The Mandela Dialogues on Memory Work 2
Creating safe spaces across generations

Observations on the process

A collaboration between the Global Leadership Academy, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Nelson Mandela Foundation

Observations on the Mandela Dialogues on Memory Work 2

1. Rationale

The Mandela Dialogues on Memory Work are an international collaboration between the Global Leadership Academy (GLAC), commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF). The first series was convened in 2013-14, bringing together 26 participants from ten countries to engage in a three-part dialogue on memory work in contexts where oppression, violent conflict or systemic human rights abuses have taken place. Following the Mandela Dialogues 1 process, a second series was planned with the aim of exploring two key lines of inquiry to have emerged:

- Firstly, how do we create spaces safe enough for the unsayable to be said and in which those who do not even want to see each other (former enemies, perpetrators and victims, winners and losers) can begin to listen to one another's stories? These are spaces dedicated to establishing the conditions for a fundamental hospitality to what is considered 'other'. And they are spaces which must reach the children and grandchildren of protagonists.
- Secondly, how do we provide the foundation for sustainable cross-generational action that leads to societal change and transformation?

Twenty-nine participants were invited from nine countries (Rwanda, Nepal, Argentina, Colombia, Sri Lanka, the United States of America, South Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia). The first encounter of Mandela Dialogues 2 took place in Cape Town, South Africa in June 2016 and a second encounter took place in Colombo and Batticaloa in Sri Lanka over late October and early November 2016. Between these meetings a number of self-guided 'local immersions' took place involving participants from the same home country. Participants chose varied types of immersions to broaden their perspectives and engage with parts of their context that they were less familiar with.

The Mandela Dialogues on Memory Work 2 have been supported by the financial contributions of the GIZ programmes ProPAZ (Colombia) and FLICT (Sri Lanka) as well as the Civil Peace Service (Nepal and Rwanda) in support of the participants from these countries.

In any dialogue process about safe spaces across generations, process and content are of necessity interwoven. The challenges, and potentials, of creating safe spaces were therefore discussed on the basis of the past experiences of all participants in their respective countries and organisations and at the same time experienced together during the face-to-face meetings in the group. Based on this understanding, process and content observations in this report are interwoven as well. In the first part, on the methodology used, the report will give an overview in order to lay a basis for sharing some observations along the exploration of the key themes in the second part.

2. Methodology: Understanding the process

The Mandela Dialogues provide an international forum to discuss the complex personal, collective and professional challenges facing those engaged in reckoning with the past. Through different layers and modes of engagement the process aims to reinvigorate debates about memory work and how it is done; and to offer new approaches, new questions and challenges to existing paradigms. The participants' inquiry takes them into the nexus between memory work, dialogue facilitation and leadership development as transformative practices.

Mandela Dialogues 2 was an open and collective process and used a number of methodologies. A facilitation team, comprising three experienced facilitators, worked together to form an overarching structure and to design various activities. The process over the twelve days in both countries used 'immersions', reflective and dialogical exercises as well as plenary and small group discussions to facilitate dialogue as well as self-reflection. The process was designed to also stimulate dialogue and conversation outside of formal proceedings, including over refreshment breaks and in after-hours down-times.

The process for the Mandela Dialogues was built on three pillars:

i) Deep **dialogue** on the practice and content of memory work along the guiding questions of how to create and sustain safe spaces and how to foster intergenerational memory work.

ii) **Personal and leadership development**, enabling reflections on what this work requires from those involved in it and strengthening each other in this work.

iii) The transfer of insights and inspiration from this international dialogue to **enable change** in the home contexts of participants.

2.1 Dialogue on the content and practice of memory work

Dialogue took place during the process in facilitated plenary and small group sessions. Essential for the facilitation team was to work with topics and themes that arose from the participants' inputs during the process rather than with a predefined set of topics on the agenda. This focus on emerging themes was strengthened in the course of the process. Small group conversations, often with 'Open Space Methodology', were particularly useful to deepen conversations around specific content aspects, debriefing immersions and developing ideas to take forward with peers within the group. During the Sri Lankan meeting, in particular, the Open Space Methodology was employed to allow the group to self-organise itself to effectively deal with the different issues in a very short time and to determine what aspects of a conversation it would like to deepen.

Both in the first and the second dialogue meeting, situations were created in which the group practised deep and attentive listening, for example in small groups or during dialogue walks. Equally, for facilitators and the hosting team, listening to the group and adapting the process accordingly was crucial.

Immersion into local dialogue and memory work initiatives provided an added contextual layer to the proceedings and used deep content dialogue, memory work in practice and participant observation. Activities not only stimulated content dialogue, but also inspired participants to think about which of the approaches/methodologies experienced by them could be adapted and transferred into their work back home. The intention to visit and experience projects and engage with their work, rather than simply visiting memorials or doing tours, was supportive of this.

