SOCIAL
INNOVATION
IN PRACTICE

OPEN FOR CHANGE

Hivos
people unlimited

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

Femke Kaulingfreks

In October 2013 Hivos organized a three-day event around the question "How open for change are we really?" This question is both self-reflexive and addressed at a larger social context. The words 'openness' and 'change' are formative for Hivos itself, and speak of a desire to transform societies for the better. Hivos is moving towards becoming a global incubator for social innovators and an advocate for the open society.

OPEN COLLABORATION

As an organization in development cooperation Hivos is always looking for up-to-date methods to tackle oppression, inequality and injustice around the world. The traditional approach to development aid, based on the idea that 'the West needs to train the rest' has been replaced by a more reciprocal approach. Inspiring and new methods to change existing social, cultural and political structures are developed both in the Global North and the Global South. Hivos strives to facilitate an open dialogue and collaboration between a variety of change-makers, in which different sources of knowledge, practices and worldviews can nourish each other. This approach is aimed at the empowerment and self-reliance of people who do not naturally benefit from traditional centers of power and governance. At the same time, possible clashes of convictions, divergent working attitudes and styles of communication can make such an open collaboration challenging. An engagement with dilemma's and multiple perspectives is necessary in every processes of transformation, for development practitioners, as well as for society at large.

Those who share the Hivos approach, strive towards societies which are characterized by transparency, accountability, dialogue and compassion. However, despite this strive for openness and understanding, certain shadow sides remain difficult to deal with in every society. Certain conflicting cultural expressions, identities and beliefs remain difficult to touch upon, since they are related to solidified socio-economic hierarchies, deeply

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rooted distrust between different groups of people and/or seemingly self-evident traditions of thought and faith. It is on these shadow sides where problems remain most difficult to tackle. During the "Open for Change" event, Hivos explored social innovation as a new route towards sustainable and genuine societal transformation. In this publication we share some of the 'best practices', which enable people to tackle tough dilemma's in a refreshing way.

SOCIAL INNOVATION

The term social innovation is in fashion nowadays. The concept is defined in many, sometimes vague or naive, ways. Hivos is inspired by Alan Fowler, who defines social innovation as follows: "social innovations are context dependent, original or inventive agent-inspired initiatives that are intended to alter the rules of the game - or the game itself - through the institutions that mediate and co-determine a society's aspirations, trajectory, sustainability and its winners and losers." For Hivos it is important that change in itself is not the primary object of pursuit. If social innovation is not embedded within a strong analysis of social, economic and political power structures on a global scale, and coupled with a clearly formulated ideological position, it remains an empty vessel. Hivos aims to become a game changing social innovator, and not a provider of quick fixes. However, if developed in a conscious and context-rich way, the route of social innovation has a lot to offer. Social innovation can help development organizations to move beyond the traditional focus on humanitarian aid and service delivery. It acknowledges the entwinement of ecological and social concerns, the local and the global dimension to societal problems and their solutions, as well as formal and informal approaches to political agency. Social innovation can lead to transformation in unexpected ways.

Experiments with social innovation tools have contributed to recent work on advocacy, empowerment and social cohesion. Such tools facilitate

the strength, voice and networks of communities themselves, instead of promoting the contribution of external experts. The mobilization of grassroots knowledge and citizens-based agency is central to a social innovation approach. In this sense, by adopting an agenda of social innovation, NGO's can transform from the motor behind civic action, to the facilitator of transformation processes that are sparked within communities. In such processes multiple actors are invited to cooperate. Not only citizens are expected to bring about the necessary change, governments and corporations are indispensible to find structural solutions to so called "thick" problems, which are characterized by their complex socio-political dynamics, multiple causes, and multiple layers of interests.

These "thick" problems are not easy to tackle. They are characterized by a complex interplay of different stakeholders, who each have their own needs, believes and expectations. In addition, negative systemic influences on the quality of life for people and planet are sometimes tough to change. Nevertheless, processes of transformation begin with concrete steps. The methods which are described in this publication show which steps could be taken.

METHODS TO TACKLE TOUGH DILEMMA'S

The first three articles following this introduction discuss various ingredients of an attitude of openness. Such an attitude could be seen as the basis for a social innovation approach, especially when "touchy" issues are at stake. All three articles emphasize the need to be open to divergent, sometimes clashing lifestyles and religious or cultural convictions, as well as the need to critically evaluate ones own position and background. An inviting dialogue on tough societal dilemma's can be opened up by carefully listening to the experiences of others. Ute Seela and Ton Groeneweg discuss the complex nature of reciprocity, as it can be experienced by Western development practitioners. Their liberal values can sometimes conflict with the religious values of their interlocutors. Such clashes often come to the fore around the topic of sexuality. In her contribution Brenda Bartelink discusses the skills which could enable professionals to adopt an open attitude in conversations about religion and sexuality. Judith van den Boogert presents the Kumi method, a dialogue technique which helps interlocutors with conflicting positions to unravel societal problems in clear steps, and in an inclusive setting.

The following three contributions discuss the use of creative methods to address taboos and problems which otherwise remain on the shadow sides of society. Simon Hodges explains how story telling can make complex topics accessible in a personal way. The sharing of stories can bring people closer together and contribute to the discovery of common values and interests. Sonali Khan describes how theatre performances in the tradition of Theatre of the Oppressed make the traditional practice of early marriages negotiable for girls, their families and their communities in rural India. Jimmy Ssentongo shares his experiences as a cartoonist in Uganda. His cartoons can make a provocative, funny contribution to the public discussion on tough issues such as corruption, police brutality and the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. These articles make clear how cultural tools can provide an opening to engage average citizens, also from lower classes, in an analysis of prevailing political and cultural practices. Creative interventions can make a critical evaluation of dominant practices acceptable.

In the last two articles the use of new digital technologies to encourage social and political change is discussed. Paolo Ruffino describes how video games can function as a space for critical engagement with international problems, such as the production and trade of consumer goods, and border management. David Harris proposes the use of an interactive phone application to make the democratic political process more transparent and open to the direct participation of voters. Both contributions indicate how digital tools can provide open access to often obscure political and economic processes. The use of new technologies is recently not only apparent in protests and other manifestations of social movements, but can also be used by more institutionalized stakeholders. Video games and phone apps can involve many people in a common search for alternatives to existing structures of decision-making.

The contributions to this publication offer some inspiring examples of how to address "thick" problems and how to bring tough issues out of the shadows. The discussed tools of open dialogue, creativity and digital technology indicate how social change can be brought into practice in a refreshing way. Hopefully, you, the reader, will be invited to formulate your own answer on the initial question "How open for change are we really?" Enjoy the input which is provided in the following pages.
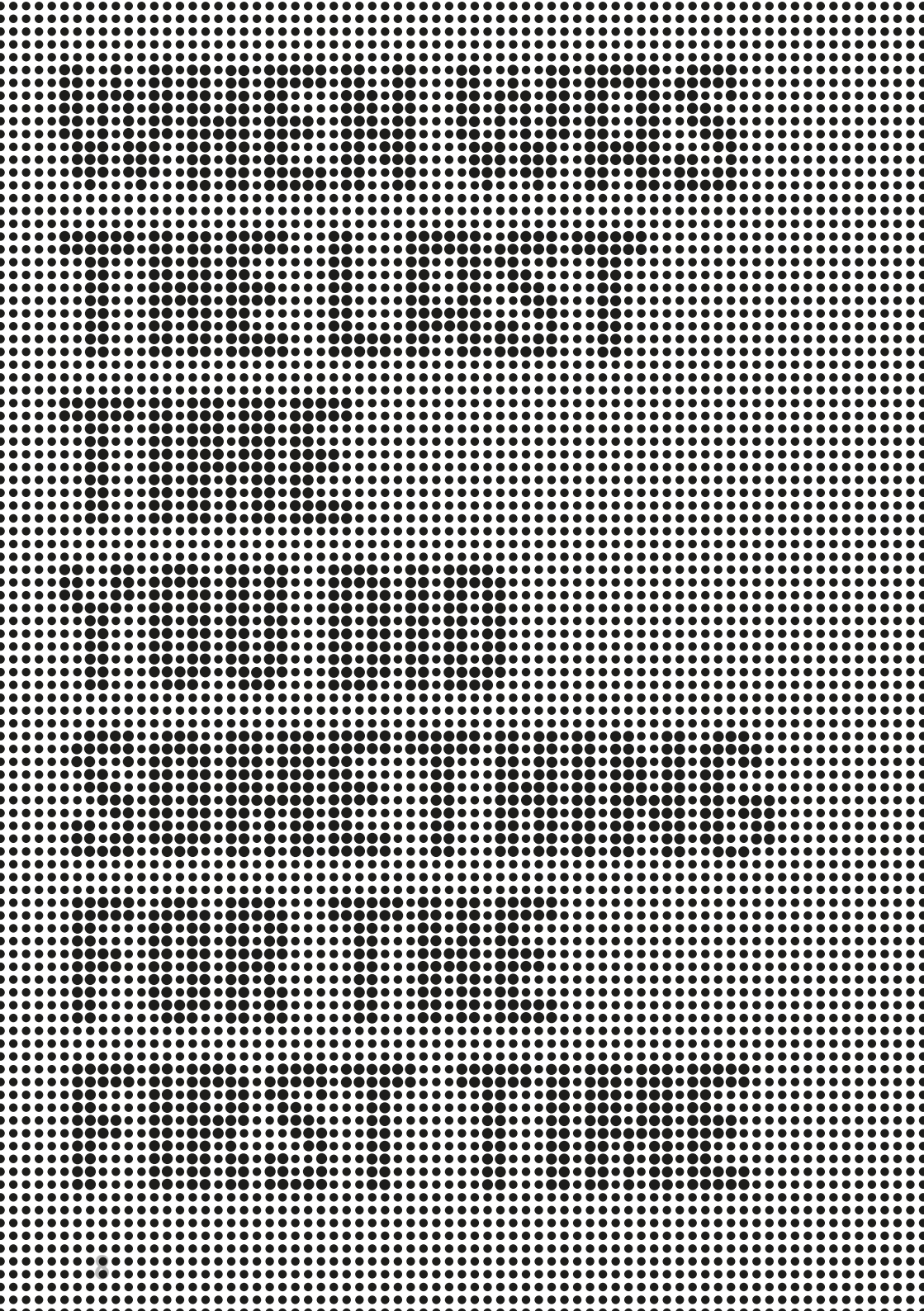
Femke Kaulingfreks received her Masters degree in Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam and completed her PhD at the University for Humanistic Studies in Utrecht. In her dissertation she explored the political meaning of disruptive, and even violent, interventions of youth with a migrant background in deprived urban areas in France and the Netherlands. The notion of unruly politics remains her main topic of investigation. She currently teaches Political Theory at Webster University in Leiden and works as a researcher for de Haagse Hogeschool in The Hague. As a freelance researcher she also cooperated with partners such as Forum: Institute for Multicultural Issues, Hivos, Vrijwilligers Centrale Amsterdam (Association of Volunteers Amsterdam) and de Doetank. Besides her teaching and research work Femke regularly organizes youth exchange projects and is engaged in activism related to housing, migration and social justice issues.

FEMKE KAULINGFREKS

STORIES ENGAGE PEOPLE AT EVERY LEVEL - NOT JUST IN THEIR MINDS BUT IN THEIR EMOTIONS, VALUES AND IMAGINATIONS

TAKING SOCIAL INNOVATION SERIOUSLY:
HOW OPEN ARE WE REALLY? *Ute Seela and Ton Groeneweg*

The Open for Change event has brought together individuals and organizations who seemed to represent a new generation of 'change makers' and 'change supporters'. Many enthusiastically shared their experience with new tools which – so they hoped – would mobilize people to be active citizens who claim their rights and question harmful norms, regulations and practices. What seemed to unite them was not only the young generation's support of modern technology and playful approaches but also a shared observation (voiced primarily by seasoned activists) that despite decades of civil society activism and improvement in the legal landscape, numerous human rights issues continued to emerge while citizens remained inactive for a large part. This led many of the participants of Open for Change to conclude that strategies had to be rethought in order to tackle inequalities and injustice. What we want to argue in this piece is that social innovation – which seeks to offer a new approach to tackle the big issues of our time[1] - indeed provides useful methodologies. However, taking social innovation seriously also requires a rethinking of our own norms, attitudes and practices. Values like tolerance, equality and liberty can lead to new forms of intolerance, if they are rigorously put into practice without acknowledging the particularities of a specific context.

WICKED PROBLEMS

What characterizes the ´big issues´ of the current decade is that they are multi-layered (some use the term ´thick´ or ´wicked'[2]). What may offer a solution to one part of the problem, may create dilemma's for another part. Our own norms and perceptions are not only guiding us to a solution but can also be part or even the core of the problem, in cases where norms

1   See Alan Fowler 'Social Innovation: new game, new dawn or false promise', http://www.hivos.net/Hivos-Knowledge-Programme/Publications/Publications/Social-Innovation-New-Game-New-Dawn-or-False-Promise Hivos 2013.

2   See for example Mike Edwards 'Thick problems and thin solutions. How NGOs can bridge the gap', http://www.hivos.net/content/download/71414/611447/file/Edwards_How%20NGOs%20can%20Bridge%20The%20Gap.pdf Hivos 2011, or this animation which emerged from a series of events on wicked problems https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrWbicvDLPw.

