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**Case Study - Dialogue in Ireland: A comparison and study of the characteristics of dialogical environments within the context of dialogue-resistant conflict.**

As a student and practitioner of dialogue, I have an abiding interest in the development of dialogue, and the ways in which dialogue is encouraged and practiced. The practice of dialogue appears to me to be essential for the development of progress toward peace in places where conflict is present but not instantiated as violence.

Designing an environment to enable dialogue is a process of developing space where differences can be honored, where participants, especially those in conflict, are reciprocally re-humanized. The hope for such spaces is that the conditions will exist from which dialogue can emerge. My case study is about the creation of a particular space designed to enable a community dialogue in Northern Ireland. The city of Derry and the community there has experienced significant partisan and international conflict centered on the historical and current colonization of the island of Ireland which includes political, economic, cultural and religious dimensions. Each of these dimensions is understood and interpreted differently by the partisan factions, each not willing and/or not able to cross thresholds to hear the narratives of the others.

My initial inquiry was focused on the question of what went wrong for the Tower Museum. The Tower Museum is a civic museum in Derry, Northern Ireland. An exhibit called the "The Story of Derry" was designed to tell the history of Derry in an unbiased way, the history of a city with many connections to the conflicts in Ireland. I had heard that the exhibit at the Tower Museum, while award winning, was not popular with the local community in the city. The locals,

those involved in the conflict presented by the exhibit, were not taking advantage of that space. This appeared to me to be a question of an available dialogical space being ignored. If a community ignores a dialogical space where they could develop shared meaning about a shared conflict, then, I wondered, how could dialogue be part of a conflict resolution process? If opportunities for dialogue were not participated in, that the community did not have the inclination toward dialogue, then dialogue could not take place.

I realized that my line of inquiry was based on a specific problem-seeking paradigm, and not a well-formed inquiry within the larger context of creative change studies. The cultural predilection toward seeking problems that need to be solved is a particular pattern typical in the current scientific, mechanistic paradigm.

In order to reframe my inquiry, I generalized the focus and widened the context. A broader inquiry is to ask how can enabling dialogical spaces be created in communities characterized by dialogue-resistant conflicts.

When I speak of opportunities for dialogue, I mean the presence of specific foundational criteria. Dialogue is a form of communication that potentially emerges from an enabling environment. As described in my literature review, an enabling dialogical environment is characterized by time, space, inclination and good faith. Also in my literature review I establish that an emergent dialogue is characterized by participants peeling away layers of their personae, suspending their judgment and arriving at their own meaning and by a search for shared meaning. Therefore, these characteristics show that dialogue is fundamentally a complex transformative process.

Anathematic to dialogue is hierarchy. (Senge, 1994) Dialogue itself is disabled by agendas and intentions. This creates an apparent paradox in creating dialogue, because the intention to create dialogue disables dialogue.

The paradox is resolved when one is able to focus on the intention of creating a dialogical environment from which dialogue can emerge, not in the creation of the dialogue itself. Therefore, it becomes essential to the emergence of dialogue to be intentional and active in developing the enabling environment. Dialogue does not just happen.

Intention is a mild example of hierarchy, but one that is enough to disable the emergence of dialogue. If one enters an enabling dialogical space with an intention to dialogue then one has precluded a shared development with the other participants. One's intention to dialogue becomes a barrier to seeing the other participants as equals in the process of what emerges, in fact as has been observed by some practitioners of related disciplines, an intention to dialogue also precludes even being a fully engaged listener. In this sense, hierarchy and intention is an example of a lack of good faith.

Good faith emerged as a primary issue for the formation of dialogue within a year long program on dialogue I attended at The Evergreen State College in 2003. Lack of good faith is a form of deceit, and implies that the deceiver has created a hierarchical power relationship between themselves and other participants. Mediation also takes good faith as a foundational issue as well, and mediators will summarily end mediation sessions where good faith is not evidenced. (DRC, n.d.)

Conflicts where participants are inflexible or lack good faith are examples of conflicts around which dialogue is essentially precluded. These are dialogue resistant conflicts. The question of how to create dialogical spaces from which dialogue can emerge around these dialogue resistant issues and conflicts is one of particular interest to me as a practitioner.