For more information on the immersion activities please see Annexure 1.

The MD2 circle in the District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa. Picture:Werner Ryke.

2.2. Personal and leadership development: Reflections on what this work requires from those involved in it

Mandela Dialogues 2 provided a space for leaders and change agents in the field of memory work not only to develop new ideas for the professional and technical challenges of dialogue work, but also to engage with the difficult feelings and challenges of this work on a personal level. For most of the participants, the depth and intensity of this experience came as a surprise, first creating irritation and resistance, later being embraced as a gift by many. As participant Malathi de Alwis put it : "*I don't think any other dialogue process I have ever been in has engaged every part of me like the Mandela Dialogues did. Some of the lessons learnt will stay with me for the rest of my life.*"

Personal reflection was supported by an intentional reflection about one's own learning intention for the dialogue. In Sri Lanka, participants were invited during paired dialogue walks to provide each other with a thinking environment to help sharpen the focus of this learning intention for the dialogue: What is the real challenge I am carrying around with me, that I want to address with my peers in this group?

Participants also started reflecting on issues of self-care in the difficult, often politically fraught and/or traumatic processes they are engaged in. Questions on one's own mindset in such processes and how to relate to perpetrators were asked. During reflective writing processes, many participants engaged in contemplation on sources of vitality, grounding and anxiety as well as personal dreams. During the second dialogue meeting, this reflection was deepened. Galkande Dhammananda offered loving kindness meditations; an impetus for many in the group to reflect on the inner mindset with which we meet other people, including those one might feel different from or opposed to. The meditations invited contemplation on the specific relevance of this kind of awareness in the work of reconciliation and healing in post-conflict societies.

2.3 Enabling Change

The whole process of the Mandela Dialogues was also geared to promote and enable change. Activities did not only stimulate content dialogue, but also inspired participants to think about which of the approaches/methodologies experienced by them they might be able to adapt and transfer into their work back home. The intention to visit and experience concrete projects and engage in their work rather than touring or visiting memorials was supportive of this. The deep dialogue between peers interwoven with reflective exercises inspired many ideas that participants have committed to taking forward into the future.

Impressions from local immersions in Eastern Sri Lanka. Pictures: Private.

Similarly, the in-country immersions (or "learning journeys") which took place between South Africa and Sri Lanka encounters served on the one hand to support a "fresh" enquiry by the country groups into their own context and on the other hand to get inspirations for ideas/actions they would like to take forward beyond the dialogue process. The Sri Lankan participants visited an area in Colombo known as Slave Island, where gentrification and forced displacements have affected a community of 60 000. Sri Lankan participants were able to engage with the community to understand new forms of violence (including state violence) that affect poor and marginalised populations. Nepalese participants travelled to outlying villages in their country to increase their understanding of the systemic inequality in many parts of rural Nepal, where they witnessed the different levels of privilege even within seemingly oppressed groups. Participants from the United States conducted a field tour in Chicago, visiting archives and interviewing key stakeholders and academics. They interrogated how accessible archive is, even in a community context, and grappled with the ways in which systemic power and privilege plays out in the archive today. These self-organised in-country immersions stimulated further reflection among the participants and played an important role in strengthening the relationships in the group.

Being an open-ended process, the Mandela Dialogues did not aim at pinning down fully-fledged change projects at the end of the final dialogue meeting. The

experience of the first Mandela Dialogues series has demonstrated that systemic change usually takes time to become tangible. In this second series, many participants already had concrete ideas about what kind of action they would like to take forward, inspired by the dialogue process. The penultimate day of the process offered Open Space sessions dedicated to looking forward and to crystallising some of these ideas.

After this last dialogue meeting, participants had the opportunity to apply for seed funding to start change initiatives inspired by the dialogues. 11 proposals were handed in, out of which 4 have been selected and will be supported through the year 2017.[1]

Exploring key themes[2]

3.1.   Safe spaces for dialogue

Intentionally, no definition of a safe space was provided by the convenors, so that the process would be guided by the practical experiences of participants rather than a theoretical definition. Notable during the conversations was recognition of the multiple meanings of 'safe space'. For many, with the threat of war as a constant, a safe space was a space in which the threat of physical violence was not there. For others a safe space was one in which a conversation could be had between enemies, whilst for others it could also mean a space in which people of a similar community could meet and discuss. The term safe space remains one of contention and its use as a 'catch-all' term does not translate well across borders or even professions. For example, in some countries' colleges and universities, safe spaces are referred to as places in which minority and marginalised groups have their own

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[1] The projects have been selected by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the German Civil Peace Service.
[2] The documentation laid out in the following sections was put together by the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Khalil Goga, who was included as a researcher to document the process. He used a qualitative methodology, engaging with the group as an expert focus group. The report is primarily descriptive but key themes were, of course, interpreted. There was also a particular focus on high level interpretation of some of the themes related to the two key lines of inquiry, with a noting of themes or concepts that emerged from the process. Detailed notes were taken during the process, not only on what was said but also on what happened during the dialogues. As a note, it wasn't possible to document all the small groups and therefore documentation focused on plenary session themes. These notes were then interpreted to find relevant concepts to emerge from the process itself. Following the initial draft report, changes and additions were added by the GIZ team, Claudia Apel and David Winter, the latter drawing on his role as a facilitator in the dialogue.

space away from, most often, white people. It is in this space that they can feel protected and work together on group rights.