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and values collide. A telling example is (religious) fundamentalism. While most human rights activists would not hesitate to call it one of the sources of violence against women[3], we do not have a joint understanding of what religious fundamentalism is. As a consequence, perceived signifiers of fundamentalism, such as traditional religious dress and habits, come to be seen as problematic. From the other side, when traditional or religious values are seen as opposed to human rights, this can lead to the perception that Western discourse ignores local identities, imposes moral judgment and reinforces the divide between 'us' and 'them'.[4] Current civil society strategies clearly do not suffice to address this growing polarization.
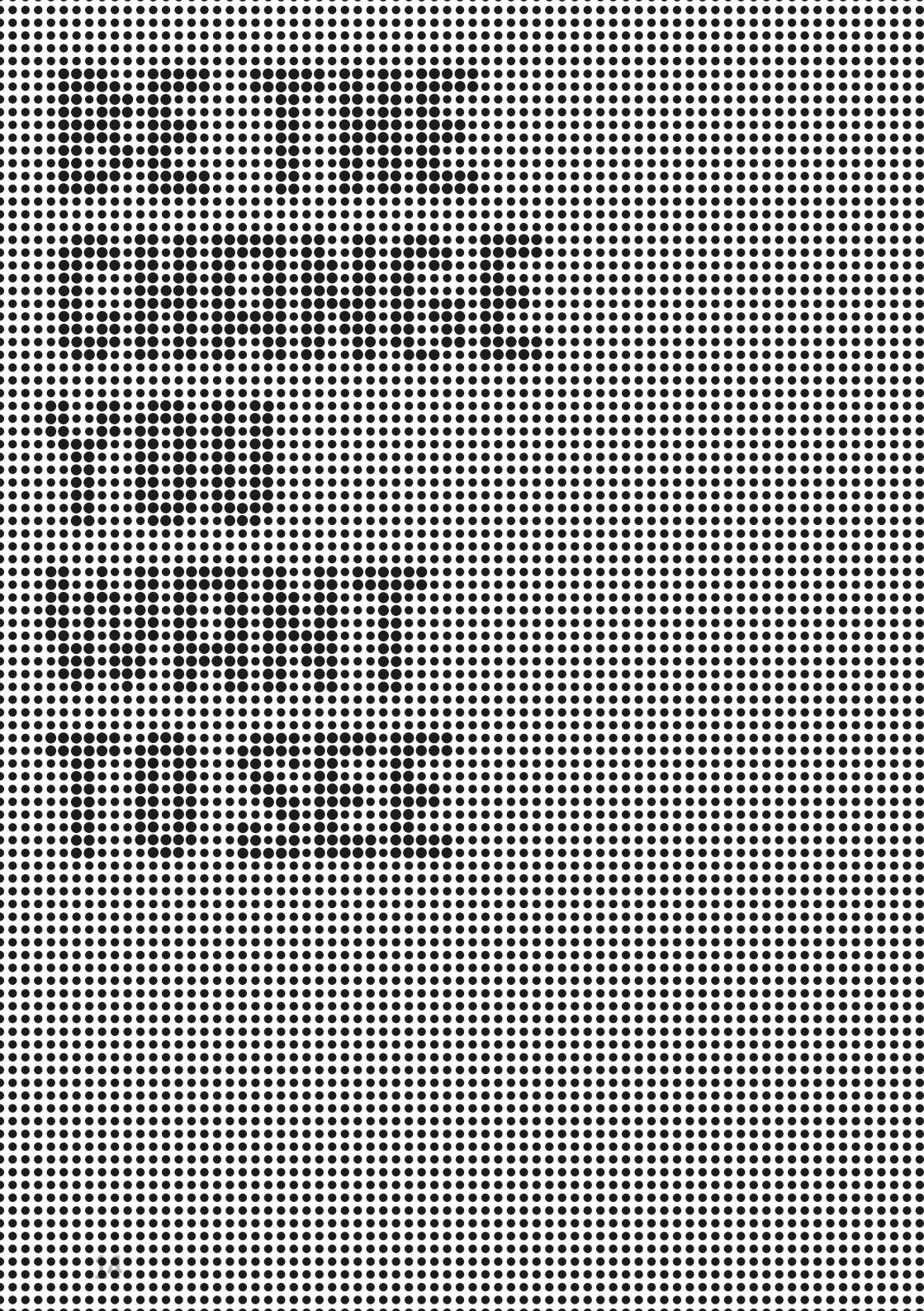
SOCIAL INNOVATION

The search for new strategies and tools is ongoing, both conceptually and in practice. This is what the Open for Change event was about, and it is what the authors of this booklet describe. Conceptually these new tools could be grouped together under the rubric of social innovation. Social innovation, on the one hand, makes use of technological innovations to involve citizens in addressing social problems. Mobile technology has greatly increased our connectivity and access to information and has, at least in theory, decreased the distance of citizens to authorities, their knowledge and policies. Technology has increased people's demand for freedom of expression and openness of data.[5] Furthermore, those seeking new methods to promote citizen activism have discovered communication and marketing techniques - visualization, branding, prototyping and the use of play and humor - that seek to lure the 'citizen as consumer' into action.

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3   http://www.awid.org/AWID-s-Publications/Religious-Fundamentalisms

4   This is a simplified reference to the phenomenon of fundamentalisms. Obviously many more factors determine whether or not fundamentalism thrives and what its effects are.

5   The example of David Harris 'App4Gov' in this booklet is a case in point.

On the other hand, social innovation and its various methodologies address 'problem solving' and 'collaboration' in a very different way than we are currently familiar with in development cooperation and human rights advocacy. To start with, social innovation puts the 'end-user' at the centre of the analysis of the problem, as well as the path to finding solutions[6]. To development practitioners this may sound familiar. Replace ' end-user' by ' target group' and we are talking about ownership and agency – concepts which have been in the development discourse for 20 years. The question is whether this discourse has transformed our understanding (and practice) of collaboration and agenda setting or just our terminology.

Furthermore, social innovation seeks to involve multidisciplinary teams in designing change options. People with different backgrounds and roles in society cover a wider scope when working together. At Hivos we have been venturing into multi-actor initiatives (convening those who have a stake in a certain subject area – such as government, civil society, business, religious leaders, media etc.) for a number of years now. Our rationale is clear: in order to address complex problems – for instance child marriage – one needs to work with all those actors who are sustaining the current situation. Civil society support alone – our core business for many decades – is not enough. However, the wish to have all these actors subscribe to Hivos' approach and work together has been stronger than our ability to achieve real commitment. We often lack the methodologies to find out what triggers different actors to do whatever they are doing and to offer them powerful incentives to commit to change. What attracts our interest in social innovation is that on the conceptual level, a number of methodologies are suggested. In practice, there are not that many examples of game-changing social innovations yet.[7]

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6   Different terminologies are used, for instance user centered design, user centric approach, or human centered design – all of which have been employed by businesses for a long time. See http://www.ideo.com/work/human-centered-design-toolkit/ for using human centered design as an approach to address social problems.

7   Maybe ˙game changing˙ is too high of an expectation of social innovation, which has been criticized for not paying enough attention to power, ideology and politics. Adam Kahane˙s ˙transformative scenario planning˙ is certainly an exception here. See http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/transformative_scenario_planning_working_together_to_change_the_future

SELF-ASSESSMENT

And yet, practical toolkits may be useful in coaching step by step how to convene and engage *others*, they will fall short of transforming societies and relationships if we as development practitioners do not engage with *ourselves* and our own norms, attitudes and practices. This kind of reciprocity is increasingly demanded by social activists, academics, policy makers and opinion leaders in the South. They pose more and more critical questions about the way ´we´ in the West approach social change and project our perspectives on 'development' on realities elsewhere[8]. Are we prepared to discuss (and accept) different concepts and underlying values, to the extent of being criticized about our own policies and practices and to become part of more mobile, fluctuating and multi-layered social change processes?

This is particularly relevant in social change processes where secular and religious views compete. Oftentimes, when norms and values come into the debate about desirable outcomes of social change, and human rights and pluralism are offered as a guiding principle, we tend to encounter conflicting demands made either on the basis of (freedom of) religion or, for instance, freedom of expression, women's rights or, for that matter, animal rights. We encounter these questions and difficulties abroad, as we encounter them at home. In Western Europe a commonly held view is that we have resolved this tension through secularism, the separation of state and religion. Religious freedom is supposed to remain restricted to people's private sphere. Once we enter the public space, religion – goes the argument - cannot be used to compromise on human rights, animal rights or 'progress' in general. In practice, this distinction is not so clear, as the following example shows - which was also discussed at the Open for Change event.

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8   We base this argument on our personal experience, which finds resonance in the theories of an entire academic discipline of Postcolonialism, and more recently 'unruly politics' https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp423.pdf

COMPETING NORMS

In 2011, a political debate was initiated in the Netherlands by the 'Party for the Animals' to proclaim a legal ban on ritual slaughter. The argument, in short, was that slaughter without stunning the animal first caused unnecessary suffering. There was immediate protest from the Jewish (and less so Muslim) community and their supporters against this proposal, in the name of religious freedom. A fierce political debate emerged, in which animal rights and anti-Islam politics entered into an unholy political alliance. The debate eventually led to a compromise bill to proclaim a ban with clear exceptions, for cases in which it could be proven that minimal suffering was caused to the animals in question. Henceforth the bill was rejected by the Senate, for being mere 'token law' without any real consequences for the existing practice, and an unnecessary infringement on religious freedom. Consequently the debate subsided, with the firm commitment of the 'Party for the Animals' to table the bill again at the first possible occasion.

PROGRESS

What this example shows, is the complex dynamics that apparently liberal arguments are drawn into. While a growing attention to animal rights and empathy for animal suffering can be considered as a matter of *progress*, this is less clear if it corresponds to a loss of empathy for and protection of the particular practices of religious minorities. There was a clear shift noticeable in the public (and thus political) sensibility about the more *secular* concern of animal suffering, at the cost of a loss of empathy and support for particular religious practices, that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. The 'Party for the Animals' succeeded to frame stunning as an obvious practice in modern societies against which ritual slaughter inevitably becomes projected as a backward tradition which causes unnecessary harm, and thus cannot be tolerated.[9]

9   The proposal of the 'Party for the Animals" succeeded because of an alliance with the 'Freedom Party' of Geert Wilders for which the bill seemed another opportunity to reject 'outdated practices' of Muslims, even if the party has a genuine agenda for protection of animal rights. The discourse therefore was an opportunistic merging of different interests into one frame rather than the expression of a new norm to prevent animal suffering. Intensive farming, to name only one issue related to animal suffering, has not received any more criticism following the ritual slaughter debate.

The shift in public attention and sensibility, however, was not recognized in the debate itself, and points towards a blind spot in such debates on 'our norms and values' in the Netherlands. Fundamental differences in norms and practices exist and become more apparent as societies become more heterogeneous. Existing laws and institutions as well as a firm belief in the secular character of the public sphere have not prevented discrimination and marginalization of (religious) minorities, which has been remarked by a range of national and international reports[10]. In the case of religious slaughter and animal rights, a certain awareness about the one-dimensional emphasis on animal rights, in its complex interaction with other political agendas and a shift in public sensibility, could have led to a more nuanced debate and open engagement between proponents and opposing voices to the proposed ban.

The simple message that comes across here, is that issues we – development practitioners - are engaged with elsewhere are not alien to our own Dutch context. This is one thing we have learned from our experiences in the Pluralism Knowledge Program, in particular from our engagements with partners in India and Indonesia. When it comes to issues related to the role of religion in the public sphere, there is never a univocal path to progress or innovation. Issues related to religious identity are always entwined with differences in power and the dominance of majoritarian cultures, as the dominance of the secular culture now shows in the Netherlands. The obvious risk here is to simply project 'progressive norms' upon what is considered as backward practice. To become true proponents of *social innovation*, it would suit us to become more aware and self-conscious about the norms and perceptions that we bring to the scene. That would not only do justice to the position of minority cultures, but it could potentially also enrich the debate on the particularities of our own cultural practice. In the case of ritual slaughter, for example, would it not be valid to bring the religious and moral components of this practice into the debate on the more problematic sides of intensive farming and industrialized forms of slaughter? If we merely wipe out what we consider as backward practice, we would also miss opportunities for self-correction and innovation.

10   See Council of Europe, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Library/PressReleases /164-23_06_2014_RTNetherlands_en.asp; Amnesty International 'Proactief Politieoptreden vormt risico voor mensenrechten' http://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/rapport_etnisch_profileren_ainl_28_okt_2013.pdf; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau 'Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland' http://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2014/Ervaren_discriminatie_in_Nederland

Is this the task of development practitioners? Well, maybe yes, if we take social transformation seriously. On the short run, our strive for social innovation should start with some introspection: Are we, as development practitioners, sufficiently aware of our own position and preconceptions when we engage with our interlocutors from the South? Do we sufficiently realize the complexity of the dynamics and the processes we are engaging with? And do we always acknowledge the role that we have in intervening in these dynamics, the fact that we are *not* neutral, and are certainly not perceived as such? Is it always certain that our progressive and liberal views work towards the benefit of a particular situation, or can they perhaps also work to the adverse? How can we avoid this? Taking social innovation seriously also means asking these kind of questions. How open are we really? It is up to us to translate that introspection and deliberation in practice, too. We hope that the approaches and tools described in this booklet may serve as a source of inspiration in this regard!

Ute Seela is part of the Hivos knowledge team and the initiator of the Open for Change Event and this publication. With ´Open for Change´ Ute envisioned to create a setting in which thinkers and doers - who care about the open society – could meet and learn from each other. Ute herself is a ´hybrid´. Work wise she has repeatedly found herself between research and practice. In her current job at Hivos, Ute seeks to bring in knowledge and tools to rethink strategies and contribute towards a learning culture. In her previous positions, as a fellow designing training programmes for diplomats at think tank Clingendael and as a policy advisor for the Green Party in the European Parliament, Ute also navigated theoretical insights and practical possibilities. As a German migrant in the Netherlands, Ute celebrates hybridity in her private life, too.

As the co-chair of the Pluralism Knowledge Programme – an academic-practitioner collaboration on issues of religious and ethnic diversity in India, Indonesia and Uganda - Ute frequently worked with Ton Groeneweg with whom she co-authored her contribution to this publication.

UTE SEELA

Ton Groeneweg works as program coor-
dinator for Asia, and policy officer for reli-
gion and development at Mensen met een
Missie ('People on a Mission'). Mensen met
een Missie is a small Netherlands-based
development organization with a Catholic
background. It focuses on empowerment
and promotion of social cohesion within
marginalized communities in 16 countries
worldwide.
For Ton an 'open society' would be a
society that is able to accommodate
a maximum (and in principle infinite)
plurality of voices, identities, practices that
would never stop to inspire, engage and
confront each other. A society also, where
power mechanisms can be constantly
questioned, challenged and exposed.

In this line, 'social innovation' would,
first of all, require the permanent self-as-
sessment of social actors in view of their
own performance and presuppositions.
Ton strongly endorses the idea of social
innovation as a challenge to our very
human tendency to stick to the familiar
and the trodden path. At the same time,
social innovation encounters a lot of
'old questions' as well. Questions about
equal access to new opportunities, and
the willingness to engage with the actual,
physical power structures and the public
sphere.

