JOURNAL of DIALOGUE STUDIES

Special Issue

Governance for the Human Future: The Centrality Of Dialogue

Guest Editors:
Prof Scherto R. Gill
Prof Edward Abbott-Halpin
Dr Ali Moussa Iye
Dr Sara Silvestri
Prof Garrett Thomson
Prof Paul Weller

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

INSTITUTE for DIALOGUE STUDIES

2023

Volume 11

Journal of Dialogue Studies
Volume 11
2023

Special Issue

Governance for the Human Future: The Centrality Of Dialogue

Guest Editors:

Prof Scherto R. Gill
Prof Edward Abbott-Halpin
Dr Ali Moussa Iye
Dr Sara Silvestri
Prof Garrett Thomson
Prof Paul Weller

Editorial Team

Academic Editor: Prof Paul Weller - Executive Editor: Dr Ozcan Keles
Assistant Editors: Dr Mustafa Cakmak, Dr Mustafa Demir, Frances Sleap

Editorial Board

Prof Ronald Arnett
Duquesne University

Prof Michael Barnes
University of Roehampton London

Prof Joseph Camilleri
La Trobe University

Prof Donal Carbaugh
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Prof Tony Evans
Winchester University

Dr Cem Erbil
Dialogue Society

Prof Max Farrar
Leeds Beckett University

Prof Eddie Halpin
Orkney College UHI

Dr Carool Kersten
Kings College London

Prof Simon Keyes
University of Winchester

Prof Ian Linden
St. Mary's University Twickenham London

Dr Johnston McMaster
Trinity College Dublin

Prof Karim Murji
University of West London

Prof Alpaslan Ozerdem
George Mason University

Prof Ali Paya
The Islamic College

Prof Fabio Petito
University of Sussex

Prof Simon Robinson
Leeds Beckett University

Dr Erkan Toguslu
University of KU Leuven

Prof Pnina Werbner
Keele University

Dr Nicholas Wood
University of Oxford

The Editors appreciate comments and feedback from readers. They also value any help in increasing circulation in order to fulfil the Journal's objective, which is to bring together a body of original scholarship on the theory and practice of dialogue that can be critically appraised and discussed.

Aim and Scope

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal published once a year. Its aim is to study the theory and practice of dialogue, understood provisionally as: meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding. The Journal is published by the Institute for Dialogue Studies, the academic platform of the Dialogue Society.

Submission and Editorial Correspondence

Manuscripts submitted to the Journal for publication must be original, meet the standards and conventions of scholarly publication, and must not be simultaneously under consideration by another journal. Manuscripts should be presented in the form and style set out in the Journal's Style Guide. For further information and Style Guide please visit www.dialoguestudies.org. To get in touch please email journal@dialoguesociety.org.

Subscription

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is published once a year. Annual subscription – Institutions: £15 + p&p; Individuals: £10 + p&p; Students/Concessions: £7.5 + p&p. For further information or to subscribe please email journal@dialoguesociety.org. Except where otherwise noted, the authors of papers and reviews alone are responsible for the opinions expressed therein.



INSTITUTE *for* DIALOGUE STUDIES



CENTRE *for* COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



CENTRE *for* POLICY OUTREACH

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

EMPOWERING ENGAGEMENT

INSPIRING IDEAS



DIALOGUE SOCIETY

LONDON 1999

Registered Charity
No: 1117039

www.DialogueSociety.org

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic journal published once a year by the Institute of Dialogue Studies, a subsidiary body of the Dialogue Society, which undertakes the Society's academic work including research, academic workshops and publications.

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through discussion forums, courses, capacity building publications and outreach it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

Journal of Dialogue Studies

2023
Volume 11

First published in Great Britain 2023

© Dialogue Society 2023

All rights reserved. Except for downloading and storing this publication from the Dialogue Society website for personal use. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means or stored or made available on any information storage and retrieval system without prior written permission from the publisher.

ISSN 2054-3123

Contents

Editorial Introduction

Scherto R. Gill *7*

Dialogue and the Critical Challenge of Governance

Kenneth J. Gergen *15*

Dialogues in Consensus-building for Governance

Garrett Thomson *25*

The Case of the Popular University of Social Movements: Lessons on Dialogue From and For Humanisation and the Transformation of Institutions

Alexandre da Trindade and Fábio Merladet *46*

Cultures of Dialogue and Pro-democracy in Equatorial Guinea and Diaspora

Carolina Nvé Díaz San Francisco *77*

Conversation as a Methodology for Human Flourishing, Belonging, and Understanding

Saiyyidah Zaidi *100*

Participatory Governance of Healthcare: Centring Dialogue and Interrupting Epistemic Injustice

Tineke Abma and Barbara Groot *119*

Rethinking Dialogic Narratives in Water Diplomacy

Medha Bisht *141*

From the Palaver Tree to the State House: A Reflection on the Tension between Dialogue and Governance in Africa

Ali Moussa Iye *161*

Public Policy, Collaborative Governance, and Female Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean: A Critical Assessment

Talia Esnard *186*

Cultural Democracy at the Frontiers of Patronage: Public-Interest Art versus Promotional Culture

Owen Logan with Martyn Hudson, Alex Law and Kirsten Lloyd *208*

Ready for a Perfect Storm: Leadership, Dialogue and Trust in a Time of Disconnection

Mike Hardy and Uroosa Mushtaq *238*

Democracy, Dissent, and Dialogue in Contemporary India

Sneha Roy *258*

The 30th Anniversary of a Grassroots Dialogue in Northern Ireland

Simon Lee *273*

Holding the Unaccountable to Account

Edward Abbott-Halpin *304*

Editorial Introduction

Governance for the Human Future: The Centrality Of Dialogue

Scherto R. Gill[1]

Anxiety, Optimism, and Unease

Today, there is an ever present anxiety about the failures in the practices of representative democracy. As observable in the current global political turmoil, the electoral process in many parts of the world is fraught with rivalry, antagonism, corruption, manipulation, and other deep-seated problems. To move away from such a political impasse, scholars and researchers have proposed to revisit the governance 'turn' starting three decades ago (Boussaguet, Dehousse & Jacquot 2011). The burgeoning intellectual curiosity and academic interest at the time was part of the continued effort to reconceptualise a new form of governance, not based on voting, but centred on dialogue.

Integrating dialogue in governance has the promise of engaging diverse actors and stakeholders and involving multiple perspectives in collective decision making through consensus. This is regarded as one of the major characteristics of participatory democracy – an inclusive and collaborative approach for all to take part in the political process (Gill & Thomson, forthcoming). With emerging practices, such as the cooperative movement, Barcelona's participatory governance model, the worldwide citizens assemblies, and Climate Assembly in the UK, there is a growing optimism in the possibility of co-creating a better future through dialogue and collaboration.

Whilst recognising the need for an inclusive and consensus-based approach to policymaking, there is at the same time an unease about the theory's naivety, owing to

1 Professor Scherto R. Gill is researcher, writer, educator, and facilitator who creates safe space for deep listening and generative dialogue with others towards better understanding of global challenges. She is the Director of Global Humanity for Peace Institute, University of Wales Trinity St David. She is also Senior Fellow at the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation, an international peace think-tank based in the Southeast of England; and Life Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts (FRSA). Scherto is Visiting Fellow at the Centre for International Education, and Associate Lecturer at the University of Sussex. She directs the UNESCO Collective Healing Programme; and chairs the G20 Interfaith Forum's Education Work-ing Group. Scherto is also a board member of Spirit of Humanity Forum and Rising Global Peace Forum.

the seeming unfeasibility of the practice. Many have cast doubt on humans' collective capacity to *do politics* together. Amongst the typical objections are that people tend to be too selfish, lazy, ignorant, aggressive, unmotivated, and easily persuaded, for dialogue to be meaningful for them. Moreover, there are too many people with too diverse opinions and too unreconcilable interests to make consensus possible (Menser 2018).

There are more serious concerns around how institutions can be structured and engaged in participatory governance. Which institutions could facilitate public dialogue? How might these dialogue practices be implemented through the different institutions in order to co-ordinate inclusive and harmonious consensus building? What institutional processes should be put in place to carry forward the public-generated decisions and public-proposed policies?

The Need for Systemic Transformation

Humanity is facing 'polycrisis' in the words of French thinker Edgar Morin (1999). Morin also suggests that the global economic and political systems themselves have aggravated the crisis in multiple directions. These systems also tend to inhibit the emergence of new socio-economic and political structures that can transcend traditional institutional boundaries and that can enable people, communities, and organisations to participate in decision making that affects the well-being of all. An obvious path forward starts from re-imagining good governance.

However, it has been less obvious until now that what is required is, in effect, a much desired shift from the control by *government* (i.e., the state and other formal institutions) to an open-ended, multi-layered participatory process and collaborative approach to *governance*. In other words, this is not an attempt to widen inclusion and participation, nor an innovation to improve government, not even a proposal to reform existing institutions. Instead, what is demanded is a total reset and a systemic transformation.

What might constitute such systemic transformation? Questions about the necessary conceptual arguments and their practical implications come from all directions. Understanding what is truly desirable and possible for participatory governance has helped move research to beyond merely diagnosing what is wrong in the current systems. New ideas take such forms as inspirational politics, humanising economy, and positive peace (Gill & Thomson 2019). Given that governance is at the heart of the new conceptualisations, the intellectual leaning has consistently been towards the definition of governance as a process of coordination and facilitation to enable collective decision making at different levels (see Levi-Faur 2016). In this sense, an innovative conception of governance concerns *what people can do together*. This is in

contrast to the traditional definition of governance that is about what *the governments should do*. When understanding governance as coordination and facilitation of decision making, scholars and researchers in the related fields then recognise that we must reconceptualise dialogue and consensus in the light of its myriad potentials in participatory democracy.

Innovative Conceptions of Governance

Theoretically, to advance this shift from government to governance, there should be a concern as to firstly what constitutes good governance and secondly what should characterise the processes of governance thus conceived.

To advance a conception of good governance, it requires a normative understanding of the *good* in this context. At a most fundamental level, the good ought to consist in the primary non-instrumental value of the person, including human life and our well-being (Gill & Thomson, forthcoming). This valuable nature of all persons should count towards human dignity, and thus human equality, that is, all persons are equally non-instrumentally valuable. In recognising this primary good, we can see that good governance must prioritise, as central in the political agenda, the good life and well-being of all, or the common good.

This leads to our second concern. Good governance that aims to serve the common good of collective human well-being ought to characterise the political process as involving, at a basic level, the equal, inclusive participation of all. In this regard, there are two associated recognitions. On the one hand is the acknowledgement of and respect for people's self-identifications. This leads to the rejection of using identity designations as criteria for political participation, be it citizenship, place of origin, and other social categories. All should have the opportunity to participate in the political process equally. On the other hand, and more importantly, is the understanding of equality of all persons that can help us disclose the fallacy of separating people into categories of the *governing/governor* and the *governed*. When we are all equal in a primary sense, there cannot be some who rule over others.

Therefore, the notion of the equal value of all persons not only helps establish the good that governance process ought to promote, but it can also, at the same time, challenge the power hierarchy in politics and repudiate any form of instrumentalisation of persons (e.g., through manipulation, discrimination, alienation, marginalisation, and even persecution). It also characterises governance as involving dialogue and listening to the voices of diverse stakeholders in reaching consensus on strategies towards nurturing the collective good life and well-being.

The Centrality of Dialogue

With increased use of the word 'dialogue' in governance, its meaning can sometimes be reduced to tokenism, such as allowing some people to have a say, rather than enabling full and meaningful political participation. The centrality of dialogue in good governance thus requires deeper exploration.

What innovative conceptions of dialogue might be put forward? How should we understand the rich meanings of dialogue in participatory governance and in implementing public policies for the common good? What kinds of dialogue should be involved, and how might such dialogue contribute to consensus? What does consensus look like and how is it achieved? Likewise, how might dialogue transform conflict rooted in the divergent interests and needs of stakeholders and transcend the tensions in the myriad ideas and perspectives voiced by the multiple actors?

Furthermore, how might meaningful dialogue in participatory governance enable us to launch collective inquiry and raise good questions that interrogate the structural conditions of socio-economic and political systems? What are the dialogue processes necessary to contest postulations underlying the practices of public institutions at all levels? And how might the different power and cultural dynamics play out during dialogue when reflecting on the need for systemic transformation?

The Special Issue

The *Journal of Dialogue Studies* has taken up these contemporary topical challenges and questions by inviting this Special Issue. The papers are selected by their theoretical robustness, methodological originality, and diverse contexts of case studies. Despite grappling with conceptual, methodological, contextual, and practical complexity, these papers can be viewed as a coherent whole in their intention to advance innovative ideas and unfold the promise of dialogue in participatory governance, and in their critical analyses of lessons drawn through research and reflection.

The theoretical strengths are evident in all the papers. For instance, Garrett Thomson argues for the different kinds of dialogue necessary for participatory decision making, and what constitutes consensus. This includes a distinction between the formal dialogue process and informal trust building to enable the possibility of meaningful consensus. Thomson's proposal is echoed and further illustrated by Alexandre da Trindade and Fábio Merladet's paper that conceives, through a Freirean lens, dialogue as both a path to help the community to reach decisions in congenial ways and an inherent condition for human's relational being. Drawing on the Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS) meetings in Latin America as illustrative analyses, da Trindade and Merladet bring to life Paulo Freire's conception of dia-

logue as social praxis – from naming the problems in the world towards transforming the world.

To such theoretical force, Carolina Nvé Díaz San Francisco expands on the notion of culture of dialogue by drawing on the experiences of pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and its diaspora; whilst Saiyyidah Zaidi adopts the perspective of human flourishing to examine the subtle differences between dialogue and conversation. These add layers of complexity to our understanding of the part that dialogue can play in governance.

The conceptual developments in this Special Issue are further complemented by papers that take the opportunity to challenge the limitations of the existing understanding of dialogue, and/or draw on other theories to critique the inadequacy of the theoretical foundation needed to support the emergent dialogue practices in different governance settings. Take the governance of public health as an example. Tineke Abma and Barbara Groot argue that an innovative conception of dialogue is required to go beyond its rational base and epistemic insensitivity and injustice. In doing so, dialogue is conceived as in part an ethic of caring that enables both embodied and storied understanding, whilst taking into account the relational nature of health in decision making. This conception of dialogue in participatory health governance in the Netherlands helps address the power imbalance in collective decision making and prevents the voices of the vulnerable from being silenced. Likewise, the limit of standard conceptions of dialogue is further challenged by Medha Bisht from an Asian/Indian cultural perspective. Bisht proposes a conception of dialogue by infusing and integrating narrative in the dialogic process. This reflects an Asian understanding of the relational nature of strategies setting when engaging in dialogue, for example, about the River Ganges' water management. In a similar vein, Ali Moussa Iye reflects on the endogenous conception of dialogue in governance from the perspectives of traditional African nomadic societies, in contrast to and alongside contemporary conceptions of dialogue as applied in national political processes within the African continent and in trans-national processes amongst international organisations.

This tension continues throughout the Special Issue between the seemingly 'universal' conceptualisation of dialogue which undermines the particularities of cultural, economic, and political contexts, and the highly localised understanding which has limited resonance elsewhere.

There are also illuminating analyses of the structural obstacles to overcome in order to embrace dialogue in governance. Taking a post-structural feminist perspective, Talia Esnard accentuates the need to be aware of the power structures and discourses in public policy dialogue. This leads to the recognition of the importance of inclusiv-

ity, visibility, and equity for empowering women entrepreneurs in public policy making. Bringing in quality of life and human flourishing as an evaluative criterion, Esnard's critical analysis weaves the political economy and social structures within the challenges of public policy design and implementation in the Caribbean. Owen Logan, Martyn Hudson, Alex Law, and Kirsten Lloyd interrogate the part that arts, aesthetics, and cultural and emotional experiences play in defining the public interest dialogically. In doing so, they advocate for equality and pluralism in participatory governance whilst pointing out the main blockages and impediments (political, institutional, and professional) to the integration of dialogue and participation in cultural governance in the UK. Mike Hardy and Uroosa Mushtaq's literature review introduces further food for thought by raising our awareness of intercultural dialogue's contribution to trust building and transforming tensions and conflicts at multiple levels, hence the need for continued 'dialogue on dialogue'. Using the global social movements as case in point, they outline the important role leadership can play in facilitating and coordinating horizontal dialogue for solidarity, and vertical dialogue for institutional change.

These conceptual discussions and case studies further serve as the backdrop to allow analyses on the communities' struggle for the opportunities of equal political participation. Sneha Roy's paper illustrates how identity-based and emotion-driven politics engineered by the Modi government can make equal inclusive dialogue and collaboration of Muslim and other minorities in Indian politics feel like a conceptual and practical illusion.

In a most substantive analysis, Simon Lee reflects on grassroots dialogue in Northern Ireland (NI) thirty years on, focusing on the theoretical underpinning of NI approach to dialogue, exploring how it had worked then, and drawing insights into the experiences of NI dialogue. These are hugely relevant to this Special Issue's concerns of dialogue in good governance. In particular, Lee emphasises the value of inclusive listening in dialogue (i.e., involving people from both sides of the conflict, especially those who feel that they are undervalued) which is by way of an invitation to the process of the formation of relationships. This is because the narrator and the listener are bound in a mutual-witnessing relationship, where trust, esteem, and caring can be cultivated. Listening itself is an act of parity of esteem, a recognition of the equal value of all persons. In listening, we can transcend the binary of us-vs-them whereby the dialogue can become a relational flow. He also highlights the importance of giving due space for the voices of memory but leaving open a space for imagining a common future. Above all, the NI experience advances the need for fully integrating dialogue in governance, that is, 'let the dialogue seep into the mainstream of thinking about ways forward'. This includes the recognition that good governance involves people making decisions for themselves towards the common good.

Governance for the Future of Humanity

Taking the Special Issue as a whole, the papers have indeed unveiled new vistas of theory and practice. They not only stress the centrality of dialogue in participatory governance, but they also identify specific relational practices that can help scaffold the dialogic participation, consensus, and trust, including the attention to inclusive listening, the recognition of multiple perspectives, the respect for the voice of all participants, the responsibility for and commitment to congenial relational bonds, and so forth. As highlighted, dialogue is not just a practice, a governance process for participatory decision making, a pathway towards collaborative consensus making, dialogue reflects, above all, the relational being that we are (Gadamer 1975).

Bibliography

Boussaguet, L., Dehousse, R., Jacquot, S. (2011) The 'Governance Turn' Revisited. In: Dehousse, R. (eds) *The 'Community Method'*. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gadamer, H-G. (1975) *Truth and Methods*, New York: Continuum.

Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (forthcoming) *Beyond Instrumentalised Politics: Re-Conceptualising Public Governance,* Berlin: DeGruyter Publishing.

Gill, S. & Thomson, G. (2019) *Understanding Peace Holistically: From the Spiritual to the Political*, New York: Peter Lang.

Levi-Faur, D. (ed.) (2016) *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Menser, M. (2018) *We Decide!* (Global Ethics and Politics), Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Morin, E. (1999) *Homeland Earth: A Manifesto for the New Millennium*, New York: Hampton Press.

Dialogue and the Critical Challenge of Governance

Kenneth J. Gergen[1]

In matters of governing, attention to dialogic process has never been more important. I say this because institutions of government – from local to global spheres – are losing the fundamental capacity to sustain viable order. The future of governing will essentially be the future of humankind, and it is within the process of dialogue that this future will be forged.

To appreciate the force of these assertions, it is first useful to touch on the pivotal place of dialogue in the creation of any form of governing. As people gather, so is a process of coordination or mutually adjusted action set in motion. Many see this process of self-organising as fundamental to the creation of human society. It is also a process of communication, both generating a language and relying on language as a means of coordinating. As mutually agreeable patterns of coordination are achieved, they also acquire moral weight. They become ways in which one *should* act, with means typically sought for their sustenance. The challenge of sustaining and protecting a way of life is essentially that of governance. Informally this could take the form of reminders and reprimands; even community gossip functions as a means of sustaining the informal order. It is with the creation of formal institutions to sustain and protect the moral order that we may speak of government.

In this sense, structures of government are much like other significant institutions – commercial, educational, military, and otherwise. They represent attempts to fix a form of life deemed optimal for achieving a given function. At least within the past century, many such organisations have drawn on the metaphor of the machine, with

1 Kenneth J. Gergen, PhD, is a founding member, President of the Taos Institute and Chair of the Board, and the Mustin Professor of Psychology at Swarthmore College. Gergen also serves as an Honorary Professor at the University of Buenos Aires. Gergen received his BA from Yale University and his PhD from Duke University and has taught at Harvard University and Heidelberg University. He has been the recipient of two Fulbright research fellowships, the Geraldine Mao fellowship in Hong Kong, along with Fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, and the Alexander Humboldt Stiftung. Gergen has also been the recipient of research grants from the National Science Foundation, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and the Barra Foundation. He has received honorary degrees from Tilburg University and Saybrook Institute and is a member of the World Academy of Art and Science.

an emphasis on functional units, standardised procedures, instrumental communication, assessment, and top-down control. Government bureaucracies are exemplary, though many of these characteristics may be found from local to higher levels of government. Ideally, then, national government should function as a rationally structured and enduring institution.

Importantly, while the origins of our governmental institutions may be found in the process of dialogue, once the structures are in place, the originating process may wither. For citizens these structures provide a sense of security, stability, and safety. One wishes them to remain obdurate. Promises of their continuation are protected by constitutions, forms of law, and force of arms. Indeed, challenges to the legitimacy of such structures may be counted as treason. Thus, challenges to founding constitutions and legal precedents are few and changes fraught with conflict.

Government in a World of Uncontrollable Assembly

While structures of government are developed within particular socio-historical conditions, their adequacy across time and circumstance is moot (Applebaum 2020). Especially problematic is the adequacy of stabilised, functionally organised, and tradition-based governments in the global conditions of today. Here we must recognise the dramatic developments of the past century, now thrusting us into conditions of increasingly rapid, unpredictable, volatile, and potentially lethal change. Such conditions radically reduce the ordering capacities of any governmental institution. They spell the end to our reliance on such institutions to maintain the social/moral order.

To expand, consider alone the impact of innovations in communication technology. The emergence of the automobile, telephone, radio, and air transportation early last century, followed later by television, and mobile phones, represent a dramatic and unprecedented increment in the capacity for human interchange. The barriers of both time and geography gave way to unceasing opportunities to associate. The subsequent development of the internet and efficient computational technologies – along with ancillary websites, email, and social media – has enabled vast populations from around the world to communicate both continuously and instantaneously.

In principle, every interchange sets in motion a process of self-organising, variously extending, transforming, or subverting existing orders. Thus, within any dialogue lie the seeds of a new agenda, direction, value, goal, project, or innovation. Every conversation may be the origin of a new political movement, religion, cult, network, or conspiracy, along with newly hatching feelings of alienation, difference, or animosity. And for every emerging order, there are those who will resist, exploit, or attempt to destroy it.

In effect, the common beliefs and values that once supported stable institutions of government are not only eroding, but they are also being replaced by a vast sea of micro-orderings. As these micro-orderings emerge, conflict, and variously merge with each other, we approach a condition that is infinitely chaotic and simultaneously suffused with attempts to order – a continuous and dynamic condition of *chaordering*. While governments attempt to govern, direct, and assert controls, this continuous and globally extended process of micro-ordering cannot be contained. Structured institutions are both clumsy and slow; micro-ordering is instantaneous, continuously adapting, creative, and rhizomatic. Governments are over-extended, under-funded, and encumbered by resistance within and without. In effect, structured institutions of government are increasingly subverted in their attempts to sustain a civil society.

Dialogic Challenges to Future Well-Being

If it is through dialogic process that governments are erected, flounder, or fail, it is also to dialogue that we must turn for viable alternatives. Given the crippling of governmental power, the critical question becomes how dialogue can be employed to bring about *sustainable chaorder*. What are its potentials? What are the impediments? Dare we think that within the incessant and globally distributed micro-orderings lie potentials for global flourishing? While complex and profound in implication, glimpses into possible answers are also surfacing. Presently I see four significant domains of departure, areas in which attention to the positive potentials of dialogue may be – and are being – realised.

Enriching the Practices of Governance

Given the decline in the governing capacities of institutionalised government, the most promising alternatives would seem to be practices that contribute to coordinating the sea of coordinations. Such practices would reduce the ruptures and frictions inherent in the multiple micro-orderings, while enhancing the potentials of these orderings in contributing to the common good. The attempt would not be that of controlling the flows of meaning making but entering into the flows so as to positively inflect their direction. Effectively, this would be to set in motion dialogic micro-processes that serve the more general function of governance.

Significant movements in this direction now emerge in multiple locales. Here I would include, for example, developments in co-governance, collaborative governance, commons-based decision making, cooperative governance, participatory democracy, direct and deliberative democracy, dialogic policymaking, New Public Governance, public value co-creation, relational welfare, the relational state, inter-

active governance, decentered governance, shared governance, and multi-party collaboration among them. By governance, in this case, I would not only include practices nominally concerned with governing, but any practices that successfully bring divergent parties together to achieve greater public welfare. Illustrations and insights into the potentials of such movements are numerous, including for example, Ansell and Torfing (2016), Batory and Svensson (2019), Emerson and Nabatchi (2015), McGuire (2006), Osborne (2010), and Thomassen and Jensen (2021). The content of the present issue also offers detailed expositions. However, brief amplification of significant domains of application may be useful:

At local or communal levels of action, for example, I draw inspiration from Hilary Cottam's (2018) innovations in practices that enable communities to develop their own capabilities, thus compensating for the incapacities of public services. In community meetings, for example, inhabitants share their experiences, and develop networks to help each other find meaningful work, health supports, services for the elderly, and so on. In contrast, relational welfare advocates in Denmark attempt to replace the top-down organisation of public services by implementing collaborative relations with the communities they serve (Von Heimburg, Ness, and Storch 2021). For example, welfare agencies work with community members to help in supporting the needy in their communities. Through this collaboration, government services are more finely attuned to local needs. At the same time, it is important to underscore the value of ancillary initiatives contributing to dialogic-centred governance. To illustrate, Marilene Grandesso and her Brazilian colleagues have developed a practice of *integrative community therapy,* bringing residents together for mutual support (Grandesso 2020). Drawing from reservoirs of wisdom, experience, and understanding within the community, public meetings enable broad sharing on topics such as substance abuse, discrimination, and family violence.

On the regional level, collaborations bringing together public, private, and voluntary sectors of society are now becoming a major lever in the movement toward shared governing (cf. Haug and Baldersheim 2016; Schroeder and Dann 2019). Such collaborations have been successfully employed to protect the environment, boost regional economies, coordinate transportation systems, resolve disputes, and much more. One innovative and inspiring effort is the attempt of the Spanish province of Gipuzkoa to institute collaborative governance as its central governing process. In this effort, over 120 projects have been launched, with a major focus on such issues as climate change, minority employment, health, cybersecurity, and social tensions. In every case, the attempt is to increase the participation of the citizens in political deliberation, and to ensure that such deliberations are reflected in public policies.

In the context of national politics, one of the most promising signs of a shift toward governance, is represented in the emerging range of citizen assemblies. Here common citizens may deliberate on issues of common significance, with their resulting opinions and decisions entering government decision making. Now functioning in some 500 locales around the world, such assemblies – variously termed 'people's assemblies', 'citizens' assemblies', 'citizens' councils', and 'popular assemblies' – take many different forms. Many also function in local and urban settings. Most interesting, both in terms of its origins in the non-profit sector and the scope of its activities, is the Mehr Demokratie initiative. The German-based organisation has operated for over thirty years to generate and support citizen-based referenda and other direct democracy initiatives, with the ultimate aim of decentring policy making. Gradually, its focus of change has shifted to governance at the European Union level.

Because relations among nations are typically treated as if nation states were autonomous persons, we can also view international relationships through the lens of governance. In this vein, an organisation such as the United Nations functions as an institutionalised form of government. The challenge, then, is to open informal alliances for the greater good – a shift toward governance. Inspiring, for example, is the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, a collaboration of governments, movements, and individuals working towards a well-being economy and ecological well-being. More specifically, the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo) brings national and regional governments together to share expertise and policy practices. The driving concern of the alliance – now including New Zealand, Finland, Scotland, Iceland, and Wales – is the replacement of the prevailing goal of monetary wealth with that of human and environmental well-being. The governments work with both businesses and civil society to achieve these goals. Also at the international level, the potentials of people's assemblies are now being explored. Issues of sustainable development, social justice, and poverty occupied discussions in the first Global People's Assembly in 2022.

This glimpse into the copious efforts to coordinate multiple voices in the process of governance is both hopeful and innervating. However, the efficacy of such efforts ultimately depends on the form or quality of the dialogic process itself. We turn, then, to the challenge of designing dialogue.

Designing Dialogue

Political dialogues are often fraught with mutual criticism, blame, and derision. In democratic governments, competition among parties almost guarantees mutual acrimony (Moghaddam 2010). In public gatherings where political issues are at stake, dialogue often deteriorates, and rancour prevails. Practitioners working with dia-

logue-centred governance are aware of these dangers, and the elements of their practices are carefully considered. However, as Louise Phillips argued in her book, *The Promise of Dialogue* (2011), the vision of dialogue as an unquestioned good for achieving inclusive and democratic forms of life is unwarranted. As she demonstrates, power dynamics can be subtly at play even in the most congenial collaborations. We are invited, then, to view dialogic practices – their elements, forms, and potentials – as a focus of study, from which knowledge may be gleaned and shared.

Movements in this direction are indeed under way. As realised in such broadly successful practices as restorative justice (Wachtel, Costello, and Wachtel 2019) and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005), forms of dialogue can be systematically developed, studied, and improved. Within the field of organisational studies, we thus find a movement toward *dialogic organisational development* (Bushe and Marshak 2015), specifically oriented to developing practices that bring people together to achieve particular ends. Innovation by design (Gaynor 2002) is perhaps the most widely known exemplar, but experiments now move in many directions (cf. Lipmanowicz and McCandless 2013; Kaner 2014). When dialogic practices in peace building (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009; Coleman, Deutsch, and Marcus 2014) and mediation (Monk and Winslade 2013) are added to the mix, one begins to see the enormous potentials of systematic study and global sharing of dialogic practices.

In the case of governance process, there are certain challenges at stake. Much needed are practices for building trust across otherwise competing or antagonistic enclaves. What forms of dialogue will enable us to move beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion? There is also the major question of decision making in a pluralist world. How is a unified decision to be derived from an incoherent multiplicity? What should be affirmed, what excluded? There is no principled means of judging among multiple proposals except by embracing criteria for which there are also alternatives. What dialogic practices will recognise the richness of the multiple voices, without reaching a final conclusion that will leave most of them silenced? Dialogic design and sharing are essential.

Developing Dialogic Skills

While forms of dialogic-based governance are numerous, they are also site-specific. They are developed to enhance the process of governing within circumscribed domains. At the same time, however, the intensive, globe-spanning process of conversation continues, and with it the continuous generation of difference, alienation, and antagonism. As conflict proliferates and intensifies, so is the success of dialogic-based governance impeded. In this context we must ask about the capacities of people in

the ordinary course of their daily lives to converse in ways that avoid, reduce, or dissolve differences. This is essentially to ask about the level of dialogic skill that people bring into their relations. Frequently noted in this case is the decline of conversational skills – variously resulting from immersion in television, social media, and the internet more generally (Turkle 2016). Much has also been said about the loss of civil discourse in political deliberations (Cohen 2023). But where are the contexts for acquiring the kinds of dialogic skills essential for capillary coordination? There is indeed a growing awareness – even at the international level – of the need for the *soft skills* of relating. Requisite programmes are infrequent. Public education would seem to be the more obvious direction for development. Ideally, such skills should figure prominently in the learning goals of our schools. This possibility raises the further question of dialogic scaffolds.

Transforming Dialogic Scaffolds

The qualities and directions of dialogue are many, and while their forms may be designed for specific purposes, many are shaped or curtailed by cultural tradition. In the case of public education, for example, the potentials for building dialogic skills are thwarted by traditions of testing and grading (Gergen and Gill 2020). Because these assessment techniques invite standardised curricula, both student learning and pedagogical practices are narrowed to test attainment. Further, students are set into competition, thus limiting mutual sharing and support. In effect, the assessment tradition serves as a scaffold for the shape of dialogue within public education, to the detriment of its potentials. As we have proposed, this scaffold can be transformed through the implementation of relationally based forms of evaluation. Alter the scaffold, and the direction of dialogue is turned.

The emphasis on cultural scaffolds is especially relevant to the challenge of governing. It is 'just natural' in many countries, for example, to organise political debates between candidates. While other forms of interchange could be designed, political debate in such countries is essentially 'our tradition,' and candidates who refuse may be sanctioned. In effect, the tradition serves as structural scaffold that favours a certain form of dialogue over others. It is also a dialogue that is often contentious and alienating; ambiguities and nuances are sacrificed, along with information on the many ways in which candidates might agree. As quickly recognised, however, the use of debate is closely related to the more general structuring of democratic government. If we presume a structure in which political parties compete for power, a scaffold is thus erected for mutual rancour, manipulation, and concealment. One may argue that it is precisely the failings of this structure that cry out for a shift toward governance processes. However, the major challenge lies in transforming the political structure itself.

Much the same arguments apply at the international level. The existing scaffold for international relations is that of competition, with each nation state primarily invested in its own well-being. The result is an all-against-all race for power, severely restraining the forms of dialogue and possibilities for collaboration (Hale, Held and Young 2014). In the meantime, the environment is destroyed, and mutual mistrust among nations precludes their sacrificing for global survival. Transformation in this structure is imperative; shifting the weight toward governance is only the beginning.

Conclusion

Centralised governments are losing their capacity for effectively ordering and serving society. At the same time, we move toward a world of broadly distributed and uncontrollable micro-orderings, now threatening both societal and global chaos. Proposed here is a shift from a dependency on governmental institutions toward processes of collaborative governance, that is, forms of micro-ordering that soften the boundaries among otherwise antagonistic centres of order and facilitate coordination for the common good. Dialogic process stands as the critical fulcrum to their success. A broad range of collaborative governance initiatives is currently in motion, from the local to the international level. However, the ultimate success of these efforts depends on the concerted design of dialogue, the fostering of dialogic skills, and developing structural scaffolds of support. In a significant sense, the world's future depends on our forms and capacities of dialogue.

Bibliography

Ansell, C and Gash, A. (2007) *Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice*. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 18, 543–571

Ansell, C, Torfing, J (eds) (2016) *Handbook on Theories of Governance*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Applebaum, A. (2020) *Twilight of democracy*. New York: Doubleday.

Batory,A. and Svensson, S. 2019. The fuzzy concept of collaborative governance: A systematic review of the state of the art. *Public Policy,* 13 (2), 28–39.

Bercovitch, J. and Jackson, R. (2009) Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-First Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bevir, M (2002) 'A decentred theory of governance', in: Bang, H (ed) (2003) *Governance as Social and Political Communication*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 200–221.

Bushe, G. & Marshak, R. (Eds.) (2015) *Dialogic organization development: The theory and practice of transformational change*. Noida: Berrett-Koehler

Cohen, P.M. (2023) *Talking cure: An essay on the civilizing power of conversation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Coleman, P.T., Deutsch, M., and Marcus, E.C. (eds) (2014) *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (3rd edition). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Cooperrider, D.L. and Whitney, D. (2005) *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Cottam, H. (2018) *Radical Help: How we can Remake the Relationships Among us and Revolutionize the Welfare State*. London: Virago.

Emerson, K. and Nabatchi, T. (2015) *Collaborative Governance Regimes*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Gaynor, G. (2002) *Innovation by Design: What it Takes to Keep Your Company on the Cutting Edge*. New York, NY: AMACOM.

Gergen, K.J. and Gill, S. (2020) *Beyond the Tyranny of Testing: Relational Evaluation in Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grandesso, M.A. (2020) 'Integrative community therapy: Creating a communitarian context for generative and transformative conversations', in S. McNamee, M.M. Gergen, C. Camargo-Borges, and E.F. Rasera (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Social Constructionist Practice*. London: Sage. 183–92.

Haug, A.V. and Baldersheim, H. (2016) *The rise of the networking region: challenges of regional collaboration in a globalized world*. New York: Routledge.

Kaner, S., et al. (2014) *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision making.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lipmanowicz, H. and McCandless, K. (2013) *The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures: Simple Rules to Unleash a Culture of Innovation*. Seattle, WA: Liberating Structures.

McGuire. M. (2006) Collaborative Public Management: Assessing What We Know and How We Know It. *Public Administration Review,* 66 (1), 33–43

Moghaddam, F. (2010) *Words of Conflict, Words of War: How the Language We Use in Political Processes Sparks Fighting*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Monk, G. and Winslade, J. (2013) *When Stories Clash: Addressing Conflict with Narrative Mediation*. Chagrin Falls, OH: Taos Institute.

Osborne, S.P. (ed) (2010) *The New Public Governance? Emerging Perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance*. Routledge: New York.

Phillips, L. (2011) *The Promise of Dialogue*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Rosenberg, M.B. (2005) *Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World*. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer.

Schroeder, B.C. and Dann, S.L. (2019) *The Life of the Lakes: A Guide to the Great Lakes Fishery*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Thomassen, A.O. and Jensen, J.B. (eds) (2021) *Processual Perspectives on the Co-productive Turn in Public Sector Organizations*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Turkle, S. (2016) *Reclaiming conversation: The power of talk in a digital age*. New York: Penguin Books.

Von Heimburg, D., Ness, O. and Storch, J. (2021) 'Co-creation of public values: Citizenship, social justice, and well-being', in A.O. Thomassen and J.B Jensen (eds), *Processual Perspectives on the Co-productive Turn in Public Sector Organizations*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. 20–41.

Wachtel, T., Costello, B., Wachtel, J. (2019) *Restorative Circles in Schools: Building Community and Enhancing Learning*. 2nd ed.

Dialogues in Consensus-building for Governance

Garrett Thomson[1]

Abstract: Participatory democratic governance requires consensus-building processes. Consensus usually implies coming to some agreement about a set of propositions, but there is much more involved because consensus is also a set of social relations that allow people to act together and live harmoniously even when there is propositional disagreement. This paper proposes a conceptual examination of some of the different kinds of disagreements that may make consensus seem near impossible. By classifying the main types of discord, we can provide a conceptual map of the dialogues needed for consensus-building processes. We also need to characterise dialogue as such, distinguishing it from debate, discussion, and conversation, and distinguish it from various forms of conflict resolution such as mediation, group-problem solving and conflict transformation. To define the kinds of discord that make consensus difficult, we shall characterise the hermeneutics of listening, as well as the structure of communication. This will enable us to identify how dialogical processes can go wrong in ways relevant to consensus-building. From this, we distinguish four basic kinds of dialogical processes needed for consensus-building governance.

Keywords: Belief, Consensus, Community, Communication, Dialogue, Disagreement, Hermeneutics, Identity, Listening, Participatory Democracy, Semantics

Introduction

This paper is written from the conviction that there are good arguments to the effect that a participatory democracy is the only form of political system that treats people humanely. Representative democracy fails in this regard because it is at heart a way to

1 Garrett Thomson is the chief executive officer of the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace, and he teaches philosophy at the College of Wooster, where he holds the Compton Chair. He has a DPhil from Oxford University, England. He is the author/co-author/co-editor of 26 books including, Needs (1987), On the Meaning of Life (2002), Bacon to Kant (2012) and Thales to Sextus (2016) and A Brief History of Twentieth Century Philosophy (2022). He has co-authored: Happiness, Flourishing and the Good Life (2020); Understanding Peace Holistically (2019); Human-Centred Education (2017) and Redefining Religious Education (2014). He co-edited the six-volumes of the Longman Standard History of Philosophy with Prof. D. Kolak (Longman's Press, 2006). He has taught at universities in Colombia and the U.K., as well as the USA.

elect rulers who tend to be part of an elite rather than being a way for people to engage directly in collective policy making for the community. Or so we shall assume.

However, there are serious practical obstacles to participatory decision making. In this paper, I will show how various forms of dialogue can constitute an answer to some of these problems, especially insofar as they pertain to the difficulties in reaching agreement. Dialogue can construct the conditions that allow people to agree more readily. Churchill once said that the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the ordinary voter. One might contend that the current non-participatory system is partly to blame for this! However, one might also reply that a ninety-minute, well-facilitated community assembly would constitute strong support for democracy. When supplemented by dialogue, such assemblies can work.

Thus, this paper has a limited aim. It will not provide a theory of good governance, or a theory of participatory consensus building or try to explain the links between the two. Rather it will try to show what kinds of dialogues are needed to support participatory decision making or processes of governance by consensus. This implies that we need to distinguish the formal process whereby a community assembly reaches decisions by consensus from the informal dialogues that support such consensus-building processes.

The basis of the main argument will be a classification of different kinds of disagreement or discord between persons. There are many forms of such discord. Contradiction in belief, in which one person believes a proposition and the other denies it, is only one form. Acts of communication consist in more than the affirmation of propositions. Indeed, they can express and create social relations that are antagonistic or peaceful. As we shall see, peacefulness is a condition of participatory democracy, and well-run dialogues are conducive to peaceful relations.

Participatory local democracy requires consensus-building processes because the core idea of a participatory democracy is that a community decides its policies together. It would be inadequate democratically for a majority to decide a policy that a minority find abhorrent or reject, without the opportunity for them to share and discuss, especially if there might be reasonable alternatives that might be acceptable to all. All need to be heard.

However, consensus is usually conceived as unanimous agreement, and this implies that consensus-building is simply coming to agreement about a set of propositions. I contend that this is an inadequate understanding of consensus, which must include the social relations that allow people to act together harmoniously even when there is propositional disagreement among them. Consensus can be attained without unanimous agreement when a part of the community feels that, although they cannot

support the proposal on the table, they should not oppose it. They might feel like this because they sense that their views have been heard with openness and without judgment by the group as a whole and that the current proposal reflects this, albeit not as much as they would wish. They judge that further discussion would not be productive. Above all, they feel and are equally members of the community. In this manner, consensus without unanimity presupposes peaceful social relations of respect and trust. This is why consensus-building needs dialogue. Dialogues are necessary for the building of the social relations that are part of consensus.

Dialogue

We need to briefly define and characterise dialogue as such, distinguishing it from conversation and discussion. The central idea of dialogue is that it involves facilitated talking and listening that transforms conflict or transcends antagonistic relations, towards greater peacefulness. All relations involve conflict, but conflicts between persons concerning their beliefs and interests do not need to be antagonistic and unpeaceful. Dialogues are a specific kind of interchange that performs these transformative or transcending functions. Therefore, it is important to begin by distinguishing dialogue from various forms of conflict resolution such as mediation, group problem solving and conflict transformation.

Conflict resolution consists of a range of activities with conflict settlement at one end, and conflict transformation at the other. There are four broad approaches for resolving apparently intractable conflicts: negotiation and mediation, interactive problem solving and conflict transformation, as well as various kinds of dialogue.[2]

Negotiation is a discussion between the parties with the goal of reaching an agreement. Mediation is a negotiation in which one or more outsiders, or third parties, assist the disputants in reaching the goal. Arbitration or adjudication is when a third party makes a binding decision about the conflict.[3]

According to another approach, the core of conflict resolution is problem solving, and in particular how to reframe adversarial win–lose competition into a shared problem that can be solved through cooperation.[4] This approach usually combines so-called 'objective' and 'subjective' factors.

---

2 This section draws on Ramsbotham, (2010) Also see https://www.beyondintractability.org/moos/challenge-complexity

3 Carnevale, P. (1992)

4 See for example, Deutsch, M. (1973) and Fisher, Ronald (1997)

Recently, many peace writers have moved away from mainstream negotiation and problem-solving approaches towards conflict transformation. Typically, a conflict appears to have an 'either...or' structure: either A or B. For example, either Jerusalem is part of Israel, or it is part of Palestine. The transformational model looks towards alternative structures, such as 'neither-nor' or 'and-and'.[5] The two parties work towards 'finding how their contradictions could be transcended and their perspectives combined in a higher unity'.[6] In this vein, John-Paul Lederach criticises 'either–or' frameworks and argues for seeing conflicts as complex webs of interactions that can only be transformed by 'the moral imagination'.[7]

In the context of peace building, dialogues differ from negotiation, problem solving and conflict transformation partly because they are directed towards increasing understanding and trust between the parties. Dialogues are not aimed directly at providing solutions to a conflict, but rather at changing the cultures, feelings and misapprehensions that breed the conflict and render it antagonistic.[8]

Dialogues have the power to transform conflicts and transcend antagonisms towards more peaceful relations. As we have just seen, they function in a way that is different from other peace-building approaches. But to specify more completely what counts as a dialogue, we need to define their main characteristics in contrast to conversation, discussion, and debate.

First, in a dialogue, people come together in a special way. They become a group, suffused with friendliness and good will towards each other. There is a reduced sense of individualism. In this manner, dialogue is distinct from a conversation, which tends to be between individuals. Of course, the creation of this group togetherness is a result of the dialogue itself. It cannot be forced or imposed, but it does not come out of thin air. It is part of the dialogue process.

Second, dialogue contains an implicit commitment to the equal value (and reality) of all persons. This expresses a democratic ideal, namely the quality and equality of listening. The traditional definitions of democracy tend to focus on the right to voice one's views. However, voice means nothing unless there is relevant and appropriate listening. If democracy requires an equality of voice, then it also requires an openness of ears that respects such equality. This feature of dialogue means that par-

5 Galtung (2004), p.13

6 Ibid. p.57

7 Lederach (2005) 172–3

8 See http://www.ywamkb.net/kb/Mapping_Dialogue_Introduction

ticipants come to the circle *as persons* rather than role-holders. This is one sense in which dialogues are informal. In a dialogue, people participate as themselves rather than as representatives of some organisation or group. This is one feature that distinguishes a dialogue from a conversation.

Third, there is a sense of common or group action in which the members of the group participate together as one, as opposed to engaging in individual actions. Sometimes this aspect of the process is referred to as 'co-creation of meaning'. Sometimes it is experienced as a co-inquiry, and sometimes as a co-sharing. Again, this marks a difference from both a conversation and a discussion.[9]

Fourth, in a dialogue, participants suspend what they think rather than defend it. This requires that people typically put on hold the part of themselves that criticises, blames, and judges. They do not set themselves in opposition to the other: they are usually more open and receptive to others. These qualities define the way in which people listen. Again, this is part of the process. This feature sets dialogue as distinct from a discussion.[10]

Fifth, a dialogue usually is not directed to a pre-defined goal, such as the making of a decision. In this sense, it does not seek convergence on an endpoint which would count as closure. Rather, it is open-ended and amenable to new unplanned and unexpected possibilities. In this sense, it is a divergent and continuing process.[11] This makes it different from a discussion which tends to be focused on some endpoint.

Sixth, a dialogue is not primarily instrumentally valuable for the sake of some goal such as solving a problem. Rather, it is a process that is valuable for itself. In this way, it is more like play than work. For example, in post-conflict situations, sometimes, NGOs offer experiential workshops in which people share their pain, mostly as a means of healing and reconciliation. This may be something good, but it is therapy rather than dialogue, despite the fact that it involves empathetic listening. For example, warring groups may talk to each other only as a means to ending violence. The term 'dialogue' contradicts such instrumentalisation. As soon as an interaction becomes merely a means to serve a political purpose, it is no longer a dialogue. In a dialogue, the content and direction cannot be imposed from outside the community but must emerge from a transformative process within a community. Dialogue is *a part* of having peaceful relations. It is intrinsically valuable because it is a constitutive aspect of peaceful relations. For instance, peaceful families talk to each other. As a

9 Lee Nichol (2004)

10 William Isaacs (1999)

11 Mario Cayer (2004)

peaceful community, we engage in dialogue for its own sake as a way of being together. Dialogue is more like healthy living, and less like taking pills before or after an operation.

However, this does not mean that dialogues do not have ends. For example, dialogues bring people to understand each other better. In this sense, it is like entering into another world. Dialogues can have a strong healing effect. As the group opens up, people's suffering is released, and sharing this cathartic experience can be therapeutic. Dialogues can have goals, but the goals do not instrumentalise the process.[12] When it is instrumentalised, the process is treated only as valuable insofar as it contributes to the goal. In contrast, because a dialogue is a process valuable for itself, people appreciate the experience of it as such.

I am not claiming that all dialogues must have all the six features described above. The relationship is more like a family resemblance.[13] There is a certain looseness to the term 'dialogue' which this Wittgenstein-like approach respects. This explains why sometimes dialogues will appear to be like facilitated conversations, and other times more like open-ended discussions. Given our earlier discussion, we can define a dialogue as a facilitated interchange directed towards transforming conflict and transcending antagonistic relations, which typically will have all six of the above features.

Given this rough definition, we can distinguish consensus-based community decision-making processes from the informal dialogues that support them. When a community comes together to decide its policies on waste disposal, for instance, this does not count as a dialogue according to the above definition: it fails on the second, fourth and fifth criteria, and possibly also the sixth. However, such community decision-making processes can only hope to reach consensus with the support of dialogues. This clarifies the earlier point, namely that this paper is not about governance and community decision-making processes *as such* but rather about how different types of informal dialogue are needed to make them function well.

Well facilitated dialogues can have an almost magical transformative power. More than anything this is because of the synergy involved in becoming a group that is positive and friendly. By 'positive,' I mean that each person feels listened to without criticism and prejudgment, and that each recognises that this is the experience of the other. The transformative power is also due to the creative energy released in an

12 On instrumentalisation, see Thomson, Gill and Goodson, 2019, Chapter 2

13 Wittgenstein (1986)

open-ended, divergent, and non-instrumentalised process which unfolds spontaneously.

Linguistic Communication

To classify the relevant kinds of discord between people, we need to start with a quick typology of linguistic communication. This could be very complicated and intricate. To avoid that, let us be simplistic, while still being principled. We can divide communication into four aspects: the linguistic as such; the speech act; the listening act; and the relationships between the people involved. We will review each in turn in relation to dialogue. Later, we will explain how each gives rise to different kinds of discord.

a) The Linguistic as Such

The linguistic as such consists primordially in sentences, some of which express a proposition. Sentences that do not express a proposition include commands, questions, and exclamations. These are sentences that are not true or false, such as 'Help!' and 'Are you OK?' A proposition is the meaning of a declarative sentence. The simplest kind of disagreement is a logical contradiction in which person A affirms the proposition P and person B denies P.[14] Both cannot be right. Indeed, to affirm that P is to assert that the relevant sentence is true, and it is also to deny not-P.

Sentences are composed of words, and the meaning of a word consists in the way it contributes to the meaning of an indefinite number of sentences.[15] Such semantic meaning is a public or social phenomenon, but it is much more than a mode of communication. We each live in the world as shaped by concepts. In this way, concepts or semantic meanings construct the experiential or phenomenological world that we inhabit. For example, without the concept of tree, one could not experience a tree as a tree. Because semantic meaning is a public phenomenon, it is a field of accord or the common, within which disagreements, misunderstanding and discord can occur. It is the shared background. At the semantic level, we understand each other well most of the time. However, this does not signify that there are not semantic disagreements! Rather it means that such disagreements require a shared backcloth.

14 The sentence 'A believes that p' does not contradict 'B believes that not p'. The contradiction concerns the content of their beliefs.

15 This approach has its roots in the works of Frege (1991) and Donald Davidson (1991a).

Because semantic meaning is largely shared, and because it is also constitutive of our experiential worlds, it has the extraordinary property of allowing us to enter the phenomenological world of others. To allow one to pass into the experiential world of a gardener, all she has to do is to describe her experience in sufficiently vivid terms. This is a remarkable facet of language. For example, in his novel *The Inheritors*, William Golding captures the experience of Neanderthals. Marcel Proust's descriptions of his childhood transport one to a different world. Therefore, in a dialogue, we can find ourselves glimpsing into the world of another person, suddenly seeing things from her point of view.

Language *per se* has other aspects besides the logical and semantic. An especially important one for our purposes is the rhetorical, which straddles the linguistic and the pragmatic. As a pragmatic phenomenon, rhetoric is the attempt to convince an audience; it is the act and art of persuading. It is something we *do*. As a linguistic phenomenon, it is a feature of words such that they have rhetorical connotations that can go beyond their semantic meaning. For example, the phrase 'illegal immigrant' is rhetorically very different from 'undocumented immigrant', even though the two are close in meaning. As a linguistic phenomenon, words have rhetorical power. This power allows us to be swayed and moved by what people say.[16] It is part and parcel of the tremendous emotional force of language. At the same time, it is an important source of discord. For example, two policies can be very similar in content but very different rhetorically, even when this difference is not a deliberate act.

When we add these various factors together, there are at least three general features of the linguistic as such: the logical, semantic, and rhetorical. It is important to appreciate that the meaning of a word is not a thing or an entity. We are systematically prone to think of mental states and meanings as entities on analogy with physical objects. This is a mistake because such a view overlooks both the intentionality or aspectual nature of semantic meaning and its relational nature. Among other things, the meaning of a word consists in its semantic relations to other words: the term 'chair' is opposed to 'stool' and 'table' within the category 'furniture'. Rather than thinking of the meaning of a word as an object, we can conceive it as a set of relations that specifies what a word means, where 'means that' is an intensional verb

16 Stevenson C.L. (1937)

(with an 's')[17]. The intentionality of the verb 'means that' and the intentionality of the phenomena of meaning signify that meaning is aspectual or description relative.[18] 'H2O' does not mean the same as 'water', even though the words refer to the same substance. The intentional and the relational nature of meaning implies that the meaning of a word will be indeterminate in some regards. In this way, we should not regard the indeterminate nature of word meaning as some form of vagueness (as if it might be cured with a strong dosage of definitions). Word meanings are ineluctably indeterminate, albeit within limits.

b) Speech Acts

Semantics concerns meaning; pragmatics is about how we use words. Some theorists regard the former as primary: words must already have meaning in order for us to employ them to do things such as making promises and issuing threats. Pragmatics presupposes semantics. In contrast, some theorists regard the second as primary: word-meaning or semantics is nothing beyond how we conventionally use words. Semantics presupposes pragmatics. Some theorists try to combine these two kinds of dependency.[19]

Pragmatics is generally concerned with four aspects of acts of linguistic communication. The first is the kind of speech acts we perform in uttering sentences. For example, I can *ask* whether the door is open; I can *request* that it be opened; I can *assert* that it is open. In these cases, while the speech-act is distinct, the content is the same.[20]

The second aspect concerns the contextual and the conversational implications of those linguistic acts. For example, there is a strong presupposition that what one says is conversationally relevant. So, if I assert out of the blue that the door is open, this might be meant and understood as an indirect request that the listener should leave.

17 Intentionality is the feature of mental states or texts in virtue of which they are about something. In contrast, a sentence is intensional (with an 's') when one cannot substitute in it expressions with the same referent. Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly doesn't entail that she believes that Clark Kent can fly. Sentences about meaning are typically intensional. Intentionality and intensionality are different. However, they are related because when we describe the intentional as such, we employ intensional sentences.

18 On the difference between intentionality and intentional sentences, see G. Thomson (2002) Chapters 7 and 8.

19 The first approach is found in the works of Donald Davidson (1991b); the second in the works of Grice (1989b) and Wittgenstein (1986); one example of the third is David Lewis (1997).

20 John Searle (1970)

Conversational implicature permits us to understand each other without having to say everything or to spell everything out.[21] Context factors do the same. They allow for the spoken to imply the unspoken. In this way, both make communication swift.

The third aspect of speech acts is that the speaker constructs a narrative or a text, which has a structure. Any speech act is embedded in a broader communicative context. This verbal text is often co-constructed in conversation with others. It might consist in an explanation, a story, a list, a piece of reasoning.[22]

Fourth, all speech acts are manifestations or expressions of the mental states of the speaker. For example, most simply, if I assert that the day is hot then the assertion expresses my belief that it is so, given that I am being sincere. Whenever I say something, I express my intentions, beliefs, and attitudes. Moreover, in a conversation, I manifest much about myself, such as my mood and my character, without deliberately wanting to do so. In conversation, these manifestations are interactive and are part of a largely unarticulated communication.

The speaker can reduce the misunderstanding of persons through peaceful communication methods. For example, I can be aware that the audience might misread my tone and feel that I am expressing a scornful attitude, even when it was not my intention to do so. The key to peaceful communication is to be aware of how the other might hear and take what one says. By becoming more aware of how an audience is likely to interpret her attitudes, beliefs and intentions, a speaker can shift her verbal and non-verbal communication.[23]

c) Listening Acts

In most pragmatic theories, listening usually takes second place to talking, just as reading does to writing. Pragmatic theories are first and foremost speech-act theories. Arguably, this is back to front. Generally, we talk so that we can be listened to; we write because we want others to read. Even soliloquies and notes to oneself can be acts of communication, even if they are not always so.

Like reading, listening is an act of understanding. This takes place at different levels. These reflect the distinctions we have already drawn with respect to the linguistic as such and the nature of speech acts. For instance, we understand the meaning of the sentences that the person utters, and we understand the implications of the way that

21 Grice (1989a)

22 Gadamer (1989)

23 On peaceful communication, see Marshall Rosenberg (2015).

she says it. We also form beliefs about what this *inter alia* expresses about her beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. The phrase *inter alia* indicates that we also rely on many other contextual cues such as gesture, body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc. What she says and how she says it manifests something about her and her character. In the act of communication, I come to comprehend or misunderstand her.

This suggests a new level of possible discord: one can disagree or be in discord with the speaker. One might agree with what a person says and even be in accord with the language she uses to say it, but, nevertheless, in some sense, still disagree with *her*. For instance, one can disagree with something she is expressing, such as some implied attitude or some background beliefs. For example, a person's narrative might be expressing bitterness and fear, and I might feel that such emotions or attitudes are not appropriate in this context. In this way, listening as the interpretation of persons forms a distinct source of discord.

The type of misunderstanding that arises from listening acts mirrors those that emerge from the four features of the speech act. Of course, people misunderstand each other by listening badly, but listening badly is not simply a question of not paying attention, of being distracted and of adopting a prematurely prejudicial attitude to what someone is saying. It is also a question of ingrained hermeneutical practices that lead us to systematically misunderstand each other as persons, as we shall see in a later section. The dialogue space to overcome these tendencies is very important for peaceful social relations.

d) Relations

The notion of a communicative speech act is insufficient when it focuses on a single act. As we have seen, speech and listening usually occur within the flow of a conversation, which is itself embedded in an interactive process that forms a social and perhaps a personal relationship. The point is not simply that, without communication, there are no relationships. But rather, more strongly, in part, the relationship in part consists in processes of communication. For our purposes, the relational aspect of communication is the most important. This is because, on the one hand, if the relations of trust and respect are strong, misunderstandings and disagreements can be corrected and overcome. On the other hand, the various disagreements that we have mapped are significant mostly insofar as they contribute to antagonistic social relations, which make consensus seem unobtainable.

A Topology of Disagreement

The discussion has already indicated different kinds of discord and disagreement. We have described a simplistic four-fold typology of communication: the linguistic as

such; the speech act; the act of listening and the relations thereby formed. We have identified at least three aspects of the linguistic as such: the logical, semantic and rhetorical. We have specified four features of speech and listening that are potential sources of discord. We have shown how this leads to relational discord between people. This typology constitutes a classification of the various kinds of disagreement that make consensus-building seem difficult, which will guide us in identifying the dialogue processes necessary for consensus-building.

We can initially define one basic type of disagreement, belief-disagreement, in terms of the simple logical contradiction in which one person believes a proposition and the other believes its denial. However, despite its apparent simplicity, this is not clear for a few instructive reasons.

First, is logical contradiction even a sufficient condition of disagreement between people? Suppose that, if I were asked, I would reply that Jayapura is in Papua New Guinea. If my friend were asked, she would reply negatively. Suppose that these propositions are not important or even in consideration, and even if they were, neither of us would mind being corrected. We have no conviction. Clearly, our beliefs contradict each other, but it seems that *we* do not disagree. In response to examples such as these, one might claim that two people disagree with regard to their beliefs when the content of the beliefs matters to at least one of them, and they would be initially unwilling to change their beliefs without some strong evidence or good reasoning.

Second, the definition of belief disagreement requires that the assent and dissent of the two people is directed to the same proposition. However, in everyday practice, this requirement is not a simple on/off or yes/no condition. This is because, as we have seen, propositions are not objects or discrete units. This is part and parcel of both the intentionality of and relational nature of linguistic belief-states.

The intentionality of belief means that what we believe, the content, depends on how it is described. Belief is aspectual. Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly, but she also believes that Clarke Kent cannot fly, even though, in fact, Clarke Kent is Superman. What she believes depends on how it is described. This means that belief-agreement and disagreement are intentional too. For example, John believes that Bacon wrote Hamlet, and Mary believes that Marlow wrote Hamlet. They disagree. But they do agree that Shakespeare did not write Hamlet.[24] Whether there is agreement or not depends on how the content of the relevant beliefs are described.

24 Rescher (1993), 44-5.

The relational nature of belief is sometimes called holism. Most, perhaps all, beliefs depend on some others.[25] For instance, even when two people both believe that P, there will be relevant background beliefs about which they might disagree. When a young person and an experienced physicist both affirm that $E=mc^2$, their agreement disguises differences in belief that might be important in some contexts.[26] Such hidden disagreements abound in the political domain. But this phenomenon can also work the other way too. People can think that they disagree more than they do. I may claim to believe that P but this belief is subject to implicit conditions and qualifications which once spelt out or made explicit will put my original claim in doubt. The holism of belief shows us that belief disagreement needs to take into account the degree of basicness of a belief. For example, two people might agree (more or less) on a basic policy position but disagree on how it should be implemented. If we focused only on their derivative beliefs regarding implementation, we might miss their more basic agreement.

Third, this last point shows that any specification of belief-disagreement also has to take into consideration the semantic and rhetorical factors. Often people think that they agree or disagree when they do not because they are using words differently, and in addition, their word choice reflects rhetorical differences. Sometimes, people are more distant in their views than they might think because of these semantic and rhetorical factors. Sometimes, they are closer.

Having just discussed belief-disagreement, the pending issue now is to describe the other kind of discords, disagreements or disputes between people that blocks consensus-building processes. We are now interested in the various communicative misunderstandings that do not concern propositional content. Such disagreements between people often pertain to the mismatch between the speech act and the listening act, with regard to the four facets of these acts. For instance, it consists in the possibility that what one manifests is not what the other reads (and what the other reads is not always what one thinks she reads). Or a listener might misapprehend the point of the narrative. Without dialogue, these types of discord contribute significantly to unpeaceful social relations.

The Hermeneutics of Listening

To define the kinds of misunderstandings that make consensus difficult, we characterised communication not only as a speech act, but also as a listening act. Listening is plagued by a hermeneutic asymmetry. This is the tendency, in our own case, to

25 Quine and Ullian (1978)

26 Stephen Stich (1985)

only see our own good intentions, and in the case of others, to see only the results of their actions, which are often bad. This means that we are fundamentally prone to apply a double standard: we judge ourselves by the good intentions we have, but we judge others by the results of their actions. I am disposed to see my own intentions as always good, and those of others as bad or, at best, imperfect. This means that we have a tendency to attribute maleficence and to demonise others.

This tendency is important for understanding all human relations.[27] This propensity for a double standard is accompanied by a set of allied dispositions, namely:

We tend to assume that we understand others better than they understand us;

We tend to underestimate the differences between ourselves and others;

We tend to be ignorant of our ignorance of others.

Regarding the first propensity: egocentrism supports the belief that I can understand others better than they can understand me because they do not have direct access to my mental states, but I can understand their intentions through their behaviour. This is the same double standard mentioned earlier.

My attribution of bad intentions to the other person will be reinforced by the assumption that she did not see my good intentions. Indeed, I may feel this as a failure on her part and as a hostile act. Furthermore, we can imagine that the other person is engaging in the same reasoning about me. If I perceive that she does her mannerisms, facial expressions, tone of voice, and word choices, then this will further increase the antagonism. Likewise, she may perceive the same of me. The mutual misunderstandings escalate.

The second propensity adds a new dimension to this process: I see the quarrel between us in a certain way, and because I underestimate the differences between us, I tend to assume that she ought to be seeing the situation in the same way as I do. I take my perspective on the situation as the natural one. I assume that she would have the same view if it were not for her ill-will. Therefore, her failure to agree with me is further evidence of ill-will. The fact that she does not see it the same way reinforces my idea that she has ill-will. Meanwhile, she is undergoing through the same process of attributing ill will to me.

The third propensity is a very important factor in inter-personal relationships: our ignorance of our ignorance. The person who is ignorant tends to not know that she is so. If one does not know that P, then one will tend to not know that one does not

27 Thomson, G. (2017) and (2020)

know P. Indeed, to be aware of one's ignorance is a peculiarly Socratic virtue. The escalating mutual antagonism described earlier is reinforced by the fact that both persons are ignorant of the viewpoint of the other. I may not even recognise my own ignorance of the other person's point of view. It may not have even occurred to me that I have missed out something of relevance and importance, namely how she sees the disagreement. Given this second-order ignorance, I tend to portray my view of the situation as the natural default position.

The original hermeneutical asymmetry that led to this cascade is erroneous. As Plato saw, whenever someone wants something, she necessarily wants it under some description of the thing that reveals it as desirable. This does not mean that the thing wanted *is* always all things considered desirable, but it does mean that the thing wanted is perceived as desirable under some description by the person who wants it. This is a requirement of the claim that a person's intentions always make sense to the person herself.

We can translate this first-person point into a third person understanding because of the public nature of language. This public nature means that, for instance, when I say of you that you are hungry and when you say the same of yourself, and when you say that of me, the word 'hungry' has the same meaning. The public nature of language implies that there is some description of the person's intentions that makes sense to other people such that they can see it from her point of view. This means that there is necessarily a way of making sense of others' intentions. That is, there is a way of seeing what others want as a good.[28] However, this Platonic thesis is only plausible if we distinguish primary and derivative descriptions of a person's intentions. For example, my primary intention is to defend myself. It is directed to some good. The derivative intention is to hurt someone, which is not. Revenge and malice as such should be regarded as derivative descriptions of the person's intentions.

The idea that all primary intentions must be for a good contradicts the egocentric tendency to see others' intentions as directed primarily towards something bad. The egocentric propensity makes it psychologically difficult for people to appreciate that there is always some description of any person's intentions that is directed to some good. We succumb to a childish illusion and tend to demonise others. This illusion amounts to the incapacity to come to terms with reality of others, which transcends the egocentric perspective.

Having peaceful relations requires that we overcome this hermeneutic asymmetry. In any conflict, there is some description of her intentions that my enemy thinks of as

28 This does not imply that all virtue is knowledge as Plato claimed. See Thomson (2016) Chs 4 and 5.

good, which I too could recognise as good. There is good reason to acknowledge this, without committing to agreeing with the person's judgments. In principle, one could step into the shoes of even one's worst enemy by realising that her point view must make sense to her. To understand her intentions in this manner requires a willingness on my part to see the whole process that led up to the squabble from her point of view; and likewise, a willingness on my part to see my own actions from her point of view, however unpleasant that may be. This does not mean that I must agree with her judgments, only that I recognise emotionally there is some description of the situation as seen by her that portrays her intentions as primarily aimed at some good and which I could see as good myself. This condition is a requisite for understanding others.

Identity

This hermeneutic asymmetry is accentuated and solidified by identity. Because humans have allegiances, we tend to identify with some group. Insofar as we do so, we tend to not identify with some other groups. Identity necessarily tends to be exclusionary. It is a question of 'us and them', and the 'them' tends to get excluded.

This exclusionary identity socialises and solidifies the hermeneutic asymmetry described earlier. We understand the good that *we*, as a group, intend some good, and that we do not even consider the good intended by the other group. We assume: "*We* intended to do good, but *they* did something bad." The divide between us and them becomes an antagonism between groups. Indeed, the very declaration 'This is my identity' can function as an affirmation of allegiance which commits one to demonising the intentions of opposition groups. Furthermore, insofar as this antagonism becomes solidified in a culture, it acquires the momentum of being a history. It becomes ingrained in collective memory.[29]

As we shall see, deep dialogical processes are aimed at transforming the basic self-identifications which otherwise would form antagonistic social identities. Such dialogues function by enabling the person to self-identify non-derivatively with themselves in more inclusive ways: for instance, as a human or a person or an 'I' rather than primarily as a member of a specific social group. The more I perceive the other as a person, the more I identify myself primarily as a person (and less as the member of an antagonistic group). Good dialogues shift self-identification towards the human and, in so doing, they undermine antagonistic forms of 'us versus them'.

Peaceful relations require that we transcend the dichotomy between victim and aggressor through such shifts in self-identification. Given histories of violence and fol-

29 Gill and Thomson (2019)

lowing the hermeneutic asymmetry, groups will be prone to perceive themselves as victims and to see their relevant others as aggressors. It is difficult to see others, with whom we do not identify, as victims. Furthermore, it is also hard to perceive oneself, and the groups that one identifies with, as aggressors. These tendencies are a result of three factors: the legacies of histories of violence and dehumanisation; the subjectivity of our experience; and our propensity to identify. Dialogues can help transcend the histories of dehumanisation and the resulting subjectivities and identifications that tend to perpetuate those histories. This means that such dialogues are necessary to find peace because peace requires that we transcend the subjectivities defined primarily in terms of victim and aggressor.

Four Kinds of Dialogue

Suppose that we have a regular local participatory assembly. One of the main purposes of this assembly is to reach policy decisions regarding the governance of the local community. Another, we can suppose, is to make recommendations to a regional assembly. We shall suppose that these discussions would not count as dialogues because they are purpose-driven and convergent. Nevertheless, they need the support of various kinds of dialogue.

We should suppose that the assembly makes its decisions by consensus rather than by majority vote. The assembly is part of a participatory democratic system and, as such, the voices of minorities should be part of the community deliberative process. The process is inclusive because all people are equal. We would not want a system that marginalises and tends to disregard minorities because of their views. All people are equally part of the community. Furthermore, a participatory democracy would run on the process of constructing consensus rather than a polarising debating format that sets people up against each other. We do not want a system that creates winners and losers. In short, the process of policy making will need to be peaceful.

All relationships between individuals and between groups are conflictual. People have different interests, emotions, and understandings; ineluctably, this means conflict. Thus, peace cannot be defined as a lack of conflict. Indeed, peacefulness as a value only becomes operational when there is conflict. In part, peacefulness means that conflictual relations will not make destructive waves. It is the quality that allows conflictual relations to exist without displacing other non-instrumental goods that constitute human flourishing, such as trustful community relations and our capacity to act together as a group. In participatory democracy, the community acts together, as a whole, deciding the policies that steer the community towards the common good.

How can the required peaceful consensus be attained? If we are to avoid defining consensus as unanimity, there needs to be a culture of trust and solidarity that permits people to feel that they have been listened to respectfully and openly, and that their voices have had an impact on the policy statement, even when they feel that they cannot support it. This culture of peacefulness needs to be constructed, and the main way to do this is through well designed and well facilitated dialogues.

Earlier we saw that communication has four basic facets. Among these, the most important is the relations in which communication is embedded. The other aspects of any communication breakdown, such as the various disagreements and misunderstandings, are secondary to the relations. If the relationships are based on trust and good will, then the other kinds of discord can be corrected or repaired. Indeed, for consensus, the other forms of discord are important insofar as they contribute positively to peaceful relationships. However, good relations are constantly threatened by the hermeneutic asymmetry that we analysed, which is itself solidified by parochial non-derivative self-identifications.

On the basis of this analysis, one can distinguish four kinds of dialogical processes relevant to consensus-building:

The first kind of dialogical process concerns getting to know and understand others, especially their life narratives. This process should be treated as valuable in itself. However, it will help everyone to understand how people's political attitudes are shaped by their life narratives. In this regard, often, the experiences of childhood are important. People's political views are often formed by their experiences of being exploited or undervalued by others. The dialogue process will help people understand others in ways that help transcend victim/aggressor relations. It allows us to understand how others perceive situations such that they see themselves as willing the good. It permits us to enter the phenomenological reality of their point of view. This glimpse into the world of another is a powerful experience. It can be transformative insofar as it allows a person to transcend the subjectivities that define oneself as victim and the other as aggressor. However, this dialogical process should not be instrumentalised to these aims. It should be valued in itself, even when it does not follow in the expected direction.

The second kind of dialogue can be called 'belief exploration'. It is focused on belief disagreement in its various aspects, such as the semantics and rhetoric of the terms that constitute (in part) a political worldview. However, the general aim of such a dialogue is not to have a discussion or a debate, but rather to understand better the beliefs of others. Therefore, this kind of dialogue requires an approach similar to critical appreciation. Understanding better the beliefs of another will often consist of discovering where we agree. Even when people disagree deeply about a particular

policy proposition, nevertheless, they may agree about other propositions related to the policy in question, even if the propositions they agree about are conditional. Importantly, it will cover why we disagree both in terms of more basic beliefs and in terms of our live experience.

The third kind of dialogue is called 'deep dialogue', which aims to shift people's identities or self-identifications. Like the first process, it involves people listening to each other non-judgmentally and openly, but this time, the aim is to provide the space for transcending non-derivative identifications and their underlying dynamics. It indicates the willingness to enter the subjectivity of someone whom one would previously have considered an enemy. Forgiveness and reconciliation processes can be instances of deep dialogue. A community will be peaceful when it practices deep dialogue at the heart of its processes. In short, the term 'deep dialogue' refers to dialogues that involve listening non-judgmentally and openly with the aim of transcending antagonistic, non-derivative self-identifications.

The fourth kind of dialogue concerns building relationships of trust. In the context of democratic governance, such dialogues often pertain to the ethical use and abuse of power. Community policy-making assemblies will often need and want to delegate functions and tasks to individuals and groups. For example, the community will want to appoint someone or people to participate on their behalf in regional assemblies. Such acts of delegation presuppose trust, and members of the community will feel sometimes that this trust has been betrayed. This will necessitate trust-building dialogues.

Conclusion

We cannot expect people to form a trusting community which makes decisions as a group without their knowing, understanding and respecting each other, and this requires special purpose-built dialogue processes. In comparison with other forms of exchange, dialogue has special characteristics that allow it to serve this kind of purpose. It may *seem* paradoxical that among these features is non-instrumentalisation: dialogue is not only a means to an end. It is valuable in itself as an integral part of people's lives as members of a peaceful community.

Bibliography

Banathy B. and Jenlink, P. (2004) Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication, Springer.

Carnevale, P. (1992) 'Negotiation and Mediation', *Annual Review Psychology.* 43, 531-82.

Cayer, M. (2004) 'The five Dimensions of Bohm's Dialogue' in Bela H. Banathy, Patrick Jenlink, Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication, Springer.

Davidson, D. (1991a) 'Truth and Meaning', *Inquiries Into Truth and Meaning,* Oxford University Press.

Davidson, D. (1991b) 'Moods and Performances', *Inquiries Into Truth and Meaning,* Oxford University Press.

Deutsch, M. (1973) The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes, New York: Yale University Press.

Fisher, D. (1997) Interactive Conflict Resolution, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press.

Frege, G. (1984) Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy, Wiley-Blackwell.

Frege, G. (1991) Logical Investigations Part I: Thoughts, in ed. Brian McGuiness, Gottlob.