Therefore, the primary inquiry question that informs this case study is how enabling dialogical spaces can be created for dialogue resistant conflicts.

This case study is an examination of this larger inquiry question through more focused research questions. The first research question is how fully do attempts to create enabling dialogical space exhibit characteristics that I believe to be essential for dialogue to emerge. As developed above, several characteristics that I will look for are providing time, space, and willingness.

I have not included good faith in the criteria in this case study due primarily to the sheer difficulty in determining good faith in a meaningful way as a transient outsider to the community.

My secondary research question is whether there is evidence that dialogue has emerged. Elements that I will take as evidence of an emergent dialogue are the aforementioned characteristics from my literature review: re-humanizing of the other, a willingness to suspend judgment or otherwise have flexible positions, a search for shared meaning, and framing the conflict within a larger context.

I used a primarily ethnographic research paradigm, attempting to improve my understanding of dialogue resistant conflict through participation in and interpretation of attempted dialogical activities in context. My primary tool toward this end was observation and participation in the social context and the spaces where I believed dialogue was being attempted. I supplemented my observation with review of documentation produced by the conveners of these spaces. My choice of an ethnographic research method is primarily due to a belief that this model can help in producing new insights and because my focus on areas of dialogue resistant conflict involves incorporating multiple perspectives.

Supplementing my specific observations, I was immersed in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland for two weeks. I traveled in many of the larger cities including Cork, Galway, Donegal, Dublin and Derry.

*Two spaces in the city*

Two spaces I examined were within the larger context of Derry and Londonderry. Derry and Londonderry are both the same place and at the same time very different. One cannot name the city without taking sides within the context of a larger conflict: to call the city Londonderry is to identify with the Loyalist cause, to call the city Derry is to identify with the Catholic cause. For this reason, I will use the terms Derry and Londonderry when speaking about specific historical periods, but for the modern period I will merely speak of the city, without a specific or historical name. The name Free Derry is a specific reference to the Bogside community that is an identity formed in conflict with the British Army during the '70s. The place also has an even more historical name, Doire, which is the Irish word for an oak grove surrounded by water, from which the name Derry was derived.

Derry was renamed Londonderry in 1613 to honor the trade guilds of London that helped finance the construction. The city walls were built in, around and on the site of Derry as part of the effort to fortify the settlements of the Ulster Plantation initiated by James I of England. Thus the city walls are not only iconic signs of the division of the city itself but are indexical signs of the larger conflict over the colonization of Ireland. The city walls are remarkable historically because they still exist, the only complete city walls left in Europe. The city walls are also remarkable as a constant, daily reminder of the division between the communities in the city and of Ireland as a whole. Similar physical divisions have existed in Berlin and are being constructed in Israel-Palestine, not to mention the oft-overlooked divisions created in US communities by inequitable development patterns around railroad tracks or the active construction of freeways along economic and class boundaries within communities.

*The Tower Museum's "The Story of Derry" exhibit*

While I was unable to visit the Tower Museum itself due to renovations, “The Story of Derry” exhibit was temporarily moved to the Harbour Museum. I was able to view the exhibit and review a small number of documents from the museum about the exhibit. The primary elements of the exhibit that interested me were the presentation of the area’s history starting at the founding of Saint Columba’s monastic settlement in the 6<sup>th</sup> century without mentioning previous habitation in pre-history, a side by side view of history comparing Catholic and Loyalist milestones, and a video presentation of the modern troubles of Derry beginning in the late 60’s and continuing through the 70’s.

While the video was playing there was a space to sit and watch, but the video looped and the sitting space did not allow for group conversations. Therefore, there was little space or time made for participants to communicate with each other. Excepting for the space provided to view the movies, there was no space available for people to speak with each other. Even if people would have been so inclined, there was no encouragement to have any kind of discourse with anything other than the material display and presentation itself.

It appeared that the exhibit attempted to humanize the history of the city, providing historical artifacts and narratives. The video presentation did offer an emotional appeal and showed a tendency toward re-humanizing the participants of the historical conflict. Judgment was suspended in the exhibit primarily by providing information in an unbiased way and presenting biased materials in combination with material from another point of view. One prime example of this combination strategy was in a side-by-side history of milestones with one side being a Loyalist timeline and the other being a Catholic timeline.