For Ton, one of the main issues facing
the development world at present, is how
to overcome and open up the implicit
dominance and sense of superiority of the
Western secular development paradigm.
Ton tries to bring some awareness about
this issue into various platforms in the de-
velopment sector, both in the Netherlands
and abroad.

www.mensenmeteenmissie.nl

Tons personal blog: www.disenchanted-
secularist/wordpress.com

TON GROENEWEG

WHEN WE LAUGH AT THOSE IN POWER, WE BECOME LESS AFRAID.

THE FIFTY SHADES OF GREY **IN RELIGION AND SEXUALITY** *Brenda Bartelink*

Religion and sexuality are among the controversial issues of our times. In the controversies around the anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda, for example, we have seen religious leaders acting as pushers in the polarisation. They have used religious arguments to legitimize discriminatory politics against gay people, stimulated by preachers from the United States.[1] Journalist and founder of Go-Gay Uganda Kikonyogo Kivumbi, talked about his fear as an open homosexual in Uganda in an article in an online Dutch newspaper.[2] Yet he also explained that his family accepts him, stating that outside of the capital Kampala there is much more openness towards people and even leaders being homosexual. These nuances are often lost in the black-and-white manner in which the perceptions about religion and sexuality are framed, by African and Western politicians and in the public media. I take the controversies around homosexuality in Uganda as an example of a discussion that is polarised to such extremes, that dialogue seems impossible. I use them as a starting point for my argument that there are much more shades of grey than this black and white frame suggests.

This paper takes up the question "How open are we really?" and argues that openness should be an attitude rather than a goal in the conversation about sexuality with religious actors. Openness as an attitude rather than an ideal requires that we have the skills to be open. It starts with asking open questions such as: what is really happening here? I take the NGO context as a point of departure and explore a fictional case in which polarisation around sexuality and religion between a Dutch and Ugandan NGO emerges. Inspired by the method Dialogue for Peaceful Change, I offer some suggestions to come to an understanding of what is happening. I also offer insight in the steps which can be taken towards a constructive conversation about religion and sexuality.[3]

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1   http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/004233.html

2   Maite Vermeulen (maart 2014) 'Kikonyogo Kivumbi: Ik ben homo en ik leef in Oeganda' in De Correspondent https://decorrespondent.nl/799/ik-ben-homo-en-leef-in-oeganda/50708539794-4f00647f

3   Dialogue for Peaceful Change is a method for mediative dialogue: http://www.stichtingoikos.nl/sites/default/files/uploads/Documenten/DPC_leaflet.pdf

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POLARISATION

In situations of polarisation people can play various roles. There are people who push the polarisation by claiming moral high ground, the so-called 'pushers'. We find them on both sides of the polarisation, having the loudest voices. Pushers try to pressure the silent majority to become an active participant in the conflict. In Uganda we see religious leaders acting as pushers of the polarisation around homosexuality. They use arguments from Christian theology or African culture as arguments against tolerance for homosexuals. They do that by tapping into fears that exists among the silent majority, about loosing control due to rapid changes in society. These changes are often seen as a result of Western influences. Homosexuals are positioned as a scapegoat to fuel this anxiety. In this process of polarisation, locally situated practices of tolerance like Kivumbi described in the interview easily get lost in the tumult between two polarised groups.

The setting for this paper is a Dutch development NGO that is engaged in a partnership with an NGO in Uganda because both organisations are concerned with preventing young people from getting infected with HIV/AIDS.[4] The Ugandan NGO is faith-based, it has a Christian identity and several religious leaders serve as board members. The NGO works locally, mainly in rural areas.

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4   This is a fictional case that is based on a combination of my imagination, my ethnographic research and the role-play World Views. While the case is realistic it does not refer to any real NGO whatsoever. More information about World Views: http://www.oikosxplore.nl/ For other work on this issue: Brenda Bartelink and Erik Meinema (May 2014) 'Contested Sexualities and Shared Concerns: Power dynamics in a transnational network of faith-based organisations'. In N. Beckmann, C. Christiansen and A. Gusman (eds), Strings Attached: AIDS and the Rise of Transnational Connections in Africa. British Academy/Oxford University Press.

The Dutch NGO has a Christian background, but many people in the staff have not. The NGO is inspired by general humanitarian principles and has taken up a rights based approach in its programmes. The NGO works for more than twenty years in various countries around the world on the inclusion of marginalized groups, youth and women affected by HIV/AIDS in particular. For the Dutch NGO it has become increasingly clear that sex education should be the most important focus in HIV/AIDS programmes. In meetings with this Ugandan partner the staff of the Dutch NGO have experienced that it is difficult to talk about sexuality, and they are unsure whether young people in the community can access full information on sexuality.

The Dutch NGO has been successful in attracting funding of donors for programmes on sex education. They invited the Ugandan NGO for a workshop on sex education, with the possibility to fund sex education programmes that are developed as a result of the training. During the workshop a conflict develops between Marijke and Frank, the two Dutch NGO representatives that provide the training and Rose and John, two participants from the Ugandan NGO. Rose and John are critical about the approach to sex education that is introduced in the training. They feel it is inappropriate to talk about sexuality in the way that is proposed. Rose claims that the only thing the Dutch NGO wants, is make them activists for homosexuality in Uganda: 'We are not going to promote homosexuality, but condemn homosexuality in the communities we work in', she says.

TRUST THE PROCESS

What can be done in such a situation? Instead of taking a position in a polarised field by affirming that everyone should be open to respect sexual rights, on could start with asking open questions such as: 'what is happening here?' Asking this type of open questions requires that we have the skill to suspend judgement. Instead of jumping to conclusions based on our own understanding and moral frames, we need to take a step back and try to understand what motivates the other. This requires a focus on the process and not on ones own aims, at least for a while. A conversation with Rose and her team leader John offers some information on what is actually

at stake for Rose. They affirm that as a Christian organisation they feel it is their duty to teach young people Christian morals regarding sexuality and marriage. Abstaining from sexuality before marriage and being faithful in marriage are the best tools to prevent HIV/AIDS. They are deeply concerned with the sexual health risks and the 'eroded morals' of young people. John also affirms that talking about sexuality in the way it is suggested in the training leads to accusations that the organisation is teaching young people bad morals.

A next step in the process requires insight into other actors that are a stakeholder in the conflict or polarisation; a mapping of stakeholders. NGO staffs do not only represent themselves and their organisations, but also have to mediate between their organisation and the broader community. Within this community various actors may influence the position taken by the NGO staff, such as religious leaders, other community leaders, teachers, parents, and of course the young people to whom sex education is provided. The staff of the Ugandan NGO consists of adult men and women who are active church members. Rose is a young women who is married to the pastor of a Presbyterian church. She has a temporary position at the NGO and wants to live up to what is expected of her as a professional and a pastors wife. John is a man in his early forties and serves as an elder in a church in a nearby city; he is married and a father of two teenage girls. In addition, the religious leaders on the board, who are mainly elderly men, have authority and influence in the organisation. They have expressed their concerns about the focus on sex education for youth.

Next, one needs to explore which pillars constitute the polarisation. One pillar is the culturally accepted way of giving information about sexuality: what can be discussed openly and between whom? Another pillar is the polarised discourse about homosexuality in Uganda in which Western influences are criticized. A third pillar consists of intergenerational tensions influencing how the sexuality of young people is understood in the community.[5] Traditionally older men exercised power over younger generations. Globalization and the local appropriation of views and customs

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5   Cf. Alber, Erdmute, Sjaak van der Geest, and Susan Reynolds Whyte. 2008. Generations in Africa: connections and conflicts. Berlin: Lit.; Abbink, J., and Ineke van Kessel. 2005. Vanguard or vandals youth, politics, and conflict in Africa. Leiden: Brill. http://site.ebrary.com/id/10171699; Burton, Andrew, and Hélène Charton-Bigot. 2010. Generations past: youth in East African history. Athens: Ohio University Press.

from abroad have blurred these traditional patterns. Young people adopt new (sexual) life-styles by which they implicitly or more explicitly contest the authority of older generations. This causes anxiety among the older generations to loose control in society. We see this reflected in Rose and John's concerns with the 'eroded morals' of young people.

A mapping of actors may indicate that apart from the NGO staff, conversations need to take place with other actors, such as the religious leaders on the board, and the teachers or parents of the children in the schools. Actors that should not be overlooked are the young people themselves, who are not passive victims but play a role in the polarisation as well. To learn how polarisation around sexuality and religion works within the broader community, we need to understand the interests of different stakeholders. What motivates them to take a certain position, and to whom are they opposed? A mapping and analysis of pillars provides insight in these issues.

SELF-REFLECTION

Inspired by human rights, development organisations have generally taken strong moral positions on sexuality. The comments by Rose on homosexuality have also triggered strong and emotional reactions with Frank and Marijke. Marijke has a brother who is homosexual and after years of struggling to come-out he is now happily married to a man. She feels that Rose's viewpoints are discriminatory and is eager to change these views. Frank feels Rose's position is opposed to the attitude of openness and inclusion his organisation wants to promote. After the conflict Frank is not sure if he can agree with funding new projects of the Ugandan NGO. The pressure felt by the Ugandan NGO staff to promote liberal lifestyles, and their resistance to this pressure, is also influenced by the desire to access or maintain funds from Dutch partners. This unequal power relationship is part of a development relation, but its impact in situations of polarisation should not be overlooked. It is therefore important to be aware of your own position in a polarisation or conflict.

So what can Frank and Marijke do in this situation? They can engage various stakeholders in the process that focusses on creating possibilities for change through more effective communication. This paper has also shown that there are much broader issues at stake than religion and sexuality.

Setting requirements for funding may seem a quick win, but may also push the Ugandan NGO to approach sex education in a way that increases tensions in the community. Long-term results should be broader than the aim of implementing comprehensive sex education for young people in this community. One such long term goal may be to realise more effective communication between various stakeholders around pressing issues in the community. The start of this process is not to bring the pushers around the table first. It would ideally start with involving moderate people from various parties. The Dutch NGO is a stakeholder in the polarisation as well. If the Dutch staff is not able to take a non-aligned position in order to facilitate the process, it is a good idea to involve someone else who can take that role. Finally, polarisation itself is difficult, but part of life. If handled well, a situation of polarisation can contain important lessons on the motivation of different stakeholders, and strengthen the relationship between organisations involved.

HOW OPEN ARE WE REALLY?

How open are we really? This question should not be directed at how open we are to talk about sexuality. The case has illustrated that such a notion of openness is culturally specific and may not necessarily be shared by all stakeholders in the process. How open are we really, in this case, implies a challenge to accept the open end to a conversation about religion and sexuality. These topics are close to ones heart. That is why an open conversation is both challenging and much desired. It is a challenge to agree to disagree and to be open to different views. However, this open attitude creates space to explore a new potential for connections. So instead of taking a black-and-white perspective on religion and sexuality, let us begin with exploring all fifty shades of grey!

Brenda Bartelink is 37 years old and lives in a small village in the North of the Netherlands. She is a researcher in the academic study of Religion by training, with experience in researching how religion is meaningful in processes of transformation and development in the Netherlands, Yemen, Tanzania and Uganda. Currently she works at Oikos Foundation in the city of Utrecht for the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development. Finding constructive solutions to deal with controversies around religion and sexuality in development cooperation is her personal motivation. This motivation fits to the broader mission of Oikos to contribute to more equal and just relations between people around the world. An open society is a plural society to Brenda. How do we cope with the situation in which different freedoms contest each other? For Brenda, the answer to this question does not lie in excluding one or the other from the public sphere, but in improving our skills to live, to work and to engage with other people in daily life.

BRENDA BARTELINK

KNOWLEDGE EXISTS IN ALL
CORNERS OF SOCIETY AND
IT IS IMPORTANT TO BRING
A DIVERSITY OF VIEWPOINTS
TOGETHER IN A PROCESS OF
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

KUMI:
CHALLENGING
SOCIAL REALITY *Judith van den Boogert*

With the question 'how open for change are we really?' immediately a huge dilemma is raised. When we reflect on Dutch society, at first sight it seems that we live in a peaceful society, where no overt conflicts are looming. However, as we look closer we might see that certain prominent issues need to be addressed. However, are we ready to work on these complicated matters? And are we truly willing to take a look at our own role in these matters? Acknowledging your contribution to complex social issues can mean a confrontation with your own truth in the way you think and behave. Perhaps, when we realize that these conflicts exist, we might feel that we do not have clear answers or that it is not up to us to change the situation. The question is: is this true? Or does the fear of sharing responsibility for a conflict lead us to avoid touching the issue?

A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

The Dutch foundation *Sociale Transformatie Nederland* works the method 'Kumi'. The foundation works in the Netherlands as well as abroad with partners. The aim of Kumi as an approach for Social Transformation in Conflict (STiC) is to help people unravel a conflict in society in clear steps. Sometimes it seems hard to address prominent issues in society in an inclusive way, by involving all actors in the analysis of the conflict and eventually in its solution. Kumi helps people to make action plans to change the contradictory situation. The method can be used in different settings, such as in community work, neighborhood conflicts, at the workplace and within political networks. By partaking in the workshops participants become more aware of conflict dynamics, they learn tools on how to deal with difficult conflict situations and understand how conflicts arise and can be changed.

Kumi is guided by the idea that conflicts exist within a broader social context, in which identities and material interests are entwined and embedded in deeply-rooted social structures. For example, the asymmetric

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power balance or the exclusion that is felt by certain groups should be tackled by uncovering its underlying dynamics and causes, such as social relations, cultural or economic differences, politics and policy procedures. Knowledge exists in all corners of society and it is important to bring a diversity of viewpoints together in a process of social transformation. In such a process a new vision and a plan for 'action for change' is created by the larger group.

An example of an issue that has a prominent place on the Dutch political agenda is sexual diversity. Research shows that the Dutch are very tolerant towards gay people[1]. However, there are still people who reject sexual diversity, or do not know how to deal with people with non-heterogenic sexual preferences. For some people this issue is a taboo and therefore hard to talk about. In such a case the Kumi method creates a safe space where different feelings can be expressed. An exploration of the issue which includes various perspectives can result in a shared vision on how to respect each other, without harming the basic human needs of the people involved.

THE LAUNCH OF KUMI

Kumi means 'Rise Up' in Hebrew and Arabic. The method was developed by a group of scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution, who felt frustrated about 'people to people' programs. This frustration was especially experienced in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the Oslo Peace Accords in the 1990s. The idea that plain contact with people from the other side could change perceptions and therefore the core of the conflict, was too simple according to the initiators. Principal social structures that were upholding the conflict and issues of identity were not addressed properly in these programs. Therefore, the Kumi facilitators brought Israelis and Palestinians together with the aim to mobilize them in challenging the structures and culture supporting the conflict.