There was unanimous agreement that "*safety and comfort are not the same thing*" and that the aim of the dialogue as well as in broader conversations is not to make everyone comfortable but to make sure everyone feels safe.

Within the group there were those that expressed a limited trust in safe spaces. It was argued that instead of trying to create safe spaces for communities or groups there should be a call for results-orientated dialogue that includes partners from those with privilege or from the opposition. Thus a safe space should not be one of singular groups or communities but should be broadened to all in a particular country or collectivity. It was argued that for change to take place there needs to be a mobilisation of allies in other areas and groups and that searching for a closed safe space can shut this down. It was reasoned that society should instead seek to build 'permanent safe spaces', that there is always a time and space to speak out against violence and that the notion of a safe space should be extended to a whole country.

Similarly, it was argued that safe spaces often limit engagement and that confrontation in a space is sometimes necessary - as a participant explained, '*not everything's a dialogue, more often it is a negotiation.'*

Observations from the nexus of content and process

During the MD process, particular attention was given to crafting a dialogue space for the group itself. Whilst working with one of the guiding questions of creating *'safe spaces for the unsayable to be said'*, facilitators and participants intended to create this space for the group itself during the process. Therefore the creation of a safe dialogue space for the group was both a process happening during the meetings as well as the content of the conversations in the group. These two levels evolved simultaneously.

In a dialogue, not only the content of what is shared matters, but also the **form** the group chooses for HOW it wants to relate and share with each other. Based on this understanding, a "working agreement" was created at the outset of the first dialogue on the basis of input from the participants. The working agreement initially served as

a reference point with regard to disagreements and conflict.[3] Participants were in agreement that the 'search', and the 'aim', in this type of dialogue is not to achieve a consensus and that consensus is not always 'healthy'. Instead, during MD 2, learning would be the aim.

During the first encounter in Cape Town, the difficulty in creating this space was noted and a significant amount of time was spent trying to deal with these difficult dynamics. While many in the group were pleased that the process was not one of 'checking boxes', there was contestation over whether there should be an 'agenda' or 'no agenda' and there was considerable disagreement over how 'directed' proceedings should be. To a great degree, this kind of difficulty is expected in a process such as the Mandela Dialogues, where individuals with very diverse backgrounds and perspectives come together and engage with each other in the framework of a process that explicitly intends to be open-ended and to work with the themes and dynamics that emerge from the process.

It became obvious during the process that different people have different perceptions of what impacts the safeness of a dialogue space. Some members of the group indicated that they felt they could not speak out or contribute fully to discussions, which made the space feel 'unsafe' for them. A number of participants felt that dominant voices within the participant group or 'righteous victimhood'[4] made dialogue difficult and people were unable to truly express themselves and their views. This shows that the convening of a space for dialogue, the facilitation of such a dialogue as well as the behaviour of other participants, can impact the perceived safeness of a dialogue – and this perception differs from person to person.

At the outset of the second dialogue, it became clear to the hosting team that it was necessary to revisit in how far the group felt that it had collectively created a safe space in the first dialogue meeting in Cape Town. During a constellation exercise it became clear that many people – both participants as well as hosting team members – did not perceive Cape Town as a safe dialogue space for themselves. This led to a

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[3] The principles of the working agreement were: we are all learners; agree to disagree; tolerance and openness; transparency; Chatham house rules; horizontal interactions; empathy; conscious use of rank and privilege; acceptance of diversity; not trying to impose ideas; stay engaged; allowed to be emotional; honesty; self-awareness; self-management.
[4] Chandre Gould, The trouble with memory work: Reflections on the Mandela Dialogues; https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Questioning_memory_work_-_Chandre_Gould.pdf

renewed questioning of the term 'safe space', which continued throughout the dialogue process. At the same time, the group (including the hosting team) was able to increase its sensitivity to the different needs and perceptions within the group.

While some participants were frustrated by the constellation (bringing back "memories from the first dialogue in Cape Town in a painful way"), others were frustrated that the space did not allow for an even deeper engagement with conflict within the group (within and between the participants and the hosting team). In this situation the facilitation team was challenged to balance these interests in a way that enabled a productive working environment without dissolving all tensions – but also without losing, for example, some participants who felt less safe (!) in the English language for such a tense interaction.