Little evidence was available that framed the conflict in larger contexts of Ireland’s history as a whole or in world history, such as the period of colonization.

*Tours of the City*

Employees of the Tourist Centre conduct the tour of the city walls. Information was primarily from the viewpoint of those within the city walls during the Siege and much of the information was about the Siege itself. The tour mostly follows the top of the city walls and conspicuously focuses on the experience of those within the walls and their descendants, only looking off into the distance from the walls to the historic place of the catholic cannons or down from the walls at the primarily Catholic Bogside area. No time or space was provided for the participants in the tour to speak with one another.

The Derry City Council publishes a series of books on Irish heritage, including *The Siege of Derry*. I was able to review this as part of the documentation on Derry from the Tourist Centre. Strikingly, the last sentence of this book is “After three hundred years it is surely time to absorb the Siege of Derry into a common history.” (Lacy, 1989) This expresses a strong inclination toward dialogue and the search for shared meaning.

The tour of the Bogside occurs on a different day than the tour of the city walls and is conducted by the Bogside artists not the staff of the Tourist Centre. I was unable to take part in the guided tour of the Bogside, but I did independently view the murals and monuments there. The Bogside artists produced *Murals* (2001) a book that details the history of the murals and the history of the Bogside itself that I was able to review.

The two tours are divided along the same lines as the larger community. While it could easily be that the community demanded this division, and that the issue is so contentious that even the idea of combining the tours was unacceptable, it is also true that little apparent recognition of the variety of viewpoints was available. There was not an attempt, for example, to laud the similar strength of resolve of both the protestant and catholic communities to persevere.

This is as much as to say that the tours did not offer a search for shared meaning. The tours did not provide a time or space for people to talk with each other, and were primarily oriented toward an expert model. Habermas has specifically pointed out the difference between a dialogical mode of communication and the presentation, or monological, mode. (Westerhof-Shultz, 2004) Communication on these tours is presentational, one-way and hierarchical, and distinctly neither deliberative nor dialogical.

The division of the tours would allow participants to self-select a viewpoint that was compatible with their previous beliefs. This division provided a mechanism by which partisans could maintain their views without any significant challenge, unless they were already inclined to such action. The development of shared meaning would therefore be stagnant until some other, outside influence created a change in the participants.

The separation of these tours seems to evidence an inability to suspend judgment about the history of the city. There was certainly an empathetic story told of partisans within their context, but there was little evidence of an attempt to re-humanize the other side of the conflict at the same time.

There was also no information about the conflict provided in a broader context than merely the events surrounding the specific history of the city, centering primarily on the period of the Siege or the conflict in the 70's.

*Photo tour of the city*

*Image 1 - The Tower Museum*

The original site I had hoped to study was the Tower Museum. Unfortunately, the museum was closed for renovations. I was able to view some of the materials from the museum's exhibits that had been moved to a neighboring building.

*Image 2 - "Derry Will Be Free" at Grianan Aileach*



I was visiting an ancient monument in the Republic of Ireland five miles northwest of Derry called the Grianan Aileach, possibly the palace of the northern Irish Kings. I happened to notice something was carved into the surface of a stone that pointed out how pervasive the specific conflict over the city was in the larger context of Ireland as a whole. The conflict in the city is an indicator of the larger context. Therefore, a case study of the city itself is an important opportunity toward a more wholistic understanding of Ireland.

*Image 3 - "Hands across the divide"*

This is a statue at the city side of a bridge over the river. The statue is a representation of the sides of the conflict coming together, but not quite there. The cultural, institutional and physical demarcations between the communities in the city are still very real and present to all residents.

*Image 4 - Hands come closer*

The premise of this work is that there are divisions that need to be mended. The implied hope in this work of art is that the divide will be bridged by the actions of the people on either side. This becomes an analogy for the larger conflicts in Ireland and other specific conflicts as they manifest in other communities.