1   Keuzenkamp, S. en Kuyper, L. (2013). Acceptatie van homoseksuelen, biseksuelen en transgenders in Nederland 2013, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Den Haag.

Within the Palestinian society the method is effectively used to work on overcoming internal fragmentation amongst local communities, as well as for the empowerment of young people who wish to become more politically active. Within the Israeli society the Kumi process facilitated coalitions to challenge the prominent security discourse. In different settings the Kumi workshops facilitate a successful change in the minds and behavior of average citizens, mid-level political leaders and grassroots organizations.

As a Palestinian participant mentioned about his Kumi process: 'Kumi connects the ideas of people. It is open for everyone, not just a certain religion, skin colour or culture. Because of what I learned I can share other ideas with my relatives and neighbours about the society we want to live in.' Another participant explained how difficult it was for her to come back to each workshop session, because of the confrontation with others and herself. Nevertheless, she came back every day. 'Something inside of me made me come back to the workshop. I came and learned through the process how to move from a place in which I could not find myself, my identity, to a place in which I can find and dedicate my thoughts to real positive change.'

THE KUMI APPROACH

In order to reach this empowerment a Kumi process creates an in-depth dialogue on a current contradiction in society. The aim is to give participants an understanding of the distinctive angles from which the conflict is perceived and knowledge to transform the situation on a social level. A Kumi process always starts with a thorough pre-workshop preparation, in which it is explored who should be involved in the dialogue process. During the workshop sessions the Kumi participants go through several steps in which they take ownership of the content. By digging deeper in personal experiences and societal developments, strong identity frameworks, possible interests and goals become clear. Questions such as: 'What made you think this way?', 'If nothing changes what will that do to you?' and 'Which structures in society have an impact on you?' are asked. The participants discover the origins of their own assumptions and feelings. This understanding is needed before going to the next step: a deep analysis

2   Rothman, J. (ed.) (2012). From Identity-Based Conflict to Identity-Based Coop-
     eration: The ARIA Approach in Theory and Practice. Springer, New York, see also
     www.aria.com
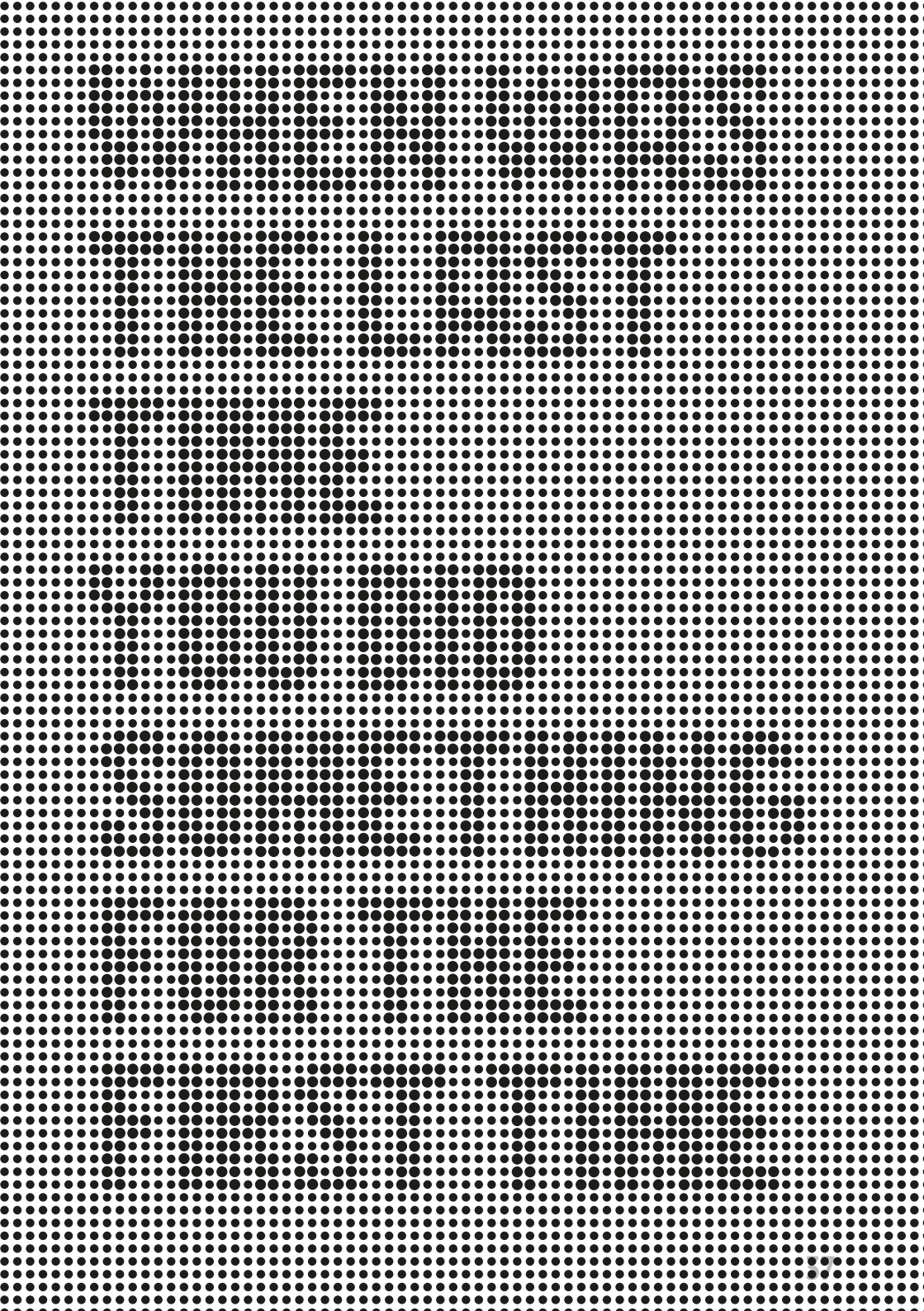
of what is needed for social change in society. This exploration of the context of the conflict in all its complexities is carried out with the help of conflict transformation theories, such as ARIA from Jay Rothman[2] and the Transcend approach of Galtung[3]. The ARIA method allows participants to discover their Antagonism, to find a shared Resonance between them, to Invent creative possibilities and to work on a shared Action plan. Galtung's Transcend approach is aimed at a transformation of the conflict without violence, in which all parties share the responsibility for the well-being of everyone involved . The method of Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) helps in the last phase of the process, by structuring the overall discussion and making plans for the future.

People almost feel 'naked' and very unsafe when they discuss a social problem in a group with others who have different viewpoints. For the participants this means a continuing voluntary step in the lions' den. Dialogue is not the ultimate goal within a Kumi process, but a means to assist the participants in identifying a new vision on how to establish significant change together. The group will eventually make concrete action plans to transform their environment, so the change will not only be an adjustment in thinking. The aim is to develop a reflexive practice for change and an intentional, self-regulating community of practitioners.

KUMI IN PRACTICE: THE NETHERLANDS

After the implementation of Kumi in the Israeli and Palestinian societies the Kumi facilitators brought the method to Europe, where it is adopted by a network of practitioners in Germany, Great Britain and The Netherlands. A workshop held in The Netherlands in 2011 was focused on the question 'in which society we want to live'. Its aim was to create a common vision for this question. The Dutch participants came from different ethnical backgrounds, with a small majority of ''native Dutch''. They were aware of the conflict in Dutch society regarding integration and migration. Some of the participants worked professionally on this issue but most participants identified with the conflict through personal experiences. The group wanted to deal with the increasing racism and Islamophobia that is manifested in the mainstream discourse in Dutch society. The participants spoke about fear of increasing nationalism, a lack of tolerance, and a segregated society.

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3   Galtung (2000). Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means (the Transcend Method), Participants' Manual, Trainer's Manual, United Nations. Source: www.transcend.org/pctrcluj2004/TRANSCEND_manual.pdf on 2 February 2014.

During the workshop the participants saw an ambiguity between 'dominant culture based on individual rights' versus 'a pluralistic society ensuring group rights' that causes conflict in Dutch society. An example that was given by the group was the prohibition of ritual slaughter or wearing a burka in public spaces. In this last case, one side would argue that a burka could be restrictive to individual rights and should not be worn in the public domain. The opposing part of the group would voice that prohibiting people to make their own choice on wearing a burka in public would limit group rights. A thorough analysis of diverse opinions and personal experiences regarding the overarching contradiction gave insight in the culture and structures behind both sides. The group became aware of their own share in the continuation of this contradiction; the fact that they found it safer to be bystanders than to tackle the situation.

The participants understood that it was necessary to express one's own narratives, needs and values, as well as to hear the narratives of others with opposing needs. This approach encouraged a clear vision on the change everybody wanted. The participants discovered their fears and needs, as well as the things they did not want to give in to. Next they analysed which basic human needs regarding 'survival, wellbeing, identity and freedom' are violated by the existing culture and practices. Based on this analysis, the group formulated the following statement against the violation of these basic human needs:

We are a group of initiators of social change aiming at a trust-based, resilient and cohesive society that incorporates equality, diversity, individual and group rights, based on basic human needs and therefore challenging the asymmetry of power and the polarizing discourse of identity.

This vision formed the basis for the different participants to share the knowledge they gained from the Kumi process with others, and to start dialogue projects on Islamophobia and multiculturalism. For example, some of the participants gave lectures and trainings on these topics. Other participants initiated new Kumi processes to invite a larger group of people to rethink their personal and social situation. Most of all, the participants gained a better understanding of their own background and way of thinking as well as the position of others in society.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED TRANSFORMATION

In relation to the question 'how open for change are we?', we can conclude that there is a difference between 'dialogue' and creating social transformation. For real transformation one should step in the 'lions' den' which was previously mentioned. Transformation is not only about the voicing of your own position in dialogue. It requires deeper reflections of a group which intends to develop a common vision and agency, based on the knowledge the group has accumulated. By implementing an action plan the participants can become 'change agents', and encourage others to challenge their shared social reality. Transformation within the group can result in an outwards focus, making further social transformation possible.

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Judith van den Boogert is a lecturer at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), where she teaches various courses in the social sciences department and works as a thesis supervisor in conflict studies. Furthermore, Judith teaches a course named Soliya (www.soliya.net), which connects students worldwide for dialogue on conflict, international affairs and social processes. As a facilitator and coach she is directly involved in the dialogue processes that take place. Judith has been living and working in The Middle East and initiated various educational programs in Syria, Egypt and Israel/Palestine. Furthermore, she gives trainings to organisations in intercultural communication, peace education/mediation and change management. As the founder of the foundation 'Sociale Transformatie Nederland' she hopes to achieve more active dialogue, which will result in action on the ground. The foundation has worked with the Kumi method for 4 years and members of the foundation are involved in different issues; dialogue and mediation, facilitating and coaching social action programs for young professionals, giving life skills training and implementing participatory community projects in Amsterdam and Utrecht. For Judith an ideal 'open society' would encourage a mindset of dialogue; its members would have the feeling that everything can be talked about in a peaceful way. This will create an atmosphere of trust and openness towards each other. Social innovation implies a search for a vast amount of perspectives and 'out of the box' thinking, which will stimulate new ways of living together, on an inclusive basis. Judith likes to work on a 'beloved community' as Martin Luther King said.

www.socialetransformatie.nl

JUDITH VAN DEN BOOGERT

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL
ABOUT STORY TELLING FOR
SOCIAL CHANGE? *Simon Hodges*

A new world requires new stories, but people will only listen to them when they themselves are included in the storyline. This requires a 'gear-shift' in conversations about radical action.

While working in the belly of corporate communications some years ago, I stumbled across a storytelling night at Amsterdam's Mezrab cultural centre. Nude model drawing classes and the *Mahabharata* in Dutch were also on the menu, but it was the storytelling that caught my eye, hosted on an open stage by an Iranian storyteller by the name of Sahand Sahbedivani.

Even through the candlelight and the smoke, the rapt attention on the faces of the audience made it clear that they loved the stories of human drama they were hearing, which was the opposite of my experience in my work. Despite the fact that I was working extremely hard to get the company's stories more attention, they rarely ignited anything like this response in the public's imagination. The difference between a profit-making organisation and an alternative arts event was obvious but intriguing. Why did storytelling at Mezrab succeed while corporate communications generally fell flat? The answers are relevant to anyone who has a story to tell, and nowhere is that more important than in the field of social change.

Today, storytelling is wildly popular. It's seen as the key to succeeding in business, strengthening organizational culture, and drumming up support for advocacy and campaigns. But why is that? The first reason is obvious: climate change, inequality, violence and other challenges can't be solved by doing more of the same. We need new narratives that connect with peoples' deepest motivations and promote more radical action. Stories engage people at every level - not just in their minds but in their emotions, values and imaginations, which are the drivers of real change. So if we want to transform society, we must learn to tell - and listen to - a new set of stories about the world we want to create.

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So far so good, but what actually makes for a good story in this sense? That's where my visits to Mezrab were so instructive. For one thing, the storytellers that got the most attention were not necessarily the funniest or wittiest. Instead, they were the ones that were most prepared to put their skin in the game, to state something that was uncomfortably close to how they saw the world. This radical subjectivity – perhaps the basis of all great art – is a crucial lesson for anyone who wants to communicate a complex topic. When we allow our own insights to organise the telling of a story, we give a more compelling account of events. Why? Because our deepest values are closest to what we share with others.

Business is only now learning that telling a good story requires authenticity, as if bewildered by the discovery of truth. Storytelling in social movements is more advanced. In fact for those who work for social justice, the problem has not been making up good stories, but getting people to listen to the ones they have already. This can be especially hard when movements are very broad, and when the issues they deal with are so large in scope. But my storytelling sessions taught me another lesson that's useful in this context: even when the issues are large and complex, we feel compelled to listen when we ourselves are included in the storyline.

The danger of much current rhetoric is that justified frustration at injustice comes across in torrents of abuse. The parlous state of the economy, for example, is not just the fault of the bankers and politicians who have overspent, it's also something that involves all of us on a daily basis in our roles as consumers and producers, employers and employees, shareholders and borrowers. When anyone is marginalized or demonized in this context, they are less likely to be part of the solution, even if they have the power to make change.