Gadamer, H. (1989) Truth and Method, Crossroad.

Galtung, J. (1996) Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilisation, SAGE Publications Ltd.

Galtung, J. (2004) Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work, Pluto Press.

Gill S. and Thomson, G. (2019) Understanding Peace Holistically, Peter Lang.

Grice, P. (1989a) 'Logic and Conversation', *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press.

Grice, P. (1989b) 'Meaning', *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press.

Habermas, J. (1984) The Theory of Communicative Action, Beacon.

Isaacs, W. (1999) Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together, Currency Press.

Lederach, John P. (2005) The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace, Oxford University Press.

Lewis, D. (1997) 'Languages and Language', *Papers in Philosophical Logic* Volume 1, Cambridge University Press.

Nichol, L. (2004) 'Wholeness Regained, Revisiting Bohm's Dialogue' in eds. Bela H. Banathy and Patrick M. Jenlink. Springer US.

Quine, W. and Ullian, J. (1978) The Web of Belief, McGraw Hill.

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

Rescher, N. (1993) Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus, Oxford University Press.

Rosenberg, M. (2015) Nonviolent Communication, Puddle Dancer Press.

Searle, J. (1970) Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language, Cambridge University Press.

Stevenson, C.L. (1937) 'The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms', *Mind,* Vol. XLVI, 181.

Stich, S. (1985) From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science The Case Against Belief.

Thomson, G. (2002) On Philosophy, Wadsworth Press, Belmont, California.

Thomson, G. (2016) Thales to Sextus*,* Waveland Press.

Thomson, G. (2017) 'Towards a Theory of Peaceful Relations', *Peacefulness,* Spirit of Humanity Forum Press, eds. D. Cadman and S. Gill.

Thomson, G. (2020) 'Towards an Ethical Understanding of Others', in eds. Gill. S and Thomson, G, *Ethical Education*, Cambridge University Press.

Thomson, Gill, Scherto, G. and Goodson, I. (2021) Happiness, Flourishing and the Good Life: Towards a Transformative Vision of Human Well-Being, Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1986) Philosophical Investigations, Blackwell Publishers.

The Case of the Popular University of Social Movements: Lessons on Dialogue *From* and *For* Humanisation and the Transformation of Institutions

Alexandre da Trindade and Fábio Merladet[1]

Abstract: This paper engages with Paulo Freire's dialogical proposal for promoting individual consciousness, collective emancipation, and effective social changes in order to question some of the main contemporary obstacles to meaningful dialogues taking place. Considering Freire's idea, in which dialogue is both a result of and a fundamental condition for humanisation, the question is where and why there are barriers to, and failures of, dialogical governance processes in the current global context where social fragmentation is more latent and ideological divergences more evident and challenging to address. To discuss this question, the case of the Popular University of

1 Alexandre da Trindade is a Brazilian doctoral student at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, working with Professor Susan L. Robertson and holds a master's degree in Global Prosperity from University College London (UCL). His research examines the role of higher education, which goes beyond the traditional functions of teaching and research and contributes to the development of alternative futures (e.g., Buen Vivir, human flourishing), social justice, democratic societies, and emancipated individuals. He is a founding member of CLAREC and is a member of the Knowledge, Power and Politics (KPP) and the Decolonizar a América Latina e seus Espaços (¡DALE!) research groups. He holds a degree and an MBA in marketing from the ESPM/SP in Brazil and has almost twenty years of professional experience working with innovation and technology projects in large companies and through international partnerships and networks.

Dr Fábio A. D. Merladet holds a degree in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), a PhD in Post-Colonialisms and Global Citizenship from the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra (CES-UC) and is the coordinator of the Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS). His academic and professional activities focus on pedagogies and methodologies for social engagement, training, popular education and articulation of social movements and organisations. He was a researcher linked to the ALICE (Strange Mirrors, Unsuspected Lessons: leading Europe towards a new way of sharing experiences) and a researcher linked to the Centre for the Study of Indigenous Authorship Productions in the Americas. Since 2017 he has carried out several consultancies for the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Flacso), the Centre for Popular Education and Advice (CEAP), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focusing on the development of methodologies for the organisation, facilitation, and systematisation of formative and participatory processes.

Social Movements (UPMS) is analysed. In 2003 at the World Social Forum, the UPMS emerged with a challenging proposal to constitute a space in which activists, academics, artists, entities, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and local, national, and global social movements who oppose all forms of oppression, can freely and democratically exchange their ideas. Although the UPMS is a space of articulation outside traditional institutional processes, its model implies significant changes in how academic and governmental institutions relate to social movements, activists, and other sectors of society. The article concludes that for dialogue to flourish, it is necessary to define the conditions, processes and spaces that take account of the fundamental pillars of humanisation pointed out by Freire: love, humility, and the faith of individuals in their capacity to create and recreate the world together. In this sense, the case of the UPMS teaches us that it is possible to promote internal changes in structures and institutions through the consolidation of successful dialogical experiences outside institutional walls.

Keywords: Dialogue, Humanisation, Institutions, Paulo Freire, Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS), Transformation

Introduction

For more than half a century, the ideas of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire have been encouraging scholars, social movements, and organisations worldwide to reflect on the role of education as a means for social change. Freire developed a critical pedagogy based on the following challenge: how to understand the reality of those peoples who were oppressed while maintaining a permanent dialogue with theoretical reflection. Freire's work is hopeful and full of faith in the power of individuals and communities to transform their realities through collective action. He developed his political theories by re-signifying words, on the one hand, whilst adopting new words that emerged from the popular groups with whom he was in contact, on the other. As he wrote, these were 'words pregnant with the world' (Freire 1989, 13), words that have 'the gift of pronouncing new realities' (Streck et al. 2010, 27). 'Dialogue' was one such word that Paulo Freire used to express his profound belief in human beings and the possibility of 'being more human'. Freire understood dialogue to be a human vocation, a revolutionary and counter-hegemonic act threatening the established order and its project of domination to which the oppressed are subjected. This article scrutinises this Freirean concept with the aim of understanding it as a potential means of emancipation, particularly for marginalised groups in society.

Focusing on the current context, in which social fragmentation has become more widespread and ideological divergences more evident and challenging to address, we explore aspects of this dialogical process conceived by Freire that contribute to overcoming barriers to and failures in the practice of humanisation in traditional institutions. We begin by identifying aspects of the dialogical process that help explain how transformative dialogue can flourish. What separate spaces are needed for this kind

of dialogue? Moreover, to what extent can it produce perceptible benefits for individuals and social groups, especially those from the most marginalised sectors of society?

Through these questions we hope to understand the barriers to transformative dialogue as well as the requirements needed for a dialogic process with a mobilising character to occur. We also want to investigate the possible transformative effects on organisations in which those involved in the dialogical process participate, and how these organisations benefit from these effects. To address the first enquiry, we will draw on Freire's dialogical theory, whilst the Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS) case whose methodology is inspired by Freire's proposals, will be our primary resource for the second enquiry. The UPMS is an educational practice involving what Paulo Freire defines as an intense and critical dialogical process aimed at promoting new transformational relationships between individuals from different institutions and organisations. The methodology used to produce this analysis and the arguments presented here include a literature review focused on works published by Freire and scholars who have interpreted his work, ethnographic approaches, action research, lived experiences, and observations and interviews with UPMS participants.

We have divided our analysis into three parts. First, we explain how dialogue can be both a product of humanisation and a condition for its development, as proposed by Freire. This analysis is essential to understanding how it is possible, through dialogue, to overcome the barriers to social change in contexts of domination, oppression, and marginalisation that we address in this paper. Toward this end, we will, first, analyse some of Freire's central ideas. It is worth noting that although his main proposals were developed more than fifty years ago, they are both highly relevant and applicable to current social contexts, as we explain when discussing the case of UPMS. Second, we present our case study and highlight how and why the dialogical process is central to the design of this educational initiative. Third, we conclude our study of Freire's critical pedagogy by presenting some findings which we believe suggest that some dialogical spaces have the potential to become spaces of articulation, while also introducing new spaces (or mechanisms) for constructing hitherto unrealised possibilities and alternatives that benefit those involved in the dialogical process and their organisations' social and political projects.

Dialogue, a Product and Condition of Humanisation

In *Extension or Communication*, Paulo Freire (1985, 28) defines *dialogue* as a 'loving encounter of [people], who, mediated by the world, proclaim it, that is, transform it, and, transforming it, humanise it for the humanisation of all'. The educator de-

veloped the idea of critical and liberating dialogue in one of his early works, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1987). Throughout his career, he continued to develop this concept which also retained a central place in his thinking. However, as Galli and Braga (2017) argue, the democratic perspective and the concept of 'unity in diversity'[2] are incorporated as primary requirements for the construction of dialogue in his later work, *Pedagogy of Hope: Re-encounter with the Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2013).

Paulo Freire understood dialogue as a radical and revolutionary praxis that involves both action and reflection which occur simultaneously, and which radically interact with each other. Freire argued that dialogue has the function of problematising any knowledge established in 'its unquestionable relation with the concrete reality in which it is generated and on which it has an impact, in order to understand it better, explain it and transform it' (Freire 1985, 34). It does not matter what the content is to be problematised to establish the dialogue. The problematising dialogue unfolds in the context of people's lives, giving their life meaning and value. It therefore has a self-reflective dimension that allows for consideration of how an individual life and its social context might be transformed by producing critical detachment from the conditions surrounding individuals (Shor in McLaren & Leonard 1993, 24–35). Furthermore, Freire argues that dialogue is not a historical product but rather historicisation itself. It is a primordial characteristic that meets an historical vocation of all of us: humanisation. In other words, he recognised that we are unfinished beings, and that humanisation is a natural vocation to 'be more [human].' Thus, dialogue is a path that leads us on a journey which, although without a pre-defined destination, continues transforming realities along with the people who transform them.

Dialogue is always communication, and it cements the collaboration of people. The world mediates people who meet to announce, recreate, and transform themselves and the world together, in a process that involves deep epistemological curiosity. It also has a profoundly human character. In this sense, dialogue is not only a means to humanise ourselves but also to humanise the world (Freire 1987, 14). In Freire's view, this process of humanisation takes place through the word:

2 Pedagogy of Hope, Freire (2013, 143) approaches dialogue in the question of 'unity in diversity' as a way of transforming the struggle of a minority group into a struggle of the majority, referring, for instance, the racial issue in contexts of oppression: 'The so-called minorities, for example, need to recognize that, deep down, they are the majority. The way to assume themselves as the majority is to work on the similarities among themselves, and not only the differences, and thus create unity in diversity, outside of which I don't see how to improve and even how to build a substantive, radical democracy.'

> Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which humans transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world, in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. [Humans] are not built in silence but in word, in work, in action-reflection [...]. If it is in speaking their word that humans transform the world by naming it, dialogue imposes itself as the way in which [humans] achieve significance as [humans]. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. (Freire 1972, 60, quoted by Lankshear in McLaren & Leonard 1993, 96)

Dialogue involves the recognition of the other and the recognition of oneself in the other, a phenomenon that cannot exist in the absence of three profoundly human elements:

- a deep love for the world and others;
- an intense faith in humanity, in its power to create and recreate the world, and in its commitment to becoming more fully human; and
- humility in recognising ourselves as all unfinished beings.

Love

> Paulo Freire dared to tread where even Marx refused to walk – on the ground where the revolutionary love of human beings in struggle sustains their faith in each other and keeps hope alive within themselves and in history. (West in McLaren & Leonard 1993, xiv)

> In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1987, 121), Freire, quoting Ernesto Guevara[3], calls attention to the need to assume, without 'the risk of appearing ridiculous', that revolution is an act of love since [humans] do it in the name of their humanisation and for the transformation of a dehumanised condition in which the oppressed find themselves.

For Freire, love is a human condition for understanding the world that needs to be transformed and for opening oneself to dialogue with others:

> The pronouncement of the world, which is an act of creation and recreation, is not possible if there is not love that infuses it [... T]he act of love is in committing oneself to its cause. The cause of its liberation. However, this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of courage, it cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it cannot be a pretext for manipulation but must generate other acts of freedom. Otherwise, it is not love. Only by suppressing the oppressive situation is it possible to restore the love that was forbidden in it. If I do not love the world, if I do not love life, if I do not love [humans], dialogue is not possible for me. (Freire 1987, 51)

Dialogue is a human capacity involving the potential for love that takes place in human relationships. It is based on ethics and solidarity, respect, and a welcoming of differences. It is also an act of courage because it involves a commitment to a cause that is not only or necessarily one's own (Fernandes in Streck et al. 2010, 54).

3 In the footnote to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire wrote 'I am more and more convinced that true revolutionaries must perceive the revolution, because of its creative and liberating nature, as an act of love. For me, the revolution, which is not possible without a theory of revolution—and therefore science—is not irreconcilable with love. On the contrary: the revolution is made by people to achieve their humanization. What, indeed, is the deeper motive which moves individuals to become revolutionaries, but the dehumanization of people? The distortion imposed on the word 'love' by the capitalist world cannot prevent the revolution from being essentially loving in character, nor can it prevent the revolutionaries from affirming their love of life. Guevara (while admitting the 'risk of seeming ridiculous') was not afraid to affirm it: 'Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality' – Venceremos—The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara edited by John Gerassi (New York 1969), p. 398.'

Feminist educator bell hooks[4], who attributed to Freire the inspiration in building her identity in resistance (hooks 2013, 65), expanded on the idea of lovingness in building community dialogue in the context of women's struggles for rights in patriarchal society. hooks defined love as an act of courage, resistance, and redemption, in a process of realising one's humanity that was and has been denied to women:

> Think of love as the most heroic and divine quest that life demands us to face. And let that journey begin with the quest to love oneself completely. It is very appropriate that women, having walked so far in demanding recognition of our humanity, our equality, our talents, and daily reaping the benefits of that struggle, wisely demand a return to love (hooks 2020, 175).

Faith

In Paulo Freire's work, critical reflection on faith appears as a constitutive element of his pedagogical work. He is confident in the transformative capacity of human beings. However, he recognises that our creative capacity to transform our world is seriously curtailed by systems of domination and oppression by some over the many. Therefore, his wager on faith is that we can transcend social and cultural barriers and emerge with a new consciousness and commitment capable of mobilising transformative actions (Streck, in Streck et al. 2010, 229). Freire speaks of this faith as a 'vocation to be more [human]' and that it precedes dialogue. For him, a dialogue without faith would be a farce; a 'sweetly paternalistic' manipulative process (Freire 1987, 52).

Humility

Paulo Freire introduced a new concept – that of humility – by explaining this human virtue as a fundamental element to promote dialogue and coexistence among differences (Euclides Redin in Streck et al. 2010, 266–267). Humility is a virtue associated with respect for oneself and others that leads to unity in the struggle to transform the world. In his work *Pedagogy of Autonomy,* Freire (1996) highlights the importance of availability and openness as paths to respect. Humility involves the humble discovery of perceiving oneself as an unfinished being with the possibility of gaining completeness through dialogue and relationships with others. Here Freire reflected on how respectful and dialogical relationships can promote mediation and authentication between freedom and authority. Moreover, Freire explained the importance of humility in the constitution of dialogue whilst warning of the risks of

4 'Author bell hooks opted not to capitalize her name, hoping to keep the public's focus on her work' (McGrady 2021).

arrogance and disrespect. For him, dialogue is not possible if we start from the premise that (i) there is ignorance only in the other; (ii) that the right to pronounce the world is reserved to a privileged few people, (iii) that value is inferior in the contribution that comes from others, and (iv) when we are not open to having our concepts and assumptions overcome based on the contribution of others (Freire 1987, 51).

Finally, Freire argues that the establishment of trust is the natural outcome of a dialogical process in which love, faith, and humility are present as these qualities promote horizontal relations and strengthen companionship in the pronouncement of the world. Establishing trust means learning to trust in oneself and others, and to distrust the oppressor that each one carries hosted within oneself (Freire 1987). However, engaging in this liberating dialogue is a counter-hegemonic act that demands recognising, resisting, and confronting domination strategies that aim to prevent the dialogical process from happening among the oppressed. Freire developed his theory of anti-dialogical action on the basis of this understanding (Freire 1987).

A Theory of Anti-dialogical Action

In enunciating his theory of anti-dialogical action, Freire denounced strategies (whether conscious or not) of domination, oppression, and marginalisation, which aim to prevent dialogue from flourishing. He observed that such anti-dialogical actions are part of a project of conquest that aims at depriving people of the right to think:

> [T]here is no oppressive reality that is not necessarily *antidialogical*, just as there is no *antidialogicality* in which the pole of the oppressors does not strive, tirelessly, for the permanent conquest of the oppressed. (Freire 1987, 87)

According to Freire, these strategies of dehumanisation of the masses occur in four ways. First, they occur as a form of conquest – a process of domestication based on alienating myths and slogans for domination and maintenance of the status quo perpetrated by the media, which is subservient to such hegemonic projects. For instance, the myth that the oppressive order is an order of freedom, that we are all free to work with whatever means we want, and that all human rights are respected, is a strategy of dehumanisation. So, also, is the concept of meritocracy; the heroism of the oppressor class; charity, generosity and welfare; the elites as champions of the people; and from here the list could be expanded. Revolution as a sin against God is a dehumanising myth; the concept of private property as the foundation of the development of the human person is likewise a myth; and the view that hard work is a virtue of the oppressors and laziness and dishonesty deviations of the oppressed, to

which Freire also refers, is a myth that, together with the others, serves one purpose: to entrench the ontological inferiority of some (the oppressed) and the superiority of others (the oppressors) (Freire 1987, 86–87).

Second, these strategies divide the masses by emphasising a partial vision of societal problems which in turn prevents an understanding of the whole. An oppressive system based on the artifice of alienation aims to prevent critical perceptions of reality and the possibility of identifying and believing in alternatives for change:

> The more the totality of an area is pulverised into 'local communities' in 'community development' work, without these communities being studied as totalities in themselves, which are partialities of another totality (area, region, etc.) which, in turn, is the partiality of a larger totality (the country, as partiality of the continental totality) the more alienation is intensified. And the more alienated they are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided. (Freire 1987, 87)

Such strategies presuppose that the unification of the masses is a threat to hegemony and therefore needs to be stopped, even at the cost of physically violent methods.

Third, through populist manipulation, which consists of a style of political action, defining bonds with the population creates a feeling of participation in a project that exists only to reproduce the existing oppression. Freire describes populist leadership as an ambiguous being that stands between the masses and the oligarchies and serves neither a counter-hegemonic project nor the construction of the liberating revolution. (Freire 1987, 90–92)

Finally, in the strategy of invasion or cultural violence, visible or camouflaged, a self-image of the inferiority of the oppressed masses is produced, serving to establish conservative and rigid cultural standards. This cultural invasion imposes on the invaded an alienating vision of the world that interests the invaders, inhibiting creativity and cultural diversity, whilst rooting itself in social structures (families, school, etc.) in a reproductive and cyclical social process. Ultimately, the strategy is aimed at creating interaction with the masses to get to know them and conquer them (Freire 1987, 93–94).

Paulo Freire introduced the theory of dialogical action as a counterpoint to anti-dialogical action and, thus, as a way to emancipate the oppressed and overcome systems of domination. Dialogical action is explained with reference to four concepts that appear as corollaries to the strategies listed above.

These concepts are 'cooperation' (instead of conquest), 'unity' (instead of division), 'organisation' (rather than manipulation), and 'cultural synthesis' (rather than cultural invasion and divisiveness). Cooperation involves the meeting of people for pronouncement and transformation of the world: a meeting in which there is no conquest of one by the other, but only trust that produces adherence to a group or cause. Unity is understood concretely as involving praxis; that is, practice combined with reflection on freedom from unjust reality, and class consciousness for the purpose of liberation. Organisation occurs at the intersection of freedom and authority, and cultural synthesis takes the form of action and cultural revolution for structural transformation of the oppressive culture (Freire 1987, 103–155). Several of these ideas are central to conceptualising the essentially counter-hegemonic proposal of UPMS.

So far, we have summarised some of the key Freirean ideas to be deployed in this paper in order to provide a guide for the discussion of a case study and the applicability of those concepts. With almost twenty years of existence, UPMS has become a fertile space for experimentation with methodologies and dynamics inspired by the dialogical proposal theorised and practised by Paulo Freire.

UPMS, a Dialogical Practice Based on a Pedagogy of Articulation

The UPMS benefits from being a product of a global counter-hegemonic process that emerged at the beginning of this century: the World Social Forum (WSF), an unprecedented phenomenon and a revolutionary, democratic, and experimental space that values plurality and social struggles in opposition to a hegemonic neoliberal capitalist model. The Forum had its first meeting in 2001. It emerged out of the inspiration of the protests and anti-neoliberal events (Whitaker 2000) that took place at the end of the 1990s, such as the demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organisation and in Washington, D.C. against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. From the beginning, it was proposed as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum in Davos with its emphasis on plurality and social struggles and its parallel constitution as an internationalist event, albeit open, self-organised, and self-managed by social movements and civil society organisations whose main characteristic consists of proclaiming the existence of alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation.

> The WSF is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, [and the] free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to

> domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society centred on the human person. (WSF 2001)

The WSF is a space that seeks to be free of leadership, hierarchies, and centralised command. Instead, it emphasises networks, experimentation, and democracy. The WSF takes place periodically through the formation of a specific organising committee that schedules each meeting, and it follows a 'charter of principles' (WSF 2001) which was signed at the first event. This charter aims to ensure that each forum is built as a democratic space, plural and committed to social struggles.

The enthusiasm about the WSF is primarily associated with the global dimension achieved for a counter-hegemonic event, and all the aspirations and intriguing reflections related to the emergence of this plural space are intended to resolve and promote alternatives for another possible world. Hardt (2002), while describing it as an 'unknowable, chaotic, dispersive' forum, was enthusiastically curious about the possibility of placing in such a monumental dimension a debate on two primary positions in response to the dominant forces of current globalisation: ones that 'reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital' and another that 'strives towards a non-national alternative to the present form of globalisation that is equally global'. Furthermore, the Forum had the challenge of becoming a space which could embrace different actors from the most diverse sectors and social struggles, representing, for example, consolidated movements, emerging mobilisations, non-governmental organisations and political parties, all of which advocated the most varied strategies to achieve not one but countless possible 'world alternatives' from the most radical to those more conciliatory to the hegemonic model (Sader 2002). The issue of the fragmentation of counter-hegemonic struggles discussed by Paulo Freire is possibly the most critical question that the Forum has to resolve: how to build unity in diversity and strengthen progressive fights and resistance, preventing it from becoming a space of disputes over a particular hegemonic alternative.

The WSF arose in the context of progressive and promising prospects for the left in Latin America. The first decade of the twenty-first century was seized with a strong sense of hope and significant advances and achievements in social areas, particularly in Latin America, following the election of several left-wing governments. In 2005, the largest meeting in its history was held in Porto Alegre, with over 155,000 participants. However, this scenario has subsequently changed radically, with the following decade marked by significant setbacks in the region, including the rise of the far-right wing, conservatism, and fascism. The change in the political context and the consequent impact on the availability of financial resources to hold an event of this

size deeply affected the continuity of the Forum, the frequency of meetings, and the number of participants. On top of that, the dilemmas inherent in embracing plurality without undermining particular struggles or strategies, along with dealing with the discontent of specific consolidated movements, pressured the Forum to take a more active political position (Therborn 2022) without demobilising organisations and activists. To add complexity to this scenario, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 limited the mobilisation of social movements worldwide, whilst the availability and enthusiasm to organise the event was immensely hampered. More than two decades later, the WSF has changed significantly, and, to some, lost its creative and innovative character. The WSF has also been marred by significant discouragement from the people organising the event to take part in it. However, we will not address these issues in this article since the UPMS has, from the beginning, developed independently from the WSF. Nevertheless, it is essential to mention that the complexity of the political context and the pandemic also significantly affected the UPMS workshops.



Figure 1: Opening march for the WSF 2022. Mexico City / Mexico, 2022. Source: authors' archives.

Two years after the first meeting of the WSF, the Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS) emerged. It was an experimental idea proposed by Professor

Boaventura de Souza Santos[5] as an immersive, interactive, and dialogical, experience, and it was embraced by the movements and academics involved with the WSF. One reason for proposing this new initiative was the recognition that the Forum is not a space that allows for or would allow the development of deeper relationships or deepening of mutual learning between social movements due to its sporadic nature, short duration, and because it involves the participation of a multitude of people and many dispersed activities (Santos 2006). Moreover, attendance at WSF events is usually accompanied by organisation members, a practice that does not encourage participants to meet people from other organisations and establish dialogue and deeper relations outside their group during the events themselves. Therefore, it was necessary to create a new space informed by dialogical methodologies that could be introduced as an educational and training place for social movements.

This new space emerged having a trans-scalar, intercultural and inter-thematic character involving multi-territorial actions. The UPMS was thus created to be a space for meetings and exchanges between social movements originating from different parts of the world. A primary goal was to attain maximum diversity, as inspired by Paulo Freire's culture circles and popular education methodologies developed by consolidated social movements, such as the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). UPMS had no ambitions to be a physical institution or to have a curricular structure like traditional universities. The blueprint for the new organisation was more akin to an itinerant centre for meetings dedicated to the self-education of its participants, where everyone would be both educators and learners during the workshops. As the proposal to be a common good of the social movements, the organisation of the UPMS workshops should be open to all as long as they respected its two funda-

5 As one of the creators of the Popular University of Social Movements, Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos has become one of the biggest enthusiasts and promoters of this initiative inside and outside the World Social Forum, contributing to the engagement of several social movements worldwide, mainly in Latin America. His ideas and theories also inspired the experimental methodologies of the UPMS, which were elaborated, tested, and revised as the meetings went on.

mental documents, elaborated and deliberated collectively: the charter of principles (UPMS 2012a) and the methodology guidelines[6] (UPMS 2012b).

Regarding its name, Gadotti (2003) noted that the adoption of the expression *popular university* was not intended to point to the idea or to repeat the experiences of the workers' universities that multiplied in Europe and Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century, but to convey the idea that, after a century of elitist higher education, a popular university must necessarily be a counter-university (Santos 2004b, 141), besides responding to a deficit of the WSF.

UPMS aimed to promote meetings that were essentially dialogical and conducted for the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Moreover, it also aimed to operationalise the epistemologies of the South[7] proposed by Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos, which focuses on intercultural translation (Santos 2004a) thereby promoting mutual understanding between social movements, to link diverse forms of knowledge and to strengthen new forms of resistance.

> [The epistemologies of the South] deal with knowledges present in or emerging from the resistance to and the struggle against oppression, knowledges that are, therefore, embodied in concrete bodies, whether collective or individual. (Santos 2018, 87)

Such a diversity of knowledge disowned by the dominant order finds in the UPMS, on the one hand, space to articulate and claim in solidarity struggles for radical

6 The methodological guidelines emphasise that UPMS 'is not a training school for the cadres or leaders of social organisations and movements' but rather a process of reciprocal learning among all participants, whose goal is shared knowledge production. It is oriented towards popular education, as taught by Paulo Freire, intercultural and interpolitical translation and the ecology of knowledge. It is structured by alternating periods for discussion, study, reflection, and leisure. It highlights critical tasks for the organisers, such as fundraising, mobilising workshop participants, and building the event's memory. It also suggests an agenda that includes a time for deliberations on what will come out of that meeting. (Access the full document at UPMS 2012b.)

7 What best defines the *South* of the epistemologies of the South is not geographical location, but rather epistemic location, so that the idea of *South* incorporates both the hierarchy of the South in relation to the North and of the East in relation to the West (Araújo 2014, 20). In epistemologies of the South, the *South* is used in the sense of an epistemological reorientation and conceived not as a physical or spatial South (although it also is), but rather as an epistemic and metaphorical South, 'a metaphor for unjust human suffering caused by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, and for resistance to these forms of oppression' (Santos, Araújo and Baumgarten, 2016: 18) (Merladet 2020, 90–91).

democratisation, decolonisation, depatriarchalisation, and demercantilisation of hegemonic knowledge, and on the other hand, a methodology to promote reciprocal intelligibility between the most diverse knowledges and experiences of worlds and those that can still be created (Merladet 2020). In the case of intercultural translation, it should be essentially horizontal so as not to hierarchise either the knowledge, whether it comes from movements or academia, or the struggles represented by the participants (Benzaquen 2012).

An essential premise of UPMS is that understanding is contextual, which means that dialogue is necessary for bridging differences. This idea converges with Freire's idea of the hegemonic strategy of domination through anti-dialogue, in which oppressed social groups or those who struggle to resist the dominating order are separated in their struggles and subjected to strategies of manipulation, conquest, and cultural invasion. The UPMS, recognising such an agenda, implements methodologies aimed at overcoming domination and proposes a fundamentally dialogic space with the humanising character that Freire elaborated upon. Thus, the UPMS is an initiative space dedicated to facing the challenges of building the 'unity within diversity' that the Brazilian educator had envisaged, a space where liberating dialogue can break down the barriers of anti-dialogue and domination.



Figure 2: Conversation circle at the UPMS Workshop 'Marielle Vive! Os movimentos sociais e as lutas pela construção de alternativas democráticas frente às múltiplas faces da violência'. Museu da Favela da Maré – Rio de Janeiro/Brazil. Source: UPMS archives, website.

UPMS is designed to welcome activists, leaders of social movements, non-governmental organisations, academics, social scientists, researchers, and artists committed to issues such as social justice, human rights, diversity and multiculturalism, global peace, and respect for the environment. UPMS meetings use educational methodologies that involve a process of reciprocity or mutual exchange in which people come together to learn about each other and about the issues that affect everyone. Any knowledge, whether traditional or academic, can be shared, and will be recognised and valued. An important premise of these meetings is the recognition of mutual ignorance and, as theorised by Freire, the stimulation of epistemological curiosity to learn from others. In practice, UPMS involves encounters with individuals from various sectors and movements who come together to educate each other. It is an encounter involving intensive activities in an immersive environment that extends for two to three days, during which participants live, eat, and stay overnight in shared accommodation.



Figure 3: Moment of conviviality at the UPMS Workshop 'Health, Sustainability and Living Well'. Aldeia Velha, Casimiro de Abreu, Rio de Janeiro/Brazil. Source: UPMS archives, website.

The purpose of describing the practical workings of UPMS in this paper is to provide a background for understanding the process of articulation that takes place

in UPMS activities. The term 'articulation'[8] in its political and multi-relational sense has become prevalent in the context of social and political strategies in Latin America. In our analysis, articulation occurs through a pedagogical process which converges with the Freirean idea of dialogue previously discussed. However, it adds a strategic element to this process that drives transformative action. Merladet (2020) proposes that the 'pedagogy of articulation' is a strategic coalition, a process involving an invitation to participate in a fraternal, high-intensity, and trust-building dialogue. It is an educational practice that takes place in the UPMS workshop activities and takes shape through subversive methodologies aimed at the reciprocal learning of the participants. It embraces moments of sharing and solidarity as well as moments of silence, tension, and conflict, as this pedagogy navigates between divergent and convergent issues addressed by the participants. Its goal is to promote unity through alliances, create common agendas for those individuals and organisations represented, and to understand collective actions.

Articulation happens during the exchange of knowledge, practices, and experiences. When reflecting on humanisation, which takes place in (and for) the dialogical process discussed above, the UPMS relies on what can be thought of as 'tools of articulation'. These tools include the *mística*[9] (mysticism), festivities, rituals, and experiences of contact with human suffering that make hearts and minds more open to dialogue, love, and the exercise of faith and humility.

The mística and all UPMS relational experiences play a crucial role so that the dialogue in its humanised character with faith, love, and humility can happen. The moments of mística, rituals, and cultural activities, are usually interspersed with moments of discussion in a circle, seeking to stimulate an interrelation between critical thinking and deep feeling, promoting an ethic of care, involvement, respect, and commitment to that moment, to those who are there. and to everyone's struggle. Thus, discursive dialogue is complemented by other suprarational faculties that make

8 According to The Oxford English Dictionary, 'articulation' has several meanings and predominantly in the biological area, but articulation in the figurative sense means 'a conceptual relationship, interaction, or point of juncture, esp. between two things.' In this article we consider the political and dialogical aspect of this relationship and interaction between two or more individuals.

9 'The term *mística* refers not just to the performance, but to the whole world view that underlies it, drawing on traditions of Christian mysticism to affirm unity with a transcendent reality. *Mística* is sacramental in that its manifest physical reality is taken to represent the deeper meaning. It is impossible to separate the enactment of *mística* from the engagement with transcendence. Through participating in or observing *mística*, people express their ideals and believe that they come closer to attaining them' (Hammond 2014, 372).

possible the relationship of complicity between struggles. Each one of these distinct moments has a methodological function in the construction of the dialogue that, at the same time as it becomes humanised, humanises its participants:

> [A]s important as discussions are silences; as important as words are symbols; as important as speeches are gestures, postures and looks; as important as theories are practices and experiences; as important as articles are poems, poetry, theatre, rap, graffiti and cordéis; as important as reason are emotions, feelings and spirituality (Merladet 2020, 245).



Figure 4: Mística in the UPMS Workshop '*Territory, Culture and Rights: Intercultural Education in Minas Gerais*'. Xacriabá Indigenous Territory, São João das Missões, Minas Gerais/Brazil, 2016. Source: UPMS archives, website.

Spaces for Dialogue, Articulation and the Emergence of Possibilities

The third and final section of this paper discusses the extent to which the different aspects of critical and liberating dialogue of the kind analysed above and concretised through the experiences and practices of the UPMS, sensitise, question, or challenge the norms, structures, and processes of the very organisations and universities that have participated in this pedagogical project. Here, we highlight situations in which

the UPMS methodology has created subversive sparks within rigid structures, as in the National Council of the Public Ministry (CNMP) in Brasília, Brazil. In addition, we discuss instances in which UPMS partnerships have resulted in the development of new initiatives led by partner institutions – some of which involve the creation of new institutional structures, as in the case of the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB). Although these are small-scale initiatives, the construction of spaces – such as the WSF on a more global level, or the UPMS in a local context – offer possibilities of experimentation through which the dialogue proposed by Freire can flourish. We focus on exposing new points of vulnerability in rigid institutional structures so that revolutionary and counter-hegemonic action can develop.

The Case of the National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office (CNMP)

The UPMS workshop *Human Rights in Movement: The organisations, the institutions and the street*, held in 2013 in Brasília, Brazil, attracted the participation and financial support of the National Council of the Public Ministry (CNMP). The Public Prosecutor's Office is a Brazilian public body of justice, which has the role of defending social and individual inalienable rights, the legal order, and the democratic regime. It is common for the CNMP to hold meetings and forums with representatives of social movements. However, the innovative nature of the UPMS workshop held in partnership with this public body was precisely the proposed dialogue discussed above. The workshop brought together different generations of activists, artists, and intellectuals engaged in social-justice struggles. Its main objective was to foster a broad critical discussion on the value and effectiveness of the fight for social and political rights in a context of growing mobilisation and strategic action by different institutions.

It is worth noting that in 2013, Brazil experienced a wave of protests and demonstrations which erupted in hundreds of Brazilian cities. The reasons for indignation were the current political regime, corruption, and a shortage of public investment in education and health. This underfunding was contrasted to financial support for significant sporting events hosted by Brazil, such as the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (Gondim 2016). The June 2013 protests focused attention on the effectiveness and application of human rights in Brazil, and the role of institutions. Furthermore, established issues such as systematic violence, the harm caused by large development projects, and the multiple difficulties in accessing rights in socially authoritarian urban contexts gained publicity through this political confrontation. In that context, the UPMS workshop in Brasília intended to reflect on the challenge of reinvigorating the State from below, building up a cognitive justice strategy which (i) recognises the voice and the contribution of extra-institutional knowledge and prac-

tices, (ii) promotes inter-knowledge transfer between groups and social movements, and (iii) creates spaces for the articulation of the struggles and needs arising from different claims (UPMS 2013).

As usual in UPMS workshops, this event promoted convivial, dialogical, and cultural activities which stimulated a profound dialogue.[10] However, it was marked by a significantly higher level of tension than other events. Although the UPMS participants from the CNMP were progressive and sympathetic to social struggles, there was a significant attempt to ensure that *concrete results* were produced from the workshop activities to justify the investment made by the federal public institution.

All the proposals of the Public Ministry were debated instead of imposed. The movements systematically rejected most of them, preserving the collective's autonomy in the workshop. The discussions were characterised by participants' subversive attitudes and the inability of the CNMP to manage some demands. For instance, during the public session[11] of the workshop, which concluded the programme

> the CNMP wanted the movements to choose only two representatives to go on stage and the speeches to be only 10 minutes long. However, in the public session, six representatives of the movements spoke (among them an indigenous woman and a former homeless woman), and they disregarded the stated time limit when they spoke. Similarly, campaign flags were not allowed in the auditorium; however, the movements not only brought them but also placed them directly in front of the stage. (Merladet 2020, 289)

10 See photos of activities carried out at the UPMS Workshop *Human Rights in Movement: The organizations, the institutions and the street* at https://www.flickr.com/photos/upms/sets/72157637614515416/

11 Public sessions are usually activities that close the UPMS workshop with the aim of presenting the results of the discussions and debates held to an external and wider audience (Merladet 2020, 278).



Figure 5: UPMS Workshop 'Human Rights in Movement: The organisations, the institutions and the street'. Brasília/ Brazil, 2013 Source: UPMS archives, website.

Unlike other participatory experiences and instances of dialogue between movements and the State, in the UPMS workshops the movements were not fighting for resources or policies. Therefore, the state actors involved with the UPMS did not inhabit the central role traditionally played by governments. Even though they were proposing, organising, or funding the workshop, it was not the State dictating the rules of the game and, therefore, it did not have the power to influence or guide the activities, the methodology, or the content of the discussions. That was a significant challenge, as the State lacked the knowledge of how to legitimise spaces of deliberation which need to be established, coordinated, and regulated, by it.

We chose to discuss this case for two main reasons. First, this UPMS workshop reveals that dialogue will not always find a context or conditions thoroughly prepared for it to occur in a harmonious way; rather, we can see tensions and conflicts also making up the dialogical process. Indeed, we should not read conflict as an antiidialogic act; Paulo Freire wrote a book with Moacir Gadotti and Sérgio Guimarães (Gadotti et al. 1995) in which the educators argue that 'dialogue is embedded in conflict' (94) and that 'conflict and dialogue are articulated as a strategy of the oppressed' (9):

> We argue that dialogue takes place between equals and those with differences, never between antagonists. Between those [the antagonists], at most, there can be a pact. Between them, there is a conflict,

> but one contrary to the conflict between equals and those with differences. (Gadotti et al. 1995, 9)

Second, we understand that the intention to stimulate dialogue in contradictory contexts opens possibilities, even if the dialogue materialises in a manner different to that which was planned. The CNMP, like many federal public bodies in Brazil, is a space inhabited by contradictory people who are not there to serve the institution's core purpose, in this case, the non-negotiable defence of human rights:

> Today, the fight for human rights requires the Public Prosecutor's Office to play an active role. We know that there are contradictory people in all state bodies [...] if the Public Ministry is not active, it will be responsible for the frustrations of millions and millions of Brazilians; if it is active, it will be responsible for all the aspirations [goals] achieved. (Comment by Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos at the public event of the UPMS Workshop (Santos 2013))

It was because of the initiative of some members of the CNMP that the UPMS workshop took place, making it possible to promote a form of meeting, relationship, and dialogue between the movements and the institution that had not yet happened in other events with the same attendees. The moments of tension and subversion were important, not only for the movements to perceive themselves and adopt a leading role in the dialogue, but also to allow CNMP participants to understand the movements and their claims from a different perspective.

> After the statements by the participants of the UPMS workshop, CNMP Council member Jarbas said he was 'touched'. For him, the 'institutional elite' of the Public Prosecutor's Office 'cannot stop this type of approach', involving grassroots members of popular organisations; that is, 'listening to the social movements' is the 'right path'. He acknowledged that members of legal institutions often develop 'a somewhat limited view' of issues involving human-rights violations and that it 'hurts' when he sees that the institution itself still mirrors, internally, existing social inequalities. (Hashizume 2013)

The Case of the Federal UFSB

In contrast to the previous example, the second case we will discuss took place in a fertile environment for building dialogue, cultivating articulations, and unfolding progressive initiatives. The Federal UFSB is a Brazilian institution founded in 2013 during the period of 'reflourishing public and free higher education in the country' (Lima et al. 2021, 20) – a process of expansion of higher education that

happened predominantly during the governments of Presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016), and which gave rise to new and innovative public educational institutions in Brazil. Those new universities aimed to 'provide structures for the reduction of regional inequalities and offer conditions to articulate knowledge to regional development [while targeting] internationalisation, interiorisation, curricular innovation and social inclusion' (Lima et al. 2021, 79–80). As a result, the UFSB emerged as one of the country's most promising experiences of progressive public universities.

Inspired by the proposals of a '21st-century university' (Santos 2010), its project plan embraced the idea of an ecology of knowledges as a means to produce a revolutionary epistemological movement and as a way to promote university outreach[12] in reverse, that is, from outside the university, to inside the university (UFSB 2014). From this background, UFSB, which was established significantly connected to UPMS and Santos's ideas, made cooperation agreements that would (i) envisage the adaptation of UPMS's methodology to courses, projects, and programmes developed by the new university; and (ii) build collaborative spaces for experimentation with new ideas. Amongst others there was the proposal of 'the ecology of knowledges laboratories' for medical and legal knowledge resulting from with UPMS and its partners' and participants' ecosystem. This initiative had the pedagogical objective of establishing new relationships between the academic community and the experts and leaders of the local communities in order to produce knowledge together – a proposal of solidarity and social commitment to local populations that emerged from the relationship with UPMS aiming to become institutionalised in the curriculum and structure of a public institution.

The case of the UFSB (Federal University of Southern Bahia) encourages us to think that the UPMS is not an end in itself. The impact of its activities should not be analysed based only on the 'concrete results' of a workshop, as was desired by the CNMP representatives who held the Brasília UPMS workshop which we analysed above. Instead, it makes more sense to consider UPMS as a space for building relationships, multiple dialogues, and sets of articulations, which have both separately and collectively the potential to define the possibilities for radically new and different dialogues, spaces, or actions. In the case of UFSB, an institution born from the

12 University outreach (or university extension) involves activities carried out by the university that aim to engage with communities and sectors outside the academic institution in order to transfer, exchange, or jointly produce knowledge. In his book *Extension or Communication, Freire* (1985) discusses this function of the university.

same context that led to the development of UPMS[13], there was from the beginning a fertile ground to create and transform what the UPMS has as one of its central purposes, that is,

> [to promote] inter-knowledge and self-education with the double objective of increasing reciprocal knowledge between movements and organisations and making possible alliances between them, thus facilitating the realisation of joint collective actions. (UPMS 2012a)

As Merladet (2020) notes, the UPMS can be envisioned as a hub for the unfolding of other counter-hegemonic initiatives, which, although still 'a tenuous emergence [process], we can identify signs of their future potentialities' (179). At the heart of this potential for emerging possibilities is the nature of the dialogue promoted by UPMS. Following Paulo Freire, this is a dialogue that implies social praxis; that is, a deep commitment to the spoken word that pronounces the world to be transformed into humanising action.

Discussion and Conclusion

To conclude, we offer some reflections on the role of dialogue in governance processes, especially in marginalised contexts, which is where the UPMS acts to transform them. We also provide a brief update on how this counter-hegemonic initiative has survived the challenges of recent years and has taken its next steps.

First, we reflect on the idea of 'governance,' referring to what Santos (2009) defines as *insurgent counter-hegemonic governance*. Santos argues that *governance* was globally consolidated as a *political and social matrix* between the 1970s and the 1990s that played a mediating role in response to crises of legitimacy and governability. He suggests that the idea of governance was constituted at the expense of silencing and excluding people's participation, in favour of concepts that ensured the reproduction of the dominant, mercantilist, capitalist social order, as in the case of self-regulation, compensatory policies, social cohesion and the stability of flows. In this sense, Santos defines the idea of *globalised neoliberal governance* as a form of government that has been *genetically modified* to resist the risks of bottom-up, potentially chaotic

13 Like UPMS, the proposed Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB) project was conceived in promising years for progressives and leftists in Brazil, during the advancement of policies focused on social inclusion. However, with the *legal-parliamentary coup d'état* (Merladet 2020, 26–27) that occurred in Brazil in 2016 and the rise of the ultra-conservative and neoliberal right-wing in the region, investments in projects in public education were drastically reduced, impacting significantly the development of the UFSB that had just been created. The suspension of the ecologies of knowledges laboratories project resulted from this situation.

pressures and ensure an increasingly insignificant role for the state as a social regulator. Santos then argues that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a new notion of governance emerged from the strength of social movements and civil society organisations that 'through networking and building up local/global linkages, are conducting a global struggle against the inequality, destitution, dispossession and discrimination brought about or intensified by neoliberal globalisation, a struggle most generally guided by the mobilising idea that another world is possible' (Santos 2009, 58). Drawing on this perspective, we suggest that insurgent initiatives such as the WSF and the UPMS have emerged to play an important role in strengthening popular participation and advancing social transformation.

Based on Freire's argument discussed in this article, which alerts us to the possibilities of fragmentation in social struggles arising from a strategy of domination, we consider it necessary and urgent to focus on strengthening the articulation of social movements. For this reason, a methodology that is dialogue-centred and capable of promoting robust alliances amongst marginalised social groups is required. By focusing on dialogue, the ecology of knowledge, the promotion of reciprocal learning between social movements, activists and academics, and intercultural translation, UPMS has emerged as a space that pushes forward a viable counter-hegemonic governance approach. Based on our analysis of these two cases, we highlight two main insights. First, we argue that the dialogue *from* and *for* humanisation contributes to breaking down the barriers of domination that produce fragmentation in the social struggle, thereby opening and building spaces for the construction of articulations and alliances. As we observed in the case of the UPMS workshop held with the CNMP, dialogical spaces and methodologies contributed to raising *silenced subjects* to positions of greater prominence and visibility by amplifying their voices and empowering their participation. Second, the experimental character of these dialogic processes promotes creativity and engaged participation, thus advancing the construction of new counter-hegemonic agendas, practices, and actions. In the case of the UPMS and UFSB partnership, we can observe a public institution becoming a laboratory for the development of new possibilities for institutional structures and processes. This broadens and transforms the vision of the university's social function by rethinking university extension[14] from the outside in, drawing on an ecology of knowledge and the leading role of marginalised subjects from outside the university.

UPMS has been determinedly resilient in the face of two major challenges that have marked the last decade: the issue of funding shortages following the fall of left-wing

14 University extension is an academic function as are research and teaching. It involves collaboration between the university and society through various actions led by academics aimed at the exchange of knowledge and social transformation.

governments in Latin America, especially in Brazil; and the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented what is at the heart of its methodological proposal: face-to-face human contact. Thanks to the strong links with social movements, academics, and activists developed over its first decade, UPMS managed to overcome these two phenomena by finding alternatives to stay alive, such as running online workshops and through voluntary collaboration. More recently, UPMS has been resisting and strengthening itself in two main directions. In Brazil, a partnership with the National Association of Postgraduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPEd) – a traditional and influential non-profit organisation in the Brazilian academic community – has contributed to promoting new collaborations with Brazilian universities and accessing public funding. Thanks to this partnership, and in spite of the pandemic, UPMS has successfully delivered four workshops in the past three years and plans another three for 2023–2024. Moreover, UPMS has been expanding to the central regions of the global north. In 2022, a UPMS workshop was held in Gipuzkoa in the Basque Country, in partnership with the Emaús Social Foundation and the University of the Basque Country, as part of a social programme that aims to build dialogic spaces for political consciousness-raising, debate, and intercultural translation. This was a collective agenda-building initiative that aimed to formulate strategies to transform university through collaborative governance and a new university-society relationship (EMAÚS 2022; Casado et al. 2021). In the same year, UPMS started interacting with activists from the University of Cambridge academic community[15] to discuss and rethink the relationship (and responsibility) of that traditional institution towards its local community, given that Cambridge has been identified as Britain's most unequal city[16] (Cities Outlook 2018). This developing collaboration finds in the UPMS methodological approach the potential for engaging community leaders and local activists in a dialogical process that sees them as protagonists in designing actions to change their unfair reality.

To conclude, the UPMS still has much to teach us about how a methodology focused on dialogue and political and social articulation can transform institutions and governance processes, as well as question what we refer to as 'governance'. Since it began two decades ago, much has been published on this counter-hegemonic initiative.[17] However, this research mostly focuses on the impact of the UPMS on social movements and social struggles. Little has been written on how the public institu-

15 See https://news.educ.cam.ac.uk/latin-america-popular-education-inequality.

16 See https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/feb/04/cambridge-most-unequal-city-population-divide-income-disparity.

17 See some examples at http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/pages/pt/documentos/leituras/leituras-sobre-a-upms.php.

tions that have been involved with the initiative, either through the participation of their staff in UPMS workshops or by hosting events, have benefited from it. Indeed, a social institution that can be transformed (with the potential for much more) by this sort of engagement is university. Potentially, this engagement can divert this historic institution from an increasingly likely destiny: that of being reduced to a *hopeless university*, as framed by Richard Hall (2021).

Bibliography

Araújo, S. (2014) Ecologia de justiças a Sul e a Norte: Cartografias comparadas das justiças comunitárias em Maputo e Lisboa. (Tese de doutoramento). Coimbra: UC.

Benzaquen, J.F. (2012) Universidade dos movimentos sociais: apostas em saberes, práticas e sujeitos descoloniais. Universidade de Coimbra. Available at: https://eg.uc.pt/bitstream/10316/18904/1/Tese%20Júlia%20Benzaquen.pdf. Accessed: 14 November 2022.

Casado, A. da R. et al. (2021) PISTU: Pensar la Innovación Social desde las Transformaciones Universitarias, SocArXiv [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/edgku. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Centre for Cities (2018) Cities Outlook. London. Available at: http://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/18-01-12-Final-Full-Cities-Outlook-2018.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

EMAÚS (2022) Hackeando la academia: Manual para 'guisar' nuevas relaciones universidad-sociedad. EMAÚS. Available at: https://upms.emaus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/hackeando_academia_es_online.pdf. Accessed: 14 November 2022.

Freire, P. (1972) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1985) Extensão ou Comunicação. 8th edn. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Freire, P. (1987) Pedagogia do Oprimido. 23rd edn. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Freire, P. (1989) A importância do ato de ler: em três artigos que se completam. 23rd edn. São Paulo (SP): Editora Autores Associados and Editora Cortez.

Freire, P. (1996) Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa. 25th edn. São Paulo (SP): Paz e Terra.

Freire, P. (2013) Pedagogia Da Esperança: Um Reencontro Com a Pedagogia Do Oprimido. 1a edn. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Gadotti, M. (2003) Universidade Popular dos Movimentos Sociais: Breve história de um sonho possível, Democracia Viva, 14, 78–83.

Gadotti, M., Freire, P. and Guimarães, S. (1995) Pedagogia: Diálogo e conflito. 4a edn. São Paulo: Cortez.

Galli, E.F. and Braga, F.M. (2017) O diálogo em Paulo Freire: Quaestio: Revista de estudos em educação, 19 (1), 161. DOI: https://doi.org/10.22483/2177-5796.2017v19n1p161-180. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Gondim, L.M.P. (2016) Movimentos sociais contemporâneos no Brasil: a face invisível das Jornadas de Junho de 2013, Polis (Santiago), 15 (44), 357–379. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-65682016000200016. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Hall, R. (2021) The Hopeless University: Intellectual Work at the end of The End of History. Leicester, UK: Mayfly Books.

Hammond, J.L. (2014) Mística, meaning and popular education in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement, Interface: a journal for and about social movements, 6, 372–391.

Hardt, M. (2002) Porto Alegre: Today's Bandung?, New Left Review. 14th edn, 112–118. Available at: https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii14/articles/michael-hardt-porto-alegre-today-s-bandung.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Hashizume, M. (2013) Ministério Público Dialogando com Movimentos Sociais, Fórum Justiça. Available at: https://forumjustica.com.br/conhecimento/participantes-da-upms-de-brasilia-cobram-atuacao-do-mp-na-defesa-de-direitos/. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Hooks, Bell (2013) Ensinando a transgredir: Educação como prática da liberdade. 1a edn. Translated by M.B. Cipolla. São Paulo: Editora WMF Martins Fontes.

Hooks, Bell (2020) Ensinando Pensamento Crítico: Sabedoria Prática. São Paulo: Editora Elefante.

Lima, M.C. et al. (2021) UNILAB 10 anos: Gênese, desafios e conquistas. Blumenau: Edifurb.

McGrady, C. (2021) Why bell hooks didn't capitalize her name, The Washington Post. Online. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/12/15/bell-hooks-real-name/. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

McLaren, P. and Leonard, P. (eds) (1993) Paulo Freire: A critical encounter. London: Routledge. Available at: https://libcom.org/files/peter-mclaren-paulo-freire-a-critical-encounter-1.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Merladet, F.A.D. (2020) Pedagogia da articulação: A universidade popular dos movimentos sociais e a ecologia de saberes na prática. Universidade de Coimbra.

Sader, E. (2022) Beyond Civil Society: The Left after Porto Alegre, New Left Review, 1. Available at: https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii17/articles/emir-sader-beyond-civil-society. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Santos, B. de S. (2004a) O futuro do Fórum Social Mundial: o trabalho da tradução, Revista del Observatorio Social de América Latina, 15, 77–90.

Santos, B. de S. (2004b) The World Social Forum: A User's Manual. Available at: http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/fsm_eng.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Santos, B. de S. (2006) A Universidade Popular dos Movimentos Sociais, in 'A gramática do tempo: para uma nova cultura política'. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 155–165.

Santos, B. de S. (2009) Governance: Between Myth and Reality, RCCS Annual Review [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4000/rccsar.95. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Santos, B. de S. (2010) A Universidade no Século XXI: Para uma reforma democrática e emancipatória da Universidade. São Paulo: Cortez.

Santos, B. de S. (2013) Depoimento para Sessão Pública da UPMS Brasília. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEPdQWZc4CQ. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

Santos, B. de S. (2018) The end of the cognitive empire: the coming of age of epistemologies of the South. Durham: Duke University Press.

Santos, B. de S.; Araújo, S. and Baumgarten, M. (2016) As epistemologias do Sul em um mundo fora do mapa, Sociologias, 18 (43), 14–23.

Streck, D.R., Redin, E. and Zitkoski, J.J. (eds) (2010) Dicionário Paulo Freire. 2nd edn. Belo Horizonte, MG: Autêntica.

Therborn, G. (2022) The World and the Left, New Left Review, 23–73. Available at: https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii137/articles/goran-therborn-the-world-and-the-left.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

UFSB (2014) Plano Orientador. Available at: http://ufsb.edu.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Plano-Orientador-UFSB-Final1.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

UPMS (2012a) Charter of Principles of the Popular University of Social Movements. UPMS website. Available at: http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/media/Carta_de_Principios/Charter_of_Principles_UPMS__alteracoes_de_Lima__-_ENG.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

UPMS (2012b) Methodological guidelines for the Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS). UPMS website. Available at: http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/media/Metodologia/Methodological_guidelines_UPMS_-_ENG_-_30-04-15.pdf. Accessed on 14 November 2022.

UPMS (2013) Oficina de Brasília - 2013. UPMS website. Available at: http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/pages/pt/oficinas/oficina-de-brasilia---2013.php. Accessed: 13 November 2022.

Whitaker, F. (2000) Fórum Social Mundial: origens e objetivos, Correio da Cidadania. 222nd edn, 1.

World Social Forum (2001) World Social Forum Charter of Principles, Universidade Popular dos Movimentos Sociais. Available at: http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/media/documentos/WSF_-_charter_of_Principles.pdf. Accessed on 13 November 2022.

Cultures of Dialogue and Pro-democracy in Equatorial Guinea and Diaspora

Carolina Nvé Díaz San Francisco[1]

Abstract: In March 2022, pro-democratic actors, civil society platforms and organisations, and political activists from Equatorial Guinea and its diaspora signed the *Pacto Político* and *Pacto de Concordia*, an agreement to build a *culture of dialogue* and deepen its mechanisms toward peaceful political transitions and governance collaboration. This paper presents perspectives on a *culture of dialogue* within the contexts of national and diasporic socio-political movements, transnationalism, and webs of digital connections committed to defending human rights, civil liberties, and political freedom and representation in Equatorial Guinea. The inquiry of a *culture of dialogue* as an agreement to respect political plurality and cooperate in cohesion in response to lived experiences of struggle for liberation focuses on the trajectories of a civic society platform or social alliances. This inquiry considers phenomenology as a point of departure to analyse how the centrality of bodies' expressions, performances, and lived experiences represent cultural references for the meaning and practice of dialogue. This preliminary and general overview of one description of the culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and diaspora identifies characteristics and qualities of dialogue based on the trajectories and combinations of identities, spaces, and social structures. Pro-democratic actors' transnational, diasporic, and digital political mobilisation enrich theoretical conversations about *intra-* and *inter-community dialogues, calls for dialogue,* and *public dialogues*. The goal is to expand into possibilities and venues of peaceful pressure systems that, despite the challenges in communication and non-existent peaceful relations between dictatorship and pro-democratic systems in Equatorial Guinea, attempt to solve immediate needs and build up a culture of understanding and collaboration.

Keywords: Dialogue, culture, Equatorial Guinea, Diaspora, Human Rights

Introduction

On March 28 and 29, 2022, human rights defenders, activists, civil society platforms and organisations, and representatives of political parties from Equatorial Guinea

1 Carolina Nvé Díaz San Francisco, born and raised in Spain, completed a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology at the University of East London (United Kingdom) and a Master of Science in medical anthropology at Boston University School of Medicine (Massachusetts, United States). She is a researcher at the Disparities Research Unit (Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School), Health and Wellness coordinator for the Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition (MAWOCC), adjunct faculty at the Social Sciences Department, Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), and a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at UNED, Spain. Her research interests include mental health and Equatorial Guinea.

and diasporas gathered in person and virtually in Madrid, Spain, to review aspects of the socio-political history in the country and exchange proposals for non-violent political transitions toward democracy in contexts of dictatorial governance that suppresses political plurality and political participation (Espacios Europeos 2022). Based on the understanding that democratic government (Hountondji 2002) refers to 'a principle of governance for developing a comprehensive and consistent procedure and orientation for effective and humanistic administration of the state' (Ntui 2021, 77), pro-democratic actors, women, and men living in Equatorial Guinea and abroad, co-signed in agreement the documents called Pacto Político (Political Pact) and Pacto de Concordia (Concord Pact).

The *Pacto Político* is an agreement on political and civic society intervention to support civil liberties and peaceful democratic transitions in contexts of exploitation, corruption, and a monoculture of accumulation (Wood 2004). The second dictatorship, led by the Head of State Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo since 1979, does not benefit the country. The political system's violence and repression negatively impact the progress of education, healthcare, and civic freedom and representation. The *Pacto* recognises that a dictatorial political system disrespects the Rule of Law (Comisión Ecuatoguineana de Juristas) and therefore calls for processes of an inclusive dialogue that defends amnesty, freedom to political prisoners, democratic elections, legalisation of all political parties and social organisations, and the participation of the civil society, or 'all forms of organised voluntary association and social interaction not controlled by the government, self-generating, largely self-supporting, and operating within the constitutional and legal frameworks of the state and observing a set of shared values' (Marume et al. 2016, 68; Radio Macuto 2022).

The *Pacto de Concordia* is an agreement on a code of conduct, a non-aggression pact, and the proposal of a system and guidance for cooperation and coordination between the signees to support and adopt social change and peaceful action toward political advocacy plans. Pro-democratic actors signed the *Pacto de Concordia* as a peace agreement to build a culture of dialogue among themselves as organisations, individuals, and allies. The culture of dialogue integrates a written agreement of peaceful communication, acceptance of differences, and a conflict resolution protocol to maintain peaceful cooperation. The proposal for a culture of dialogue symbolises a framework for abidance to denounce political oppression, violence, democratic façades, corruption, and fraudulent elections (Campos 2013; Africa UCM-CIDAF 2014; Rupiya 2020).

This paper discusses preliminary ideas on the concept of *a culture of dialogue* among pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and its diaspora from the moment of the signing in 2022 through the beginning of 2023. Focusing on the actions and

performances of a civil society platform, a solidarity alliance 'among different sectors [that] helps create a sense of belongingness with others and loyalty in interests' (Płachciak 2009, 86), their *culture of dialogue* became an object of study. As a daughter of the African diaspora, the daughter of an Equatoguinean man who migrated to Spain, and a supportive member of the platform living in the United States, I developed interest in learning more about the meanings, practices, and implications of the concept of culture of dialogue immersed in socio-political and diasporic movements. Other studies consider *cultures of dialogue* as functional tools that *develop relationships* among social and political groups that disagree, as in the case of indigenous communities' efforts to protect land rights in the face of oil companies' exploitation plans in Russia (Stammler et al. 2008). The notion of culture of dialogue is also considered as a medium to *nurture relationships* between religious communities and the state in the Republic of North Macedonia to integrate collaboration in governance (Gjorgjevski 2020), or a *medium for peacebuilding*, as in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the period after the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993 and before the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence in September 2000 (Mollov and Lavie 2001).

Through the use of phenomenological perspectives that focus on actors and agents as manoeuvres of culture and forms of life, this discussion integrates the consideration patterns, repeated behaviours (Boulding et al. 2019), webs of significance, and ways of living (Bell et al. 1998), and multilayered social realms for the management of dialogue not only between groups and communities but also *within* communities, organisations, and platforms that share common goals and ideals. The purpose is to understand how the concept of culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and diasporas increases the capacity for collaboration to address common problems.

Perspectives on Cultures of Dialogue

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define. Culture affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour, manifests at multilayered social levels, and can be differentiated from universal human nature and unique individual personalities (Spencer-Oatey 2012). Dialogue is an explorative subject (Jacobi et al. 2021). Personal experiences and systems of thoughts and symbols can inform what culture and dialogue might signify (Schein 2003). Dialogue becomes a cultural element when perceived as a learned and repeated behaviour gravitating toward exchanges of expressions related to social needs and spark issue-oriented mechanisms (Pickering and Garrod 2021).

The literature describes *cultures of dialogue* as elements operating within the realms of social difference and disagreement (Chukwuokolo and Jeko 2019) and within and between communities and organisations or micro-social life modes of connections and formations (Jacobi et al. 2021). For example, The World Café is an international organisation committed to building up a culture of dialogue by bringing people worldwide together to discuss issues of everyday life and solution-seeking matters to improve life (Tan and Brown 2005). Another example is the London-based Colombian peacebuilding organisation called *Rodeemos el Diálogo* (Embrace Dialogue, ReD) currently working toward giving dialogue a cultural status through the practice of consistent communication, habits, and techniques that produce optimal organisational work to ultimately support peacebuilding in Colombia in collaboration with other organisations and communities (Mesa Velez 2019, 93).

Cultures of dialogue are embedded in social dynamics that treasure symbols, sets of rules, learning guidelines, and recipes for action and opportunity (Okeja 2010). The concept in question navigates across social structures, human relations, and ever-changing and multi-levelled social conditions and roles (Bell et al. 1998). Cultural dialogues as analytical concepts create and recreate dynamic and subjective models of social interaction with unique characteristics and spatial localities. So, in this manner, and as a way to contextualise this preliminary inquiry, there exists a universe of interpretations of cultural understandings of dialogue. Although there also exists the need to include specific characteristics and structures of the functionalities of dialogue, it is possible to start with the idea that dialogue targets specific social problems and solutions, as in the case of the *community's dialogues* in Cyprus, Estonia, China, Sweden, and Cuba that specifically target neighbourhoods and localities and their immediate social crises (Marková and Gillespie 2011), revealing thus the model perspective based on shared semantics, relationships, and inter-subjectivities (Coulthard and Rock 2017).

The culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors and diasporas is embedded within social structures and symbols that generate it through the juxtaposition of entire life forms and philosophical underpinnings of concretely situated embodied beings (Baerveldt 2014). The highlight in this inquiry points to phenomenological perspectives: glances toward the body and its performances, or the body-self interchanging social roles, transformations, and engagements within social and political spheres as both body-social and body-political (Mensch 2009). This inquiry focuses on the actors themselves, actors or bodies in action, or agents representing 'living vessels of culture' (Lock 1993, 140). In this manner, meanings first emerge from individuals and their learned cultural experiences to capture *dialogue*, or *dialogism*, 'dialogic learning, thus implying intersubjectivity [...] diverse people exchanging

ideas, acquiring and producing knowledge, and creating new meanings that transform both the language and the content of their lives' (Aubert and Soler 2006, 522).

Within transnationalism, diasporic worlds, and digital communication, the understanding is that the constructivism process of cultures of dialogue transcends, interacts, and connects with the larger community and the global (Zeleza 2009), as in the case of the African Diaspora Dialogue Project. This civic society organisation facilitates in-group and outward dialogic processes to address social challenges and mobilise toward conflict resolution within socio-political contexts in the United States, Somalia, Ethiopia, Congo, and Liberia (Tint and Sarkis 2014). It is interesting to note that, as the inquiry deepens, dialogue acquires instrumental and qualifying characteristics. This paper reveals that, within the trends of transnational social movements for collaborative governance and public policy development (Nicholas and Dyer 2003), the practice of dialogue allows the learning of human relations, values such as inclusiveness, survival, wellness, fairness, and compromise (Bohm et al. 1991). Diversity in dialogue delineates profiles of local, communal, global, and transnational relations (Kate and Lane 2021), defines and qualifies interactions as 'equal status,' 'cooperative,' and 'competitive' (Mollov and Lavie 2001), and sustains 'public movements,' 'collective agencies,' 'partnerships' as tools to incite awareness and advocacy of cultural and developmental differences, commitment, and possibilities (Stammler and Pesk 2008).

From Within: Cultural and Political Dialogues

Following the philosophy of phenomenology (Jackson et al. 2015), or the study or science of phenomena, or the *how* rather than the *what* of an object of interest, the highlight is the centrality of human experience and *being in the world* (Zahavi 2018). My interest in the phenomenological glasses started in reviewing some of the principles of humanism that state that everything perceptible in our world has been managed, created, and transformed through biological formulations, including humans. Phenomenology looks into the frameworks of personal lives and trajectories that guide the sense of self, personhood, and identity and how these philosophical and introspective human qualities reflect on performances and social relations (Janz 1996).

As I started my journey as the daughter of the African diaspora living transnationally, I became interested in Equatorial Guinea, my father's country. After years of exploration and learning about the migratory experiences and social transitioning of many Equatoguineans that followed the declaration of independence from colonial Spain on October 12, 1968, the overrun of President-elect Francisco Macias Nguema, the violation of the Constitutional Law of the same year, the coup d'état in

1969 that established eleven years of the first long military regime, and the second dictatorship still in power since 1979 (Fleischhacker 1999), I found individuals and communities in Equatorial Guinea and abroad that advocated for freedom and the defence of human rights through socio-political movements.

From the diaspora, between sporadic visits to Equatorial Guinea to visit my family and through the mediums of digital worlds, I joined a civic society platform or organisation to contribute to their efforts in building up and maintaining a culture of dialogue dedicated to constructing social fabrics of peaceful democratic transitions collaboratively. Furthermore, I learned that pro-democratic actors, women, and men of all ages, represent the diverse ethnic groups in Equatorial Guinea, such as Bubi, Fernandino, Annobones, Ndowe, and Fang, and express a sense of rootedness. I engaged in conversation, meetings, and gatherings, collaborated on what was needed, and listened to stories of remembrance and life in Equatorial Guinea and original understandings of culture and dialogue. Following the phenomenological transits that look into learned experiences with communication, language, and perceptions of gender roles and power relations (Bawa 2012), I noticed the special highlight of remembrances and returns to *home*, to the place of birth, familial spaces, and community ties. For those who have stayed, remaining in Equatorial Guinea represents a source of pride, as they are thriving and resisting despite restrictions in political participation. For those who have migrated, the memory of past experiences coexists with ideas on who they were while they lived in Equatorial Guinea, and their understandings of the self, home, and social life.

Cultural contributions intersect with present understandings and practices of dialogue. As described in the Africa Dialogue Series (2021), revisiting culture and familial roots incites adopting a forward-looking mindset and is a strength and essential ingredient that nurtures transformations (African Renewal 2021). In its cultural contexts, dialogue contains values that serve as conduits for relations, alliances, lineages, traditional laws, and conflict restoration. The experience of dialogue, expressed locally and cosmologically, reflects teachings of cultural histories bridged with the present and modernity (Nzimakwe 2014; Bawa 2012). In Equatorial Guinea, ideas of *cultural dialogues* recall past immersions in localities across and between socio-economic, ethnic, gender, rural, and urban spaces and contexts. The recall of dialogue *at home,* such as 'We don't have it (political dialogue); we are not used to it; the cultural yes, but the political not so much,' brings into the scene further characteristics of dialogue, such distinctions between forms of dialogue, as if dialogue within the realms of the home resulted from a different nature compared to the formats of dialogues encountered outside of the familiar. *Home associations* (identities, sense of belonging, political inequities) contribute to the moulding of

transnational African diasporic organisations and political mobilisation (Mercer and Evans 2008).

Individual trajectories or bodies-in-motion merge with constructions and manifestations of being and the embodiment of personal, cultural, and political identities. Professionals, mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons as well as sisters and brothers became aware of the significance of social roles and civic status. As individuals, they remain aware they belong to the socio-political history of Equatorial Guinea (Chambers and Kopstein 2001). In this manner, waves and movements toward independence and liberation in Equatorial Guinea fuelled pro-democratic processes within the context of a history of colonialism and anti-colonial sentiments (Fernández 2015; Okenve 2018), as well as the rise and formation of democratic values, such as the defence of freedom of expression, political manifestation, pluralism in political parties, constitutional legitimacy, and transparent free, fair, periodic, and all-inclusive elections (Aworawo 2012; Sundiata 2019). The negative impacts of the dictatorial system on the population and political opportunity prevail. Some challenges posed by the present unjust system include the systematic repression of civic and pro-democratic movements, corruption, and political violence, as well as forms of stagnation in the expectations of democratisation and respect for human rights (Angüe 2011).

'National Dialogues' and Pro-democratic Movements

In Equatorial Guinea, the need for representation led civilians, politicians, and government officials to the signing of the Constitutional Conference and the Act of Independence by the state of Spain, a consequence of the only democratic elections in the country that took place on August 21, 1968, along with constituted political parties, and the following Independence Day on October 12, 1968 (Castro and Ndongo-Bidyogo 1998). Along with African liberal and independentist movements that supported democracy as a principle of governance (Ntui 2021), the drive toward democratic movements in Equatorial Guinea motivated the step forward to legalise political parties in the 1990s (Lashmar 1992). On February 10 and March 16, 1993, the government and representatives of legalised political parties met in Malabo's capital to create political pluralism premises that ensured freedom in the country and abroad. In a context of hope for democratisation, the *Pacto Nacional* of 1993 (Comision Europea 1993) established political freedoms and pluralistic elections, agreements officially signed on March 18, thus, unfolding the first National Dialogue Table – o *Mesa de Diálogos Nacionales.* The National Dialogues, between the government, public institutions, legalised political parties, and political leaders sat at the table to discuss law, constitutional rights, and political freedom. However, the *Pacto Nacional* (National Pact) was unsuccessful. The political realms of the

country remained divided into 'two dialogues' or diverging narratives, partly due to divisions, unproductive attempts to reach agreements, and the government's incapacity to fulfil its responsibilities (Nsé and Micó 2016).

Like other national dialogues worldwide that never reached an agreement or were partially implemented due to fragmented social and political structures (Paffenholz and Helfer 2017; Wählisch 2017), the national dialogues in Equatorial Guinea that followed in the consecutive years of 1997, 2001, and 2014 through the Manifesto de Madrid (Africa UCM-CIDAF 2022), also resulted in unfulfilled practice. The national dialogues attempted to reform and apply constitutional laws; however, the exponential social and political fragmentation brought deception and broken promises (Esono Ondo 2014; Nsé and Micó 2016). The last National Dialogue took place in 2018. The Head of State recalled the importance of political agreements for the nation's peaceful development. The State proposed the creation of *a culture of peace* and reconciliation, words that became stamped in the signing of the Binding National Pact. However, the negotiations of equal rights and obligations were, yet again, unfulfilled (Revista Real EG 2022).

The political violence of the dictatorship system continues to influence pro-democratic actors to call for and propose a culture of dialogue. Despite numerous pacts signed, such as the Democratic Coalition in the Palacio del Pueblo of Malabo in 2017, the General Democratic Pact for National Reconciliation and the Governance and Political Stability of Equatorial Guinea in 1998, The Coexistence Pact between the State and the People, The Coexistence Pact for Secularism, The Pact for a Democratic and Republican National Unity, and The Historical Memory Pact (CORED Pacto de Convivencia Nacional), dictatorships are not known to provide a friendly environment for open dialogue to conjointly and collaboratively resolve differences about power distribution (Kojevnikov 1999, 227). Instead, dictatorships are characterised by instilling *cultures of terror,* entangled contradictions in the particularities of constitutionalism, reform, and legal interpretations that inherently accept repressive law and oppressive political procedures (Osiel 1995; Crouch 2018; Elinoff 2019), and are consequently detrimental to the development of education, healthcare systems, and life (Geloso et al. 2020).

Despite the challenges of stagnation in the expectations of democratisation and respect for human rights, pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and diasporas create opportunities to expand social networks and come together in alliance (Bernal 2020). Through digital political worlds (South African Institute of International Affairs 2019), pro-democratic actors mobilise and organise, respect each other, and other groups, share meaningful connections that strengthen social roles, sustain open lines of communication, friendship, trust, knowledge, and define and

build mechanisms, for example, of a culture of dialogue agreed upon a Pact, to motivate collaborative work and political participation. Among an array or plethora of legalised, exiled, and clandestine social and political movements (Baynham 1986; Staffan 2006; Sá 2021), pro-democratic actors support women and feminist movements (Allan 2019), writers, activists, and artists *artivists* (Ugarte 2010), and other members of the civil society (Bernal 2020), and platforms or 'organised groups and associations that enjoy autonomy in their relationship with the State and that are voluntarily formed by members of society to protect and disseminate their interests' (Maroto 2014, 176).

Intra-community Dialogues: Collaborative and Organisational Performances

The methodological dynamics of the *intra-community dialogue* or the *inside dialogue* (Jacobi et al. 2021) provide the structural framework of the platform. The platform was first realised in 2021 envisioning collaborative and organisational work while considering that the conditions for community dialogue (Zoller 2000) include balancing consensus with the present realities of social tensions in organising and activism. Throughout 2022 and early 2023, I noticed that collaborative and organisational performances needed to be sustained by regular and consistent communication through meetings online or in person. Engagement and presence represent vital elements essential to move forward. However, we also understand that we can contribute to the cause according to our unique circumstances. Everyone is welcome.