*Image 5 - The Loyalist area*

Merely a block away from the statue is an area of the city clearly marked as being a Loyalist zone. The curbstones are painted with the colors of the UK flag as territorial markers. The right side of the frame shows part of a constructed surface on which the Loyalist community annually builds a bonfire that is lit before one of the two annual marches around the city walls. The bonfire building takes place over several weeks, keeping the city aware of the conflict during that period. The left side of the frame shows a sign, black background with white lettering, which recalls the centuries old Siege of Londonderry and the present,

active identification made between the current Loyalist community and that local history.

*Image 6 - "No Surrender"*

A key component of the sign is the phrase "No Surrender" which points out an important element of the way that the Loyalist community views itself. They still feel that they are under siege, and have an identity that demands recognition of the strength and resolve of place and position they represent.

*Image 7 - British Army Watchtower*

Here is one of two modern watchtowers placed in the city by the British Army. These towers have been in constant use, and are still the station of British soldiers. In recent years, the garrison has been reduced to only 5 soldiers, but the watchtowers are a constant reminder of militarization. These towers echo the still extant historical watchtowers along the city walls used during the Siege of Londonderry along the city walls.

*Image 8 - The George Walker Plinth*

The fenced platform was the site of a large plinth, marked by a statue of one of the key Loyalist figures in the Siege of Londonderry. Rev. George Walker was one Governor of Derry during the siege. The IRA blew up the plinth itself, but the significance of the area around the platform remains. Only several hundred feet away is both the site of St. Columba's original monastery and the clubhouse for the Apprentice Boys of Derry Club, the Loyalist organization that organizes the annual bonfire, march and, until recently, the burning in the effigy of Robert Lundy. Lundy was another Governor of Derry at the time of the Siege of Londonderry and is considered to have been a traitor by the Loyalists because he fled the city.

St. Columba's 6<sup>th</sup> century monastery was built in the clearing in the original oak grove of Derry. The name Derry itself derived from the Irish word Doire,

meaning an oak grove surrounded by water. Beneath this section of wall, far below at the edge of the Catholic community below is St. Columba's Well, one of the original holy wells of the oak grove. Perhaps symbolically, that well has been sealed and water cannot be had from the installed ornate pump.

*Image 9 - View of the Bogside from near the plinth*

Until only the last few years, the burning of the effigy and the firecracker sounds would have occurred at the exact spot on the city walls that overlooks the Catholic community, also called the Bogside. Derry had been surrounded by water with a river on one side and a bog on the other. Much of the Catholic community lives in the drained bog land almost opposite the area where the Loyalist community has been located. The difference in relation to the wall is significant. At the Loyalist section, the wall is directly next to and on the level of the buildings outside the wall. The city wall towers several hundred feet above the Bogside community, an imposing and ominous height. Far below, in the Bogside, can be seen the Free Derry sign and several murals.

*Image 10 – "You are now entering Free Derry"*

I was not able to determine which of the community labels came first, the previously mentioned Loyalist sign or this sign with a white background and black lettering. I suspect that the Free Derry sign was first. The two are clearly intended as opposites. Free Derry is another name for the Bogside community, and was the area that the Catholic community held blockaded from the British Army in the 70's. The blockade was broken on Sunday, January 30, 1972 when the British Army pushed through barriers with tanks and soldiers, killing several Bogside residents. This has since become known as The Bloody Sunday Massacre and is commemorated in the song "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" by U2. Along with a specific memorial to those killed on that day, murals illustrate the sides of several

Bogside buildings. One of these murals is on the building in the right side of this image.

*Image 11 - Bogside Mural & Current protest sign*

Artists that now run the city tours of the Bogside area painted these murals. While the murals are reminders of past conflicts, artifacts of current and ongoing conflict exist side by side.

*Image 12 - Solidarity in a broader Irish context - militarization*

Solidarity beyond the context of the city is quite apparent within the community. Not only do those present in the city identify with a broader Irish conflict, but they also appear to have contextualized their own experience of militarization within a broader worldwide context of resistance. In this case, the use of Ireland as the site of manufacture and supply for militarization is protested in stenciled graffiti on a wall in the city. Mentioned in the graffiti, Raytheon is a multinational corporation that produces defense technologies and warplanes for various militaries. In Derry, Raytheon established a software plant to develop missile guidance tools. (Maguire, 2001)

*Image 13 - Solidarity in a broader worldwide context - no war for oil*

On the same wall as the graffiti protesting local militarization is evidence that the local conflict over militarization has been contextualized as merely a specific instance of a much larger, world-wide struggle for hegemony and military control of economic resources.

