



**COHESION,  
DIVERSITY,  
EQUALITY  
CONFERENCE  
SEMINARS**

1 Noelette Hanley's presentation can be read in full on the Runnymede website: [www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)

# Policy into Practice Seminars: (I) Neighbourhoods

Chair: Ted Cattle CBE, IDeA

Presentations:

Gerard Lemos, Lemos & Crane

Noelette Hanley, Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

Alan Riddell, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

Note takers: Candida Blaker and Alveena Malik

**Ted Cattle** introduced the session with his opinion that there is plenty of opportunity to engage with communities in ways that promote community cohesion. He referred to the Home Office/Regional Co-ordination Unit's guidance on Area Based Initiatives, PSAs and CPAs as tools to achieve cohesion.

**1. Alan Riddell**, in his presentation, was struck by how similar the Aims and Objectives of this new strategy are to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's Race Equality Strategy, the main difference being the NRU's emphasis on 'Place'. He felt there was a strong relationship between the NRU's 'Place' and Government's drive to tackle discrimination and inequalities. Whether participation is encouraged under the banner of 'civil renewal', 'neighbourhood renewal' or the NRU's 'new localism', it is through engagement with local community strategies that improvements will be delivered. And communities of interest or of faith are as significant within neighbourhoods as communities based on physical proximity.

**2. Gerard Lemos's** intention was to identify the missing links in the Government Strategy and highlight those points where policy was clearer than practice. In brief these could be listed as: (1) a shift in government focus from employment to disadvantage; (2) addressing issues of social housing doesn't deal with problems of overcrowding in the private sector, which is more relevant; (3) lack of female activity in the employment sector is as problematical as male unemployment among Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities; (4) the locality effects are as important as the 'ethnicity effect'; (5) tolerance seems harder to inculcate than are measures to address intolerance; (6)

migration of small numbers of people from large numbers of countries with no historical ties with the UK produces a fragmented response from agencies; (7) inter-ethnic community conflict often has more to do with 'new' versus 'old'; (8) diversity is much stronger in the private/cultural realms than in the public.

**3. Noelette Hanley** gave an overview of the legislation affecting gypsies and travellers, especially the law on accommodation. Relationships with Local Authorities revolved around either poor provision of sites or disputes around use when gypsy and traveller communities had purchased their own land. Amendments to the Housing Bill were welcome. Development of accommodation for gypsies and travellers should include both workspace and living space. Good practice models included the Westway Travellers site.

## Main discussion points

**1. Awareness of the need to put policy into effective action, and also to enable civil action alongside governmental activity**

**2. A generalised belief in the importance of investing in community organisations and leaders – as the principal change-makers at neighbourhood level**

- *Neighbourhoods are where not only differences but also common interests can be found.* (AG)

Neighbourhoods may have their limitations for addressing major issues of inequality, yet they are the places where people live. Common

interests can provide opportunities to build tolerance and understanding. This underlines the need to work with community groups and the importance of informal networks. In order to address the real tensions and incompatibilities and attacks, which do take place at neighbourhood level, there is a need to support people who can be effective 'bridges' from within those localities.

*Alan Riddell* agreed about the importance of neighbourhood-level work, and the need to invest in strengthening capacity at a local level, adding that this needs to be 'nested' into subregional and then national contexts.

- *Is there real interest in handing back power to local organisations?* (MF)

Research and experience in Leeds has demonstrated that it is the self-initiated activity (of black and Asian people) that has contributed to improvements in their quality of life. This was taken forward by neighbourhood organisations, initially driven by people inspired by values of justice, tolerance and respect, working with white people. Too little has been done to foster these organisations.

*Gerard Lemos* agreed that real change takes place when there is an alliance between various different 'those that have' and 'those that do not'. There comes a point when 'race' gets de-prioritised as a marker of difference – what is that point? Noelette Hanley emphasised the importance of coalition-building, as witnessed by the recent formation of the Gypsy Traveller Coalition, defying historical differences and rivalries.