The platform coordination and members often clarify expectations and dialogue rules focused on organisational work and building conceptual models for activism and practice. Highlighting the goal of concrete plans to organise orientation, ground rules, and approaches to action, reminders of the importance of regular revisions of the *Pacto de Concordia* and *Pacto Político* balance the challenges related to disagreement and confusion over procedures, responsibilities, trajectories, and division of responsibilities. Based on established regulations for dialogue, the platform evokes peaceful communication and the need to understand others and oneself instead of imposing one's beliefs as synonyms of the absolute truth. The culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors belonging to the platform represents a way of learning together, recognising the different life experiences that underpin the different views and the legitimacy of the other, that is, their humanity, despite disagreements on values and ideas.

The internal organisational work aims to commit to peaceful dialogue during group discussions, consensual and compartmentalised action toward the planning and definition of functional structures, evaluation procedures, leadership and coopera-

tion, resource searching, networking, communication, and information exchanges. In addition, the internal organisational work of this civic platform aims to improve skills and political capacitation or citizen empowerment to form a culture of political participation, co-responsible and critical, with the capacity to transform social realities. Political capacitation, or citizenship-building processes and the strengthening of the social fabric through citizen organisation towards a culture of civic participation engages initiatives that expand political education on the role of members of civil society in politics. Through regular communication and exchanges of didactic information, the goal is to understand how the political embodiment of each participating individual turns implicit in the day-to-day practice of activism, thus defining the understanding of civic rights and responsibilities in contexts of dictatorial regimes and political systems (Igambo 2006; Allan 2019).

Intra-community dialogues invest in political mobilisation through frequent communication over the importance of knowing, being informed, and being aware of the social and political happenings in Equatorial Guinea. The internal dialogue among all members of the organisation reflects an interest in the news, especially about governance and juridical systems, to develop formal and informal conversation and exchange ideas on how to act and respond. One vivid example of internal movements within the organisation that exponentially reflected outward was the flow of communication about the irregularities of the 2022 legislative, municipal, and senatorial elections in Equatorial Guinea. The holding of presidential elections on November 20 violated the current legal system in the country because, according to the Constitutional and Electoral law, the presidential elections should occur legally every seven years or early 2023 (República de Guinea Ecuatorial, Boletin del Estado 2012; Europa Press 2022).

The internal work included following the election's development and the consecutive sharing of narratives about the corrupting nature of present and past elections organised by the dictatorial regime since 1973. Among pro-democratic actors, the 2022 fraudulent elections served as a reminder of the past and the lack of opportunity among civilians in Equatorial Guinea to learn about civic rights, laws, and possibilities in political participation. *Anafalbetismo político,* or political illiteracy, prevails due to distorted messages the regime delivers to the public, such as the belief that pro-democratic activism is violent. Equatorial Guinea is a 'captured country' divided into four social groups: the dictator and his family, the dictatorship's collaborators, spies, informants, and the masses. The organisational work focused on the strategies that enable civic actors in civic spaces to publicly communicate the non-recognition of the 2022 national elections while recommending to the general population in the country not to vote or even engage in the parody of the campaigns, as these violated the principles established in the Constitution of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea,

the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Convention on Human Rights (GE Nuestra 2022).

Pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and the diaspora organised internally to find mediums to denounce the 2022 illegal and non-democratic 'elections' and the absence of fundamental freedoms under a sixth-term presidency that has overtaken an entire oil-rich country and where the vast majority of its 1.3 million inhabitants live below the poverty line (France 24 2022). On official communication platforms and social media, the organisation publicly denounced the political violence that arose during the electoral year. There was a proliferation of detentions and arrests of opponents, audits, activists, and anyone who disagreed with the ruling political party. The platform attempted to support those individuals and their families in need while the government criminalised rival parties by storming their headquarters and homes, initiating waves of violent '*limpieza*' (cleaning), arresting, torturing, and withdrawing legal rights of defence and representation (Amnesty International 2022).

Amid the processes of internal dialogue and *calls for dialogue* or exchanges that mobilise and help 'community groups define and achieve their preferred future' (Finegold et al. 2002, 235), the challenges that surfaced in the culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors in diasporic worlds and Equatorial Guinea, were missing meetings, different personalities, questions of power relations, vulnerabilities of stagnation, frustration, and uncollaborative attitudes. Through experience, peaceful conflict resolution, constant work, empowerment, revision of the pacts and the plans to stabilise the consensus apparatuses, collective leadership, and objective communication, the internal practice of dialogue reflected a commitment to call for processes of inner peace while poking the government and delivering calls for compliance with the standards of a Rule of Law and international agreements as a State member of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) (GE Nuestra 2022).

Inter-community Dialogues: Calls for Dialogue and Transnational Socio-political Movements

In the contexts of international and socio-political movements, African diasporic politics, and collective identity formations (Adamson 2012; Bingaman and Charnovitz 2001), pro-democratic actors communicate internally, exchange ideas and proposals, work toward consensus and collaboration to produce an impact on the efforts to participate in peaceful transitions to democracy in Equatorial Guinea. Intra-community dialogues belong to a more significant movement that values dialogue as a medium to understand needs and reach unbreakable agreements. The civic

society platform or open organisation becomes part of local and global strategies that define and turn into reality collaborative governance in Equatorial Guinea. In this way, processes of social expansion enlarge this culture of dialogue into communal discussions that request immediate proposals and actions for resolution.

Envisioning stages for developing engagements before and during the first two years of its life since 2021, this platform perceives social enlargement and networking as necessary alliances for progress. From local political opportunities, inceptions of social organising, and national and transnational networks, to diffusion to the international spheres across host states in Africa, Europe, and the Americas, this civic society platform creates its supranational and global circles of support. Networks of transnational activism and transnational justice (Koinova 2017) manifest intercommunity dialogues (Jacobi et al. 2021), or the sharing of political identities and expectations, and the understanding that relatively small-scale examples of dialogue can develop an awareness to increase participation in defence of human rights and peaceful transitions to freedom and democratic governance.

There exist diverse levels of inter-community dialogues that operate internationally, such as the National Summit on Africa to bring forward the dialogue on Africa-US relations, or the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building (IDPS), a forum for political dialogue that brings together countries affected by conflict and fragility. Pro-democratic actors actively demonstrate inside and outside Equatorial Guinea in alliance with political parties, groups, and international human rights organisations. Aided by social media platforms, journalists, and public and private institutions, the joining of voices and performances takes place through the systematic public exposure of the oppression in Equatorial Guinea and the curtailed efforts of the civil society in the country to demonstrate and contribute to social change. The whole civic mobilisation strengthens efforts for *calls for dialogue*. Throughout 2022 and early 2023, the message called for a dialogue cultivated to defend justice and the human right to protest politically.

Calls for dialogue, or 'rational dialogue in procedural rhetoric of access, one that defines participants as equal partners in a definitional venture by which a form of truth is sought' (Anderson et al. 2003, 8), requested the government of Equatorial Guinea to assume responsibility in the caring and support of the victims and families affected by the explosions at a military station in the neighbourhood of Nkoantoma in the city of Bata on March 7, 2021 (DW 2021). In 2021 and 2022, individuals and organisations publicly denounced the inability of the government to supply emergency aid, implement an investigation to address unresolved questions about the causes of the tragic event, and the non-canalised funds and resources delivered to support the victims and their families (Aljazeera 2021). Like many other diasporic

initiatives, individuals and organisations communicated with nationals and institutions in Bata and Malabo and established an aid system that included financial help. Calls for dialogue integrated press releases denouncing and demanding explanations of unresolved questions, requests, and proposals to organise and foment debates or transnational dialogues at public and community tables, as well as radio and social media interviews that discussed the government's negligence in care toward the population while proposing strategies to improve the situation; there was consistent political activism and readiness to defend human lives in the context of a violent dictatorial regime.

The 2021 and 2022 commemorations of the Independence Day of October 12, 1968, represented opportunities to deliver clear messages: absolute independence will not be achieved in Equatorial Guinea without freedom of expression. Pro-democratic actors from diverse associations and political parties voiced the need to value freedom and peace. The youth and the artist community organised a musical concert in Malabo, *Concierto por la Paz*, on October 11. However, the regime's security forces dismantled the gathering on the same day (Radio Macuto 2022). While the Head of State and affiliates celebrated Independence Day with military parades, activists in the diaspora, including civic society organisations, came together in 2022, as they do year after year, to share public spaces in Spain at the Equatorial Guinea embassy in Madrid, community halls, and other cities and countries and publicly speak up, demand to be heard, and denounce the dictatorial regime's negative impact upon life. Debates, workshops, and political meetings invited dialogue and discussion, projecting at the same time videos and audio recordings on social media that consistently portrayed the political corruption brewing in their homeland.

Inter-community dialogue flourishes even with its challenges. This level of dialogue inquiry that reveals interchanges and calls for dialogue, including embodiments of belief and arguments on social suffering under dictatorships, projects a strong vision of global pro-democracy (Rosenblat 2022). While pro-democratic actors express their need to be heard by the government of Equatorial Guinea, differences and conflict arise as critical comments and narratives on what this other organisation is doing or what the other is not doing. Yet, leadership and commitment always intervene to develop opportunities so that the theory of peaceful dialogue can continuously serve as a guide during trying times. Throughout 2021 and 2022, communities, groups, and political associations in Equatorial Guinea and the diaspora engaged in digital media and digital connectivity (Bernal 2020) to interchange communications among themselves and produce diverse calls for dialogues, such as press releases and political announcements calling for an end to political violence. The series of elections since 1973, including that organised on November 20, 2022, have resulted in

the illegitimate continuation of the presidency (Europapress 2022). Different organisations drafted public letters; some were signed in collaboration and published online. Messages included the non-recognition of the government-imposed fraudulent assault on the homeland elections. Transnational social actors demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners and other activists arbitrarily detained for months without fair trials (Africa UCM-CIDAF 2023).

Conclusion: Public Dialogues and Implications

Given the efforts to call for dialogue, what are the results? What is the response of the government in Equatorial Guinea? What are the implications of the culture of dialogue among pro-democratic actors in Equatorial Guinea and its diaspora? This preliminary and general exploration reveals the explorative nature of dialogue and culture combined through phenomenological perspectives: the investigation of human experience and the impacts of bodies on cultural remodelling (Jackson et al. 2015). The constructions and maintenance of a culture of dialogue imply developments of the self, personhood, sense of identity, and political embodiments. Dialogue, as a human practice, and adopted by pro-democratic actors to foment respect and understanding as a way to interact with repression and political violence, unfolds within personal lives, trajectories, and social structures to expand and transform to ultimately highlight *calls for dialogue* and *public dialogues* as implications of the determination to achieve engagement and peaceful transformations.

The impact of the civil society platform reflects the power of dialogue for peacekeeping and the building of civil society and community organisations. The internal engineering of consistent communication and planning reflects designs to produce calls for dialogue that become known worldwide. The calls for change in unequal systems of distribution of political capacity and collaboration in Equatorial Guinea reiterate collaborative constructionist thinking toward agreement on models of activism, or 'a methodology that begins a dialogue between individuals, expands to groups and builds to embrace and declare community-wide intentions and actions (...)' (Finegold et al. 2002, 235). However, the challenges continue. In February 2023, pro-democratic actors agreed on the fact that Equatorial Guinea has committed internationally to protecting human rights and felt able to denounce corruption and kleptocracy on the day that the Invest in African Energy forum was held in London (UK) on January 26 and planned to receive the Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons as guest (Oil Review 2023). Once again, the internal communication of the civic society platform produced several press releases and joined public demonstrations, showing, thus, that the work of maintaining a culture of dialogue is a constant enterprise.

On February 16, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Movement for the Liberation of Equatorial Guinea Third Republic political party announced the death of a Guinean political prisoner kidnapped in South Sudan in 2019 along with three other opponents and taken to Equatorial Guinea by force, where repeated torture was reported before his life sentence on charges of attempted coup d'état and terrorism (Euronews 2023). Pro-democratic actors organised, requested explanations, and denounced the system, including senior officials' torture. Activists called for declarations and a resolution that included the 'release of political prisoners, call on the Equatorial Guinean authorities to respect international human rights law, humane detention conditions, fair trials and access to families and lawyers for detainees' (CDE 2023). Due to the tenacity and constant enterprise to keep political activism active and productive by civic organisations, political exiles, groups, and international organisations, the European Parliament joined calls for justice and dialogue between February 15 and17 and presented a 'Joint Motion and Resolution on violence against opposition activists in Equatorial Guinea, notably the case of Julio Obama Mefuman' (European Parliament 2023). The government reacted with a non-dialogic response denying human rights violations (Radio Macuto 2023).

The political mobilisation among pro-democratic actors contributes to innovative digital and national democracy (Gopaldas 2019) and a universe of expressions exclusively dedicated to public dialogues or peaceful pressure systems that, despite the challenges in communication and a non-existent exchange between dictatorship and pro-democratic systems (Haggard and Kaufman 2016), thrive on solving immediate needs and building up a culture of collaboration.

Bibliography

Abaha. (2022) 'Mesa Sociopolítica y de Concordia de Madrid.' *Espacios Europeos*, June 4. April. Available at: https://espacioseuropeos.com/2022/04/mesa-sociopolitica-y-de-concordia-de-madrid/.

Adamson F.B. (2012) 'Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora Identity Politics and Transnational Social Movements.' In Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks, edited by P. G. Mandaville, and T. Lyons, 25–42. London: Hurst Publishers.

Africa Renewal. (2021) 'Africa Dialogue Series: Harnessing Culture Development.' *Africa Renewal*, May 6. Available at: https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2021/africa-dialogue-series-harnessing-culture-development.

Africa UCM-CIDAF Revista. (2022) Opinión. *Manifiesto de Madrid de la oposición de Guinea Ecuatorial.* March 3. Available at: https://cidafucm.es/manifiesto-de-madrid-de-la-oposicion-de-guinea-ecuatorial.

Africa UCM-CIDAF Revista. (2023) 'Comunicado de la CORED del no reconocimiento del gobierno impuesto por Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo en Guinea Ecuatorial surgido del pasado fraudulento asalto a la patria llamado elecciones.' *Africa UCM-CIDAF Revista*, February, 27. Available at: https://cidafucm.es/spip.php?article45441#.

Aljazeera. (2021) 'Huge Blasts in Equatorial Guinea's Bata Kill Many, Wound Hundreds.' *Aljazeera*, March 7th. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/7/four-large-explosions-hit-equatorial-guinea-city-of-bata-reports.

Allan, J. (2019) Silenced resistance: women, dictatorships, and genderwashing in Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Amnesty International. (2022) 'Guinea Ecuatorial: La Operación Limpieza pisotea los derechos humanos, no los delitos'. ('Guinea Ecuatorial: La Operación Limpieza pisotea los derechos humanos...') *Amnesty International,* August 18. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2022/08/equatorial-guinea-cleaning-operation-tramples-on-human-rights-not-crime/.

Anderson, R., Cissna, K. N., and Clune, M. K. (2003) The rhetoric of public dialogue. *Communication Research Trends*, 22, 3–27.

Angüe, A. G. N. (2011). *La democracia en Guinea Ecuatorial: dificultades de un proceso*. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).

Aubert, A., and Soler, M. (2006) Dialogism: The dialogic turn in the social sciences. In J. Kinchelo and R. Horn (Eds.), *The Praeger handbook of education and psychology* (pp. 521–529). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Aworawo, D. (2012) The Road Not Taken: Political Action and the Crisis of Democratic Values and Stability in Post-Independence Equatorial Guinea. *Critical Issues in Justice and Politics*, 5, 2.

Baerveldt, C. (2014) Culture and dialogue: Positioning, mediation, or style? *New Ideas in Psychology,* 32, 66–72.

Bawa, S. (2012) Women's rights and culture in Africa: a dialogue with global patriarchal traditions. C*anadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 33 (1), 90–105.

Baynham, S. (1986) Politics and power in Equatorial Guinea. *Africa Insight*, 16 (1), 28–32.

Bell, M. (1998) Culture as dialogue. In *Bakhtin and the human sciences: No last words*. Sage. In *Bakhtin and the human sciences: No previous comments*. Bell, M. & Gardiner, M. E. (Eds.), 49–62. London: Sage Publications.

Bennett, W. L. (2008) 'Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth.' ('Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth') Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Bernal V. (2020) African digital diasporas: Technologies, tactics, and trends: Introduction. African Diaspora, 12 (1–2), 1–10. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/18725465-bja10007.

Bignami, F. and Steve, C. (2001) 'Transnational Civil Society Dialogues.' In *Transatlantic Governance in the Global Economy*, edited by Mark A. Pollack and Gregory C. Shaffer, 255–84. Lanham (Md.): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bohm, D., Factor, D. and Garrett, P. (1991) 'Dialogue: a proposal', Available at: http://www.muc.de/~heuvel/dialogue/dialogue_proposal.html.

Boulding, E., Brigagao, C., and Clements, K. (2019) Peace, Culture, and Society: Transnational Research and Dialogue. Boulder: Westview Press.

Campos-Serrano, A. (2013) 'Extraction offshore, politics inshore, and the role of the State in Equatorial Guinea.' *Africa*, 83 (2), 314–339.

Castro Antolín, M. L., and Ndongo-Bidyogo, D. (1998) España en Guinea: construcción del desencuentro: 1778–1968. Madrid: Ediciones Sequitur.

CDE. (2023) European Parliament blames the Equatoguinean dictatorial regime for the death of Julio Obama Mefuman. *CDE*, February 17. Available at: https://

www.cde.ual.es/en/european-parliament-blames-equatoguinean-dictatorial-regime-for-death-of-julio-obama-mefuman/.

Chambers, S., and Kopstein, J. (2001) Bad civil society. *Political Theory*, 29 (6), 837–865.

Chukwuokolo, J. C., & Jeko, V. O. (2019) 'A Hermeneutic Understanding of Dialogue as a Tool for Global Peace.' *Dialogue and Universalism*, 29 (3), 23–39.

Comisión Ecuatoguineana de Juristas. Legislación de Guinea Ecuatorial. Available at: https://www.juristasge.org/es/leyes.

Comision Europea. (1993) Guinea Ecuatorial: Evolución de la situación politica. *Comision Europea*, May 19. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/IP_93_380.

CORED. Pacto de Convivencia Nacional. Available at: http://coredge.org/es/1-pacto-de-covivencia-nacional/.

Coulthard, M., Cotterill, J., & Rock, F. (Eds.). (2017) Dialogue Analysis VII: Working with Dialogue: Selected Papers from the 7th IADA Conference, Birmingham, 22. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Crouch, M. (2018) Dictators, democrats, and constitutional dialogue: Myanmar's constitutional tribunal, *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Volume 16(2),421–446. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moy056.

DW. (2021) Equatorial Guinea: Death toll from Bata explosion climbs over 100. *DW News,* September 3. [Accessed 10 November 2022] Equatorial Guinea: Death toll from Bata explosion rises over 100 | News | DW | 09.03.2021.

Elinoff, E. (2019) Subjects of politics: Between democracy and dictatorship in Thailand. *Anthropological Theory*, 19 (1), 143–169. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499618782365

Esono Ondo, A. (2014) La necesidad de diálogo político en Guinea Ecuatorial. *Website El Confidencial*, October 14. La necesidad de diálogo político en Guinea Ecuatorial. Available at: http:///www.elconfidencial.com.

Euronews. (2023) 'Muere en prisión un opositor español a la dictadura de Obiang.' Euronews, January 1. Available at: https://es.euronews.com/2023/01/16/guinea-ecuatorial-muere-en-prision-un-opositor-espanol-a-la-dictadura-de-obiang.

Europa Press, International. (2022) 'Guinea Ecuatorial adelanta las elecciones presidenciales a noviembre de 2022.' ('Guinea Ecuatorial.– Guinea Ecuatorial adelanta las elecciones...') *Europa Press*, September 9. [Accessed 10 November 2022]

Europa Press, International. (2022) 'Guinea Ecuatorial adelanta las elecciones presidenciales a noviembre de 2022'. *Europa Press.* Available at: https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-guinea-ecuatorial-adelanta-elecciones-presidenciales-noviembre-2022-20220909070555.html.

European Parliament. (2023) Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2023-0122_EN.htm.

Fernández Moreno, N. (2015) Discursos coloniales y resistencias nativas. La evangelización de la isla de Bioko a principios del siglo XX (Guinea Ecuatorial). En *Tras las huellas del colonialismo en Marruecos y Guinea Ecuatorial*, 54–87. CSIC.

Finegold, M. A., Holland, B. M., and Lingham, T. (2002) 'Appreciative inquiry and public dialogue: An approach to community change.' *Public Organization Review*, 2 (3), 235–252.

Fleischhacker, H. (1999) Equatorial Guinea. In D. Nohlen, M. Krennerich, & B. Thibaut (Eds.), *Elections in Africa*, 351–366. Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

France 24. (2022) Teodoro Obiang wins sixth term in Equatorial Guinea and becomes the world's longest-serving ruler. France 24, November 27. Available at: https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221127-teodoro-obiang-wins-sixth-term-in-equatorial-guinea-becomes-world-s-longest-serving-ruler.

Ge Nuestra. (2022) - Statement - Obiang Unleashes A Wave Of Repression Against Local Activists In Equatorial Guinea During His Election Year. Human Rights Defender Anacleto Micha Has Been Arbitrarily Detained. *Ge Nuestra*, September 28. Available at: https://genuestra-en.weebly.com/news/-statement-obiang-unleashes-a-wave-of-repression-against-local-activists-in-equatorial-guinea-during-his-election-year-human-rights-defender-anacleto-micha-has-been-arbitrarily-detained

Geloso, V., Berdine, G., and Powell, B. (2020) Making sense of dictatorships and health outcomes. *BMJ Global Health*, 5 (5), e002542.

Gjorgjevski, G. (2020) Nurturing the Culture of Dialogue: A Macedonian Experience. *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 6 (2), 385–412.

Gopaldas, R. (2019) Digital dictatorship versus digital democracy in Africa. *South African Institute of International Affairs Policy Insights*, 75. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25956.

Haggard, S., and Kaufman, R. R. (2016) Dictators and Democrats – Masses, Elites and Regime Change. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hountondji, P. J. (2002) The Struggle for Meaning: reflections on philosophy, culture, and democracy in Africa, 78. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Igambo, F. M. R. (2006) Conflictos etnicos y gobernabilidad/Ethnic conflicts and governance: Guinea Ecuatorial. Barcelona: Carena Editores.

International Dialogue. Available at: https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/id/about-international-dialogue/.

Jackson, M., Jaap, T., Fisher, D., Bedford, I., Desjarlais, R., Van Heekeren, D., and Dalidowicz, M. (2015) *Phenomenology in Anthropology: A Sense of Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Monteiro, R. d. A. A., Toledo, R. F. d., Jacobi, P. R.(2021) 'Dialogue Method: A Proposal to Foster Intra- and Inter-community Dialogic Engagement.' ('Journal of Dialogue Studies Vol 9') *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 9, 164–188.

Janz, B. B. (1996) Alterity, dialogue, and African philosophy. In E. C. Eze (Ed.), *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A critical reader,* 221–238. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Kent, M. L., and Lane, A. (2021) Two-way communication, symmetry, negative spaces, and dialogue. *Public Relations Review*, 47 (2), 102014.

Koinova, M., and Karabegović, D. (2017) Diasporas and transitional justice: Transnational activism from local to global levels of engagement. *Global Networks*, 17 (2), 212–233.

Kojevnikov, A. (1999) Dialogues about knowledge and power in totalitarian political culture. *Historical studies in the physical and biological sciences*, 30 (1), 227–247.

Lashmar, P. (1992) Equatorial Guinea: Lurching Toward Democracy. *Africa Report*, 37 (2), 68.

Lindberg, S. I. (2006) 'Opposition parties and democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa,' *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 24 (1), 123–138, 126. 26.

Lock, M. (1993) 'Cultivating the body: Anthropology and epistemologies of bodily practice and knowledge.' ('Cultivating the Body: Anthropology and Epistemologies of Bodily...') *Annual review of anthropology*, 22 (1), 133–155.

Marková, I., and Gillespie A., eds. (2012) Trust and Conflict: Representation, Culture, and Dialogue. London: Routledge.

Maroto Blanco, J.M. (2014) La Ayuda Oficial al Desarrollo española en Guinea Ecuatorial. *Cuadernos Geográficos*, 53 (1), 160–187.

Marume, S. B. M., Ndudzo, D., and Chickasha, A. S. (2016) Role of civic society. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*. 4 (8), 68–72.

Mensch, J.R. (2009) *Embodiments: From the body to the body politic*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press Evanston.

Mercer, C., B. Page, and M. Evans. (2008) Development and the African Diaspora: Place and the Politics of Home, London: Zed Books

Mesa Vélez, L. (2019) 'Culture of Dialogue as a Decolonial Peacebuilding Tool: The Case of Colombia. ('Culture of Dialogue' as a Decolonial Peacebuilding Tool: The Case of...') *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 7, 93–113.

Mollov, B., and Lavie, C. (2001) Culture, dialogue, and perception change in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12, 69–87.

Nicholas, G. T., and Dyer, P. (2003) Inter-community Dialogue: An Appreciative Inquiry Application. In Tenth National Conference of the NZ Organisation Development Network. Auckland.

Nsé, A., and Micó, P. (2016) La oposición guineana entre dos 'diálogos nacionales' (1993–2014). *Endoxa*, 37, 413–462.

Ntui, V. N. (2021) African Democratic Communalism: Implication for Governance and Democracy in Africa. *Sapientia: Journal of Philosophy*, 14 (1595–4943).

Nzimakwe, T.I. (2014) Practising Ubuntu and leadership for good governance: The South African and continental dialogue. *African Journal of Public Affairs*,7 (4):30–41. Available at: https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/58143.

Oil Review. (2023) Africa must develop its gas market, says EG Minister. *Oil Review*, January 27th. Available at: https://www.oilreviewafrica.com/events/event-news/africa-must-develop-own-gas-market-says-eg-minister.

Okeja, U. (2010) Narratives and the Dialogue of Cultures of Knowledge: A Perspective on the Experience of the West and Africa. ('Narratives and the Dialogue of Cultures of Knowledge: A Perspective on...') *Kritike*, 4 (2), 142–154.

Okenve, E. N. (2018) Colonización, resistencia y transformación de la memoria histórica fang en Guinea Ecuatorial (1900–1948). *Ayer. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 109 (1), 109–135.

Osiel, M. J. (1995) Dialogue with dictators: judicial resistance in Argentina and Brazil. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 20 (2), 481–560.

Paffenholz, T., Zachariassen, A., and Helfer, C. (2017) What makes or breaks national dialogues? 'Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative, Graduate Institute of

International and Development Studies.' ('Preventing violence through inclusion')

Pickering, M. J., and Garrod, S. (2021) Understanding dialogue: Language use and social interaction. Cambridge University Press.

Płachciak, A. (2009) Sustainable development as the principle of civic society. *Economics & Sociology*, 2 (2), 85–90.

Radio Macuto. (2022) Pacto político de la Oposición Prodemocrática de Guinea Ecuatorial por la Unidad, la Coordinación y la Transición democráticas. ('Pacto político de la Oposición Prodemocrática de Guinea Ecuatorial por...') *Radio Macuto*, Junio 28. Available at: https://www.radiomacuto.net/2022/06/28/pacto-politico-de-la-oposicion-prodemocratica-de-guinea-ecuatorial-por-la-unidadla-coordinacion-y-la-transicion-democraticas/.

Radio Macuto. (2023) El dictador Obiang desafía al Parlamento de la Unión Europea. Radio Macuto, February 22. Available at: https://www.radiomacuto.net/2023/02/22/el-dictador-obiang-desafia-al-parlamento-de-la-union-europea/.

Republica de Guinea Ecuatorial, Boletin Oficial del Estado. (2012) Elecciones de la Cámara de los Diputados, el Senado, Municipales, y Referéndum. ('Publicada la lista de los 100 diputados electos en las pasadas elecciones') *Boletin Oficial del Estado*, Noviembre 16.

Revista Real Equatorial Guinea. (2022) 'El Gobierno y 17 partidos políticos exigen el desalojo inmediato de la sede del partido Ciudadanos por la Innovación.' ('El Gobierno y 17 partidos políticos exigen el desalojo inmediato de la...') *Revista Real Equatorial Guinea,* Septiembre 29. Available at: https://realequatorialguinea.com/destacado/politica/el-gobierno-y-17-partidos-politicos-exigen-el-desalojo-inmediato-de-la-sede-del-partido-ciudadanos-por-la-innovacion/.

Rosenblat, M. O. (2022) The Role of Transnational Civil Society in Shaping International Values, Policies, and Law. *Chi. J. Int'l L.*, 23, 144.

Rupiya, M. R. (2020) Political History of Equatorial Guinea: 'The Rise and Entrenchment of Nguemism' *Advances in Historical Studies*, 9 (3), 98–112.

Sá, A. L., and Rodrigues Sanches, E. (2021) The politics of autocratic survival in Equatorial Guinea: co-optation, restrictive institutional rules, repression, and international projection. *African Affairs*, 120 (478), 78–102.

Schein, E. H. (2003) On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning. *Reflections: The SoL Journal*, 4 (4), 27–38.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) What is culture? A compilation of quotations. *Global People Core Concept Compilations*, (1) 2.

Stammler, F., and Peskov, V. (2008) Building a 'culture of dialogue among stakeholders in North-West Russian oil extraction. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60 (5), 831–849.

Sundiata, I. K. (2019) The Roots of African Despotism: The Question of Political Culture. In *African Nationalism and Revolution*. Gregory Maddox (ed), 35–57. New York: Routledge.

Tan, S., and Brown, J. (2005) The world café in Singapore: Creating a learning culture through dialogue. *The journal of applied behavioral science*, 41 (1), 83–90.

Tint, B., Chirimwami, V., and Sarkis, C. (2014) Diasporas in dialogue: lessons from reconciliation efforts in African refugee communities. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 32 (2), 177–202.

Ugarte, M. (2010) Africans in Europe: The culture of exile and emigration from Equatorial Guinea to Spain. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Wählisch, M. (2017) The Lebanese National Dialogue. The past and present consensus-building experience. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

Wood, G. (2004) Business and politics in a criminal state: the case of Equatorial Guinea. *African Affairs*, 103 (413), 547–567.

Zahavi, D. (2018) Phenomenology: the basics. London: Routledge.

Zeleza, P.T. (2009) Diaspora dialogues: Engagements between Africa and its diasporas. In N. Nzegwu & I. Okpweho (Eds.), *The new African diaspora,* 31–58. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Zoller, Heather M. (2000) 'A place you haven't visited before': Creating the conditions for community dialogue. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 65 (2/3), 191–207.

Conversation as a Methodology for Human Flourishing, Belonging, and Understanding

Saiyyidah Zaidi[1]

Abstract: Despite the subtle differences, the terms conversation and dialogue are frequently used interchangeably. Conversation is an informal exchange of ideas, thoughts, and opinions between two or more people; it occurs in a range of settings from formal to informal, without a specific goal or objective. Conversation is a 'model, method, end and means' (Pattison 2020, 88) of communication. On the other hand, dialogue refers to a more structured and intentional exchange of ideas and opinions between two or more participants with the aim of achieving a specific outcome; it is often more formal and structured. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the delicate differences between dialogue and conversation and make a case for the use of the less formal methods of conversation in exchanges where human flourishing, belonging, and understanding are sought. This article is in three parts. First, the difference between dialogue and conversations is explored. Second, I introduce Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and its development for use in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) conversations through The Lotus Model Process (Teller 2021, 404) with the seven types of conversation. Third, I present a report on a workshop where DEI topics of cultivating belonging and inclusion were explored by an international organisation. Finally, practice recommendations are made for using conversation as a methodological approach with the aim of creating spaces that enable belonging and understanding to emerge at an individual, team, and organisational level.

Keywords: Conversation, Appreciative Inquiry, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, Psychological Safety

One conversational method is that of an 'Appreciative Inquiry' (AI) (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) which enables individuals, teams, and organisations to become learning groups where 'learningful conversations balance inquiry and advocacy... where we are open to the influence of others' (Senge 1990, 9). Moving from 'entrenched mental models' (Senge 1990, 203) to building a shared vision that 'fosters a long-term orientation and an imperative for learning' (Senge 1990, 344) fosters

1 Saiyyidah Zaidi is a pioneering and bridge building independent practitioner-researcher and leadership coach investigating the intersection of race, gender, and religion using conversation as a methodology . She is an engaging and facilitative tutor skilled in researching, designing, and delivering personal and professional development programs. Working across sectors, in a multi-disciplinary manner, Saiyyidah is an expert researching and teaching in diversity, inclusion, and belonging for senior leaders and individuals interested in exploring their identity, intersectionality, and interculturality in a postcolonial, post-George Floyd, post-Pandemic arena.

more openness, vulnerability, and opportunity for behavioural change. In my work and research, I use AI conversations to consider 'how might we' explore issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) and belonging and understanding. I argue that difficult, complex, uncomfortable conversations can take place with increased respect, presence, psychological safety, and change-enabled action by using AI conversations, rather than dialogue alone. I propose the use of The Lotus Model Process (Teller 2021, 404) and the seven types of conversation (which I have identified by reflecting on thirteen years of DEI facilitation and leadership training) as a methodology for human flourishing, belonging, and understanding.

Introduction

As a practitioner-researcher and leadership coach I advocate for the importance of exploring how conversation and good conversation practices (such as how to ask questions, deep listening, and holding space) can positively contribute to governance locally and globally. Having a hopeful intention in this regard is critical to curating and embedding human flourishing, belonging, and understanding in interactions that have the potential to transform individuals and organisations. In my work as a practitioner and researcher, the aim is to establish and extend an awareness of the energising and liberating attributes of conversation as a vehicle and instrument of interaction for 'cultural creativity and societal change' (Jenlink and Banathy 2005, 3). Good human governance requires a broad, representative range of voices from the full population of a location to be involved, otherwise the governance is not inclusive and may be accurate based on the voices of those involved, but inaccurate as a representative of the population or community as a whole. By considering the differences between dialogue and conversation, there exists an opportunity to contemplate the formal, curated, and ordered exchanges, compared to informal, incidental, and undisciplined explorations; with the latter often being perceived as more precarious.

The terms 'conversation' and 'dialogue' are habitually used synonymously to describe interactions (usually verbal) between people. Expanding dialogue into a broader conversation addresses several issues in DEI endeavours and can result in defusing possible fear or tension in the interaction before it has commenced: with individuals more prepared; feeling a greater sense of psychological safety; and those involved sensing confidence in participating regardless of role, knowledge, or position. Genuine dialogue is a process of reciprocal interaction where a space for new meaning and understanding is created (Banathy and Jenlink 2005, ix), often asynchronistically. I start this paper by discussing the difference and similarity between conversation and dialogue. I then introduce AI and share an approach that can be used to enable a purpose, values-, and beliefs-oriented conversation regarding DEI, leading to tan-

gible behavioural change. Finally, I present a sample project where the conversational approach advocated for has been used as part of leadership development and DEI advancement in industry.

The Importance of Subtle Similarities and Differences

The subtle and nuanced differences in meaning contribute to greater awareness of how and when to use particular communication methods. The etymology of 'dialogue' means a speech across, between, or through two or more people. The word dialogue comes from two Greek words: 'logos' which refers to 'meaning,' 'knowledge,' 'word'; and 'dia' which means 'through.'[2] Dialogue is a collective communication: it is relational, genuine discourse. It is a disclosing through language as a cultural symbolic tool and conversation as a medium for sharing (Jenlink and Banathy 2005, 5–6). Dialogue 'derives its genuineness only from the consciousness of the element of inclusion' (Buber 1965, p. 97 in Jenlink and Banathy 2005, 6). Through dialogue, individuals engage in a shared exploration and construct meaning, actively contributing to an unfolding. It is a creative interaction that allows, or enables, new insights and unexpected ideas to emerge from the encounter. Irish theologian Danny Martin says that in the past dialogue represented something special, it had a 'richer sense' and was 'regarded as a special form of exchange' (Martin 2005, 82). Today, dialogue implies something formal, perhaps curated, a planned interaction with a beginning, end, and conclusion.

By contrast, conversation is conceivably more 'about connecting with life through others' (Martin 2005, 72). The word 'conversation' has its root in the Latin word 'con-vertere' meaning to 'turn with' (Martin 2005, 72) and means 'to live, dwell, live with, keep company with'.[3] It is described as an 'informal interchange of thoughts and sentiments by spoken words' (Martin 2005, 72), suggesting something casual, incidental, even playful. Conversation can result in change as 'we see things differently, we understand better what is going on; we co-create as we participate in the emergence of new meaning' (Martin 2005, 72), a transformation of sorts as the exchange happens 'in between' (Pattison 2020, 87). Retired British practical theologian Stephen Pattison describes conversation as 'commonplace and ordinary – everyone can engage in them' (Pattison 2020, 88): it is informal, and is a process that can happen accidentally with no agenda.

As I am proposing that there are both distinctions and similarities between conversation and dialogue, it is helpful to draw on a suggestion by Martin, who asserts a dis-

2 https://www.etymonline.com/word/dialogue (Accessed on 23 November 2022)

3 https://www.etymonline.com/word/conversation (Accessed on 23 November 2022)

tinction between 'dialogue' and 'Dialogue' (with a capital D). He describes 'Dialogue' as 'a new conversation that is deliberate, intentional, and skillful; that will take place between individuals and communities, across sectors, across gender, race and creed' (Martin 2005, 83). The use of the capital D to describe it as a 'proper noun' creates a careful emphasis on the 'deliberateness implied and the skills that must be (re)learned' (Martin 2005, 83), indicating that there is something uncomplicated, innocent, and harmless about these conversations. This description of Dialogue is similar to Pattison's explanation of conversation with both Martin and Pattison suggesting that it is something available to all, is skillful yet requires no skill, creates something new, is co-created voluntarily, is playful, energising, storytelling; unstructured and waiting to unfold, emergent, willingness to listen and to give, and creating something new (Martin 2005 and Pattison 2020). Dialogue is 'profoundly important, creative, ignored, and [a] deeply subversive activity that needs to be acknowledged' (Pattison 2020, 88); it is about thinking together with the aim of moving towards a mutual understanding (Martin 2005, 84). This is very much how I would describe what is necessary for human flourishing, belonging, and inclusion.

I describe communication encounters between people as conversation because it 'is accessible all the way down' (Pattison 1989, 87). Conversation is available to all regardless of cognitive, experiential, or demographic difference or similarity (Zaidi 2022a, 84) difference or similarity. It exists without hierarchy, can be utilised by all groups and individuals, and is itself the 'beginning and end' with those involved 'celebrating and participating in the living perichoretic relational flow of conversations' (Pattison 1989, 87). It is for these reasons that conversation can be an effective tool in DEI and human flourishing related work.

The invitation to study conversation as a 'model, method and means' (Pattison 2020, 88) provides the opportunity to consider the essence and approaches used in conversation as a device for eliciting human flourishing, belonging, and understanding; and this communication is central to examining governance for the human future. Documenting my experience as a leadership coach and facilitator later in this paper, I explore how conversation can be used to progress inclusion and belonging by applying an adapted AI approach.

Having explored some of the differences and similarities between dialogue and conversation, I now discuss the contribution deploying conversation as a method can bring to governance for the human future in DEI undertakings.

Conversation as an Approach to Curating an Inclusive Governance for the Human Future

As we seek to create a more equitable and sustainable governance for the human future, involving a full, representative range of voices and opinions is critical. Since 2020 there has been an increased awareness of the range of complex and interconnected challenges facing the world, from climate change and economic and health inequality to social conflict and political polarisation. Tackling these volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous challenges requires multiple manoeuvres, including a collective effort that takes account of the perspectives and experiences of diverse communities.

There are many benefits from taking an inclusive and varied stance to all aspects of governance, particularly governance for the human future. Creating structures that include people from diverse backgrounds and experiences brings in different epistemic perspectives to policy and strategy making, without being derailed by discussions of epistemic advantage or disadvantage. Diversity of thought can lead to more creative and effective approaches to complex problems (Reynolds and Lewis 2021); and diversity of experience and demographics further broadens the field for potential solutions to problems and challenges. Furthermore, inclusive governance can foster greater trust and cooperation among diverse groups, ultimately leading to more sustainable and equitable outcomes (OECD 2015). Inclusive governance structures and discussions can also help to reduce social tensions and conflicts between different groups, promoting greater understanding and tolerance by virtue of expanded participation. Adopting DEI as a principle in governance can disseminate human rights and dignity at all levels. Organisations that value diversity and promote inclusive decision-making processes send a powerful message internally and externally (to the organisation) that every person has inherent worth and should be treated with reverence and self-worth.

As DEI initiatives have become more important in recent years, organisations have adopted programmes that seek to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. However, many of these programmes fail (Caprino, 2023) and are seen to be tokenistic by some (Fastcompany 2020). A significant obstacle to successful DEI conversations is that they, by their very nature, can be difficult and uncomfortable due to discussing sensitive topics related to race, gender, and identity. This awkwardness can lead to avoidance of these conversations or topics, which can hinder progress toward creating a more inclusive workplace – any initiatives undertaken result in little or no tangible change. Many organisations wishing to embark on these discussions do not have a clear understanding of what DEI means or how to achieve it; they may not have the necessary resources or expertise to implement effective DEI

initiatives; they may not have buy-in from leadership, may struggle with accountability, or may view it as a human resources project.

This lack of understanding and commitment can result in ineffective or symbolic DEI endeavours that do not lead to meaningful change and may in effect cause additional resistance. Another reason for a lack of effectiveness in many DEI initiatives is that organisations struggle to acknowledge the systemic barriers and biases that contribute to the inequities in the workplace. This includes implicit biases in hiring and promotion processes, lack of representation and inclusion of marginalised groups in leadership positions, and unequal distribution of resources and/or opportunities. Acknowledging these matters requires a deeper understanding of the structural and systemic nature of discrimination and a commitment to systemic change. The multiple challenges that individuals, teams, and organisations face when wishing to curate or participate in DEI conversations can be exponentially enriched with a willingness to engage in unscripted conversations.

The Use of Conversation as a Method and Methodology

Leadership coaches and facilitators use conversation as the primary process to curate a safe space for clients and organisations within which to grow, develop, and flourish. Unsurprisingly, as a leadership coach, I use conversation in my organisational work in the area of DEI and belonging, and as a research methodology.[4] The notion of a 'critical conversation' provides a helpful entry point to reflection and provides a methodological approach for critical conversation.[5] Pattison's description of conversation as a 'shy, slightly illicit activity... [where] as a researcher I never found anything out, and only found things in. But, more accurately, I find things in between. And in between is the precise location of conversation' (Pattison 2020, 87) draws out the power and potential of conversation. This description describes a shift in participant understanding of the actual process, resulting in a heightened awareness of the simplicity and capacity of a simple intentional interaction. When leading DEI facilitations in organisations, obtaining and then sustaining the 'buy-in' of the 'gatekeeper' is as important as maintaining that of the participants for the possibility of the exchange to remain.

4 For more see Pattison 2020 and Elizabeth Jordan (2019) Conversation as a tool of research in practical theology, Practical Theology, 12 (5), 526-536, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1635743

5 For more detail see 'Some Straws for the Bricks' (1989) where Pattison sets out the 10 steps for a (theological) critical conversation, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13520806.1989.11759678

Approaching conversations as 'commonplace and ordinary' and 'hidden in plain sight and unattended through all aspects of our lives' leads to a recognition that 'conversations… are our main work' (Pattison 2020, 88) – the work of humanity. The word 'ordinary' has been used by practical theologians in different ways. British Black liberation theologian Anthony Reddie describes 'ordinary' as essentially 'working class' (personal correspondence, March 20, 2021). Theologian Jeff Astley (2002) explains that 'ordinary theology' implies '*non-scholarly* and *non-academic*' (56, italics original). Pattison explains that by 'ordinary', 'I mean that people have conversations very frequently and without fuss in everyday life' (personal correspondence September 20, 2021). These subtle differences highlight that everyone's experience is 'ordinary to them' and validates the contribution to be made by all. It is sharing this ordinariness that creates understanding and awareness of different perspectives and brings together potentially disparate people. Conversation is 'unbiddable, under-determined and under-defined…, slipper[y]… It's informal, commonplace, democratic, ordinary, and open to all' (Pattison 2020, 91) and anyone wishing to be involved can, and should, be.

Knowing that the 'essence of [something] you cannot predict or guarantee' (Pattison 2020, 89) is embedded within the exchange requires a deep trust (with oneself, the process, and other participants) before the interaction can take place when using conversation as a method. Facilitating a space where 'the possibility of wandering, meandering, even doubling back… flows unevenly and at different speeds [like a river] as it goes along and encounters gullies, bends, and obstacles in its path' (Pattison 2020, 89) provides comfort in the discomfort of not knowing. Participants and facilitators experience tension from sitting with the polarity of confronting realities about self and system, conscious and unconscious biases, work as individuals and as a collective, and the unknown opportunity given in the field of the facilitation, where we might meet.

> 'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
> there is a field. I'll meet you there.
>
> When the soul lies down in that grass,
> the world is too full to talk about.
> Ideas, language, even the phrase 'each other'
> doesn't make any sense.' (Rūmī 1995, 35)

The opportunity for a convening that 'potentially involve[s] transformation, however slight, for those involved' (Zeldin 1998, 2) is presented in the extract of Rumi's poem above. Every interaction in this space can create change if one is willing to surrender to the unknown. At the same time, it is important to 'not push for results' (Pattison 2007a, 261–89, in Pattison 2020, 89) and to allow what naturally

emerges. Creating a space for participants to share the results from what can be perceived to be a private experience has been compared to sharing holiday photos (Pattison 2020, 90). The suggested intimacy and varying perspectives of what is shared and experienced draws our attention to trust and individual subjectivity – factors the facilitator is aware of in the curation of any DEI conversation. The documentation of personal journeys through a written reflexive practice and sharing conversational insight (not the content per se, which is private to the individual interactions) creates the space for further reflection with others. The resultant new knowledge creates opportunities for extending relationality with others and expanded awareness of self and other. It takes genuine courage and curiosity to engage in this work. Yet when the proposed conversational AI model is deployed, we discover the space for allowing and encouraging deep, messy, challenging conversations to take place; and a sense of humanity and mutual understanding is created.

I will now summarise what AI is and then describe what and how I use this to facilitate belonging, understanding, and inclusion in DEI work.

The AI Model

The conversational method of 'Appreciative Inquiry' (AI) (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) enables individuals, teams, and organisations to become learning groups where 'learningful conversations balance inquiry and advocacy... where we are open to the influence of others' (Senge 1990, 9). It supports shifting from 'entrenched mental models' (Senge 1990, 203) to building a shared vision that 'fosters a long-term orientation and an imperative for learning' (Senge 1990, 344). In its essence AI is about changing attitudes, behaviours and practice through appreciative conversation, exploration, and relationality. Developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva at Case Western Reserve University, USA, in the 1980s, AI has been used to facilitate organisational change with strengths-based interactions that construct a positive, expanding, generative shared future (Cooperrider et al. 2008, VI–VIII). The focus on strengths enables one to identify improvements and unlock new insights that may act as doors to new opportunities, knowledge, and progress. The inquiry invites a move from using strengths to perform to utilising them for transformation, with the aim of the investigation to 'locate, highlight, and illuminate the life-giving forces of an organisation's existence' (Cooperrider et al. 2008, XI). AI practitioners advocate for a collective inquiry into what is best so that one can imagine what could be in five phases of definition, discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Each phase has a key question of exploration.

Having a clear answer to the question 'What is the topic of inquiry?' enables the AI to have a clearer focus, a definition and allows the AI process to start effectively. De-

veloping the inquiry question in a pre-AI meeting with key stakeholders present results in a sharper articulation of the intent behind the inquiry, which can then be shared and considered openly. This avoids the inquiry becoming dominated by unarticulated agendas. In the discovery phase the question of 'what gives life' enables participants to appreciate what is. This part of the AI is concerned with exploring the past and present relating to the inquiry topic. The discovery stage considers the strengths of previous approaches and what conversation partners may choose to continue with (or leave behind). In the next phase the opportunity to dream of 'what might be' successful in the future is considered. Through an exploration of the stories uncovered in the discovery phase the opportunity to create a compelling, memorable, and ambitious picture of the desired future is available with themes identified that are considered at the next part, the design stage. In the design phase, participants in the inquiry co-construct 'how it can be.' The opportunity to be expansive and create images of a preferred future occurs in this part with all possibilities available for discussion. Finally in the destiny phase, participants investigate 'what might be' with a view to empowering, learning, improvising to create sustainable change (Cooperrider et al. 2008, 36–48).

A significant critique of AI is the emphasis on the positivity and strengths aspects of individuals, groups, organisations which may lead to a lack of critical analysis and a failure to identify and address systemic issues. Two qualities of appreciative inquiry are necessary in order to achieve AI's transformative potential: "(a) a focus on changing how people think instead of what people do, and (b) a focus on supporting self-organising change processes that flow from new ideas" (Bushe and Kassam 2005, 161) AI's focus on celebrating success and ignoring negative experiences can also lead to the erasure of marginalised voices and perpetuate existing power structures. However, the approach of co-creating a discussion with an inquiry approach where all possibilities can be explored is useful in the space of DEI. This invites an adaptation to use AI in DEI projects.

Using AI in DEI Conversations

As a research-practitioner with the aim of creating spaces for individuals to fully be themselves, I am constantly investigating and developing existing tactics, strategies, and methods to fit the ambition of the research or organisational project. The significant and subtle difference is that often in DEI projects knowledge is handed over to attendees through a lecture format with minimal (or ineffective) discussion relating to how this new knowledge and material applies to the individual, team, or organisation. This diminishes the opportunity for behaviour change and reduces the long-term alignment of wellbeing with DEI aspirations. Therein lies a missed opportunity for senior leaders at a time when significant effort, time, and money is being invested

with the ambition of creating real change in the DEI agenda, and simultaneously boosting wellbeing.

In my experience commissioners of DEI initiatives are procuring behaviour change because of increased intellectual, emotional, psychological, and embodied understanding. When allowed careful AI event design, planning and facilitation supports increased psychological safety before, during, and after the experience. A team effort by all those involved assists those leading the intervention to adjust and be flexible to the needs of the moment in the experience, rather than merely imparting information which may be intellectually understood, but not experientially received. When several conversations are convened as part of an intervention, behaviour change becomes more possible, probable, and predictable because participants are more open and curious about the perspective of others – they are viscerally changed as their knowledge of reality expands. It is for this reason alone that the demographic, experiential, and cognitive range of the facilitators and participants is acutely important in DEI explorations.

Adapting AI to take account of DEI requires a nuanced and sympathetic understanding of the ways that power and privilege operate within organisations and the broader societal context of the organisation. Experienced South African AI facilitator, Tanya Cruz Teller, developed an AI model incorporating an appreciative leadership and inclusion approach. 'The Lotus Model Process' has four components: 'renew – engendering a positive sense of self; relate – connecting with others; co-create – generatively visioning a desired future together; and resolve – committing to heartfelt actions' (Teller 2021, 404). Echoing the earlier descriptions of conversation and Dialogue, Teller describes the work of inclusion as a 'call to action [that] requires perseverance and resilience' (Teller 2021, 408).

Individual psychological safety is necessary to feel able to change (Schein and Bennis 1965 in Edmonson 1999, 354) and requires interpersonal trust and mutual respect (Edmonson 1999, 354). The 'shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking' (Edmonson 1999, 350) is required for this work to be truthful. These factors are significant, given the complexity of DEI discussions, and can be consciously cultivated by facilitators. Bringing specific attention to psychological safety, nurturing deep integrity and trust, and allowing the full somatic experience to be represented, as well as the intellectual one at the start of any facilitation, enables the group to create its own 'terms of engagement'. This subtle shift raises participant self-awareness and leads to an emergence of shifting behavioural patterns or mindsets. All AI events require significant preparation for participants to be fully present with a degree of certainty that their contribution matters and to be confident in sharing their perspective. Lord Alderdice's invitation to explore the

question 'What is the other guy right about? If I recognise this, then I can be open to identifying what within me I need to change' (spoken in the opening remarks of the Dialogue Society symposium leading to this publication) offers the opportunity for DEI-related understanding and change.

Acknowledging that not all communication is empowering and co-creating the frame of reference for a conversation permits participants to evoke a deeper understanding of each other in a reduced period. For example, when an organisation seeks to convene their first DEI-based inquiry the existing strength within this topic (or current sense of self) is often minimal. As a facilitator I offer that one of the primary purposes for the initial inquiry is to map the current landscape and future vision. The development of an effective strategy and implementation plan will evolve from simply continuing the conversation. Persisting with the conversation is in and of itself progress, given the sensitivity of the subject and its personal nature for some organisations. Creating a platform where innovative and/or experiential behavioural change can occur, rather than hastily procuring 'off the shelf' solutions, is an effective response to the DEI challenges present in organisations and systems today.

Reflecting on my thirteen years of practice in DEI leadership training and coaching, I have identified seven types of conversation: with self (through thoughts or writing); one-to-one conversations with one other person; in a triad where there is a speaker, listener and observer; in a group; through video; using the written word; and through audio (e.g., podcast, voice notes or video listened as audio). Each of these conversations has varying degrees of depth of communication shared and receipt of information that can range from 'words imparted' to 'information transferred.' Sharing the range of what can be (or not be) understood helps participants to acknowledge and recognise the potential delivery of what they seek to communicate. Exploring this in the early part of an inquiry helps to deepen trust and extend psychological safety to conversations where people may be uncomfortable to wander, make mistakes, and open up to their own (and others) vulnerability. The heightened awareness of the range of communication opportunities, methods, and comprehension increases options and decisions regarding what conversation type is most appropriate for any scenario.

An additional factor generated by identifying the 'seven types of conversation' is the range of depth of communication for the person sharing and the person(s) receiving it. Words exchanged in an intellectual, matter-of-fact way appear to convey a message, and exploration of nonverbal communication adds depth to the words exchanged – even in text – with nonverbal cues embedded within (Burgoon et al. 2021, 5), even in virtual communication. The cues of 'body, face, voice, appearance, touch, distancing, timing, and physical surroundings [which] all have a part in creat-

ing messages, with or without anything being said' (Burgoon et al. 2021, 5) represent so much and can aid comprehension, or result in misunderstanding (Burgoon et al. 2021, 7). If human communication is the 'process of creating meanings between people through the exchange of signs' (Burgoon et al. 2021, 7) paying attention to the verbal, nonverbal, and somatic nature of communication is critical to obtaining a broader understanding of what is being offered and received. Therefore, the combination of Teller's Lotus Model Process of AI and the use of the seven types of conversation assists in expanding the influence of DEI discussions in any setting.

A Sample Conversation for Human Flourishing, Belonging and Inclusion

I now turn to how conversation can be used to cultivate belonging and inclusion by sharing the experience of working with one organisation where The Lotus Model Process and seven types of conversation were used to 'open the conversation' in DEI. The commissioning client is the director of an English office leading 100 staff of a global finance organisation. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, staff returning to the workplace reported a reduction in belonging and connection, an increased sense of loneliness, alongside a reported sense of lack of inclusion and diversity (confidential client reporting). Employees with one or more 'protected characteristic'[6] felt that DEI had historically been ignored or given 'lip service.' They reported that their experience of working from home was psychologically safer, which contributed to difficulties in going back to the office. The leadership team were made aware of these challenges and commissioned 'unconscious bias' DEI training in 2021. In early 2022, the employee satisfaction survey report showed 24% reduction in loyalty to the firm, and 18% reported a reduction in satisfaction at work. The unconscious bias training did not have the desired effect, with no reported change in the employee satisfaction survey. Following this, the leadership team commissioned an intervention to explore DEI through the lens of belonging, understanding, identity, leadership, and difference.

Given the sensitive nature of such an intervention (and the previous financial and time investment), it was important for the client to ensure that any activities would move the discussion forward and enable people to feel safe in participating. A half-day, in-person AI experience was undertaken for the organisation with a two-month lead-in consisting of short weekly communications inviting participants to review carefully curated content. These 'email conversations' enabled participants to feel

6 Based on the UK Equality Act 2010, which defines protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, 'race', religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

more able to enter the room and be active participants in discussions with strengthened vulnerability and unfiltered openness. The full range of 'seven conversations' were applied leading up to and during the experience.

The primary question of inquiry was 'How might we cultivate belonging and inclusion in (company name)?' Participants reported that it was the initial 'conversation with self' which enabled them to be more vulnerable before the group meeting. A range of conversational styles was deployed during the event; these enabled individuals to relate and connect with each other. Multiple check-in points were provided during the event with facilitators speaking one-to-one to each person with the aim of putting participants at ease and to check-in on how they were feeling. The group were invited to co-create and generate a range of visions before identifying a shared desired future agreement. All of this provided the foundational principles that directed the rest of the conversation and enabled participants to generally be in the same place emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically, despite the potential for discomfort. Opportunities for individual, small group, and plenary discussion continued throughout the experience as discussions moved towards the resolve phase with commitments made. Noting that silence can mean a participant feels unable to be heard, anonymous sharing through tools such as Padlet and Mentimeter[7] were provided. The gentle questioning, asking, and listening approach results in engaging with difficult matters in a safe way.

An approach of 'modelling the behaviour' was identified alongside some strategic changes that could be considered over the course of the next twelve months. As the discussion moved deeper into the resolve phase – unexpected conversation, dialogue, respect, and understanding of each other emerged. Multiple points of connection were created between people who were carers, responsible for young children, had English as a second language, and a range of sexuality, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

To explore the best of 'what is', time and space was allocated for participants to acknowledge and appreciate themselves, draw out learning opportunities from others' perspectives, and be comfortable with being uncomfortable – they related with each other in a stronger manner. Initially several individuals did not want to participate in this discussion and felt that it was a 'human resources initiative'; they displayed resistance to the topic and project and said that being told it was 'mandatory' by the leadership team, further increased their opposition. The process of experiential learning and careful facilitation resulted in participants reporting greater awareness

7 Padlet is an online collaborative tool that allows users to share and organise information in a virtual board; and Mentimeter is a real-time interactive tool that enables audience engagement through live polls, quizzes, and word clouds.

of DEI (98.6%) and positive behaviour change (98.4%), even among those who were hesitant initially.

Three weeks after the event, participants reported a greater consciousness of the challenges faced by some marginalised individuals within the organisation. Further still, some felt they were able to move from a place of resistance to one of less resistance, even advocacy in DEI elements important to individuals. Attendees reported an 8.5/10 satisfaction with the experience, and an 8.6/10 regarding recommending others to attend. One attendee found the discussion very challenging and was given further support via the organisation – highlighting the importance of carefully curated spaces for DEI conversation. Those who reported ratings of 7 and 8 out of 10 (rather than 9 or 10 out of 10) expressed frustration at how challenging the experience was for them personally. My team and I were pleased that all those expected to attend were there and stayed throughout the event despite their complexities and personal challenge. Horizons were broadened.

Discussion

Conversation is a reciprocal communication tool and is accessible to all in one way or another. The intention participants have in a conversation will become clear during the interaction by the words used, the vocal tone, physical embodiment of the language, the quality of listening, and how the space is held by those involved. Furthermore, what is unsaid is particularly relevant in DEI conversations – through using a modified version of AI this is factored in. Rather than an AI that is purely positive in its strengths focus, The Lotus Model Process enables a discussion incorporating power dynamics, self, and systemic challenges, as well as a strengths emphasis. For highly complex topics such as DEI the use of conversation has the potential to be pivotal in unlocking understanding, providing insight, and expanding impact. However, it can also be detrimental if not undertaken correctly. There needs to be a clear intent for the conversation, and when this aim is shared with other participants, and developed alongside them, it enables a deeper sense of psychological safety, lessens uncertainty, and enables superior progress; and removes the intervention from being a 'tick box' exercise to one that generates change. All these possibilities are further enhanced when the opportunity to co-create the purpose of the AI is presented before the start of the inquiry. The 'issue' being discussed (or question being considered) requires naming; yet sometimes even naming the issue in DEI work can 'cause resistance [to] engaging conversations regarding substantive aspects of oppression and inequitable distributions of power' (Alston-Mills 2012).

When respectful exchange takes place in which similarity and difference is discussed, human flourishing and wellbeing expanded, and where diverse conversational styles

are used, individuals are able to be fully present in the same space and meet people where they are. Highly sensitive or emotionally charged subject matter relating to a person's sense of being, which may normally evoke an internal fight, flight, or freeze response linked to previous negative experience or past association (Kozlowska et al. 2015, 264) and can become a major impediment to meaningful exchanges, is now able to be explored delicately and respectfully. Overcoming real relational barriers by using conversation as a method where participants become advocates for themselves, allies for others, having an agreed ambition, and becoming collective ambassadors in 'the work' (Zaidi 2022b, 40) amplifies human flourishing and connectedness as demonstrated in the example shared. The possibility of embedding behavioural change in DEI is increased.

Co-creating interventions that can open DEI conversations and develop into a longer-term strategy requires sensitive planning and time. Participants should be made aware that the inquiry includes participants with multiple views, often at various points on the spectrum of opinions. By giving clear instructions, messages are shared and understanding unlocked; when the space is appropriately curated, even in profound disagreement, there is respect and trust. The results from the final resolve phase of the inquiry are continuously influenced by information from the renew, relate, and co-create phases. In the example shared, there was unexpected content that emerged from the conversational nature of the dialogue, and improved understanding and amplified mutual respect happened asynchronistically, some of which could not be captured in a survey or report – 'it just happened' as one participant said.

I propose that belonging and understanding emerge, identity is developed, leadership is demonstrated, and difference respected through these explorations. Consequently, human flourishing advances due to the affirmative interactions that take place in the process. This progressive understanding of complex issues and advancing of empathy towards one another can happen in small and large groups. The initial DEI event shared in this paper was repeated by the organisation four times in one year and led to the development of a global cultural competence, wellbeing, belonging, and inclusion strategy – a policy that the organisation reviews every six months. My aim in sharing this experience is that it is possible to know that 'within conversation lies otherness, difference, in-betweenness, togetherness and ultimately friendship and exploration of relationships of all kinds. This is the human condition and opportunity' (Pattison 2020, 92) and from that we find purpose and place in self and system.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to show that conversation (or Dialogue with a capital D) can be used as an approach in DEI facilitation to create vulnerable, open, honest, uncomfortable conversations leading to superior conversations and interventions. Each discussion and interaction between participants moves the awareness and consciousness of psychological safety, belonging, and understanding forward. I reported on a sample event with an organisation that had previously undertaken unconscious bias training which they reported as being ineffective and even regressive. The leadership team sought behavioural change in DEI, and as a result of the belonging and wellbeing-focused DEI intervention my team and I facilitated, they eventually created a strategy that championed a real sense of belonging and inclusion. A very significant opening of the conversation was undertaken. Viewing conversation as a method opens up the ability for people to be able to celebrate and participate in the living relational flow (Pattison 2020, 87) and discuss real-world issues in a way that can result in 'deep, profound change quite quickly' (participant reporting). The relational flow of conversation using both Teller's Lotus Model Process and the 'seven types of conversations' affirms conversation as 'consensus-building generative dialogue' which is focused on a 'large array of issues and events that become the action agenda of [participants'] lives' (Banathy and Jenlink 2005, 429).

Exploring the precise location of a conversation can make it accessible to all regardless of cognitive, experiential, or demographic difference (Zaidi 2022a, 84) and make it transformative. Using conversation as a methodology in DEI work enables us to progress much further than merely having a conversation where information is imparted with no acknowledgement and/or the real problem not discussed. However, the combination of The Lotus Model Process and seven types of conversation presented here has the essence of something that cannot be predicted or guaranteed but 'it really empowers everyone to speak… without worrying about someone differing with me' (Teller 2021, 406). Different ways of thinking and exploring are seen by some as potentially threatening – demonstrating vulnerability and invincibility at the same time makes it a very effective change-making activity for all involved. In conclusion, I have described that open, honest, uncomfortable conversations can lead to the articulation and identification of what a team or organisation is actually seeking in relation to DEI conversation, strategy, and project implementation.

This paper provided insights that can be used by organisations and scholars seeking to deploy conversation as a method for accessing and expanding human flourishing and wellbeing in environments where participants or leadership wish to address difficult subjects and topics including identity, race, socio-economic mobility, gender, sexuality, and disability. It is important to note that the use of conversation as a

methodology for human flourishing, belonging, and understanding requires a bespoke modification for each conversation and interaction, allowing for collaborative tension. The use of The Lotus Model Process and seven types of conversation provides a way forward for now. The simplicity of using conversation as a method lies in the complexity of its implementation alongside the realisation that curating space for dialogue to take place requires meaningful commitment from all involved.

Bibliography

Alston-Mills, B. (2012) Diversity: How to Begin the Discussion. Journal of Diversity Management (JDM), 7 (2), 75–78. Available at: https://doi.org/10.19030/jdm.v7i2.7474.

Banathy, B.H. and Jenlink, P.M. (2005) *Dialogue as a means of collective communication*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Banathy, B.H. and Jenlink, P.M. (2005) 'Creating Future Societies: Reflections on Searching Together,' in P.M. Jenlink (ed.) *Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 427–436.

Burgoon, J.K., Manusov, V., & Guerrero, L.K. (2021) Nonverbal Communication (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Caprino, K. (2023) *Why so many DEI programs are failing and how to improve them*, *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2023/02/23/why-so-many-dei-programs-are-failing-and-how-to-improve-them/. Accessed on 27 February 2023.

Cooperrider, D.L. and Srivastva, S. (1987) *Appreciative inquiry in organizational life David L. Cooperrider and...* Available at: https://www.oio.nl/wp-content/uploads/APPRECIATIVE_INQUIRY_IN_Orgnizational_life.pdf (Accessed: September 27, 2022).

Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D., and Stavros, J.M. (2008) *The Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change*. 2nd edn. San Francisco, USA: Berrett-Koehler.

Edmondson, A. (1999) "Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44 (2), 350–383. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999.

Fastcompany (2020) *How much diversity workplaces need to prevent tokenism*. Available at: https://www.fastcompany.com/90516384/research-shows-us-workplaces-need-this-level-of-diversity-to-prevent-tokenism. Accessed on 27 January 2023.

Bushe, G.R. and Kassam, A.F. (2005) 'When is appreciative inquiry transformational?', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 41 (2), 161–181. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886304270337.

Jenlink, P.M. and Banathy, B.H. (2005) 'Dialogue: Conversation as Culture Creating and Consciousness Evolving,' in P.M. Jenlink (ed.) *Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 3–16.

Kozlowska, K. *et al.* (2015) *Fear and the defense cascade: Clinical implications and management*, *Harvard review of psychiatry*. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4495877/. Accessed on 13 October 2022.

Martin, D. (2005) 'Dialogue and Spirituality: The Art of Being Human in a Changing World,' in P.M. Jenlink (ed.) *Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 71-104.

OECD (2015) *The governance of Inclusive Growth - OECD*. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/governance/ministerial/the-governance-of-inclusive-growth.pdf (Accessed: December 12, 2022).

Pattison, S. (1989) 'Some Straw for the Bricks: A Basic Introduction to Theological Reflection.' *Contact* 99, 1, 2–9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13520806.1989.11759678.

Pattison, S. (2020) 'Conversations in practical theology,' *Practical Theology*, 13 (1-2), 87–94. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073x.2020.1722345

Reynolds, A. and Lewis, D. (2021) *Teams solve problems faster when they're more cognitively diverse*, *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: https://hbr.org/2017/03/teams-solve-problems-faster-when-theyre-more-cognitively-diverse . Accessed on 12 December 2022.

Rūmī Jalāl al-Dīn. (1995) *RUMI Selected Poems*. Translated by Coleman Barks, Michael Schmidt, and Marian Bantjes. London: Penguin.

Senge, P.M. (1990) The Fifth Discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Teller, T.C. (2021) 'Inspiring Inclusion with the Appreciative Leadership Lotus Model,' in B.M. Ferdman, J. Prime, and R.E. Riggio (eds) *Inclusive leadership: Transforming diverse lives, workplaces, and Societies*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 394–406.

Zaidi, S. (2022a) This is the sound of my soul: A journey seeking belonging and inclusion in Practical Theology. thesis. unpublished.

Zaidi, S.M. (2022b) 'Integrating psychological safety: Using the all-in method to cultivate belonging and understanding in diversity and inclusion,' *AI Practitioner*, 24, 37–42. Available at: https://doi.org/10.12781/978-1-907549-53-3-7

Zeldin, T. (1998) *Conversation: How talk can change our lives*. Mahwah, NJ.

Participatory Governance of Healthcare: Centring Dialogue and Interrupting Epistemic Injustice

Tineke Abma and Barbara Groot[1]

Abstract: Traditionally governance is set up to stabilise and control and hold organisations accountable for their actions. Experts, decision-making and privileged citizens close to the centres of power and strategic decision-making determine those processes. Hence, many voices and perspectives are silenced, resulting in mismatches between policies and people's needs. We propose a participatory approach to governance in the field of healthcare where people in vulnerable and marginalised positions are involved through a relational process to influence policies, with the goal of social justice and social change. This requires a communicative space for mutual learning, listening, questioning, and dialogue. In practice, we find that precisely the experiential and pathic knowledge of people in the margins often produces a breakthrough in making contact with policymakers and professionals and interrupts processes of silencing and epistemic injustice. For example, a creative expression in a performance or exhibition leads to a call to action. In our article, we illustrate our approach with a few cases from our practice of an eight-year-long collaboration with people in vulnerable positions, artists, researchers, managers, and policymakers to make a change towards social inclusion in a large city in the Netherlands.

Keywords: Communicative Space, Horizontal Epistemology, Epistemic Justice, Participatory Action Research, Pathic Knowledge, Boundary Objects

---

1 Tineke Abma is a professor for Participation at the Leiden University Medical centre, and Executive-Director of the Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing. She has published extensively on hermeneutic dialogue and its application in the fields of policy and programme evaluation, patient participation, and bioethics. Her work has been awarded for its social impact, and in 2013 she received an ASPASIA laureate from the Dutch Scientific Council for her work in long-term care. Abma is a member of the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research consortium and has co-authored two books on 'Evaluation for a Caring Society' and 'Participatory Research of Health and Well-being.' She has been a member of various Supervisory Boards in long-term care and is familiar with (developments in) governance.

Barbara Groot is a senior researcher who conducted her PhD in 'Ethics of Participatory Health Research'. She co-founded an eight-year-long collaboration called 'Centre of Client Experiences' which was focused on policy change with people in vulnerable situations. In this relational platform, she has conducted participatory arts-based research with a variety of groups – people living in poverty, people with a psychiatric vulnerability, people with learning disabilities and older adults with dementia. She reflects in her academic work on the impact, the relational complexities, and the ethical issues in participatory governance.

Introduction: Decision Making in Healthcare Governance

Governance entails actions and decisions to monitor organisations and includes decisions that structure expectations and legitimise actions within society. Traditionally, systems of governance are populated by policy- and decision-makers and experts. Nowadays, there is an increasing interest in engaging and involving citizens to adjust policy measures to their needs and lifeworld. 'Participatory governance' refers to democratic processes that aim to involve citizens in public policy making at local level (Gaventa 2003). Comparable notions are 'distributed leadership' or 'collaborative governance', which are relatively new approaches in the scientific literature. Leadership and governance in these approaches are not understood as an individual trait or something being exerted vertically or top-down but take horizontal and collective forms with room for polyvocality, alternating leadership, and mutual influence ('t Hart 2014; Zhu et al. 2018). In collaborative governance more people are engaged in the process of decision making. Instead of one leader there are many stakeholders involved in democratic decision making.

New spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, but in the field of healthcare we notice that public and patient involvement is often limited to privileged citizens. For example, several countries have organised citizen summits to stimulate a dialogue on the future of long-term care for an ageing population (Citizen Assembly 2022). There are, however, worries that such measures are tailored to the wishes of a happy few (Van de Bovenkamp et al. 2018). As a result, not all voices are taken into account. Within healthcare governance, this implies that certain groups of patients and their family members are not involved in decision making. At the same time, they are often the end-users of policies and decisions.

Not considering or involving citizens, including those who live in vulnerable situations and are marginalised, is problematic because patients and families have their ideas and perspectives on situations, a perspective grounded in their lived experience and referred to in anthropology as an 'emic' (insider) versus an 'etic (outsider) perspective (Pike 1967). As a policymaker or expert, one can know everything about illness and disability, but this differs fundamentally from the lived experience of being ill or disabled (Carel 2018). In healthcare, patients acquire knowledge based on self-experience; they experience what it is like to be ill or disabled. This experiential knowledge is considered unique because one cannot get this knowledge without undergoing the experience (Dings and Tekin 2022). By involving patients in governance, healthcare can introduce this perspective, so that knowledge and decisions align with patients' lifeworld and contribute to their quality of life.

Another argument for why it is crucial to include patients and families in governance systems is value-laden: patients and families have a democratic right to be involved in governance because their interests are at stake (Greene 2006 in 't Veld 2010). They are often the intended end-users of decisions, so why should they not be co-determining the policies and decisions that address their lives? If they are excluded from decision making, they cannot bring their values and interests to the fore. To date, governmental bodies and supplementary boards have determined decision-making processes. Patients and their family members hardly participate in this and are therefore excluded from the processes of decision making (Crawford et al. 2002; Ocloo et al. 2021). We argue that patient participation is essential; having a say and being heard has value in itself, quite apart from the outcomes. Having a voice means recognition, and this is in and of itself important to human beings.

As pointed out above, the chances to engage in citizen participation at local level are not equally distributed. Intersectionality offers a useful lens for understanding how the multiple aspects of identity and multiple systems of oppression interact with each other to shape people's lived experiences and hence the opportunities to participate in policy making. Intersectionality assumes that various forms of oppression are connected. Lately, intersectionality is receiving growing attention from scholars studying (health) inequities (Crenshaw 2017; Hankivsky 2012; Verdonk, Muntinga, Leyerzapf & Abma 2015). For health scholars, intersectionality provides a framework to understand health inequities within and between groups, to identify groups who are specifically at risk, and to understand how these health inequities are shaped by the broader societal context, taking into account societal systems of oppression, including class, ableism, and racism.

In the rest of this article, we will outline our vision of participatory governance in healthcare. We first set out to argue why dialogue and deliberation should be central in governance, relying partly on the theory of communicative action outlined by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1985), and those who criticised his work for being overly rationalistic. Next, we therefore foreground theories on marginalisation and explore how power might interfere in vertical governance systems through silencing and epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007) and what is needed to centre dialogue and deliberation. We introduce a practical example where a horizontal system of governance emerged and present a few cases from our practice of an eight-year-long collaboration with people in vulnerable positions, artists, researchers, managers, and policymakers to make a change towards social inclusion in a large city in the Netherlands.

Centring Dialogue and Communicative Space

Habermas (1985) provides a useful framework to understand our modern society, the roles of systems of governance, and the need for what he called 'communicative spaces'. Habermas has been critical of modern society and dehumanisation and looks for a new foundation for democracy in the dialogue between citizens and in the openness of the equal exchange of ideas and arguments between people. Habermas sees a lack of communicative action due to the imbalance between the system and life world and the dominance of strategic action and power struggles between people. Habermas (1985) assumes that the system logic and related forms of bureaucratisation and market forces can be tamed and normatively controlled by the life-world and communication action. He therefore pleads for increasing the dialogical space and develops a theory of communicative action as the basis of his vision for a more humane society.