The Mezrab storytellers were successful because they and their audience felt united with each other at some level, even if they might disagree on the surface. In myth, drastic opposites are often reconciled through elaborate plots and casts of characters. We can do the same in our own stories by not alienating the people we need to talk to or persuade. Michael Margolis, a San Francisco-based 'story architect,' makes this point elegantly by asking that our stories of social change become *love stories*. His argument is that undermining belief systems – a necessary step in social change – requires an emphasis on shared values and commonality. These shared values can then be used to show when, why and how some people aren't living up to them in practice.

Stressing unity between divergent interests has often been the basis of effective change - look no further than the genesis of the European Union after World War Two. A more local example came in the wake of the killing of British soldier Lee Rigby by two self-proclaimed Muslims in Woolwich, southeast London, in 2013. This event outraged the far-right English Defence League (EDL) who organised a protest outside a mosque in York. Knowing of this plan and anticipating violence, members of the mosque invited the protestors in for tea and biscuits. In the discussion that followed, both parties realised that they had a common interest in ending extremist violence. The protestors' anger was successfully defused, and the day ended in an impromptu game of football.

The leader of the mosque, Mohamed El-Gomati, initiated a dialogue to identify elements of a shared culture among members of both the EDL and the Mosque. We can do the same with our own stories. Whenever there's a situation in which we tempted to label one group as 'the other', telling a story that reveals shared values aids in the creation of new communities. The narrative ceases to be the property of one side's rightness over another side's error. Instead it becomes a story of co-creation and mutual responsibility.

Identifying common value is attractive, not just to those with whom we want to communicate directly, but also to other listeners who have to be part of the conversation. Focusing on commonality puts everyone in a stronger position to undermine belief systems and lay out new possibilities for social change. That, at least, is something I learned from corporate communications.

Where the business community excels is in its story of possibilities. After all, branding is simply an exercise in creating the idea that something is valuable, so that others will buy into it - in this case literally. Where these ideas about value are already present - as in social movements - much of the job is done, but not all. In addition to telling stories that inspire people's imagination, movements can also activate their energies for action by including a greater sense of concrete possibilities in the stories they want to tell. And that requires something of a 'gear-shift' in conversations about the nature of radical action.

Myth, says Martin Shaw, is not just about awakening a past that is forgotten; it's also about describing the possibilities of the present. Values - as the core of all good stories - can lay the foundations for social transformation by simultaneously undermining beliefs and retaining some continuity, so that people are not immobilized by the changes taking place around them. When stories are deeply grounded in values, they can communicate a vision and not merely a picture of the realities we face.

These visions - as enablers of action - are necessary to the path of social and political change. Those on the Left are often criticised for pointing out the problems rather than presenting some solutions. By identifying the values that underpin our activities and weaving them into a story of how the world might look, we will become more effective at opening hearts and minds to accommodate a positive future.

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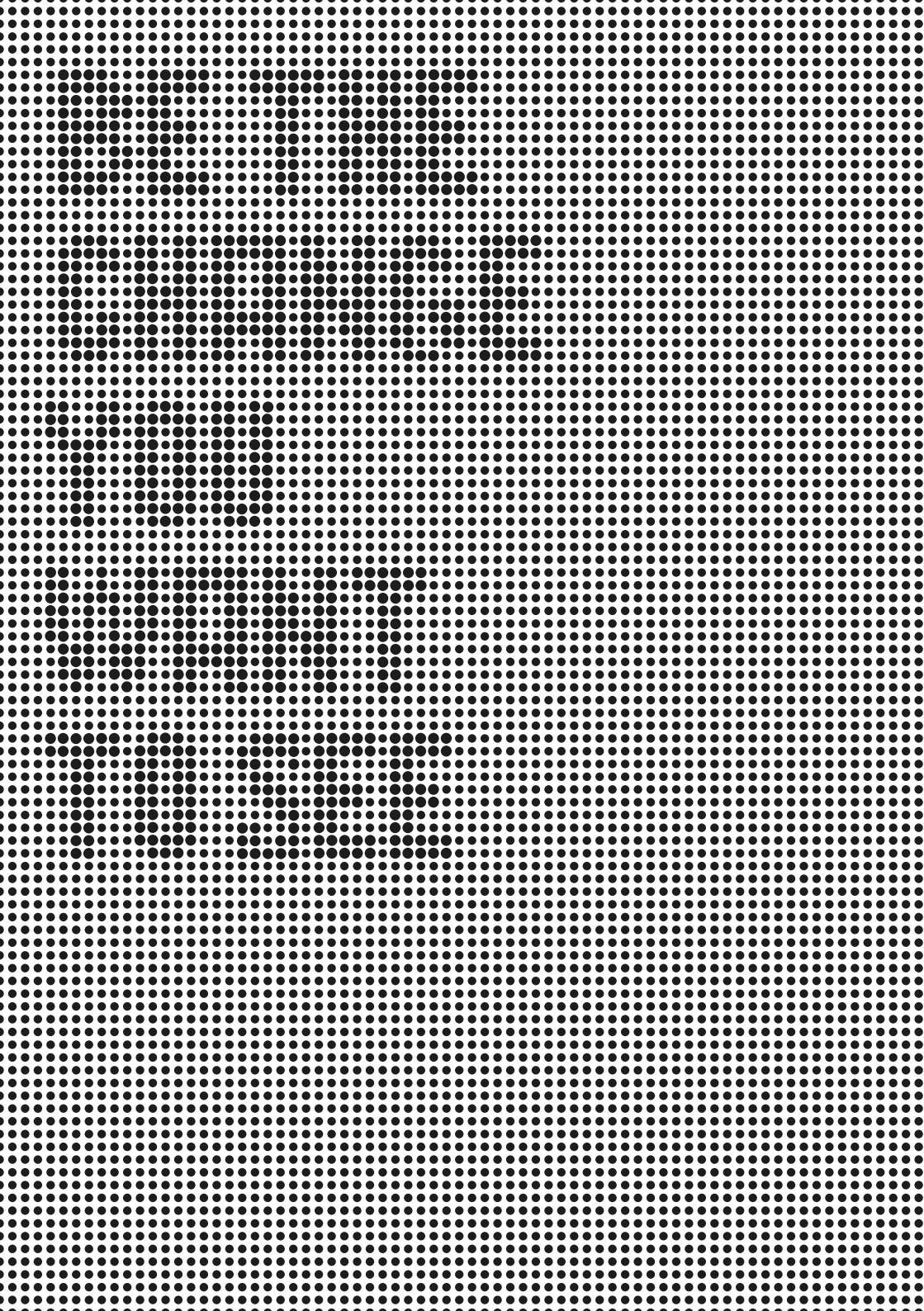
Simon Hodges is a writer, storyteller and director of Words That Change. As a consultant, he works with organisations on storytelling and communications. As a writer, his specialist topics are social business, sustainability and leadership communications. He is a performance storyteller in his adopted home of Amsterdam, and is a coach for speakers at TEDxAmsterdam. Simon aims to transform business and society by getting people to tell truer and more inspiring stories about themselves. He is focused on culture in his work, which he understands as the creation of mindsets and intelligent, vibrant communication that give rise to sustainable innovations.

In his opinion, an open society honours diversity and creates nourishing communities that are driven by self-determination. Such communities see their success as intertwined with the flourishing of their fellow human beings, cultivating the ideal of a prosperous planet, and healthy animal populations. Simon associates social innovation with the capacity to flourish. Systems and organisations should be designed around deep human values, not economic imperative alone. The Indo-European root of the word human is 'Earth', which already hints at this intended interconnectedness.

SIMON HODGES

WE NEED TO TAKE A
STEP BACK AND TRY
TO UNDERSTAND WHAT
MOTIVATES THE OTHER.

هنر انقلاب

اسلامی

EMPOWERING GIRLS TO SAY NO
TO EARLY MARRIAGE *Sonali Khan*

Kamla,[1] a girl from a village in the Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand, India was barely in her teens when her father fixed her marriage. Like over 60% of the girls in Jharkhand and the neighbouring state of Bihar, Kamla became a married woman before she could comprehend what marriage entails. After years of quietly suffering a violent husband, Kamla was saved from her miserable existence by her father, who brought Kamla and her daughter home with him. Today, Kamla's father echoes Breakthrough's call for action – to stop early marriages to prevent more girls from suffering like his daughter did. "I have a relative who was going to marry his daughter off at an early age," he says. "I stopped them. I will not allow the mistake I made with my daughter to happen to anyone else in front of my eyes."

Breakthrough is currently working in Bihar and Jharkhand towards creating more voices of opposition, like Kamla's father, to early marriage. From a fatalistic "Gaon mein aisa hi hota hai" – "This is how it happens in villages", we are trying to change mindsets of families and communities in order to end this socially approved practice. Breakthrough base line data show a more than 60% rate of early marriage[2] among communities here. Our study and existing research prove that this is such a deeply rooted traditional practice that communities here do not think of it as an illegal practice. After spending over two years in rigorous formative research and baseline impact studies carried out by external agencies, we identified two crucial entry points for bringing about change. Our researchers engaged with a cross-section of people in three districts of Bihar and Jharkhand to understand why communities continue the practice of early marriages, despite knowing

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1   Names in this article are changed in order to guarantee the anonimity of the respondents.

2   District Level Household & Facility Survey (DLHS-3) conducted in 2007-08 pegs Early Marriage rates in Jharkhand at more than 55%, while the National Family Health Survey 3 (NFHS-3) figures say more than 60%)

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it is illegal. This research[3] helped us understand the situation in areas we planned to work in, revealing the complex links between tradition, poverty, dowry practices, lack of opportunities for education, concern for girls' safety, resistance to inter-caste alliances, and the practice of early marriage. Early marriage is perpetuated by many powerful and intertwined drivers: economics, tradition and low societal status accorded to girls and women. The research findings concluded that the way forward to reduce the prevalence of early marriage was to work towards changing the mindset of communities, especially of the men and youth about early marriage. The community elders, especially the male elders of the family believed that early marriage protected girls from indulging their sexual urges or being promiscuous. This in turn, protected the family's status, pride, and 'honour', which they considered to be easily compromised due to reasons like inter-caste marriage, elopement, 'promiscuity' (including social intermingling of sexes), harassment, girls remaining unmarried, or the violation of norms related to accepted codes of conduct. Our clearest finding was also the most ironic: fathers -- who make all the decisions regarding early marriage -- see early marriage as a way to keep their daughters safe from harassment, molestation and promiscuity. It was essential that we combat this mindset through our on-the ground interventions.

Engaging with communities on the ground posed major challenges for us. Asking girls and women to go against their families to protest early marriage was not a viable option. Despite personal reservations and legal provisions that ban the practice, few girls challenge their families' decisions as male members of the family are also the sole breadwinners of the family. Prosecuting them could push the family into a bigger cycle of debt and poverty. For instance in Jharkhand, there were no official complaints made

3   Breakthrough Formative Research: Marriage Can Wait, Our Rights Can't. April 2012; Revised September 2013

against early marriage in the last ten years. Therefore the hunt began for ways and methods to engage with the communities and to start a conversation where there was none – making people aware of the dangers of early marriage and the need to shun the practice, without blaming or antagonising men, youth or other sections of the community. The idea was also to make this a public conversation so that young people can oppose early marriage with support of family members and key officials.

Breakthrough decided to use **Theatre of the Oppressed** as one of the methods of intervention to elicit community participation and encourage girls and women to speak out about their needs and aspirations.

WHAT IS THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED?

Theatre of The Oppressed is a performance that transforms the spectator, the one who watches, in a spect-actor, the one who watches and takes action. It was developed as a theoretical framework and a set of techniques by Brazilian director, artist and activist Augusto Boal in the 1960s as a means of promoting social and political change. The technique revolves around the unique ability of people to take action, while observing themselves in action – this simultaneous process helps them amend, adjust and alter their actions in order to impact their world differently, thus bringing about change. Trained actors present a short scene on an issue of oppression and represent the world as it is– the anti-model. At a critical point in the narrative, the play is stopped. The spectators are then encouraged to respond, play and take the stage to address the oppression, attempting to change the outcome of the played situation through action. A facilitator then engages the community, facilitates responses and encourages the community to take on the role of the oppressed and respond with what they think is the correct course of action. Humour and entertainment are used to engage with the audience before the challenging situation is presented. A community dialogue is initiated in this manner to collectively reflect on an important social concerns that impact them.

WHY DID WE USE THE THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED?

Since the prevalence of early marriage was not due to a lack of awareness about the legal implications, we needed a method that would act as a mirror to the behaviour of the community. Our research showed that most stakeholders of the community were in a state of constant denial about the

prevalence of the practice within their community. Therefore, our approach should not only provide imparting information on the issue - its legal, social and biological dimensions - but also help the community to articulate factors responsible for its emergence. The long-term aim of our approach is to make people aware of their role in a scenario of social change.

Instead of using street theatre (which had earlier been used by Breakthrough), where actors typically present solutions to the issue, we decided to use Theatre of the Oppressed, because it is more focused on participation of the community. More importantly, it offers space to break the power dynamics existing between the oppressing forces in society, communities, families and traditions, and the oppressed, in this case the girls forced to marrying early. A script was developed by Breakthrough with the help of nationally acclaimed theatre personality, Lokesh Jain and his team. The play **Chanda Pukare,** revolved around Chanda, a 11-year old spirited village girl keen to attend school like her older brother. She is however, deprived of this opportunity due to the existing exploitative gender norms and practices. Her father, who initially allows her to attend school, eventually stops her and is determined to marry her. During the staging of this performance, the play was stopped at the moment when Chanda is about to be married of. The audience were then invited to come and step into Chanda's shoes to explore the options in front of her. Some of the responses elicited during these shows were not just surprising but heartening:

A student of Class XI, Sumita Kumari, exhibited immense confidence and persistence when asked to express how Chanda should react. She said boldly before the audience that if persuasion would fail, she would seek help from the police, because what was being done to her is illegal. When her father said "you will send me to jail", her answer was even bolder: "if you will insist on doing something illegal like this to your own daughter, I will be forced to seek help from the police."

Another 19 year old girl, Meena Lakra, a member of an self-help group volunteered to play Chanda and responded to her father firmly saying, "I will not marry till I complete my education. I want to stand on my feet and support myself." When her father made an emotional appeal asking about the future of her siblings in case she refused marriage, she responded, "I will set an example for them and they too will seek education, will earn and take care of themselves and you will as well."

