

Addressing Hate and Violence: The Scottish Experience of Communities & Complexity

with Keynote remarks from the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Justice:
Mr. Kenny MacAskill

One-Day Workshop hosted by:
The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) Young Academy of Scotland

8 July 2013 at the RSE, 22-26 George Street, EH2 2PQ

Introduction

The aftermath of the attack in Woolwich demonstrates how one misguided personal act of brutal violence can quickly be regarded as symbolic of the feelings, motivations, and desires of entire groups. Soon, the attack of an individual upon another individual is seen as a conflict between large groups. While frequently these incidences of violence are explained as the work of a single individual, rarely does an individual act in complete isolation. Individuals live and interact within communities, within our larger societies. Thus, we must all work together to prevent violence and incidences of hate.

Aim of the Workshop

This workshop seeks to explore what can be done to garner the support of ever-larger and diverse groups and communities in the efforts to prevent violence, build stronger, more enduring social relationships and, ultimately, build more peaceful societies. The Young Academy of Scotland, created by the RSE in 2011 to develop a coherent and influential voice on the most challenging issues facing society in Scotland, aims to bring together community leaders and practitioners, each with different resources and skills, to discuss the concerns of community relations and pursue the means to build more peaceful, more resilient societies. This initial meeting will bring together community activists, police practitioners, representatives from central and local government and local community stakeholders from a range of groups, institutions and backgrounds. While establishing a dialogue among such a diversity of potential partners is always laudable, the workshop aims to foster deeper strategic relationships, and encourage partners to form immediate concrete collaborations to initiate new programmes of community building across a range of complex, multicultural and multilingual neighbourhoods in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Engaging Each Other

An important step in strengthening communities is the recognition of positionality: while we may all work together, each group or each stakeholder has a different perspective. It is crucial to provide an ongoing environment where different actors can both defend their different perspectives while simultaneously be seen as contributing to the same project of cooperation and resilience. Positionality allows groups to speak as groups, articulating their collective fears, desires, and aspirations. It also enables a wide-ranging discussion, providing an opportunity to challenge and discuss, work through and engage stereotypes and assumptions.

Discussing Group Conflict:

Hate and violence are most frequently associated with prejudice; the expression of hate can be seen as a failing of an individual to recognize the humanity and equality of another. Yet, we can also see such expressions of hate, whether as verbal or physical attacks, as forms of collective violence. In collective violence the targets are not recognized for their humanity *per se*, for they are not seen as individuals; rather the targets of collective violence are seen as representatives, as emblematic symbols, of an enemy-other. Collective violence is a crisis of large group identities, culminating in an enactment of separation between "us" and "them" – determining who belongs and who is to be regarded as an outsider met with suspicion

Programme: 8 July 9:00am – 4:15pm at the RSE

Registration and Coffee (9:00 – 9:30)

Welcome (9:30-9:45)

Session One: **A Round Table on the State of Conditions in Scotland and UK** (9:45-10:30)

The session opens the workshop with a discussion of community relations in Scotland from a range of perspectives. This panel will explore what we do well in Scotland, what we may need to improve upon, and what are the potential concerns for the future.

Session Two: **Dealing with Differences** (10:30-11:15)

In this session we will examine the splits, divisions, tensions, and divides within communities. Often communities are regarded as being holistic entities, yet every community has its own internal tensions. There are inter-generational differences of opinions within groups, just as there are intra-generational differences. There are gender issues, sexuality issues, and class issues; this panel will examine how communities deal with difference both from one another and within their own groups.

Break (11:15-11:30)

Session Three: **Identity and the Media** (11:30-12:15)

The media assists in opening conversations, transmitting vital information, and bringing communities together. Unfortunately the media can also sensationalize conflicts even when there is none; stir the public's imagination for both good and ill; and promote stereotypes even when those perceptions are hurtful and inaccurate. This session's discussion engages questions on the media's role in addressing incidents of hate and building community relations.

Session Four: **Cabinet Secretary's Keynote Remarks** with Q&A (12:15–13:00)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Mr. Kenny MacAskill, will offer his impressions on what we do right in Scotland, what we may have to offer other communities in the UK, and how we might move forward to build stronger communities in Scotland.

Lunch (13:00-14:00)

Session Five: **Small Group Breakout for 5 Questions** (14:00-15:00)

The large group will break into small groups of six members each to discuss and offer responses to five key questions regarding challenges facing community relations in Scotland. The small groups will then each present their responses to these challenges.

Break (15:00-15:15)

Session Six: **What Do We Do Next?** (15:15-16:00)

All too often workshops leave the question of what we do next far too little time or serious consideration. The aim of this workshop is to move forward with concrete proposals for collaboration and cooperation. This session will explore ways forward and discuss what resources would be needed to find opportunities to work together, synergize and seek higher, better ways to deal with the status quo.

Summary and Closing Thoughts (16:00 – 16:15)

Networking Opportunity (16:16 -17:00)

We invite the participants to remain at the RSE after the formal programme ends to meet with one another, make connections, and build networks for further cooperation and collaboration.

About the organisers

Dr. [Jeffrey Stevenson Murer](#) is the Lecturer on Collective Violence at the University of St Andrews, and was the Principal Investigator of the European Study of Youth Mobilisation. He is also a Member of the Young Academy of Scotland.

[Asif Ishaq](#) works for the Safer Communities Directorate of the Scottish Government and is also a Member of the Young Academy of Scotland.

Inspector [Nadine Aliane](#) is from the Safer Communities Department from Police Scotland, liaising with the many communities across the whole of Scotland.

[Abdul Rahim](#) and [Sam Tedcastle](#) are the Directors of the Centre for Good Relations, which engages in “civic mediation”: facilitating dialogue, addressing social conflicts, and group disputes & tensions.

The [Young Academy of Scotland](#) of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, created in 2011, brings together some of the most able and innovative young academics, entrepreneurs, artists and professionals in Scotland, with the aim of harnessing their creativity to consider many of the most challenging issues facing society.

The event will take place at the RSE. The RSE are an educational charity founded in 1783 and includes fellows from a wide range of disciplines - science & technology, arts, humanities, social science, business and public service.

Further support will be provided by [International Alert](#), one of the world's leading peacebuilding charities with over 25 years' experience working in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, in Africa, Asia, Eurasia, South America and the Middle East, which has recently started work in the United Kingdom.

Joining Instructions

Registration will open at 9am and participants are invited for a morning tea or coffee and to meet with one another before the workshop officially begins. To reserve your place please contact Abdul Rahim (abdul@centreforgoodrelations.com) or Jeffrey Murer (Jeffrey.Murer@st-andrews.ac.uk).

Contact Details

If you would like to join the conversation exploring how to build stronger and better connected communities, please request further information by e-mailing Dr. Jeffrey Stevenson Murer at: Jeffrey.Murer@st-andrews.ac.uk. Or, alternatively, leave a voice message by calling 01334 461 924.