In line with Habermas's analysis, we argue that governance and evaluation or accountability systems are often structured and based on system values and norms, relying heavily on expert knowledge and functional reason (Woelders & Abma 2016). Following Habermas's analysis of our modern society, there is a risk that the imbalance between system and lifeworld will be further increased through governance systems and that certain types of action and certain voices and values are systematically under-represented in governance systems. Crucial in the context of governance, then, is the critical awareness of the constraints arising from hierarchical relationships and the use of language that enables all participants to understand the arguments and values that support different validity claims and the expression of experiences and opinions. Only then is an honest dialogue possible in which participants dispute validity claims through conscious argumentation, acquire moral insight, and jointly give meaning.

According to Habermas communicative action forms the basis of everyday communication between people in their lifeworld, in which people try to reach an agreement with each other. It is a place of 'mutual acknowledgement, taking a mutual perspective, a shared willingness to see one's circumstances through the eyes of the stranger and to learn from each other' (1985, 291). In communicative action, people can express their inner selves and be authentic, according to Habermas. Furthermore, communicative action offers the possibility of expressing social relationships and relationships and raising questions concerning those relationships. Finally, communicative action aims at truth and offers space for all to make assertions about reality and test them through deliberation and dialogue. This means that people check with each other: Is this true? Is it sincere what someone is talking about? This refers to good reasons and arguments that people make and put forward and goes beyond

yes/no positions. In other words, for Habermas, social reality is a product of communicative action, and a shared understanding can arise between people in co-creation.

To make communicative action possible, Habermas outlines several conditions: a) the voluntary nature of being convinced; b) the ability to contradict, say 'no', express doubt, and introduce new paradigms; c) the absence of power differences: no one should be silent because of hierarchy or sanctions; and d) the space to express oneself honestly (no manipulation). Under these conditions, Habermas believes that it is possible to have a power-free communication (*Herrschaftsfrei Communication*) and to arrive at a rational consensus.

However, we want to go a step further because his work has been criticised precisely on this point – the Enlightenment belief in the rational actor and that rational communication and argumentation will generate social and moral unity. For example, postmodernists such as Francois Lyotard (1988) and Iris Young (1990, 1997) have pointed out that power interferes in communication and that exclusion is inherent to speech acts. For example, people's silence does not equate to agreeing with specific arguments. Sometimes people do not explicitly say 'no' to what they find objectionable, but they simply do not see the possibility of putting forward their considerations because these do not fit within the dominant discourse. So, while Habermas (1985) still believes in rationality to come to agreements, postmodernists show that power is always at work and interferes in more or less subtle ways than Habermas envisioned in his work. Moreover, these critics point out that not everything can be expressed in language and that there are sources beyond rationality to realise moral bonds such as emotion, embodiedness and care. In the next section, we will expand this argument by bringing in the notion of silencing as a form of power and exclusion. In the rest of this article, we will therefore foreground theories of oppression and marginalisation.

Silencing and Epistemic Injustice

Indeed, power inevitably interferes with governance and determines which voices are valued or not and, thus, which knowledge is valued. Privileging scientific evidence as the gold standard and highest form of knowledge in the field of healthcare, which is heavily influenced by the standards in the biomedical sciences, is one of the reasons why in systems of healthcare governance, lay people and advocacy groups – those who are not experts and who hold less powerful positions – will find it harder to have their voice heard (Barnes 2008; Strathern 2000; Yanow 2003; Young 1990). Their knowledge can easily be disregarded as 'just another anecdote,' 'an emotional outburst,' 'subjectivist,' or 'irrational.' These processes, therefore, prohibit accurate

balancing of values and are at risk of becoming narrow and superficial when countervailing powers are excluded.

The concept of silencing is helpful here to understand how power and the processes of inclusion and exclusion work. Silencing goes beyond denying someone the mere opportunity to speak but involves contesting the validity of one's statements. In other words, the speaker and the story are already disqualified as unreliable even before something has been uttered. So, it is not about moments when individuals are silenced but about the structural dimensions of silencing certain groups of people. This exclusion can take many forms, such as mocking someone, dismissing experiences as 'just' anecdotes or hijacking a conversation. One should be aware of the effects of being structurally negated and ignored. People who are over and over given the impression that their language or culture does not fit, or who repeatedly hear that their education is not appropriate will lose their own story and self-confidence.

What follows is an example illustrating how silencing can work out. We were involved in a participatory study with older people, in which well-educated older men with a career were always the first to speak and were long on substance so that the women did not get chance to speak. This had everything to do with habits and gender relations. The researcher tried to point out to the men that in a democratic process, everyone has a voice, but it proved difficult to break through that dynamic. You consider this perfectly normal if you have always been given plenty of space to talk. If someone points out that you are thereby limiting the speaking possibilities of others, it can feel like an infringement of personal freedom. In the end, communication space was only created for the older women when two men decided to withdraw; the process of silencing was interrupted. From that moment on, the women began to articulate their voices (Bendien, Groot and Abma 2020).

Knowledge is also silenced because not all people are proficient in language or can speak it coherently. This includes people with cognitive disabilities. Our academic methods assume that participants are autonomous speaking subjects, and that people can voice their needs and wishes. This leads to a large group of, for example, older people with dementia or speech limitations being systematically under-represented (Groot, et al., 2023). Backhouse and colleagues have expressed how older people with cognitive disabilities are systematically written out of research that causes their voice to be lost, and call on future researchers to make room for these voices:

> Residents with cognitive difficulties were often screened out from studies or only informally involved. If involved, cognitive difficulties could greatly restrict residents' involvement. Future research should

> explore the best ways to involve residents with cognitive difficulties in studies, so that their voices can be heard. (Backhouse et al. 2016, 337)

Finally, there is much that is unspeakable and cannot be expressed in words. This knowledge is left out of dialogues. This often involves experiences of love, pain, and suffering. For example, we noticed that women, most of the time single mothers with children with a disability or psychiatric vulnerability, who had grown up in a lower-class family and nowadays living in poverty all had lived experiences with various forms of abuse and violence, stress, financial debts, and unemployment (Groot et al. 2022). Initially, the women did not speak about these experiences and kept them secret; it was too shameful and too difficult to share and thus remained invisible. Only after a few years of research on poverty and health promotion, with the help of arts-based and creative methods (Groot and Abma 2020), did they feel at ease and shared their experiences (mostly) non-verbally. Creative methods were helpful to express what can hardly be put into words. In this case the women received fake money to imagine how they would spend millions of euros (see figure 1). In their images and dreams they envisioned the support and services needed to solve problems related to their socioeconomic position. This perspective differed from the focus of professionals and policymakers on lifestyle interventions. The women brought something to the fore that could not be articulated and expressed in the policy discourse on self-sufficiency.

A similar situation emerged in a study surrounding people with learning disabilities. In a study about community care, they told us they were often the informal carer for their parents or people in the community. One client told us, 'I help my father. He has been in hospital – two broken knees. So, I clean his little house. Every day.' Others offered practical help in the neighbourhood: 'We put up this fence. Very sturdy. For that little neighbour. Yes, she's 90...'. These informal care tasks were barely heard and acknowledged in a professional dialogue session at the end of the study. The idea that people with intellectual disabilities were not only care-receivers, but could be caregivers as well, simply did not fit in the prevalent discourse and stereotypical imagery of people with intellectual disabilities. Professionals mainly talked about the care and support they could give as experts, not about the value of these people to the community.

Here we see how dominant discourses structure the debate and determine what can be said, and by whom, and thus who and what counts as valid knowledge. Not all that is said in the communicative space can be heard, can be understood, or can contribute to mutual understanding and new insights (Woelders 2019). Philosopher Harry Kunneman (2017, 16) describes this as follows:

> The situation, in which the dominant discourse, for example a therapeutic discourse, colonises the communicative space and absorbs all that is said in its own conceptual framework and defuses it. What has to be said and might be said, lets itself not be said. The words are lacking, or are, when they come, are absorbed in a space of meaning, that turns them into strangers. Into uninvited strangers, who only can be admitted when they get rid of their strangeness after an integration course... And, the question is, whether there is a language available for what is experienced or felt.

Mutual understanding is only possible if there is a language available to express meaning (Woelders 2019). The above examples illustrate that not all experiences can be expressed in the existing and dominant language (fitting the dominant discourse) and that what cannot be understood in the dominant discourses runs the risk of being absorbed and reduced to the dominant discourse and may therefore get dismissed.

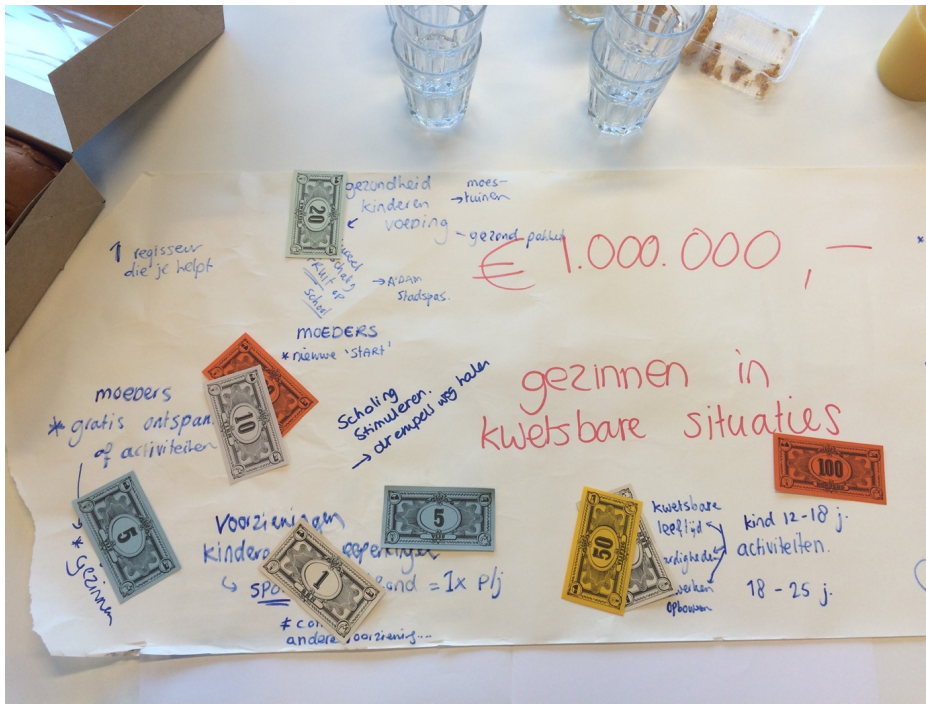

Figure 1: The game about investing money for the social good of mothers living in poverty

These processes of silencing lead to epistemic injustice: 'In all such injustices the subject is wronged in her capacity as a knower. To be wronged in one's capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value' (Fricker 2007, 5). If patients and families are not recognised as 'legitimate knowers', they are denied a fundamental human capacity. This has ethical, political, and epistemological consequences. Not involving the patients and families in governance affects their human dignity because they do not receive recognition as a knower of the world. On a political level, this means that people do not see their interests represented, leading to anger and frustration or complete withdrawal from society. On an epistemological level, there are concerns over the (in)completeness of our knowledge of the world: if the perspectives of those without power in our social world remain unheard, our collective knowledge resources are less robust. If those without power are silenced, this leads to an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of the social world.

Toward Participatory Governance

To make our governance practices in healthcare more inclusive and participatory, we can deliberately create and facilitate communicative spaces where all stakeholders and citizens are able to be involved. As pointed out in the examples above, this requires academics to facilitate these processes that acknowledge the limits of their verbal communication and the willingness to interrupt processes of silencing and epistemic injustice. In our practice, it has proven helpful to work with welcome rituals to acknowledge people, to create and value silence for those who are less verbal and assertive, to create safe spaces and to use artworks and creativity and all the senses to understand the ways people communicate. Precisely because power and silencing processes interfere, this is a precondition for shaping the joint moral learning process by building in joint reflections on the process of cooperation. This requires a process of reflection, a care-ethical attitude, and an ethos of attentiveness, empathy, and solidarity (Groot et al. 2018).

Participatory governance starts with rethinking the underlying epistemology in governance. This epistemology can be described as vertical, in which the expert stands above the layperson, objective above subjective, and rational above emotional. The pyramid of knowledge is its symbol. Participatory governance requires recognising epistemic plurality (multiple forms of knowledge) and more horizontal knowledge systems (coexistence of knowledge forms). A horizontal epistemology values scientific knowledge, but this epistemology gives equal value to practical-professional knowledge developed by practitioners in their practical work, as well as to the experiential knowledge of patients and families as a form of valid knowledge; and it values artistic-creative forms as expressions of knowledge that cannot be said or expressed in words (Abma 2020).

Horizontal epistemology means giving up the ideal of a firm or absolute ground in the process of knowledge production; there is no meta-theory to distinguish various forms of knowledge, and researchers are always interwoven with the phenomenon of study, as are other stakeholders. Therefore, our desires and agenda always permeate our view of the world. A horizontal epistemology acknowledges that there are some laws to explain natural processes but also many unpredictable aspects of reality. This includes the acceptance of the friction between facts and values. Within a horizontal epistemology, co-creation and narrative sources of knowledge are preferred. Furthermore, there is the acceptance that wicked or messy problems demand our attention and are not easy to fix and tame. While many researchers may prefer to avoid these problems by focusing on easy-to-manage and controllable conditions (RCTs), we argue that more qualitative and participatory research is needed to deal with these kinds of problems.

In participatory research and related methodologies, the aim is to enhance the personal and mutual understanding of people whose life and work is at stake as a vehicle for collective action and local improvements (Abma et al. 2019). Respect, inclusion, democratic decision-making, mutual learning, and collective action are the main principles of participatory research (ICPHR 2013). Control and decision-making power are shared between the researcher and people whom they concern. They are the ones to define the research topic based on the 'pressing issues' in their lives. Their role becomes one of co-researcher, and as co-researchers they are involved throughout the whole research cycle from formulating the goals and questions to the analysis and sense-making and sharing for knowledge. The role of the researcher is to facilitate a dialogue among and between groups of people.

Case Example

An example of a participatory governance initiative in which dialogue and reduction of epistemic injustice were central was the platform Centre for Client Experiences (in Dutch Centrum voor Cliëntervaringen). In 2015, a small group of people with a shared mission to improve the quality of care by participatory health research (PHR) started the initiative of a learning platform. The initiators were the authors of this article, based in academia, and the director and researcher of the client advocacy organisation. We called members of the platform 'partners'. All platform partners were striving for change within their context but felt alone in their mission. They often experienced resistance in their context and were looking for partners who shared their mission. Partners were embedded in different settings of care and well-being; they worked with healthcare providers, municipalities, research funding, client advocacy organisations or charity organisations, and universities. Above all, a group of people with lived experiences were full partners in the Centre from the

moment it was established. These people have lived in vulnerable situations, reflected on their lived experiences with others in a comparable situation, and were eager to make a difference for themselves and others in a similar situation.

The development of the Centre was based on the ethical principles of PHR: democratic participation, equality, respect, inclusion, and mutual learning (ICPHR 2013). It was a place where a core group of people could learn about participation collaboratively and in dialogue. By sharing stories, and precarious experiences and reflecting on shared situations, the Centre offered a space to learn and develop competencies in participatory research. For five years, we met four times a year for 'collaborative learning sessions.' In these sessions, we developed a shared mission and vision and established key values that we all see as crucial for collaboration. In many of these sessions, we used creative methods and materials to enable anybody to join the conversations, such as poetry, collages, and *tableaux vivant* (see Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: *Tableau vivant* in one of the Centre sessions about vulnerability



Figure 3: *Tableau vivant* in one of the Centre sessions about dependency

Multiple stakeholders were involved and challenged to think and express their vision on the participation and involvement of clients. These people did not meet each other regularly, and thus the process helped them learn more about the perspectives of others involved. It was particularly beneficial that people at higher policy levels, such as CEOs at the municipality and healthcare organisations, met face-to-face with patients, family members, and people from the work floor because these worlds are often disconnected. Gradually, they developed a need to explore together what good participation meant and what was needed to improve the position and care for clients. Building trust in each other was crucial in this process of joint dialogue. We have to note that this was not always a smooth process; there were tensions, participants were not always reflective, could not always find the words to express themselves, and sometimes found it hard to listen to alternative views. Yet, it is precisely the willingness to be engaged in these processes that transformed people.

Between 2014 and 2020, the Centre network grew to include ten organisations as official community partners and 20 community co-researchers. This was not planned; it emerged from the process and explicit questions from participants. The co-researchers involved in the sub-studies were invited to participate in the learning sessions, which also became a community for co-researchers when a study was fin-

ished and co-researchers wanted to stay connected. In total, we conducted eighteen sub-studies using participatory research, including interviews and group sessions (n=404 patients) on patient experiences with psychiatric care, community care, day-care, public health, and social work. All studies ended with dialogue sessions (n=367 professionals and directors in healthcare and social work, municipality civil servants, and funding agencies). These studies mostly focused on the evaluation of care policies and austerity measures that were introduced in The Netherlands in 2015 and focused on self-reliance and the substitution of formal care by informal care. The stories of many clients and informal caregivers countered the notion of self-sufficiency and pointed to situations where people do not have a social network to rely on and are simply not able to take care of themselves (Groot et al. 2022). A few quotes from people in those interviews:

> 'If he came to help clean up my house now, I would not mind. However, the way my house looked before, I didn't want to receive my father. I was terribly ashamed of that.' (A young man with a psychiatric vulnerability)

> 'I find it difficult to involve them [family] in my request for help. I find it hard to show that I'm doing badly.' (A middle-aged man with a psychiatric vulnerability)

> 'I do not want to bother my children. When they come, I talk about cows and calves (...) If I have a down moment, I go to the park. (...) I was always a model mother. And now I have to go and ask for help? (...) I have my pride for that (laughs), and you do have to maintain that air.' (An older woman with a psychiatric vulnerability)

In these dialogue studies, we noticed that talking and sharing stories often reproduced epistemic injustice. People with lived experiences felt that their story was not always heard because it did not fit into the dominant discourse. The policy discourse focused on self-sufficiency and those stories, like the ones above, that did not fit into the frame were simply ignored. Policymakers tended to reduce those narratives and its narrators into *unwilling* subjects. In other words, what people experienced was reframed: not a matter of not *being* able to take care for oneself, but a matter of not *willing* to take on responsibility for their own lives. Besides this inability to see inequality, we also observed that policymakers and professionals focused on 'positivity.' So, those who were invited to the policy table needed to speak in positive terms about their lives and work. It was hard for policymakers to relate to those stories that showed a counter picture to the idea of self-sufficiency, and such stories were easily put aside as not 'constructive' (Duijs et al. 2022).

While stories or reports were easily dismissed, when we shared the findings in more personal arts-based products, the team felt a more in-depth impact. Dialogue after a theatre performance, meditation, and art exhibition, created by co-researchers with lived experiences about their understandings, was experienced differently than written reports. The co-researchers were mostly positive on the approach. A person who participated as co-researchers: 'No, it was nice to contribute in everything. Yes, how shall I put it simply: in the final product. (...) It gave satisfaction for myself, and yes, it was nice...To participate in this.' Another participant: 'What struck me [in the relationship between policymakers and we as clients] was that we felt one, it was not us vs them. Not in my experience. Because of their reactions [to our product presentations]. This has already started from the first presentation. It felt very human. A human approach.'

Most policymakers were moved by the presentations of the co-researchers and became inevitably involved in the themes they expressed. A policymaker (July 2018): 'Thanks for sharing your feelings and thoughts with us. We have learned a lot from this meeting. All products were powerful and have affected me.' Another policymaker (July 2018): 'What do "they" think... if they lived in a country without social welfare, they could all work. The city needs people who work! If they can do this... they can also work...' (Groot et al. 2020). A CEO: 'It affects me when I hear a client who says, "But I also belong to society, don't I?" That sort of appeal, that's why I do my job.' (See Figure 4.)

One of the participants also shared a reflection about the process in the group. At first, they felt like a victim in their position as client, but after a while the group transformed and even felt like a group together with the client managers against the bigger system, not against the people in their role as client manager. A participant said, 'It's nice though. At first, we had a lot of angry stories about the client managers and were a bit more victims as a group. During the process, this transformed into more of us together as a group with the client managers having to fight the system together. That was a beautiful process. You can also see that in the expressions. Those of the first presentation. And those of later ones'.



Figure 4: A partner with lived experiences and one with management experiences in a session

Those directly affected, patients and their families, contributed by bringing in 'pathic knowledge' (Van Manen and Shuying 2002). The term pathic is derived from *pathos*, meaning 'suffering and also passion' (220). Pathic knowledge refers to knowledge and understanding that are not cognitive, intellectual, rational, or technical but relational, situational, physical, and action-oriented (219). This is the understanding achieved by putting yourself in the shoes of another (empathy) and by feeling what the other is feeling. We saw this reflected in the statements made by the officials when they became aware of the artworks of people without employment and in the statements made by the CEO that he feels touched by a client who wonders whether he counts in society. We have found that pathic knowledge is more challenging to represent. Our rational and cognitive modes of expression hardly allow this kind of knowledge. As a result, pathic knowledge is easily overlooked or ridiculed in strategic discussions that are often verbal and argumentative in nature (Barnes 2008).

Therefore, we started looking for other ways to express the unspeakable and make room for silent voices. In that search, we came to art and creative expression. We have illustrated that people can open up, listen, and be moved by using art and creativity and by touching the senses, revealing atmospheres and states of mind. Listening to a personal story, seeing a collage, hearing a poem, or experiencing a piece of

music or a dance performance can appeal to people; policymakers and administrators can be touched on an affective level as human beings and feel connected again and show solidarity. In those moments, the shared humanity between people emerges again, and moral insights arise. Such enriched and more inclusive communicative actions restore the balance between the system and life world and lead to new moral understandings, for instance, on the inclusion and exclusion of people who live in vulnerable and marginalised circumstances.

Discussion

Dialogues in governance are often exchanges of words spoken by articulate people. In practice, many people are less eloquent or deal with experiences like illness or trauma that cannot simply be put into words and are easily reduced to the dominant discourse. This illustrates how power interferes in communicative spaces and determines who can speak and what can be expressed and thus what is included or excluded from governance. Hence, their voices remain hidden, leading to mismatches between policies and people's needs. This article proposes a new way of governance, namely participatory governance, with attention to acts of silencing and epistemic injustice. This governance goes beyond the questions about citizen competence (Fischer 2012). Participatory governance creates space for people in vulnerable positions to be involved through a relational process from A to Z to influence policies in a way they are heard and seen (testimonial justice) and facilitated to analyse their experiences and share them (hermeneutical justice). In order to build such a participatory governance process, it takes time and energy to build capacity, create communicative spaces for mutual learning, listening, questioning and dialogue, and use artistic and arts-based methods.

We have shown that creating a space for the voices of patients and their family members in the field of healthcare governance offered them a starting point for finding and expressing their voice and could thus be empowering. Yet, we also experienced how the voices of patients and next of kin could be silenced by professionals and policymakers. This was not just unwillingness to listen to people, but also due to complex dynamics related to the interrelation between power, language and knowledge (Kunneman 2017; Woelders 2019). Dominant policy discourses determined what could be said and understood, and what not. Moreover, some people were granted the authority to participate and speak up, while others were not granted that authority simply because they were seen as being unreliable due to their conditions. This implies that if we create communicative spaces for participatory governance we always need to be alert to acts of silencing and disempowerment (Bendien, Woelders & Abma 2023). Our experiences are also an invitation to create spaces for the

emotive, embodied, and complex modes of existence because people we work with are more than just rational actors as human beings.

Acts of silencing and marginalisation can further be understood from an intersectionality perspective (Hankivsky 2012; Duijs et al. 2022). We have shown how gendered inequality can lead to a situation where men are thought to be superior to women and influences who can take the floor and who cannot, and thus determines who is granted with authority to speak and what can be said and counts as knowledge. In the example of the single mothers, several dimensions of disadvantage (gender inequality, unequal socioeconomic positions) led to a situation of silence and invisibility. Several examples show how ableism is at work in the process of knowledge production and governance in health care. It is simply assumed that all people have healthy bodies and minds and that they can properly speak up and voice their concerns. The examples clearly show this is not the case for people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, chronic illness, and stress.

Furthermore, we need to be aware that as facilitators of these processes we need more than analytical skills. Yet, there is not much attention paid to the role of the facilitator in these participatory governance processes (Escobar, Faulkner and Rea 2014). As a facilitator, you need to be able to shift gears at many levels: those of administrators, managers, practice professionals, as well as of people with interesting stories and experiences. For example, it can be challenging to initiate the process of mutual story sharing by avoiding horizontal violence in groups where people with lived experience do not have 'space' to listen to each other (Groot and Abma 2020). This often requires emotion and relationship work, also called 'ethics work' (Abma 2020; Banks 2016; Groot and Abma 2022). Ethics work cannot be outsourced or placed outside the organisation; it is inevitably part of governance, accountability, and evaluation research (Abma 2020). Creating a communicative space where all voices are heard may generate ethical knowledge on moral dilemmas as part of participatory governance.

When thinking from an ethics of care philosophy, creating a communicative space is essential for all involved, not just those in vulnerable positions. Sometimes, professionals who put their heart and soul into their work may feel attacked by pathic knowledge expressed by patients and families that affects them (Abma 2022). It can be scary to confront the boundaries of one's professional expertise and control and face complexities that cannot be fixed or tamed by technical solutions. That is what patients and families often share: that they feel left alone with the existential questions of illness, suffering, pain, and death. This requires a redefinition of professional practice that goes beyond the mere application of protocols and handbook knowledge. Professional practices always have a solid hard ground, according to Donald

Schon (1987), but also include 'swampy lowlands' where one is faced with uncertainty and unpredictability. Dealing with this (moral) messiness includes the acceptance of making mistakes and (moral) learning, the search for creative paths to work around the system, and the importance of 'craftmanship' to deal with messiness. Participatory governance creates a space to foster such (moral) learning and reflection-in-action (versus vertical accountability).

The role of less verbal and creative techniques in governance has yet to be discussed in depth. Recently, Carrick and colleagues (2022) stated that one of their practical criteria for effective participatory planning and decision-making processes is diverse and creative methods of engagement to encourage participants to contribute. This is linked with the idea that creative methods could stimulate a communicative space for all involved, especially people in a marginalised position (Groot and Abma 2021). Outside healthcare, there are some examples of creative approaches for participatory governance. For example, Davis and colleagues (2022) called the role of a facilitator in creative, communicative spaces 'the art of invitation', a term coined by Ruth Ben Tovim, Lucy Neal, and Anne Marie Culhane. Facilitators in the 'art of invitation' give themselves a role as boundary spanners and space holders in which an exchange can occur between stakeholders, including citizens, in creative ways. Creating this affective atmosphere (Anderson 2009) can help to learn together in an effective way instead of a functional and efficient way.

Our world is getting more complex, unpredictable, unstable, and uncertain. We face crisis after crisis, and the question can be raised if we will ever eliminate crises. There are signs everywhere, the ecological crisis is perhaps the most urgent, that control, growth, and consumption are reaching their boundaries. Although our world has changed dramatically, we still use vertical governance systems. Vertical governance is, however, not very appropriate when it comes to dealing with this messiness. The messier and more complex, the more we need self-knowledge, dialogue and craftmanship as the basis for moral development in horizontal relationships. This means we must interrupt hierarchic relationships, absolutist moral claims and vertical epistemologies. Horizontal and participatory governance is a new way to learn to embrace the complexity of ourselves and our world, inviting all the voices, pearls of wisdom, perspectives and values needed to build and envision an inclusive, human, and ethically rich future (versus materially rich).

Acknowledgement

We want to thank all partners of the Centre for Client Experiences.

Bibliography

Abma, T. (2022) Patiëntparticipatie in een academisch ziekenhuis Moreel-relationeel leren over trage vragen in een kennisintensieve organisatie. *Waardenwerk, nr.* 90–91, 35–45.

Abma, T. (2020) Ethics work for good participatory action research. *Beleidsonderzoek Online*, september 2020, DOI: 10.5553/BO/221335502020000006001.

Abma, T., Banks, S., Cook, T., Dias, S., Madsen, W., Springett, J., & Wright, M. T. (2019) *Participatory research for health and social well-being*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Anderson, B. (2009) Affective atmospheres. *Emotion, Space and Society,* 2 (2), 77–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.08.005

Backhouse, T., Kenkmann, A., Lane, K., Penhale, B., Poland, F., and Killett, A. (2016) Older care-home residents as collaborators or advisors in research: a systematic review. *Age and Ageing,* 45 (3), 337–345.

Banks, S. (2016) Everyday ethics in professional life: Social work as ethics work. *Ethics and social welfare,* 10 (1), 35–52.

Barnes, M. (2008) *Deliberating with care: Ethics and knowledge in the making of social policies.* 24 April 2008. Brighton, England: Inaugural Lecture, University of Brighton.

Bendien, E., Groot, B., and Abma, T. (2022) Circles of impacts within and beyond participatory action research with older people. *Ageing and Society*, 42 (5), 1014–1034.

Bendien, E., Woelders, S. and Abma, T. (2023) Silver Empowerment. An empowerment perspective on underpriviledged older persons and care. In Tine van Regenmortel. *Silver Empowerment*. Leuven University Press.

Carel, H. (2018). *Illness: The cry of the flesh*. Routledge. Londen/New York, 2013.

Carrick, J., Bell, B., Fitzsimmons, C., Gray, T. and Stewart, G. (2022) Principles and practical criteria for effective participatory environmental planning and decision-making, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2022.2086857.

Citizen Assembly (2022) Opportunities of an Ageing Population. Available at: https://www.citizenassemly.ie/en. Accessed on 24 November 2022.

Crawford, M. J., Rutter, D., Manley, C., Weaver, T., Bhui, K., Fulop, N., and Tyrer, P. (2002) Systematic review of involving patients in the planning and development of health care. *Bmj,* 325 (7375), 1263

Crenshaw, K. W. (2017) *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. The New Press.

Davis, S., Nek, Y. V., and Horlings, L. G. (2022) How to Nurture Ground for Arts-Based Co-Creative Practice in an Invited Space: Reflections on a Community in North Netherlands. In Co-*Creativity and Engaged Scholarship,* 229-263. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Dings, R., and Tekin, Ş. (2022) A philosophical exploration of experience-based expertise in mental health care. *Philosophical Psychology*, 1–20.

Duijs, S. E., Abma, T., Schrijver, J., Bourik, Z., Abena-Jaspers, Y., Jhingoeri, U., Plak, O., et al. (2022) Navigating Voice, Vocabulary and Silence: Developing Critical Consciousness in a Photovoice Project with (Un)Paid Care Workers in Long-Term Care. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 19 (9), 5570.

Escobar, O., Faulkner, W., and Rea, H. J. (2014). Building capacity for dialogue facilitation in public engagement around research. *Journal of Dialogue Studies,* 2 (1), 87–111.

Fricker, M. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2007.

Gaventa, J. (2004) Towards participatory governance: assessing the transformative possibilities. *Participation: From tyranny to transformation*, 25–41.

Greene, J. C. (2006) *Evaluation, democracy, and social change*. The Sage handbook of evaluation, 118–140.

Groot, B. C., and Abma, T. A. (2020) Participatory health research with mothers living in poverty in the Netherlands: pathways and challenges to strengthen empowerment. January 2020. In *Forum Qual. Soc. Res*, 21 (1), 8–8.

Groot, B., and Abma, T. (2021) Boundary objects: Engaging and bridging needs of people in participatory research by arts-based methods. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 18 (15), 7903

Groot, B., and Abma, T. (2022) Ethics framework for citizen science and public and patient participation in research. *BMC Medical Ethics,* 23 (1), 1–9.

Groot, B., Haveman, A., Buree, M., Zuijlen, R. V., Zuijlen, J. V., and Abma, T. (2022) What Patients Prioritize for Research to Improve Their Lives and How Their Priorities Get Dismissed Again. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 19 (4), 1927.

Groot, B., Hendrikx, A., Bendien, E., Woelders, S., de Kock, L. and Abma, T. (2023) In (re-)search for epistemic justice. Dialogical reflection of researchers on everyday ethical issues in studies with people living with cognitive or language-impairing conditions. *Journal of Ageing Studies.*

Groot, B., Vink, M., Schout, G., Hubert, M. and Abma, T. (2019) Pathways for improvement of care in psychiatric crisis: A plea for the co-creation with service users and ethics of care. *Archives of Psychology,* 3 (3).

Habermas, J. (1985) The theory of communicative action: Volume 2: Lifeword and system: A critique of functionalist reason. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Hankivsky, O. (2012) Women's health, men's health, and gender and health: Implications of intersectionality. *Social science & medicine,* 74 (11), 1712–1720.

Hart, P. 't (2014) *Understanding Public Leadership*. London: Palgrave.

ICPHR (International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research) (2013) *Position paper 2: Participatory health research: a guide to ethical principles and practice.* Berlin: ICPHR. 2013. Available at: http://www.icphr.org/uploads/2/0/3/9/20399575/ichpr_position_paper_2_ethics_-_version_october_2013.pdf. Accessed on 24November, 2022.

In't Veld, R. (Ed.). (2010) Knowledge democracy: Consequences for science, politics, and media. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Kunneman, H. (2017) *Amor Complexitatis, Bouwstenen voor een kritisch humanisme,* deel 2, Uitgeverij SWP, Amsterdam.

Lyotard, J.F. (1988) *The different: Phrases in dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lyotard, J.F. (1988) *The different: Phrases in dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ocloo, J., Garfield, S., Franklin, B. D., and Dawson, S. (2021) Exploring the theory, barriers and enablers for patient and public involvement across health, social care and patient safety: a systematic review of reviews. *Health research policy and systems,* 19 (1), 1–21.

Pike, Kenneth Lee, ed. (1967) *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of Structure of Human Behavior* (2nd ed.), The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton.

Schön, D. A. (1987) Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions. Jossey-Bass.

Strathern, M. (2000) New accountabilities: anthropological studies in audit, ethics and the academy. *Audit cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy,* 27.

Van de Bovenkamp, H., and Vollaard, H. (2018) Representative claims in practice: The democratic quality of decentralized social and healthcare policies in the Netherlands. *Acta Politica,* 53 (1), 98–120.

Van Manen, M., and Li, S. (2002) The pathic principle of pedagogical language. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 18 (2), 215–224.

Verdonk P., Muntinga M., Leyerzapf H. and Abma T. 2015. Strategisch pendelen tussen gestolde categorieën en fluïde identiteiten. *Tijdschr Genderstudies.* 18 (4), 433–450.

Woelders, S., & Abma, T. (2016) Looking at participation through the lens of Habermas' theory: opportunities to bridge the gap between lifeworld and system? In Murphy, M. *Habermas and Social Research*, 136–152, Routledge.

Yanow, D. (2003) Accessing local knowledge. Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society/ In M. Hajer and H. Wagenaar (Eds.), *Justice and the politics of difference,* 228–246. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Young, I. (1997) Difference as a resource for democratic communication. In J. Bohman and W. Rehg (Eds.), *Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics*, 383–406. Cambridge, England: The MIT Press.

Young, I. M. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.

Zhu, J. Liao, Z. Chi Yam, K. & R.E. Johnson (2018) Shared leadership: A state-of-the-art review and future research agenda. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38, 834–852.

Rethinking Dialogic Narratives in Water Diplomacy

Medha Bisht[1]

Abstract: The proposed paper aims to emancipate, critique and broaden the notion of communication associated with diplomacy studies. The purpose is to advance the understanding that conceptualising dialogue as a method, technique and institution can be relevant to the broader discourse on diplomacy studies. Empirically the paper would focus on two narratives- The first is the meta-narrative, which primarily examines the issues, concerns and expectations of the state actors, and the second is the micro-narrative, which examine the impact of these negotiated agreements at local level, thus bringing the ecological, social and cultural concerns upfront. Thus, the objective of this article is to emancipate the understanding of communication challenge in water diplomacy, which is often confronted with competing narratives. By informing the concept of narratives with dialogue, the paper attempts to open conceptual space to engage with Asian epistemological traditions, which often employed dialogic techniques in/between narratives to further communication. The article proceeds in three sections. The first section focuses on the importance of communication on water diplomacy, highlighting the intersections between narratives and dialogue. The second section focus es on Ganges Water Treaty in South Asia (which was a state actor led initiative). Highlighting the limitations of this narrative, limitations of communication in water diplomacy are highlighted. In the third section, South Asian epistemological tradition is revis-

1 Dr Bisht has a Ph. D from Diplomatic Studies Division, Jawaharlal Nehru University, where she wrote her thesis on multi-stakeholder negotiations on security and development. She works at the intersection of strategy and philosophy and is particularly interested in non-western meanings and sources of diplomatic, dialogic practices in Asia. Her book, 'Kautilya's Arthashastra: Philosophy of Strategy' has been published by Routledge (London and New York 2020). Interested in the concept of water governance and diplomacy, her research engagement has highlighted the micro and macro narratives related to crafting and implementation of water diplomacy, and has conceptually engaged with these narratives through scholarship available in literature associated negotiation and dialogue. She has conducted stakeholder engagements and dialogues in South Asia to identify the political, cultural and ecological perspectives pertaining to rivers and riparian communities. She works on transnational relations has done consultancies with UNIFEM, ICIMOD, UNDP, IUCN, OX-FAM, DFID/Asia Foundation, and Mine Action Canada, with a focus on civil society, water diplomacy, women, and governance. Dr Bisht also co-led a Winter School on Inclusive Water Governance jointly organised by South Asian University (SAU), TROSA OXFAM, and UNESCO Chair of International Cooperation, Uppsala University supported by the Government of Sweden. She also co-authored and co-led a course on 'Hydro-diplomacy in South Asia' in collaboration with Dhaka University. She has published in Hague Journal of Diplomacy, Water Policy, International Studies, Contemporary South Asia and Strategic Analysis.

ited to foreground the importance of dialogue in formulating narratives, which can address the communication challenge in transboundary water cooperation.

Keywords: Water diplomacy, Narratives, Dialogue, Buddhist Thought, Hindu Thought

Introduction

This article probes the centrality of narratives for facilitating water diplomacy. In recent years, terms such as 'water diplomacy', 'transboundary water governance', and 'transboundary water management' have been used interchangeably for examining cooperation over transboundary rivers. Given that there is always a challenge in reconciling ecological and cultural concerns, which emerge from the societal level, and security and economic concerns, which emerge at the statist level, there are two narratives of water diplomacy. The first is the meta-narrative, which primarily examines the issues, concerns, and expectations of the state actors, and the second is the micro-narrative, which examines the impact of these negotiated agreements at local level, thus bringing the ecological, social, and cultural concerns upfront. One of the primary reasons for these different views is the selective treatment given to the understanding and discussions around 'water', where ecological issues are not given due attention.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a lack of engagement between disciplines has led to an overuse of terms such as 'transboundary governance and management', leading to a lack of definitional clarity on what these terms actually mean for a dynamic discipline such as diplomacy studies. While an important corrective has been offered to reflect on the definitional aspects of these terms (Sehring et al. 2022; Keskinen et al. 2021), one can add that a primary reason is also the absence of discussions around research methods and water diplomacy. Methodological clarity makes a researcher aware of certain ontologies and epistemological questions, which in turn influence the direction of research. Given that in recent years a plurality of approaches to studying diplomacy has emerged (Pouliot and Cournet 2015, Dittmer and McConnell 2015), such debates and discussions need further deliberation in the context of transboundary water cooperation. While this article does not aim to address this very important aspect, which requires further research and discussion, for the purpose of this paper, it uses the definition offered by Sehring and Offutt (2022) to endow clarity on the term 'water diplomacy'. Sehring and Offutt define it as, 'deliberative political processes and practices of preventing, mitigating and resolving disputes over transboundary water resources and developing joint water governance arrangements by applying foreign policy means, embedded in bi-and/or multilateral relations beyond the water sector and taking place at different tracks and levels.' While this definition carries the danger of excluding specific non-state actors (non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations) who

could play an important role in socialising state actors through non-linear network-based strategies rather than linear tracks which is evident in multi-track diplomacy, it does capture some critical social, political, ecological, and economic aspects associated with meta- and micro-narratives of water diplomacy. Thus, given the tensions between meta and micro aspects associated with water diplomacy, and to tease out different narratives which emerge from the societal and statist responses, the definition offered by Sehring and Offutt is useful. This is because it looks at water as a function of diplomacy in terms of resolving disputes over transboundary rivers and also engages with efforts made by both countries towards developing joint water governance (more multi-scalar and multi-layered in nature, including river basin organisations) or management institutions (more technical in nature, including treaties with infrastructural solutions which focus on dams and barrages).

The primary purpose behind this article is twofold, first, to identify narratives that have emerged as a reaction to a bilateral treaty negotiated between two countries, and second, to understand the reasons for the success or limitations of this bilateral engagement. As an example, the Ganges Water Treaty (GWT) is studied. The case of the GWT is unique in several ways. First, it illustrates the limits of diplomatic engagement undertaken by state actors on the transboundary river and, second, it brings into focus some of the emergent debates associated with water diplomacy, transboundary water management, and governance, as most of these discussions were at their peak in the 1990s, when the treaty was signed. Significantly, the *post-facto* analysis of the treaty has been informed by some of the normative debates which have marked the broad contours of the international water policy context, which include social and ecological concerns.

Thus, the objective of this article is to emancipate the understanding of communication challenge in water diplomacy, which is often confronted by competing narratives. By informing the concept of narratives with dialogue, the paper attempts to open conceptual space to engage with Asian epistemological traditions, which have often employed dialogic techniques in/between narratives to further communication. The article proceeds in three sections. The first section focuses on the importance of communication in water diplomacy, highlighting the intersections between narratives and dialogue. The second section focuses on the GWT in South Asia (which was a state-actor-led initiative). Highlighting the limitations of these narratives, limitations of communication in water diplomacy are highlighted. In the third section, the South Asian epistemological tradition is revisited to foreground the importance of dialogue in formulating narratives which can address the communication challenge in transboundary water cooperation. This is significant in the case of the GWT, which will expire in 2026, and will require innovative modes of reflection and debate about reconciling multiple narratives.

Communication and Transboundary Water Cooperation

Communication is an important pillar to facilitate transboundary water cooperation. A central building block often considered as a sub-theme to meet the communication challenge is diplomacy. Significantly, communication has been defined as the essence of diplomacy. A scholar notes that, 'communication is to diplomacy as blood is to the human body. Whenever communication ceases, the body of international politics, the process of diplomacy, is dead, and the result is violent conflict' (Trans 1957, 8). However, communication has a rather parochial understanding in diplomatic studies as negotiation techniques are often employed as the primary method to take engagement forward. Thus, even though phrases like 'building trust, understanding, value creation, joint solutions' and so on are often used, negotiations are privileged over a more dialogic understanding. In this regard, Bisht and Ahmed (2021) have argued that dialogue as a technique, as distinct from negotiation, needs to be reckoned with, as dialogue is an effective precursor for negotiations. While the article emphasises the role of cultural performances as a useful means to meet the communication challenge in transboundary water studies, it specifically emphasises dialogic techniques with regard to the framings of water, the notion of community, and the use of multivocality, which can help to engage with the field of water diplomacy in an effective manner (Bisht and Ahmed 2021, 9–13).

This article takes this understanding further by focusing on how narratives can be made more cohesive. Narratives have been employed to understand how persuasion has and can be used in specific areas in international affairs. For instance, focusing on intertwined aspects of projection, rejection, and reception of narratives, Miskimmon et al. (2014) foreground the importance of narratives as a tool of strategic communication by highlighting how 'political actors attempt to create a shared understanding of the world, of other political actors, and of policy through the use of strategic narratives' (Miskimmon et al. 2014, 1). They categorise three types of narratives: narratives about the international system; narratives around the development of state policies; and narratives to rationalise the projection of a given identity. They argue that the actors who are able to align system, policy, and identity have a greater chance of influence. While there has not been much work undertaken on bridging the gap between these narratives, scholars have indeed talked about narrative power. For instance, Hagstrom and Gustafsson while developing the concept of narrative power note that narratives are likely to structure and exercise power over the subsequent discussion of issues as well as the policies adopted to deal with them (Hagstrom and Gustafsson 2019, 388). The relevant question for water diplomacy against this backdrop is how to generate narrative power over issues which are multi-scalar and multi-layered in nature and where the divide between micro- and meta-narrat-

ives is sharp. However, before one examines this question in some detail, it is important to understand the concept of narratives.

Derived from the Latin word *narrare*, which means to speak or tell, narratology is a branch of knowledge dealing with structure of narratives, their purpose, and conventions (Sadriu 2021, 2). Focusing on how stories are told to push political agendas and expand influence, narratology focuses on how specifically articulated causal explanations communicate a specific understanding of the world. While such understanding is useful in identifying the patterns and dominance of certain narratives vis à vis others, it does not focus much on how narratives can be constituted in a creative and inclusive manner. However, some work on narratives and communication has tried to bridge this gap, particularly around the larger theme of climate change (Marshall 2010; Bushell et al. 2016; Bevan et al. 2020). For instance, Bushell takes the argument of strategic narratives further and argues that 'Strategic narratives are the "public face" of strategy – a story, or system of stories that explain a strategy in a persuasive way' (p.7), and that, 'no matter how good a strategy is, in the absence of a narrative it will always struggle to gain traction and be effective' (p.7). Defined as an interface with the public, strategic narratives are purposive in nature and can have the potential to include multiple world views. They are also deliberately designed to have a coordinative and/or persuasive effect on the audience, allowing multiple frames to be a cohesive whole (Bevan 2020). As Jones and Radaeli (2015, 241) note,

> [N]arratives, are thus constituted through four specific criteria – (a) setting – this is the background space, which is informed by some less contested facts, which act as basic information (b) characters – these constitute the heroes (liberators), victims (the harmed) and villains (perpetrators), (c) the relationships between characters which often specify causality of actions and consequences and (d) moral – this refers to the normative ideas embedded in the narrative.

In order to address the problems associated with generalisability of narrative, the notion of content relativity is proposed as it is argued that contents cannot be generalisable across contexts, as culture and ideology (belief systems) play an important role in evoking the symbolic and emotive value of a specific narrative. Based on this, five aspects for constructing narratives are highlighted 1) social construction: narratives need to speak to many worlds, as perceptions and meanings of the world can differ and these meanings play an important role in giving life to public policy; (2) bounded relativity: meanings are often bound by contexts, and values and belief are a precondition for understanding how meanings translate; (3) structures of narratives: policy narratives are often shaped around specific structures reflective of common beliefs and perceptions; (4) simultaneity of levels: narratives are most effective

when they have a continuity across three levels: individuals (micro), groups and coalitions (meso) and institutions and cultures (macro); and finally (5) the *homo narrans* model of the individual: this mode believes that individuals as boundedly rational beings often seek affirmation in groups, which is most often done in narrative form.

These arguments on strategic narratives are useful and can be insightful for constructing and explaining the power of strategic narratives. However, a question that remains unaddressed is what can make narratives more dialogic and inclusive in nature. This is particularly important, as narratives are often associated with power and an important means of strategic communication. Narratives in the form of water dialogues can play a significant role in formulating the meta-narrative on transboundary water governance. Through the use of narratives, water dialogues can act as a medium for facilitating communication between multiple stakeholders which can reach out not only to expert communities, and government representatives, but also the local stakeholders, who are the riverine communities that depend on the river banks for their immediate survival and livelihood needs. This holistic change not only requires one to refocus on the art of persuasion and communication through narratives, but also forces one to rethink how one would like to approach issues related to transboundary water which sit at the intersection of governance and diplomacy and demand multi-scalar interventions.

Narratives around water diplomacy are important because of the multiple meanings they carry for people situated on multiple scales and thus having different narratives about the water policies. While experts from different disciplines might bring specific insights to negotiated agreements, ordinary people might not understand the technicalities of negotiations between countries. However, they do experience the impact of negotiated agreements in terms of the effects that transboundary water management and governance policies have on their immediate livelihood and well-being. In this regard, dialogue between narratives can play a significant role in formulating the meta-narrative of water diplomacy and help in making the desired shift from transboundary management approaches (technical solutions) to transboundary governance approaches (social, ecological, and institutional solutions). This shift not only requires one to refocus on the art of persuasion and communication through narratives, but also forces one to rethink how one would like to engage with narratives related to transboundary rivers which sit at the intersection of governance and diplomacy, and therefore demand the scaling up and scaling down of the multiple meanings that embody social, economic, ecological, and political concerns. Such approaches not only require conceptual innovation but also methodological intervention. Asian epistemological tradition offers one such approach which is holistic in nature yet gives attention to sub-parts which inform this larger whole. This rela-

tional perspective is important because it is not atomistic in emphasising situated perspectives but instead helps one to focus on processes, that is, aspects related to interconnections and interactions between different constituent parts, which are a part of the larger whole. An example of this approach can be seen in how specific tactics and stratagems were constituted in early India.

Conceptually, to advance the argument on dialogues through narratives, therefore, I take my cue from two South Asian traditions, the Arthashastra tradition belonging to Hinduism and the Mahayana tradition belonging to Buddhism. While the former resorted to the use of 'upayas' (transactional means), the latter resorts to the use of 'upaya kaushal' (skilful means). Significantly, where both traditions employed tactics to persuade, manoeuvre, and transform the other using relational techniques, both of them used a narrative approach to communicate these ideas. It is significant to note the relational understanding in both the traditions is different. While in the former it was confined to relationship building and relationship drifting strategies, as the primary goal was to maintain order or manage conflict and maintain social and political order at the domestic and external level (system of states), in the latter, there is a transformational angularity, where the concept of dependent origination, or how the self-changes when it comes into contact with the other is highlighted. One can also say that while the former can be understood in terms of relational rationality, the latter can be termed as reflexive relationality. Where relational rationality is taking cognition of interdependence and interactions between social, ecological, and political systems, relational reflexivity is to also find an overlapping consensus on the significant insight that each approach has to offer. Before some of these arguments are examined in section three in more detail, it will be useful to look at the meta and micro narratives on the GWT.

Narrative on Transboundary Water Cooperation

The GWT is a water sharing treaty signed between India and Bangladesh in 1996. Since 1996, bilateral relations between both countries have matured and have indeed witnessed a positive trajectory. However, when it comes to water diplomacy discourse, they have remained hostage to structures and patterns which have an enduring impact on state perceptions and interests. One of the primary reasons for this is the historical background of the GWT. In the 1950s, India decided to construct a dam on the Ganges River, which raised concerns for downstream Bangladesh (East Pakistan at that time). While talks were being held between both countries and India had recognised the Ganges River as an international river, formal negotiations started in the 1970s, when Bangladesh became an independent state. Significantly, in the 1970s, both countries had realised that there was not enough water in the Ganges to meet the needs of both countries, and a compromise had to be negotiated.

Against this backdrop, the main issues that dominated the concerns of both countries were exploring ways to augment the water of the Ganges and the allocation of a fixed amount to Bangladesh from the Ganges. There has been no breakthrough on ways to augment the flows of the Ganges to date. However, the countries did find common ground for addressing the second concern. As a result, there are two distinct narratives – the meta-narrative of the state, which considers the Ganges Water Treaty a successful case of negotiations to find a common ground, and an alternative micro-narrative, which believes that the treaty has not been cognisant of ecological and social concerns.

Analysing the Ganges Water Treaty through a narrative approach is useful because it draws attention to the nature of both meta- and micro-narratives on transboundary water cooperation in India-Bangladesh relations. In the last twenty years, published peer- reviewed literature on the GWT, statements of diplomats and ministers, and news coverage in both mainstream and alternate media helps to capture these multiple narratives of the GWT.

Understanding the GWT: Meta and Micro Narratives

India and Bangladesh share fifty-four transboundary rivers. At present, transboundary water cooperation discussions have revolved around three rivers, the Ganges, Teesta and Barak which constitute three major river systems shared by both countries, that is, the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (both Teesta and Barak are tributaries of Brahmaputra and Meghna respectively). Both countries have been contemplating broadening talks to other rivers, such as Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gomti, Dharla, Dudhkumar and Feni, where India and Bangladesh have greater scope for collaboration, particularly on the multiple uses of water.

Communication over the GWT was held against the backdrop of protracted differences over the Farakha barrage, which India was planning to build upstream. The barrage would enable India to divert the water of the Ganges to River Hooghly, to make its Calcutta port navigable. In 1971, when Bangladesh became an independent country, both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Joint Water Commission to resolve outstanding water disputes between them. The road to the 1996 treaty was thus not easy, and three *ad hoc* agreements were signed in 1977, 1982 and 1985, prior to the 1996 Agreement. The meta-narrative of the GWT can be understood by looking at the characters and relations between primary negotiators.

For instance, if one looks at the characters, one of the protagonists was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first prime minister of Bangladesh, who intervened to break the deadlock by proposing the idea of an interim agreement. Unfortunately, Rahman

was assassinated three months later, and, as a result, the good will generated by the leaders of both countries was undone. Indian Prime Minister Indra Gandhi, who headed the Congress Party, refused to negotiate with the incumbent prime minister, Zia ur Rehman, who belonged to another party (Bangladesh National Party). It was only in 1979, when the Janata Party came to power in India that Prime Minister Morarji Desai restarted negotiations over the GWT. Two MoUs were signed as part of the broader vision which the Janata Party had of neighbourhood diplomacy. Known as 'beneficial bilateralism', water was considered a sub-part for rejuvenating bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh. The interim agreements signed over the Ganges waters strengthened bilateralism as a key pillar for taking water sharing forward and also introduced a minimum guarantee of 80 percent share of water to Bangladesh under any circumstances. However, this victory was short lived. The Congress Party came to power and under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi the countries signed a new MoU in 1985. This MoU borrowed all the articles and clauses of the previous treaties except for the 80-percent guarantee clause to Bangladesh. As a result, the treaty lay dormant for the next ten years, with no mutually agreed solution coming forth. Party ideologies thus played an important role in water diplomacy (Hossain 1998; Salman and Uprety 1998; Swain 1993; Nishat and Faisal 2001).

However, apart from party ideologies, relations between individual actors and the party's approach towards neighbourhood policy also played important parts. Water became a sub-set of diplomacy, and social and ecological issues, which can stem from multiple interventions on transboundary rivers, were not taken into consideration. The treaty from the very outset was very issue-focused, where the specific interests of India and Bangladesh were negotiated based on the immediate needs they served. The political leadership emphasised the technical side of negotiations. This pattern was repeated in 1996, when the new prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina decided to privilege bilateralism as her primary foreign policy objective. This desire was facilitated by a newly formed United Front government in India too, which was led by Deve Gowda. Further, there was a major shift in diplomatic style as Prime Minister Hasina brought on board Jyoti Basu, the chief minister of West Bengal, which being an upper riparian border state was an important stakeholder in water diplomacy discussions (Pandey 2014, 2012; Hassan 2019; Zeitoun and Mirumachi 2001; and Thomas 2012).

The treaty thus was finally signed for a period of thirty years (1996–2026). Though the treaty was criticised by some quarters for not including a minimum guarantee clause, there are provisions within the treaty that guarantee water between March 1 and March 10, and guarantee 90 percent of the water flow pending review every five years. The treaty also talks about creating a joint committee, consisting of an equal

number of members from each country. This committee is also empowered to settle any difference of opinion on treaty implementation. In case the joint commission fails, issues are to be transferred to the joint commission established in 1972. The mandate of the Joint Rivers Commission is to coordinate on issues related to floods and cyclones. So far thirty-eight meetings have taken place, and issues have broadened to looking at issues of drinking water, supply schemes, protection of river banks through embankments, dredging of rivers, river linking projects, dam projects, and review of Article 1, which calls for assessing the impact of the Ganges Water Treaty. Thus, the GWT reflects a piecemeal issue-centric approach, where one of the primary goals has been augmenting the supply of water. The treaty followed a path-dependent trajectory, where leadership at the highest level played a key role in framing the argument. The official narrative maintains that the treaty is one of the most successful water sharing agreements in South Asia. This narrative has been disputed by some scholars (Rahman et al. 2019; Mirza 2002; Islam et al. 2013).

Micro Narratives

It will be useful to understand the alternative narratives that have emerged in the public domain in the last twenty years. The reason that these have been as termed 'micro-narratives' is that they offer representational concerns from the ecological and social perspective. While the published literature on the GWT reveals both these narratives for explaining and analysing the GWT, in this section societal and ecological narratives have been privileged.

For instance, in the ecological narrative scholars have brought the hydrological focus centre-stage, and the emphasis is on understanding connections in the basin. In this narrative, the focus on the Anthropocene[2] delta and basin becomes an important vantage point of analysis, where integrated development of the basin's biophysical and socio-economic challenges are emphasised. Multiple ways of integrated development have been suggested through the linking of rivers with a cross country barrage complex which can give meaningful direction to a multi-lateral/bilateral approach between basin countries and address issues related to water augmentation and water supply (Colombi and Bradnok 2002). This, as it is argued, could enhance holistic development and help in synergising national interests, people's well-being, and regional prosperity, and ensuring water, food, and energy security in the region (Rasul 2015). Biswas (2008) argues that in the long term the basin-centric approach

2 'Anthropocene delta' is a term used by Tompkins et al. to emphasise how human interventions have changed the delta and to understand the relationship between humans and physical systems. This term can also be transposed to highlight similar impacts that river basins have witnessed.

could take care of sedimentation, flooding, riverbank soil-erosion, and the supply and demand side of water management, along with developing waterways networks and catchment management.

Similarly, in the social narrative Ahmed (1985) has shed light on state-society relations and has teased out limitations that often accompany participatory approaches under the garb of federalism. In order to illuminate social aspects, scholars have also emphasised a delta-centred approach, which focuses on how flooding, erosion, cyclones, salinisation, and water logging are increasing with changing climate and anthropogenic developments and impacting the lives of the people at the local scale (Rahman et al. 2020). Rasul (2015), for one, acknowledges protection of upstream water resources, forests and soils in mountain areas as primary steps which need attention. He also draws attention to the international guideline of the World Commission of Dams, which has reflected on social, ecological, and economic tensions. Recognising the social and climate risks in Brahmaputra River Basin, Pradhan et al. (2021) offer sustainable management options to deal with the economic and ecological tensions, which they argue can only be achieved through an integrated water resource management approach which recognises the linkages between upstream areas and downstream regions at macro (river basin), meso (catchment), and micro (local) scales. The authors stresss the need for a well-established knowledge network, a coordinated approach to capacity building, the formulation of joint adaptation projects, a mechanism for high-level coordination, and the creation of an adaptation portal. These building blocks, they argue, can be further strengthened by anchoring the modalities of cooperation to the framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development between India and Bangladesh, signed by both countries on September 6, 2011 (Pradhan et al. 2021). The social approach has also found voice through scholars, communities and international, national, and local organisations working on the political ecology of water, who have taken conversations further by focusing on nature-based solutions (Sinha et al. 2018). These studies are important interventions for understanding the ramifications that negotiated water agreements have for ecological and social concerns, which can stem from multiple scales.

Narrative Analysis

What are the reasons for these multiple dichotomies and is there a possibility of having an inclusive narrative of water diplomacy? Taking a cue from Jones and Radaeli (2019), the narrative of the GWT can broadly be analysed under several headings: Social Construction – all narratives get their meaning in the context they are embedded in. Perhaps it is for this reason that that the political narratives have offered the most robust explanation for the GWT; Bounded Relativity, which has pushed the discourse on GWT towards engineering and technocratic solutions, given the

broad mandate of the legal frameworks that govern it. This also means that often ecological and social dimensions are overlooked. Meanwhile the structure of narratives often run in opposite directions, where the official narrative considers the GWT a success story, and the alternative narratives consider it a compromise solution, as it does not pay heed to ecological and social aspects. There is a lack of congruence of narratives at multiple levels, which is often expressed in the criticisms which are directed at the GWT. Finally, the *homo narrans* model suggests that the geopolitical connotations and the stakes it has for different party leaders often means looking at water sharing in a siloed, compartmentalised approach. What comes across is a fractured narrative focusing on a technical approach, bereft of social and ecological sensibilities. This narrative analysis is also instructive of the limitations around discussions on water diplomacy. It neglects discussions on 'water' that have been informed by an ecosystem perspective, which emphasises a holistic rather than a reductionist approach (Bandopadhyay 2018).

Putting Narratives in Perspective – The Dialogic Technique

In order to foreground a holistic approach over a reductionist approach, I draw upon insights from the Arthashastra and Mahayana tradition and explore ways in which narratives have been employed to communicate effectively. The use of narratives in early South Asian religions and philosophical literature was a popular medium through which certain key messages were delivered. However, one of the significant insights that stems from this analysis is the extraordinary ways in which the meta-narratives were braided with other multiple narratives. This not only made the narrative congruent but also showed how dialogic techniques helped to mediate differences between narratives, and how, when, and why this mediation occurred (Black and Patton 2016). A significant analytical tool that has stemmed from this analysis is the use of mirrors, puzzles, and echoes between sub-tales and the main story and between the sub-tales themselves. Significantly, the sub-tales reinforce such echoes through back-and-forth framings and multiple tellings to numerous audiences. From this perspective, use of dialogues between narratives becomes an important device in terms of framing and structuring texts an aspect which has been taken forward by scholars like Laurie Patten and Brian Black (2016). What also comes across through such analysis is the importance of authoritarial frames, inner frames, and outer frames, which are useful in weaving meta-narrative with other narratives. This holistic yet relational approach is an important methodological intervention of the Hindu and Buddhist tradition.

Thus, focusing on ways the narrative approach is employed by Hindu and Buddhist classical texts can be useful in constructing narratives. While the former is known for

texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Hitopdesha, and Panchatantra, the latter is known for the famous Jataka stories. Both traditions have a main narrative, which is broken by the recounting of multiple additional stories. These ancillary stories, or sub-tales, reinforce certain echoes through back-and-forth framings and are told to various audiences in multiple ways. Thus, what is important is to understand how different dialogue levels are created and intertwined with the larger frame structure, which is the authoritarial frame. Thus, if one looks at the great Indian epic Mahabharata, there is an outer frame, which is the primary narrative or the first level of the narrative. The second level entails how this main narrative is sustained. The third level takes multiple dips into the outer frame and establishes a direct conversation between the authoritarial frame and the third frame. What comes across through this approach is the importance of a meta-commentary in the narrative form that is indispensable to the narrative architecture. In fact, the meta-commentary also becomes the prime point to direct the congruence of the meta-narrative and micro-narrative. The second level is the main narrative, which in a way sustains and informs the primary narrative. The third is the outer frame, which reveals how the story of the primary frame is heard or felt by the participants. The outermost frame cannot access the actual narrative but is felt with immediacy in relation to the course of narration in the authoritarial and inner frame. In the domain of diplomacy, however, strategic or policy clarity is needed, for applying a narrative approach to specific issue areas. Examples from the traditions would help in understanding this.

For example, such an approach is evident in techniques employed by the narrative style embraced by classical traditions, which emerged in early India. Understanding it using upayas in Arthashastra tradition and upaya kaushal in the Mahayana tradition can become an interesting starting point. Upayas in Arthashastra emerge as a genre speaking to non-verbal communication and can be further classified as a relationship-building strategy and relationship-drifting strategy. Primarily conveyed by sama (reconciliation), dana (gifts), bheda (causing dissent), and danda (use of force), the former two were means to bridge differences, and the latter two were used as a means to accentuate differences and outmanoeuvre the other. While upayas was the authoritarial frame specifying means through which one could create social and political order[3], the inner frame was communicated through the sadgunya theory (six measures of foreign policy), which were also non-verbal relationship-building

3 For an analysis on the strategic themes in Arthashastra and the importance of order as the philosophical and political base of text, see Bisht 2020.

and relationship-drifting strategies[4]. The outer frame, however, was communicated through the use of stories and taken up in a more elaborate manner in Hitopdesha and Pancatantra, written and composed in a narrative form to communicate strategic wisdom through the use of stories. These messages, however, were informed by the vision of the authoritarial frame, which could resonate with the sensibilities of people in the outer frames.

In the Mahayana tradition (Pye 2003), however, upaya kaushal has been elucidated through the narrative form and can be appropriately understood through the doctrine of skilful means. By skilfully using the authoritarial frame, the inner frame and the outer frame, it sheds light on how constructing narratives by employing dialogic techniques can respond to the communication challenge. In the Jatakas for instance, the authoritarial frame is the larger frame, where Buddha rises from his meditation, ready and confident to share insights on his teaching. The inner frame is the dialogue between Shari Putra (a wise boddhisattava) and Buddha, which reinforces the extraordinariness of skilful means, as it conveys the importance of inner change or change in perceptions to respond to questions of life. The techniques employed here are a primary guide to be more reflective, so that one can adopt a transformational approach. The outer frame are the sravakas and pratekya buddha (ordinary people) who are hearers of the teaching and can attain enlightenment through faith alone. For them, not understanding but belief is important, and this belief is generated by Buddha through the use of narratives, which is also the embodiment of highest wisdom. Clearly trust in the primary protagonist, who is the Buddha, but communication of the trust becomes an important foundation.

Drawing from these insights, how can this methodological innovation help in illuminating ways for not only crafting narratives, but also braiding other multiple narratives? In other words, how can the authoritarial frame, be woven with the inner and outer frames? The policy implications from this philosophical perspective are significant for rethinking and rewriting the meta-narratives of water diplomacy, and raise significant questions related to the nature of framings of the authoritarial frame, which is key in guiding narratives or perspectives which emerge from inner and outer frames. It needs to be mentioned here that the authoritarial frame is not an authoritarian frame, but has legitimacy associated with it. For the authoritarial frame to be legitimate, its resonance with the other narratives that emerge from multiple scales and levels is important. In the current context legitimacy of the authorit-

4 These included sandhi (creating peace treaties), vigraha (policy of hostility), yana (declaring war), asana (doing nothing), samsraya (taking shelter), and dvaidhibhava (dual policy: war with one and peace with the other). Significantly, the strategic objective of the six measures of foreign policy was also defined as maintaining order or balance in the international system of states.

arial frame cannot be hinged on just technical and political aspects, as social and ecological aspects to form an essential criterion. Based on these insights, the following insights can be helpful for reconciling the statist and societal narratives as they have emerged in GWT.

Narratives and Dialogues Between Frames

Revisiting the GWT through the Authoritarial, Outer and Inner Frames, one feels that if one searches for the relevance of the authoritarial framework, the nature of meta-narrative and the inclusive message it puts forth becomes important. If this is not done, the outcome as the present case reflects, will be a fractured narrative. The Joint River Commission established in 1972 to deliberate on issues of shared transboundary rivers and the GWT of 1996 need to be seen in this context and revisited and made inclusive of the societal and ecological narrative. An inclusive policy framework which can be resonant with the inner and outer frameworks becomes significant for a coherent strategy. The inner frame suggests that conversations, discussions, and debates with expert stakeholders from both countries become important for water diplomacy. Joint fact-finding committees, informal interactions and observations stemming from these joint fact-finding committees will be significant for setting and also informing the context. The interface of policy-science dialogues becomes important here. The third frame, the outer frame, includes the reality check of these discussions by juxtaposing them with the lived problems of communities who share the brunt of water diplomacy. Consultation with civil society, which includes informal groups, formal non-governmental organisations, and international non-governmental organisations, becomes important in this context. Formulating narratives in consultation with community-building organisations and grass-roots organisations can be an elemental and continuous aspect of reviewing and updating treaties. Significantly, in the last few decades, civil society mobilisation in South Asia has opened up space for such narratives and dialogues. However, for all this to happen, the Authoritarial frame needs attention. This takes one back to the definitional aspects of water diplomacy which was mentioned in the introduction.

Conclusion – Revisiting Water Diplomacy

Thus, the link between water diplomacy and transboundary water governance and management is important as it brings together multiple narratives which are associated with transboundary rivers. One can say that water diplomacy is the overarching framework which could shape the direction of treaties either as transboundary water management practices or transboundary water governance practices. The former is more about technical solutions; the latter is about institutional and multi-scalar approaches. What also becomes evident through the above discussion is the import-

ance of rethinking narratives on issues which are multi-scalar and multi-layered in nature. Identifying the authoritarial, outer, and inner frames can help one move from water management to water governance. This is important for having inclusive water diplomacy, which can go a long way in improving diplomatic relations between states.

What one needs, therefore, is to focus and develop a meta-narrative of water diplomacy, which takes cognisance of multiple narratives. Such narratives, when structured around the scale of a river basin, can help in addressing issues of transboundary water cooperation. This is particularly significant in the backdrop of the GWT, which will expire in 2026 and requires contemplation and reflection on how to take bilateral cooperation on shared water resources forward. Dialogic narratives can definitely be a way forward, and social and ecological narratives can play an important role in rethinking the meta-narrative on water diplomacy.

Bibliography

Ahmed, S. (1995) 'Whose concept of participation? State-Society Dynamics in the Cleaning of the Ganges'. In Varanasi, in Chapman and Thompson, eds. *Water and Conquest for Sustainable Development in the Ganges Valley*. New York, Manseel, 1995, 141–162.

Bandopadhyay, J. (2018) Why do we need a new perspective on rivers? Third Pole Net.

Bevan, L., Colley, TP. & Workman, M. (2020) 'Climate change strategic narratives in the United Kingdom: Emergency, Extinction, Effectiveness'. *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 69.

Bisht, M. (2019) 'From the Edges of Borders: Reflections on Water Diplomacy in South Asia'. *Water Policy,* 21 (6) (2019), 1123–1138.

Bisht, M. (2020) Kautilya's *Arthashastra, Philosophy of Strategy*. London: Routledge.

Bisht, M., & Ahmed, S.J. (2021) 'Culture as a Fluid Interlocutor: Perspectives on Water Diplomacy from South Asia', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*.

Biswas, A. K. (2008) 'Management of Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna system: Way forward'. In *Management of Transboundary Rivers and Lakes* (O. Varis, C. Tortajada & A. K. Biswas, eds). Springer, Berlin, 143–164.

Black, B. and Patton, L. (2016) *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions*. New York: Routledge.

Brichieri-Colombi, S and Bradnock, R. W (2003) 'Geopolitics, Water and Development in South Asia: Cooperative Development in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 169, no. 1, [Wiley, Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)], 43–64.

Bushell, S, Workman, M & Colley, T (2016) 'Towards a Unifying Narrative of Climate Change', Briefing Paper No. 18, Graham Institute, Imperial College of London, 1-20.

Dittmer Jason and McConnell Fionna (2015) Diplomatic Culture and International Politics: Translations, Spaces and Alternatives, London: Routledge.

Hassan, A.B.M. (2019) 'Indian hegemony on water flow of the Ganges: Sustainability challenges in the southwest part of Bangladesh', *Sustainable Futures*, 1, 1–8

Hossain, I. (1998) 'Bangladesh-India Relations: The Ganges Water-Sharing Treaty and Beyond', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 25 (3), 131–150.

Linus, H. & Karl, G. (2019) 'Narrative power: how storytelling shapes East Asian international politics', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32 (4), 387–406.

Islam, Z., Khalequzzaman, M. & Alam, S. (2013) 'Interim assessment of the Ganges water-sharing treaty'. In *Water Resources in South Asia: Conflict to Cooperation*. Ahmed, M. F., Khalequzzaman, M. & Ahmed, T. (eds). Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon and Bangladesh Environment Network, Dhaka, 156–166.

Jones, Michael D. & Claudio M. Radaelli (2015) 'The Narrative Policy Framework: child or monster?', *Critical Policy Studies*, 9 (3), 339–355.

Keskinen, M., Salminen, E., & Haapala, J. (2021) 'Water diplomacy paths–An approach to recognise water diplomacy actions in shared waters', *Journal of Hydrology*, 602, 126737.

Marshall, G. ' Building Beliefs Through Trusted Sources', in From Hot Air to Happy Endings: How to Inspire Public Support for a Low Carbon Society (eds. Rowley, S. & Phillips, R.) 36–40.

Mirza, M. M. Q. (2002) 'The Ganges water-sharing treaty: risk analysis of the negotiated discharge', *International Journal of narrative*, Imperial College London (2014).

Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2014) *Strategic narratives: Communication power and the new world order*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Pandit, N. (2006) Hitopdesa New Delhi: Penguin Books p,.153 (translated by A.N.D. Haksar).

Nilanjan, G. and Sayanangshu, M. (2021) 'What Governance Lesson Does Mekong Bear for Ganges Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) Basin?' Journal of Asian Economic Integration, 3 (2), 211–234, September.

Nishat, A. & Faisal, I. M. (2000) 'An assessment of the institutional mechanisms for water negotiations in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna system', *International Negotiation* 5(2), 289–310.

Pandey, P. (2012) 'Revisiting the Politics of the Ganga Water Dispute between India and Bangladesh', *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 68. 267–281.

Pandey, P. (2014) 'Bangladesh, India, and fifteen years of peace: future directions of the Ganges Treaty', *Asian Survey,* 54 (4), 651–673.

Pouliot V. and Cornut J. (2015) 'Practice theory and the study of diplomacy: A research agenda', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 50 (3), Special issue: Diplomacy in Theory and in Practice (September 2015), 297–315.

Pradhan, N. Das, J.P, Gupta, N. & Shreshtha, A. (2021) 'Sustainable Management Options for Healthy Rivers in South Asia: The Case of Brahmaputra', *Sustainability*, 13, 1–23.

Press Bureau Information, https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1854557; https://newsonair.com/2022/08/26/38th-meeting-of-ministerial-level-joint-rivers-commission-of-india-and-bangladesh-held-in-new-delhi/

Pye, M. (2003) Skilful Means: The Concept in Mahayana Buddhism. New York, NY: Routledge.

Rahman, K et al (2019) 'A Critical Review of the Ganges Water Sharing Arrangement', *Water Policy*, 21, 259–76.

Rasul, G. (2015) 'Water for growth and development in the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna basins: an economic perspective', *International Journal of River Basin Management*, 13 (3), 387–400.

Sadriu, B. (2021) 'Narratives in International Studies Research'. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.

Salman, S. M. A. & Uprety, K. (1999) 'Hydro-politics in South Asia: a comparative analysis of the Mahakali and the Gangestreaties'. *Natural Resources*, 39 (2), 295–343.

Sehring, J., Schmeier, S., ter Horst, R., Offutt, A., & Sharipova, B. (2022) 'Diving into Water Diplomacy–Exploring the Emergence of a Concept'. *Diplomatica*, 4 (2), 200–221.

Sharma, V. (2019) *The Pancatantra*. New Delhi, Penguin Books.

Sinha, V. et al., (2018) Opportunities for benefit sharing in the Meghna Basin, Bangladesh and India. Scoping study. Bangkok, Thailand: IUCN.

Swain, Ashok (1993) 'Conflicts over Water: The Ganges Water Dispute', *Security Dialogue*, 1993, (24), 4, December 1993, 429–439.

The Hindu, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-and-bangladesh-in-talks-for-major-river-agreement-ahead-of-pm-hasinas-visit/article65751288.ece

Thomas, K. (2012) 'Water under the bridge? International resource conflict and post-treaty dynamics in South Asia', *South Asia Journal*, 5, 11–28.

United Nations (2015) Policy Guidance Note on the Benefits of Transboundary Water Cooperation: Identification, Assessment and Communication, New York, and Geneva.

Zeitoun, M. & Mirumachi, N. (2008) 'Transboundary water interaction I: reconsidering conflict and cooperation'. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics,* 8 (4), 297–316.