The most heartening part of using this method was the involvement and participation of women as the play progressed from being casual and entertaining to talking about serious issues. Women and girls, normally shy and reticent, shed their inhibitions to speak out in public forums, to transform themselves as Chanda. The psychological and emotional change wrought in their thinking processes and body language were one of the biggest achievements of our community mobilisation drive. The stories of change have been pouring in from areas where our interventions are going on. One of the theatre actors, Ashok summed up the transformation he witnesses during the staging of the play: *"I enjoy it most when a girl/woman from among the spectators becomes Chanda and boldly speaks in front of the crowd...it is then that I feel I have done something important."*
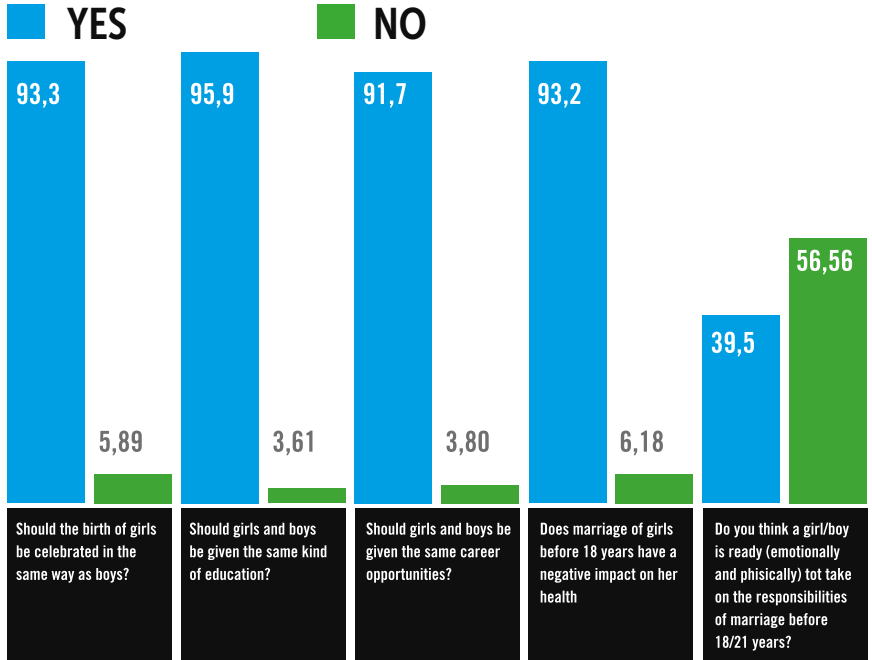
A young girl, Rani, from the Silli village of Ranchi used the forum to speak boldly out against being forced to get married at the age of fourteen and the violence she had to endure. She vowed to work on the issue, beginning from her home by not allowing her younger brothers and sisters to be pushed into a similar fate until they are mature and educated enough to understand marriage. Today, she is supported by her parents and the family has become a powerful example for others in the area.

CHALLENGES FACED

Breakthrough faced several challenges while adapting Chanda Pukare to appeal to local audiences. When the focus moved from communities to target youth still in school, the script was modified. Since many girls became brides while still in school, these girls were the critical mass that needed to be sensitised through the campaign. We also needed to focus on building support for girls already married, figuring out ways to improve their access to sexual and reproductive services. Encouraging them to stay in school required helping them seek the permission of the parents. Another challenge was to ensure that sensitivities and ethical considerations were maintained in the language and actions of the actors. This was critical since early marriage is a complex issue with strong societal endorsements. Political correctness was essential in the interactions. Responses were also carefully monitored and drafted to adhere to a value-based framework where violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination of rights were absolute and non-negotiable.

For example, during a performance, a spectator playing the role of Chanda said she would commit suicide if she was forced to marry early. The Joker, who was moderating the performance, was able to point out the error in this method. It needed to be communicated to the audience that suicide is a form of self-inflicted violence, and therefore unacceptable as a strategy for change. He proposed an alternative that could have more effect - inform and seek support from significant others like supportive family members, teachers, Panchayat members, and finally the police.

SHG TRAINING ANALYSIS

YES **NO**

93,3	95,9	91,7	93,2	
				56,56
				39,5
5,89	3,61	3,80	6,18	

Should the birth of girls be celebrated in the same way as boys?

Should girls and boys be given the same kind of education?

Should girls and boys be given the same career opportunities?

Does marriage of girls before 18 years have a negative impact on her health

Do you think a girl/boy is ready (emotionally and phisically) tot take on the responsibilities of marriage before 18/21 years?

84,4

13,40

Is it appropriate fot a girl to turn down a marriage offer selected by the parents before 18 years of age ?

88,3

10,17

can girls and boys decide when they want to marry?

96,5

2,66

Government has provided various services for girls education and marriage?

95,3

3,52

Do you think this kind of programme will raise awareness of ill-effects of early marriage

93,6

4,47

If you witness or get to know of any child marriage in your community, will you take action against it?

92,9

5,42

will you motivate othes in your community to act against child marriage?

THE IMPACT OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

Untill our intervention through the method of Theatre of the Oppressed, girls who did not favour early marriage had neither the confidence nor the knowledge to convince their families or protest the decisions taken about their lives. Theater of the Oppressed helped spread awareness and knowledge. In addition it provided youth with confidence to revise family practices and decisions. With almost 250 shows in Jharkhand and Bihar, Breakthrough reached out to more than 36,000 youths and 3,500 female self help group members. Theatre of the Oppressed provided a voice and platform to over 16,200 girls, who were still in schools and intermediate colleges. The numbers of those that were indirectly influenced are much higher than the figures mentioned here.

The success of this intervention was also gauged using a survey handed out to the audience after the show. In May 2013, the responses from 1052 self help group members and 4785 youths were analyzed and a graphical representation of this is shared below.

THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS WERE:

- 93.2% of the self-help group members surveyed concurred that marriage of girls before eighteen years had a negative impact on their health.

- Over 56.5% of the respondents concurred that girls and boys were neither emotionally nor physically ready to take on the responsibilities of marriage before they were 18 and 21 respectively.

- 95.3% of the respondents voted in favour of interventions like the Theatre of the Oppressed helping to raise awareness on the ill-effects of early marriage.

Sonali Khan is the Vice President and India Country Director of the human rights organisation Breakthrough. Breakthrough's mission is to prevent violence against women and girls by transforming the norms and cultures that enable it. This mission is carried out by building a critical mass of change agents worldwide — the Breakthrough Generation — whose bold collective action will deliver irreversible impact on the issues of our time. To do so, they create innovative, culturally relevant multimedia tools and programs — from short animations to long-term leadership training — that reach individuals and institutions where they are, inspiring and equipping them to act for change in their own spheres and beyond. She is currently working on four key areas – domestic violence, early marriage, sexual harassment and gender biased sex selection.

According to Sonali an ideal open society is one that is secure enough to allow citizens access to information which can help them improve their lives, and enables them to adopt best practices from anywhere across the world. Social innovation can create such open societies, where people are able to absorb, learn and be open to new ideas and change. For Sonali social innovation is finding inclusive ways

to encourage more people to participate in social change activities.

SONALY KHAN

CHANGE THROUGH SATIRE?
EXPERIENCES OF A UGANDAN CARTOONIST Jimmy Spire Ssentongo

I have been drawing cartoons ever since I was in college, but somehow, in my earlier days, I never took them seriously as a medium for bringing about change. I often took cartoons to be something just to laugh about. However, over time, and with diverse experiences of using them, I noticed that there could be more to cartoons than satire – however, not without challenges. This essay explains my experiences in using the cartoon medium, its viability in tackling complex societal issues and dilemmas, and its challenges.

I started drawing editorial cartoons for a national newspaper (*The Observer*) in 2006. At this time my idea was that cartoons were just for laughs. However, the editor told me: 'remember there are people who buy papers only to check the cartoon, take cartoons very seriously'. My first cartoon to be published was about power black-outs (load shedding), which was a serious problem in Uganda at the time. I drew birds standing on electricity wires telling each other: "I tell you it used to be quite dangerous to stand on these wires". The feedback I received from readers showed me that they took the cartoon seriously as a way of speaking to the concerned authorities through ridicule. This could push the authorities to 'do something' out of fear of another cartoon.

Through the reactions I have received from my audience, I have come to notice that 'provocative yet funny ridicule' is one of the biggest strengths of cartoons. No one wants their misdeeds to be a subject of laughter. Cartoons could be effective in keeping people at their guards – possibly leading to a change of behaviour.

When I joined university as a teacher at Uganda Martyrs University and started using cartoons to critique some of the things that, in my view, were not going well at the university, all of a sudden many people came to me with ideas of things that needed to be changed. Some would say: "I hope you do not draw me in your cartoons". In some cases, it was evident that the concerned people or offices changed. One vivid example I recall is when

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some university authorities decided to scrap the 6% annual salary increment for staff without informing the latter. Although there was much outrage among staff, most of it was muted or limited to corridor talk. Despite the fact that we often discuss issues of concern on our intraweb, this particular issue was never raised. Shortly after I drew a cartoon[1] mourning the mysterious death of 6%, it was reinstated. I cannot claim that this was exclusively prompted by the cartoon, but I believe it had an impacted since it raised the issue in a funny yet provocative way.

It is largely the nature – or culture - of a particular society that determines whether cartoons will be effective in addressing social dilemmas, as well as the form in which they would work. What is considered humorous in one society may not be in another. It could even be found to be irritating. In Uganda, simple yet humorous cartoons are most appreciated, especially those which can be related to everyday events and people in the country or their direct environment. This is manifested in the jokes that circulate on *WhatsApp*. This phone app is mainly used for sharing such jokes. Sophisticated cartoons that require a lot of thinking are not really popular, except for a small section of the elite. I have found cartoons very instrumental in the Ugandan context because few people are interested in reading. So, if you are to write a critique of a practice in the form of a long article, chances are high that very few people will access it. However, a good cartoon will summarise a complex issue in one precise graphical representation, rendered more attractive by a humorous appeal. I also understood the attractiveness and potential for change of cartoons through presentations in which I have used cartoons. The audience seems to be more attentive and eager in comparison to presentations in which other forms of graphics are used. The cartoon message often remained much more prominently than messages conveyed by other means. However, this has sometimes been a challenge. When the information is not well balanced the cartoon steals the show and other things are not given much thought and attention.

Oscar Wilde, an Irish writer and poet, said: *"if you want to tell people the [an inconvenient] truth, make them laugh; otherwise they will kill you"* At certain moments I wanted to put across a rather sensitive message that needed to be toned down with humour, or else it would be risky to tackle the issue. I have covered issues such as corruption in high places of Government, police brutality, presidential term limits[2] (overstaying in power), and the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. I would not have had enough freedom to express the same message in text. I use the advantage that the government is relatively less keen on cartoons in comparison to the attention paid to articles in text.

Only on one occasion in 2010, two Ugandan journalists were arrested over a cartoon of the President of Uganda. The seemingly innocent cartoon depicted President Museveni holding a knife, about to cut a cake on which was written '48th Independence' and a caption 'Uganda at 48: Museveni at 24. What next?' Otherwise cartoonists do not face as much censorship as writers may face in tackling certain sensitive subjects.

It has been said by the American cartoonist Stephanie McMillan that *"when we laugh at those in power, we become less afraid. We become stronger."* In a context like that of Uganda where leaders are perceived as BIG figures and often feared, laughing about their actions somehow demystifies them. Laughing about them can lower people's fear and hence opening up space for critique. I get the impression that there is too much hidden fear in Uganda. I am often advised by friends and other readers that I should be careful when drawing cartoons which are critical of the president. Satirising such figures makes people realise that they are also human after all. They can be critiqued, and one can get away with it.

On the other hand, despite the numerous advantages of cartoon satire in working for change, its messages are sometimes lost since some people still think that cartoons are just for fun. Some readers will only laugh and exclaim 'you cartoonists are funny!' As such, even when there is a serious message in the cartoon, it can be swallowed up by the humour. Also considering that cartoons can be irritating if one is among the subjects it addresses, it sometimes happens that a cartoon draws anger instead of bringing about change. Such anger may instead attract resistance. There was an incident when I drew a cartoon about wrangles between muslim factions in Uganda. One faction had set up a probe about the alleged sale of muslim property by the Mufti, the head of muslims in the country. The Mufti had pleaded

innocent and claimed that all he was doing was guided by Allah. I drew a cartoon with the Mufti clinging to the top of the main Mosque and the probe team digging up around the Mosque (probing). The Mufti was pointing at a bearded old man in the clouds and was saying 'Ask my guide Allah'. Little did I know that it was blasphemous in Islam to present Allah in any kind of graphical form. Muslims wrote to the editor demanding an official apology before they would 'take up other action'. Although the situation was later calmed down with an editorial apology, the incident reminded me to be more cautious in assessing the sensitivities around what I satirise. Not every funny cartoon passes as a good one. And, cartoons could also be socially destructive.

All in all, not withstanding its weaknesses, the advantages I have so far experienced in using cartoons convinced me that it is one of the methods that we should take more seriously in change agency. The human desire for entertainment and humour gives us a strategic opening to pass on important messages, which can touch the human spirit in irresistible ways. Yes, we can laugh for change.

Jimmy Spire Ssentongo works as a lecturer in Ethics at Uganda Martyrs University, a Catholic-founded private university. Currently, he is pursuing a PhD at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, the Netherlands. His research focuses on possibilities for co-existence in ethnically sensitive communities in Uganda. He also works with Ugandan newspaper The Observer on a part-time basis, as an editorial cartoonist. The Observer is an independent tri-weekly private newspaper, one of the four leading newspapers in Uganda. His cartoons mainly reflect on topical issues in Ugandan and African governance and politics. Considering that corruption is one of biggest challenges affecting development in Uganda, it is one of the subjects that frequent Jimmy's work, which has a view of fostering justice in the country. For Jimmy, in an ideal open society there is freedom for people to realise their potential, to enjoy their humanness, and express/work for their desires without unnecessary barriers. However, with keenness not to 'open' one's society and thereby closing another's. For Jimmy social innovation signifies creative means to bring about desirable change in a given society. This could be done by paying closer attention to untapped capabilities in the community.

JIMMY SPIRE SSENTONGO

GAMES CAN BE USED AS BRILLIANT INTRUMENT TO RAISE AWARENESS AROUND SOLCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES.