Overall, the difficulty in creating a safe space which was noted during the dialogue process, while having been perceived as painful for many, served as an important point of reflection for both facilitators and participants.

The MD2 circle in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Picture: Sujeewa de Silva.

3.1.1 Safe spaces, power and inequality

Framing much of the dialogue was the need to critically engage with the underlying power imbalances in a safe space as well as the histories, both political and individual, that are brought into discussions. Of importance was the recognition of various power dynamics that manifest even within supposedly safe spaces.

Furthermore, it was argued that whilst a space may be created for dialogue, dialogue itself can't always be accepted as non-violent, given the structural and institutional violence that underpins systems. This is particularly apparent in post-conflict countries or countries with a history of violent oppression. As participants from the USA reflected in a post-Mandela Dialogues piece:

> "*Dialogue's enshrinement within the U.S. stems from a perverse misconception of the First Amendment's protection of free speech, a misconception that holds all voices within a dialogue are equally valid and valuable, even those of the most vile and violent variety. This perversion both obfuscates the raced, gendered, and classed inequality of those with the means to "speak" in a democracy and it implies that an embrace of that inequality in the form of dialogue is a pathway towards justice, a notion we find demonstrably disingenuous.*"[5]

This 'inequality' in history has a powerful imprint in the present. For example, those who were seen as victims often bring with them a history that can lead to a 'righteousness' in a post-conflict dialogue space and the creation of 'a hierarchy of oppression'. Similarly, those involved in an armed struggle, those who sacrificed, or those who risked their lives, often can carry a certain 'legitimacy' and 'righteousness' which makes questioning them or their actions extremely difficult. This becomes even more apparent when a nationalistic or ethnic mythologizing of the conflict and related meta-narratives emerge. Thus the creation of an equal and free space becomes mired in difficulty and self-censorship. In other words, it often becomes difficult to question both victors and victims. Even more difficult to engage in the

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[5] Doria D. Johnson, Jarrett M. Drake, Michelle Caswell, "From Cape Town to Chicago to Colombo and Back Again: Towards a Liberation Theology for Memory Work";
https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Liberation_Theology_for_Memory_Work_-_Doria_D._Johnson__Jarrett_M._Drake__Michelle_Caswell.pdf

space where there are no hard boundaries between these categories. Those that may want to ask difficult questions to these groups, may hold-back due to social fear and open themselves to criticism for broaching these topics.

Observations from the nexus of content and process

It seemed throughout the process that traditional 'liberal' notions of 'equal' and open dialogue were brought into question as an ideological framing for meaningful and progressive engagement. There was often a reluctance or rejection when entering these kinds of dialogue.

In the working agreement developed together as a group at the beginning of the Mandela Dialogues, participants had already pointed to the importance of "using one's rank and privilege consciously". Given the importance of this in the participants' conversations on the creation of safe spaces, and given that the constellation exercise in Sri Lanka had shown that many members of the group hadn't felt safe in our own setting in Cape Town, a rank exercise was held in Sri Lanka, in which everyone was invited to share in pairs his/her perceived rank within our group. Rank could include gender, nationality, race, age, experience, etc. In a second step, one heard back from the pair-partner what other ranks he/she perceived the first person holding in this particular dialogue group. This was intended to create awareness within the group and for each individual, especially on the high rank that each person carries that inherently contains the potential to be used abusively, even if the holder doesn't intend to act that way. One rank that was named, for example, was age/eldership, which has important implications for a safe space across generations; especially since the group included a number of young participants while arguably older participants had a greater proportion of verbal contributions during the process. Furthermore, the facilitators were called on to both facilitate and be a part of the process, which was often difficult for them as they needed to both embed themselves in the process and be aware of their rank and role in facilitating conversation.

The idea of reaching across privilege and cultural barriers was also a difficult question. This was not only a question of being less privileged – for example, in South Africa it may be difficult being accepted as a white person, whilst in Nepal it may be harder for those in 'higher' castes to be accepted by those in 'lower castes'.

There is often the justifiable belief that those who enjoyed privilege and often still continue to enjoy the legacies of that privilege will never fully understand the lived experience of those with less privilege. Furthermore, one would have to reach out across these barriers without become patronising or dictating ways of being. Whilst the need for being aware of power and privilege was accepted, it remains a difficult line to straddle and is in need of further unpacking. For example, during the ranking exercise within the dialogue, there was a level of unhappiness and discomfort with the exercise focusing on the perceived ranks of one's self. It seems easier to talk about the ranks of others than to talk – and thus to acknowledge – our own ranks.

3.1.2 Safe space and identity

Given the dominance of identity in many conflicts, the role of identity politics in the creation of a safe space became one of importance. Whilst some expressed the view that '*there is a need to leave aside identities for a second, as that's how safe spaces are created'*, much of the discussion focused on how to increase the inclusion of those often marginalised in a dialogue process.