From the Palaver Tree to the State House: A Reflection on the Tension between Dialogue and Governance in Africa

Ali Moussa Iye[1]

Abstract: This paper proposes a reflective approach to exploring the complex relationship between dialogue and governance. It first recalls the different dimensions of dialogue and its centrality in governance and discusses the fundamental tension between these two practices that constantly challenges power dynamics in decision making. Through analyses of how different governance systems tend to domesticate, shape, and regulate dialogue in responding to this tension, this paper further identifies three types of dialogue that come into play in three different contexts: (1) 'open-ended' dialogue practised by the African endogenous systems of governance, (2) 'locked dialogue' imposed by the African Nation States, and (3) 'biased dialogue' promoted by international and transnational organisations. Such analyses are particularly meaningful in enabling us to draw lessons from these three cases of interaction between dialogue and governance. Ultimately, this paper seeks to reconcile the requirements for multidimensional and relational practices of dialogue with the rational processes of governance in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world.

Keywords: Governance, Endogeneity, Multidimensionality, Nation State, UN, Open-ended Dialogue, Closed Dialogue, Biased Dialogue

1 Ali Moussa Iye is a Djiboutian writer and researcher. He holds a PhD in political science from the Institute of Political Science (Grenoble, France). He was a journalist, editor of a weekly newspaper and Director of Press and Audio-visual in Djibouti before joining UNESCO in 1996. Within UNESCO, he was coordinator of the UNESCO Culture of Peace Programme in the Horn of Africa, based in Addis Ababa from 1997 to 2000. He then coordinated the follow-up to the Durban World Conference against Racism and was in charge of the UNESCO programme against Racism and Discrimination. Dr Moussa Iye was the Head of the History and Memory for Dialogue Department from 2004 to 2019 and directed two important UNESCO programmes: **The Routes of Dialogue** (*Slave Route Project and Silk Road Project*) and the **General and Regional Histories Project**. He has coordinated the pedagogical use of the General History of Africa project and the writing of the last three volumes of this prestigious collection. Dr Moussa Iye is currently pursuing his personal research in the field of political anthropology and is working in particular on the revalorisation of endogenous African knowledge. He founded the Think Tank "PERSPECTIVES", a Global Africa initiative to rethink Africa's presence and contribution to humanity. He has published several books on the history and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Horn of Africa and on intercultural dialogue.

Introduction

Dialogue is one of the most elusive concepts that defies attempts to define and fully comprehend it. Dialogue related to governance is even more difficult to grasp, depending on who is talking about it, from what position, and for what purpose. I therefore would not pretend to provide a comprehensive definition here, but rather I shall propose a perspective of dialogue that could help to better understand its dialectical interactions with governance.

In any discussion about dialogue, it is important to take into account the multi-dimensional character not only of human relations but also of the reality itself. We must consider the metaphysical, spiritual, and philosophical interpretations of the visible and invisible world that shape the different layers through which relationships between humans, but also with other living and non-living entities, are perceived in each society. Without this multi-dimensional perspective any debate about dialogue and governance is bound to remain superficial and therefore limited in its ability to capture the complexity of their interactions.

To illustrate the necessity of understanding the different dimensions of dialogue in applying justice, ensuring peace and social cohesion, I would like to cite an example of a conflict that was brought to my attention by elders during my research on the 'Xeer Issa', the socio-political pact or 'Customary Law' of the Somali pastoralists in the Horn of Africa. It is a difficult case that the Xeer lawyers had to deal with which concerns the social responsibility of a 'were-hyena'. The belief that there are people who can turn into hyenas, wolves, or jaguars after nightfall is very common, not only among Somali pastoralists, but also among many peoples in other regions of the world (Steiger 2011). The story goes that one night a hyena attacked a herd in a nomadic camp, but the owner fired at the wild animal and wounded it.

The next day, the were-hyena whose shape-shifting form had been killed had just enough time before dying to tell his family about the circumstances in which he had been seriously injured. His grieving family felt that his murder deserved redress and brought the case before the community law to obtain the blood price (compensation calculated in heads of cattle, usually camels, paid for the murder of a person in Somali pastoralist societies). The murderer's family replied that their member had killed a hyena that had been caught attacking his sheep, not a human being. This became a sensitive case which went through the 'twelve trees' procedure, which allows a plaintiff to appeal up to twelve times for a verdict. The elders, who considered the validity of both interpretations of the story, had to give a multi-dimensional answer. At the final meeting under the tree, the best speaker was chosen to announce the decision of the elders, using the power of the verb. He said,

> 'O my people! Who lives will see! And our community have not finished seeing strange cases of justice. Up until this day, two things had no guarantors to be held responsible for their actions: the Angel of death and hyenas. When they kill, we did not know who to turn to for reparation for their crimes. Today, we have here a family claiming to be guarantor of a hyena and asking for its blood price. So be it if that is their wish! This family swears in the front of the Elders that this hyena was one of its members, let us consider their request for compensation. According to our Xeer (Law), a murder calls for condemnation and compensation. This family who lost a loved one must receive the blood price. However, the Xeer is also a fair law, which requires that members of the community fulfil their duty. Moreover, our law has always been open to change in the face of new circumstances. So, I propose to enrich our Xeer and add a new clause stipulating that from today on, this family that claims the blood price of a hyena be henceforth held responsible for all future misdeeds of hyenas. I invite them to reflect on the consequences of this provision before receiving the hundred camels of the blood price.'

After weighing up the pros and cons, the family decided to give up their claim. How could they take responsibility for the actions of thousands of hyenas that pose a constant threat to the herders? This story shows us that instead of dismissing the plaintiff's claim for justice for killing a hyena as unrealistic, the elders took into account the existence of this layer of social reality and came up with a solution that met the interpretations of both parties.

This paper uses a reflective approach to explore the complex relationship between dialogue and governance. It begins by recalling the various aspects of dialogue and its centrality to governance. It highlights the need to understand the multi-dimensional nature of human relations in order to truly embrace dialogue in governance. It also discusses the fundamental tension between these two practices of. dialogue and governance which constantly challenges power dynamics in decision making. By analysing how different governance systems tend to domesticate, shape and regulate dialogue in response to this tension, this paper further identifies three types of dialogue that come into play in three different contexts, which we refer to as: (1) 'open dialogue', practised by African endogenous governance systems, (2) 'closed dialogue', imposed by African nation states, and (3) 'biased dialogue' promoted by international and transnational organisations. Such analyses are particularly useful for drawing lessons from these three cases of dialogue and governance interaction.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to reconcile the requirements of multi-dimensional and relational practices of dialogue with the rational processes of governance in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world.

Different Understandings of Dialogue

Dialogue is at the origin of human organisation as a society. It stems from the long process of appropriating and mastering language. Talking goes beyond the need to name or show what we see, or describe an experience. It is also about exchanging ideas and feelings, discussing decisions and choices to be made in a given situation, and about plans for the future. (Harari 2015*)*. As reality is interpreted differently according to the conditions of existence, interests, and ambitions of the interacting individuals and groups, there is a need to constantly construct a common understanding and meaning of this reality, a need which imposes the necessity of dialogue to confront and reconcile the different interpretations in order to build intelligibility, sociability, and governability.

Dialogue is more than an exchange of rational arguments, according to some common moral norms that were freely discussed and agreed upon by all the interlocutors (Habermas 1991). Dialogue is shaped by our interpretations of the very notions of subjectivity, relationality, and reciprocity developed by the ontological system in which we live and evolve. Anthropology is perhaps the discipline that offers us the broadest view of the diversity of existing cosmovisions and helps us to become more aware of our limitations to conceive beyond our cultural horizons. This is why I have chosen to refer to anthropological works in discussing the issues of dialogue and governance that are usually treated by sociologists and political scientists.

The anthropologist Philipe Descola proposed an interesting distinction between different ontological systems, according to their identifications and classifications of existing entities and the ways they determine the relationship patterns between human beings and with other entities (Descola 2005). Beyond the usual differences between cultures or religions, he described four holistic systems of interpreting and inhabiting the universe:

- *Animism*, which endows all existing beings with a similar interiority (mind, soul, consciousness, and subjectivity) while distinguishing them by their physicality (form, physiological processes, bodies, visible and tangible expressions);

- *Naturalism*, which asserts that only human beings possess the privilege of interiority, while they are attached to the continuum of non-humans by many other material characteristics;

- *Totemism*, which believes that humans and non-humans share, within a specific class, the same interiority and physicality derived from a prototype, while being distinguished from other classes;

- *Analogism,* which considers that all the entities of the world are ontologically different from each other and have distinct interiority and physicality and therefore stable analogical correspondences need to be found between them to understand their relationship.

Each of these ontological systems has developed its own cosmogony to explain how the universe came into being and its own epistemology and ethics to understand the relationship and communication between humans and with other living and non-living entities. For instance, animist societies in Amazon or sub-Arctic America *generalise* the position of moral and epistemic subject to a multitude of beings, since all entities possess an interiority that is analogous to that of humans and enjoys equal dignity. In contrast, naturalist societies in the West confine the position of the subject to a single species and hierarchise other beings according to criteria derived from their ontological beliefs.

Although the existence of radically different cosmovisions implies that there are no absolute and scientifically founded criteria on the basis of which universally recognised values can be justified, Descola argued that, nevertheless, it is possible to define, through dialogue and by a normative act, some values that are acceptable to the majority of people and can be considered universal. He introduced what he called a 'relative universalism' which does not stem from nature and cultures but is rather based on the relationships of continuity and discontinuity, identity and difference, similarity and dissimilarity that humans establish everywhere among beings**.** He pointed out that this relative universalism is likely to lead to an ethic, that is, to common rules to share the world to which everyone can subscribe without doing violence to the values in which they are brought up. He considered that the construction of this ethic does not require that an equal materiality for all and contingent meanings be given beforehand: it has to be built relationship by relationship. (Descola 2006)

Within this perspective of universalism, dialogue would be possible even between peoples with different cosmovisions and can become a constructive and reflective interaction to foster our understanding of the unity (continuity) and diversity (discontinuity) of our humanity, build relationships, and transcend conflict and hostility. In this sense, dialogue is different from debate, which is characterised as combative, unreflective, and oriented towards winning an argument rather than deepening understanding (Ute Kelly 2013).

Dialogue is therefore a complex exercise that involves the risk for participants of having their thoughts and visions altered and challenged. The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai identifies three of these risks in relation to intercultural dialogue: the risk of not being understood and of exacerbating cultural misunderstandings; the risk of giving others the impression of having grasped the essence of their culture and of caricaturing it; and finally, the risk of not finding the right balance between the legitimacy to speak on behalf of one's whole group and the need to reveal the doubts, divergences, and internal disagreements of one's own culture. (Appadurai 2013)

Dialogue proposes a form of communication, which invites us to reflect on our certainties and doubts. It is an exchange of different subjectivities and rationalities that could open the possibility of new ones born of the transformation of the parties in dialogue. It leads to what Tzvtan Todorov called a 'transvaluation', that is, the return to oneself of a gaze informed by contact with the other (Todorov 1986). In this respect, dialogue becomes a learning and training process through which participants can rediscover their own identity, personality, and even autonomy by participating in dialectical exchanges that can reconfigure their initial thoughts and feelings.

This understanding of dialogue introduces a new etymology of the term, which suggests a different interpretation of the prefix 'dia-' by positing it as the equivalent of the prefix 'trans-' that implies the idea of overcoming and transformation. This transformative character of dialogue is highlighted in the operational definition of intercultural dialogue proposed in the UNESCO report *Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue*. Intercultural dialogue is defined as

> a process undertaken to realise transformative communication that requires space or opportunities for engagement and a diverse group of participants committed to values such as mutual respect, empathy and a willingness to consider different perspectives. (UNESCO & Institute for Economics & Peace 2020)

A fruitful and transformative dialogue happens between people who are aware of their incompleteness and the limitations imposed by their worldview, and who are looking, beyond their similarities and differences, for further personal and collective enrichment through the search for meanings in the unity and diversity of humanity. Intersubjective by nature, dialogue involves both intra-cultural, inter-cultural, and trans-cultural dimensions. It requires the development of specific personal and collective skills: the ability to listen and learn, the capacity to suspend judgement while listening, the capacity to inquire and explore assumptions in order to understand the interpretations of the interlocutors and have a 'bigger picture' about the issues discussed. Listening is here considered as an active skill that requires the capacity to hear and to digest what is being said.

Tension Between Dialogue and Governance

It is within this holistic perspective on dialogue that the tension with governance is to be addressed. The concept of governance itself needs to be understood in its broader dimension. It is more than a form of government that takes its objectives from democratic theory and from market economics and whose aim is to achieve transparent processes, a better management of power and rule of law, and greater efficiency in the production of public services (Stoker 1998). It is not reduced either to the sum of formal and informal modes of regulating social processes (Héritier 2002). Governance is to be considered as a larger system of metaphysical, spiritual, and philosophical interpretations, interactions, processes, and regulation which inform us about the 'political ontology' of each society and in particular about the relationship between humans and with divinity, the nature of authority, the mode of sharing power and resources, and the decision-making process in the management of communities' needs and aspirations.

In that perspective, dialogue is central for the legitimisation of governance as a necessary system for organising society, ensuring order, stability, and some form of justice. It is a highly political exercise that reveals the stakes, challenges, and limits of the system. Rulers need dialogue to justify their power, inscribe their legitimacy in the cultural and religious representations, and to govern society without the costly and risky use of force. Dialogue is what turns their power into authority if they acquire the capacity to listen and the ability to convince and embody in an exemplary way the ethical principles and values agreed upon.

But at the same time, rulers always attempt to hinder the possibility of a full dialogue that could lead to the transformation we have mentioned above or challenge the structural power relationships. They cannot afford to let dialogue adopt the 'discourse ethics' defined by the philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, according to which any serious dialogue presupposes the validation by the participants of a certain number of moral rules agreed upon, such as the free participation in the discussion without any a priori exclusion; the equal possibility for the interlocutors to assert, express, or examine any assertion; and the absence of pressure to suspend the application of the preceding rules. (Habermas and Apel 1991)

Any system of governance is bound to be contested and challenged because of its intrinsic vulnerabilities: the divergence about policies, the envy it arouses, the abuse of power and resources it encourages, the aspirations for change it provokes. The stronger the power, the greater its vulnerabilities. That is why rulers and leaders have an ambivalent attitude to dialogue. They need it to ensure the link with their constituencies, but at the same time they are wary of it because it is an unpredictable and

risky process through which their practices and their legitimacy can be assessed and challenged.

The way in which the terms of the dialogue are defined, the agenda is set, the participation of stakeholders is organised and the outcomes are processed informs us about the nature of the governance at stake. Each form of governance (direct or representative democracy, absolute or constitutional monarchy, plutocracy, or dictatorship) promotes and institutionalises a type of dialogue that limits the risks of being challenged.

Governance at all levels (state, national and local institutions, international organisations) has developed a panoply of strategies, tactics, and tools to accommodate, frame, limit, and instrumentalise dialogue and control its outcome. This includes *inter alia* criteria for the selection of interlocutors and mediators, the definition of agenda and topics, the organisation of consultations, seduction, intimidation, or bribery of participants, manipulation and communication of the outcome. We have chosen to analyse three situations reflecting the way in which the tension between governance and dialogue is addressed: Open-ended Dialogue, Closed Dialogue and Biased Dialogue.

Open-ended Dialogue: Under the Tree

Open-ended dialogue is generally the kind of dialogue that is practised in most traditional systems of governance. Embedded symbolically and practically in different rituals, and representations, it is a process commonly accepted by all communities.

The decision-making assemblies take place in open spaces where members of the community can access and follow the-dialogue. The shade of specific trees usually serves as place of deliberation. The symbol of the tree is indeed very strong. It is an open space without barrier. People sit on the exposed roots of the tree and lean against its trunk. The leaves provide protection from the sun and rain and can also be used to make mats on the ground for the elders. Depending on the environment, assemblies can be also held in large pavilions that are open to the outdoors in order to allow free participation. It is worth noting here the contrast between initiation ceremonies which are usually held behind closed doors and in secret and the dialogue on the community's affairs that takes place in a transparent way and in open spaces that everyone can access.

The 'palaver under the tree' has become a metaphor for the open-ended dialogue, with no time limit, which allows relatively comprehensive, open, and free exchanges (Bidima 1997). All members of the community can speak according to a specific agreed protocol and agenda. However, such palaver is often limited to men in many

patriarchal societies, even if, in some matriarchal societies, women may participate or have their own assembly to decide on some important community matters (Sudarkasa, 1986).

Furthermore, several restrictions are imposed to avoid emotional outbursts, aggressive behaviour, and unpredictable reactions, but also to prevent radical challenges to the social order and the narratives on which it is based. A set of rituals and procedures is used to frame dialogue and ensure that individual freedom of expression does not threaten community cohesion and collective interest. However, individuals can challenge this order without facing punishment. As prison and death penalty do not exist in these societies, they may risk exclusion or ostracism if they threaten the common norms.

The main tension that this type of governance system has to deal with is the contestation about representation, resource sharing, legitimacy of leadership, and the dialogue agenda. If the dialogue fails to reach consensus, the proposed solution is usually to organise further dialogue sessions to attain it.

The two main procedures used to contain and orient dialogue are the designation of spokesperson and the application of the rule of consensus in decision taking. Spokespersons are designated according to their experience, integrity, and speaking skills and mandated to speak on behalf of the group they represent under the guidance and direction from other members of the group, who are tasked to ensure that their requests and messages have been properly translated and articulated. As they are also attending the meetings, they can contradict their spokespersons if the spokespersons have deviated from their mission.

Within this relational governance system, decision making requires a broad consensus. The closer it is to unanimity, the more legitimate the decision is considered. This result depends on the way in which debates have been conducted, expectations, aspirations, and interpretations taken into account, and the honour and respectability of groups involved. This is one of the reasons why open-ended dialogue is a time-consuming exercise which requires patience and humility (Teklu 2021).

However, there are circumstances where rapid decision making is necessary. Traditional systems of governance have generally defined the specific situations where dialogue can be restricted and adapted. During these emergency situations, the procedure is simplified, and decision making is entrusted to certain individuals, such as military or religious leaders.

There have been cases in Africa where emergency situations have led to a change in the decision-making process by replacing it with more expeditious and less demo-

cratic methods. Such transformations of endogenous governance systems have been brought about, for example by the upheavals of the slave trade, colonisation, and the introduction of the nation state model.

In general, because of the centrality of dialogue in decision making, traditional societies place particular emphasis on civic education to enable young people to acquire the skills to participate in community affairs at an early age. This capacity building is ensured through the initiation ceremonies organised to induct and welcome young people as full members of the community. A whole literature of tales, proverbs, legends, mythologies, but also games and reasoning exercises, are included in this education.

To provide concrete examples of the above-mentioned characteristics of open-ended dialogue, I will refer below to some aspects of the Somali 'Xeer' system of governance that I have studied (Moussa Iye, 2019).

Concerning the consensus building, the Xeer provides for the possibility of going through as many as twelve 'trees' or sessions to decide on difficult matters. Furthermore, a member of the community who disagrees with a decision is allowed to express his dissatisfaction by uttering the following words of deviance 'I refuse the decision of this *shitty assembly*'. It happened that individuals or families who strongly contested a decision they considered unjust left their community, migrated, and integrated into a neighbouring community.

In the case of an emergency situation, mainly during war or imminent threat, the Xeer bestows full authority and leadership to the *Mirix,* the Commandant, selected by the elders on the basis of his military and strategic abilities. The process of dialogue is limited in order to take decisions rapidly. The Mirix can decide on the movement of the community, the distribution of duties, and the collection of food and animals, side-stepping the usual process of democratic decision making.

It is useful at this stage of our discussion to question a deeply rooted presupposition about societies labelled as primitive, archaic, tribal, or segmentary by colonial anthropology. These societies are often denied the possibility of the deliberative choice or design of their socio-political and economic structures because these are supposed to be only determined by their material and environmental conditions (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1987). Communities that have managed to put dialogue and participatory decision making at the heart of their system of governance and developed coherent discourses to justify this choice are typically regarded as *traditional*, incapable of progressing towards more structured power and economic systems. They are generally defined negatively as societies without writing, without history,

without state, and so on. They are also designated as societies of scarcity and of subsistence, without market and surplus.

In his work of political anthropology, Pierre Clastres, who studied the Amazonian communities, the Guaraní in Brazil and the Guayaki in Paraguay in the 1970s, has deconstructed this evolutionary theory that considers 'modern' society as the culmination of social organisations and as a more evolved stage that all human societies will have to reach. He debunked two fundamental prejudices of this theory: the technical inferiority of 'primitive societies' and their absence of state to bring change and progress. He argued:

> If one understands by technics the set of procedures men acquire not to ensure the absolute mastery of nature (that obtains only for our world and its insane Cartesian project, whose ecological consequences are just beginning to be measured), but to ensure a mastery of the natural environment suited and relative to their needs, then there is no longer any reason whatever to impute a technical inferiority to primitive societies: they demonstrate an ability to satisfy their needs which is at least equal to that of which industrial and technological society is so proud. (Clastres (2006), *La sociète contre l'Etat*, Editions Marée noire, page 10)

Other anthropologists have also highlighted that these societies have been able to satisfy their basic needs by working less than four hours a day, using the rest of their time for fighting, hunting, fishing, and enjoying social and cultural activities. Some anthropologists have even designated them as 'the first affluent societies' and the first 'leisure societies' (Lee 1965; Sahlins 1968). This debate, which divided anthropologists at the time, takes on a new dimension today with the series of dialogues engaged in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), which recommends developing urgently a culture and an economy of *sobriety* to save our planet (UN Environment Programme, 2022).

For Clastres (2006), the so-called primitive societies are in fact egalitarian societies that have deliberately chosen their economic model and refused to let labour and production imprison them by deciding to limit the production of resources to sociopolitical and well-being needs and by prohibiting inequality. They have also deliberately chosen political and economic systems that could allow them to sustain their egalitarian organisation and participatory processes in decision making. Clastres argued that only external violence and specially the violence exercised by a state-centric system of governance could explain the shift from traditionally egalitarian societies towards state power, which imposed an economic system characterised by a

mode of production pursuing wealth for its own sake rather than for the community's well-being.

Closed Dialogue: Under the Seal of Nation States

Statehood and nationhood are two concepts that have evolved separately but converged at a certain point of history and in a certain part of the world to form what it is now called the 'nation state' (Markakis, Schlee and Young 2021). States come in different forms in various regions of the globe, from the tiny city states along coastal settlements to vast empires across continents. A *state* emerged as a political institution to exercise sovereign control over a given territory but without necessarily a close identification with the populace. It was long after the emergence of *state* that the concept of *nation* was attached to it. Nation is a more complex notion that had different and divergent interpretations of its core principles, such as shared memory and heritage, common aspirations and destiny, mutual feeling of togetherness. In fact, it was in Europe that the notion of nation acquired its present meaning and prominence in modern times. It is a product of Western history and modernity that introduced the problematic criteria of ethnic and cultural homogeneity as the foundational definition of nationhood and the related criteria of belonging and loyalty (Deutsch and Foltz 1966).

Nation state is therefore a model of governance that, far from being universal, is marked by the particular trajectories of European societies. Its birth is generally dated back to the signing, in 1648, of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty- and Eighty-Years' Wars and created the framework for modern international relations (Wilson 2009). The concepts of state sovereignty over demarcated territory, hierarchical authority, mediation between nation states, and diplomacy all find their origins in the context of this treaty.

However, this peace treaty that enshrined the concept of sovereignty did not end conflicts: it opened a new cycle of confrontations, wars, and destructions between emerging and competing European nation states. This system of governance left a disastrous legacy of expansion and conquest that marked Europe's bloody histories until the middle of the twentieth century with the so-called 'World Wars.'

The collective work achieved through the UNESCO General and Regional Histories Collections (1980–2010), which offer a multi-perspective approach to world history has shown that this model of state was not the only way to develop large functional socio-political entities (Jakobson and Dandamaev 1996). For instance, in Africa and Asia, other forms of large multi-ethnic and multi-cultural political groupings emerged that did not use the concept of nation as a vehicle of unification and legitimacy. The great African empires, such as Ghana, Mali, Songhai, to name but a

few, had developed other criteria of belonging and affiliation to the imperial authority without using the identity-based concept of nationhood and the criteria of ethnic homogeneity. For instance, the concept of 'Mansa', a Mandinka word, was the title given to the Sovereign of the Empire of Mali, founded by Sundiata Keita in the thirteenth century, which reached its apogee in the sixteenth century. It is wrongly translated as 'Emperor or King of kings' according to the European conception of imperial power. In effect, the 'Mansaya' ruled by the 'Mansa', was a highly decentralised power, whose system of administration could be compared to that of a confederation of states or provincial structures with great autonomy in many aspects of decision making. In Africa, in addition to these widely dispersed empires, there were also centralised kingdoms and empires ruling large territories which did not use the ideology of the nation state (Niane and Ogot 1985 1999).

The Abyssinian empire built by Emperors Menelik and later Haile Selassie in Ethiopia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively is an example of the African power systems that tried to adopt the concept of nation state. The imposition of a model of empire based on a homogenous ethno-religious group in a country with an astonishing cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity has led to terrible atrocities which are still being documented (Bulcha 2005).

When the African elites who were educated in the Western conception of governance came to power in their countries after independence, granted either by negotiation, or acquired through armed liberation struggles, it was this toxic concept of the nation state that was transposed to Africa. By adopting this colonial legacy, they found themselves confronted very quickly with a great challenge: how to reconcile the search for unity based on homogeneity in countries with artificial borders (drawn by the ambitions of colonial empires) with the extraordinary diversity of their peoples, cultures, and beliefs produced by a long history.

To transcend this contradiction, the new rulers began to replace the founding myths of their people with new narratives and representations about the existential unity of their nation states before even ensuring effective control over their territory, securing their borders, imposing the monopoly over the use of force, and maintaining order and enforcing law.

Frantz Fanon, who was a psychiatrist before becoming a political thinker, has perfectly analysed the psychology and behaviour of these post-colonial elites who, despite their discourse about emancipation and national liberation, had internalised colonial alienation (Fanon 1963). In their effort to catch up with the progress and modernity considered the only possible path for human development, the new rulers adopted Western ideologies such socialism, communism, or liberalism, thus overlooking their cultural specificity and abandoning their autonomy of thought. By

doing so, these rulers put themselves at the service of a development that could only perpetrate external domination and reproduce the colonial prejudices against their own populations. The Egyptian economist Samir Amin has spent decades studying the disastrous effects of this dependency syndrome (Amin 1976), while the Guyanese historian and political activist Walter Rodney analysed the very processes that led to the development of underdevelopment in post-colonial societies (Rodney 1972).

What interests us here is how this model of exogenous governance has marginalised and instrumentalised the dialogue that African societies used to practise before the colonial penetration. The endogenous conceptions and processes of consensus building through dialogue used by most African communities were the first 'traditions' to be targeted in the effort to build nation states. They were replaced with different forms of consultation controlled by state institutions such as political parties, administration, and other affiliated bodies. Under the pretext of preserving unity and national cohesion, and fulfilling their commitment to economic development, African rulers established in an authoritarian manner new terms and agendas for dialogue.

Endogenous mechanisms for building mutual trust, preparing minds, and establishing common norms for the exchanges, such as the spiritual and magical rituals to prepare the ground for dialogue and reinforce the spirit of harmony and peace, were rejected as impractical and archaic. Exogenous conceptions of dialogue such as the models of political meetings with their modes of agenda-setting and floor-taking, and reporting were adopted at every level and imposed as new paradigms of dialogue. Endogenous rituals and representations were replaced by other ceremonies such as national anthems, military marching bands, and religious preaching to encourage. The 'palaces' of governments, the headquarters of the ruling parties, the offices of the ministers, the halls of parliaments, the centres of authorised civil society associations became the new places for dialogue.

The 'palaver of the elders' as they were designated with contempt by the new technocrats were replaced by public consultations under the control of the state institutions from which independent elders, critical civil society activists, and scholars are generally excluded.

In such conditions, dialogue is often reduced to a series of impoverished and standardised discourses dismissing the norms of a true exchange such as freedom of expression, identification of the sources of problems, analysis of the shortcomings, and so on. A dialogue of the deaf came to take place between the rulers and the grassroots communities, encouraged by the use of concepts and notions borrowed from the colonial languages used as official language in state administration.

Despite all the efforts of the state to impose these new terms, the endogenous systems of dialogue have continued to enjoy great legitimacy and respect among communities. Challenged by this resilience, the new elites undertook various actions to discredit these traditions in the eyes of the population, by manipulating the process of leadership designation, corrupting the authority of the elders, enrolling traditional kings, sultans, and other powers in their campaign for unity and development. They could not tolerate the existence of parallel decentralised systems of governance which put in perspective the centralised decision-making process imposed by nation states. Thus, indigenous governance systems were listed among the 'retrograde' and 'anti-progress' cultural traditions that should be combatted and erased in order to modernise the society and pull people out of backwardness and underdevelopment. Even the acclaimed cultural diversity and richness is reduced to folkloric representations, such as speeches, songs, and dances performed during official ceremonies and in front of foreign visitors.

Moreover, post-colonial states imposed further restrictions to disqualify and criminalise dissident voices. New offences were introduced including crimes of treason, infringement of national unity, insubordination to state authority. The control of political dialogue has led some nation states to use the monopoly of force and violence by imposing coercive measures such as banning, imprisonment, deportation, or even disappearance. This may explain why, very early after independence, citizens who did not accept this locked dialogue chose to take up arms and form liberation movements under the banner of imported ideologies in which the endogenous traditions of dialogue were not often better used and respected.

Beyond cultural and political alienation, African rulers were also confronted with the predatory, exploitative, and repressive nature of the colonial state structures they inherited. Those who tried to challenge this order and regain autonomy and control over their resources for the benefit of their people during moments of revolutionary or nationalist ferment were confronted, very quickly, with the reality of the imperialist hegemonies. They have been the object of coups, assassinations, terrorist attacks, or unrest under the banner of democracy, human rights, or humanitarian emergency. The so-called 'curse' of the wealth in the African soil and subsoil is the consequence of this unfinished decolonisation.

The nostalgia for open-ended dialogue remains alive among African populations, who regularly express their frustration during movements of protest through which they claim all-inclusive national dialogue based on endogenous experiences to build a decolonised and democratic future.

Biased Dialogue: Under the Umbrella of International Organisations

International organisations, whether intergovernmental or non-governmental, have become the great advocates of dialogue. Most of them have set up programmes on different types of dialogue: intercultural, interreligious, intergenerational, inclusive dialogue, and so forth. Dialogue becomes a magical keyword in their institutional discourse and communication. Taking advantage of the neutrality afforded by their international status, these international organisations urge social and political actors in various countries to engage in dialogue and offer their expertise and experience to serve as brokers. Some of these organisations have even proposed methodologies and guidelines to help interested parties organise a constructive dialogue around issues of justice, development, or power and resources sharing.

However, international organisations are themselves governed by structures that do not favour dialogue and equality among their members. The example of the United Nations is instructive in that respect. Its General Assembly, which brings together all the member states, is supposed to be the supreme body that makes decisions on major issues of the world, according to the egalitarian principle of one country, one vote. It is informed by the dialogue within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which is 'the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals on the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental' (UN ECOSOC).

Every year, the UN General Assembly is held in New York to discuss pressing global issues and adopt by consensus or vote specific resolutions through lengthy debates and laborious negotiations. However, despite the time and energy put into their drafting and adopting, these resolutions are non-binding except those concerning UN budgetary and organisational matters. They are considered as formal expressions of the will of the United Nations but are not legally binding upon member states.

On the other hand, resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council are generally considered binding in accordance with Article 25 of the Charter. How can a Council composed of only fifteen members be allowed to adopt binding resolutions while the General Assembly of 193 members cannot? More surprisingly, five of the Council's members have the right of Veto, which means that they can oppose a decision taken by all the other members of the Council if so, they wish, without providing any logical justification. Are these Security Council members wiser, more credible, and more ethical than others to be given this privilege? Or is it because they acquired nuclear power before the others did? In that case, would there be a 'bomb

dividend'? None of the countries holding the Veto right have demonstrated exemplary ethical behaviour in exercising that privilege that has been used around 300 times since 1946 (Von Freiesleben 2008).

This discrimination among member states constitutes a fundamental weakness of the UN, which may explain why an increasing number of people, countries, and organisations across the world are questioning its legitimacy and credibility in promoting good governance and meaningful dialogue processes. More and more people are calling for reform to challenge the power given to the five permanent members to unilaterally obstruct the UN dialogue process and render the international organisation irrelevant (Gordon 1995). Another problem faced by the UN system is the inability of its member states to transcend their national egoism and self-interest and to address global issues with the necessary sense of responsibility, solidarity, and equity.

Since their inception, the UN and its specialised agencies, followed by other international organisations, have focused their actions and interventions on the so-called 'Underdeveloped', 'Least developed' and now 'Developing' countries as they were defined following a questionable evolutionary and Eurocentric perspective on societal development. Regional and national offices have been created in these countries to implement development programmes on the ground, provide support. and engage governments and social actors in dialogue.

Thousands of international civil servants and consultants are sent to these countries to organise consultations, advise governments, mediate between national stakeholders, and implement the methodologies and guidelines they have developed on dialogue and good governance. The uneven results of their interventions have shown that the international experts are not necessarily the best prepared and equipped to facilitate dialogue and encourage good governance in different cultural contexts, firstly, because they themselves have not acquired a culture of dialogue within their own organisations, where power relations and bureaucratic hierarchy and career competition exhaust their attention. Secondly, they are not sufficiently trained to understand the complex and multi-dimensional realities of the societies they are supposed to serve. Thirdly, they often perpetuate themselves some of the prejudices and paternalistic behaviours inherited from the colonial 'civilising mission' (Césaire 1950).

Although the UN has played a crucial role in the decolonisation process and in the fight against colonialism, racism, and segregation, it has not succeeded in challenging the 'racial order' that has been constructed since the sixteenth century European conquests to justify slavery and then colonial exploitation (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015). This racial order is at the basis of capitalism which has shaped the

global system today (Go 2020). Western staff and consultants are sent to developing countries to share their experience and expertise. They can go and work anywhere in the world and manage regional and country offices outside their region of origin, while African, Asian, and Latin American staff are generally assigned to their region of origin. This gives the impression that some staff are granted the privilege of universalism while others are confined to their particularism (Lynch 2020).

Thanks to the efforts of dedicated international staff to combat this bias, some UN and affiliated organisations are beginning to develop ethical codes of conduct and organise awareness raising and training to help their staff challenge this legacy. Aware of the suspicion that programmes imposed from outside may create, they are putting in place mechanisms for consultation with their constituencies with a view to adapting these programmes to local contexts. The concept of 'Participatory Development' (PD) has been introduced to engage in dialogue with local populations about development projects (Milabyo Kyamusugulwa 2013). This is where the UN staff are confronted with the closed dialogue that nation states promote in their countries. The choice of this model of dialogue and participation to be established with the populations has become a bone of contention between the United Nations, international organisations, and the governments which have shown more resistance to defending this aspect of their national sovereignty, whereas they are more flexible when it comes to introducing liberal economic doctrines imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Williams, 2003).

From this negotiation between nation states, the UN, and civil society, organisations have developed the different perspectives of PD to challenge the dominant top-down approaches (Mohan 2014).

The social movement perspective defines participation as an open dialogue within communities for the mobilisation of people to eliminate unjust hierarchies of knowledge, power, and economic distribution, and to identify the objective of participation as an empowering process for people to confront challenges together and to influence the direction of their own lives. The institutional perspective considers participation as an oriented dialogue with the communities for the reach and inclusion of inputs by relevant groups in the design and implementation of development projects (Tufte & Thomas 2009). The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is guided by this perspective as it attempts to engage civil society sectors and other relevant stakeholders to play a constructive role in supporting its implementation (http://unsdg.un.org).

The conversation about PD raises the question of participation as an end in itself with no necessary impact on the decisions taken on behalf of the community or as 'process of empowerment' of people to reinforce their self-determination and their

ability to play a real role in their development (Mohan 2007). One of the main problems of the dialogue promoted by international organisations is that the driving cultural, ideological, political, and economic reasons behind the notion of development itself are rarely questioned and discussed. The ways the UN and other international organisations conceptualise participation and empowerment are based on politically and economically blind perceptions of power relations at national and international levels. It implies that the empowerment of the powerless could be achieved within the existing social order without any significant negative effects upon the power relationships within societies. It does not take into account critical analysis from researchers and civil society activists on the shortcomings of most development agendas undertaken by international organisations, such as the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000. These organisations seem to overlook that any true 'bottom-up' process of participation constitutes a challenge to the hegemonic interests of the state and the market because empowering marginalised and exploited groups calls for a structural transformation of power relations between economic and political forces at local, national, and transnational levels. The focus on 'localism' and the discourse on local participation also leads to underplaying the inequalities and the stakes of power relations between economic and political forces at these different levels (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Notwithstanding the good will of international organisations to improve their approach and learn from their mistakes, the conception of dialogue they promote suffers from a Eurocentric perspective. Dialogue is often confused with consultations and quick-fix and result-oriented conferences, which are subject to the rationality of the 'cost-effective' approach. The various constraints faced by international organisations (budget and time constraints, language barriers, and governments' interference) do not facilitate in-depth dialogue addressing all the dimensions of people's concerns. All these constraints and shortcomings in the analysis lead international organisations towards a biased dialogue, which overlooks the different dimensions of dialogue and of people's aspirations (Sahnoun, 1994).

The case of the Somali Peace process is a concrete example of the differences between community-led dialogue and the UN-led one. In Somaliland, the northern region of Somalia, an endogenous peace and reconciliation process was engaged in 1991 by concerned communities, which followed its own pace and succeeded in ending hostilities in the region, addressing the grievances between the communities, who were often on opposing sides during the civil war, and establishing stability and a kind of 'pastoral democracy'.

In comparison, the process launched at the same time and led or supported by the UN, regional organisations, and neighbouring countries failed to bring peace and

security in Somalia despite the organisation of around twenty peace conferences/ dialogues over the last 25 years in different parts of the world that has cost millions of dollars.

The model of product-oriented dialogue and quick fix appeared in the end to be more costly and time consuming than the community-led process. In his analysis, Pat Johnson, an observer of the Somali crisis enumerated some of the critical features of community-led dialogue processes that were lacking in the internationally sponsored initiatives in the Somali context:

- Thorough consultation before beginning the process, including agreement on the agenda
- Respected and authoritative leadership and mediation
- Representation from a range of stakeholders to ensure inclusiveness, legitimacy of the process, and credibility of its outcome
- Committees with expertise to assist in the multiple levels of a peace process
- Financial and in-kind contributions provided by stakeholder communities themselves
- Prioritisation of public safety and a consensus-based approach to security management
- An incremental approach
- Process- rather than product-oriented methodology
- Agreement on ways to address reparation and oversee implementation of accords and sanctions against 'spoilers'
- Public outreach before, during and after the process and dissemination of accords to ensure transparency, public understanding, acceptance and ratification of the outcomes.

(Johnson 2009 'The Search for peace: Lessons from Somali-led peace processes 1991–2007' in *Making the Difference*, p.275)

Certainly, the UN needs a profound overhaul in order to adjust its actions and practices to its fundamental mission as a world forum for dialogue, a mission which remains more essential than ever for humanity. But beyond the reform of the structure and functioning, what the UN needs the most for its renaissance in this worrying

twenty-first century is a paradigm shift enabling emancipation from the linear evolutionary perspective of human history and the Eurocentric conception of human development and relations so as to build a more universal and pluralistic vision of human destiny.

Conclusions

We have shown in this paper that dialogue is not only a concept but also a practice that has a history with governance systems. We have recalled the different understandings and dimensions of dialogue according to the political ontology of various societies. We have highlighted the potential of dialogue under the tree, the instrumentalisation of dialogue by African nation states, and the shortcomings of dialogue promoted by international organisations. We have underlined that dialogue is an endless process and exercise that requires specific knowledge, knowhow, and skills to manage the multidimensional and dialectical tension with governance. In an increasingly urbanised, connected, and crowded world, where this tension has become even more complex, what chance is there to reconcile the requirements of a multi-dimensional dialogue with the rationalities of governance?

From the three cases of interactions between dialogue and governance that we have briefly analysed, we can draw some lessons that can help us respond partly to this question. Their articulation would facilitate the identification and exchange of practices and experiences of building shared universal values as dreamed of by the great poet Aimé Césaire: 'There are two ways of losing oneself: by segregation walled in the particular or by dilution in the universal. I have a different idea of a universal. It is of universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening and coexistence of them all'.

The multi-dimensional perspective of the open-ended dialogue is an important element that can be integrated into the PD theory promoted by governments and international organisations. Further research should be undertaken to better understand how different societies across the world define this multi-dimensionality. Training and capacity-building sessions should be organised for all the staff in charge of governance and development programmes to deepen their understanding of the requirements of dialogue. National and international experts should take into account the latest anthropological findings regarding the ontological systems and cultural specificities of communities they are engaged with to be able to identify endogenous knowledge and expertise for the development and implementation of their programmes at national level. Exchanges of expertise and experience between regions of the world should be organised on an equal footing to draw out communalities and understand differences.

The open-ended dialogue principles, values, and methodology should be preserved and revalorised where it has been marginalised or perverted. Endogenous processes of dialogue should be opened to women who have been often excluded in these exchanges so that they can contribute to the problem analysis and consensus building of their communities. Women and youth are demanding space in the traditional governance system and their potential should be recognised and accommodated. Younger generations and civil-society activists should be educated in the knowledge of their endogenous systems of governance and learn more of the related methodologies of dialogue.

At national level, exchanges of experiences between the different endogenous experiences in dialogue and governance should be organised to identify communalities that will help build comprehensive methodologies. Multimedia and ICT should be used for public outreach to publicise in local languages these methodologies and root them in the national socio-political landscape. Some of these methodologies could be used as models for national political dialogue at parliaments, governmental councils, and so on.

International organisations should work out innovative solutions to revise their product-oriented methodologies and transcend the cost-effective accounting approach for responding to the requirements of dialogue processes that need to follow their own pace to reach their purpose. It indeed requires time, humility, listening, and patience to achieve an inclusive dialogue and participation in the sense that the Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu has so clearly described: 'Go and meet with the people, live with them, learn from them. Love them. Start with what they have, develop from what they know, and in the end, when the work is over, they will say, "We did it ourselves."'

Bibliography

Amin, S. (1976) Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Appadurai, A. (2013) The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition, Verso.

Apel, K. O. (1991) "Is the Ethics of the Ideal Communication Community a Utopia?" In T*he Communicative Ethics Controversy*. S. Benhabib and F. Dallmayr (eds.). Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, 23–60.

Bidima, J.G. (1997) Une juridiction de la parole, Paris, Editions Michalon.

Bulcha, M. (2005) Genocidal Violence in the Making of Nation and State in Ethiopia in *African Sociological Review* 9, (2), 2005, 1-54,

Césaire, A. (1950) *Discours sur le colonialisme,* Présence Africaine, (1ère édition : La Réclame).

Clastres, P. (2006) *La Sociètè contre l'E*tat, Editions Marée Noire.

Descola, P. (2005) *Par delà nature et culture*. Paris, Gallimard.

Descola, P. (2006) Absolute universalism, particular universalism, relative universalism? Presentation to UNESCO Division of World Heritage, 16 June 2006, 11).

Deutsch, K.N. and Foltz.W. J. (1966) *Nation Building in Comparative Contexts*, Aldine Translation, New Brunswick and London.

Emirbayer, M. and Desmond. M. (2015) *The Racial Order*, University of Chicago Press.

Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fortes, M. and Evans-Pritchard. E.E. (1987) *African Political Systems*, London, Routledge

Go, J. (2020) Three Tensions in the Theory of Racial Capitalism in *Sociological Theory* 2021, 39 (1), 38–47. American Sociological Association.

Gordon, W. (1995) The United Nations at the Crossroads of Reform, New York, Routledge.

Habermas, J. (1991) Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Héritier, A. (2002) New Modes of Governance in Europe: Policy-Making without Legislating?', in Héritier, Adrienne (ed.), *Common goods. Reinventing European and International Governance* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield), 185-206.

Johnson, P. (2009) The Search for peace: Lessons from Somali-led peace processes 1991–2007" in Making the Difference: What works in response to crisis and security threats-the debate continues, European Commission External Relations.

Jakobson, V.A and Dandamaev. M.A. (1996) From State to Empire in History of Humanity: Scientific and Cultural Development, Volume II. UNESCO.

Kelly, U. (2013) 'Studying Dialogue – Some Reflections', *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 1 (1), 51-62.

Lee, R.B. (1965). Subsistence Ecology of !Kung Bushmen (PhD). University of California, Berkeley.

Lynch, C. *(*2020*)* 'The UN has a Diversity Problem', *Foreign Policy*.

Ogot, B.A. (1999) Africa from 16th to 18th Century, General History of Africa, 5, UNESCO.

Markakis, J., Schlee, G., and Young. J. (2021) *The Nation State: A Wrong Model for the Horn of Africa*. Berlin: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften.

Milabyo Kyamusugulwa, P. (2013) 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction: A Literature Review', *Third World Quarterly,* 34 (7).

Mohan, G. (2014) Participatory Development in *The Companion to Development Studies*, Routledge.

Mohan, G., and Stokke, K. (2000) 'Participatory Development and Empowerment: The Dangers of Localism', *Third World Quarterly*, 21, 247-268.

Moussa Iye, A. (2019) Le Verdict de l'Arbre, Essai sur une démocratie endogène africaine, Djibouti, 3nd edition Editions Frankolin.

Niane, D.T. (1985) Africa from 12th to 16th Century, General History of Africa, Volume 4, UNESCO.

Noah Harari, Y. (2015) *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, London, Harvill Secker.

Rodney, W. (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle L'Ouverture Pub.

Sahlins, M. (1976) *Stone Age Economics*, Routledge 1st edition.

Sahnoun, M. (1994) *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities*. United States Institute of Peace Press.

Steiger, B. (2011) *The Werewolf Book: The Encyclopedia of Shape-Shifting Beings*. Visible Ink Press.

Stoker, G. (1998) 'Governance as theory: five propositions', *International Social Science Journal*, 50(155).

Sudarkasa, N. (1986) 'The Status of Women', *Indigenous African Societies in Feminist Studies*, 12 (1), 91-103.

Teklu, T.A. (2021) 'African palaver as a model of multi-ethnic recognition', *Moral Pedagogies for Africa*, Routledge.

Todorov, T. (1986) 'Le croisement des cultures', *Communications*, 43, 5-26.

Tufte, M. and Thomas, P. (2009) Participatory communication: a practical guide. World Bank working paper, 170, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

UNESCO and Institute for Economics & Peace (2020) Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue.

UNESCO and Institute for Economics & Peace (2022) We Need to Talk. Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion.

UN Environment Programme (2022) Closing Window: Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies. UEP UN Sustainable Development Goals: Available at: http://unsdg.un.org.

von Freiesleben, J. (2008) Reform of the Security Council, Center for UN Reform, (centerforunreform.org).

Williams, D. (2003) 'Managing Sovereignty: The World Bank and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Mondes en développemen*t, 123, 5-21.

Wilson, P.H. (2009) *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Public Policy, Collaborative Governance, and Female Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean: A Critical Assessment

Talia Esnard[1]

Abstract: Despite the growing implementation of entrepreneurial policies within the Caribbean and the recognition of the structural and relational challenges that impact women entrepreneurs, there is little discussion on the possibilities for using collaborative governance practices to empower and enhance the lives of women in that space. These gaps centre not just the inadequacies of the public policy process, but also those related to governance practices that underpin the contexts for women entrepreneurs. Where these gaps remain indicative of broader limitations within the ideological framing of managerialism within the public policy process, it is important to disrupt the political and social imaginaries embedded within the thinking and practices of female entrepreneurship within the region. The paper will therefore adopt a post-structural feminist approach and that of critical discourse analysis to assess the degree of consultation within the public policy process, the extent to which this identifies and addresses the concerns of women in the sector, and the implications for reframing public policy as a collaborative governance process. The intentions are both to illuminate the relevance of collaboration and participation within dialogue as an extension of consultation but also as a requirement for addressing matters of inclusivity, visibility, and equity within the public policy process.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, Public Policy, Female Entrepreneurship, Caribbean, Dialogue

Introduction

While entrepreneurship as an economic activity has the potential to secure sustainable futures for global citizens, major apprehensions remain. Key concerns for the systemic inequalities that negatively impact entrepreneurial opportunities and experiences for diverse groups (Raman et al. 2022). In fact, there is substantive literature to suggest that entrepreneurial possibilities are constrained by prevailing ideological, structural, and cultural framings of the global marketplace; a reality, which differently impacts the identities, experiences, outcomes, and trajectories for women who engage within that space (Ahl and Marlow 2021; Marlow and Martinez-Dy 2018;

1 Talia Esnard (PhD Sociology) is a senior lecturer and current Head, Department of Behavioural Sciences, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago. Her research centres on women, work, and organisations. She has (co)authored and edited books on the tenure process, diversity, and inclusion, mentoring and female entrepreneurship.

Bianco, Lombe and Bolis 2017). In question are the hegemonic neoliberal representations of entrepreneurship and of the normative pathways to self-actualisation within the market (Lemke 2001). The discursive, structural, and political aspects of how and why women are situated to experience and disrupt existing barriers for their engagement also unfold as areas of contention. . To a large extent, the conversation around these precarious realities connects issues of patriarchy (Ahl and Nelson 2015), contextuality (Welter and Baker 2020), spatiality (Autio et al. 2014), and positionality (Villares-Varela and Essers 2019) to those of the broader complexities and ambiguities for women entrepreneurs within the Global North. There is, however, a lack of scholarship on the realities for women across diverse social geographies and for developing countries in the Global South, where issues of size, comparative advantage, global market share, and cultural typecasts uniquely challenge their engagement (Radice 2011; Esnard and Knight 2020). Such is the case for the small island developing countries like the Caribbean, where deficit perspectives around the familial motivations (Terjesena and Amorós 2010) and levels of informality (Lashley and Smith 2015) collectively limit the potential for regional scholarship on female entrepreneurship, and for more concerted efforts to address some of the barriers to entry and participation (Barriteau 2002; Bernard 2012).

A related contention is also with the deficiencies within the processes and outcomes of entrepreneurial policies. Thus, while there is some acknowledgement that public policy advancements have increased access for women to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Henry, Orser, Coleman, and Foss 2017), ongoing calls remain for more context-specific strategic objectives (Henry, Foss, and Ahl 2016; Welter, Brush and de Bruin 2014), and for the use of more critical perspectives that better situate the experiences of women within the promotion of business startup and growth (Foss, Henry, Ahl, and Mikalsen 2019; Orser, Riding, and Li 2019). To take this conversation forward, this study uses discourse analysis within a post-structuralist-feminist framework to assess the nature and significance of this policy-context-actor dilemma for the Caribbean. Key lines of inquiry are, therefore, the extent to which existing entrepreneurial policies (i) consider the identities and positionalities of women, and (ii) centre their participation and contribution within the process. These examinations inform discussions on the limitations of consultative processes inherent within the public policy process but also of the promise and challenge of collaborative governance. This exploration and contextualisation of the policy dialogue process within the context of the Caribbean region is particularly important for enhancing the relevance of dialogue, reach (particularly for those for whom these policies are intended) and developmental impacts of these.

Policy Dialogue and Collaborative Governance

While there is no consensus on what policy dialogue is, there is some acknowledgement of the need to address matters of inclusion and participation as a way to ensure collective decision making within policy dialogue (United Nations [UN] 2007). Dialogue in this sense is represented as a process of using conversation to build mutual understanding, trust, and reciprocity for the broader purpose of reaching shared understanding, accommodation, and outcomes (Lazoroska and Palm 2019). This dialogic exchange has been framed, therefore, as an inquiry into building a community of collaborators (Inness and Booher 2009, 2010) with the capacity to address matters related to power and resource imbalances (both at interpersonal and societal level). This notion and practice of dialogic exchange have also been extended to tackle the relevance of political contexts (with considerations of legislative and regulatory dimensions) and prospects for negotiation, whether around the definition of the problem, rules, and/or issues of fairness in the process (Emerson, Nabatchi and Balough 2012). These concessions, however, call into question the extent to which power dynamics impact the possibilities for intersubjectivity, relativity, and inclusivity within policy dialogues (Escobar 2011; Ganesh and Holmes 2011). Issues, therefore, of association, influence, and negotiation between collaborators become important points of investigation when dialogue is applied as a governance tool within the public policy process (Nabyonga-Orem *et al.* 2016). This collaborative process, however, requires an analysis of *power structures and discourses in dialogue* as opposed *the power in dialogue as a practice* to unpack the types of actions, actors, and outcomes that are associated with the public policy process. The connections between dialogue, power, and empowerment are critical points to move beyond the ambivalences related to dialogue (Hammond, Anderson, and Cissna 2003).

This work takes forward collaborative dialogue theory but with a post-structural feminist turn as a way to bring attention to the practice of dialogue within the public policy process for the region. Collaborative governance is represented as a strategy to build engagement and relationships with multiple stakeholders to ensure a consensus-oriented approach within the decision-making process (See Ansell and Gash 2008; Innes and Booher 2009, 2010). The collaborative dialogue theory problematises the potential for power and authority to sustain ongoing forms of conflict among stakeholders and pushes for a collaborative rationalisation of the public policy process that is generated and sustained by an orientation towards consensus (Ansell and Gash 2008). This type of stakeholder involvement is presented as a public policy innovation that centres the importance of shared motivation, reciprocal relations, co-production of knowledge and capacity for collective action. This form of collaborative engagement stands as a measure of good governance that takes into consideration the 'processes and structures of public policy decision making and

management' within the engagement of stakeholders (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012, 2). Yet, it is this issue of participation, as an expression of who, why, and how people are involved in the dialogic process, which emerges as a major cause of concern in the public policy process. This is particularly the case given the observation that the needs and values of actors beyond the public sector often do not find their way into the public policy contexts (Wade 2004; Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh 2012). This policy-actor-integration perspective therefore calls into question the cultures or norms that guide practice (Dovlo, Nabyonga-Orem, Estrelli, and Mwisongo 2016), the relations of power between actors (Hoppe 2011; Pieczka and Escobar 2013), the levels of inclusion and/or collaboration (Goodin and Dryzek 2006), and implications for collective decision making within the policy dialogue process (Monteduro and Hinna 2008). A push, therefore, is for more diverse methods, with the use of critical perspectives and methods as (counter)stories/narratives and observations to better assess whose interests are being served and who is involved within the design and implementation of the policy process (Edwards 2012; Escobar 2011). This work centres aspects of power and dialogue closer within the theorisation of dialogue and interventions to situate and question the assumptions related to the process, actors, and outcomes.

Situating a Post-Structuralist Feminist-Discursive Inquiry

Post-structural feminism is uniquely positioned to capture discursive and dialogic inquiry. Central to this point of interrogation is the contextual, ideological, structural, and social aspects of power that coalesce to influence subjugated knowledge, rights, and identities (Sekulic 2010; Soares 2006; Ness, Miller, Negash, and Morgan 2017). A major benefit of this approach is that it centres the ways in which agency is not only contingent on discursive tendencies and self-regulation (Davies 2000), but also upon the strategies or policies that exist to break down patriarchal structures, norms, and practices (Davies and Gannon 2006). In the context of the public policy process, this analytical framework captures the heteronormative assumptions related to entrepreneurship and the impact for the framings, allocations, expectations, experiences, and outcomes for women (Henry, Foss and Ahl 2016; Wu, Li, and Yang 2019). This kind of entrepreneurship-gender-policy discourse analysis, as is the approach within this paper, situates specific issues of power (whether structural, cultural, economic, or political) in relation to those of representation, engagement, and empowerment of relevant stakeholders (Ahl 2006; Foss, Henry, Ahl, and Mikalsen 2019). This analysis of the subject-in-relation to the policy offers a unique way of assessing the significance of the discursive practices within regulatory framework to the social and economic constitution of everyday life (Davies and Gannon 2006).

The use of discourse analysis as a method of data analysis within this paper presents, therefore, a critical way to locate the layered aspects of power within the social, cultural, and political underpinnings of the policy process. Key points of examination are those of the meanings, contexts, practices, and relationships that are evident through written texts and the extent to which these cover diverse voices and experiences of actors within the space. These points of interrogation centre (i) the dialectical relations between power, discourse, and representation and (ii) the structures and processes through which these dialogues emerge and are sustained to influence the process of social transformations (Fairclough 2010; Widdowson 1995; Bondarouk and Ruel 2004). This type of analysis can be critically extended within examinations of entrepreneurial policy documents to assess the extent to which the challenges for women are addressed through public policy and are connected to issues of power and dominance as constructed through the practice of public dialogue. The paper is, therefore, premised on the examinations of the methodological and procedural/consultative aspects of the public policy process, as stated within existing entrepreneurial policies for three Caribbean countries, where entrepreneurial policies exist, namely Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago. For comparative purposes, the paper does not include a review of the entrepreneurial policy for Barbados, where little information is available on the policy process. Once collated, these policy documents were reviewed to identify the structures, strategies, and discourses that feed into the public policy design and implementation process to impact women entrepreneurs in the region. This analysis is a way to trouble the taken-for-granted discursive and dialogic practices within public policy and to better reflect on the gaps and possibilities for female entrepreneurship.

The Case of Belize

On a broad level, Belize offers a unique case where matters of inclusivity are consistently referenced across the National MSME Policy and Strategy report (2012), the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2014), the National Entrepreneurial Ecosystem workplan (2016–2019), and the National MSME Strategy and Roadmap for Belize (2022–2025). Collectively, these documents provide insights into the identification of problems across diverse actors within this sector, the tools that are applied to manage these, and drawbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic for this sector.

Methodologically, these policy documents, however, are devoid of any substantive discussion on the type and nature of the participation of women's entrepreneurs and the significance of this for the strategic objectives developed through this consultative process. Such is the case of the National MSME Policy and Strategy report (2012), which elaborates on two methods of data collection, namely the broad application of survey research and the use of consultations to establish a legislative

foundation for MSMEs, namely the MSME Development Act and the Belize Agency for Development of Enterprise. In the first instance, there is some reference within the discussion of the survey design to the engagement of diverse social groups including young persons (26%) and Mestizo (45%) across diverse communities (San Ignacio, Belize city, Orange Walk, Corozal, Punta Gorda, and Dangriga), with 43% or 56/130 of women within the survey. However, there is no discussion on the proportion or percentage of the suggestions made for or by women involved in MSMEs and of the nature of the questions developed within the questionnaire to address the experiences for women. The actual survey was also not available, leaving no indication of the depth or scope of issues addressed through this consultative process. In the second instance, the policy speaks to the use of activity-oriented engagement and dialogue, but with a narrow inclusion of actors, specifically, the state and established economic players as powerful brokers within this process.[2] There is no mention of women entrepreneurs as part of this cohort or group of persons consulted or visibility of the issues that impact women entrepreneurs in the sector. This absence of women as collaborators is also evident in the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2014), which speaks to collaborative engagement of technical experts and ministerial officials, but with no indication of the involvement of women entrepreneurs. These gaps are also evident in the National Entrepreneurial Ecosystem workplan (2016–2019), where the emphasis is on the management tools developed to support the strategic pillars of the National Entrepreneurial Strategy, but with limited collaboration that includes only external consultations and stakeholders including technical and methodological experts.[3] Likewise, the National MSME strategy and roadmap for Belize (2022–2025), which though developed through collaborative efforts of international and national agencies, private sector organisations, and non-governmental organisations[4], shows some effort at inclusion, with just over 30% of women across small and medium size enterprises. However, there is no gender-based disaggregation based on level of education, industries, access to technology, level of support needed, financial or otherwise.

The lack of treatment around the experiences of women also remains a source for concern. A review of existing policies shows that many of the strategic initiatives do

2 Economic players were limited here to MSME business support organisations, owners, Belize trade and investment development service, managers, and their employees.

3 These include staff within the Gender Department and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

4 United Nations Development Program, BELTRAIDE, Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and National Women's Commission as a regional centre for the promotion of entrepreneurship.

not address the power structures that exist at the interpersonal, sectoral, or societal levels. Thus, while the National MSME policy and Strategy report (2012) underscored the need for 'traditional financial institutions with a technical assistance component...and with special attention given to women, youth, and small farmers' (p. 19), the preamble on these initiatives does not acknowledge or refer to any structural or relational underpinnings that frame their positionality with that space. This lack of treatment of the domains of power that influence the positionality of women is also evident within the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (2014), which on a very generic level provides a list of strategic initiatives around education, finance, and legislation. As such, despite the acknowledgement of social deprivation as a major challenge for women's engagement within this sector, there are no gender specific policies or initiatives within this policy document. This limitation is also extended to that of the National Entrepreneurial Ecosystem workplan (2016–2019), which, on one end, advances the conversation on the need for 'human rights approach[es]' that do not discriminate or '...[distinguish between] race, religion, sex, gender, [and beliefs]' (p.19). On the other end, this discourse on human rights approaches within entrepreneurial policy design and implementation does not include specific policy initiatives that are supportive of women within this sector. There is also no mention or interrogation of other intersections related to other socially constituted criteria for difference within the workplan. The power imbalances, as they exist for women within this sector, therefore, remain substantively obscure and without any actionable strategies for tackling the inequalities that impact the outcomes of this process.

The Case of Jamaica

Jamaica has a micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurship policy (2018), as a revised version from 2013, with some amendments based on the strategic mandates and considerations from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report for Jamaica, 2016/2017. On the surface, the policy as written unfolds as an outcome of multiple stakeholder engagements with the use of thematic working groups, national consultations, and validation workshops. Like Belize, these engagements were framed on a consultative process with the use of surveys and focus groups. To some extent, these various forms of engagement align with the process of good governance with a space for multiple voices and representations within the policy process. Even within this approach, the consultations remain limited. Thus, what obtains is the centrality of ministerial representatives (particularly from the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Fisheries), private sector agents, and non-governmental actors as key stakeholders within the policy dialogue process. The inclusion of the (i) Bureau of Gender Affairs, Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC), (ii) Jamaica Agricultural Society, (iii) Ministry of Culture, Gender, Enter-

tainment and Sport, (iv) Small Business Association of Jamaica (SBAJ), (v) MSME Alliance, (vi) Women Entrepreneur Network of the Caribbean Initiative (WENC), and (vii) Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) emerges here as representative of the actors and the voices that inform notions of shared understanding and planning of entrepreneurial interventions. While these collaborations, including the more recent ones with the Bureau of Gender Affairs and the Branson Center for Entrepreneurship, are promising initiatives that promote participation within the public policy process, what remains absent within the discourse on inclusion is the presence, if any, of women entrepreneurs within this dialogue, and of the level of engagement that followed from this process.

The centrality of women's issues within the strategic objectives of public policy are also critical to the enhancement of their experiences within the sector. In the framing of this discourse, the challenge of entrepreneurial engagement is presented as financial and informational deficits within the market. While there are hints of gender-based initiatives that appear in sections, with strategies to make available financing and relevant market information for women, there is no contextualisation of these struggles, or reference in the reporting to how these initiatives provide equitable access and systems of support for women in the sector. The actual policy for Jamaica, however, captures some key components of the conceptualisations around enterprise and entrepreneurial development, with an emphasis on the economic imperatives of the sector, including discussions on the need to create enabling environments, provide business support, create a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, or to add social value to the business development process and to enhance competitiveness. The discourse around enterprise development, however, is substantively devoid of discussions on the intersectional precarities for women and of the need to develop policy frameworks that are responsive to the positions that they occupy in the market. In that regard, the reference to 'inclusive growth' (Government of Jamaica 2017, 22), which is central to the policy, and to the expectations for social sustainability, is not balanced with how inclusivity is either conceived, captured, and promoted to represent the interest and experiences of diverse actors, including women. While the attention to these issues of equity and inclusivity are commendable, with the mainstreaming of policy to support women and persons with disability, there is a lack of critical intersectional frameworks to direct or guide collective sharing, capacity building, and business support as quintessential to the creation of equitable contexts. With the need for MSMEs to serve as the catalysts for human, social, and economic development, or as key drivers for social and economic measures of progress, it is important that these diversities and precarities also feature within the policy design and implementation process.

The Case of Trinidad and Tobago

The micro and small enterprise development policy for Trinidad and Tobago (2014–2016), recognises the need and potential for driving enterprise and entrepreneurial development. To that end, the policy design as written brings attention to the conditions and challenges within the business environment as central to the areas to be addressed within the policy process. The attention to the business environment is also reinforced through the analysis of the political economy and geo-political relations that impact entrepreneurial orientations within Trinidad and Tobago. Such is evident in the review of documents within the policy of the Trinidad and Tobago Medium-Term Policy Framework (2011–2014), the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development's Strategic Plan (2011–2015), and the Enterprise Development Policy and Strategic Plan for Trinidad and Tobago (2001–2005). There is also evidence of dialogue within the framing of enterprise and entrepreneurial development with the use of public consultations held in 2012 and 2013. Like the case of Jamaica, the iteration of dialogue is limited to the engagement of public entities with the central role of the Enterprise Development Division within the Ministry of Labour and that of the Small Enterprise Development. These public consultations informed the reliance of state agencies (the Small Business Company and the National Enterprise Development Company Limited) and on related policies (namely the Fair Share and Green Enterprise Development policies) as regulative mechanisms to support small business development. There is no discussion on the inclusion of women entrepreneurs or on whether the challenges for women were indirectly addressed within these dialogues. A related outcome of these gaps and forms of exclusion, therefore, is a framing of enterprise and entrepreneurial development within this discourse that is reduced to generalised indicators that support business development, market network, financing, trade and investment, training, and advocacy (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago [GORTT] 2014), with financial support from dominant actors within this process, namely public representatives.

Dialogue in this case remains removed from collaborative governance principles. A central focus is on the reproduction of normative framings around enterprise and entrepreneurial development, with some focus on business development, support, diversification, and wealth creation. While there is some treatment of equality, social responsibility, and sustainability as key principles within the entrepreneurial process, this is not significantly elaborated or operationalised, and with little insight as to how these concepts are understood and/or actionable. As such, the strategic objectives remain vaguely described, with reference to 'Special Areas for Social Development' as indicative of a gender-sensitive response, and of the commitment to, '...focus on the gender gap' (GORTT 2014, 24). While the reference and inclusion of

this gender-sensitive consideration represents a step in the right direction, the actual activities or initiatives under these strategic objectives remain vague with general information on cross-sectoral partnerships to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs. Even where, 'Future Policies and Programmes for Development' that support women are highlighted within a sub-section of the entrepreneurial policy for Trinidad and Tobago, there is little treatment of the nature of these initiatives and on the participation of women within the process of designing and/or implementing these programmes (GORTT 2014, 28). The discourse around these constructions of entrepreneurial activities therefore makes visible the silences around ongoing exclusion and sustained marginalisation of women within policy dialogues. These gaps represent some key points for further interrogation and intervention.

Discussion

Systems of social inequalities within the Caribbean remain complex with structural, relational, and discursive parameters that both enable and restrict women's entrepreneurial activities. Contesting gender scripts as an aspect of social inequality to promote women's empowerment, however, requires tackling structural and relational aspects of women's experiences within this entrepreneurial landscape. Such a reality deepens the call for more strategic approaches that engender democratic engagement and the broader sustainability of entrepreneurial women. A dialogic method/practice, with elements of participatory or collaborative governance, presents an opportunity to bridge the gap between the goals of equity and sustainability. This shift calls for a move beyond the limitations of a consultative process to a more collaborative one, where there are possibilities for mutual learning, exchange, networking, and sharing, but with the inclusion of those for whom policies are being designed and implemented.

Examinations of the policy documents for the region, however, point to the existence of more managerial and adversarial approaches, with some inclusion of public and private partners, but without clear demonstration through the written policies of how women entrepreneurs were engaged in the process. Dialogue in these written policy documents therefore appears to be restricted to key/established actors (public and private representatives) but without any substantive details on the treatment and recognition of the voices that are or are not included within the process. This limited insight on the level of women's participation is particularly concerning given the consensus that a conventional approach to policy design and implementation remains necessary but not sufficient to ensure inclusivity and participation (Fusheini and Marnoch, 2020). Participation in this sense is restrictive, with public and private sector agents as power brokers speaking on behalf of primary actors, but with the

potential for a collaborative thrust to centre the relevance of dialogue as a primarily tool for leading integration within the public policy process.

As it stands, therefore, the public policy process around entrepreneurship within the region floats within the maintenance of the established status quo and that of the mandates for inclusion and equity. Here, the lack of understanding and placement of the key actors within this process, of relevant representational and relational strategies to address the concerns of women entrepreneurs' positions, and/or to be part of the design and implementation of public policy emerge as missing aspects and points of engagement. This outward treatment of inclusivity within the dialogic policy process raises more pointed questions related to representation and participation with an absence of formalised information sharing or joint decision making within the policy. While these public-private sector partnerships are particularly needed given the longstanding issues facing women entrepreneurs in Jamaica (Government of Jamaica [GOJ] 2013; Saner and Yii 2019), issues of equity in Trinidad and Tobago (Bailey, Pacheo, Carillo, Pemberton, and Ghany 2015; Kelly, Brush, Greene, and Litovsky 2013; Giles, Schmid, and Waithe 2018) the inclusion of primary actors within small business enterprises cannot be masked within the dynamics of these relationships and power structures. The technical model, therefore, which centres more on the analysis, regulation, and implementation of strategic objectives appears devoid of these diverse realities, contexts, and voices. A major risk of these managerial and adversarial approaches if these are sustained within the policy process, therefore, is the stifling of democracy, inclusivity, and equity, which, as a process, reproduces the knowledge and practices that are linked to existing systems of power (International Labor Organization 2021).

This centring of participatory justice can be proffered through the framework of collaborative governance. While adversarial politics may persist with some semblance of participatory engagements, the aim is to transform hierarchical undertones within the process and move towards more cooperative alliances among and between actors (Ansell and Gash 2008). This approach grounds the importance of governance within the dialogic process and practice to help reduce inherent risks and possible exclusions that can emerge within public-private engagement. This paper therefore advances the call for the use of a post-structural lens to examine the context, discourse, and action surrounding women's entrepreneurship, and, moreso, for consideration of representation and openness to collaborative governance that is not restricted solely to private-public consultations. Where stakeholder dialogues represent an important aspect of creating public value and innovation within the public policy making process, it is important, therefore, to rethink and reframe issues of selection, representation, and transformation related to collaborative governance. This type of process innovation is grounded within the use not just of collaborative governance but also

of alternative dialogues and positioning of marginalised actors to inform change agendas. Even where public-private structures form the basis of consultative processes to inform policy, it is important to drive narratives that promote shared responsibility and open dialogue with opportunities for primary actors to become involved in the process of problem definition and decision making, rather than to depend on the secondary representation of their perspectives through institutionalised actors within the public policy process. These also call for analyses of power structures and dynamics that symbolically and materially impact the lines of authority and authenticity in the public policy process.

From a post-structuralist perspective, changing the public policy process and openness to engagement calls for attention to equity and social justice. Moving in this direction spotlights the need to address systemic issues of power, with examinations of the structures, relations, representations, and actions that impact women within the entrepreneurial space. The call is also for more innovative methodologies and post-structural feminist sensitivities to shift away from generic policy initiatives (Ahl and Nelson 2015; Ahl and Marlow 2019) and to map the multiple meanings, practices, identities, and structures that frame the discourses related to the roles, expectations, and actions between and among actors (Henry, Foss and Ahl 2016). Yet, the demands of capitalist production and the dislocation of Caribbean countries within the global landscape (Girvan 2010; Levitt 2009) call for an assessment of the broader macroeconomic, ideological, and structural deficiencies that differently position and impact women within entrepreneurship (Barriteau 2001, Hall 2011; Reddock 2011; Duffy, Kline, Mowatt, and Chancellor 2015). These contradictions and sources of conflict also impact their access and engagement to becoming critical stakeholders in the public policy process. Given the historical challenges related to the high incidence of female-headed households in the region and the levels of necessity-based entrepreneurial activity that exist for women in the region (Amorós *et al*. 2016), it is also important to understand how the household as a core unit of analysis can provide deeper insights into constructions of identity, risk, and economic activity for women (Barriteau 2002). In so doing, it is also important for policy makers to address the connections between identities and social inequalities based on race (Ryan 2012), gender (Barriteau 2002), gendered racism (Hossein 2014) class (Freeman 2014), as well as the different constellations of power that have unfolded across historical and contemporary periods to impact the positionality, (in)visibility, and marginality of women within the labour market (see Barriteau 2001; Coppin 1995). A post-structuralist perspective offers, therefore, a framework for also working through and pushing back against the contextualities that weigh in on the positionalities and strategic priorities for addressing persistent concerns for women in the sector. While the integration of these types of structural and social analysis may not immediately alter the context and practice, it represents an import-

ant step towards humanising individual and shared identities and cooperation that can equalise the public policy process.

As a process, however, the examination of entrepreneurial policies in the Caribbean show that the intersectional realities for women and engagement of women within the sector are less than reflected within the documentation of the public policy process. The still contested perceptions and positions of women within the labour market also require that policy frameworks centre and adapt issues of human rights (Popiolek 2019) and work-life integration (Reddock and Bobb-Smith 2008; UNDP 2021). These concerns are particularly important given the contradictions within the market and those of the ameliorative measures that have been implemented to address gender inequality within the region (Barriteau 2001). The calls for more intersectional framing of women's lives and livelihoods in the region also add to the need for alternative approaches to the policy process (Hall 2011; Esnard 2023). Without this questioning of the processes through which the social and political inscribe itself onto the individual, then the policy framework becomes implicit in the use of dialogic approaches that reproduces and sustains social inequalities, and a lack of access to entrepreneurial opportunities. Where this is not unique to the region, a broader push has been for a synergy between feminist insights, explorations of women's lived realities, and entrepreneurial policies and programmes (Bianco, Lombe, and Bolis 2017). Such a direction within the public policy process offers a way to rethink and reframe elements of participatory justice and transformative praxis.

Collaborative governance that is centred on dialogic public policy offers an opportunity to address this. The potential within this governance framework is for the promotion of open spaces and notions of dialogues that move beyond the hierarchies or power-laden lines of authority within the manifestation and dynamics of public-private partnerships. This type of analytical framing also takes away from the prospects of prescriptive and weak-evidence-based practices that are used to inform the public policy process within low- and middle-income countries (Dovlo, Nabyonga-Orem, Estrelli, and Mwisongo 2016). Examinations of entrepreneurial policies in the region show an alignment and reproduction of this traditional type of policy dialogue that takes for granted the lines, expressions, and manifestations of power within the process and the outcome. These appear, therefore, as an aspect of political dialogue that is symbolic of the need to direct change, but, as this paper has contended, without the requisite engagement, representation, and collaboration of critical stakeholders to remove the barriers and lines of authority that sustain the power-driven elements of dialogue. Given the lack of research and visibility of entrepreneurial policy as an area of research within the region, more is needed to understand the possibilities for social dialogue and exchange as critical drivers and tools for collaborative governance. The uniqueness, therefore, is in the ways through which an

examination of the tensions and conflicts that stem from inherent power relations can advance more authentic discussions on inherent differences, power, and authority, which exist and impact the framing of relationships that can emerge from this process. This aspect of building relations through collaboration can promote meaningful exchange, reciprocity, and the creation of learning loops that can enhance the use of dialogue within the public policy process (Innes and Booher 2010). If explored, these insights and hopes can advance the achievements within dialogue theory and practice beyond that of what obtains in the region.