BEYOND GAMIFICATION:
FROM PROBLEM-SOLVING TO PROBLEM-MAKING *Paolo Ruffino*

Gamification is a relatively recent term in the discourses surrounding video game culture. It has been defined by Sebastian Deterding and colleagues as 'the use of game design elements in non-game contexts'[1], but its meanings go far beyond this definition. In fact, as many gamification *gurus* have argued, gamification could become the tool for changing and 'fixing' the world. According to the enthusiastic proponents of this perspective, we will be able to solve any problem as soon as we will master the technique of transforming these same problems into games; a technique which indeed requires consultancies and workshops offered by those same proponents. Jane McGonigal notoriously claimed during a TED talk in 2010 that video games can fix the world[2]. Her game *SuperBetter* proposes a series of tasks to be achieved in order to reach any goal in life, from losing weight to recovering from illness. This and similar other examples of gamification have attempted to provide a series of clear and simple goals and achievements in order to solve more complex problems.

Gamification has attracted much critique. Game scholar Ian Bogost defined gamification as 'exploitationware', or more simply, 'bullshit'[3]. Bogost complained about the appropriation from the side of marketing of the complexities of video game design. While many video game designers have in fact tried to introduce social and political issues in their games, gamification often tends to be used more mundanely as a promotion of a certain brand

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1   Deterding S., Dixon D., Khaled R., Nacke L. (2011), From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining gamification, Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference, p.2

2   See Jane McGonigal's Gaming can make a better world at TED
     www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_gaming_can_make_a_better_world

3   Bogost, I. , Persuasive Games: Exploitationware, Gamasutra The Art and Business of Making Games [Online], 3rd May 2011, Available at www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6366/persuasive_games_exploitationware.php

     Bogost, I. , Gamification is bullshit: my position statement at the Wharton Gamification Symposium, Ian Bogost – Videogame Theory, Criticism, Design [Online], 8th August 2011, Available at www.bogost.com/blog/gamification_is_bullshit.shtml

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or company and to increase customer's affiliations. Indeed, the idea of using video games to affect and influence players can be applied for marketing purposes. Also, it can easily end up in an over-simplification of social issues through a game-like scenario which overlooks their ethical implications. If there is one lesson we are currently learning from gamification is that being open for change is not necessarily good *per se*. It is not enough in itself and can in fact lead to an over-simplified and self-congratulatory perspective on social activism. While many gamification experts appear to be moved by the best intentions, their proposals for a better (or 'superbetter') world still lack any sense of the complexities underpinning the issues they attempt to solve. Gamification aims at involving the players but it is difficult to let these games become actually engaging practices, as the solution to the proposed issues of the simulation is already planned by the designer. These games might work well in terms of the numbers of players involved - a factor often considered to be indicative of their effectiveness -, but their potential for change in a social context remains limited to that of merely informational material.

However, I believe there is something potentially innovative in the questions that gamification is posing. The idea that we can do 'things' with video games is quite interesting, but I believe it should be approached from a different angle.

The problem I would like to highlight in this contribution is that gamification has been thought about too much as a tool for problem solving, and not enough as a tool for problem making. The idea of gamification as a tool for problem making could be more useful – although maybe paradoxically. As long as a technique is presented as a method for the solution of problems it can too easily become an authoritative proposal, which takes one solution and vision as necessarily better than the others. Instead, games can be used as a brilliant instrument for satire, critique, and to raise awareness around social and political issues. This implies thinking about video games

less as tools to convey a direct message, and more as spaces for critical engagement.

I will present and analyse two cases that, rather than pretending to solve problems, raise new questions and propose new perspectives in relation to emerging or existent socio-political issues. I will propose this as a more effective, interesting and creative way of doing social change through video games.

Some of the most brilliant examples of video games used for problem-making are created by the collective Molleindustria. The game *Phone Story*[4], released in 2011, reveals, in a playful way, the production process of an Apple product, including its planned hype and obsolescence. Most importantly, the game is based on the extremely controversial mining process, in which slaves are forced into labour to collect the required minerals to produce an IPhone, or any other electronic gadget. The game was released as a web game and also as Android and Apple app. However, soon after its release, Apple decided to ban the game from the Apple store. In an article from The Guardian the story is put into context, and Apple's policy about games is revealed through a statement the company published one year earlier: "if you want to criticize a religion, write a book. If you want to describe sex, write a book or a song, or create a medical app. It can get complicated, but we have decided to not allow certain kinds of content in the App Store... We will reject Apps for any content or behavior that we believe is over the line"[5]

Molleindustria's game became the source of a problem. A problem for Apple in the first place, which was forced to expose itself as an authoritative company, prone to censor its own marketplace by removing any content that could somehow be seen as critical of the company's "values". The *Phone Story* game has also exposed the problematic and often unacknowledged production process of electronic gadgets, and in so doing forced players to consider the political and economic implications of their practices of consumption. The radical difference with most of the gamification apps is that the game itself is here seen as a complex text that can raise questions,

4   Molleindustria, 2011, Phone Story. www.phonestory.org

5   The Guardian, "Apple bans satirical iPhone game Phone Story from its App Store". Available online at www.theguardian.com/technology/appsblog/2011/sep/14/apple-phone-story-rejection

rather than provide answers. *Phone Story* is the opposite of a tool for self-help: it puts the players themselves into an uncomfortable position, one where the very instrument they are using to play the game is part of the bigger picture in a story of violence, exploitation and greed.

In the case of *Phone Story* the revenues received from selling the game, as well as the artist fees received by the funding institutions (AND Festival from Liverpool, UK and the Gwangju Design Biennale in Korea), have all been donated to institutions that are currently trying to assist those exploited by corporations involved in the production of electronic gadgets. This has attracted attention from potential buyers of the game, who have supported the project despite the ban from Apple. *Phone Story* has proved to be successful as it has raised questions about a relatively unknown story of exploitation in both specialised and mainstream press. It has also moved people to actively support the organizations that are already concerned with the victims of the mining process enabling the production of electronic gadgets.

Video games can also be more subtle and become spaces to reflect on the ways in which we are politically involved in the world. The game *Papers, Please*[6], developed by Lucas Pope in 2013, does not address, apparently, any contemporary political issue. It is a game where the player has to impersonate an immigration inspector at a border checkpoint in a fictional Soviet regime. The game shows a series of rules for each day of the game, dictating different regulations for border controls. The player is supposed to check passports, scan bodies, issue working permits and so on. However, soon after playing the game some apparently marginal choices are presented to the player: an attempt of bribe, an offer from another officer to stop as many immigrants as possible in order to share a bonus, or maybe a terrorist asking for solidarity. The player can stick to the rules, but the game soon becomes difficult to play. At the end of each day a family needs to be fed and the money provided by the daily salary is not enough. Also, an element of compassion and empathy might arise in the player towards those who ask for a permit, the feeling that the rules provided by the game might not

6   Papers, Please, 2013, Lucas Pope, http://papersplea.se/
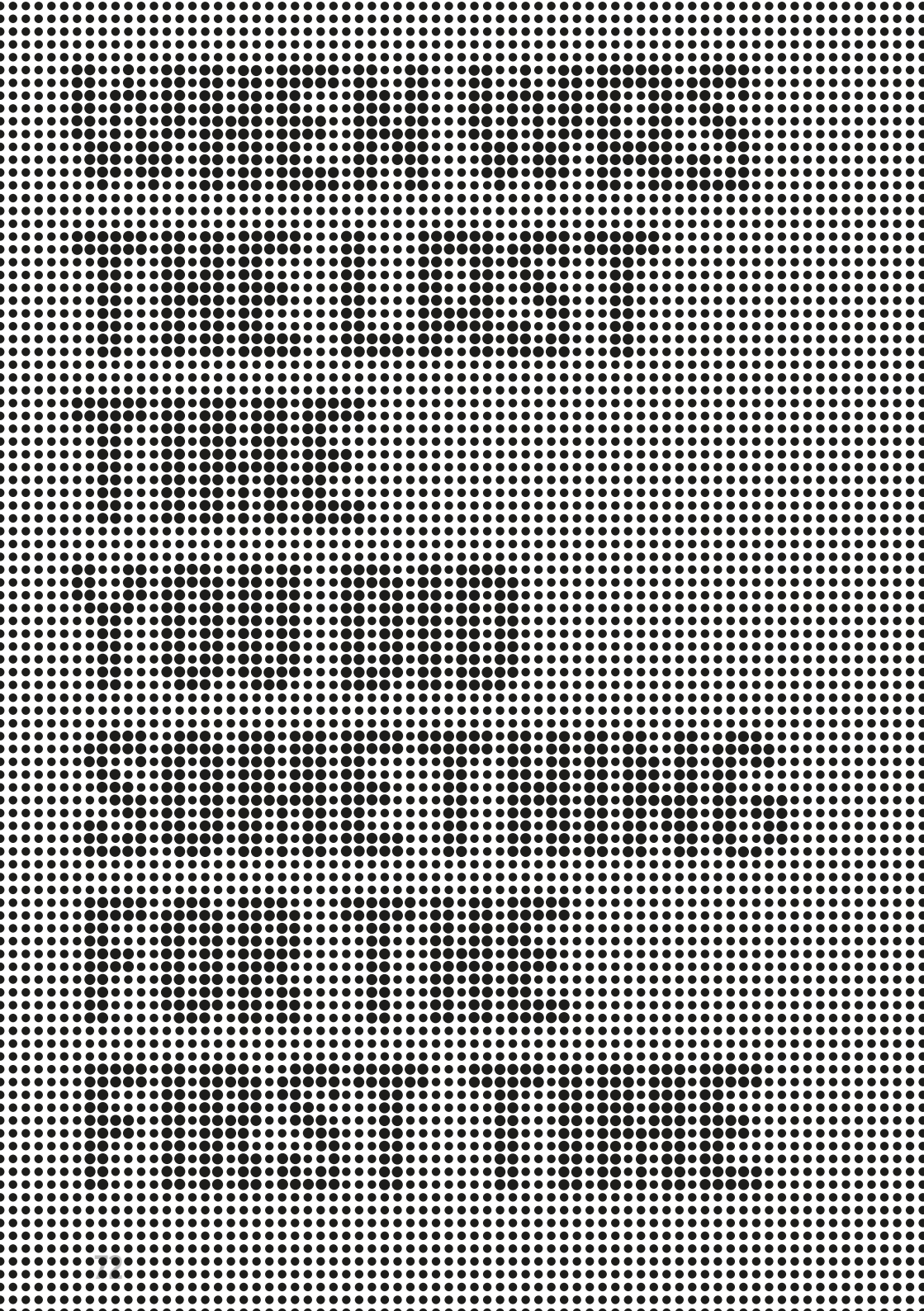
necessarily respect the best and right thing to do – as video games usually want the player to assume.

Papers, Please is a simple game only at the most superficial level. At a deeper level it presents several layers of interpretation and different modes of playing it. It does not provide a final and overall morale, but offers a scenario where the player can question the social and discursive mechanisms through which authorities gain legitimacy and make the distinction between what is right and what is wrong.

Both *Phone Story* and *Papers, Please* are good examples of using video games to raise problems. They avoid the naiveté of gamification apps and do not refuse to be political and to engage with the player. . Maybe that is exactly what makes them fun and innovative. This is a very different kind of engagement, one where questions are asked and answers are not provided. Providing a precise mission, clear rules and objectives is not necessarily the best way to engage players who wish to be challenged by a game, its mechanisms as well as its meanings and values. While gamification has been considered so far as a tool for simplifying and solving problems, these two examples show how video games could instead be much more complex systems for raising new questions, and also for looking at the world from a different perspective. They are not, strictly speaking, examples of gamification, but can teach a lot to the gamification enthusiasts.

TO PROBLEM-MAKING

More interesting reads:

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Bogost, I. (2011), How to do Things with Videogames, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

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Fuchs M., Schrape N., Ruffino P., Fizek S. (2014 expected), Rethinking Gamification, Hybrid Publishing, Leuphana University

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Paolo Ruffino is an academic and artist, interested in the uses and meanings of new technologies. As an artist he collaborates with the group IOCOSE (http://iocose.org). IOCOSE explores possible futures and alternative presents in order to hijack the collective imagination. As an academic, Paolo investigates video game culture, its history and current values, in order to propose potentially new uses of the medium. He is a PhD and Associate Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London; Lecturer at London South Bank University and Research Associate at the Gamification Lab, Centre for Digital Cultures, Leuphana University. Paolo works on new questions and forms of imagination, which might be potentially inspiring, in a later stage, for others who propose solutions for social change.

According to Paolo the open society should grant equal opportunities and be transparent, while also searching for ethical forms of living. He does not believe in 'innovation' because of its modernist and progressive sound. Nevertheless, he firmly believes that change can happen, and that it can temporarily bring more fair conditions of life for people.

PAOLO RUFFINO

THE LONG-TERM AIM OF OUR APPROACH IS TO MAKE PEOPLE AWARE OF THEIR ROLE IN A SCENARIO OF SOCIAL CHANGE

OPEN SOURCE GOVERNMENT?
FORK ME: APP4GOV *David Evan Harris*

What if an app could run for elected office? Imagine: when your elected official made a decision that you did not like, you could simply reprogram him or her—with the support of your co-constituents, of course. Preposterous, you might think? Well, if we humans can use open-source technology tools to collaboratively write the best encyclopedia in the world,[1] and build the core of the world's most popular mobile operating system,[2] what is to stop us from collaboratively rewriting democracy, as we know it?

But why would it be necessary to rewrite—or reprogram—democracy? Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Lessig describes the present situation in the US as follows: "...the corruption of today is in plain sight. The mechanism of its reach is displayed to everyone. It is the simple and pervasive economy of influence that buys access and more through campaign cash. And then without explicit recognition, the actions of our government are guided by the understanding of how those acts will affect the opportunity to raise money."[3]

This problem is not easily solved within the system that produced it. Lessig underlines this intractability in his Anti-Corruption Pledge[4] campaign: "...politicians won't talk about this because they're all hypocritical if they make this the number one issue. They have to live by the very system which is corrupt." Candidates spent more than $7 billion on their campaigns during the 2012 U.S. election.[5]

1   "Reliability of Wikipedia," Wikipedia, accessed April 30, 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reliability_of_Wikipedia

2   "This Chart Shows Google's Incredible Domination Of The World's Computing Platforms," Business Insider, March 28, 2014. www.businessinsider.com/androids-share-of-the-computing-market-2014-3#ixzz30MAznlkN

3   "Neo-Progressives," Huffington Post, Lawrence Lessig, September 3, 2010.