For some of the participants, the prioritisation and inclusion of people was seen as integral in the creation of a safe space. In other words, care should be taken to create a space that is as representative as possible. It was noted that many who do not fit a 'binary' or into a defined 'group' are often excluded and their voices consequently not heard.

It was during this discussion on including as many people as possible, that the complexities of conflict and post-conflict were raised. For example, there are those who need to be a part of a discussion, but who occupy a difficult position or have a difficult history to bring into a discussion, for example apartheid collaborators or those who committed human rights abuses in the name of freedom. These difficult identities that do not fit into archetypal categories make people uncomfortable and often cause deliberately exclusionary or defensive practices.

Complicating identities in a safe space is the allure of reductionism – thinking, for example, 'victims' and 'perpetrators' - and a temptation to marginalise particular groups, especially those with intersectional identities. Metanarratives play out in safe

spaces, unavoidably, and individual identity is easily overwhelmed by national ethnic and other divisions. And complexity is often rejected in favour of narratives that are easier to handle in processes of "reconciliation".

One's identity can also shift in a post-conflict situation as underlying entrenched inequalities become more noticeable. It was named by a participant that women, who were often in the frontlines of conflict in Colombia, were deliberately excluded from negotiations once peace had been achieved and were told to take on 'traditionally female' roles post-conflict. Negotiation teams had very few women initially (despite a large contingent of female ex-combatants and victims), mirroring the underling patriarchy in society. Therefore, many women lost their hold on identities as fighters or ex-combatants and leaders in favour of a forced primary identity as 'woman'.

Observations from the nexus of content and process

There were instances in which identities strongly came into play within the group in a very useful way to depict polarisations and challenges in the field of memory work and the creation of safe spaces. For example, there was a conversation held between two participants, one of whom had chosen non-violent resistance and one of whom had chosen violent resistance during conflict-ridden times in their respective contexts. The dialogue spun around the paths and reasons for each individual's choice. And such fundamental choices seem inseparable from our identity. Questioning the choice of the other would imply questioning the identity of the other, causing the other to feel vulnerable and judged. It was critical in this moment to stay in a non-judgmental interaction to enable the group to explore the discrepancy of life choices for people involved in memory work.

On this basis it remains questionable as to whether it is possible to "leave identities aside". Isn't it through the "glasses of our identity" that we see the world – can we ever take them off? While it seems crucial to challenge identities ascribed to individuals/groups by others, it seems impossible (and even not desirable) to ignore identities – as long as they are self-determined.

The immersions undertaken during the dialogue encounters in South Africa and Sri Lanka served an important purpose and created the opportunity for participants to

engage with diverse contexts. Additionally, important ethical questions began to emerge as participants questioned not only the immersions but their own practice in relation to vulnerable populations. For example, participants were able to relate how, in their search for memory, they may have caused a re-traumatisation of interviewees as they related their stories of trauma and violence. It is worth noting, in this regard, that former LTTE cadres noted that there is most often little action after they engage with work groups and NGO's, and that this fosters a level of despondency.

3.1.3 Reconciliation, justice and accountability in a safe space

Justice and accountability appeared as topics of importance during the encounters in both Cape Town and Sri Lanka.

Tied to the creation of a safe space was the need to use this safe space for reconciliation work. David Hernandez from Colombia explains in a reflection piece.

> *"Placing the concept of safe space within reconciliation processes is essential, the interaction and recognition of the other, generation of dialogue, communication and encounter: however, it is necessary to understand the moment and the existing will to generate and promote these spaces. After the Mandela Dialogues experience I can think of three different levels of reconciliation that fit the purpose and function of a Safe Space: Coexistence, convivence and communion."[6]*

Hernandez, like many in the group, argues that a reconciliation process extends beyond forgiveness and should be a dialogue process focused by and on justice. The idea of forgiveness and the humanising and dehumanising of those coming from oppressive pasts was unpacked during the dialogue. There was near consensus on the rejection of forgiveness as a virtue and instead there were calls for greater justice, restitution and redress. It was also argued that during a conflict we should avoid the language 'humanising' or 'dehumanising' with regard to actions taken by

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[6] David Hernández Torres, Mandela Dialogues: Building a Safe Space;
https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Building_a_Safe_Space_-_David_Hernández_Torres.pdf

people, as phrases like "humanising the enemy" often implies focussing overly on understanding atrocities to the detriment of endeavours designed to hold persons accountable in legal proceedings. As a participant explained, '*we need to keep them human, to keep them accountable.*'

A participant expressed the importance of accountability in the creation of a safe space. Using the example of police relations toward black and white people in the US, he explained how when the police are at a gathering of white people, the gathering feels safe whereas this would not happen in the context of a gathering of black people, where police brutality toward black people is common. Safety therefore remains relative. He went on further to explain that as it is impossible to have a world free from harm, the focus should therefore be on accountability and redress rather than the creation of safe spaces. The guiding question for those creating safe spaces should be built upon a reimagining of what justice looks like and a determination to work towards this justice.