Conclusions

Public policy can sustain or disrupt the marginalised positioning of women entrepreneurs. The direction and nature of this influence, however, depends on the dialogic process, and, more specifically, the type and status of actors that are included within the design-making and implementation process. As it stands, the policy documents for the region suggest that there is much to be done to enhance the participation of women entrepreneurs within the region. Unless this is addressed, then the process only serves to institutionalise and sustain existing power structures and modes of dominance within the broader society. The centering of dialogue, with attention to questions of who and how within the process, therefore, brings into disrepute claims of representation, information sharing and decision making for key stakeholders within the consultative process of public policy.

Moving towards a more enabling process and outcome for public policy requires that we move beyond economic imperatives and strategic mandates of the entrepreneurial space and the hegemonic representations that obtains (Ahl and Nelson 2015). While the paper does not track and represent the chronological change in the relations of power that have unfolded for women in the Caribbean, it situates the importance of the political economy and the social structures within the challenges for public policy design and implementation. The use of a post-structuralist lens provides a way to unpack the policy-context-actor nexus and to open the conversations around the use of dialogue to create more inclusive policy processes. This level of openness and inclusion underscores the potential for collaborative governance when actioned within policy dialogues to disrupt existing or traditional power structures and processes that are both evident in and sustained within the public policy process.

If actioned to allow for marginalised voices and representations within the public policy process, this inclusion increases the prospects for innovative governance practices, as a fundamental aspect of creating public value, but with the possibility of building collaboration, trust, motivation, and networking in the process (Monted-

uro and Hinna 2008). The uniqueness and value of the policy dialogue thrust, therefore, is within the potential to revalue and reposition key actors, actions, and outcomes related to the policy dialogue process. While this element of inclusion may not automatically address existing power structures, it represents a more progressive dialogical process, with the potential to increase meaningful engagement of actors. This move towards a dialogic public policy process offers an important way to ensure more inclusive, collaborative, and participative practices with the potential for more effective and impactful policies to support women entrepreneurs within the Caribbean.

Bibliography

Ahl, H. (2006) 'Why research on women entrepreneurs needs new directions', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30 (5), 595–621.

Ahl, H. and Marlow, S. (2021) 'Exploring the false promise of entrepreneurship through a postfeminist critique of the enterprise policy discourse in Sweden and the UK', *Human Relations*, 74 (1), 41–68.

Ahl, H. and Nelson, T. (2015) 'How policy positions women entrepreneurs: A comparative analysis of state discourse in Sweden and the United States', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30 (2), 273–291.

Amorós, J.E., Borraz, F. and Veiga, L. (2016) 'Entrepreneurship and Socioeconomic Indicators in Latin America', *Latin American Research Review*, 51 (4), 186–201.

Ansell, C. and Gash, A. (2008). 'Collaborative governance in theory and practice', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18 (4), 543–571.

Apostolopoulos, N. Al-Dajani, H., Holt, G., Jones, P. and Newbery, R. (2018). *Entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Development Goals,* Emerald Group Publishing.

Autio, E., Kenney, M., Mustar, P., Siegel, D., and Wright, M. (2014) 'Entrepreneurial innovation: The importance of context', *Research Policy*, 43 (7), 1097–1108.

Bailey, H., Pacheo, M., Carillo, M., Pemberton, G., and Ghany, G. (2015) *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Trinidad and Tobago Report 2014*. Trinidad and Tobago: GEM Consortium, 80. Available at: https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=49283.

Barriteau, E. (1998) 'Theorizing gender systems and the project of modernity in the twentieth-century Caribbean', *Feminist Review*, 59 (1), 186–210.

Barriteau, E. (2001) The Political Economy of Gender in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean, NY: Palgrave.

Barriteau, E. (2002) 'Women entrepreneurs and economic marginality: Rethinking Caribbean women's economic relations'. In P. Mohammed (ed.), *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought,* Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 221–248.

Bernard, A. (2012) 'Fostering freedom: A feminist analysis of micro-enterprise development for women in the Caribbean.' In Barriteau, E. (ed.), *Love and Power: Caribbean Discourses on Gender,* Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 286–322.

Bianco, M.E., Lombe, M. and Bolis, M. (2017) 'Challenging gender norms and practices through women's entrepreneurship', *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 9 (4), 338–358.

Bondarouk, T. and Ruel, H. (2004) 'Discourse Analysis: Making Complex Methodology Simple' (2004). *ECIS 2004 Proceedings*. Available at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2004/1.

Coppin, A. (1995) 'Women, men, and work in a Caribbean economy: Barbados', *Social and Economic Studies*, 44 (2–3), 103–124.

Davies, B. (2000) *A Body of Writing, 1990-1999,* Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press.

Davies, B. and Gannon, S. (2006) Doing Collective Biography: Investigating the Production of Subjectivity, London: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Dovlo, D., Nabyonga-Orem, Estrelli, Y., and Mwisongo, A. (2016) 'Policy dialogues – the "bolts and joints" of policymaking: experiences from Cabo Verde, Chad and Mali', *BMC Health Services Research*, 16 (4), 216. DOI: http://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-016-1455-x.

Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., and Chancellor, H. C. (2015) 'Women in tourism: Shifting gender ideology in the DR', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 72–86.

Edwards, A. (2012) 'The role of common knowledge in achieving collaboration across practices', *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 1 (1), 22–32.

Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T. and Balogh, S. (2012) 'An Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 22 (1), 1–29.

Escobar, O. (2011) *Public Dialogue and Deliberation*. Edinburgh, UK: The University of Edinburgh. Available at: http://www.beltanenetwork.org/resources/beltane-publications.

Esnard, T. (2023) Women Entrepreneurs in the Caribbean: Critical Insights and Policy Implications. NY: Palgrave.

Esnard, T. and Knight, M. (eds.) (2020) Mothering and Entrepreneurship: Global Perspectives, Identities and Complexities, Ontario: Demeter Press.

Fairclough, Norman. (2010). Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language, 2nd edn, New York: Longman

Foss, L., Henry, C., Ahl, H., and Mikalsen, H. G. (2019) 'Women's entrepreneurship policy research: a 30-year review of the evidence', *Small Business Economics*, 53 (2), 409–429.

Freeman, C. (2014) Entrepreneurial Selves: Neoliberal Respectability and the Making of a Caribbean Middle Class. Duke University Press.

Fusheini, A. and Marnoch, G. (2020) 'Dialogue as a tool for improving policy implementation: Lessons from Ghana', *Policy Design and Practice*, 3 (4), 387–400.

Ganesh, S. and Holmes, P. (2011) 'Positioning Intercultural Dialogue—Theories, Pragmatics, and an Agenda', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4 (2), 81–86.

Giles, L., Schmid, J.P. and Waithe, K. (2018) *Development Challenges in Barbados*, Inter-American Development Bank. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18235/0001134.

Girvan, N. (2010) 'New world and its critics.' In B. Meeks, and N. Girvan (eds.), *The Thought of New World: The Quest for Decolonisation*, Kingston, MI: Ian Randle Publisher, 3-29.

Goodin, R.E. and Dryzek, J.S. (2006) 'Deliberative impacts: The macro-political uptake of mini-publics', *Politics & Society*, 34 (2), 219–244.

Government of Jamaica (2013) *Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) and Entrepreneurship Policy,* Kingston, Jamaica: Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce.

Government of Jamaica (2017) *Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise (MSME) & Entrepreneurship Policy,* Jamaica: Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Fisheries (MICAF).

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2012) *Green enterprise Development Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises and Cooperatives,* Trinidad and Tobago: Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (2014) *Micro and Small Enterprise (MSE) Policy for Trinidad and Tobago 2013-2016,* Trinidad and Tobago: Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Hall, C. (2011) 'Gender politics and imperial politics: Rethinking the histories of empire'. In V. Shepherd (ed.), *Engendering Caribbean History: Cross-cultural perspectives,* Kingston: Ian Randle, 138-145.

Hammond, C. S., Anderson, S., & Cissna, N. K. (2003) The problematics of dialogue and power. In Pamela J. Kalbfleisch (Eds.), *Communication Yearbook,* 27 (1), 125-157.

Henry, C., Foss, L. and Ahl, H. (2016) 'Gender and entrepreneurship research: A review of methodological approaches', *International Small Business Journal*, 34 (3), 217–241.

Henry, C., Orser, B., Coleman, S. and Foss, L. (2017) 'Women's entrepreneurship policy: a 13-nation cross-country comparison', *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 9 (3), 206–228.

Hoppe, R. (2011) 'Institutional constraints and practical problems in deliberative and participatory policy making', *Policy & Politics*, 39 (2), 163–183.

Hossein, C.S. (2014) 'The politics of resistance: Informal banks in the Caribbean', *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 41 (1), 85–100.

Innes, J. E. and Booher, D. E. (2009). 'Collaborative policymaking: governance through dialogue'. In M. A. Hajer and H. Wagenaar (eds.), *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding governance in a networked society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 33-59.

Innes, J.E. and Booher, D.E. (2010) Planning with Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

International Labour Organization (2021) *Women's entrepreneurship development assessment: Jamaica*. Publication. International Labour Organization. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/caribbean/information-resources/publications/WCMS_773071/lang--en/index.htm. (Accessed on: 18 November 2022).

Johnson, M. A. (2007). 'Women's labors in the Caribbean', *Atlantis*, 32 (1), 172–183.

Kelley, D.J. Brush, C. Greene, P., and Litovsky, Y. (2013) *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2012 Women's Report*. GEM Consortium. Available at: https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/gem-2012-womens-report.

Lashley, J.G. and Smith, K.V. (2015) *Profiling Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs: Business Environment, Sectoral Constraints, and Programming Lessons*. Publication. The World Bank. Available at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/240461562141037955/pdf/Profiling-Caribbean-Women-Entrepreneurs-Business-Environment-Sectoral-Constraints-and-Programming-Lessons.pdf.

Lazoroska, D. and Palm, J. (2019) 'Dialogue with property owners and property developers as a tool for sustainable transformation: A literature review', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 233, 328–339.

Lemke, T. (2001) 'The birth of bio-politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality', *Economy and Society*, 30 (2), 190–207.

Levitt, K. P. (2009) 'In search of model IV'. In L. Best and K. P. Levitt (eds.), *Essays on the Theory of Plantation Economy: A Historical and Institutional Approach to*

Caribbean Economic Development, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 189-196.

Marlow, S. and Martinez Dy, A. (2018) 'Annual review article: Is it time to rethink the gender agenda in entrepreneurship research?', *International Small Business Journal*, 36 (1), 3–22.

Monteduro, F. and Hinna, A. (2008) '*Stakeholder dialogue and innovations in governance*', *EGPA Conference*, Rotterdam, Netherlands. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316715707_Stakeholder_dialogue_and_innovations_in_governance.

Nabyonga-Orem, J., Dovlo, D., Kwamie, A., Nadege, A., Guangya, W., and Kirigia, M. J. (2016) 'Policy dialogue to improve health outcomes in low-income countries: what are the issues and way forward?', *BMC Health Services Research*, 16 (4), 217.

Ness, N. Miller, M. M., Negash, S., and Morgan, M. (2017) 'Embracing Our Eroticism: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Women's Eroticism.' *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy,* 29 (3), 103–26.

Orser, B., Riding, A. and Li, Y. (2019) 'Technology adoption and gender-inclusive entrepreneurship education and training', *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 11 (3), 273–298.

Pieczka, M. and Escobar, O. (2012) 'Dialogue and science: Innovation in policy-making and the discourse of public engagement in the UK', *Science and Public Policy*, 40, 113–126.

Popiolek, K. (2019) Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures in collaboration with B+HR and UNDP. Accessed on 14 February 14, 2023. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/Gender_Booklet_Final.pdf

Radice, H. (2011) 'The crisis and the Global South: From development to capitalism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46 (48), 27–31.

Raman, R. S., N., Nair, K. V., Vidyapeetham, V.A., Shivdas, A. (2022) 'Women entrepreneurship and sustainable development: Bibliometric analysis and emerging research trends', *Sustainability*, 14 (15), 9160. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159160.

Reddock, R. (2011) 'Constitutional change and the new nationalist politics'. In V. Shepherd (ed.), *Engendering Caribbean history: Cross-Cultural perspectives*, Kingston: Ian Randle, 663-688.

Reddock. R. and Bobb-Smith, Y. (2008) Conditions of Work and Employment Programme. Reconciling Work and Family- Issues and Policies in Trinidad and Tobago, Geneva: International Labour Office.

Ryan, S.D. (2012) *Entrepreneurship in Trinidad and Tobago: The Black experience,* O'Meara, Arima, Trinidad and Tobago: The University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Saner, R. and Yiu, L. (2019) 'Jamaica's development of women entrepreneurship: challenges and opportunities', *Public Administration and Policy*, 22 (2), 152–172.

Sekulic, N. (2010) 'Identity, Sex and "women's Writing" in French Post-structural Feminism.' *Sociologija*, 52 (3), 237–52.

Soares, J. (2006) 'Addressing the tensions: Reflections on feminism in the Caribbean,' *Caribbean Quarterly*, 52 (2/3), 187-97.

Terjesen, S. and Amorós, J.E. (2010) 'Female entrepreneurship in Latin America and the Caribbean: Characteristics, drivers and relationship to economic development', *The European Journal of Development Research*, 22 (3), 313–330.

UNDP. (2021) *Trinidad and Tobago Gender Analysis: Executive Summary*. Available at: https://climatepromise.undp.org/sites/default/files/research_report_document/undp-ndcsp-trinidad-tobago-gender-analysis-report.pdf. Accessed on 14 February 14, 2023.

United Nations (2007) 'Participatory dialogue: Towards a stable, safe, and just society for all', *New York*, 9.

Villares-Varela, M. and Essers, C. (2019) 'Women in the migrant economy. A positional approach to contextualize gendered transnational trajectories', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 31 (3–4), 213–225.

Wade, S. O. (2004) 'Using intentional, values-based dialogue to engage complex public policy conflicts', *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 21 (3), 361–379.

Welter, F. and Baker, T. (2020) 'Moving contexts onto new roads: Clues from other disciplines', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45 (5), 1154–1175.

Welter, F., Brush, C. and de Bruin, A. (2014) 'The gendering of entrepreneurship context', NY: Rochester.

Widdowson, H.G. (1995) 'Discourse analysis: A critical view,' *Language and Literature,* 4 (3), 157–72.

Wu, J., Li, Y. and Zhang, D. (2019) 'Identifying women's entrepreneurial barriers and empowering female entrepreneurship worldwide: a fuzzy-set QCA ap-

proach', *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 15 (3), 905–928.

Cultural Democracy at the Frontiers of Patronage: Public-Interest Art versus Promotional Culture

Owen Logan with Martyn Hudson, Alex Law and Kirsten Lloyd[1]

Abstract: In *Brave New World Revisited* Aldous Huxley observed that 'genius has been the servant of tyranny and art has advertised the merits of the local cult' (Huxley 1958). Regarding the complex relationship between art and society, Huxley argued that democracies need to identify good art in the making rather than retrospectively. Drawing also on Raymond Williams' analysis of the

1 Dr Owen Logan is an Honorary Research Fellow in the University of Aberdeen's School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History. He has worked in several countries in the fields of the creative and performing arts, art history, sociology and energy studies. He earned his doctorate in art history and sociology from Northumbria University for his thesis entitled 'Fractured Culture; the sociological poetics of the arts, participation, and well-being'. Logan's research projects have been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the British Academy, Creative Scotland/Scottish Arts Council, the Leverhulme Trust, the Research Council of Norway, and the Wingate Foundation.

Dr Martyn Hudson is an Applied Sociologist of Art and Design and a Critical Theorist whose primary research interests lie in Sound Art, Cultural Landscapes, Classical Origins of Critical Theory and Aesthetics, Socially Engaged Practice with Communities and Design-led methodologies. He is the Editor for the 'Visual Modernities' series from Routledge and has laid the groundwork for the series in 'Visualising the Empire of Capital' (Routledge 2020).

Professor Alex Law teaches sociology at Abertay University, Dundee. His teaching and research are informed by relational and historical approaches to sociology, taking long-term perspectives in sociological theory to problems of nation, state and society. His research interests date back to postgraduate studies at the University of Edinburgh on privatisation and public policy (MSc, 1993) and industrial sociology and political economy (PhD, 1997).

Dr Kirsten Lloyd is Lecturer in Curatorial Theory and Practice at The University of Edinburgh, where she founded and directs the MSc by Research in Collections and Curating Practices. She leads the Cultural and Museum Studies Discipline and Catalyst for the Scottish Arts and Humanities Graduate School. Lloyd's research focuses on late twentieth and twenty-first-century art and curatorial mediation, including lens-based practice, participatory work, and realism. She is currently a Research Fellow with Feminism Art Maintenance (2019–2022) research group, funded by the Swedish Research Council, and the Academic Lead for the University's Contemporary Art Research Collection. for Stills and Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts. Lloyd is currently working on a collaborative curatorial project for Glasgow Women's Library entitled 'Life Support' (launching August 2021) and a book titled 'Contemporary Art and Capitalist Life'.

limits imposed on dialogue by representative democracy (Williams 1980), this article considers the data from our pilot ethnography on the prospects for cultural democracy in the arts. Private patronage and largely unaccountable interests presently influence the use of public money; spending is guided towards the logic of individual or organisational self-promotion and an overwhelmingly promotional culture which serves different types of governance, whether authoritarian or democratic. By incorporating private patronage and non-western gift-economics many critical dialogues springing from the arts are contoured by their origins in elite social and political courtship (Bourdieu 1977; Burke [1790] 1997; Schiller [1794] 1994). Here we show how aesthetics remain a key to twenty-first century statecraft. Noting the effects of top-down patronage, whether in the direct manipulation of dialogue or in the more indirect tailoring of critique, the premise of our research is that if widening participation in the arts matters, it matters first and foremost in decision making about spending. Our study tests the deliberative capacities of randomised citizen juries as patrons financially empowered to commission public-interest arts projects on controversial themes and across contested frontiers of sovereignty or cultural identity. We consider our initial findings from the comparison of deliberation in non-randomised control groups and in randomised juries. We discuss the potentially positive role of randomised citizen juries as 'jolts' of equality and pluralism at the level of cultural governance (Connolly 2017). We also outline the main political, institutional, and professional blockages and impediments to the democratic integration of such empowered dialogical encounters.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Cultural Democracy, Elites, Spiritual Aristocracy, Statecraft

> Genius has been the servant of tyranny and art has advertised the merits of the local cult. Time, as it passes, separates the good art from the bad metaphysics. Can we learn to make this separation, not after the event, but while it is actually taking place? That is the question.
>
> Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (1958, 53)

Introduction: Patronage, Aesthetics, and Statecraft

George Orwell (1903–1950) was fascinated by the violence and the hard powers described in his nightmarish 1948 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; however, Britain's other famous dystopian writer Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), author of *Brave New World* published in 1932, regarded the softer powers of manipulation and 'the arts of selling' to be the real danger to democratic development (Huxley 1958, 47 ff.). This article concerns the combination of hard and soft powers, and the impediments facing dialogue and democratic deliberation in and about the arts. We introduce aesthetics as an arm of modern Statecraft, and discuss the way randomised public juries might counteract a history of aesthetics and despotism and instead deepen democratic deliberation.

It is worth pointing out first that Orwell's novel portrays a world ravaged by warring geopolitical blocs, or super-States, while Huxley's fictional dystopia is governed by a world-State. Their different visions correspond, respectively, with the opportunistic alliances of Europe's ancient regime, and the modern rules-based system which led towards the creation of the League of Nations and then the United Nations after the Second World War. However, as its critics point out the modern order veils the hypocrisy and rule-bending of the victors' justice; the UN Security Council's right of veto protects those major powers from prosecution and disguises the survival of the old-fashioned logic of geopolitical alliances and proxy wars fought on the opportunistic basis of common causes rather than just causes (e.g. Falk, Kim & Mendlovitz 1991; Hirst 2001; Kennedy 2007). Both Orwell and Huxley simplified geopolitics for the sake of selling different fictional dystopias, and each corresponds with distinctive fears of governance on the part of the public. Although Huxley was still convinced that soft powers mattered more than violence and compulsion, he was able to elaborate on the complexity of the issues raised by his novel in the later non-fictional book quoted above where he recognises that something socially important is missing from the arts. However, neither Huxley nor Orwell were much interested in the kinds of agreed procedures which mean that fundamental conflicts over norms, both within and between societies, might instead assist internal cohesion and international cooperation.

The ten-nation multi–authored study, *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict & Mediation in Pluralist Societies,* which reported to the Club of Rome in 1998, suggests that dialogical procedures and mediations are essential for societies to consider the twin key questions of who are we and how we are to live together. As the sociologist Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) argues in conclusion to that volume, while concrete dialogical procedures are attractive, both as an intellectual proposition and in use (e.g., in Germany's social market or in post-apartheid South Africa), they depend upon a certain 'normality' that is never permanent. Moreover, across the ten nations examined a highly secularised cultural elite is seen to conflict with more religiously inclined populations (Berger et al. 1998, 358–368). More generally, as Berger recognises, established conflict resolution procedures that rely upon 'negotiating elites' may create other fractures between those 'elites and their followers who are left out of the mediating process' (Ibid., 367).

Modern culture can never be reduced to the religious identities found within societies, even when one religion might still be very closely interwoven with the formation and authority of the State (e.g., Israel or Iran), so there are good reasons why cultural elites tend towards a more cosmopolitan, or secular standpoint, registered by Berger. After all, culture and the arts are widely expected to be spaces for dialogue and mediation. A more radical question concerns the purpose of cultural elites in the first

place. Elsewhere in civil society, in labour relations, for example, desire for durable and binding agreements on all sides creates elites with the degree of social trust and political authority to negotiate such agreements. The management of culture is more fluid and diffused so the social formation and authority of cultural elites is much more open to question. As might be gleaned from the quotation above about the arts and tyranny, Huxley saw a lot of nonsense in the professionally and politically convenient faith in the arts and letters as a pillar of liberty and democracy. During the Second World War, influential writers and artists of Huxley's generation pioneered this informal contract with the State. Cyril Connolly (1903–1974), editor of the influential cultural journal *Horizon*, summed up the project in a 1943 editorial: Britain had to rescue European culture from totalitarianism, and to do so attitudes to art had to be altered. As he wrote, 'we must give art a place in our conception of the meaning of life and artists a place in our conception of the meaning of the State which they have never known before. Never again must our artists be warped by opposition, stunted by neglect, or etiolated by official conformity' (Connolly 1943, 6). This nominally liberal project promoting the arts as an ally of democracy raised the prospect of all kinds of supposedly autonomous or critical works glorifying the liberal State.

Only a few socialists in Britain saw this as a worrying substitute for social-democratic reforms in education and the economy, reforms they supposed should lead more naturally towards a richer popular culture wherein artists and writers would have less need for State patronage. No doubt some of the dissenters, such as the essayist and poet Julian Symons (1912–1994), who turned his hand to crime stories, were naive about the fracturing of cultural dispositions (Symons 1945, 1990). Yet they had good grounds for distrusting any contract forged between aesthetics and political power, democratic or totalitarian, and in the British case, to be governed by a mixture of 'old boy' networks, elite lobbying, and artistic reputation markets (Jenkins 1979; Witts 1998). Nor were things very different in a United States less dogged by European class structures. The former New York Times journalist, John L. Hess (1917–2005), recounts power-elite dynamics in The Grand Acquisitors (1974) and in his 2003 memoir, My Times, A Memoir of Dissent. Looking back on a kind of conceit shared by Donald Trump and the managers of great institutions such as the New York Metropolitan Museum's director, Tom Hoving (1931–2009), Hess says that 'their tales about the art of the deal and the deal in the art can tell us a lot about the world we live in, as long as we don't believe a word of what they say' (Hess 2003, 137). Nevertheless, the advantage of a career in arts management is that, unlike

Trump, Hove was given ample media opportunities to defend mendacity itself, and to promote the idea of being a 'dictator in the arts'.[2]

A highly rhetorical opposition is often made between money making and true art. The dichotomy lends itself to much myth making in already opaque reputation markets (Bourdieu 2008). As the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) shows in his studies begun in Algeria of symbolic capital and the good-faith economy, the appearance of cultural discernment and benevolence is a key to maintaining an otherwise fragile hold on power (Bourdieu 1977, 172 ff., Bourdieu & Darbel 1991). Even the best financial investments can turn bad, the status quo might be overturned, friendly governments may be ousted, and so on, but establishing charitable foundations, or making substantial gifts to cultural institutions opens other doors. Organisations operating in reputation markets offer an unusually resilient sort of influence, often passed down the generations to sons, daughters, or grand-children as trustees or board members. Trustees are supposed to protect the public interest but, nepotism aside, are they equipped to do that? As Hess argues, trustees readily give way to the specialist education and experience of professionals who implement institutional policy. Indeed, some trustees might be chosen precisely for their mixture of conceit and practical ignorance, in which case they probably feel honoured as members of a spiritual aristocracy, 'the lords of creation' as one of Hess's informants sarcastically calls this cultural elite (Hess 1974, 30). Investigative journalists like Hess offer the checks and balances to soft power but as his *Memoir of Dissent* shows, the liberal basis of critique is extremely fickle and too open to influence from above.

In Europe, art critics from several countries claim a central role in mediating the dialogue between artworks and publics, creating 'a space open to debate' (Apollonia 2005, 3). Notwithstanding good intentions, there is still an echo of the eighteenth century when Royal Courts determined that space. So, while these modern critics posit the independence of art as a normative ideal, they give very little consideration to the independence of criticism. In this sense cultural critics separate themselves from the problems of press freedom occupying investigative journalists like Hess who pose questions that few arts critics entertain if they care for their jobs. Not surprisingly then, the journalistic investigation of culture is starved of professional time and resources, and the snippets from less demanding forms of criticism are the bargaining chips when artists and writers search for support and investment. The transactions may be less blunt, less obviously corrupt, than those portrayed in Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) account of criticism in *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions* 1837–1843) – today trust and predictability are the currency of artistic reputation markets

2 See the end of Hove's interview on Charlie Rose, 19/03/93, and eight other appearances on the same talk show at https://charlierose.com/videos/14283. Accessed on October 2022.

– but none of this is any less significant when it comes to politics and commerce. When corruption exposes systemic fragility, elites habitually appeal to the riches of cultural heritage as rightful inheritors. As Hess (2003) points out, governments in many parts of the world can be called corrupt in the pages of the *New York Times*, but not the government of New York, the self-proclaimed 'cultural capital of the World.'

The sort of conceit we have introduced here is very much in keeping with the birth of that branch of eighteenth-century European philosophy confusingly named 'aesthetics'. The founding thinkers, in what amounts to a modern developmental discourse, concerned themselves with the kinds of dialogue, public knowledge, and emotions which might underpin the successful State. Philosophers such as the Anglo-Irish Edmund Burke (1729–1797) in Britain and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in Germany were beneficiaries, if not disciples, of so-called *enlightened despotism* (Israel 2013, 275–301, Scott 1990). The somewhat self-contradictory term is applied to European rulers and patrons such as Frederick the Great (1712–1786), who recognised that if regimes were to be viable and durable, traditional hard powers, (armed conquest, serfdom, slavery, torture, etc.) were of limited value; greater powers of socio-economic persuasion and surveillance would be required. This strategically nuanced thought became far more relevant with the pressures and burdens of the global Seven Years War (1756–1763). Serfs and mercenaries make unreliable armies, so strong incentives for reform were in place to make the nobility more commercial and the peasantry more efficient, meaning too that war alliances could move from common causes based on naked territorial ambitions, to more ideologically sophisticated just causes of national unity and emancipation.

One of the greatest losers in the Seven Years War was *ancien regime* France. In 1789, the Comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791), who played a leading role in the French revolution later in the same year, observed the relatively favourable situation in Germany; he wrote that 'princes and the men of letters now restrain each other; and if that is not the best state of affairs, it is at least a thousand times more preferable than that which lasted for centuries' (in Blanning 1990, 276). Schiller's *Letters on The Aesthetic Education of Man,* penned for his patron Prince of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, and first published in 1794, offers a theory of personal dialogue and power in which distrust turns into mutual respect (Schiller 1994, 75). Schiller became a semi-official ideological touchstone for a range of States, including Nazi Germany, which produced the 1940 biopic *Der Triumph eines Genies* (The Triumph of a Genius). If interrogated merely as a history of ideas, enlightened despotism is no less paradoxical than some of its radical philosophical opponents. An interesting example is the ambiguous mixture of German cultural nationalism and universalism espoused by the influential preacher and philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder

(1744–1803) in his search for spiritual authenticity. So here it is worth recalling Edmund Burke and a concrete example of ethics and geopolitics during this period. It was late in Burke's life when he attempted, unsuccessfully, to impeach Warren Hastings of the East India Company (EIC) for 'high crime and misdemeanours' connected to the company's corruption and military campaigns (Hastings 1786). Burke was a remarkably precocious aesthetician and had a religious and teleological faith in Leviathan-like authority and patronage weaving a politically 'well-wrought veil' of culture to be passed down the generations (Burke 1790, 86–122). However, during the impeachment trial which ran from 1787 to 1795, Burke's published ideas about what we now call 'soft power' were effectively turned against him. While Burke showed that Hastings and the EIC had done 'very reprehensible things' the Houses of Parliament also saw that violence and political excesses might be off-set by patronage and good-works (McCauley 1841, 255).

According to Burke's case for prosecution, the House of Lords should perform as a transnational court, above Britain's local and national interests represented by the House of Commons. In his defence, Hastings brought witnesses from India and argued that the EIC needed to adapt its operations to the despotic standards of India's traditional rulers, since sovereignty in Asia was based on nothing else, he claimed. Burke revealed this to be a crude misrepresentation of India's traditional jurisprudence and argued that in any case British imperialism required the guidance of natural law and universal values, not a false 'geographical morality' shaped by the acquisition of territorial governance rights (Burke 2000, 94; Mukherjee 2005, 610). In the most damning terms, Burke also attacked the sincerity and quality of one of Hastings' pet educational projects, a Calcutta college churning out degrees in record time. Yet forced by his own philosophy to rely only on sarcasm, Burke permitted the principle that patronage and charitable works could make amends for wrong-doing and become avenues for Hasting's personal redemption (in Bond 1861, 730–731). Hastings was acquitted in the House of Lords and went on to become a Privy Councillor. At this point in European history, the horizons of a heavily armed gift-economy begin to come into view.

Patronage and gift-giving are, of course, expressions of discernment. The aesthetic overlap of hard-edged political economy and soft-edged culture underpins State formation we argue. Much of its emotional fervour was broadcast worldwide in 2022 immediately after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. A distant African viewer commented sceptically that only the British could turn a civil event into a military ceremony.[3] But it is precisely the combination of Leviathan-like powers and the benevolence of noblesse oblige that Burke (1790) regarded as the sublime 'veil' of cul-

3 From personal communication.

ture which needed to be handed down generations because, as he admitted, its immediate benefits were merely hopes for a better future. Burke is silent about precisely what was actually veiled, namely hard political economy as the British peasants and their children moved from the land into factories. If Burke's veil of culture still exists, its contemporary contours are shaped by the patronage politics and gift-economics of many different countries today (cf. Giridharadas 2018). Historically and spiritually, generosity is universal but the socio-economic conditions for egalitarian dialogue, debate, and deliberation are not (Dehejia 1992, 44 ff). Traditional charity survives but in terms of civic voluntarism, top-down patronage ensures that 'NGO-ism' is made far more attractive to an educated and democratically inspired social cadre than trade unionism and workers solidarity (Folorunso, Hall, Logan 2012).

While the relationship between aesthetics and Statecraft we have briefly introduced here hinges on theories of meaningful dialogue, they usually lack democratic procedure. So, doubts about aesthetics as a developmental discourse must also apply to any hopes for a spirit of dialogue which might in, or of itself, democratise representative democracy. Immanuel Kant's idea of the Enlightenment was that open public debate was contingent on a clerical loyalty to private contracts. In the words of Frederick the Great, 'argue as much as you please, but obey!' (in Kant 1784). Voltaire (1694–1778), who enjoyed Frederick's patronage, eventually baulked at the terms of his own contract, but Voltaire only advocated free speech for an educated elite class. It is only when workers sought speech rights as part of the process of self-organisation, and to bite the hand that fed them, that we begin to see the democratisation of free speech (Harrison 1974). Because many powerful organisations today, from the World Bank down, promote dialogue and participatory decision making as a means of strengthening democracy, we ought to stress the obvious: there is such a thing as fake consultation and harmonious inequality. Sincere dialogues too, are always infused with power relations and types of political or socio-economic courtship which determine who is talking to who, when, and where, and about what. However, the randomised public juries we discuss later may be a useful democratic corrective and a form of dialogical mediation which anticipates the crisis of normative conditions which Berger rightly points out can never be guaranteed to last.

As we go on to show, there are connections between the lack of speech in one area and the inflation of speech in another; an imbalance reinforced in the US by the 1976 Supreme Court Judgement on free speech, (Buckley v. Valeo) which found that 'money is speech' (Barnett 2003, 122). Theoretical ideal types designed to protect an epistemological integrity connected to the word *dialogue* – rather than its normal dictionary definition – can obscure many important questions concerning its management and manipulation. The world systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein (1930–2019) argued that while we live in a capitalist world economy with its his-

tory, structures, and contradictions, many in the humanities only study the effects implicitly and it would help everyone if scholars reflected on what they are really doing (Wallerstein 2011, 226). With this in mind, we argue that face-to-face encounters and deliberation organised in civil society can lead to better social solutions than those offered by political leaders, and might positively influence governance and international relations, but this depends on their democratic credibility, dogged by issues of accountability and transparency (c.f. Barber Rowell 2021). Nor should the fundamental democratic right of people to kick out their government ever be forgotten. However, if authoritarian plebiscitary-style democracies are to be avoided, significant democratic deliberation should not be confined to elections and referendums. A plebiscitary democracy created along those lines is more than capable of veiling women for the sake of misogyny or allowing torture and war crimes for the sake of liberalism – provided that the dignity of immense profits and inherited wealth are also protected. For the sake of open deliberation we borrow the example of justice systems using randomised selection to assemble juries – in this case to finance public-interest arts projects. The theoretical question of who produces the critical meaning and value of artistic projects and products is already complicated – authors, publics, or both? Based on the initial findings of our comparative study of face-to-face deliberation in randomised juries, we will argue that the public interest might be carved out by such independent members of the public in a practically productive dialogue with each other and with cultural producers, and also open to comment from the wider public. However, to consider the potential of such dialogical and democratic procedures we must first address issues of territory.

Perspectives on Territory: Raymond Williams, Norbert Elias, Martha Nussbaum

The influential cultural and literary historian Raymond Williams (1921–1988) is also known as a champion of cultural democracy. His working-class origins in Wales sensitised him to education systems which offer personal emancipation via institutions of socio-economic segregation. His own personal mobility across frontiers of class and nationality between Wales and England influenced his highly reflexive standpoint. In a 1980 lecture, on 'Representative Democracy' he began focusing attention on the concentration of powers which typically produce the monopolistic 'all purpose representative who (...) represent[s] our views on everything' (Williams 1980). He pointed out that the same monopolistic logic extends to the appointments of experts and public representatives to the boards of cultural institutions. Williams insisted that 'if you are taking the notion of representation seriously, (...) you have to have much more diverse assemblies' (Ibid.). He anticipated communications technology leading to the devolution of decision-making powers and assisting public deliberation. With the benefit of hindsight, Williams might be accused of

naivety when in fact his arguments about the political abstractions connected to territory and constituency explain why, more than four decades later, and with all the advances in communications he anticipated, open debate and deliberation are eroded by a technologically managed infrastructure of echo chambers. The impulse to use communications technology to reach ever greater numbers of people on the basis of a mathematically registered similarity, or to identify new similarities, is perfectly in keeping with the arbitrary territorial logic of the constituency that Williams critiqued. However, what he failed to foresee was the technological expansion of a promotional culture based on easy praise from the bottom-up. Our capacities to communicate our preferences worldwide in almost infantile terms of 'likes' also change the experience of actual childhood in many contexts where growing up appears to be increasingly orientated towards a training in consumer preferences and identities.

Alongside Raymond Williams, our study is inspired by the historical sociology of Norbert Elias (1897–1990), a Germen-Jewish refugee to Britain, who also harboured deep suspicions of the way representative politics deploys myth to herd citizens (Mennell 1989, 15). His classic *longue durée* study, *The Civilizing Process* (Elias 2000), shows how peace developed hand-in-hand with the externalisation of violence and how the process can work in reverse, turning back in on itself as in the decivilising case of Nazi Germany. Elias saw the need for genuine controversy as a safeguard against civilisational arrogance and our pilot research stress-tests his idea of 'civilised controversy' (Law 2018). We argue that the time is right to experiment with a form of cultural democracy, revisiting Elias's ideas about constructive controversy by empowering randomised public juries to commission arts projects. In some cases, randomised juries might be assembled from more than one population group, with the intention of bridging contested ideas of sovereignty. The critical premise of our research is that if widening participation in the arts matters, it matters first and foremost in decision making about public patronage (Logan 2017). Later we discuss our initial comparative findings on the effects of randomisation as a form of encounter that might assist social integration from below.

Elias was particularly critical of 'reality-blind institutions' devoted to the promotion of their professions, disciplines, or discursive missions (Law, op.cit). When it comes to culture, great works by artists and writers have long been measured against the supposedly universal moral or psychological standards they reach and might convey to the public. An influential voice promoting the arts as a means of encouraging feelings that are appropriate to democracy is the University of Chicago's professor of law, Martha Nussbaum. In *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters to Justice*, Nussbaum (2013) finds humanity too politically abstract and, following the arguments of Giuseppe Manzzini (1805–1872), she regards patriotism based on dialogue and

mutual respect between fellow citizens to be a surer, more practical route to the global common good. Nussbaum's prescriptions about what we may call 'emotional territory' do not ignore the dark side of the arts; in fact she is rather censorious, but, having been disenchanted by the United Nations, her disengagement from the issues of democratic internationalism , means that she bypasses increasingly charged issues of sovereignty and frontiers by positing morally correct patriotic sentiments instead. If Nussbaum suffers from reality blindness, its degree is directly proportional to the fact that the richest countries spend at least twice as much on constructing obstacles to migration than they devote to tackling climate change (Brand et al. 2022). Numerous important studies detail how successful artists and writers articulate emotional compensations for the faults and shortcomings of their nations and varied systems, even when appearing to challenge those systems, (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Carey 1992; Golomstock 1990; Hauser 1982; Milosz 1980; Williams 1958 & 1989). Nussbaum's assessment of unselfish patriotism neglects the historical and political burdens carried by the arts.

We find conventional wisdom about the role of the arts in public enlightenment deeply flawed on two counts here. The first corresponds with the externalisation of conflict as seen by Elias's historical studies of internal pacification processes. The brutal political and economic history of the East India Company is a striking example, and artistic expression is implicated. Take Charles Dickens, some of his best-known books will always be held in high esteem as insightful pleas for social justice and peace at home. Nevertheless, it was the same Dickens who, in criticising the East India Company, also articulates his own willingness to exterminate the pagan masses of the Indian subcontinent (in Robins 2012, 195). Similarly, his criticism of slavery as the root of a spirit of violence in the United States still repays attention (Dickens, [1842] 1972, 269–284). But Dickens also believed that emancipated slaves should not be allowed to vote (Colander et al. 2006, 87). One of the effects of patronage is that such a paradoxical artistic social conscience is not always directly connected to the kind of imperialist and racist beliefs which tempted Dickens. A contemporary example of externalisation is the Gulf Labor Coalition, an artist-led campaign begun in New York and focused on the abuse of migrant workers in Abu Dhabi, where a branch of the Guggenheim Museum is planned. The campaigners describe and illustrate how the museum project is 'constructed and maintained on the backs of exploited employees' deprived of workers' rights (Ross 2015). Their campaign gained moral and material support in the art world, and in 2015 it was presented at the Venice Biennale as an ongoing socially engaged arts project. However, criticism has been shaped by the project's own targets, when a deeper analysis would raise questions about political courtship and the influence of patronage on the campaign. The focus on workers' rights in far-off Abu Dhabi is extremely one-dimensional given corporatist labour laws in New York State which prohibit strikes in the public sector,

including of teachers or lecturers employed in the arts and humanities. The draconian New York laws even enforce supposedly voluntary duties. This repressive labour regime was stabilised under the governorship of New York State by Nelson Rockefeller (1908–1979), one of the most famous patrons of the arts. Regarded as a progressive democratically minded Republican in the United States of the late 1960s, Rockefeller lent his support to military government in Latin America. A mirror image of this Janus-faced geopolitics appears in one of the most questionable ideas to have been floated by US trade union leaders in recent years, namely, the outsourcing of strikes. In this scenario, workers from poorer countries are to take the risks in confronting employers while unions in 'advanced' countries follow partnership policies and submit to laws that politically handcuff trade unionists (McCallum 2013, 5). Solidarity is traditionally understood as a risk shared; Gulf Labor's externalisation of the issue of workers' rights appears to have been shaped, consciously or unconsciously, by the corruption of that principle.

We have given two brief empirical examples of externalisation to support our first objection to the conventional wisdom that artists and writers might psychologically embody universal values and convey enlightenment. Thought and communication processes are much more complicated and morally ambiguous. As Nussbaum admits, compassion is its own worst enemy because people too often address structural injustices in ways which gratify themselves emotionally, in the process creating in-groups and out-groups while reinforcing the status of second-class citizens for others (Nussbaum 2013, 6ff.). Our second objection is more theoretical and concerns *readiness*. Here the paradoxes of artistic discourse require a deeper analysis informed by sociological poetics. In the eyes of Williams and others working in this theoretical tradition, the public is never an empty vessel awaiting enlightenment or revelation, no matter how much some people might feel that their own encounters with art or literature were mind-altering or even life-changing experiences. Sorely neglected by that neo-religious account of communication are the social and temporal questions of resonance and readiness, which apply equally to authors and readers, artists, and viewers. In this sense, it is surprisingly difficult to differentiate the producers and consumers of culture involved in a dialogical process. While emotions that begin in society may be well captured by individuals with sharpened perceptions, their audiences are influenced by the same feelings and both groups are shaped by institutional or social structures and their historical situations. Broadly speaking, this is what Williams meant by the term 'structures of feeling' and 'deep cultural forms' that perpetuate or play on stereotypes rather than interrogating their basis (Williams 1989, 186–187). This issue of the social readiness for certain genres or types of cultural expression is mixed up with both establishment and fringe points of view, so rather than only undermining ideological crudeness and providing exits from echo cham-

bers, representation in the arts and letters also streamlines and circumscribes representative politics, as our examples of Charles Dickens and Gulf Labor demonstrate.

Unfortunately, the role of the arts in streamlining dialogue and preparing the emotional territory of representative politics and Statecraft is increasingly neglected by the continual promotion of its 'impacts' upon society. The obsession with creative leadership means that cultural policy tends to be guided more by the desires and requirements of spiritual aristocracies rather than a critical understanding of the relationship between artists, patrons, and publics. The latter critical understanding (capable of discarding what was highly praised and marketable, or praising something previously unpromising and unwelcome) typically arrives after key historical events, and usually too late to make a difference to anything but artistic styles and fashions. Essentially, this is the issue Aldous Huxley raised when he proposed that 'time separates the good art from the bad metaphysics [of power, and therefore] we need to find another means of making the same separation' (op.cit).

Crossing Frontiers: *Five Broken Cameras*

Anna Baltzer is a respected Jewish-American activist and former Zionist. She now promotes the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Disinvest and Sanctions movement against Israel. At a debate sponsored by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School in New York in 2012, Baltzer criticised the liberal preference to invite Jewish speakers like herself to talk critically about Israeli policies. She compared this tendency unfavourably with the feminist movement of the 1960s to point out the patent absurdity if male speakers had been preferred to women as the promoters of women's rights. When it comes to opposing Israeli policies today Baltzer condemned implicit racism and said it should not be 'about Jews leading the way, it's about Jews getting out of the way'. She went on to argue that 'as Jews we can use our voices to help lift up the voices of Palestinians that have been silenced for so long (...) but what's really needed is a complete paradigm shift (...) we must make sure that Jewish-American voices are not, as they have been in the past, regulating the terms of the discussion'.[4] We will now look at this geopolitically charged debate through the lens of cultural democracy and with the benefit of hindsight.

There are some remarkable and commendable attempts to rethink the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the most critically acute and historically balanced efforts

4 See Baltzer's debate with Norman Finkelstein filmed at the Vera List Centre on 10/06/12 at C-Span, https://www.c-span.org/video/?309751-1/knowing-much#!. Accessed on October 2022).

generate great controversy and often have to battle against censorship.[5] However, the example we consider here is important for different reasons which address the patronage and ownership of internal critique envisaged by Cyril Connolly in Britain in 1943 and quoted in our introduction. It is the award-winning documentary film 5 Broken Cameras released in 2011 and nominated for an Oscar in 2013. This film was co-directed by the Palestinian farmer/film-maker Emad Burnat, and the Israeli film-maker Guy Davidi. Their film punctures the myth that Palestinians are more deeply implicated in the use of violence than Israelis, and that non-violent action would be a more rational or effective expression of Palestinian rights. Conservative Israelis accuse Davidi of betrayal. The unmistakably Palestinian film charts the non-violent protests against an Israeli settler land grab in the Palestinian village of Bil'in. However, when nominated for an Oscar for the best feature documentary, the film was itself territorialised in the media when the Israeli Embassy in Washington claimed the film would represent Israel at the Oscars.

Davidi and Burnat rejected Israeli claims for the symbolic ownership of their film.[6] Burnat explains that when he approached Davidi to collaborate 'it was not a political decision' about making an Israeli-Palestinian film, rather Davidi supported him in making 'a Palestinian film'.[7] Both filmmakers also stress the importance of Burnat's personal account of his family life in the midst of non-violent protests that met with increasingly violent Israeli repression against the families in Bil'in. In the film's voiceover Burnat returns repeatedly to his torn feelings about his children's future and the imperative to make them politically aware for their own safety. In the process everyone's childhoods are erased. Burnat also makes acute remarks on political opportunism in the film:

> The Palestinian Authority doesn't consider my accent to be resistance-related. If you don't fit the resistance image, you're on your own. Lots of people use symbols for political profit. Whether it's a symbol of Bil'in, or the Palestinian State. Bil'in is attracting politicians of all

5 For a discussion of the issue of censorship, see Edward Said's discussion of his book The Last Sky in 'Edward Said, The Last Interview', by Charles Glass (2003) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxW0uJBWVIY. Accessed on October 2022).

6 See *Huffington Post* article by Danny Shea, 11/02/13, *Five Broken Cameras' Directors: 'This Is A Palestinian Film',* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/5-broken-cameras-director_n_2662614 . Accessed on October 2022).

7 *Five Broken Cameras*, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZU9hYIgXZw. Accessed on October 2022).

> stripes. I film Adeeb [a friend of Burnat] observing them from behind. I'm sure he doesn't like it. I'd rather be with the real rebels.

Davidi expands on the Israeli response to the film in a magazine interview:

> The Israeli Left likes to see 5 Broken Cameras as a film that points the finger of blame at Israeli society. This is also the strategy of Palestinian society, to point the finger at Israel. So, the whole discussion of the occupation is about guilt, which is very destructive. I'm saying there is no room for guilt. There is only room for taking responsibility. A lot of Israelis say it's so great that Israelis and Palestinians are working together – but then they go off and cry [about the occupation]. There is no place for tears and guilt here. Only taking responsibility.[8]

The issue of taking responsibility raised here cannot be confined to the rights and wrongs of this particular conflict, and we argue that it demands a paradigm shift about cultural decision making itself. The spurious dispute over the symbolic ownership of nationalist self-critique was made more complicated because the production and distribution of *5 Broken Cameras* was supported by an international network of organisations eager to share the credit for a documentary praised as a work of art. But what if the film had *not* been commissioned by an opaque group of film-funders, nor even by one of a very small number of self-consciously responsible and peace-loving mixed communities created in Israel; what if the making of the film had instead been supported by a jury made up of Israelis and Palestinians randomly assembled on the basis of their willingness to call for public-interest arts projects? Might the *readiness* of society we have discussed become more than a private commercial or stylistic question, but a fundamentally democratic one open to debate and further public deliberation? As academic commentators such as Berger and Nussbaum argue, the creation of artworks, including new symbols and memorials, may be significant dialogical mediations (Berger 1998; Nussbaum 2014), yet very little attention is given to the procedures that lead to their commissioning. Nor is there enough consideration of the very real difficulties in making audacious creative decisions. More than once it has been suggested that the tragic irony of *The Satanic Verses* affair was that Salman Rushdie and his supporters were persecuted and attacked by some of the very people Rushdie would have regarded as ideal readers, and with whom he wanted to create a dialogue (Fletcher 1994, 1–2). Therefore, we think the arts are a fitting place to test dialogical capacities, precisely because the history of

8 See 972 *Magazine* article by Lisa Goldman, 24/02/13, '5 Broken Cameras' director: There is no room for guilt – only taking responsibility. Available at: https://www.972mag.com/director-of-5-broken-cameras-there-is-no-room-for-guilt-only-taking-responsibility/. Accessed on October 2022.

State formation means that the words 'art and politics' fall together rather too easily. The couplet is casually adopted at the expense of the more incisive issue of art and democracy which poses radical questions about management, patronage, education, and self-promotion, not least for the New School in New York where Anna Baltzer made her acute comments.

The Prospects for Cultural Democracy

Given the historical fluidity of culture in the displacement of peoples, changes to territorial control and in commerce and trade, it is very doubtful that the public interest in the arts can still be narrowly defined by the local cults referred to by Huxley (op. cit). Moreover, existing research on public support in Britain for the randomised selection as a counterbalance to representative politics, points in a more ideologically complex direction. It is argued that the rise of right-wing populism signals the need for a return to the ancient democratic instrument of randomisation to protect modern democracy and the public interest (Chwalisz 2015). Rather than only voting or appointing people to positions of authority, the use of random selection by lot is recorded in Athens and in later political communities as an expression of equality. Various degrees of randomisation are thought to counteract the negative effects of competition for popularity and authority (Lopez-Rabatel & Sintomer 2020). In the UK, levels of public support for randomised selection in 2015 were generally above 50%, with the exception of traditional Conservative voters, and they also fall beneath 50% among the top and bottom earners in society (Chwalisz 2015, 40–60). The rich feel they lack time, while the disadvantaged lack confidence. About the latter, the research funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust argues that proper remuneration and other incentives are required, though no consideration is given to egalitarian educational reform.

We can begin here by defining culture as communication and process. Values are created through a variety of social processes, including performance, types of ritual and forms of dialogue. Many of these processes are instigated by educational institutions and cultural organisations or foundations developed from the eighteenth century onwards. Notwithstanding good intentions, political and financial patronage exposes values such as respect for civil and political liberties to what Darrow Schecter, a European political philosopher, calls 'exchange-based forms of politicisation' (Schecter 2000, 186). Schecter critiques liberalism's conflation of competition and equality, as if competition is an expression of equality and equality is only meaningful in relation to fair competition. The result, he argues, is that modern States defuse meaningful dialogue by legally codifying liberties in order to regulate competing private interests. In this process, liberties are stripped of much of their radical and public content. Anyone doubting the applicability of theory here might con-

sider torture and other abuses discussed by Britain's former Law Lord Tom Bingham (1933–2010) in his (2010) book, *The Rule of Law*. Another valuable study is *What Price Liberty*?, Ben Wilson's acute historical analysis of Britain's legal steps forward, typically followed by larger steps backwards. Worth considering here for a moment, as an example of exchange-based politicisation, is the way censorship regimes have regulated and balanced the commercially competitive spiral between sex and violence. A certain sense of emancipation from sexual repression in the 1970s was squeezed back into a semi-illicit industry of pornographic self-exploitation, while the increasingly explicit representation of extreme violence was almost universally mainstreamed according to artistic standards. The result is countless celluloid hymns to violence and war. The 'Me Too' campaign exposed the normalisation of sexual harassment in the censorious creative industries, but only a tiny fraction of the public are aware of critical media research revealing how the defence and intelligence organisations mould thousands of film and TV scripts in return for assistance and access (Alford 2010; Alford & Secker 2017). The big question is how localised civil society responds to the State's codifying of liberties according to the logic of competing private interests played out at the international level.

As part of our pilot study examining the prospects for cultural democracy, a jury was randomly assembled from members of the public in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to commission a public-interest arts project. The jury was assembled by a member of the research team approaching every tenth passer-by at different points in the city, in relation to different social classes and ethnicities, until a minimum number of volunteers confirmed their willingness to serve as jurists over the extended and, at that point, rather uncertain period of the pilot project. This pilot project involves two face-to-face day-long jury meetings more than twelve months apart. No jury is a perfect representation of a society or a population, and according to our diversity scale – running from Type A (Very Homogenous) to Type F (Very Diverse) – the Newcastle jurors make up a Type E, (Moderately Diverse) jury.

At their first meeting, the jury of twelve adults decided by majority vote to commission a public-interest arts project on the theme of Video/Computer Gaming. Other possible themes the jury was asked to consider were Disease or the Ecosystem. Such meetings are facilitated by two members of the research team, who are careful not to promote their own opinions in the decision-making process. At the first jury meeting the facilitators introduced the three possible public-interest themes to the jury for their deliberation. However, in line with our methodology, the Newcastle jury were also asked to consider a hypothetical request for funding, designed by the researchers to stress-test public deliberation comparatively. Intended to be controversial, such hypothetical proposals also have the effect of 'warming up' the jury for further discussion and debate about real funding decisions. Because the hypothetical

proposals are also debated by relatively homogenous focus groups included in our study, they allow us to make direct critical comparisons between the discussions of those groups, which include relatively expert groups, with the discussions of randomised public juries. Without such a comparative methodology, claims about the merits of expert or elite decision making versus the deliberative capacities of lay people cannot be tested, and would lack credibility.

On this occasion, our hypothetical proposal for comparative purposes concerned a municipal gallery exhibition devoted to Leni Riefenstahl's (1902–2003) commercially successful but critically controversial photo-essays about the traditional life of the Nuba people in Sudan. It has been forcefully argued that Riefenstahl's approach to Africans is consistent with her earlier Nazi propaganda work, particularly her ideas about Nuba beauty and superiority in comparison with other Africans (Sontag 1980). The two facilitators in Newcastle presented arguments for and against supporting Riefenstahl's exhibition, and so far, the same pro and contra arguments have also been debated by two focus groups; one was made up of immigrants and refugees in La Seyne sur Mer in France, and the other was a group of MA students in Creative and Cultural Industries Management in Newcastle. By comparison with the randomised jury, the focus groups were relatively homogenous in terms of their members' ages and in that they already knew one another and had shared interests, either because of their common situation as foreigners in France, or because of their specialist studies in England. Both focus groups voted very strongly and almost unanimously *against* hosting the Riefenstahl exhibition in a municipal gallery. By contrast the randomised jury from Newcastle voted almost unanimously *for* hosting the exhibition *on condition* that publicly employed curators should put Riefenstahl's work in a critical context. This option of critical curatorship was not one of those suggested in the pro and contra arguments we presented for the hypothetical proposal and emerged entirely from the jury discussion itself.

Within our research team we have a variety of opinions or viewpoints, and we avoid influencing the outcome of such debates, whether they are hypothetical ones or real funding decisions. What is most intriguing about the jurors' deliberation in our pilot study is, first, the autonomy of their reasoning in relation to arguments we presented for and against a Riefenstahl exhibition and, secondly, the sharp contrast with the decisions of the two more homogenous focus groups that debated the same hypothetical proposal for a Riefenstahl show. *Comparison here suggests that open jury deliberation favours a critical public culture more than the governance impulse to censor, or the marketplace impulse to promote.* From our historical perspective as researchers, we note that authoritarianism dynamically combines censorship and self-promotion, and unfortunately criticism in the arts and letters swings back and forth with an unseemly haste to accommodate whoever or whatever is in power (Riding 2010; Saun-

ders 1999). With this issue in mind, our initial research results give us some reason to believe that randomised juries could strengthen the critical autonomy, accountability, and relevance of cultural institutions if the assembly of such juries is more widely adopted and further developed.

After lunch, during the first jury meeting, the facilitators read out the background arguments for each of the three public commissioning themes, and an initial vote was taken before jurists went on to debate the merits of each. Although their initial vote to commission work on the theme of Video/Computer Gaming was confirmed in their second vote, it is worth noting that the jury included the general issue of the ecosystem in their call to artists, thereby combining two of the proposed themes. The jurors drafted a call to artists internationally for a creative project in any medium or form, (including game design itself) that

> compares power, domination and the glorification of violence in the invented worlds of gaming with everyday life and reality. Are malevolent invented worlds a consequence of a lack of control and collective material investment in the physical world we inhabit? How far do the invented realities of gaming actually underpin social isolation and ecological catastrophe?

The jurors' published call for artists' project proposals goes on to mention some of the background issues of the aesthetics of game design they discussed. At the time of writing this article, their international call for proposals is to be published online with an offer of £8000 to be awarded by the jury at their second face-to-face meeting.[9] The online portal for submissions provides members of the public and interested parties with the opportunity to comment on the commissioning theme or on artists' submissions. So instead of people acting behind the scenes to lobby expert appointees, experts and all interested parties might communicate their views openly to such public juries. To protect jurors from unwanted personal attention, they remain anonymous in this process, although in the interests of transparency and further discussion, details of the social make-up of the jury will be published at the time of their award.

Conclusion

Ultimately the development of the alternative communicative processes explored above, goes beyond personal or professional valuations of 'good art'. Rather, by defin-

9 A webpage to facilitate public discussion of artists' applications for the commission is under construction by the BxNU Institute at Northumbria University at the time of writing. See hosting.northumbria.ac.uk/bxnugamecall.

ing the public interest dialogically, democratic ethics offer a fundamentally different and more critically reflexive basis for artistic and cultural work. Such democratic processes may generate vital jolts that combine equality and pluralism. In his book *Aspirational Fascism*, the US political scientist William Connolly (2017) argues that such jolts are needed to counter the temptations of an exclusionary plebiscitary style democracy in the United States, mobilised very effectively by Donald Trump. However, whether any jolts of equality and pluralism can be effective without a major egalitarian jolt to education remains an open question. Educational achievements, judged by the self-deceptive standards of meritocracy, dignify declining standards overall and perpetuation of class inequalities across generations (Young 1994). This egregious situation is the case in most countries beyond Scandinavia. Yet in those countries too, where militant labour movements made considerable egalitarian gains, a so-called 'halo effect' means that values of equality and pluralism are eroded as imagined, rather than actual contact, with ethnic minorities is turned into support for the far-right (Teitelbaum 2019). Studies suggest that a certain social and physical distance from *the other,* rather than actual contact and practical dialogue, heightens the politics of fear and distrust, hence the reference to a negative 'halo' around ethnically mixed communities and urban areas. Nevertheless, the now classic sociological study by Elias and Scotson (1965) looking at prejudices *within* a white English working-class community is much more telling. Their study shows how ethnically identical newcomers were unfairly disparaged by the older more established families in the district. Entitled *The Established and the Outsiders,* this study suggests that insider prejudices may be gradually replaced by new ones aimed at new outsiders, and in this way, communities lend themselves an internal moral coherency which they actually lack. These distortions at the level of territorial micropolitics are not disconnected from larger questions of sovereignty and international relations we have touched on. The same distortions are magnified by religious extremists and far-right movements, the latter adopting Renaud Camus's theory of 'the great replacement' – the thinly disguised racist polemic from France which may be readily interpreted as a call for civil wars (c.f. Chaouat 2019).

Traditionally, trade unionism, socialist internationalism, and other egalitarian movements have sought to overcome self-defeating communitarian fractures, but even the most scrupulously organised parties or movements cannot effectively articulate the equality principle when people come together precisely because they share ideologies or values. If equality and deliberation are to be more meaningful, they cannot depend on such obvious self-selection and exclusions. For the jolts of equality and pluralism we have considered here as a form of cultural democracy to be effective, they need to be significantly multiplied. Scaled up and loosely connected they could support integration from below via practical and meaningful public decision

making carried out by people with significantly different experiences, perceptions and standpoints.

Our initial findings substantiate previous research on opinion formation suggesting the importance of face-to-face encounters as opposed to online dialogues and surveys (Rutter & Carter 2018). With this proviso, which applies particularly to jury meetings, our research also corresponds with Elias's arguments for the necessity of civilised controversy as a means of countering civilisational arrogance. However, talking shops directed at citizens with time to spare do not begin to address the dialogues we envisage for genuine cultural democracy. Hence, we advocate for randomisation and reasonable remuneration for the time gifted by jurors. A major impediment to such democratic innovations, which otherwise enjoy considerable levels of public support, are the customs and habits of representation, intra-elite dialogue and patronage. These impediments are all reflected in the foundations of aesthetic philosophy, and they demand materialist investigation and analysis.

In this article we considered State formation through the lens of aesthetics as an integral, if underestimated, aspect of the modern Western model of democracy. The disintegration of long-established States is always a possibility. While the threat of disintegration may recede during prolonged periods of political stability, it does not do so all by itself. As with sport, the arts help consecrate national consciousness and are often deployed to cosmetically patch-up policy failures, or to rhetorically reconcile fractures of class, culture, or religion (Belfiore 2009). While this could be regarded as a relatively benign aesthetic function, it falls far short of the sort of integration from below that accompanied the historical development of labour movements. We should also bear in mind that political power is not a zero-sum game, the use of soft power does not necessarily mean that the use of hard powers and violence diminish. Whether a State is nominally democratic, authoritarian, or totalitarian, governments still need to manage, contain, or repress internal conflicts, and each response demands the incorporation of elites and the use of soft forms of power in culture and education.

Rather than distributing knowledge, dialogue can also be used to acquire knowledge and power over others. Therefore, the basic issues of who, where, when, and about what ought to be very carefully considered from an egalitarian perspective before lauding the accomplishments of dialogue. The history of aesthetics shows how important dialogues are problematically contained and streamlined by the arts and letters feeding into a wider promotional culture. Patronage tends to shape critique so that even the most valid and pertinent types of dialogue take the form of organisational or personal self-promotion. While this may be unavoidable in a capitalist world economy, it does mean that the management of dialogue ought to be a key

critical question. For that to happen, a greater degree of intellectual modesty may be required from scholars who, otherwise, overload the word dialogue with a wholly positive theoretical significance not to be found in ordinary definitions of the word. However, if one accepts the management of dialogue as a key issue, the ancient principle of randomising representation and deliberation does hold out hope for the deepening of democratic culture in the twenty-first century. Such forms of dialogue are insufficient, but they are indispensable.

Coda: The Cult of Decisionism

Economists have registered the increasing concentration of wealth within the upper one percent of elite incomes. Thomas Piketty (2014) argues that available data corresponds with the return of a patrimonial form of capitalism. This merits interpretation in terms of patronage politics given that the resistance to progressive taxation, on the part of business leaders and the most wealthy, offers the economic elite the opportunity of a virtuous circle: Lower taxation means increased profit margins, which means increased capacity for giving, which means increased influence over public policy decisions (including matters of taxation). Such a virtuous circle represents a long-standing cult of decisionism – the historical obsession with powers of individual decision making and discernment. This deserves further attention since it represents a major impediment to a culture of democratic deliberation.

In his *Social History of Art* Arnold Hauser (1892–1978) outlines how the concept of 'genius' developed during the war-torn Italian Renaissance. The concept put the self-referential artist at one remove from both science and God, allowing him to become a quasi-sovereign power in his own right. In this historical context gifted artists could afford to be opponents as well as the accomplices of princes and popes (Hauser 1962, 59–61). Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) combined the notions of inspired artist and autocratic genius with the dictum; 'Rules are not the source of poetry, but poetry is the source of rules' (Ibid., 117). In the modern epoch, Huxley rightly treats with caution this long-standing artistic 'will to order', since it turns the artist's need for communication with a critical public into the public's presumed need for enlightenment by critical artists (cf. Huxley 1958, 22–23). Reinforced by the Enlightenment's rejection of superstition and criticisms of feudal inefficiencies, Western aesthetics spawned the possibility of creative decisions on the part of artists and writers assisting or even creating social harmony, just at the moment when universal male suffrage and a popular mandate in France threatened the entire hierarchy of decision making as it had been understood until then.

In 1797, the radical egalitarians Gracchus Babeuf (1760–1797) and his associates were put on trial for subversion, and once condemned they became the victims of

their own revolution. Babeuf defended their proto-communist beliefs on the basis of the massive popular vote supporting the revolutionary Montagnard Constitution of 1793 suspended in the same year. They were all too clear about what they considered to be the source of subsequent anti-democratic restraints in their declaration: 'Let all the arts perish, if need be, as long as real equality remains!' (Buonarroti 1796). A little more than a century later this controversial statement became the polar opposite of everything fascism stood for, particularly the Italian Futurist's war-mongering manifesto to put art first and let the world perish (*fiat ars – pereat mundus*) (Marinetti 1909; cf. Benjamin1936). In an effort to bring art, advertising, and politics closer together, the Futurists pioneered a cult of decisionism which made sense in all three areas where the fascination with individual creativity and decisive leadership already existed. Although their political influence within Italian Fascism declined, the Futurists co-authored classical fascism, and artists from all creative practices helped to create a hybrid culture which outlived Fascism's defeat in 1945. In 1925 Mussolini had defined the totalitarian system as 'everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State' (Morgan 2004, 97). Artists understood that if this corporatist State was to be culturally palatable it would have to draw in the energies of a range of fiercely competing interests: political energies had to be given opportunities to promote themselves, albeit only at a tightly controlled symbolic level. This classical fascist strategy is still articulated by CasaPound movement in Italy (see Froio et al. 2020). More significantly though, it remains a key to mainstream marketing discourse. Although marketers do not openly claim to incorporate everything and leave nothing outside the market, they do promise to make the egalitarian critique of markets marketable, or at least to adopt them as part of the promotion of institutions, organisations, and enterprises with their own niche market interests. This supposedly virtuous circle appears to lead to distrust and cynicism, since it may well be perceived as a vicious circle created by a self-serving liberalism operating at a symbolic level and stripped of social content. What is clear is that the political far-right regards public fatigue with a mixture of market-failure and State-failure as political fertiliser. In such conditions, beliefs in a plebiscitary democracy, led by decisive leaders exhibiting intolerance for minority rights, might be revived.

If the aesthetic history we have briefly summarised seems too abstract, we should remind ourselves of the vast sums of money spent on the smallest design decisions. For example, hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money are spent on civic logos, such as the now abandoned 'Belfast B.' The existence of such extraordinarily expensive and unpopular design projects is indicative of the depth of a cult of decisionism, adhered to jointly by elected representatives and professionals in the arts. A fraction of the public funds spent in these highly questionable ways could support the social design of countless public-interest arts projects based on the democratic principles we have discussed. In this sense one of the impediments to deliberation

might be one of the means to overcome it. Now, more than twenty years since its publication, Naomi Klein's best-selling manifesto against consumer capitalism, *No Logo*, is viewed, at once, as an authentic radical statement of its time, translated into more than thirty languages, and an obvious political failure which possibly encouraged 'more tasteful shopping decisions' rather than more democracy.10 However, the egalitarian failure is not that PepsiCo reportedly expects to project its product logos into the night sky from outer space. Rather the lesson that might be drawn here is that apparently egalitarian and democratic manifestos flounder when their impact is measured by symbolic victories in publishing markets. An actual praxis of equality and pluralism is needed.

10 See Dan Hancox interview with Naomi Klein in The Observer, 11/O8/19, 'No Logo at 20: have we lost the battle against the total branding of our lives?' at https://www.theguardian.-com/books/2019/aug/11/no-logo-naomi-klein-20-years-on-interview (Last accessed October 2022).

Bibliography

Alford, M. (2010) Reel Power: *Hollywood Cinema and American Supremacy*, London: Pluto Press.

Alford, M. & Seker T. (2017) National Security Cinema: The Shocking New Evidence of Government Control in Hollywood, Create Space Independent Publishing.

Apollonia, (eds.) (2005) *On Criticism, Between Art and the Public in Europe*, Strasbourg: Apollonia European Art Exchanges.

Babeuf, G. (1972) *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf Before the High Court of Vendome* (translated and edited by Scott, J.A.), New York: Schocken Books.

Barber-Rowell, M. (2021) 'Curating Spaces of Hope: Exploring the Potential for Intra-Communities' Dialogue (ICD) and Faith-Based Organisations, in a Post-COVID Society,' *Journal of Dialogue Studies,* 9, London: Dialogue Society.

Barnett, C. (2003) *Culture & Democracy; Media, Space and Representation*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Belfiore, E. (2009) 'On bullshit in cultural policy practice and research: notes from the British case', in *International Journal of Cultural Policy,*15 (3), Taylor & Francis Online.

Benjamin, W. [1936] (2003) 'The Work of Art on the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (eds.) *Art in Theory 1900–2000, An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition), Oxford: Blackwell.

Berger, P. (ed.) (1998) *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict & Mediation in Pluralist Societies*, Oxford: Westview Press.

Blanning, T.C.W. (1990) 'Frederick the Great and Enlightened Absolutism', in Scott. H.M. (ed.) *Enlightened Absolutism — Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth Century Europe*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bond E.A. (ed.) (1861) *Speeches of the Managers and Counsel in the Trial of Warren Hastings*, Volume 4, London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (2008) 'A conservative revolution in publishing' in *Translation Studies* 1 (2), London: Taylor & Francis.

Bourdieu, P. and Darbel, A. (1991) (with Schnapper; D.) *The Love of Art – European Art Museums and their Public*, Cambridge: Polity.

Brand, U., Fried, B., Koch, R., Shurian, H. & Wissen, M. (2022) 'Climate adaptation: more sea walls will not be enough', *People and Nature* (August). Available at: https://peopleandnature.wordpress.com/2022/08/26/climate-adaptation-more-sea-walls-will-not-be-enough/#more-4787. Accessed on October 2022.

Bingham, T. (2010) *The Rule of Law*, London: Penguin.

Buonarroti, P. [1796] (1957) *La conspiration pour l'égalité,* Paris: Editions Sociales.

Burke, E. [1790] 'Reflections on the Revolution in France' in Muller J.Z. (ed.) (1997) *Conservatism, An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Burke, E. (2000) The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, 7, India: The Hastings Trial *1789–1794*, (P. J. Marshall ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Carey, J. (1992) The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880–1939, London: Faber and Faber.

Chaouat, B. (2019) 'The Gay French Poet Behind the Alt-Right's Favorite Catch Phrase', *The Tablet*, August 27. Available at: https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/renaud-camus-great-replacement (Last accessed October 2022).

Chwalisz, C. (2015) The Populist Signal: Why Politics and Democracy Need to Change, London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Colander, D., Prasch, R.E. & Sheth, F.A. (eds.) (2006) *Race, Liberalism, and Economics*, University of Michigan Press.

Connolly, C. (1943) 'Comment', *Horizon*, January, VII (37), London: Horizon.

Connolly, W. E. (2017) Aspirational Fascism, The Struggle for Multifaceted Democracy under Trumpism, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Forerunner.

Dehejia, V. (1992) 'The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC–AD 230' in *The Powers of Art, Patronage in Indian Culture,* (Miller, B.S. ed.), Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dickens, C. [1842] (1972) *American Notes For General Circulation* (Whitley, J.S. & Goldman, A. eds.), London: Penguin Classics.

Elias, N. (2000) The Civilizing Process, Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations, Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias, N. & Scotson J.L. (1965) *The Established and the Outsiders*, London: Frank Cass.

Folorunso, F., Hall, P. & Logan, O. (2012) 'A Country Without a State? Governmentality, Knowledge and Labour in Nigeria', in *Flammable Societies: Studies on the Socio-economics of Oil and Gas,* (McNeish, J. & Logan, O. eds.), London: Pluto Press.

Falk, R., Kim, S. & Mendlovitz, S. (eds.) (1991) *Studies on a Just World Order*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Fletcher M.D. (ed.) (1994) *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, Amsterdam: Brill Rodopi.

Froio, C., Gattinara, P.C., Bulli, G.& Albanesi, M. (2020) *CasaPound Italia; Contemporary Extreme-Right Politics*, London: Routledge.

Giridharadas, A. (2018) Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World, New York: Alfred Knopf.

Golomstock, I. (1990) *Totalitarian Art*, London: Collins Harvill.

Harrison, S. (1974) Poor Men's Guardians, A Survey of the Struggles for a Democratic Newspaper Press, 1763–1973. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hastings, W. (1786) The Defence of Warren Hastings, Esq. (late Governor General of Bengal,) at the Bar of the House of Commons: Upon the Matter of the Several Charges of High Crimes and Misdemeanors, Presented Against Him in the Year 1786, London: Stockdale.

Hauser, A. (1962) 2nd edition, The Social History of Art, Vol. 2, Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, London: Routledge.

Hauser, A. (1982) *The Sociology of Art*, translated by Northcott, K. London: Routledge.

Hirst, P. (2001) *War and Power in the 21st Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hess, John, L. (2003) *My Times: A Memoir of Dissent*, New York: Seven Stories Press.

Huxley, A. (1958), *Brave New World Revisited*, New York : Perennial Library.

Israel J.I. (2013) *Democratic Enlightenment: Democracy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, H. (1979) The Culture Gap — An Experience of Government and the Arts, London: Marion Boyars.

Kant, I. (1784) What is Enlightenment? (*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*) (Smith, M.C. trans.) Available at: http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html. Accessed on October 2022.

Kennedy, P. (2007) The Parliament of Man: The United Nations and the Quest for World Government, London: Allen Lane.

Law, A. (2018) Thomas Reid's 'civilised controversy': sociology of Utopia in the Scottish Enlightenment, (paper given at the Elias conference, Université Saint-Louis, Brussels, Belgium).

Lewis, J. (2002) Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle Over Censorship Created the Modern Film Industry, New York: New York University Press.

Logan, O. (2017) Fractured Culture/The sociological Poetics of the arts, participation and well-being. Newcastle: Northumbria University PhD Thesis.

Lopez-Rabatel, L. & Sintomer, Y. (eds.) (2020) *Sortition & Democracy. History, Tools, Theories*, Exeter: Imprint Academic.

Marinetti, F.T. [1909] (2003) 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism', in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (eds.) *Art in Theory 1900–2000, An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (New Edition), Oxford: Blackwell.

McCallum, J.K. (2013) Global Unions, Local Power: The New Spirit of Transnational Labor Organizing, Ithaca: ILR Press.

McCauley, T.B. (1841) 'Warren Hastings, Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings, first Governor-General of Bengal'. Compiled from Original Papers, by the Rev. G.R. GLEIG M.A. 3 (8). London: 1841. *Edinburgh Review* LXXIV, (October).

Mennell, S. (1989) Norbert Elias Civilization and the Human Self-Image, Oxford Blackwell)

Milosz, C. (1980) *The Captive Mind*, London: Penguin.