*Image 14 - Connected not divided*

Tangential to the mirroring of community signs, there is a statue outside a performing arts center that mirrors the “Hands across the divide” statue. Where the latter represents an essentially divided community voluntarily coming together, the former represents an essentially, and inescapably, connected

community with oppositional views of the world around them. These are completely different statements about the communities within the city.

*Image 14 - Each sees through the others' eyes*

A fundamental artistic element to this statue is that the eyes of each side are open through to the eyes of the other side. One cannot see without the other. While the welded joints between the bodies suggests an inescapable prison, the eyes are a humanizing and hopeful escape for this vibrant and beautiful city that is locked in an iron mask of conflict. The essentially interconnected nature of the eyes in this statue is a further statement of the inescapable interconnectedness and humanity of every part of this community within the context of a historically dialogue-resistant conflict.

This statue and the other are both physical manifestations of a shared search for meaning of what it means to be a diverse and interconnected community. These may evidence an emerging dialogue that is occurring in the city I was not able to otherwise witness within the tours of the city and the museum exhibit.

*The Doagh Island Visitor Centre*

The third space I included in this case study was in The Famine Village at the Doagh Island Visitor Centre. Doagh Island is in Inishowen. Inishowen peninsula is close by and directly northwest of the city. Started in 1997, the Visitor Centre tells the story of the Inishowen peninsula from the period of the Great Famine in the 1840's to the present day.

The structure of the Famine Village is a physical path that follows history from the present back through time. Beginning with a house that was inhabited until the early 80's, the village walk passes displays of Irish culture and events through the period of the Great Famine and before. Through out the village walk, the guide offers cultural information from all sides of the issue, re-humanizing all

factions and constantly contextualizes the historical famine in Ireland to current famines in other areas of the world. The materials from the Centre go so far as to suggest that these current famines are occurring in “our Ireland’s [sic] – we are their landlords.” The history of the famine in Ireland is given but also framed in a larger context of exploitation in the world.

Ireland’s historical experience with famine is contextualized with its current general prosperity and current famines across the world. An example of this framing is when the pamphlet for the Centre suggests: “If you can walk up to your fridge and find food in it, if you have clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a bed to sleep on then you are richer than 75% of the world’s population.” The visceral connection between Ireland’s self-identification as victims of famine induced by British economic prosperity is placed in the context of current Irish prosperity being at the expense of other areas of the world. Contextualizing the past in relationship to the present in this way indicates a systemic awareness, that the pattern of famine is an emergent property of economic prosperity within the current economic model. By making this contextual comparison, the Famine Village is pointing toward the necessity for second order change.

The push toward re-humanizing others and in searching for shared meaning is evidenced in the pamphlet saying, “Based on this tour one can perhaps understand the great need for understanding, accepting, education and unity among all people.” Evidence of suspension of judgment is available when the pamphlet states “The Centre is designed not to divide on religious grounds but to show a view of past Irish history where there were no winners.”

What the quotes from the pamphlet point to, and was amply played out during the guided tour, was a constant connection made between the experience of Ireland being relevant and reflective on the way that other post-colonial struggles have manifested across the globe. There is a significant push

throughout the experience of the Famine Village to co-contextualize the specifically Irish experience with the experience of the world as part of the human experience as a whole.

The famine centre constantly framed the conflicting views of history within a structure of world experience with famine. There was an external reflection of the issue in a distant context. This allowed for the people to be separate from the problems. The experience of the people was presented, which focused on the ground not the political frame in which the events happened.

By framing the history of the famine as a shared history of pain from which lessons could be learned and responsibility gained for ensuring that the same pain did not occur in the world for others, there was the development of an option for mutual gain. The Irish experience could be a way to collectively act in a more moral and responsible way toward other countries that currently are in the world economic position in which Ireland herself was so recently.