Spaces of sharing in the Mandela Dialogues 2. Pictures: Werner Ryke, Sujeewa de Silva, Sanjeeth Arul.

3.1.4 Creating a safe space

Key inputs were noted for creating conditions for the creation of a safe space for dialogue in the contexts of memory work and reconciliation.

Points to consider when planning/setting up a safe space for dialogue:

- NGOs can often restrict the conversation and silence controversial views. This also applies to funders and supporters of causes. NGOs, as with other stakeholders, must reflect on their position within a space and carefully consider the ramifications of their actions.
- A truly safe space is one in which we can articulate a position, yet this remains difficult when there is a threat of conflict or war. Therefore many hold back from their real viewpoints. Understanding this dynamic is key in the creation of a safe space.
- Prosecution and the fear of prosecution can also prevent the free flow of information and prevent the creation of a truly safe space.
- Language is a powerful tool for compromise and negotiation. For those who want to create a safe space, including the creation of such space on a national level (such as the police), learning a language is integral. In reality, language barriers can often be a line of exclusion (e.g. minorities who don't speak a majority language).

Points that need attention and awareness throughout a safe space process:

- It was accepted by many in the group that the responsibility for creating a safe environment is shared but that there is a greater onus on the majority, or the more powerful, group.
- In part, the creation of a collective or a sense of shared values was integral to the creation of a safe space.
- A space of 'horizontal communication' is key, but this space should also allow for anger to be expressed.

Observations from the nexus of content and process

Whilst nuanced discussions took place on how to create a safe space, it was telling that there were difficulties in creating a safe space during the process, both in the

plenary and in smaller groups. The possibility remains that, given the different definitions and understandings of the concept that were observed, the vision of a 'safe space' and the buzzword-use of the term remains so broad and all-encompassing, that its creation may never be attained nor be fully inclusive from the viewpoints of all stakeholders.

3.2. Memory work and intergenerational dialogue

"The ruins are inside us" is how a participant described the experience of living in a post-conflict country. Therefore, unlike physical buildings which may be restored, the inner trauma for many still exists. This in turn makes intergenerational dialogue complex and often almost irrational to outside observers. Managing this process becomes particularly difficult. Furthermore, as it was later argued in a reflection piece, *"we see memory as a process that takes place part of a transition but we fail to see it has to become an on-going process of constant upgrading and construction."*[7] Emerging from the process was the acceptance that as time passes and process and narratives change, memory workers must be reflexive in relation to these changes and foster the multiplicities of memories that emerge from both the young and the old. Additionally, memory workers should work towards building these connections between memories and groups to create an understanding of the choices and failures of a transition. In other words, memory workers should work toward unpacking the complexities of various political, economic and social ramifications after a transition in a detailed and nuanced way. Rather than focusing on finding a 'history' of a country, memory workers should seek to incorporate various histories and these histories should be dynamic and able to change as time passes.

The dialogue on intergenerational memory work followed three primary lines. Firstly, there was a focus on the memorialisation process and on sites of memory as a form of intergenerational memory work. Secondly, there was a discussion on the role of

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[7] Dylan Herrera, Understanding memory construction as an ongoing process;
https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Understanding_Memory_Construction_as_an_Ongoing_Process_-_Dylan_Herrera.pdf

violence and the legacy of heroic narratives; and thirdly, there was a discussion on how to facilitate difficult intergenerational dialogues.

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Observations from the nexus of content and process

On the penultimate day of the entire process, three participants (Shaileshwori Sharma, Ivana Stankovic and Dylan Herrera) initiated a council on self-care and gratefulness – a rich, emotional and vulnerable space that was held collectively and mutually supported by the entire group. The session offered a space to turn the attention to oneself and the frustrations and despair one is facing in one's life and work. It is interesting to note that it was three younger participants who proposed and offered this session and it felt like this was a long overdue conversation. And while the proposal faced initial reservation with critical questions from other –primarily older – participants, it was embraced and cherished by many once the session was underway. From the facilitators' perspective it was only possible in this process and this group for this proposal to come from the participants themselves and not from the facilitators or hosting team.