4   "Anti-Corruption Pledge," Rootstrikers, 2012. (video) http://vimeo.com/36624800

5   Total 2012 election spending: $7 billion, Sunlight Foundation, 2013. http://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2013/01/31/total-2012-election-spending-7-billion/

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Unfortunately, a similar problem pervades governance processes the world over: elected officials respond quickly and efficiently to opinions that are backed by the financiers of their campaigns, but slowly and inefficiently to the opinions of their constituents. Without fundamentally restructuring the deep internal logic driving the decisions of our elected officials, making public policy in the public interest is nearly impossible.

App4Gov came out of a deep desire to fix this problem and give every citizen a fast and efficient platform to participate in the policymaking process without having to back those ideas up with cash. It is as much a thought experiment and artifact from the future[6] as it is a performance art intervention and a deliberate provocation: "Hello, politicians! With all your focus on fundraising, would we constituents just be better off getting an app to replace you?"

Together with colleagues at the Governance Futures Lab, I explored the possibility of such an app, even entertaining the notion of mounting a campaign to run this app as a candidate for the United States Senate, representing the state of California. We would know that the app is not corrupt, because every single decision it makes would be completely transparent and determined by citizens.

The app's software—quite literally its *modus operandi*, or operating system—would be open source and published on a website like GitHub. com, open to the community to post and track bugs, share blueprints, test new features, and even fork the code if different people wanted to take it in different directions.

6   "Artifacts from the Future," Institute for the Future website, accessed April 30, 2014. www.iftf.org/what-we-do/foresight-tools/artifacts-from-the-future

The App4Gov registration process: Users register online and receive a postcard at their address. Voter identity is anonymized, but elected officials can track voter participation by census tract, allowing them to make sure that demographics of participating voters are not disproportionate from a specific subset of their constituency.

App4Gov users vote regularly on all sorts of issues through direct communication with their elected representatives. Users can delegate their votes to organizations or individuals.
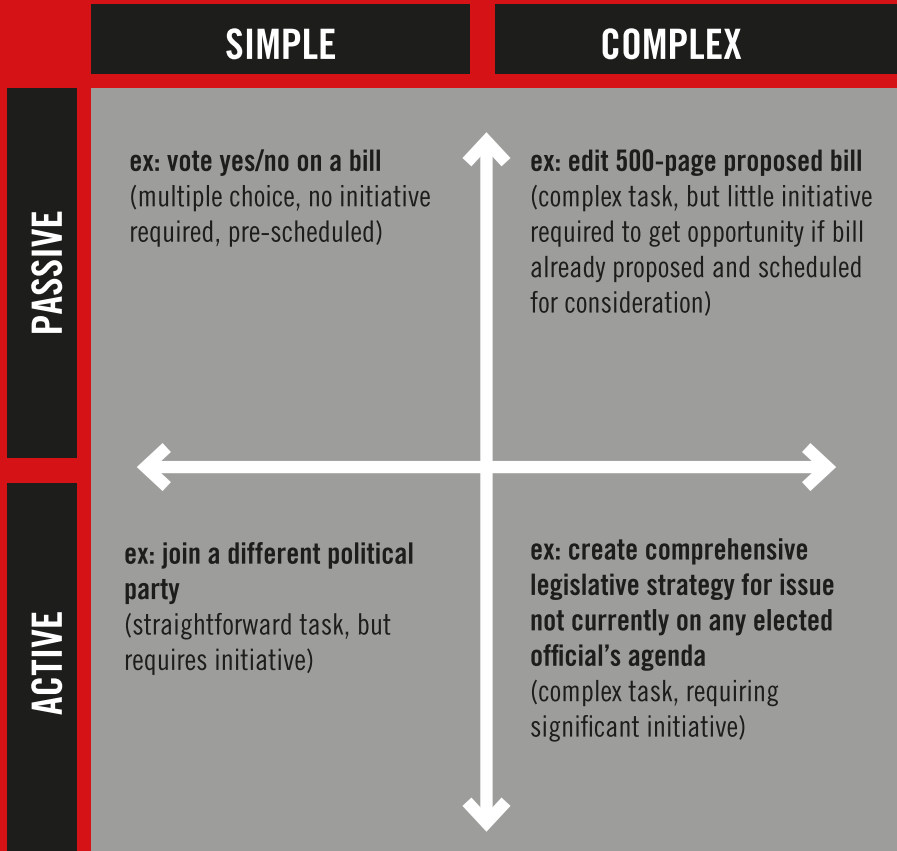

Augmented Reality (AR) Heads-Up Display for Elected Official: Senator uses AR glasses (i.e., Google Glass) to monitor live suggestions for questions during senate proceedings. App4Gov committed elected officials agree to video broadcast every working minute of their political life — from hearings to meetings with lobbyists —, constituents can watch the stream and participate in real time. Senate staffers act as community managers, working to encourage participation and moderate as needed. Exceptions to video broadcasting may be made for security or confidentiality reasons, though transparent justifications are required.

Forking, a central concept in open source software development, would mean that the app software development could branch off in many different directions from the central "trunk" of the code base. It could be customized for specific campaigns and contexts, as different people develop different versions of the app running for different offices in different places—think "App4Mayor," "App4Senate," etc. Additionally, the software would need to grow in complexity to match the requirements of different types of "decision points" related to the different moments in an elected official's day. (see chart below)

The elected official could serve effectively as a "human proxy"—a term that we developed for the human being who would technically run for office, while signing a public pledge stating that he/she would not make a single decision without consulting the will of the constituents through the app. The name App4Gov has a double meaning: it is a more generic term for a piece of software *for* any government official, and at the same time describes an app that could run *for* elected office. I quickly found that policymakers had real interest in the concept and was encouraged to keep developing it along these lines, which led to the mockups in this article.

TYPOLOGY OF DECISION POINTS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

	SIMPLE	**COMPLEX**
PASSIVE	**ex: vote yes/no on a bill** (multiple choice, no initiative required, pre-scheduled)	**ex: edit 500-page proposed bill** (complex task, but little initiative required to get opportunity if bill already proposed and scheduled for consideration)
ACTIVE	**ex: join a different political party** (straightforward task, but requires initiative)	**ex: create comprehensive legislative strategy for issue not currently on any elected official's agenda** (complex task, requiring significant initiative)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

While developing the App4Gov blueprints, a number of concepts for important future features took shape.

One key feature is a digital divide correction tool that gives insight into demographic breakdowns of votes based on voter wealth, race, age, geography, or other characteristics. This feature informs elected officials if App4Gov users participating in any given poll or debate are unrepresentative of their overall constituency, and then weights their views to compensate in generating final outcomes. If the sample size is too small, elected officials can do phone polling or door-to-door outreach to make sure that their sample is accurate before making an important decision.

An example could be a decision about expanding public transportation to specific neighborhoods. If poorer people have less access to computers and smartphones, and vote disproportionately little on App4Gov, it is possible that a decision could be made against their interests. App4Gov could track this disproportionate representation and allow elected officials to compensate for it pro-actively using the methods mentioned above.

Another to-be-designed feature is similar to the battery of questions offered by the dating site OK Cupid, which uses an algorithm to pair potential partners. In the case of App4Gov, an ever-growing set of questions could offer elected officials and constituents a "continuous sentiment tracking" tool, measuring opinions not related to specific votes, but rather to the general views of citizens on issues. This type of information could contribute to the active and difficult decision points that elected officials face, allowing them to make long-term strategies and legislative agendas based on the deeply held views of their constituents, independent of what might be currently rolling through the legislative process.

A third feature in development is a semantic discussion tool drawing upon the advances of Yelp restaurant reviews and Amazon.com product reviews that allows hundreds and even thousands of individuals' views on a topic to be more easily parsed without reading the entire discussion. Yelp produces "review highlights" by searching for common word strings like "avocado tempura" and then telling you how many reviewers mentioned them. One could imagine a similar algorithm in App4Gov, which for example tells you that "this bill has **racist implications** as written" appears in 732 reviews.

7   Eggers, D. (2013) The Circle, Toronto/San Francisco:Knopf/McSweeney's

Amazon.com organizes the conversation around product reviews. First, the most positive and negative reviews are highlighted, then all the reviews are sorted by "most helpful," based on user feedback.

Amazon.com also offers badges to the users who verify that they are using their real names, as well as to the site's top reviewers. It is not difficult to imagine how similar technologies could be used for App4Gov. One could even imagine different levels of "expert" certifications for users in certain policy areas.

These three more advanced features are aimed to address some of the major problems inherent in a project like App4Gov: uneven adoption among constituent sub-populations and the difficulty of providing easily digestible ways for users to understand a conversation that potentially could involve many thousands of people.

SEECHANGE AND PRIVACY

In October 2013, novelist Dave Eggers released *The Circle*[7], a thoroughly delightful and disturbing book, set in the not-too-distant future. The story features politicians that "go transparent" by live video broadcasting their every waking moment. The Circle, a fictitious company that has gobbled up Google, Facebook and Twitter, is pioneering surveillance technology through their SeeChange cameras. The tiny cameras transmit wirelessly for years on a single battery and can be easily worn or hidden anywhere. People from all walks of life decide to "go transparent," broadcasting every moment of their lives via a live video stream from a SeeChange camera worn around their neck.

In the book, Bailey, the company's public-facing leader, makes an excited announcement about the impact of the SeeChange cameras:

Now this new era of transparency dovetails with some other ideas I have about democracy, and the role that technology can play in making it complete. And I use the word complete on purpose, because our work toward transparency might actually achieve a fully accountable government. As you've seen, the governor of Arizona has had her entire staff go transparent, which is the next step. In a few cases, even with a clear elected official, we've seen some corruption behind the scenes. The

transparent elected have been used as figureheads, shielding the backroom from view. But that will change soon, I believe. The officials, and their entire offices with nothing to hide, will go transparent within the year, at least in this country, and Tom and I have seen to it that they get a steep discount on the necessary hardware and server capacity to make it happen.
(Eggers, 2013:383)

As some politicians in the book speak out about SeeChange being overly invasive into their political and personal lives, they find themselves embroiled in scandals, and The Circle is presented as having far too much power in shaping political outcomes.

This presents a valuable allegory for the fact that the control of political technology—no matter how technically advanced the technology—is an important factor in determining who truly benefits from that technology. The obvious rejoinder to Eggers' implicit critique of such self-surveillance techniques is that if the technology for building a tool like App4Gov is open source and not dependent on a single for-profit corporation, it could be less vulnerable to the types of abuses of power seen in SeeChange.

At the same time, Eggers also clearly draws into question the value of the type of "complete transparency" that I had originally envisioned when exploring the first version of App4Gov, as well as the notion of the human proxy as a political candidate, who can simply represent an App in an unbiased way. The dystopian vision of a world where elected officials are completely tapped in to the minute-by-minute sentiments of their constituents appears to hinder any type of deep thinking about almost anything. The characters in the book who "go transparent" find themselves constantly distracted by the ongoing stream of continuous feedback coming from users watching the live video stream of their lives, with more popular users receiving thousands of comments in a single minute.

Despite this critique, I believe it is possible that this type of problem could be solved through a more structured and still immediate approach to "transparency" as described in the App4Gov features above.
While App4Gov would theoretically decrease the influence of special interest lobbying on decision-making by elected officials, it is possible that the money spent by those same interests on lobbying could be redirected to massive marketing campaigns to sway users of App4Gov directly. Political

campaign finance laws might need to be updated in the case that a system like App4Gov were to become mainstream to accommodate for new definitions of lobbying and issue-specific campaigning.

Another dilemma that elected officials might face would be in the case of a moral dilemma such as policymaking on issues like abortion or gay marriage. One could envision that politicians who use App4Gov make a clear statement of their core principles and beliefs that they would not be willing to compromise on, even if their user community voted for them to act against their values. This could be transparently modified and also made available for adaptation by other users as the system and patterns of best practices develop.

At the deepest level, an elected official choosing to use App4Gov as part of his or her campaigning or policymaking efforts would simply be an effort of good faith at making democracy *more representative*. Because they pro-actively seek out input in scalable and sophisticated ways, electeds using a platform like App4Gov would be much more than simply "transparent", like the politicians described in *The Circle*. They would be actively collaborating with other officials and their respective constituent communities. They would use free and open source software to test, modify and build technological tools which will help them to do their jobs better. It is in this way that—whether or not they choose to stream some or all of their working lives—they would maintain their political and technological sovereignty and be less vulnerable to the machinations of the corporations caricatured in *The Circle*.

Whither App4Gov today? Which fork is the right one? Stay tuned for the next chapter at app4gov.org. Or just fork it and make the next chapter yourself.

David Evan Harris is Research Director and Social Change Agent at the Institute for the Future (IFTF), an independent nonprofit research institute based in Palo Alto, California, founded in 1968. David co-leads IFTF's **Governance Futures Lab.** The mission of the Governance Futures Lab is to reimagine and experiment with the basic architectures and processes of governance. David is also founder of the Global Lives Project, a video library of life experience. He has been involved in numerous local, national and international political movements, ranging from working on environmental policy at the White House in the Clinton Administration to lobbying on behalf of Greenpeace for stronger action on international climate change and participating in four World Social Forums. David believes that an open society is a society where all knowledge and innovations are shared freely and put to the greatest possible use for all people. For him, social innovation should provide new methods that improve the lives of all people, especially those less privileged than others. David is particularly concerned with the question of political representation and economic rights. He believes that all individuals should have equal rights to meaningful political representation as well as access to economic opportunities and free top-quality education and health services.

DAVID HARRIS

ABOUT HIVOS

Inspired by humanist values, Hivos envisages a world in which women and men live their lives in freedom and dignity. Hivos develops programmes which are carried out jointly with civil society organizations in 26 countries, international donors and specialized agencies. We also engage in policy advocacy and co-create knowledge.

We work with academics, activists, policy makers and business people to tackle key questions. Such as how to understand and innovate support for civil society building or how to promote pluralism in times of growing intolerance. Hivos' knowledge activities include research, policy advice, documentation and creative encounters such as BarCamps, summer schools, writing workshops and knowledge exchanges.

At the Open for Change event in October 2013, we brought together change makers from around the world to share their stories, experiences and tools. Together, we attempted to uncover unusual perspectives and reflect on what has worked – and what hasn't – to mobilize people to play part in the change they want to see. Some of these stories of social innovation can be found in this publication.

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