Most significantly for me, a primary component of the exhibit, and included in the price of admission instead of as an add-on, is a pot of tea and plate of biscuits in the Tea House on site. This is a space where unstructured time is provided for participants to be together, with the social inducement of tea and finger food. Significantly, participants in the exhibit actually talked to one another, exchanging personal stories and reflections on the larger contextual issues raised by the exhibit.

The tea and biscuits at the end of the tour were provided in a space where tour participants could engage each other in non-directed conversation. This created a time, place and encouragement for further participation in human connections.

*Conclusion*

While the other spaces appeared to exhibit some elements of a dialogical space and an emergent dialogue, only one space appeared to fully develop both. The Famine Village exhibited all the criteria I outlined for an enabling dialogical space and I was able to identify all the characteristics of an emergent dialogue. Of the three spaces in this case study, the only one that had all the characteristics of an emergent dialogue was the space that met all the enabling criteria. This suggests a strong positive correlation between the criteria and the emergence of dialogue.

Due primarily to the limitations of time, I was not able to explore in this case study change over time. For example, is the apparent success of the Famine Village at developing an emergent dialogue sustainable? Another question remains about the possible dialogical space evidenced by the statues in the photo tour. Questions also remain about what one might do in a community faced with dialogue-resistant conflict to develop dialogical spaces, and this inquiry would be aided by a more thorough investigation of the design and development that preceded the implementation of the spaces in this case study.

Further, what does it mean that all these different implementations and models are in close proximity to each other?

A similar experience was a lecture series on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which included a variety of technologies intended to develop a community dialogue, including lectures, demonstration of collaborative behaviour and listening circles. This experience was hard to evaluate as either being effective or not, but in the way that it resembles the structure of the Famine Visitor's Center experience I can see that dialogical space can be aided by the development of similar supporting activities.

Anecdotally, humans switch strategies to try to accomplish tasks that seem insurmountable, so it should not be much of a surprise that the multimodal



engagement that utilizes a sequence of supporting activities appears to best support the creation of a dialogical environment.

A broader view of my experience in Derry could not ignore the way in which each element of a holistic experience is supporting activities for the other elements. While neither the tours nor the exhibit in and of themselves are fully able to develop an enabling dialogical space, it is possible that these discrete elements are part of a larger web of supporting activities. This suggests that a community in conflict may need to utilize as many different tools intended to increase engagement as possible as part of a long-term relationship with itself.

Finally, even though the spaces I examined in Derry were not fully developed enabling dialogical space nor had definite characteristics of an emergent dialogue, the evidence from the photo tour of the City did suggest that there is a search for a shared meaning occurring. Further study could show that dialogue is taking place in spaces characterized by good faith, and that the tours were far too public for that condition to be true. There may in fact be private, local dialogue occurring that I was unable to witness as an outsider to the community.

## **Literature Review**

A review of the literature on the topic of dialogue is useful for constructing a working definition of canonical dialogue. In order to study and evaluate the relative qualities of spaces attempting to promote dialogue, one must first have an idea about what dialogue is and what characteristics those spaces might most likely exhibit.

### *Criteria of enabling dialogical spaces*

#### *Time & Space*

The necessity for time and space is primarily one of self-evident logistics for dialogue to occur. However, there is reason to believe that time and place need specific characteristics for dialogue to emerge.

The work of Oldenburg (1999) makes it clear that time and place must be unstructured. Oldenburg develops the idea of time and space in relation to the needed for a commons, a third place that is neither home nor work, where people can meet and interact with one another in un-programmed ways.

Havel (1986) developed the concept of self-conscious culture in which a community is aware of the way its culture has developed, and points to theatre as a time and place where this self-conscious development can take place. Theatre then provides time and place as a foundation for the development of a community dialogue about its own cultural development.

Brown (1995) speaks of sharing “sticky rice” which is her metaphor for the way in which sharing meals creates bonds between people. A more technical

term for this comes from Christian theology is commensality, the sharing of meals as an act of community. While I certainly agree the creating time and place for dialogue is essential, as I've pointed out in the past, there must also be some intentionality and purpose. One primary task of the Compassionate Listening Project (Hwoschinsky, 2002) is to create for the participants a safe place to both speak and to be heard as an experience of these which they may not have had before. The speaking and listening is essential to a process of discernment that reveals the fundamental connection between humans. This specialized listening happens in an intentionally created time and space.