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3.2.1. Memorialisation and memory

Whilst not a direct line of inquiry, there was a significant amount of time spent on the politics of memorialisation and memory projects. These projects were seen as part of the intergenerational dialogue project and are often key both in creating history and in reconciliation processes. However, the memorialisation processes that tend to happen were criticised by many in the group. In particular, many governments supported certain narratives of the victors rather than engaging with a "*memorialisation of all pains".*

This reality loomed large in Sri Lanka, where the defeated Tamil population is marginalised from the memorialisation process. This was succinctly put by participants, who stated that '*there is violence on memory'* and '*voices are lost in victors' narratives.*' The difficulty in communicating these complexities has created a fraught intergenerational dialogue space, as the complexities of conflict are reduced to the repetition of meta-narratives.

Furthermore, the failure to create sustainable memorialisation that extends across generations arguably is compounded by the reality that '*memory itself is fragile'*. However, there was an acceptance of the limitations that memory workers experience, an appreciation of the difficulty of '*passing on, without being a preacher'* as well as recognition of the difficult political and social spaces memory workers operate in.

Whilst state-driven memorialisation processes were often criticised by the participants (with a majority working in civil society), participants noted that memorialisation need not always have to take place in formal settings - examples of powerful grassroots and 'informal memorialisation' activities are to be found across the globe. For example, families planting trees for the deceased are powerful reminders of how those outside of power can have agency over their own history. This was especially important for marginalised voices, such as LGBTI communities, who are often not recognised by formal memorial processes and projects.

It was argued that communities should avoid relying on politicians and donors to direct their memorialisation projects. Whilst donor funding can be used, it often distracts from real grassroots memorialisation in favour of the direction of an NGO or a donor.

Furthermore, memory projects such as archives themselves can become tools of 'imperialism' as certain areas, such as art, are placed above the needs of a community. Actual imperialism over archives also continues to this day, for example in Rwanda, where the German, Belgian and French governments have taken archival material and documents and have not returned them to the current Rwandan administration. There is therefore a need for self-reliance and grassroots agency in memory projects, with appropriate measures of repatriation and restitution ensured.

Observations from the nexus of content and process

As convenors of the MD2, looking at the representation of different stakeholder groups that we managed to achieve in this participant group of memory workers, we recognize an underrepresentation of state and governmental actors. On the one hand, we know from experience that it is more difficult for state employees to commit

to participation in a dialogue process spanning a substantial number of days, and secondly, there may be, in numbers, more people working on memory in civil society organisations than in governmental bodies. But we also consider the possibility that some government stakeholders may fear to be harmfully confronted with their own "difficult identities", e.g. personally caring for memory work and victims' rights, but appearing in the role of a representative of institutions that are often heatedly judged and accused of not doing and caring enough. When considering participation in a multi-stakeholder dialogue like ours, people in such situations might expect and fear painful repercussions from other participants. Is it possible that the dominant actors in the systems of memory work – unintendedly - create among their own stakeholders what they aim to overcome in their projects: Unsafe spaces for meaningful encounters with "the other"?

Encounters with "the other" are part and parcel of memory work. The way one engages with "the other" can be decisive for the way "the other" decides to enter into the encounter or not. Two anti-racism activists from South Africa and the USA shared their struggle in engaging white people for their respective causes and their frustration about the rejection that they experience. At the end of the process they both felt positively challenged to rethink their approach in engaging "whiteness" – provoked to choose a more empathetic form of engagement. This is not to say that at all times such an approach is the "right" approach – but it is important to note the necessity to question our own mindsets and preconceived views when engaging "others"…

An unexpected line of inquiry that emerged in discussions over the 'ownership' of memory was the role of physical spaces, including land. Space and land remain key concerns post-conflict and are often disregarded in settlement agreements. The cultural and spiritual dimensions of land recognition and the pain of dispossession can span generations. Control and connection with land and physical spaces therefore often have a link to a people that a monument or museum can never fulfil. As an example, it was noted by a participant that a predominately Tamil village was razed thirty years ago. For those who have survived the memory will never fade, as they relay their stories to dependents. Officials were baffled as a wave of suicide bombers plagued the village many years later, until they realised it was the descendants of those who were forcibly removed who had become suicide bombers

after having learned of the oppression of the generations before them. This phenomenon can be found across the world. Furthermore, as urbanisation and gentrification increases, there is an added pressure on people and memory within particular spaces. For example, spaces in Colombo experienced increased post-conflict violence, in the form of gentrification and the displacement of people. This in turn creates an added pressure on the preservation of memory.

3.2.2. Violence, heroes and monsters

It was argued that an intergenerational dialogue needed to deconstruct the language of heroic narratives and violence from the generation before and that heroic language, whilst possibly appropriate at the time, no longer had the same value.