Morgan, P. (2004) *Italian Fascism 1915–1945*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mukherjee, M. (2005) 'Justice, War, and the Imperium: India and Britain in Edmund Burke's Prosecutorial Speeches in the Impeachment Trial of Warren Hastings' in *Law and History Review*, 23 (3), Fall Issue, American Society for Legal History.

Nussbaum, M. (2013) *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters to Justice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, M. (2014) Political Emotions Lecture in Vooruit (18th December) Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87hwtoLfd6I (Last accessed February 2023).

Piketty, T. (2013) *Capital in the 21st Century*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Belknap/Harvard.

Riding A. (2010) And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris, New York: Vintage Books.

Ross, A. (ed. for Gulf Labor) (2015) *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor*, New York: OR Books.

Rutter, J. and Carter, R. (2018) *National Conversation on Immigration,* London: British Future & Hope not Hate.

Saunders, F.S. (1999) The Cultural Cold War — The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters, New York: New Press.

Schecter, D. (2000) Sovereign states or political communities? Civil Society and contemporary politics, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Schiller, F. (1994) [1794] *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* translation and introduction by Snell, R. Bristol: Thoemmes Press.

Scott. H.M. (1990) (ed.) Enlightened Absolutism — Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth Century Europe, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Sontag, S. (1980) 'Fascinating Fascism', in *Under the Sign of Saturn*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Symons, J. (1945) 'Of Crisis and Dismay', *Focus One,* Rajan, B. & Pearse, A. (eds.) London: Denis Dobson.

Symons, J. (1990) *The thirties and the nineties*, Manchester: Carcanet.

Teitelbaum, B.R. (2019) 'Tremors from afar: negotiating the rise of Donald Trump on Sweden's populist right', in *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53 (5), 5, London: Taylor and Francis.

Wallerstein, I. (2011) 'Thinking About the "Humanities"' in *Immanuel Wallerstein and the Problem of the World: System, Scale, Culture* (Palumbo-Liu, D., Robbins, B. &Tanoukhi, N. eds.), Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Williams, R. (1980) Representative Democracy, recorded lecture accessed at: https://raymondwilliams.co.uk/2021/05/10/new-raymond-williams-resources/. (Last accessed October 2022).

Williams, R. (1958) *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, London: Penguin.

Williams, R. (1989) *The Politics of Modernism*, London: Verso.

Wilson, B. (2009) *What Price Liberty*, London: Faber and Faber.

Witts, R. (1998) Artist Unknown, An Alternative History of the Arts Council, New York: Warner Books.

Young, M. (1994) [1958] *The Rise of The Meritocracy*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Ready for a Perfect Storm: Leadership, Dialogue and Trust in a Time of Disconnection

Mike Hardy and Uroosa Mushtaq[1]

Abstract: Since the 1980s, intercultural dialogue has become increasingly valued for its contribution to reducing prejudice, improving relationships, increasing intercultural understanding, managing difference and diversity, and contributing to democratic processes. Research has helped us understand, from lived experience and perspectives how intercultural dialogue contributes to meaningful and culturally appropriate societal engagement within diverse communities. But theories of dialogue have been largely on the back foot when applied to models of governance and work on leadership. Anxiety about the adequacy of leadership in our confusing, fragmenting, and fast-changing times appears on the increase. A *better* leadership requires new thinking about governance, new approaches perhaps that are refocused on the potentials and realities in our complex world, and on delivering positive changes to that world. This does suggest that we search for new understandings, and new arrangements for governance, and ones that might not resemble models with which we are currently familiar.

The new ideas in this paper reflect governance that adapts to change, focus on behaviours, models, and cultures of leadership, and amplify the importance of dialogue approaches to key governance relationships. The paper looks critically at how dialogue can both succeed and fail in reinforcing both social capital, generally, and key relations between the governing and the governed. We explore whether the most significant resistance to progress is entirely social (referencing solidarity, shared values, and a sense of belonging) or whether the resistance is from structural conditions (deprivation, inequality, discrimination). In addition to drawing new conclusions from the literature as well as fresh experience from diverse global contexts and new forms of conflict, about the conditions in which dialogue prospers or fails, we highlight where new empirical studies might add to our overall understanding. We look at where both social movements and incidental conver-

1 Professor Hardy is Chair of Intercultural Relations and was founding Director of the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations at Coventry University. Mike now researches leadership for more peaceful and secure communities. From 1995 until 2011, as a senior civil servant, Mike was a senior director with the British Council with responsibilities, among others, for the Council's global cultural relations programme for Intercultural Dialogue, youth engagement and so-called 'soft-power' global strategic partnerships; his work with British Council included overseas diplomatic postings in Egypt, East Jerusalem and Indonesia. He is Board Chair of the International Leadership Association.

Uroosa Mushtaq is a Doctoral Fellow (Cotutelle) at the Centre for Trust Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, and Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University. She is currently working onher thesis titled 'Testing Intercultural Dialogue in Fragile Non-western Contexts: A Case Study of Jammu & Kashmir'.

sations might create new contexts for dialogue and for supporting the trusted relationships so important for inclusive leadership and positive governance and what this means for actions and policies.

Keywords: Leadership, Governance, Multi-dimensional Trust, Post-conflict Contexts, Social Capital , Social Movements

Connections Matter

There are few concepts in recent times that have sponsored more heated discussion and debate, within the academy as well as within contestations in public policy, than intercultural dialogue, the process of exchanging ideas, values, and perspectives between people from different cultural backgrounds, with the aim of promoting mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. (Mansouri 2015; Hage 2012, Zapata-Barrero 2015; UNESCO 2013). This is a live and evolving terrain; the discussions have not remained static. There has been a significant transition, globally, in both current academic work and in policy frameworks from a discourse focusing on equality and multi- or interculturalism, towards worries about fragmentation and cultural compatibilities, or living with difference (Marshall 2018). Over the past thirty or so years, this shift has been strongly associated with the increased movement of people, notably migrants, reflecting the seemingly inexorable increase in local conflicts, challenges of climate change and personal decisions and actions seeking to create and pursue economic and other opportunities. In Europe, a politically charged and increasingly toxic public discourse about immigration has moved from an agenda about skills and status to one of legality and cultural compatibilities (Crawley et al. 2018). The response to these questions has remained grounded in primarily Western discourses of assimilation, with dialogic practices and diversity management approaches being critiqued for promoting marginalisation and difference, failing to recognise the potential of this super diversity (Zapata-Barerro 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2019; Vertovec, 2007). Diverse and complex communities will not go away, and these will continue to present challenges for relationships and for living together peacefully and positively. The migrations of so many people have heightened concern within academic and policy studies about minority populations and about both the nurturing and the sustainability of cohesive and coherent communities. Intercultural dialogue has continued to be valued for its contribution to reducing prejudice, improving relationships, increasing intercultural understanding, managing difference and diversity, and contributing to democratic processes. Research has helped us understand, from lived experience and perspectives, how intercultural dialogue contributes to meaningful and culturally appropriate societal engagement within diverse communities (Hardy and Hussain 2017). But, we argue, research and experience of such dialogue, including discussion of the essential 3Ps of dialogue – process, positionality, and product – has not taken the opportunity to

draw in and work on governance and leadership. Whereas dialogue has often been presented as a tool, governance and leadership emphasise interventions, the way we organise relationships and encourage, inspire, and frame positive outcomes from those relationships (Hardy 2022). So, the system of rules, institutions, and processes that governs the actions of individuals and organisations within a society and a leadership that can inspire and guide others towards common goals are indispensable elements for securing positive outcomes from dialogue.

This also adds the question that if research into dialogue has not taken the interventions and institutional context of governance and leadership as critical influencers, does it fall short when seeking to deliver positive outcomes? This is a time, after all, when the interconnections and interdependencies appear to demand that we organise our encounters and exchanges in very different ways. It may be that dialogue between individuals, organisations, nation states and even globally, is in an interregnum between an old regime (that is struggling) and a new one that is yet to be born, but it feels more that the power of Friedrich Nietzsche's doctrine of the *eternal return of the same* is being reasserted (Ross 2019).

This paper, then, is an important, though preliminary, look at why work and understanding of dialogue and that of leadership might valuably be brought closer together. In essence, we propose, this is most likely to succeed through the lens of governance – the processes that societies and communities adopt to manage both the relationships and the consequences of the relationships that dialogue enables and reinforces. En route, we look at trust, the belief or confidence that individuals or groups have in each other or in institutions, which is crucial for building relationships, cooperation, and social cohesion. Trust, in our view, provides the foundation for legitimacy, accountability, and social cohesion (Charron & Rothstein 2018). In turn, good governance practices can help build and maintain trust by promoting transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. According to the United Nations Development Programme, 'trust is a critical ingredient for effective governance, as it enables citizens to hold decision-makers accountable and creates an enabling environment for sustainable development' (UNDP 2018).

Moreover, trust can be built and sustained through meaningful dialogue and engagement, as it helps to build relationships and foster mutual understanding among stakeholders. For instance, a study by the International Institute for Sustainable Development found that 'dialogue and engagement can help build trust between stakeholders, leading to more effective decision-making and improved outcomes' (IISD 2020).

This is not new thinking; both the academy and practice point to the interdependency of intercultural dialogue, governance, and trust, suggesting that trust within

and between co-existing communities of difference can ensure the delivery of positive outcomes even where disagreement, hostilities, or just basic misunderstanding prevails at different levels of society (Kymlicka 1995). Dialogue, governance, and trust, then, are closely intertwined concepts that play an essential role in shaping the way societies function. This interrelationship is complex and dynamic. Dialogue can promote trust and improve governance by facilitating communication and participation among stakeholders, including citizens, policymakers, civil society organisations, and other actors. According to a study by the World Bank, 'dialogue and participation can help build trust between citizens and government, enabling better decision-making, reducing the potential for conflict, and promoting sustainable development' (World Bank 2017).

Context Matters

Alongside the migration flows of the recent past, has been the consolidation of a new increasingly interconnected and interdependent world offering countless opportunities, most particularly for young people – opportunity for encounter, for exchange, and for engagement, to meet with each other, to travel, exchange ideas, and discover other cultures and backgrounds. But this reality has not meant there is more understanding, nor more mobilising of the positives of encounter and exchange. Societies and cities are increasingly diverse, but experience shows how prejudice, misunderstanding, violent extremism, and social fragmentation remains widespread (Hardy and Hussain 2017). This raises new questions, questions about the meaning of 'progress', about the foundations for peace and sustainability, for interculturalism and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Most fundamental are the questions as to how societies can be supported in building a true and lasting rapprochement of cultures (UNESCO 2016).

In this context, sustainability and the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, are not a matter for governments alone, but for all segments of society, including universities, civil society, and the private sector; a whole-of-society frame. Sustainability has deeper roots than financial and economic assets. It is about promoting trust in relationships, however strained they may be, respecting cultural diversity, fostering equal opportunities, and allowing the reading of these efforts through diverse lenses, the essence of learning to live together. It is about building on the experience of the past for a better future. It is about adapting to local needs and contexts. This requires attention to governance and to some of the characteristics of twenty-first century governance at that, including recognition that the real contest in our societies is between those who do not believe that we can live together in peaceful relations and those who believe that we can. Trust-based relationships require stronger media literacy and freedom of expression as well as the mobilisation

of softer power based on the resources of culture, education, the sciences, communication, and information, and they require level playing fields and equity in knowledge production. Sustaining trust-based relationships will need social spaces to be secured that allow people to be real participants and in which they are and feel like equal stakeholders. These ideas were promoted within the UN system for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022). UNESCO has engaged in relentless advocacy for respect of cultural diversity and clarification of thinking in this area (UNESCO 2015), including for recognition of the importance of social capital, of investing in capacity and institution building, and of helping governments to address the needs of their citizens and to respect their rights (Cox 2009). Through this critical perspective on the appropriation and interpretation of intercultural dialogue within policies and practices, it is argued that, as the Charter of the United Nations told us more than 70 years ago, human dignity and dialogue are central to peaceful coexistence and development[2]. These may be necessary, but, we argue, they are not sufficient.

With a growing recognition within governance of the importance of dialogue, governments are recognising the need to intervene with diverse communities to build inclusive and cohesive societies, mobilising dialogue as a purposeful tool to foster greater understanding between different cultural groups, promoting social cohesion, and enhancing democratic participation.

The United Nations has been a key player in promoting intercultural dialogue and governance. The UN Alliance of Civilizations[3], for example, was established in 2005 to promote dialogue and cooperation between different cultures and religions, with the aim of promoting peace and sustainable development. The UN also promotes intercultural dialogue through various initiatives, such as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, which is celebrated annually on May 21st.

In addition to the UN, many other organisations and governments around the world are recognising the importance of intercultural dialogue as a tool within overall governance. The European Union, for example, has developed several policies and initiatives aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue and combating discrimination and intolerance. (Nahles 2021). The Council of Europe has also established a framework for intercultural dialogue which promotes the exchange of ideas and best practices between different cultural groups (COE 2018).

2 This vision is at the core of all efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 within the frame of a new UN Peace Architecture.

3 https://www.unaoc.org/

So, intercultural dialogue and governance are two closely related concepts that play important roles in shaping our societies. By promoting greater understanding, respect, and cooperation between different cultural groups, intercultural dialogue can contribute to the development of more inclusive and cohesive societies. At the same time, effective governance is essential for ensuring that intercultural dialogue is conducted in a manner that is respectful of individual rights and freedoms and that promotes the common good. Dialogue and leadership are closely related concepts that play important roles in promoting understanding and cooperation between different cultures and societies. Effective intercultural dialogue requires strong leadership skills, as it involves navigating complex cultural dynamics, building trust, and promoting mutual understanding. Leaders who are skilled in intercultural dialogue can create a sense of shared purpose among diverse groups, promote respectful communication, and facilitate cooperation across cultural boundaries (Hardy 2022). Research shows that effective intercultural leadership is essential for promoting successful intercultural dialogue, and effective intercultural leadership involves building trust, promoting open communication, and actively seeking out diverse perspectives (Gandolfi 2012), principles reinforced by research conclusions of scholars of *adaptive* leadership (Heifetz et al. 2009).

Ideas Matter

Adaptive intercultural leadership involves building trust, promoting open communication, and actively seeking out diverse perspectives on a continuous, never-ending basis. Leaders who are skilled in intercultural dialogue are able to create a sense of shared purpose among diverse groups and promote respectful communication and cooperation across cultural boundaries. This suggests, then, that leadership (and effective governance) are dependent variables for successful, purposeful dialogue. Before looking at the consequences for the arrangement of governance in and of our diverse communities, we consider how theories of dialogue developed and highlight where new research might be needed.

Interculturalism, as a diversity management approach was being discussed long before the 2000s, but it gained the serious attention of academics and policymakers only around the turn of the millennium. The intercultural approach to diversity management started being discussed across European countries like Spain, Greece, Germany, Netherlands, but much less in Britain and mostly in the field of education (Meer and Modood 2012a). Serious attention was being paid to this discussion because of the difficulties that the governments had been facing whilst following other approaches to diversity management, particularly multiculturalism which seemed not adept at meeting the challenges that globalisation and super-diversity were posing (Vertovec 2007). Multiculturalism with its focus on differences was deemed to

encourage separatism and hostility, stifle debate, refuse common values, instigate a sense of segregation, and give rise to populism (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010; Grillo 2017; Zapata-Barerro 2015, 2017a, 2019).

Around the turn of the millennium when voices critical of multiculturalism started becoming more vocal in Britain, a UK Home Office Report on Community Cohesion (UKG 2002) was published as an enquiry into violence involving British South Asian youth and white youth. The report suggested that these communities led parallel lives with no meaningful interactions and exchanges. Not long after, came the devastating '9/11' attack in the USA and a wave of terrorist attacks across Europe accompanied by the rise of xenophobia and far-right populism. All these events alarmed academics as well as policymakers, and it was international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Council of Europe that sought to respond to the growing need for an alternate approach to diversity management. The UN through UNESCO had formulated a series of conventions and guidelines from 2000, advocating the promotion of dialogue and intercultural interactions. The most poignant response to these diversity-related anxieties came from the EU and the Council of Europe (COE) who launched multiple initiatives and helped develop and discuss an alternate approach to diversity management. The EU declared 2008 as the Year of ICD, and that year COE released its White Paper (WP) on Intercultural Dialogue, 'Living Together as Equals in Dignity' (COE 2008), a policy document that has ever since become the starting point of all discussions concerning interculturalism and ICD and has been critiqued as well by sceptics such as Kymlicka (2016). The WP's findings indicated that many practitioners across Europe no longer found *multiculturalism* an adequate framework. The WP's conclusions, discussed widely in prior editions of this Journal, proposed a refinement with *interculturalism*, which it said would be a move beyond the flaws of multiculturalism and assimilation, by acknowledging diversity as well as the importance of contact. The approach was addressed as a 'forward-looking model' for managing diversity, suggesting that diversity can be managed positively, and intergroup conflict can be reduced by enhancing face-to-face relationships and developing intercultural understanding (COE 2008, 2). This implied a significant and new need, as yet undelivered, for attention to *governance*. These opinions were echoed in the UNESCO World Report 'Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue' (2009a, 2009b) as well.

'Proximity' became important to manage diversity, and the missing aspect of interpersonal interactions in multiculturalism was now addressed by the newly recognised intercultural approach to diversity management (Levrau and Lookbuyck 2018, 9). Wood et al. (2006, 9) argue that the reason interculturalism began to gain prominence was due to its stress on 'communication' as a tool through which 'an intercul-

tural approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and generate reciprocal understanding between people of different backgrounds'. The emphasis now was on face-to-face relationships which explains the reliance of the approach on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which necessitates contact for reducing prejudice. Levrau and Lookbuyck (2018) state that as Europe began to embrace interculturalism, cohesive community could be actively encouraged by profiling a mutual vision that values diversity positively, that gives equal opportunities and develops positive interpersonal relationships. The intercultural approach to diversity thus is an approach that emphasises the significance of contact and dialogue, the need for community cohesion and commonalities, and the importance of micro-level interpersonal interactions (Levrau and Lookbuyck 2018).

Dialogue Matters

Barrett (2013) draws on his research in Canada and Europe and argues that dialogue is central to interculturalism's principal objectives of building a cohesive society based on shared values. The proponents of ICD in their documents and initiatives (e.g., COE 2003, 2008; UNESCO 2005, 2016; European Parliament 2015; Pfändtner 2010) argue that it is only through interculturalism that contemporary problems arising out of globalisation, transnationalism, and super-diversity, which previous approaches such as multiculturalism either ignore or exacerbate, can be addressed if not solved. Interculturalists believe that these problems can be foregrounded by employing dialogue – interactions and negotiations. This will enhance similarities rather than seeking to maintain differences.

Interculturalism works by getting people to interact on an interpersonal level where they can openly talk to each other, recognise the advantage of diversity, and cooperate in areas of mutual interest, so that individuals belonging to groups with divergent group goals may arrive at a position of less prejudice guided by commonalities. Dialogue is central to the agenda of interculturalism and has strategic and operational significance to managing diversity. It guides the move that interculturalism makes from the 'groupist' approach to managing diverse opinions. It aims to utilize the 'individualist' potential of culture, where culture is a manifestation of a distinctive identity and is accessible, accommodating, and vibrant and has the potential to move beyond the narrow yet collective confines of ethnic, religious, regional, and cultural affiliations (Meer and Modood 2012a, 177; Zapata-Barrero,2016, 4).

While the EU was discussing ideas of ICD, the COE itself endorsed ICD as means to ensure mutually enriching management of diversity through the declaration titled *Intercultural Dialogue: The way ahead*, which urged the preparation of a 'White Paper on integrated policies for management of cultural diversity through intercultural

dialogue and conflict prevention' (Council of Europe 2005, 5) to help the COE implement the ICD strategy. A consultation document was first produced in 2007 (Council of Europe 2007; Bunjes 2013) but its definition of ICD was found to be inadequate and loose and after discussions and deliberations the final White Paper on ICD was finally released in 2008, which defined ICD (2008 17) as

> [a] process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, based on mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural, and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity, and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other.

Some criticised the initial application of ICD by the Council of Europe as being too narrow since it was limited to individuals and mostly in the field of arts, and that it understated an approach that could help build understanding and improve relationships within communities as well as at the national level (Ganesh and Holmes 2011). Ganesh and Holmes also register their dissatisfaction by adopting a definition that located ICD beyond the mere tolerance of others and defined ICD as

> [a] process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups, and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes (The British Council 2013)

ICD as defined above is frequently deemed to be the entry point into any conversation about the communication that takes place when individuals or group members of different cultures meet. Neither of the descriptions, with their common promotion of openness, respect, and exchange can completely indicate the complexity of dialogue in different contexts (Haydari and Holmes 2014), particularly in contexts which are yet uncharted and increasingly complex in terms of both stakeholders and the structure of what defines conflicts and contentions and our approach to managing them. Intercultural communication is essentially dialogic. It can help renegoti-

ate and reconstruct the position of those participating in dialogue (Holmes 2014) and can help bring balance to challenging conflict situations. It can also help cultivate conflict in a positive manner. which can help redirect it towards an increased sensitivity towards other participants and can lead to transformative change (Broome 2017). It is quite evident that ICD with its aims and aspirations generates high expectations amongst academics and policymakers alike, but whether these expectations from dialogue in general and ICD specifically can be met in practice depends upon the contextual realities of the case and the methodologies used to conduct dialogue.

New Challenges Matter

Contextual realities matter, and more research is needed to develop a context-sensitive methodology to keep dialogue relevant, and leadership will play a role.

As described above, the fairly-comfortable journey of the development of ideas and understanding of ICD has remained significantly inclined towards contexts where conditions of conflict have been similar and therefore contextual conditions have not shown great variation. In general, any success that the ICD model of dialogue has seen has been in Western contexts, where the question of capacity building and equitable participation are much less demanding than in other contexts where the drivers and actors are very different. Phipps (2014) is very clear in her criticism of ICD of a real lack of accommodation within the theoretical frame of contexts that are not characterised by the conditions found in scenarios where ICD has been most successful. Phipps suggests that the approaches in ICD applications remain ritualistic and very limited in outreach**.** Once concepts migrate into other political and social contexts, they cannot remain grounded in the refined prototypes of the scholarship and practice from which they first emerged. Such current trends in conflict as those in either the super-diverse societies of the 'West' or non-generalisable struggles of the 'non-West' are scenarios where dialogue, though used extensively, remains a much-contested intervention. There is no particular lack in terms of the available number of theories of dialogue and pre-made toolkits, but the missing element that deeply affects any impact the dialogue may have is the lack of consideration about contexts and the contextual fragilities that each case brings and also how this dialogue is operationalised in these subjective conflicts. It is important to understand the fragilities and subjectivities that characterise modern conflicts. As we explain further, below, in complex and very uncertain environments, a newly revised and reformulated language of dialogue is required, and one that rescues dialogue from the principal oversight of traditional discourse that privileges extravagant and generalisable results over small contextual victories (Hardy and Hussain 2017).

Here lies the 'perfect storm' of our title. The 'perfect storm' refers to a contextual reality defined by a contemporaneous complexity and uncertainty where academics and practitioners alike place insufficient emphasis on and recognition of the socio-political settings for knowledge or relationship formations. It is here, in our view, that governance and leadership can have the most significant impact.

To explain this thought, we begin, first, by illustrating the lack of sufficient attention paid to socio-political settings in which knowledge is produced. These settings are important as they determine the power relations between actors; they also determine how certain methodologies are privileged regardless of their level and scope of applicability; and these therefore mirror the capacity of any dialogic intervention to not only be successful but sustainable. What we are faced with as a result is an epistemological setback that requires a better informed and more critically sensitised new age of dialogue. Epistemology is the premise upon which the validity of knowledge is assessed, and, so far, traditional dialogue epistemologies have assumed this position of privilege. It is not in the spirit of critical scholarship to believe that there exists a singular objective way of approaching dialogue, without any space for variables of culture, within ICD. Lack of reflexivity and reliance on generalisable claims of traditional dialogue practices, can lead us to investing in processes that may be successful in the short run but lack the elements that can make it sustainable. This also may mean that by changing only cases and not methodologies, we are effectively adding to the epistemic imperialism by engaging in research that is descriptive in nature and uses traditional methodologies, without challenging the West-centric normative obsession of research designs and processes: the eternal return of the same!

So, when dialogue, and our understanding of dialogue, remains limited by boundaries of traditional dialogue approaches, then the theoretical and methodological position of traditional dialogue practices become more and more impermeable. But no theoretical and methodological position can remain impermeable forever. To make inroads into this, it is necessary that research and scholarship move beyond descriptive critique and invest more in the normative aspect – in the process of knowledge production. This entails a move beyond de-contextualised and non-reflexive approaches and from one that relegates focus to the normative aspect (Young 2000). Ideas must develop that address the how of knowledge production and are also involved with who produces knowledge. This encourages focus on how an equitable space for knowledge production is created (in dialogue) and what impediments those that study communities may face. This reconstruction of dialogue ideas will help make knowledge production both contextually responsive and responsible, and will, we hope, be substantiated by the sustainable success of dialogue, a testimonial to epistemic growth.

One way of questioning the normativity of traditional dialogic practices is to critique their oversimplified bottom-up approach, where the leader is considered either an overbearing 'director' of dialogue or, in an attempt to be critical, an 'unnecessary character', and trust is often considered the by-product of a dialogue process, which may need building pre-dialogue but its post-dialogue sustainability often lies beyond the scope of dialogue processes and remains untouched or to-be-seen in reports and papers. Both, though valid descriptive critiques, demand more engagement. If we are to make epistemic progress, we must take risks with the normative aspects of dialogue, and one such aspect is the re-evaluation of the role of leadership and the potential of trust. To attempt a reinvention of critical methodology, where critique of epistemic practices is not limited to descriptions but is about building effective research designs that challenge traditional way of knowledge production, we will look briefly at the relationship between dialogue, leadership, and trust. This is clearly setting an agenda for fresh empirical work.

The sustainability of effective or successful dialogue, or how to keep at it if it is working, may well be dependent on how well it is managed or facilitated, or how governance and leadership can support it. The success of dialogue as a tool should be determined by how well and for how long it helps reduce tension and creates interpersonal relationships, including trust-based ones, that can continue without an external dialogue practitioner having to intervene. But leadership can make a significant difference. A leader can initiate capacity-building activities that can reduce inequalities between actors in dialogue. A reduction of inequalities is linked to an increase in trust, given that actors acting on a level playing field will interact more freely and, by acting more freely, they will reduce any mistrust that may otherwise prevail. The reduction of mistrust here would not be utilised solely for the purpose of one dialogue initiative but rather might see a leader mobilising, as a structural actor implementing structural changes that can increase the social capital of those following, for example, through the provision of support that improves socio-economic parity; this makes groups more confident of their positions in any intergroup dynamic. Building capacities and creating equity ensures a long-term positive impact on relationships, and dialogic interventions can have better long-term impacts. Including the leader as a positive normative force can improve the equity and thus the trust in dialogue.

In turn, dialogue itself can be a serious trust enhancer. Positive leadership that leads to equity in dialogue can mean a more effective and sustainable dialogue. When groups who have an engaging leader focused on capacity building take part in dialogue, would they not be more likely to come from the perspectives of equity and the process of knowledge production (dialogic process) and more likely to increase the level of trust in the newly found interpersonal relationship? Close contact and

proximity, as premised in ICD, then become an added advantage. Empowered actors who engage in dialogue do not find proximity threatening but may realise it to be an asset in terms of exchange and learning.

The inclusion of the leader, therefore, in new normative projects of conducting dialogue, can mean creating conditions that make dialogue equitable and therefore the process of dialogue trustful and sustainable.

A Perfect Storm

Creating the conditions for equitable and sustaining dialogue that endows communities with more comfort and confidence in the contemporary, complex, and uncertain context has become more critical as the stage set for dialogue has itself become so difficult. The ongoing debate about the characteristics and application of dialogue, and its many variations, continue to test whether the most significant resistance to progress is entirely social (referencing solidarity, shared values, and a sense of belonging), or whether the resistance is from structural conditions (deprivation, inequality, discrimination). Here, in our view, lies the importance of the relationship between dialogue, the *tool*, and governance, the *terrain* for application.

The stakes are high. Communities everywhere are living in a period of great uncertainty and risk, and a period of failed systems, failed governance of important parts of life, whether health, finance, the systems that protect our planet, or our systems of government.

At the same time, the geopolitical balance of power is in flux as we transition from a unipolar world order into something new. Historically, as the Russian war on Ukraine is showing, such transitions are characterised by heightened tensions, competition, and mistrust, and thus a high risk of conflict. These developments, separately, and even more so when compounded, increase the risk of global conflict, depending on how we – as individuals, societies, states and international organisations – decide to act, use dialogue, and apply leadership. The shared experience of the 2020–23 COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that we will need to invest in strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacities of our social networks and governance systems at all levels – local to global. And what governance concepts and methods can guide us in this evolving context, now and in the future?

Unfortunately, we have lots of examples of the shortcomings of dialogue in governance underlying the application of dialogue assumptions and models to the governance and implementation of international and local peacebuilding efforts to learn lessons and identify best practices that then inform the international standards on which future peace operations are premised. Governance regimes that are more ad-

aptive to context will rely, increasingly, on completely new approaches to dialogue and much more research is called for to understand dialogue within complex and adaptive systems. How will we need to reconfigure the context of dialogue and dialogue itself to both accommodate complexity and improve positive impact?

Studies of complexity inform us that uncertainty and irreproducibility in this context are not the result of insufficient knowledge or inadequate planning or implementation but rather a tell-tale characteristic of complex adaptive systems (Varney 2021). As Varney points out, non-linearity plays a critical role in the emergence and self-regulation of complex systems, including social systems; the nonlinearity inherent in complex social systems implies that it is impossible to pre-determine what kind of societal arrangement will generate self-sustainable peaceful relations in a specific context, nor is it possible to pre-plan a series of steps that can lead to such a societal arrangement, and this creates real difficulties for preparing the conditions in which dialogue can take place and have positive outcomes.

A more adaptive governance approach in times of post-conflict when peaceful relations are actively sought and encouraged, often through dialogue mechanisms, would be specifically designed to cope with the uncertainty, unpredictability, and irreproducibility inherent in complex social change process. It is an approach where those who govern, together with the governed affected by conflict, actively engage in an iterative process of inductive learning and adaptation, in other words, doing whilst learning and learning whilst doing. Complexity science provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the resilience and adaptive capacity of social systems can be influenced to help them prevent, contain, and recover from conflict. Insights derived from how self-organisation maintains and transforms complex systems suggests that for peaceful relations, generated or helped by dialogue, to become self-sustainable, resilient social institutions that promote and sustain peace need to emerge from within the culture, history, and socio-ecological context of the relevant society.

The interface between dialogue and leadership within governance is not a simple one. Communities are peaceful when their institutions and processes of governance are able to ensure that political and economic competition is managed without people resorting to violence to pursue their interests. For peace to be self-sustaining, society thus needs to have sufficiently robust social institutions to identify, channel, and manage disputes peacefully (Killelea 2020). *Better governance* and *dialogue* can assist this process, but if there is too much intervention, harm can be caused through the disruption of the feedback critical for self-organisation to emerge and to be sustained. Every time an external intervention solves a problem, it interrupts the feedback needed to stimulate societal self-organisation. Both nation states and social

institutions develop resilience through trial and error over generations. Too much filtering and cushioning slows down and inhibits these processes. Understanding this tension – and the constraints it poses on international agency – helps us realise why leadership or governance interventions in dialogue processes have made the mistake of interfering so much that they ended up undermining the ability of societies to self-organise.

Dialogue models applied by adaptive systems of governance are thus conscious efforts to achieve people-centredness by placing the affected community in the driving seat of an iterative doing-whilst-learning process aimed at navigating the complexity inherent in trying to nudge social-ecological change processes towards sustaining peace, without causing harm.

In the Contemporary World, Social Movements Matter

The contemporary context also highlights the challenges for dialogue and governance through the nature of conflict that both seek to confront. As we have indicated, dialogue in uncertain times is difficult choreography, but the challenge has been compounded by changes in the nature of conflict itself. Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, most of the conflicts shaping contemporary division can trace their origin to an increasingly visible means of showing dissent. The significant growth of social movements, as in the Arab Spring, the widespread Black Lives Matter, or 'Me-too', has tested the traditional models of dialogue and leadership and their respective roles in trust building and conflict management. When mutual concerns among societal groups call for unified action, what emerges collectively is known either as 'critical mass' (Oliver et al. 1985) or more famously 'social movements'. Most recently, scholars have observed that the world is currently witnessing the largest wave of mass social movements in world history (Buchanan, Bui, & Patel 2020; Chenoweth et al. 2019). Despite a lack of attention by social movement scholars, leadership plays a key role in social movements (Staggenborg 2004). Social movements are categorised by the horizontal organisation that dismisses the idea of hierarchical forms of governance by focusing on horizontal and decentralised networks, where 'collective action can effectively be coordinated without the need for representation and hierarchy' (Kokkinidis 2012, 238). Such organisational structures are therefore self-governed whose efficacy depends on how efficient the leadership is (Ganz 2004). Leaders provide paths to pursue common goals and lead by proposing an alternative to the uncertainty that the context may present.

According to Ganz (2004), leadership within social movements is not only about having a charismatic leader, it involves identification, recruitment and development of leadership at all levels. Social movements lack any previous collective base of

grassroots efforts and the new leaders responsible for creating this 'new collective' do so through forming interpersonal relationships by engaging individuals, networks, and groups (Ganz 2004; Feldman 2020; de la Sablonnière 2017; Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Interpersonal interactions are the guiding principles of dialogue. From our discussion of ICD earlier we can suggest that the grassroots efforts are in practice dialogic instances and dialogue in action. Leaders of social movements engage horizontal leadership, which in the context of contemporary social movements means being 'leaderful', as argued by Nardini et al. (2020), is a form of leadership which is neither top-down nor flat but where multiple leaders embrace collective decision making as they work together towards a shared goal. Ganz (2004) further suggests that since no formal structures are involved, voluntary commitments people make to one another create the fabric from which formal structures may be woven but it is important to note that these shared understandings of power and collective decision making are only possible when relationships are based on a mutual commitment to a shared future. Sustained interpersonal relationships and contact can enable more cooperation. When people share common ground, as do the horizontally engaged grassroots members of a social movement, they reinforce their shared views, thereby deepening their social bonds and people may develop an interest in the relationship itself, creating what Robert Putnam and others describe as 'social capital': a 'relational' capacity that can facilitate collaborative action of all kinds (Ganz 2004; Berger 2014; Nardini et al, 2020).

Crutchfield (2018) and Nardini et al. (2020) suggest that successful contemporary social movements are made possible when they are characterised by strong interpersonal relationships between members of grassroots communities who are engaged in horizontal dialogue and are guided by a common goal. Balkin (2005) in his discussion of the failure and success of social movements suggests that a successful social movement is one that is capable of eliciting concrete structural and institutional change over time, otherwise social movements may protest long and loud, but governments are not seen to heed them. This assertion brings to attention the dependence of social movements, as very special forms of governance, on horizontal organisation and dialogue, bound by the necessity of shared goals. It is important to pay attention to the horizontal relationships responsible for creating tangible action among the participants, but as Balkin (2005) states and as is evident by the otherwise deemed successful social movements there is no or very limited impact (Rochon and Mazmanian 1993) because the visible fallacy of the horizontal is that it stresses working only with the members of the horizontal networks and rarely investing a similar level of energy and interest in simultaneously engaging vertical networks, which is where the potential for actual change in the form of institutions is.

A contemporary successful social movement therefore needs success defined in the terms of Balkin (2005) as being capable of eliciting change over time by changing the background expectations, reshaping common sense, and most importantly moving the boundaries of what is plausible and implausible, a combination of some basic shared interests, horizontal dialogue for solidarity and vertical dialogue for long-term impact and institutional changes.

Governance Matters

Intercultural dialogue is an object of concern in response to conflicts and the extent to which this can be used to resolve conflicts or at least minimise their likely occurrence. This paper has located discussions of dialogue within the tensions, conflicts, and desired transformations characteristic of a contemporary complexity – a world of connection and disconnection, a world in which encounter, exchange and engagement risk indifference, at best, or intense conflict. Conflict is not an inevitable by-product of cultural difference but as globalisation and political alignments have made national borders more porous, cultural borders and boundaries have sharpened and become increasingly visible and, in some cases, more separate. This dynamic context for dialogue has become unmanageable without a significant increase in our recognition and understanding of the role that governance and leadership will play. There remains a pressing need to update our dialogue on dialogue so that our understanding remains relevant and accurate given the complexities. We must understand our tools but understand also how leadership and governance arrangements can help us select the most appropriate one for the job in hand.

Bibliography

Alcock, J. (2018) *Belief*: what it means to believe and why our convictions are so compelling. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books.

Bauman, Z. (2003) *Comunidade*: a busca por segurança no mundo atual. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.

Basilio, A. L. (2021) 'Paulo Freire não queria ser imitado, mas reinventado'. *Carta Capital*. Disponível em: https://www.cartacapital.com.br/educacao/paulo-freire-nao-queria-ser-imitado-mas-reinventado/ Acesso em: 4 out. 2021.

Bohm, D. (1980) A totalidade e a ordem implicada. São Paulo: Cultrix.

Bohm, D. (2005) *Diálogo*: comunicação e redes de convivência. São Paulo: Palas Athena.

Bohm, D. (2007) O pensamento como um sistema. São Paulo: Madras.

Buber, M. (1979) *Eu e Tu*. 2ª ed. São Paulo: Cortez & Moraes.

Buber, M. (2014) *Do diálogo e do dialógico*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Freire, P. (1983) *Extensão ou comunicação?* 8ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Freire, P. (1981) *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. 10ª ed. Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra.

Greene, J. (2018) *Tribos morais*: A tragédia da moralidade do senso comum. Rio de Janeiro: Record.

Gunnlaugson, O. (2014) Bohmian Dialogue: a Critical Retrospective of Bohm's Approach to Dialogue as a Practice of Collective Communication. *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 2 (1), 25-34.

Harmonicop. (2005) *Learning together to manage together* – improving participation in water management. University of Osnabruck: Osnabruck, Germany.

Isaacs, W. (1999) *Dialogue and the art of thinking together*: a pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life. New York: Doubleday.

Jacobi, P. R. (2013) Aprendizagem social e a formação de professores em educação para a sustentabilidade socioambiental. *Geologia USP*, Publicação especial, São Paulo, 6, 5-10.

Jacobi, P. R., Monteiro, R. A. A., Souza, D. T. P. (2020) Caminhos para um novaética em tempos pós COVID-19: o desafio de ampliar diálogos e fortalecer aprendizagem social, in Sobrinho, L. L. P., Calgaro, C., Rocha, L. S. (Org.) *COVID-19*: direitos humanos e educação. Itajaí: UNIVALI.

Kahneman, D. (2012) *Rápido e Devagar*: duas formas de pensar. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva.

Lopes, T. C., Sant'Ana, B. C. C., Cardoso, L. G., Rodrigues, M. S., Almeida, M. M., Cardoso, R. S., Ribeiro, V. V., Saracho, Y. D., Monteiro, R. A. A. (2020) COVID-19 e questões estruturais: a transformação por meio do diálogo e da colaboração. *Revista Brasileira de Educação Ambiental*, 15 (4), 440-455.

Mariotti, H. (n.d.) *O automatismo concordo-discordo e as armadilhas do reducionismo*. Available at: http://escoladedialogo.com.br/escoladedialogo/index.php/biblioteca/artigos/concdisc/ (Accessed 15 December 2020).

McCoy, J., Rahman, T., Somer, M. (2018) Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62 (1), 16-42.

McCoy, J., Somer, M. (2019) Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies: Comparative Evidence and Possible Remedies, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 681 (1), 234-271.

Monteiro, R. A. A. (2018) O diálogo em processos de educação ambiental: análise das relações existentes entre uma ONG e pescadores artesanais marítimos do litoral paulista. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciência Ambiental) – Universidade de São Paulo.

Monteiro, R. A. A. (2020) Dialogue Practices for Times of Isolation and Crisis.

Monteiro, R. A. A., Jacobi, P. R. (2020) Diálogo: uma jornada de aprendizagem e polinização para educadoras(es), in Lamim-Guedes, V. (Org.). *A educação na Covid-19*: a voz docente. 1ed. São Paulo: Editora Na Raiz, 14-24.

Monteiro, R. A. A., Toledo, R. F., Jacobi, P. R. (2020) Virtual Dialogues: A Method to Deal with Polarisation in a Time of Social Isolation Caused by COVID-19, *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 8, 113-133.

Monteiro, R. A. A., Ribeiro, V. V. (2020) Diálogo e formação de jovens ambientalistas: uma experiência do Coletivo Jovem Albatroz in Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M., Jacobi, P. R. (Orgs.). *Diálogo e Transição Educadora para Sociedades Sustentáveis*. São Paulo: IEE-USP : Editora Na Raiz.

Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M. (2020) Educação Ambiental Dialógica: uma proposta a partir de Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs e Paulo Freire, in Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M., Jacobi, P. R. (Orgs.). *Diálogo e Transição Educadora para Sociedades Sustentáveis*. São Paulo: IEE-USP: Editora Na Raiz.

Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M. (2019) O Diálogo na Educação Ambiental: uma Síntese A Partir de Martin Buber, David Bohm, William Isaacs e Paulo Freire, *Pesquisa em Educação Ambiental*, São Carlos-SP/Rio Claro-SP/ Ribeirão Preto-SP, 14 (1), 10-31.

Muro, M. (2008) The role of social learning in participatory planning & management on water resoucers. PhD Thesis. Cranfield University.

Oca. (2016) O "Método Oca" de Educação Ambiental: fundamentos e estrutura incremental, *AMBIENTE & EDUCAÇÃO*, 21 (1), 75-93.

Portugal, S., Sorrentino, M. (2020) Método Oca: diálogo como princípio na formação de educadoras e educadores ambientais, in Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M., Jacobi, P. R. (Orgs.). *Diálogo e Transição Educadora para Sociedades Sustentáveis*. São Paulo: IEE-USP : Editora Na Raiz.

Rosenberg, M. (2006) *Comunicação não-violenta*: técnicas para aprimorar relacionamentos pessoais e profissionais. São Paulo: Ágora.

Souza, D. T. P., Jacobi, P. R., Wals, A. E. J. (2020) A aprendizagem social como prática dialógica: o caso da recuperação socioambiental do Arroio Taquara, em Porto Alegre, in Monteiro, R. A. A., Sorrentino, M., Jacobi, P. R. (Orgs.). *Diálogo e Transição Educadora para Sociedades Sustentáveis*. São Paulo: IEE-USP : Editora Na Raiz.

Souza, D. T., Wals, A. E. J., Jacobi, P. R. (2019) Learning-based transformations towards sustainability: a relational approach based on Humberto Maturana and Paulo Freire, *Environmental Education Research*, 25 (11), 1605-1619.

Wals, A. E. J., Hoeven, N.; Blanken, H. (2009) *The acoustics of social learning*: Design learning processes that contribute to a more sustainable world. Wageningen Academic Publishers, The Netherlands.

Wals, A. E. J. (2011) Learning Our Way to Sustainability. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 5(2), 177-186.

Democracy, Dissent, and Dialogue in Contemporary India

Sneha Roy[1]

Abstract: The complexity and commonality of today's local and global challenges, such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, deepening democratic governance, preventing violent conflict, or tackling terrorism, is a poignant reminder of our increasing interdependence and the distant future of equity. Much like other nations, India is experiencing and resisting each of these. Since 2014, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, the contours of these experiences and resistances are marked by somewhat centralised and authoritarian stakes imbued in an 'emotional force'. The emotional force is rooted in values of Hindutva[2] which has a precise type of ideological construction of how India, its people, and the Indian democracy should be. There is a conspicuous dualism and chauvinism in the imagined democracy. This imagination derives and delivers the 'new democracy' which is inextricably grounded in the majoritarian-populist politics. Bearing this in mind, this paper aims to unpack and understand the way democracy and dialogue, or the lack of it, shapes the everyday experience, while using some pertinent examples to typify the discourse. We find that democracy is challenged, but questioning its meaning is wrought with grim complexity and tensions. The author takes stock of an ongoing event to demonstrate that democracy and dialogue are becoming provisional and desultory tools in the larger scheme of things in India.

Keywords: Democracy, BBC Documentary, Dialogue, BJP, India

1 Dr Sneha Roy is a British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh. Prior to that, she was the Programme Officer for Fellows at KAICIID International Dialogue Centre in Vienna. She completed her doctoral studies at University of Wales Trinity Saint David, specialising in Buddhist nun's participation in enabling and combating religious extremism in Myanmar. Broadly, her research looks into the complexity and politics around 'agency' in extremist discourses.

2 The term Hindutva as a political ideology was coined by Chandranath Basu in the 19th century; however, the term is most popularly associated with V. D. Savarkar to manifest a part of the Hindu identity and nationalism that later became the framework for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP.

'Modi's years in power have been ones of disappointment for believers, vindication for the sceptics, and frustration for all who want India to thrive.'

Shashi Tharoor in Modi Man of Destiny (2020)

Contextualising India's (Emotional) Democracy

In 2009, the Booker Prize Winner and global justice activist Arundhati Roy, published an essay titled, '*What have we done to Democracy?' (*Roy 2009*)* In her writings, she explored how people constituting the democracy contribute towards the making and un-making of democracy, how institutional monopoly underwrites democracy, and finally, what happens when democracy becomes devoid of meaning in the context of India. In 2022, she concluded that 'the damage to Indian democracy is not reversible' (CNN, 22 June 2022). Her prime line of argument is founded in the complex majority-minority politics that is manifested by the government where 'engineering hatred of a common enemy' is conspicuously propagated and justified. Democracy and democratic backsliding in India can be evidenced with several global indices that have established that the government has failed to sustain fair and just democratic participations and outcomes. Furthermore, the government has weakened the quality of freedom associated with Human Rights and the Press, key indicators of democracy. A stark example that substantiates the above statement is the 2023 BBC's documentary *India: The Modi Question*, which has received ecumenical attention for being banned in India. The two-episode series tracks the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since the 2002 Gujarat riots, when he was the Chief Minister of the state. The BJP rationalised the ban by citing that it is 'a propaganda piece designed to push a particular discredited narrative' (quoted from the statement on Twitter by Arindam Bagchi, Official Spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs). The ban was followed by Income Tax investigations at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai citing non-compliance with the *Transfer Pricing Rules* resulting in vast diversion of profits; however, many deduce it was a petty retaliation and further suppression of press freedom. While this case is quite recent, it is safe to argue that since 2014, the BJP and Modi have courted serious concerns and controversies on matters closely intertwined with democracy, and in this paper, I take stock of this case to unpack and understand the role of impositions that infringe on the scope for dissent and dialogue in democratic processes especially when it pertains to the vulnerable minorities – the Muslim communities in particular.

The Hindu majority and the Muslim minority are a part of the modern Indian cultural fabric and identity. The partition of the subcontinent was based on this idea and independent India, was touted as the safe home for Hindus, even though declared secular. The independent India was never imagined to be a Hindu state.

Drawing on the secular fabric, of the three people who were chosen to deliver a speech addressing the free nation alongside Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman. The thought behind this was to assure the Muslims who remained in India were equal citizens and that their fundamental rights would be protected. Khaliquzzaman is a debateable figure and I mention his name here not to decorate him as a contributing political leader but to emphasise that the religious majority-minority dynamics and representation of 'the other' was reflected in the very first political speech addressed to independent India. Ontologically, the likes of Emmanuel Levinas have written that the 'the other' are a discourse in their own right and that negotiated social identities are complete only in relation to 'the other'. In pre-2014 India, 'the Muslim other' existed and the Indian National Congress (INC) played its part in clouding the secular democracy with ballot politics. As noted by Gould (2004), the INC has used aspects of Hindu nationalism and communalism since the late colonial times, and it continues to exhibit shades of 'soft Hindutva' (Anderson & Longkumer 2018). After the Narendra Modi-led and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-backed BJP came to power, the Hindutva identity has been made necessary to being an Indian. Macro-narratives across India have shown that the BJP are openly hostile to the secular framework and several BJP-led states, and the national government have directly or symbolically fanned Hindutva sentiments at the cost of the security of the Muslim minorities. At micro-levels, the perception of 'the other' varies greatly depending on the context. But reports on discriminatory impositions by law-making and governing institutions at local and national levels have raised serious concerns about democracy and are sadly not rare today.

At its simplest, democracy is a system of governance where people choose their leaders through free and fair electoral operations at unambiguous periodic intervals, and the system in turn fortifies policies and regulations that sustain democratic goodwill. The democracy in India is channelled through what Richards (2013) has called 'emotional governance', where the national identity programme is rooted in emotions. The aspirations which compose the identity programme reflect much on the tendencies of the democracy that significantly tap into the emotions and enthusiasm of the masses. However, the challenge is to restrict the liberties of the already strong and the polemics and the already strong emotions around it. These emotions can be a result of orchestration, synchronisation, or both. Of these, an emotion that is often implied is that the majority community own the nation and are the carriers of rights, while all others are dependents and supplicants (Kinnvall 2006). There is little doubt that this emotion is at the heart of the desired Indian identity and that democracy in India is tending towards deference in recent times as it manifests sentiment-driven majoritarianism.

This article contends that there are two particular – neither mutually inclusive nor exclusive – paths that democracy in India is essentially trotting on, both of which are emotion-driven. The first is what Guillermo O'Donnell refers to as 'delegative', in contrast to representational democracy (O'Donnell 1997), and the second is what Sammy Smooha calls 'ethnic democracy' (Smooha 2002). Delegative democracy is premised on the notion that the elections are an emotional affair, and the elected leaders embody sentiments and are seen as protectors of the country and the people. The leader and their party symbolise diversity and exhibit the power to subvert legislatures, courts, and the press. The country enjoys liberties more than that of an authoritarian state, but, inherently, the government is *not* unconditionally dedicated to the fundamental needs and the rights of the people. Most of all, O'Connell reasons that a leader in a delegative democratic country uses the rhetoric of majoritarianism in a frequent pattern and promotes the narrative that the majority groups have suffered due to historical and political injustices that they aim to remedy, thus, intensifying the in-group and out-group divide. The ethnic democracy is not completely a detour from the delegative democracy. The majoritarian discourse is common where the dominant nationalist discourse recognises an ethnic group as forming the core nation in the state (Jaffrelot 2017, 59). Jaffrelot clarifies that the ethnic democracy in India does not exactly fit in the definitions of Smooha's observation of Israel; mostly because in India, constitutionally and legally, the disparities between the majority and minority have still not been consolidated.

India is a highly diverse and unequal country where implementing democracy is as daunting as it is imperative. In times of global competitiveness and surveillance, the task of securing political and social democracy is supressed with a degree of coercion or is influenced unfavourably by political precincts. Eisenstadt (2003) argued that there are only two countries outside the Western Hemisphere that have sustained democracy despite critical and continual challenges. He referred to India and Israel. However, both these countries in current times are undergoing an extensive phase of ethnic nationalism. While constitutionally, India remains secular and mandates the right to freely to profess, practise, and propagate religion (Article 25) and that all communities have the right to manage their own affairs in matters of religion (Article 26), the last three decades have seen the erosion of secularism (Jaffrelot 2017). Having acutely assessed the Indian socio-political affairs for decades, Jaffrelot (2017 and 2021) argues that India has been propelled greatly towards ethnic nationalism with authoritarian populism at its characteristic core. Populism can be a radical democratic programme (Laclau 2005) or can be inclined towards divisive politics (Rydgren 2012); however, the challenge is to insulate government policies from engineering antagonistic camps. In India, nationalism has stemmed from mobilising feelings and people as if they inherently have superior ethnic, national or religious essence (Chatterjee 2019) and recognises that there are people who are at the core of

the nation and others who form the non-core (Smooha 2002; Jaffrelot 2017). The peril is that even the state perceives the non-core groups as less worthy or even a threat, gradually justifying the imposition of control over them, thus impeding the democratic mechanisms. The shrinking space for dissent and dialogue in India exemplifies this dynamic where the state and law-enforcing institutions play a role in consolidating the peripheries between the core and non-core groups.

Democracy in India is commonly referred to as the largest in the world and the people are, as Ramachandra Guha (2017) puts it, 'so many and so various that the people of India continue to be divided'. The world's most successful democracies are comparatively much smaller, wealthier and are fairly homogenous – countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway exemplify this narrative. These countries should not be compared to India, where a single state like Uttar Pradesh has such a dense population that had it been a nation, it would be the fifth largest in the world! Of the world's most populous countries, only the United States of America and India have long-standing democracies. Countries like China and Russia may ideologically claim to be democratic states but have established forms of autocracies. Other countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Mexico can be modestly described as works in progress. To obtain a rounded understanding of democracy, a country like India can offer abundant and diverse insights into the functionality of democracy – the path towards civil liberties for *all*. Understandably, the concept and lived realities around democracy can be quite distinct in a society that is really divided. However, what does it imply when the state and its institutions offer support in premeditated discrimination and violence? Or collude with agents that thwart the process of delivering law and justice? One of the greatest blots in Indian democracy continues to be the 2002 Gujarat riots. Although the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi was cleared of all charges by the Supreme Court of India[3], it lingers on the radar of global political controversies. Independent organisations like Amnesty International, media representatives from outside India, and resolute diplomats have reported on the tacit support of the Modi government for the Hindu majority and the complicit role of the police during the riots. It has been two decades since the pogrom and the delay of dialogue in the process continues to shadow India's democracy.

3 In 2008, during the Congress rule, a Special Investigation Trail (SIT) was commissioned by the Supreme Court of India (SCI) to analyse the 2002 Gujarat riot case and determine the existence of a larger conspiracy and the complicity of Modi. In 2012 the case was closed with the SIT and SCI finding 'no prosecutable evidence' against them. In 2018 the verdict was challenged, and after several hearings, in 2022 the SCI upheld the SIT's findings.

Democracy, Dissent and Dialogue: The BBC Documentary

India: The Modi Question is a two-part documentary that attempts to explore Prime Minster Modi's relationship with the country's largest minority group – the Muslims, using long-term investigative journalism. The case studies used are not only historically momentous but speak to the many ways the majority-minority interface has been shaped in contemporary India. The first episode opens with a British Muslim man narrating his experience of the riots when he visited his ancestral family in Gujarat in 2002. The organised violence against the Muslims had led to the loss of his uncle and friend who were accompanying him on the visit. He shares his struggle of trying to seek safety during the rampage and justice since the incident and repeatedly failing at both. As the episode progresses, it paints the background to the riot by showing the actual footage of the events and the viewers' attention is drawn towards the role of authority in the pogrom. A senior BBC reporter who had extensively covered the news in 2002 and was in the field at that time shares her suspicions of the law-enforcing institutions like the police's indifference and negligence. She is convinced that the 72-hour-long mob-violence could have been significantly reduced had the police been accountable and sincere. This observation is documented and backed by scholars like Engineer (2002), Lobo (2002), Jaffrelot (2003 & 2017) among others. The police operated on the axis of the state and politics, compromising much on their civil duties which leads to greater exposure of the implicit relationship of the police forces and the government (Human Rights Watch, 24 April 2004). There are distinguished diplomats, human rights lawyers, and independent organisations who corroborate this reading of the situation and express in varied ways that Mr Modi was largely responsible for a climate of impunity during the 2002 Gujarat pogrom and that there was a systematic campaign of violence against the Muslim minorities.

The second instalment of the series focuses on Narendra Modi's term of office following his re-election in 2019 and the subsequent years, which continue to be marked by religious restiveness. The reason for his electoral victory ranged from welfare plans (such as providing toilets, bank accounts, inexpensive loans, electricity, and cooking-gas cylinders) to unending advertisements and lavish donations (Mishra 2019). Part two of the series delves into the reactions to some policies and decisions of the government in Modi's second term that point at direct calls to make India a Hindu nation, even if it means using violence against the Muslim minorities. As the opposition leader Shashi Tharoor noted, 'India's identity must be purely Hindu. Mr. Modi cannot be oblivious to this fundamental contradiction, but he can only resolve it by jettisoning the very forces that have helped ensure his electoral victory' (Tharoor 2020, 235). A series of controversial policies – the banning of beef

trade and consumption, the removal of Kashmir's special status guaranteed under Article 370 of the Indian constitution, and the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act – and their role in inciting structural violence and treating the Muslims unfairly are cited. In Lacanian terms of 'the imaginary', the Modi government perceptibly aims to offer a *space* to the majority Hindu and the *lack of it* to the minority Muslims in the ontological paradigm of policies. These imagined spaces are instrumentalised through policies and occupy pivotal roles in national and religious identities (Kinnvall 2006). The documentary brings to light the experiences of people who are directly affected by these policies and also those who have expressed dissent on these issues. Modi and his government reject the indictment that their policies reflect any prejudice towards Muslims, but these have been repeatedly criticised by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The Chair of Amnesty India articulated his apprehensions in the course of their work in the Modi regime and how they have had to close their offices in Delhi following the freezing of bank accounts in connection with an investigation into financial irregularities; the verdict is yet to be heard. The documentary ends by conceding that the perception that Modi is anti-Muslim is widespread and it continues to have an impact on the quality of India's intended democracy.

The documentary offers a space to give voice to victims who are either unheard, harmed, or silenced; has spokespersons who counter, explain, and represent the BJP and its associates; and also hosts activists, journalists, and academics who have thoroughly researched the matter. A key value in the series is access to the first-hand accounts of people encountering forms of violence but their stories have been undermined. The minority discourse is of high importance in this documentary. It unveils how those who are framed as a 'threat' to the social and national security are *being* threatened in their everydayness. The makers redeem authenticity by not only adding human faces to the unwinding narratives, but also relating it to real-time life-events of the people. A significant part of the series is seemingly about a community's (inferior) position and the often-damaged, tampered, and tragic stories that are tied to it; suppressing Muslim voices is a part of the process (Bhattacharya 2022). In a climate where the political representations of the Muslim minority are impeded (Farooqui 2020), the chances of these accounts being uncovered and addressed are meagre. The inferior position comes with inherent attributes that affect the power dynamics and determine whether a dialogical relationship is possible. In this case, even the word 'dialogue' is subject to privilege and only a few have the choice to engage with it. The most affected persons in the documentary are presumably far away from any privilege, and, for many, this documentary records the grief that the people have normalised. Common in the world of such victims are the memories and stories of those they lost, and in some ways, the series helps them with a space to share what they are going through. The ban on this does not come as a shock to many because

the culture of imposition and infringement on freedom of choice is ongoing with the Modi government in power (Mishra 2019). While the Indian government continues to frame the series as a propaganda tool, the makers from the BBC have contended that 'the highest editorial standards' were employed in the production. Several student bodies and activists have tried to screen the documentary in their institutions and that has been met with disciplinary actions including arrests (BBC, 25 January 2023).

While the content of the documentary itself is complex, its reception by the BJP is politically emboldened and is in line with the feared rise of demagogues. Instead of creating opportunities for the public to understand and discern, the banning of the series across India is in itself a populist trademark. The construction of an ecosystem where fears are ontologically justified and the need to suppress those occurs routinely highlights the diminution of safe space to express and dialogue. As Sahoo (2020) argues, even though interfaith dialogue can counter the polarising of Indian society, the environment in the present time is toxic and this shows no signs of abating. The nuanced interpretation of the public's reaction is deemed unimportant when compared to the exercise of raw political power; hence, doors leading to meaningful dialogue are discouraged. Dialogue with 'the other' in the democratic discourse of India has not been absent; however, it is safe to argue that it has been much too little, conditional, and, to a great extent, superficial. The banning order by a government is often soaked in reasons but when a two-hour documentary is banned, one can deduce that it is rather a frantic effort to approximate the objective of public control, and it has received unflattering responses globally. The enforcement of the ban has occurred through state and extra-state entities, and it reinforces the rhetoric of how the government panoptically continues to control their citizens while normalising this in the name of asserting the country's post-colonial identity. The political dispensation under the Modi government transpires as a populist democracy where power and polarisation are moralised, and exclusionary practices are pursued to mobilise emotions and electoral turnouts. The populist democracy in India has highlighted that differences cannot be reconciled (Gudavarthy 2021), and the self-imagined reality is about an uneven and unmediated victory of majoritarianism.

This paper does not wish to make any single-axis claim about democracy in contemporary India nor about the terms 'victim', 'Muslim' or 'minority' being homogenous in nature; on the contrary, the idea is to construct the complexity of the shared communal realities of the Muslim minorities at the intersection of majoritarian politics and social insecurities. The example of the banning of *India: The Modi Question* doubtless deconstructs the political intentions in disguise that from a bird's eye view attests to protecting the nation's image but, when empirically assessed, it unpacks layers that warrant social control. This action by the BJP was an act of self-con-

stitution, and the strategies that might precede it symbolise a sense of political clout. Even if the pressure is realised from the political hold on this subject, the knowable socio-cultural will have contingencies on the praxis of the majority-minority complex. The ban will only further invoke paranoia about domination and invite vociferous campaigns against the sitting government. Given that violence has started to erupt on the fringes, one cannot refute the idea that, even though banned, the documentary will continue to stir the pot. It is in the news that students in institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia University are organising screenings of the documentary, and this is being met with 'accidental power cuts' across the campus or detention of the students involved. If not handled sensitively, this may incite communal tensions; and to restate, the minority Muslims will be vulnerable, for they can be unequally treated by the law enforcement units. As Jaffrelot (2017) has argued, democracy may be often embraced in a way that favours the majority, but it becomes liberal only when it insists that the minority rights and individual rights are safeguarded.

Democracy, Dissent and Dialogue: The Digital Space

The digital space today is not just a substrate to communicate. In fact, it is a highly effective means for reflecting upon what it is to be a human (Horst and Miller 2020). The digital world enables the re-imposition of normativity while radically reinforcing certain ways of thinking (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). There is no reservation in stating that the nature and impact of government extend to this sphere where social conscience is strengthened and mobilised. The notion that the electronic medium relays of our reality have wedged democracy in a mediatised world is well established. We read the same posts at the same time on the screens that have become a pervasive horizon which compels us to feel some emotions – instantly, and with pride, passion, or panic alike. The digital media and Indian democracy have an intimate relationship, particularly since the 2014 general election. Scholars argue that since then the electronic space has been cleverly used (and integrated) as a form of public relations (Chibber & Ostermann 2014; Jaffrelot 2017; and Rao 2018). Additionally, the promise of radical innovation and participation of the masses in creating unmediated and personal relations is assured (Chakravartty & Roy 2015). Despite Modi not having any press conferences and interviews with the traditional media, he is touted as one of the most interactive politicians globally! This is achieved through the tactical use of social media. Since Modi's time in office, social media has converted democratic principles in the country where governance is vastly affected by direct forms of communication (Sinha 2017) into a rhetoric that is soaked in slogans, business, and a Hindu identity (Rao 2018). As a spin-off, the Modi government is able to propagate profound mistrust in conventional media, while the global watchdogs on press freedom rank India after 135 countries.

Since the introduction of the *Reliance Jio* network in 2016, the number of internet users in India has increased dramatically and so has the average internet speed.[4] In India, 97% of internet users access it through mobile devices (Mankekar 2020) and the use of online demonstrations to incite offline violence is no news (Udupa 2018). Unprecedented online presence and influence of political leaders and their ability to articulate grandly the economic and military prowess of their country has been a game changer. Populist leaders and their parties use these platforms by means of trolls, hackers, and bots, to communicate directly with their electorate on open platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, the majority of which are one-way channels and not two-way exchanges, thus defying the 'participatory culture' which it aims to be. With time, popularity transforms into legitimacy. In an article published by *Fortune*, Mark Zuckerberg admits to Facebook being a media company and not just a social platform that connects people as it is projected to be (*Fortune*, 23 December 2016). Studies have shown the direct impact of Facebook on the spread of ethnic conflicts and violent nationalism in India, where democracy is undermined as political processes gain hegemony over public discourses (Vaidhyanathan 2018). In India, 438 riots over religious identity were recorded in 2019. In 2020, that number doubled to 857 and Facebook had an evident role in inciting communal distrust and hatred (Reuters, 1 February 2022). Furthermore, in 2020, several hate-promoting accounts on Facebook were deleted by Facebook's oversight board; however, when it was uncovered that some accounts were handled by a Member of Parliament from the BJP government, Facebook refused to take action (The Wall Street Journal, 14 August 2020). India continues to be Facebook's largest market with more than 340 million active users.

In the contemporary discourse of democracy in India, social media has become a handy tool to demonise opponents and bully minority groups and that predictably fuels intolerance and violence. In the past decade, vigilante groups and majoritarian mobs have increasingly attacked minorities, activists, and human rights defenders, often with impunity (Sahoo 2020, 16). Hate crimes against the Muslim people range from attacks for the offence of cow-slaughter to accusations of 'love-jihad'. These well-known examples and the subsequent crackdown on Muslim men shed light on the emotional delegative democracy that India is moving towards. Since the release of *India: The Modi Question* and its ban, people have taken to social media to express their views on the matter. The BJP, their associates, and several communication channels have incited hostility not only along political lines, but also religious. Many

4 In the last six years, the number of broadband subscribers has increased from 19.23 million (Sept 2016) to nearly 800 million (June 2022), but the average internet speed also increased from 5.6 Mbps (March 2016) to 23.16 Mbps (April 2022). https://www.bizzbuzz.news/markets/6-years-of-jio-data-consumption-increased-by-100x-in-india-1165190

have accused the producers of this series of a colonial outlook that reflects on their motivation for this project. A quick search on Twitter with '#BBCdocumentary' and '#BBCraid' presents several narratives and counter-narratives from lay people and experts alike. Several 'blue-tick' people or organisations have liberally supported or challenged the conception, content, and characterisation of the documentary or its ban. Similarly, on Facebook, people have used similar hashtags to mobilise their part of the narrative and organise protests either for or against the ban. The Indian diaspora in London organised a protest outside the BBC headquarters using social media platforms to gain traction and spread the word. Lastly, fake news and hate speech was rampantly shared through several channels (particularly WhatsApp) in India and abroad. Speaking to a student of the Jamia Millia Ismailia University in Delhi, I learnt that there were police stationed outside their campus and, while on her way to attend regular class, she got into a conversation with a cab driver. The driver shared his unfiltered views on the matter where he said he would urge the Delhi police to be permanently stationed outside this rebel university which produces traitors to the country. On being asked if he is referring to the screening of the documentary, he said he read it on WhatsApp that the documentary is doctored and has been produced to defame Modi before the 2024 general elections. Several posts on the social media have blatantly and repeatedly referred to Hindu-Muslim identities, which underlines how the political is saturated in the religious in the new India.

Conclusions

Thomas Hansen coined the term 'saffron wave' in understanding Hindu nationalism in the twentieth century and argued that *imagining* and *organising* a Hindu nation are two distinct discourses with some common principles binding them. Today's India is probably best sited between these two discourses. In his research on democratic India, he acknowledged that the non-western post-colonial democracy pervades a multitude of social identities and practices, and that democracy is not merely a form of governance, but rather, is a principle that can transform a society's imagination of itself (Hansen 1998, 09). The projects of 'democracy' and 'dialogue' in India in their distinct existences or in relational terms may sometimes come across as a paradox. The premise of the paradox is partly based on the idea that these discourses need installing while also needing the very democracy and dialogue as pre-requisites during the installation. Acknowledging the paradox may lead to socio-political frameworks that enable assessments of the varied expressions of democracy and dialogue that are earnest representation of *the ordinary* but are of paramount value. Often, encountering the local ordinary experiences of exchange between a Hindu and a Muslim in this climate of tension may fulfil the civilisational meaning of democracy and dialogue. This paper does not intend to convey that the democracy in India today should replay what it was decades ago or emulate a model from elsewhere, be-

cause democracy is in effect a product of the society with dynamic attributes. Much like our society, our meaning of democracy too is irresolute. However, what this paper aims to show is the rising subversion of human rights and the lack of certitude in the government and the law-enforcement bodies that has led to severe insecurity and intolerance – more so, when the insecurity and intolerance seem to be directed towards or experienced by a particular group of people and stretched to an extreme extent where these emotions are validated and normalised. What is most worrying is the decline of questioning of the system and the space for dissent.

The good news is that, despite all these challenges, democracy is being reinvented at the margins and it is gradually being sculpted through tools of dialogue. Since 2015, academics, activists, and authors have organised public forums to voice their concerns on the freedom of expression, stood in solidarity with the victims of hate and violence, held candlelight vigils, and surrendered government honours and awards to express their growing dissent. More centrally, efforts are being made to challenge the divisive politics and polarisation through educative discourses and dialogue via formal channels. Interfaith dialogue and conversations have proven useful in checking communal riots in several Indian cities, and much of their success is credited to drawing on local religious narratives of coexistence and communal goodwill. The syncretic nature of supporting dialogue is intricately woven in Hindu scriptures and religion, which is used to encourage dialogical exchanges (Gottschalk 2005 and Sahoo 2020). Interfaith engagements in India are not a modern merchandise of neoliberal efforts at cultural integration or reconciliation. Muslims and Hindus have been in dialogue since the arrival of Muslim traders in the early centuries, and since then the Hindus and Muslims have been a part of the same community through marriages, business, and other forms of interfaces (Hassan 1992 and Bigelow 2013). Hassan emphasises the possibility of Hindu-Muslim dialogue that exists (or ought to exist) in the Indian subcontinent because for millennia these groups have managed to live together, with each age bringing its own peril and disease. She argues that pluralism in India is innate, and just as no good thing comes free, pluralism too comes with a price. There are people and organisations who pledge their life towards communal trust and co-operation, and it is in their efforts that extremism and unprovoked dominations are being contested. 'Dialogue for life' between the Hindu and the Muslim people has emerged and will continue to emerge from the processes of life itself, and it will safeguard the essence of democracy. Meanwhile, studies will question, revise, and document the ever-changing meanings of democracy, dissent, and dialogue in India and beyond.

Bibliography

Agnes, F. (2016) Muslim Women's Rights and Media Coverage. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13–16.

Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017) Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of economic perspectives*, 31 (2), 211–36.

Anderson, E., & Longkumer, A. (2018) 'Neo-Hindutva': evolving forms, spaces, and expressions of Hindu nationalism. *Contemporary South Asia*, 26 (4), 371–377.

BBC. (2023) 'Students detained over planned screening of BBC Modi documentary'. *BBC*. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-asia-india-64407921. Accessed on 21 February 2023.

Bhattacharya, A. (2022) The Jharkhand Andolan: A silencing of Muslim voice (s). Contributions to Indian Sociology, 56 (3), 272–298.

Bigelow, A. (2013) Muslim–Hindu Dialogue. In The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue, C. Cornille (Ed.).

Chakravartty, P., & Roy, S. (2015) Mr. Modi goes to Delhi: Mediated populism and the 2014 Indian elections. Television & New Media, 16 (4), 311–322.

Chibber, P. K., & Ostermann, S. L. (2014) The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in 2014 General Election'. Studies in Indian Politics, 2 (2), 137–151.

CNN. (2022) 'Arundhati Roy: 'The damage to Indian democracy is not reversible'. *CNN.* Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/22/opinions/bjp-hindu-muslim-democracy-modi-arundhati-roy/index.html. Accessed on 14th February 2023.

Eisenstadt, T. A. (2003) Courting democracy in Mexico: party strategies and electoral institutions. Cambridge University Press.

Engineer, A. A. (2002) Gujarat riots in the light of the history of communal violence. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5047–5054.

Farooqui, A. (2020) Political representation of a minority: Muslim representation in contemporary India. India Review, 19 (2), 153–175.

Fortune, The (2016) 'Mark Zuckerberg Finally Admits Facebook Is a Media Company'. *The Fortune*. Available at: https://www.fortune.com/2016/12/23/zuckerberg-media-company/. Accessed on 11 October 2022.

Gottschalk, P. (2005) Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple identity in narratives from village India. Oxford University Press.

Gould, W. (2004) Hindu nationalism and the language of politics in late colonial India (Vol. 11). Cambridge University Press.

Gudavarthy, A. (2021) India after Modi: Populism and the right. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Guha, R. (2017) India after Gandhi: The history of the world's largest democracy. Pan Macmillan.

Hansen, T. B. (1999) The saffron wave: Democracy and Hindu nationalism in modern India. Princeton University Press.

Hassan, R. (1992) The Basis for a Hindu-Muslim Dialogue and Steps in that Direction from a Muslim perspective. *Religions, Liberty and Human Rights in Nations and in Religions*, 131.

Hindu, The. (2016) 'SC declines to go into Hindutva verdict'. Available at: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/SC-declines-debate-on-20-year-old-verdict-defining-'Hindutva'/article60622582.ece. Accessed on 11th October 2022.

Horst, H. A., & Miller, D. (Eds.). (2020) Digital anthropology. Routledge.

Human Rights Watch (2004) 'DISCOURAGING DISSENT: Intimidation and Harassment of Witnesses, Human Rights Activists, and Lawyers Pursuing Accountability for the 2002 Communal Violence in Gujarat'. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/asia/india/gujarat/3.htm. Accessed on 21 February 2023.

Jaffrelot, C. (2003) Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk?. University of Heidelberg. South Asia Institute.

Jaffrelot, C. (2017) India's democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu state?. *Journal of Democracy*, 28 (3), 52–63.

Jaffrelot, C. (2021) Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy. Princeton University Press.

Kinnvall, C. (2007) Globalization and religious nationalism in India: The search for ontological security. Routledge.

Lobo, L. (2002) Adivasis, Hindutva and post-Godhra riots in Gujarat. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4844–4849.

Mankekar, P. (2020) 'Objectless Television.' In *The Routledge Companion to Global Television*, edited by Shawn Shimpach, 30–38. New York: Routledge.

Mishra, P. (2019) How Narendra Modi seduced India with envy and hate. *New York Times*, *23*.

O'Donnell, G. (1997) Delegative Democracy. Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization: A Collection of Readings, 1083, 214.

Rao, S. (2018) Making of Selfie Nationalism: Narendra Modi, the Paradigm Shift to Social Media Governance, and Crisis of Democracy. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 42 (2), 166–183.

Richards, B. (2013) 'Extreme nationalism and the hatred of the liberal state' in N. Demertzis (ed) Emotions in politics: the affect dimension in political tension, 124–142. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Roy, Arundhati (2009) 'What Have We Done to Democracy?'. *The Nation*. Available at: https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/what-have-we-done-democracy/

Rydgren, J. (2012) Class politics and the radical right. London: Routledge)

Sahoo, N. (2020) Mounting majoritarianism and political polarization in India. Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia.

Smooha, S. (2002) 'The model of ethnic democracy: Israel as a Jewish and democratic state'. *Nations and nationalism*, 8 (4), 475–503.

Tharoor, S. (2020) 'Modi Man of Destiny?'. *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, 15, 234–249.

Udupa, S. (2018) '*Gaali* Cultures: The Politics of Abusive Exchange on Social Media.' *New Media and Society*, 20 (4), 1506–1522. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817698776.

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018) *Antisocial media: How Facebook disconnects us and undermines democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Wall Street Journal, The. (2020) 'Facebook's Hate-Speech Rules Collide With Indian Politics' Available at: https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-hate-speech-india-politics-muslim-hindu-modi-zuckerberg-11597423346. Accessed on 12th October 2022.