- *Attention needs to be paid to work with young people.* (RS)

*Gerard Lemos* felt that more attention should be paid in particular to inter-generational aspects of work with young people, which is where conflict often lies, especially in rural contexts.

- *How can we ensure action rather than lip-service at local authority level? (EJ)*

Alan Riddell felt it required an institutional cultural change, e.g. to consider the positive impact of spatial planning. Gerard Lemos said there was a need to address the way people lead their lives rather than looking to representative workforces, and for policy to be more driven by outcomes than by process: 'policy intervention needs to be about finding the things that turn the key'. He affirmed that in instances where there has been significant progress, this has been largely due to effective civil action.

### 3. The need to disaggregate tensions operating within a neighbourhood, and to be clear about the distinction between various different 'communities'.

- *What action can address inter-ethnic discrimination within communities? (DN)*
- *Consider existing neighbourhood renewal initiatives and demands before bringing in new people with additional needs – otherwise their arrival exacerbates tensions (RD). The 'settled' population needs to see benefits accruing to themselves so as not to be alienated.*
- *It is important not to subsume the class dimension. There may be more common ground between people of different race within the same class, and locality.*

### 4. Need for information, education, and positive images about new immigrants, in particular

- *It is too easy to dismiss Daily Mail-type reporting about*

*travellers and gypsies [or asylum-seekers and refugees]. We need to understand the causes of fear among the readership.*

Gerard Lemos pointed out that attention needs to be paid to the local press, which has higher readerships than national newspapers. He felt there was a strong need for public education to overcome the ignorance about gypsies that fuelled such fears. Noelette Hanley remarked that despite several approaches to the Press Complaints Commission about language used to describe gypsies in the media, they (Irish Traveller Movement) have not had a positive response, nor have they been granted meetings with senior politicians to take up unlawful and inflammatory treatment, including the burning of effigies, despite support from the CRE for dialogue.

- *How effective is the simple approach of positive encounters between different communities in contributing to cohesion? How is this done at a local level? (BP)*

She emphasised that it is vital to have positive images of asylum-seekers, to counter some of the tensions. Tensions against newcomers are manifested by a range of people, depending on the context – it may be by Asians (e.g. Sheffield), by white working class, or white middle class (such as at Bicester). A positive interaction between people is likely to achieve greater understanding.

There was general agreement with this, backed up by research referred to by Noelette Hanley (Stonewall's Profiles of Prejudice report) to the effect that among people admitting prejudice against travellers and asylum-seekers, 33% say their opinions get formed by newspapers.

Alan Riddell felt that it would be good to stop referring to people derogatorily as 'asylum-seekers', and focus more on what they have to offer.

### The apparent paradox between diversity and integration

- *How do we integrate diversity in private and also public life so that it becomes more than a diversion? (BP-G)*

BP-G challenged Gerard Lemos on his comment about aspiring to tolerance, saying that we should aim for more than that. He agreed that tolerance was not his highest aspiration but a highly achievable one, and that it was important for there to be commonly understood bottom lines on diversity, which would then enable us to move on to action.

### Ted Cattle – concluding remarks

Being a stranger can apply not only in urban areas, as mentioned by Gerard Lemos, but also in rural areas. People are often seen as strangers, dehumanised. We should be re-humanising people at neighbourhood level. This is key to reducing tension and increasing community cohesion. It needs a professional approach and appropriate skills, at community level.

The issue is not just about long-held rivalries (mostly black and white), but new versus old immigration, and inter-ethnic diversity and tensions. Migration will increase. We need to handle diversity in different ways. There is a widespread quest for identity, and we can help the process by defining people with reference to their positive attributes, by who they are rather than who they are not. □



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Noelette Hanley and Alan Riddell (below, left and right), and Gerard Lemos (centre), with seminar chair Ted Cattle to his left, respond to audience questions