### *Willingness*

Anecdotally, I've suggested that even if unstructured time and space is available, people in western culture lack the inclination to dialogue. The simple interest in meeting another that is different than oneself is singularly lacking across most of the population in this country. Most people are more than willing to stay within their comfort zones; in fact they are hostile to the idea of any situation that might be uncomfortable or lead to self-reflection.

One of the most insidious qualities of a shopping mall is that it caters to people who essentially want to have no meaningful connection to their own community. One can go to a mall and be assured that no one will attempt to interrupt the individual pursuit of consumption.

### *Good Faith*

Mediation places a high value on good faith as the foundation to

successful outcomes. (DRC, n.d.) Much effort is spent by the Dispute Resolution Center in establishing that requests for mediation are likely to be successful, specifically that the potential participants are coming to the negotiations with good faith. The DRC defines good faith as having an open mind and willingness to compromise. The importance of good faith cannot be underestimated, and entire negotiations can be scuttled because one party in the dispute is not negotiating in good faith.

Senge, among others, has pointed out how damaging hierarchy can be to the emergence of dialogue. (1994) In dialogue, when so much is dependant on the willingness of the participants to come together without hierarchy, a lack of good faith is an implicit, often silent claim of superiority. This superiority is an assumption of a hierarchical relationship between participants. Therefore, good faith is the antithesis of hierarchy and is a necessary condition to be met before dialogue can emerge.

### *Characteristics of an emerging dialogue*

#### *Re-humanizing*

Krishnamurti specifically points out the need to remove the personae, the masks worn by people, in order to re-connect to a shared humanity. The compassionate listening project is primarily focused on the development of a fundamental connection on this level, and proposes that this connection must take place before dialogue can emerge.

Compassionate listening views itself as foundational to dialogue, and is

very much focused on creating an awareness of shared humanity specifically in cases of conflict. In a compassionate listening experience, one is working to discern the humanity of another in spite of collectively charged topics.

(Hwoschinsky, 2002)

### *Suspension*

Bohm (1998) points out the need for suspension of judgment. Suspension of judgment not as an absence of critical thought, but is suspending value judgments. Krishnamurti points out that individuals must drop their personae, the masks they wear, in order for dialogue to emerge. (Boga, 2004) Bohm is clear that the suspension of judgment does not mean that one gives up their identity or individualities, but that space is made for new ideas to emerge.

### *Search for Shared Meaning*

The intellectual and emotional space created when participants suspend, develops an opportunity for the development of shared meaning. Bohm points to the search for shared meaning as an essential component of dialogue.

Atlee categorizes the field of dialogue by how transformative the conversation is for the participants. Atlee suggests that the field of practices that can be called dialogue is characterized primarily by more or less transformative effect. I think this is far too simplistic, and draws the field far too broadly. The transformative nature of a search for shared meaning is not the same as, for example, the transformative process of personal mastery, although they can be informed by each other. A transformative experience cannot in and of itself be

dialogical, because dialogue has additional specific characteristics that differentiate from other transformative processes, which are being outlined here.

*Framing in a larger context*

As a systems thinker, I have a bias toward the necessity of systems thinking. I presented a paper to the National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation specifically calling for both wholism and systems thinking as intentional practices within the dialogue community.

I noticed a correlation between the aforementioned three characteristics and the recommendations or strategies for what Fischer and Ury call “principled bargaining” outlined in *Getting to Yes*. (1981) The strategies they suggest are: separate the people from the problem; focus on interests, not positions; invent options for mutual gain; and insist on objective criteria. The strategies to separate people from the problem and to focus on interests both seem to be related to the criteria of re-humanizing the other and suspending judgment. The strategy of inventing options for mutual gain seems to be related to the search for shared meaning. The third strategy appears to be something new, an impulse toward wholism or finding a larger framework or context.

In this way, the fourth strategy for principled bargaining is related to a response to paradoxes, which is to search for a wider context in which the paradox resolves. (Boga, 2004)

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