The 30th Anniversary of a Grassroots Dialogue in Northern Ireland

Simon Lee[1]

Abstract: When 'talks about talks' between the politicians in Northern Ireland were collapsing in 1992, what we needed was listening about listening. Robin Wilson (then the editor of the political affairs magazine, *Fortnight*) and I (then the professor of jurisprudence at Queen's University Belfast) co-founded Initiative 92, supported by a broad alliance of patrons across civic society and funded by Quaker and other charities. In the autumn of 1992, we established an independent commission of inquiry chaired by Torkel Opsahl, the Norwegian human rights lawyer. Submissions were invited from all-comers, including those who were then subject to broadcasting restrictions. The commission held hearings around Northern Ireland in January and February 1993. Their report was published on 9 June 1993, and then a major opinion survey gauged public reactions. This whole process of dialogue made a difference, playing a part in imagining what would happen if 'they', 'the other side' did this or that and how 'we' might react. Meanwhile, leaders of the different strands of nationalism were in their own dialogue, the Hume-Adams talks, the results of which were not made public. I wrote an article in the Irish Times on 14 October 1993 imagining what they might be saying. On 31 August 1994 came the first Irish Republican Army ceasefire, and I wrote in the Belfast Telegraph on 30 September 1994 an article imagining how unionists could respond constructively. Robin Wilson and I were called to give evidence to the New Ireland Forum in Dublin on 12 April 1995, after making a joint submission, 'Towards a Participatory Democracy'. It took until 1998 for the Good Friday Agreement to emerge from the talks between politicians, chaired by Senator George Mitchell, but this paper explores the lessons for dialogue in other contexts from this experience of grassroots dialogue through Initiative 92.

Keywords: Dialogue, Northern Ireland, Parity of Esteem

1 Simon Lee is Professor of Law at Aston University and Emeritus Professor of Jurisprudence, Queen's University, Belfast. He was a Brackenbury Scholar at Balliol College, Oxford (1976-1979) and a Harkness Fellow at Yale Law School (1979-1980). After being a lecturer in law at Trinity College, Oxford, and King's College London, he became professor of jurisprudence at Queen's (1989-1995) and dean of the faculty of law. He was Rector & Chief Executive of Liverpool Hope University College (1995-2003) and Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Metropolitan University (2003-2009), both institutions winning various awards during his leadership. He was Chair of Level Partnerships (2010-2015), Executive Director of the Cambridge Theological Federation (2014-2016), a Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge (2015-2016) and a Visiting Fellow (2016-2018). He was awarded honorary doctorates by Virginia Theological Seminary in 2011 and Liverpool Hope University in 2016. Simon Lee's contributions to the peace process in Northern Ireland included being the co-founder of Initiative '92, which established the Opsahl Commission. He has served on various public and voluntary sector boards and now chairs the William Temple Foundation.

Creating the Conditions for Grassroots Dialogue During the Troubles

This analysis of the value of dialogue in conflicts is informed by my personal experience of co-creating one such dialogue during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Writing on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the famous Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement of 1998, my aim is to describe how a citizens' movement called Initiative '92 came about in 1991, launched an independent commission of inquiry in 1992 inviting submissions from all-comers, held public hearings all around Northern Ireland in early 1993, reported and commissioned public opinion surveys to gauge reaction in the summer of 1993, then found further funding to ensure grassroots participants were supported in reflecting on the process, until first the IRA and then loyalist groups called their ceasefires in 1994. The search for peace had that high moment on Good Friday, 1998, but this grassroots dialogue which played a part in the progress in Northern Ireland is not so well-known. As the political process in Northern Ireland seems to have stalled, and as so many other conflicts or crises arise around the world, are there wider lessons from this particular dialogue?

As talks and 'talks about talks' between politicians were waxing and waning in 1991, those of us living in Northern Ireland needed some listening about listening. Accordingly, Robin Wilson (then the editor of the political affairs magazine, *Fortnight*) and I (then the professor of jurisprudence at Queen's University Belfast) co-founded Initiative '92, a citizens' movement supported by a broad alliance of patrons across civic society and funded by Quaker and other charities. In the summer of 1991, we chose the '92 to reflect both the coming year in which we intended to go public with this dialogue and our awareness that this might have seemed like the ninety-second or umpteenth initiative in the crowded public square of Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Andy Pollak, the Initiative '92 co-ordinator on secondment from The Irish Times, explained that

> [t]he two men spent the following autumn sounding out opinion about their idea, and bringing together a group of people – most of them active in Northern Ireland's vibrant community and voluntary sectors – to act as a 'steering group'. The project began to get off the ground towards the end of 1991, when three major charitable trusts offered support: the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, a charity known for its readiness to back both innovative ideas and projects aimed at broadening and deepening the concept and practice of citizenship and democracy, came in first with £100,000; it was followed

> by the Barrow Cadbury Trust with £50,000 ... and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust with £25,000. (Pollak 1993, 391)

The Nuffield Foundation later contributed £25,000, and many other sums were received from trusts and individuals. The first four patrons or supporters mentioned by Andy Pollak were the leading cultural figures, 'writers like Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Jennifer Johnston and Brian Friel'. A management committee was established, chaired by Quintin Oliver from the voluntary sector. That group selected seven commissioners.

In the spring of 1992, Initiative '92 announced that an independent commission of inquiry would be chaired by Torkel Opsahl, the Norwegian human rights lawyer, with Marianne Elliott, Lucy Faulkner, Eamonn Gallagher, Eric Gallagher, Ruth Lister and Padraig O'Malley as fellow commissioners. The commission invited submissions from all-comers, including those who were then subject to broadcasting restrictions.

Andy Pollak continues his account of the process of dialogue by pointing out that confidence had to be developed in 1992:

> Through the summer and autumn, speakers criss-crossed Northern Ireland addressing public meetings, women's, Church, business, trade union, rural, student schools, youth and community groups and conferences. Twenty-nine public meetings were organised – all but a couple of them by Initiative '92's workers – in places as far apart (in every sense) as the strongly nationalist border areas of south Fermanagh and south Armagh and unionist north Antrim and Coleraine, from Bangor and Newtownards in the east to Derry and Limavady in the west. Outside Northern Ireland, speakers went to London, Dublin and Cork.
>
> There were many private meetings too.... (Pollak 1993, 392)

On 10 November 1992, the political talks came to an end. It was a difficult time in Northern Ireland. On 16 October, a law student at Queen's whom I had tutored weekly, Sheena Campbell, had been followed out of the library and murdered. She was a mature student, 29 years old, with a young son. Before coming to Queen's, she had stood as the Sinn Fein candidate in the 1990 Upper Bann by-election where the Queen's senior lecturer in law, David Trimble, became the MP. As Christmas approached, with the deadline for submissions having been fixed for 11 January 1993, outreach workers helped community groups, including those formed for this purpose, to develop the confidence to make their submissions. More than 500 submis-

sions were made by over 3,000 people. Then from 19 January to 23 February the Commission held seventeen public hearings around Northern Ireland, acknowledging the significance of a sense of place, choosing some of those who had made submissions and inviting others. On 23 February there was a Schools' Assembly in the Guildhall, Derry, and on 24 February, another Schools' Assembly was held in Queen's University Belfast. The commission's report was published on 9 June 1993 and a major opinion survey was commissioned to gauge public reactions.

My own contribution was submitted in January 1993, was ignored by the commissioners, who did not call me to speak at a public hearing but was picked up by *Fortnight* and then by Index on Censorship and published by them in September 1993. It was called 'Lost for Words' (Index on Censorship 1993).

Tragically, in September 1993, Torkel Opsahl suffered a heart attack and died. As the co-founders, therefore, Robin Wilson and I returned to promote and defend the report and the process, even though there were recommendations with which one or the other or both of us did not agree. Further funding had been secured to allow a small band of outreach workers, now led by Geraldine Smyth, to continue the dialogue for another year, encouraging reflection by participants and the next generations on the Opsahl process. Geraldine is a Dominican Sister with a doctorate from Trinity College Dublin so is sometimes referred to as 'Sister' and sometimes as 'Doctor', a small symbol of the overlaps between grassroots ecumenism and academe that was characteristic of this dialogue. She had recently returned from time in Dublin to Belfast and, after her time with Initiative '92, she went back to lead the Irish School of Ecumenics into Trinity College Dublin, where it has become a major centre for dialogue and ecumenism.

The original publication sold out, so a second edition in December of the same year was able to report the results of the opinion survey and carry some of the reactions to the report, including on its front and back inside covers. This is the edition to search for, should readers wish now to study the story of Initiative '92. Submissions can be read in the Linenhall Library in Belfast and there is open on-line access to a selection of submissions by Index on Censorship, together with a brief explanation of this process of dialogue by Andy Pollak, a note of appreciation for Torkel Opsahl, an account by Kate Kelly of the involvement of women in the dialogue and my own submission, entitled Lost for Words (Index on Censorship 1993).

As well as looking at the immediate aftermath of the Opsahl Report, there are two other analyses of the significance of Initiative '92 which bear rehearsing on this thirtieth anniversary, namely reflections from Professors Adrian Guelke and Marianne Elliott on, respectively, the tenth and twentieth anniversaries. I am therefore grateful to the Dialogue Society and this journal for the opportunity to offer some personal

reflections on this experience for the thirtieth anniversaries of the public hearings, the school assemblies, and the publication of the report.

The primary question is: are there any potential lessons for dialogue in other contexts from this experience of grassroots dialogue through Initiative '92? More specifically, since Adrian Guelke was a sympathetic observer and Marianne Elliott was one of the Opsahl Commissioners, are there any distinctive lessons from my perspective, as one of the two co-founders? In particular, I have been asked three subquestions:

- what was the theoretical underpinning of this approach to dialogue?
- what were the special features of the context in the early 1990s, such as the levels and nature of violence or of the political stalemate, and
- what are the lessons, if any, for the very different context now in 2022 and for the years to come?

Even to set out the questions in this way is to recognise that one article cannot provide comprehensive answers. Life is different after the ceasefires of 1994, the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement in 1998, decades of an uneasy peace, the waxing and waning of economies in these islands and beyond, Brexit, lockdown, the environmental crisis, technological revolutions and various developments in Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland, as well as in Northern Ireland, including political, legal, constitutional, and social changes. There are many lessons from Initiative '92's dialogue to apply to all these current challenges, just as there were many features of the early 1990s which made the conditions ripe for dialogue, and no doubt many theories which animated the different characters involved in Initiative '92. I am merely offering what I have called 'one view of the cathedral' (Lee & Fox 1994, 5). Others will have their own perspectives. Every time Monet painted the cathedral at Rouen, the impression was subtly different. If others paint from a different vantage-point, their impressions will vary all the more. An understanding of the whole cathedral, and the points of view of diverse painters, cannot be captured in one glimpse. It might help, however, to understand the purpose of the cathedral, not only to see it clearly from the outside, in different lights and atmospheric conditions, but to appreciate it also from the inside.

One way of setting the scene for Initiative '92, in answering that middle question about the context, is to look back at how violent the conflict was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as it seemed to me in stepping inside that cathedral. Around the time of my interview at Queen's University Belfast in the autumn of 1988, the Westminster government introduced broadcasting restrictions on the supporters of

terrorism, reacting to a time of exceptional violence which can be traced, month by month, through the invaluable CAIN resource freely accessible on-line from the University of Ulster (CAIN 2023). A couple of years later, in September 1990, I found the grassroots conference of the Churches' Central Community for Community Work at Loughry College, Cookstown, to be an uplifting experience, listening to many community groups in dialogue about their activities. I was asked to edit the conference proceedings, which went to press at the end of the following month and was published in December (Lee 1990). Accordingly, I added a postscript on what had happened in what I described as that 'very violent' month of October 1990. For instance,

> On Wednesday 24 October, the IRA killed several people in separate incidents involving 'human bombs'. The people of the Derry border area, Catholic and Protestant, 'came together to pay their respects and to assert their wish to live together in peace... The Catholic Bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, denounced the IRA in the clearest of terms, at the funeral of Patsy Gillespie ... 'The fruits of the IRA are strewn all over Europe, from a murdered infant in West Germany, to murdered tourists in Holland, to murdered pensioners in Enniskillen, to murdered Good Samaritans in our own city'

Bishop Edward Daly was himself a Good Samaritan and hero of the Troubles, famously risking his own life during the events of Bloody Sunday. This vignette of October 1990 gives those not then born or otherwise not aware of the history of the Troubles a sense of the violence and yet the resilience and determination of the churches and communities of Northern Ireland to reach out to one another in dialogue.

Later, I will suggest two conjoined lessons as answers from this time and context to the primary question, one on the *process* of inclusive dialogue – the challenge of learning to listen intently, and one on the *substance* of the Opsahl Report – the concept of parity of esteem. First, though, in the chronology, should come the immediate sequels to Initiative '92, both personal and political.

2 A Life-changing Dialogue

This whole process of dialogue made a difference, playing a part in imagining what would happen if 'they', 'the other side', did this or that and how 'we' might react. This was the major impact for the people and communities of Northern Ireland, but it also affected individuals. For example, leaders of the different strands of nationalism were simultaneously holding their own dialogue, the Adams-Hume or Hume-Adams talks, the results of which were not made public. I wrote an article in the Irish Times

on 14 October 1993 imagining what they might be saying. On 31 August 1994 came the first IRA ceasefire, and I wrote in the Belfast Telegraph on 30 September 1994 an article imagining how unionists and loyalists could respond constructively. The loyalist ceasefire came on 13 October 1994. In a volume of essays edited by Wilfred Mulryne and Billy McAllister of Methodist College Belfast in honour of one of the Opsahl Commissioners, Reverend Eric Gallagher, in the same year, I had reflected on 'Parity of Esteem' (Mulryne & McAllister 1994). Robin Wilson and I were called to give evidence to the New Ireland Forum in Dublin on 12 April 1995, after making a joint submission, 'Towards a Participatory Democracy' (New Ireland Forum 1995). In each of these contributions to the quest for peace and justice, original contributions to research were informed by the time spent during the Initiative '92 dialogue listening to different views on ways forward. Parity of esteem means, in essence, living out the ideal of the same genuine respect for diverse traditions, communities, and people, regardless of 'majority' or 'minority' status or any other labels and even though sometimes majorities will prevail, or minority rights will be upheld against majority preferences. A participatory democracy is one in which all citizens have opportunities to contribute, to be heard and to listen in the public square, not only to have a vote every few years. These are conjoined twins underlying, and enhanced by, this grassroots dialogue.

Overlapping with the end of Initiative '92 and continuing until the end of my time in Northern Ireland, I was serving on two public bodies, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the South & East Belfast Health & Social Services Trust. What I later called 'uneasy ethics' (Lee 2003) was not confined to the biggest constitutional questions but permeated the work of such bodies. Likewise, dialogue was needed not only between the judges and the judged but between all of us involved in, for instance, uneasy matters of medical law and ethics. As the academic lawyer member of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR), I led their work on equalising the age of consent to reflect parity of esteem for those of different sexual orientations, and on the most complex and sensitive issue of abortion law in Northern Ireland in 1993 and 1994, correctly predicting what the courts would decide and explaining why statutory change was needed, regardless of personal views on abortion and despite many people disputing this analysis through our process of consultation (SACHR 1993 & 1994). Twenty-five years later, this change has happened, and an academic study has recently revealed that government papers about my analysis (SACHR 1993) acknowledged at the time the significance of

> the publication of an influential report by Professor Simon Lee of Queen's University Belfast for the Northern Ireland Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. Lee argued that abortion law had

> been left to operate in a 'twilight zone', being so uncertain as to violate the standards of international human rights law... Abundant contemporary sources confirm Lee's finding that the law was confusing and poorly understood by the doctors required to operate within it... Lee's findings were widely reported... They were also fiercely contested.... (Sally Sheldon, Jane O'Neill, Clare Parker, Gayle Davis 2020)

Our NHS Trust focused on mental health, especially in diverse community settings. I was one of the non-executives, appointed presumably because of my interests in medical law and ethics, on the one hand, and community engagement on the other. Among the gifted executive members of the Board was the medical director, Dr John (now Lord) Alderdice, who was also then the leader of the cross-community Alliance Party and who is now an acknowledged expert on dialogue in conflicts.

Exactly one year after that first IRA ceasefire, I left Northern Ireland to start on 1 September 1985 as the rector and chief executive of Liverpool Hope University College, a joint Anglican-Catholic institution of higher education. This was an opportunity which also seemed timely for my family, as our three children were coming up to secondary school age, and to bring to a conclusion my work and daily involvement in the communities in Northern Ireland. Queen's kindly made me an emeritus professor and I have returned on various occasions over the years, but it was time to take the lessons of this dialogue into other spheres. I have rarely commented on this experience of grassroots dialogue in Northern Ireland, but I did have the opportunity to speak in the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series at Stormont in 2017, co-organised by Queen's, Ulster University, and the Open University, where I was then working. This was thanks to Professor Leslie Budd of the Open University. It was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Initiative '92. My topic was 'Parity of Esteem Re-visited & Re-imagined' (Lee 2017a) and some of what I said then is incorporated below. Robin Wilson has remained in Northern Ireland and, tellingly for this purpose, when he left *Fortnight*, he created Northern Ireland's first think tank which he called Democratic Dialogue. Andy Pollak remained in Ireland and continued to work for peace and justice through cross-border initiatives. I recognise that for these friends, still living and working in much the same setting, it would be exhausting and counter-productive to be associated continually with these few years by being repeatedly drawn back to the Initiative '92 or Opsahl process or recommendations. In my case, I have turned to leadership roles in universities, pioneering partnerships across education, the arts and sport, other adventures in the voluntary sector, and now returning to my own research in law and cognate disciplines. Once or twice every twenty-five or thirty years, however, it is refreshing to reflect on lessons from this particular process of dialogue.

Meanwhile, back in Northern Ireland, it took longer than I had expected for the ceasefires to lead to political progress. Despite the good work of governments in London, Dublin, and Washington DC, it needed new political impetus, which came in 1997 with the election of Tony Blair's Labour government. Even so, it was not until 1998 that the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement emerged from the talks between politicians, expertly chaired by Senator George Mitchell from the USA. At the end of 1998, the leading politicians in Northern Ireland, John Hume and David Trimble, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. These three developments were, of course, vital, namely an engaged, persuasive and lateral-thinking Prime Minister in London, the commitment of American political leadership, and the courage of domestic politicians in Northern Ireland itself.

The tendency has been, however, to overlook other contributing factors. These include the role of Irish politicians and the risk-taking of the previous Conservative government of John Major, through Peter Brooke and Sir Patrick Mayhew as Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland. Civil servants in Belfast, Dublin and London also took risks throughout the 1990s and doubtless earlier. Beyond politicians and other public servants, however, diverse elements of civil society played a largely unheralded part, from the churches to the trade unions and including this dialogue created by the Opsahl process, especially the opportunity it provided for many powerful and distinctive women's voices to be heard in the public square of Northern Ireland. While in 2023 it is natural that the media and politicians, including President Joe Biden, wanted to mark twenty-fifth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, there is still value in taking the opportunity to reflect on the thirtieth anniversary of the grassroots dialogue fostered by Initiative '92. This itself is a lesson, I would like to think, of more general application. I am fascinated by anniversaries but usually a political or media high moment was preceded by a much longer period of grassroots dialogue which will have an earlier timeline worth occasionally revisiting.

We were criticised in 1991, 1992, and 1993 for insisting that all-comers, even those then subject to broadcasting bans because of their support for republican or loyalist paramilitaries, would be welcome to participate in that dialogue. The 1993 Opsahl Report talked about bringing them in from the cold. It later emerged that there were simultaneously secret talks taking place between the IRA and the government. Our grassroots dialogue in 1992 and 1993 played a part in creating the conditions for the twin ceasefires in 1994. Given how long it took the powerful political players to get from that transformation to the Agreement of 1998, it was all the more remarkable how swiftly the charitably funded small secretariat and supporters of Initiative '92 had generated trust and engagement in life before the ceasefires. Those who now focus only on the 1998 Agreement cannot explain how the ceasefires happened and

why they happened in 1994 rather than, say, 1984 or 1998 or 2023. There were multiple contributory factors, but one element was the ripple effect of this grassroots dialogue in 1993 and the community engagement with the report which was continued by Initiative '92 into 1994. It showed the supporters of violence that they could be listened to without the violence, it showed them that they would also be subject to searching questions, it indicated how others might answer, and gave confidence of reciprocity if steps towards peace were taken. As more and more women's voices were heard in the public square through the Opsahl public hearings, and as the sixth-formers' voices were heard through the school assemblies, so the mood among communities became more conducive to exploring new ways forward, converting the rhetoric of parity of esteem into practical steps towards ceasefires and then on to a political settlement.

An important lesson for other processes of dialogue in the midst of conflicts is how the Initiative '92 secretariat, now led by Sr Geraldine Smyth in succession to Andy Pollak, and outreach workers continued to promote grassroots dialogue for another year of extended support by our funders, through 1993 and 1994, to which I shall return.

3 First Reactions

Those reacting immediately to the Opsahl Report in June 1993 or in the next twelve months did not know that there would be the ceasefires to come in 1994 or that there would be the Belfast Agreement in 1998. It is worth, therefore, seeing who said what.

The second edition of the report in December 1993 helpfully carries on its front and back inside covers the following reactions, among others, to the original publication in June. Index on Censorship's judgement was that 'The Opsahl Report gave a platform to voices excluded elsewhere – from the Catholic and Protestant working women of Belfast to academics and lawyers – all tired of the old polemic. It gave hope that in Northern Ireland, too, an end is stirring.' The leading Irish political journalist, Mary Holland, said that it, 'demonstrates that literally thousands of people care passionately about the political, social, economic and cultural future of the North, and yearn for its divisions to be healed and for the two communities to work together.' The leading political scientist, Professor Bernard Crick in The Scotsman called it, 'The fullest and most judicious account of opinion in Northern Ireland ever made'. Dick Spring, the Tanaiste & Minister for Foreign Affairs said it was, 'an extraordinary experiment in public participation' and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland explained that 'The Opsahl Commission was established

to encourage a public debate. It undertook the unique and valuable task of canvassing the views of a wide range of people and organisations in Northern Ireland.'

The Independent's immediate report by David McKittrick showed that local politicians were less enthusiastic. Even John (now Lord) Alderdice, who had spoken at one of our public hearings, unequivocally condemned the report:

> The Alliance Party thought it dangerously naïve on constitutional issues and ending violence. The party leader, John Alderdice, added: 'The proposals bear little relation to the realities which have been confirmed in the recent local government election and are not a framework for peace but a recipe for the Balkanisation of Northern Ireland.' (McKittrick 1993)

This hyperbole was perhaps understandable in that the Alliance Party was, and is, what we might now call non-binary and could be forgiven for focusing on the disadvantage of what I had called the 'two teams mentality' of some Opsahl analysis. Indeed, I had argued against this in my own submission. But it would have been helpful if the Alliance Party leadership, like many of its members, could have praised the *process* of the dialogue while continuing to argue for different ways forward.

The Opsahl Report was, however, discussed more constructively in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and in Ireland, North and South, more widely, including in the Dail in Dublin, and in the European Parliament.

For example, in a debate in the House of Lords initiated by the Liberal Democrat, Lord Holme, in March 1994, he observed that 'it is very good to see genuine civic leadership emerging in Northern Ireland, responsible and far-sighted, drawn from both traditions, and confident enough to take the initiative'. Lord Williams of Mostyn, speaking for Labour, said, 'It seems to us that the real achievement of the report is that it has recorded views from a very wide spectrum of opinion in Northern Ireland, not all of which have been apparent or vocal in political dialogue in the past'. For the Conservative government, Baroness Denton responded by explaining, 'The Government believe that the main value of the report lies in the way that it has enlivened public debate throughout the community in Northern Ireland and outside...we believe that it provides an important source of ideas, emanating not only from the commission itself but from the many submissions made to it' (Hansard, 1994).

We kept up the interest at community level, where there was already such momentum, particularly among the churches. The flavour of this can be seen through essays in that book for Eric Gallagher (Mulryne & McAllister 1994) by Sr Geraldine

Smyth and Barry White, one of the leading journalists of the Troubles, who explained (Mulryne & McAllister 1994, 54) that Eric had a lifetime of experience in peace-making before, in 1992, he became

> 'a member of the Opsahl Commission, hearing submissions from politicians and non-politicians alike, about the way forward. To many it seemed like a pointless exercise, especially when the Stormont talks intervened but, by concentrating the minds of community groups on either side of the political divide, it offered a rare sense of empowerment to marginalised peoples. It provided an alternative focus to violence and perhaps played a subliminal role in helping the paramilitaries to rethink their objectives, preparing their minds for the twist and turns of the Hume-Adams initiative. Even if those outside ignored political analysis, it had a profound effect inside the prisons.

Dr Geraldine Smyth gave special credit to two Presbyterian ministers on the management committee of Initiative 92, Gordon Gray and John Morrow, for working 'indefatigably' on the dialogue which *followed* publication of the report, in the year leading up to the first ceasefires. With such support and commitment from within its ranks, their church was one of several to reflect meaningfully on the dialogue:

> The Presbyterian Church in Ireland in its response expressed 'deep gratitude to the Opsahl Commission for the quite excellent manner in which they conceived, carried out and reported upon the process of consultation with such a wide cross-section of the people of Northern Ireland' and acknowledged that the report 'will stand out as one of the most significant pieces of literature to emerge from the long era of the Troubles, and will ... make an important contribution to helping people listen to one another, and become open to new possibilities of thinking and of action.' (Mulryne & McAllister 1994, 33)

We also did our best to keep the lessons of this dialogue in the media. For instance, in coming back to the management committee in the wake of Torkel Opsahl's death, I wrote on behalf of Initiative '92 three letters to The Independent in 1993, which they graciously published. I was pleased, though, that we disbanded, albeit a year later than originally intended, and let the process and the report speak for themselves or, more precisely, let the dialogue seep into the mainstream of thinking about ways forward for Northern Ireland. This was often without attribution but that did not matter. It was better that politicians who had decried the report, which they assumed was threatening to them, began to adopt its rhetoric and even, in some cases, its mindset. The lack of attribution or recognition was, curiously enough, a mark of success. It is only with the passage of time, a decade or two or three, that it is worth

tracing the impact of some of the ripples of hope created by Initiative '92 and to answer those questions about its underlying theories and how it might apply to other contexts.

The best insight into dialogue through this grassroots initiative, in my opinion, came from Dr Geraldine Smyth in the last sentence of her essay about that follow-up year, pithily and powerfully explaining how dialogue needs its close sisters if it is to effect change. Having referred to both Eric Gallagher and Seamus Heaney, she concluded:

> Both these visionary Ulstermen have reckoned that the future need not be determined by the past, for all that the past can be a resource for the future. Dialogue and imagination, memory and hope are at the heart of that reckoning.

Eric Gallagher himself said of W B Yeats' famous phrase, 'peace comes dropping slow', 'It may come slow. It does not drop from heaven. Peace and structures have to be worked for' (Mulryne & McAllister 1994, 62–3).

The grassroots work, and even the dialogue, will not yield progress if they are not preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by those three elements identified by Geraldine Smyth of 'imagination, memory and hope'. In various ways, my own research, teaching, media involvement and community engagement have revolved around this quartet of dialogue and imagination, memory, and hope.

4 Tenth-Anniversary Reflections: Adrian Guelke

Indeed, anniversaries give us opportunities to consider the role of memory in making progress towards peace and justice. That is why I am writing now and why the structure of this reflection turns to two earlier reviews of our dialogue. Ten years on, in 2003, Professor Adrian Guelke gave a generous and insightful account (Guelke 2003). He noticed that the process took the submissions and hearings seriously, so that the bulk of the report was not about the commissioners' own recommendations but was indeed reporting the views of others.

In his judgement,

> The Opsahl Commission came to be associated with a single phrase that resonated throughout the province. The phrase was 'parity of esteem' ... at the time, it gave impetus to the belief that a political settlement was achievable ... The publication of A Citizens' Inquiry took place against the backdrop of the failure in 1992 of the Brooke/Mayhew talks among the constitutional parties. The Opsahl Commission's

> expression of confidence that the creation of a government within the parameters it put forward was a task that 'should not be beyond the realm of the possible and the practicable' was important in this context. Particularly significant was the fact that the Commission had reached this conclusion on the basis of submissions across the whole political spectrum, including Republicans and Loyalists. The implication was that an inclusive process would not necessarily make it more difficult to achieve a settlement, but on the contrary might actually enhance the prospects for political progress.

Adrian Guelke then noted the similarities between the Opsahl recommendations and the text of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, concluding that

> the similarities in a number of areas, especially the emphasis on an equality agenda, suggest that the Opsahl Commission's influence was more profound than that of a single memorable phrase.

I would add that it is not simply a question of whether the high-level political negotiators in 1998 copied the ideas which emerged from our grassroots process in 1993, it was that everyone had had five years in which to come to terms with what others were saying and how their own stated positions looked.

Sometimes, when we accuse others of not listening, they think, and sometimes say, that they have indeed been listening, they just do not agree with our point of view. One of the advantages of our public dialogue was that even those who disdained it at the time could learn from it what all sides, including their own, had been saying. In arguing about this or that viewpoint, they could decide for themselves if they really had been listening-but-disagreeing or not-listening or, listening-and-agreeing-to-differ-but-being-big-enough-to-show-that-they-really-had-been-attentive-to-counter-arguments. Indeed, in my own submission, I was trying to encourage a new vocabulary and to explain how sometimes ambiguity can help. Different participants in a dialogue might be talking past each other if they have different criteria or definitions, a theoretical debate called in my own discipline of jurisprudence the 'semantic sting'. Nevertheless, it can be helpful in edging towards peace from a conflict if opposed groups can notionally agree on a broad concept while actually having in mind different specific conceptions of what that might mean in practice. Indeed, this is one reason why Adrian Guelke's tenth-anniversary reflections were so pertinent, that the influence of our dialogue 'was more profound than that of a single memorable phrase'.

There are two extra reasons why Adrian Guelke's analysis is especially poignant. First, he is an astute observer also of the dialogue in his native South Africa, someone who

understands the theory and practice of dialogue around the world. Second, he was one of those academics who not only risked his life in Northern Ireland by speaking out on all these matters during the Troubles but on whose life there actually was a violent attack. He survived when a gunman broke into his home near Queen's University Belfast in September 1991 only because the would-be killer's gun jammed.

5 Twentieth-Anniversary Reflections: Marianne Elliott

In 2013, 20 years on from her time as one of the Opsahl Commissioners, Professor Marianne Elliott wrote a magisterial article on the significance of the process of dialogue (Elliott 2013). As I moved in 1995 to work in Liverpool, in the same city where Marianne Elliott was based, I had come to follow more closely her own writings about the history of Northern Ireland, including her book, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (Elliott 2000), her essay on 'Religion and Identity in Northern Ireland' in a collection of lectures which she edited, *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland* (Elliott 2002), through to her memoir, *Hearthlands* (Elliott 2017). The 2002 essay drew significantly on her experiences of community involvement in the Opsahl hearings. In particular, Marianne Elliott's 2013 article, on the twentieth anniversary, captured much of the value of Initiative '92:

> The idea of giving a voice to 'ordinary people' had come from a brainstorming session between Robin Wilson (then editor of *Fortnight* Magazine) and Simon Lee (professor of jurisprudence at Queen's University Belfast) late in 1991...Wilson and Lee raised the finance, persuaded 220 patrons and a team of dedicated field researchers to prepare the way and gain the trust of those very people who felt disenfranchised and had 'turned off' politics: most notably women, working-class Protestants, republicans, and the young.
>
> At the outset, the Commission was criticised by a number of politicians, but the northern press welcomed the initiative as something new. In the end every party – including Sinn Fein and the emerging loyalist political parties, the Ulster Democratic Party and Progressive Unionist Party – talked with us. The format of the Opsahl Commission has been followed by every subsequent commission. The principle that the public as well as the elected politicians deserve to be consulted is now generally accepted. I think, too, that giving people responsibility for the future also brings about some measure of acceptance of responsibility for the past. ...

> The fundamental idea behind Initiative '92 and the Opsahl Commission was that of giving people the chance to express themselves – a chance, in other words, to overcome their obvious sense of frustration and helplessness...
>
> There is a tremendous unrequited thirst for dialogue among the people of Northern Ireland...
>
> Initiative '92 succeeded in encouraging women, and particularly working-class women, to become involved...
>
> The Opsahl Commission, then, consistently promoted the idea of people becoming participants in deciding their future, rather than remaining spectators as others decided it for them. As Torkel Opsahl wrote at the time, it was, 'an unprecedented, forward-looking experiment in public participation in political debate in a region that is usually characterised as politically rigid, undemocratic and backward'.

The year 2017 was when I turned sixty, and I had set myself the challenge of re-reading sixty books in the sixty days running up to my birthday (Lee 2017b). One was that huge tome on *The Catholics of Ulster: A History*. I asked Marianne Elliott what the inspiration was for her brilliant expression 'a resentful belonging' that she used in her final chapter of that history (Elliott 2000, 429–482). She said it was prompted by reflecting on Reverend Dr John Dunlop's 1995 memoir, *A Precarious Belonging*. Marianne Elliott's phrase, a 'resentful belonging', originally applied to Catholics in Northern Ireland and their attitude to the benefits of the UK's education system and welfare state. She explains her own experience in family and Catholic community life, in school and as an undergraduate in Belfast. John Dunlop's 'precarious belonging' originally applied to Protestants' fear that Westminster would sell them out of the United Kingdom. His memoir is equally fascinating on his lifetime of experience as a Protestant in Northern Ireland, including as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. Both their concepts are insightful and helpful in understanding the challenges of dialogue in a number of other controversies, such as disagreements in university life, on independence for Scotland, on Brexit, and much else. Conflict is often to be explained by one group feeling resentful and another feeling precarious. In universities and in politics, we sometimes feel both simultaneously. I had been wondering why all sides in Northern Ireland were not listening as openly as we might have wished. In that 1994 essay on 'Parity of Esteem', I had taken issue with the phrase 'dialogue of the deaf' since those whose hearing is impaired or non-existent have taught us so much about how to communicate well but I understood the point often being made that others (and of course we ourselves) were not in a state of mind

where they (and we) could listen attentively. I was still questioning how best to put this when the answer, it dawned on me belatedly, was given by Marianne Elliott in response to John Dunlop, that true dialogue is hindered by resentful and precarious senses of belonging. The process of articulating those inhibitions, and of addressing their causes, is vital to promoting dialogue in times, places, and societies of conflict.

The dialogue created by Initiative '92 benefited greatly from the quality and diversity of the seven independent Opsahl Commissioners. The grassroots involvement through the decades of Eric Gallagher and the academic brilliance of Marianne Elliott are the two examples I have given here but similar points could be made about each of the seven. Moreover, in the hearings, they lived out these values of listening and respecting all-comers. Eric Gallagher could hold his own with any leading historian, while Marianne Elliott's later memoir and her conduct of hearings with community groups demonstrated her rootedness in the communities of Northern Ireland.

6 My Thirtieth-Anniversary Reflections on 'Process': Learning to Listen

There might be thought to be little point in returning, even only once every decade, to this dialogue given that Adrian Guelke after ten years and Marianne Elliott after twenty years have captured the strengths of the dialogue so generously and powerfully. The premise of this reflection after thirty years is rather to offer a different perspective, partly because of my different role in the dialogue and partly because the world seems to have changed so much in the past decade.

My starting point is to consider how the combination of Robin Wilson and myself managed to kick-start this process of dialogue. On the one hand, this lacks the rigour of an objective account but, on the other, it at least has an insider's perspective. I would like to think that Robin might give his own account in due course, perhaps for the fortieth anniversary, but from my point of view he was an influential journalist, well-connected, vigorously independent, fearless, trustworthy, of unbounded energy and commitment, rooted in Northern Ireland and yet perceived by some to be unusual in Northern Ireland in being a secular liberal and a radical thinker. His day (and night) job as editor of the foremost political journal meant that he was constantly listening to a wide variety of views on ways forward.

How was I perceived? One advantage of having famous colleagues and students is that there is the occasional passing phrase about me in their biographies. For instance, one of David Trimble's biographers, Henry McDonald, kindly described me as, 'Simon Lee, a young left-liberal Englishman', which might say more about where

others were on a left-centre-right spectrum (McDonald 2000, 108). Dean (now Lord) Godson in his biography of David (later Lord) Trimble explained my appointment to the Chair of Jurisprudence at Queen's in generous comments on my academic and media credentials (Godson 2004, 93). When I arrived at Queen's at the start of January 1989, it was already known from my writing that I am a Catholic and obvious that I am English, meaning that I was in neither of the two communities as characterised by the media. With the benefit of hindsight, I think that people assumed I would move back to England in due course, which could be seen as both positive and negative when it came to speaking out about issues of justice. It was often difficult for people who expected to work for a long time within their institutions or within Northern Ireland or the island of Ireland to take a public stand. For example, in a biography of a colleague who went on to be President of Ireland, Justine McCarthy reported on the storm around equal opportunities at Queen's, 'Throughout it all, Mary McAleese maintained a low profile, as did most of the senior nationalists on the academic staff. Only Professor Simon Lee from the law school, who later transferred to Hope College in England, publicly supported the students' (McCarthy 1999, 118).

This brings me to an important point about the combination of academic and media involvement in the creation of Initiative '92. I benefited from association with two influential institutions which carried authority in Northern Ireland, Queen's University Belfast and the BBC. I was employed by the former and given various platforms by the latter, including a weekly opportunity to speak on Radio Ulster's Talk-Back, and presenting series on religion on radio and television. Queen's was under scrutiny and criticism from all sides over unfair employment but it still carried enormous weight. Its main Lanyon building was on some of the banknotes of Northern Ireland, and I was one of many academics seen, on one news programme after another, walking in front of it before opining on the issues of the day, supported by the BBC's duty to be impartial. Universities and the media contribute hugely to dialogue in what is nowadays in academe called knowledge exchange and impact.

Even so, why did we choose to promote dialogue at grassroots level? In my own case, I had concluded my book *Judging Judges* in 1988 (Lee 1988, 208) with a call for 'more dialogue between the judges and the judged'. Later that year, my presentation at interview for my job at Queen's University Belfast was on how a 1987 essay by me on medical law and ethics, entitled 'Towards a Jurisprudence of Consent' (Eekelaar & Bell 1997, 199) could be applied to the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. To consent to a medical intervention, or a constitutional change, one must have the capacity to consent, be deciding voluntarily (not under duress), and be aware of the risks of proceeding (or of not going ahead) and of the alternatives. Even if all those conditions are satisfied, sometimes consent is overridden by public policy. If there is

no capacity, in medical law a proxy must decide in the best interests of the patient. In politics, Westminster's direct rule could be regarded as the proxy. My argument at interview was that if I were appointed, I would work to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland would have that capacity, would be able to decide their future free of the pressure of violence, and would be aware of the pros and cons of the status quo or of other arrangements. This could only come about through a dialogue between the diverse citizens and communities of Northern Ireland and other interested parties.

Robin Wilson and others in the media were already promoting such dialogue. Dialogue was also being championed by other educational institutions and other elements in civic society, such as churches. For instance, that book about Eric Gallagher came from Methodist College, Belfast, a school which also attracted Catholics and people of other denominations, faiths, and backgrounds. The Methodists in Ireland were peacemakers, much as the Quakers are highly regarded as peacemakers in England and around the world. In concluding their preface, the editors (the principal and the chaplain of Methody) kindly thanked me in terms which might be applied to the wider work of all involved in Initiative '92 (Mulryne & McAllister 1994): 'Simon Lee, who planted the seed, and whose knowledge, expertise, generosity of time and incredible energy have ensured the production of this small acknowledgement of the esteem in which Eric Gallagher is held.' This underplays their own roles and that of David Gallagher, another member of staff at Methody and the son of Eric, as well as overstating mine. The generosity of time in all pioneering of dialogue came from our families while we were out in evenings and at weekends at Initiative '92 and wider community meetings. But the first and last elements of their generous praise do capture what is needed in dialogue. As the co-founders, Robin Wilson and I did plant the seed and energy was vital to keep the momentum going in the face of indifference from certain sections of the media, criticism from politicians and the violent context of the Troubles. We in turn, and the process, were sustained by the enthusiastic involvement of the management committee, the secretariat, the patrons, the funders, and the participants.

For example, the energy radiating from the sixth-formers in the school assemblies is still palpable from reading that chapter in the report, thirty years later (Pollak 1993). The image we used in promoting the opportunities to make submissions and to contribute to hearings and assemblies was of a microphone, as often handed to a member of the audience in a broadcast or in a community event. We were handing the mike to all-comers, including those who were previously voiceless in the public square. To do this on such a scale in such circumstances required the energy that comes from a passion for hearing those other voices and for seeing the impact they made on other listeners from diverse backgrounds. Robin Wilson and I shared in-

volvement in the media, in academic analysis and in community engagement. These are the hallmarks also of the Dialogue Society.

In contrast to Robin Wilson, I was Catholic, English, and new to the scene but there was something in common: our experience in listening. I had written about Lord Scarman, known as the most liberal of UK judges, but also describing him as a listening judge. I wrote for the BBC's weekly publication, The Listener. I thought I had learned most in my undergraduate degree from my first hour in a law tutorial when our tutor constructively critiqued my fellow tutee's essay. Without saying anything, I learned how our tutor thought we should analyse cases. It was a front-row seat at a Socratic dialogue. The fellow tutee was Timothy Brennan, KC. The tutor happened to be Chris McCrudden, then a doctoral student in Oxford, but previously a law student at Queen's and now a professor there and one of the world's leading authorities on anti-discrimination law.

But I had more to learn about listening, especially from my wife Patricia's studies as a part-time student on the Masters in Ethnomusicology at Queen's University Belfast in the 1990s, about the role of listening in music generally and in particular the value placed on listening by the Venda, a community of 300,000 in Africa, as described by John Blacking in *How Musical Is Man?* (1974, 35). In the West, according to Blacking,

> children are judged to be musical or unmusical on the basis of their ability to perform music. And yet the very existence of a professional performer, as well as his necessary financial support, depends on listeners who in one important respect must be no less musically proficient than he is. They must be able to distinguish and interrelate to different patterns of sound... What is the use of being the greatest pianist in the world, or writing the cleverest music, if nobody wants to listen to it?

This struck me as an insight applicable to my day job promoting the public understanding of law and to my extra-curricular involvement in community engagement. It is also the reason why I think it is so misleading to focus now only on the politicians' agreement in 1998, important though that ultimately was. What would have been the use of the agreement being nurtured by one of the most renowned political negotiators in the world, as Senator George Mitchell was, if nobody at grassroots level had wanted to listen to the new order it was heralding?

Initiative '92 was about co-creating opportunities for different communities to listen to one another. My guardian angel in listening to diverse communities was the father of a King's College London law student. Clodagh Hayes told me, as I left King's in

December 1988, that her father, Maurice, would look out for me. Dr Maurice Hayes, later a Senator in Ireland, was a towering figure in Northern Ireland, the Ombudsman with a distinguished career as a civil servant, and, frighteningly, a student in the Queen's LLM in Human Rights Law. He urged me to keep quiet until I had listened sufficiently to local people and then he would find ways for me to make a contribution. He suggested that the organisers invite me to give the opening address at a conference of grassroots Catholic and Protestant church and community groups in September 1990, which became a little book, *Freedom from Fear: Churches Together in Northern Ireland* in the December (Lee 1990). He then arranged for me to chair the Cultural Traditions Group's conference in March, '*1991, All Europeans Now?*, which was also swiftly turned into a book (Crozier 1991).

Soon after that conference on European identities, I wrote a letter to The Times at the start of May 1991 about the value of the talks about talks, and the possibility of peace. This attracted the attention of Robin Wilson, who was then gracious enough to publish an article by me in Fortnight, initially pointing out that the secular, liberal left in Northern Ireland, led by Fortnight, ignored religion as if the Troubles were only about other aspects of belonging. Robin Wilson, while still convinced that I was wrong on various fronts, was wonderfully open to opposing views. This is how, from my perspective, it was natural that together we would plant the seed of what became a large-scale exercise in listening to one another and which brought individuals, community groups of longstanding, and new associations, including groups of women active in their communities, to the attention of the media and of decision makers.

7 My Thirtieth-Anniversary Reflections on 'Substance': Parity of Esteem

Adrian Guelke saw the expression 'parity of esteem' as central to the Opsahl Report. In that submission of mine, 'Lost for Words', I had suggested that the underlying concept of proportionality had a role to play but I readily accepted that parity of esteem was a better way of putting this. The pushback against it ranged from Councillor Reg (later Sir Reg and now Lord) Empey to the distinguished academic Professor Richard English. Reg Empey criticised parity of esteem in The Belfast Telegraph in an article on 17 August 1994, a fortnight before the IRA ceasefire. He misattributed it to the New Ireland Forum of 1984, whereas it surfaced in Northern Ireland's Constitutional Convention (to which Reg Empey was elected) in 1975. More recently, 'equality of esteem' was used by SACHR in 1990 and as 'parity of esteem' is usually credited to Sir Patrick Mayhew's December 1992 speech in Coleraine.

It was therefore necessary for me to set out the origins of the phrase. It was coined in the context of secondary education in the Norwood Report of 1943 to describe how different kinds of secondary education ought to be treated. This influenced the legislation in Westminster and Stormont later in the 1940s:

> Accordingly, we would advocate that there should be three types of education, which we think of as the secondary Grammar, the secondary Technical, the secondary Modern, that each type should have such parity as amenities and conditions can bestow; *parity of esteem* in our view cannot be conferred by administrative decree nor by equality of cost per pupil; it can only be won by the school itself.

In the 1960s, the manifest failure of parity of esteem in secondary education led to pressure for comprehensive education. Anthony Crosland, the architect of the change, had made the point in his 1956 book *The Future of Socialism* (Crosland 1956) that, 'It is curious that socialists, so often blind to the question of the public schools, should fail to see that 'parity of esteem' within the state sector, combined with a continuation of independent schools outside, will actually increase the *disparity* of esteem within the system as a whole.' But by the time he became Secretary of State for Education in 1964, he had decided to make a start and so issued a call to local authorities to create comprehensive schools in Circular 10/65, intending (we are told in a biography by Susan Crosland) to destroy every grammar school.

In 1975, the Rt Hon David Bleakley of the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) introduced the concept of 'parity of esteem' into Northern Ireland's political discourse during the Constitutional Convention (Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention 1975, paragraph 147):

> The NILP recognises the need to look beyond the frontiers of Northern Ireland and to develop good relations with neighbours. But it stresses the need for realism; there is a price to be paid for North/South cooperation. In particular, the Irish Republic must not lay claim to the territory of the North and must acknowledge the right of the Ulster people to determine their own destiny. Equally, the North would recognise the value of cooperation, between equals, with the South. Such parity of esteem is essential for progress, but once it is established Irish people should find no difficulty in working out agreed forms of contact, beneficial to both parts of the island.

All the way through the 1980s, polytechnics campaigned to be acknowledged as universities. Curiously, it was the same Anthony Crosland, in the same year as he paved the way for comprehensive schools, who had seemed to entrench the binary

system (which he called a dual system) and saying that there would be no new universities for ten years (a policy swiftly reversed). The merger of the Ulster Polytechnic and the New University of Ulster in 1984 paved the way for polytechnics to become universities across the Irish Sea. The tone was set by Lord Longford on 10 May 1989 in the House of Lords. Although her government initially resisted this proposal, by the end of her premiership in 1990, she had changed minds and the Conservative government under John Major forced the change through, against the wishes of many university leaders, in the 1992 Higher and Further Education Act. Lord Longford put the case like this:

> First, the polytechnics are a vital though much under-estimated element in our education system. Secondly, they have been disgracefully starved hitherto of adequate resources. Thirdly, they will never get fair play or achieve parity of esteem until the distinction is eliminated between them and the existing universities. The so-called binary system may have seemed a good idea at the time – I have an idea that I helped to defend it myself about 24 years ago in this House – but by now it has served its purpose. The binary system has had it.' (Hansard 1989)

As parity of esteem for polytechnics was approaching, the concept of parity of esteem was revived by Initiative '92's Opsahl process of listening to diverse voices in civil society. Sir Patrick Mayhew invoked it, in Coleraine and in Westminster, and it featured in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The Opsahl Commission recommended 'a government based on the principle that each community has an equal voice in making and executing the laws or a veto on their execution, and equally shares administrative authority' and that 'Parity of esteem between the two communities should not only be an ideal. It ought to be given legal approval, promoted and protected, in various ways which could be considered' (Hansard 1993).

The footnotes are interesting on the origin of these ideas: for instance, about the former, 'This proposal did not come directly from any single submission. However, its inspiration was the strong emphasis on the need for absolute parity of esteem between the two communities in Northern Ireland in a number of submissions: for example, the Corrymeela Community ...' and four named individuals (Pollak 1993, 123, footnote 2).

Sir Patrick Mayhew had welcomed the Report in Parliament in 1993, 'The Opsahl commission was established to encourage a public debate. It undertook the unique and valuable task of canvassing the views of a wide range of people and organisations in Northern Ireland' and was still emphasising the concept of parity of esteem in the marching season of 1996: 'We have to encourage parity of esteem and a balancing of

the perfectly proper hopes, aspirations and fears of one side of the community against those of its counterparts. That is what we try to do' (Hansard 1996).

In 1998, under the Good Friday Agreement, the two governments,

> 1 (v) affirm that whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities.

While this policy was developing, parity of esteem featured explicitly in the South African Constitution of 1996, s6 respecting languages. In this century, however, the concept of parity of esteem has been criticised or neglected in Northern Ireland more than it has been invoked. Martin Dowling, for example, has written of a 'parity of contempt' (Dowling 2014). Yet parity of esteem is alive and well and living in the NHS, where everyone seems to agree that it was enshrined in legislation by the Coalition Government in the Health & Social Care Act 2012, even though the term itself is not in the text of the legislation. On 19 March 2014, for example, David Cameron, replying to Ed Miliband, said, 'In terms of whether mental health should have parity of esteem with other forms of health care, yes it should, and we have legislated to make that the case' (Hansard 2014).

He meant that the Health & Social Care Act 2012 requires parity of esteem. David Cameron's coalition government was particularly proud of this although (a) it came about through opposition amendments opposed by the government, and (b) the phrase is not there explicitly. The expression is used in the NHS Constitution and Mandates but the Act itself simply begins:

> "1 Secretary of State's duty to promote comprehensive health service
>
> (1) The Secretary of State must continue the promotion in England of a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement—
>
> (a) in the physical and mental health of the people of England, and
>
> (b) in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental illness.

Still, this combination of it being implicit in the legal texts and explicit in policy documents and wider discourse has brought great energy and impetus to mental health services and well-being. It brings me full circle to learning to listen through the pioneering work of the South & East Belfast Health & Social Services Trust.

Some will conclude, thirty years on from Opsahl, that parity of esteem has lost impetus in Northern Ireland, but others might judge that it is only beginning to make its full impact as the ripples from these other spheres and countries criss-cross the world. There are at least four broad reasons why progress towards parity of esteem has been slow:

- First, not everybody agreed with it in the first place, and it is still controversial as a concept. Sometimes it is said to be meaningless, sometimes it is a particular meaning to which someone objects.
- Second, there are now so many detailed rules on equality and non-discrimination that it might be thought to be unnecessary.
- Third, it might be that there is uncertainty or discontent about who is meant to show the esteem: is it a matter for the two governments only or also for politicians and others with public responsibility here or indeed for all of us?
- Fourth, it might be that the tension comes in that not only 'the two main communities' but others might wish to be shown such esteem.

If it is to be reinvigorated, what are the conditions in which parity of esteem thrives? On the one hand, it is not just about a resolution of a complex dilemma by an imposed outcome but rather is about the process of getting to a policy decision, involving listening to why others feel under-valued by the status quo or alternative proposals. The energy in the NHS around mental health is a good model for this and it is no coincidence, on this view, that parity of esteem has been most prayed in aid by processes of dialogue such as the Opsahl hearings or the political talks which led to the Good Friday Agreement. On the other hand, it is not enough for parity of esteem to be invoked only when we think someone else is not living up to it, if we are not reflecting on how we live out the idea, for instance by taking action ourselves, where we can. On the eightieth anniversary of the Norwood Report, we are now much more conscious of not blaming the victims of unjust treatment but, with those warnings, it might be worthwhile considering the Norwood Report's ultimate message by asking how can we cultivate an attitude in which we genuinely esteem other traditions and genuinely attract esteem from those who disagree with us?

8 Thirtieth-Anniversary Conclusions: Grassroots Dialogue

Thirty years after Initiative '92's public hearings, I have the honour of chairing the trustees of the William Temple Foundation. One of our last speakers of 2022 was Lord (Rowan) Williams who pointed out the methodology of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales, of which he is co-chair, which was established by the Welsh Government. The commission has made a point of going out and about to listen to people in their own communities. This emphasis on encouraging inclusive dialogue, from Northern Ireland to Wales and beyond, connects to points our Foundation has made throughout 2022 (Lee 2022).

A fundamental lesson from this grassroots dialogue of thirty years ago is that it only happens through commitment and encouragement. The twin values of our initiative were at one with those of the Quaker charities, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Barrow Cadbury Trust which led the way in funding what was then only the idea Robin Wilson and I had of dialogue: listening and striving to live out a commitment to what we now think of as parity of esteem. This alignment transcends the familiar distinction between process and substance. It has much in common at a practical level with the theoretical insights offered more recently by Richard Sennett on *Respect* (Sennett 2004).

This is why, in my opinion, even someone as committed to dialogue as John Alderdice was so critical of the Opsahl Report on its publication. I am sure that he still supported the process of dialogue, but he was reacting to the recommendations as the leader of the Alliance Party, which rejected binary distinctions such as assuming that everyone must be either a unionist or a nationalist. He could see the dangers in the commission's mindset. This did not deter me, however, partly because I was confident that, in time, the concept of parity of esteem would come to recognise both the non-binary and the fluid nature of some citizens' sense of belonging. It might even have been that it was necessary to go through the phase of 'two communities' arrangements to get to this point. Over thirty years, the Alliance Party has bounced back in polling, while the fortunes of the two parties of the Nobel Peace Prize winners, the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Ulster Unionists, have faded by comparison to Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party. In 1993, in my opinion, the immediate reaction by the leading politicians of the Alliance Party to the Opsahl Report combined both a precarious and a resentful sense of belonging. They feared that the two blocs would squeeze the middle out of political existence, which would have seemed unfair to those in politics who had always tried to be peaceful bridge-builders. Rank and file Alliance supporters, however, and those from

other parties across traditional divides, were more open to this dialogue than were their leaders.

This is a familiar pattern in dialogues in other societies in conflict. Politicians claim that their supporters will not allow them to make compromises, to contemplate alternatives, or to take risks. In fact, genuine consent to the status quo or to change can only emerge if risks, alternatives, and compromises are explored at grassroots level. The more open the dialogue, the more we hear, for instance, the supporters of violence questioned by the media and by fellow citizens, the better the prospects are for peace and, eventually, justice.

This is also why there is such danger in the contemporary 'culture wars' or 'cancel culture'. Dialogue between those who disagree is preferable to a monologue. Parity of esteem is more needed than ever, in Northern Ireland and beyond, but it need not be in two blocs. In Northern Ireland, the mirror image of veto rights between the two main ways of categorising community identities appealed to those communities in the 1990s. In the 2020s, we ought to be able to be more nuanced in recognising more diverse identities and shaping through dialogue more subtle structures to reflect the population's diverse senses of belonging and to overcome abstentionism.

It should be easier to do this in the 2020s than it was in the 1990s because of all that has gone before. Thirty years on, the time-lag does not seem so slow between the dialogue created by Initiative '92 through to the 1994 ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. It took that time, I think, for many families of the victims of violence to come to terms with the idea that those who had been, or who had supported, paramilitaries were being 'brought in from the cold'. Yet this was necessary for that political process, and it was prefigured in the Initiative '92 dialogue, which was open to all-comers including those then subject to the broadcasting restrictions. Thirty years on from listening to both the victims and the supporters of terrorism, my view is that the most significant lesson of the Northern Ireland dialogue and peace process rests in the transforming grace that comes from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Those who come late to participation in constitutional democracy, no longer supporting violence, are treated on equal terms with those who have laboured peacefully for so long. This remains a mystery to many, but it works. We involve all-comers in dialogue not *because* some of them have supported violence but *despite* that.

The last word on this thirtieth anniversary should go to one of those who had laboured long and hard in the vineyard, working for peace and justice through dialogue at grassroots level. Fr Denis Faul, a courageous and indefatigable parish priest and campaigner, 'said that addressing the Opsahl Commission at a Dungannon oral hearing made him feel like a citizen of classical Athens!' (Pollak 1993, 395). We

know that the city of Athens was not as inclusive an arena as Initiative '92 sought to establish, but this sentiment beautifully captures the spirit of grassroots democratic dialogue.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Robin Wilson, Andy Pollak, Geraldine Smyth, the commissioners, the funders, and all who participated in Initiative '92. Thanks also to the Dialogue Society and fellow guests at their Harris Manchester, Oxford, conference in September 2022. For constructive comments on my draft, I am grateful to Edward Abbott-Halpin, James Lee, and two anonymous reviewers. For encouragement and patience, I thank Cem Erbil and all those involved in editing this special edition. None of these should be taken to agree with my views but all helped me clarify my understanding of dialogue. In particular, I am in awe of the work of Adrian Guelke and Marianne Elliott, so it is an honour to follow in their footsteps by adding my reflections on this thirtieth anniversary of the Opsahl Report to their reflections on the tenth and twentieth anniversaries.

Bibliography

Blacking, J. (1974) *How Musical is Man?.* University of Washington Press.

Board of Education (1943) (The Norwood Report), Curriculum and examinations in secondary schools.

CAIN University of Ulster (1968-2023) Northern Ireland Conflict, Politics, and Society. Information on 'the Troubles'. Available at: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk.

Crozier, M. (1991) *All Europeans Now?*. The Institute of Irish Studies.

Dowling, M. (2014*) Traditional Music and Irish Society: Historical Perspectives*. Routledge.

Dunlop, J. (1995) *A Precarious Belonging: Presbyterians and the Conflict in Ireland*. Blackstaff Press Ltd.

Eekelaar, J. & Bell, J. (1997) (editors) *Oxford Essays in Jurisprudence* (3rd series)

Elliott, M. (2013) 'The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution: The Opsahl Commission in Northern Ireland, 1992–93.' New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua, 17 (2), 86–102. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/24625187.

Godson, D. (2004) *Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism*. HarperCollins.

Guelke, A. (2003) 'Civil Society and the Northern Irish Peace Process.' Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 14 (1), 61–78. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27927826.

Hansard (1989) The Polytechnics (Hansard, 10 May 1989). Available at : https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1989/may/10/the-polytechnics.

Hansard (1993) Opsahl Report (Hansard, 28 June 1993). Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1993/jun/28/opsahl-report#S6CV0227P0_19930628_CWA_18.

Hansard (1994) Northern Ireland: Opsahl Report (Hansard, 3 March 1994). Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1994/mar/03/northern-ireland-opsahl-report.

Hansard (1996) Security Situation (Hansard, 11 July 1996). Available at: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1996/jul/11/security-situation

Hansard (2014) House of Commons Hansard Debates for 19 Mar 2014 (pt 0001). Available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140319/debtext/140319-0001.htm

Kelly, K. (1993) 'Staking a claim on the future'. *Index on Censorship*, 22 (8-9). Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064229308535598

Lee, S. (1988) *Judging Judges*. Faber & Faber.

Lee, S. (1990) *Freedom from Fear: Churches Together in Northern Ireland*. The Institute of Irish Studies

Lee, S. (1993) 'Lost for Words'. *Index on Censorship*, 22 (8-9). Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064229308535599

Lee, S. (2003) *Uneasy Ethics.* Pimlico.

Lee, S. (2017a) 'Parity of Esteem'. Parity of Esteem Re-visited & Re-imagined - Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

Lee, S. (2017b) 'Sixty Book Workout, Day 52: Marianne Elliott, The Catholics of Ulster, A History'. *Sixty Book Workout*. Available at: https://sixtybookworkout.wordpress.com/2017/03/16/sixty-book-workout-day-52-marianne-elliott-the-catholics-of-ulster-a-history/.

Lee, S. (2022) 'Reflections of 1942 in 2022'. Available at: https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/reflections-of-1942-in-2022/.

Lee, S. & Fox, M. (editors) (1994) *Learning Legal Skills.* Blackstone Press

McCarthy, J. (1999) *Mary Mcaleese the Outsider*. Blackwater Press.

McDonald, H. (2000) *Trimble.* Bloomsbury.

McKittrick, D. (1993) 'Commission on Ulster calls for power-sharing: Report attracts 500 submissions on how to break the political logjam in Northern Ireland', *The Independent. Available at:* https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/commission-on-ulster-calls-for-powersharing-report-attracts-500-submissions-on-how-to-break-the-political-logjam-in-northern-ireland-1490862.html

Mulryne, W. & McAllister, W. (editors) (1994) *Esteem: Liber Amicorum: essays in honour of Revd. Dr. RDE Gallagher.* The Methodist College: Belfast.

Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention (1975) Report Together with the Proceedings of the Convention and other Appendices

Pollak, A. (1993) 'An experiment in communication', *Index on Censorship*, 22 (8-9). Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064229308535596, along with a note of appreciation for Torkel Opsahl. *Index on Censorship*, 22 (8-9). Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03064229308535597

Pollak, A. (editor) (1993) *A Citizens' Inquiry: The Opsahl report on Northern Ireland*, Lilliput Press.

Sennett, R. (2004) *Respect in a World of Inequality*. W. W. Norton.

Sheldon S., O'Neill, J., Parker, C. and Davis, G. (2020) 'Too much, too indigestible, too fast?' The decades of struggle for abortion law reform in Northern Ireland, The Modern Law Review, 83, 761. Available at: https://www.modernlawreview.co.uk/july-2020/much-indigestible-fast-decades-struggle-abortion-law-reform-northern-ireland/

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (1993) Eighteenth Annual Report for 1992-3, Annex N.

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (1994) Nineteenth Annual Report for 1993-4, Annexes L(ii) and N.

Holding the Unaccountable to Account

Edward Abbott-Halpin[1]

I am grateful for the space provided here to write a few words about my close friend Dr Steve Wright, who sadly died far too soon at the age of 67 in 2019, and who is missed by many. Now is not the time for a full-scale assessment of Dr Steve Wright's pioneering work, which he would have wanted to be collaborative and constructively critical, but I look forward to participating in such an endeavour in due course.

Steve was a large presence, physically, intellectually, but also in spirit: he could move people and had an array of tales or stories which were hard to believe. His stories were both legion and legendary amongst students, his friends, and I suspect those he held to account, though as somebody who crossed paths with Steve before he actually knew me and we were friends, I can therefore verify that many were true and there are others would also vouch for this. As academics we often maintain a distance from our subjects; on this occasion I make no apology for straining this convention as I take an all-too-brief journey through the life of a very close friend and colleague – nor do I apologise for drawing upon writing by my good friend and colleague Professor Simon Lee and a former student whom Steve and I supervised, Dr Craig Brown (from his book *Steve Wright Spy for Peace*, Brown 2022).

Steve pursued a life of seeking to hold to account those who were largely able to be unaccountable. He left me, and others, often questioning how this was possible. How do you dialogue with those who can avoid being accountable? How do you bring those to account who do not need to enter into dialogues and stand beyond being accountable, perhaps considered above the law or even makers of those laws?

1 Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin is currently the Principal at the University of the Highlands and Islands, Orkney College, and Professor of Social and Human Rights Informatics at the University. He has a background in politics, human rights, governance, and social informatics. He was responsible for developing and leading the School of Applied Global Ethics, at Leeds Metropolitan University, and through this became involved in working with the Dialogue Society some 15 years ago He has been involved as an Expert Panel member at the Cambridge Governance Labs, Cambridge University, supporting the development of innovative approaches to measuring governance. He remains a Visiting Professor to the Citizenship and Governance Strategic Research Area (SRA), at the Open University.where he has provided support in the development of a new multi-disciplinary research group. He is an Associate Schumann Fellow of the European University and served as an Expert for the European Parliament Scientific and Technical Options (STOA) Unit. He is currently co-editor of a book series on National Governance and Emerging Technologies for the publishers Springer.

How do you engage with those who actually deny their own existence? The arms trade, governments who interpret or apply legislation allowing themselves to act beyond questions, or an agency of the state, such as the National Security Agency (NSA), who deny their existence even to their own President, earning the epithet 'No Such Agency.' Dr Steve Wright, our friend, and a good friend of the Dialogue Society, spent most of his life in this pursuit, and with some success.

Steve was, throughout his life, a consistent voice in some dialogues that were very much unequal, a pioneer in the field of tracking the arms trade, seeking accountability from security services for their actions, and shining a powerful light on often devious and surreptitious actions of governments who created, or subverted, the very laws that they were responsible for. His methodology was precise, analytical, and accurate, creating accountable information and evidence, but as an adept and accomplished storyteller he used the raw data to paint pictures of the often very secret world inhabited by the arms trade, governments, and their 'representatives', describing unbelievable futuristic weaponry about to come to market or in development, and security systems that invaded the lives of all, and in particular those considered activists or undesirables within their own state. He could enthral students, who did not know whether to run in fear, or to consider his words just myth or fable, and overwhelm civil servants and politicians with evidence and descriptions that they found unbelievable, until they checked the facts. His work on the Technologies of Political Control – STOA Report (Wright 1998) caused consternation and brought an important debate to the European Parliament and its states, still relevant today.

It is probably worth sharing here a little of the background to Steve's life, though not too much for the sake of all who knew him! Born in Newcastle Steve studied at Manchester University for a BSc (Hons) in Liberal Studies, before undertaking his postgraduate studies at Lancaster University, at the Richardson Institute. He set out on a journey to study 'New Police Technologies and Sub-State Conflict Control.' This research, and the consequence of it, led to some of the significant and important impacts of his work. I will mention again later his impact in relation to 'non-lethal' weapons and the NSA.

Steve had the misfortune to come to the attention of the UK secret police whilst studying at Lancaster University for his PhD. As Steve tells the story in his chapter in *Human Rights and the Internet* (Hick 2000), he was undertaking some research for a friend:

> I was assisting a colleague who was preparing a piece for the Sunday Times on the plethora of microwave towers that has sprung up around the UK – ostensibly there to assist us in making long-distance telephone calls. I took some pictures of the Post Office microwave

> towers at the back of the university speculating that they didn't seem to have a proper function since the horns and dishes were not going North-South but to Northern Island to the west and to what might be Menwith Hill in the east. A few weeks later two carloads of secret police entered my house and undertook the first raid by special branch on a UK university.

The visit by Special Branch was part of a well-known case, the ABC (Campbell 2022) trial, relating to alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act. Steve was not the one of the main subjects of the case and was never prosecuted. It did, however, cause considerable pain and loss for Steve, who did not complete his PhD until 1987. It might be said that the motto of Lancaster University became one that Steve lived by – as he says the 'somewhat misleading motto of the university was "Omnibus Patet Veritas" – or "The Truth lies open to all"'!

My colleague, Professor Simon Lee, who was Vice-Chancellor at Leeds Metropolitan University (now known as Leeds Beckett University), when both Steve and I worked there, makes a very fine and well considered appraisal of Steve, which I share next. It illustrates the importance of the activist academic, which describes Steve well:

> Steve Wright was a thinker of originality, rigour, and significance. These are the three criteria by which academic research in the UK is judged every seven years or so in the REF exercise. Each unit of assessment also puts forward 'impact' case studies. The ESRC chose Steve's career as a prime example of such a case study.[2] His challenges to the arms trade and then to the surveillance industry required courage and independence of the highest order. For he was also a campaigner or, as it is sometimes put, an activist.
>
> There has been an uneasy space between academic work and taking action in what are perceived as more direct ways to challenge those in power. Steve Wright is an exemplar of those who inhabit this space. They are often not taken as seriously as those who are solely 'academics' or solely 'activists.' This is a mistake. One lesson from Steve Wright's life's work is to take such people seriously. A famous essay by Ronald Dworkin in my core discipline of jurisprudence, the philosophy of law, was called 'Taking Rights Seriously'. This tribute to Dr

2 https://esrc.ukri.org/news-events-and-publications/impact-case-studies/exposing-international-arms-trade-and-surveillance/

> Steve Wright is therefore entitled 'Uneasy Space' with the sub-title, 'Taking Wrights Seriously'.
>
> There are signs that this space between academia and activism is closing, with the shared concerns about the environment. This is to be applauded. It was a different era, however, and a very different context when the police arrested the then doctoral student Steve Wright in 1977 and seized his notes. It has been a different space ever since because, unlike the consensus over the environment, Steve Wright was one of very few challenging the arms trade and the surveillance state.

Over the years Steve stayed true to the University motto. In all his work he held those in power or with responsibility to account, by ensuring that ethical and moral standards were observed, by collecting the data and analysing it, and then ensuring that directly or indirectly it was applied effectively, in a dialogue with them and those accountable. I mention just three examples very briefly, but there are many more examples and stories.

The first relates to impact, and to rubber bullets. Steve undertook important and ground-breaking work on supposedly 'non-lethal weapons.' Rubber bullets were portrayed and sold as just such a weapon, though in reality proved to be lethal, and research by Steve, amongst others, proved this. But those in power did not want to hear this; they ignored evidence. Steve gave evidence at a UN Committee, filled with those who would not listen. He attempted to convince them, to show his evidence, and finally to illustrate his point, when all else failed. The story goes, from the mouth of the Chair of that Committee, that, having tried everything else Steve, a large and strong man, threw a rubber bullet at the wall. He then watched it ricochet around the room whilst the audience ducked for cover – he made an impact on them, and one on the wall of the room, which I am told caused conversation after the event and resulted in the capacity of this non-lethal technology to be reconsidered.

Over many years, and funded by a variety of charities, European funders, and research councils, Steve, along with colleagues whom he led, undertook research into the arms trade. This involved being a 'spy for peace' or in other words attending arms fairs around the world as an arms trader, gathering data secretly, and collating this. This was a high-risk job: the people on whom Steve spied were wealthy, powerful, amongst the best connected, and not keen on their secrets being shared. What Steve saw, what he documented, was the entrails of the official and unofficial world of arms trading, the current weapons and tools of security, and the future plans and new technologies that were coming. He often described this work as that of a 'secret squirrel', building perhaps the most comprehensive data collection on arms, techno-

logies, and security tools in the world. It informed the activist world, allowed questions about weapons and security to be well-informed in challenging parliaments, and functioned as a vital tool helping perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuse to be held to account – a dialogue of holding to account, wherever possible, and shining light on those who refuse or are beyond accountability.

As a final example I will return to the secret police raid on Steve, and as he would say, it was worth the twenty years' wait to hold them to account – this time it was personal! Steve, through the organisation he then led, the Omega Foundation, was awarded a contract by the Scientific and Technical Options Assessment Unit (STOA) of the European Parliament. The work was broadly to cover the technologies of political control (Statewatch 2023), including state real time surveillance. The report tells the story, but this was very much about the international surveillance systems, operated secretly by a group of states who had the capacity to watch and listen to all of us, a global listening and watching service – operated by the National Security Agency, with the cooperation of the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The pictures that Steve had taken at Lancaster University were a part of the global technology backbone of this global surveillance system. The reporting of this enabled the European Parliament, governments in Europe, and around the world to hold those spying on them to account – evidence indicated the level of interference was not just directed at miscreants but supported interference in political matters and in allowing huge trade deals to be interfered with. The NSA were no longer 'No Such Agency' and were, at least to some extent, made accountable. The full story and the impacts are available in the report mentioned above, and in Steve's own words in his chapter in *Human Rights and the Internet* (Hick 2000).

The legacy that Steve leaves is manifold. He leaves tools and techniques for gathering information, has developed a huge data system that accounted for arms trading and has impacted policy and practical changes. Amongst his later work was the pressure to ensure that any funding by the European Community relating to weapons and security would have to undergo an ethical evaluation prior to being awarded. He has inspired friends, and more importantly students, to carry forward the concept that 'Truth lies open to all' and exemplified how one creates a dialogue with those who do not listen. He would probably describe this as 'political *jujitsu*' but, whatever it is called, it exemplifies integrity, passion, ethical and moral values, and a determination to create a means of speaking to those who do not listen.

Bibliography

Brown, C.S. (2022) Steve wright: A Spy for Peace. Sweden: Irene Publishing

ABC Case | DuncanCampbell.org Retrieved 17 June 2023

Hick, S. F., Halpin, E. F., Hoskins, E. (2000) Human Rights and the Internet. Basingstoke, MacMillan Press

Wright, S. (1998) "An appraisal of technologies of political control. Scientific and Technological Options Assessment STOA". Working document. PE 166.499, 6 January 1998.

Traditional forms of governance have fallen short of dealing with many important global challenges, such as the spread of radical ideologies, the emergence of authoritarian regimes in democratic societies, the threat of climate change, and other environmental problems. These are termed 'polycrises', the solutions of which require innovative approaches to governance to enable interdisciplinary partnerships and transboundary collaboration.

In recent decades, there have been attempts at exploring good governance at both grassroots and national levels. Inspirational models feature in, for instance, practices of co-governance or collaborative governance, commons-based decision making, participatory democracy, public value co-creation, and inclusive policy dialogue. However, despite such promising practices, these models (with a few exceptions) tend to be engaged outside the local and national governance structures and formal institutional processes, rather than integrated in the systems.

For this reason, we propose this Special Issue to analyse the key components of dialogue-centred practices in governance and explore how the dynamic characters of listening, encountering, sharing, inquiring, appreciating, collaborating, co-creating, and other forms of relating can help us re-imagine good governance. In doing so, the Special Issue puts forward innovative ways that dialogue may facilitate structural and institutional evolution and systemic transformation towards more inclusive, participatory, and relational paths to future making.

As pointed out by the authors of this issue, for dialogue to contribute to future-forming governance, there are necessary shifts at three levels. At a basic level is a shift from dialogue as a gateway to knowledge to dialogue as a pathway to understanding, a move from knowing the fact to knowing what-it-means. As these articles demonstrate, governance involves understanding as the basis for collaborative and collective decision making. Understanding through dialogue enables us to transcend fragmentation and integrate knowledge into our shared ways of being human together. At the next level is a shift from dialogue as an intellectual exercise to dialogue as an experiential and embodied engagement. Through dialogue, we partake in each other's lived experience emotionally, allowing us to step outside of ourselves into the world of others and to feel how they are feeling in their lived realities. At a third level is a shift from dialogue as individuals having exchanges with one another to dialogue as living a common life together in an inclusive and caring 'WE space'. Dialogue at this level is community making, as Paulo Freire saw it, where we can become more fully human together in the world and with the world.

The Special Issue further explores how the centrality of dialogue in governance can advance these desirable shifts, what systemic challenges participatory governance tends to encounter, and how we may engage communities and policy makers in moving forward.

Volume 11
2023

JOURNAL of DIALOGUE STUDIES

The Journal of Dialogue Studies is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by the Institute for Dialogue Studies; a subsidiary body of the Dialogue Society.

INSTITUTE for DIALOGUE STUDIES

www.DialogueSociety.org

ISSN 2054-3123