It was argued that 'virtuous narratives' tend to emerge in this space, glorifying those who were victors and rendering them unaccountable for their actions. There was a call to 'trouble' such heroism and a view that this conversation, arguably, was not being had. Similarly, it was argued that there is a creation of 'monster narratives' that allows those who were beneficiaries of oppression to avoid accountability for their complicity. In South Africa this narrative took away the burden from white South Africans. With a 'church-like' redemption, these 'monsters' (often former police or soldiers) were converted and their sins, as well as the sins of other white people, were forgiven. This in turn was a distortion of history as they played the part of 'sacrificial lambs'. It also didn't disturb the broader *status quo* which allowed white people to maintain a dominant social and economic position post-apartheid. It was argued that in a process of meaningful intergenerational dialogue there is a need to keep both heroes and villains human and accountable for their actions and cognisant of their fallibilities.

Observations on the nexus of content and process

It was perceived by some in the hosting team that throughout both encounters of the Mandela Dialogues 2 that the language of violence remains embedded for many memory workers. Thus the question emerged: Should memory workers use violent but arguably liberatory language associated with the conflict? Is this language appropriate in a post-conflict space? Is it supportive to the creation of safe spaces in which people are free to speak?

Chandre Gould noticed in a reflective piece after the Mandela Dialogues:

"how activists, in very different settings, experience the power of violence and the unconscious way in which it calls us, and may even bind us in addiction.

In Cape Town we had the opportunity to experience memory work first hand through immersive experiences. There were two such experiences that differed in almost every respect. During the one, participants experienced the sadness and tragedy of a community destroyed and then moved into a powerful, difficult and polarised meeting with young people who are justifiably angry and demanding of social change.

The second was a slower, gentle process of inter-generational, inter-cultural storytelling. The young people involved in this process had rejected the lifestyle of hard drinking and hard living of many of their peers – and for the young men this was a difficult and sometime dangerous choice because they were rejecting the masculinity championed by many of their peers. That is what they told us anyway. The older people had all endured terrible hardship and tragedy in their lives. Yet despite our apparent differences of privilege or the lack thereof - we were joined across countries, continents and generations by our shared humanity, by humour and by our stories. Those who took part in this experience came back feeling invigorated, inspired, having felt generosity, warmth, acceptance and love.

Yet, when we came together again as the larger group the collective discussions that followed from our experiences were focused on the first immersion. It felt as though speaking about the warmth and love we had experienced was out of place, it was drowned out by the urgency of anger and violence and the need to respond and engage with it. In short, a language of peace was silenced.

Silencing came up several times during our meeting. Sometimes very passionately and with overwhelming emotion. It seemed that for several of the people in the group the closeness to pain, anger and violence, in combination with a powerful empathy for those victimised by systems beyond their control, meant that they needed to find ways to create an 'other' within the group: 'An other' that could stand for those seen to be in opposition to themselves. The emotions that were expressed included anger, rejection and frustration.

This experience opened my eyes to how essentially ('in essence') violence can overwhelm, infiltrate and dominate. Also how easily it can distract us from anything else and transform our relationships and engagements with others."[8]

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[8] Chandre Gould, The trouble with memory work: reflections on the Mandela Dialogues on Memory Work ; https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Questioning_memory_work_-_Chandre_Gould.pdf

3.2.3. Creating the conditions for intergenerational dialogue

It was apparent that in the creation of an intergenerational dialogue, it is important to note the differences across countries and generations and to be aware of the circumstances in each particular context. There is no formula for intergenerational dialogue. For example, it was noted that in South Africa, the anger of the youth, those born after 1994, and hadn't felt the full might of the apartheid regime, held sway. As yet unfulfilled promises see them conceive of an older generation as 'sell-outs'. However, in the Sri Lankan context, there was a concern about a younger generation who have only seen military defeat and were old enough to understand that humiliation. They therefore have an anger and a need to express that anger as they were too young to physically take part in the war. The danger could be that violence becomes a way of expressing their anger and frustration. Here are two highly charged political spaces, both of which carry complexity and defy simple analysis.

Both the South African and Sri Lankan experience highlighted the role of inequality as a major stumbling block in the development of intergenerational dialogue. Failures of restitution and redistribution remain an 'open wound' in many countries as 'victims;' remain economically destitute and pass this on to the next generation. The failure to economically and socially uplift sections of society will lead to continued conflict in these post-conflict societies. The absence of economic upliftment adds to the '*internalised oppression of the psyche',* where one sees oneself as less than and has no experience of being an equal. This makes dialogue difficult and creates intergenerational tensions.

Observations on the nexus of content process

To some, it was noticeable that a lot remains unsaid. During one of the immersions it was noted by participants that there '*is a lot of monologue on dialogue but very little dialogue'.* This stemmed from observations in which people spoke about getting young people to speak but did not support young people in taking space for themselves or make conscious use of their rank to invite young people to speak.

It was also noted that whilst we often talk about intergenerational dialogue, the need for "*horizontal dialogue is also important"* - and we often forget that.

Much of the dialogue revolved around how to improve dialogue in the intergenerational space. Suggestions included:

- Making dialogue more personal and interpersonal: whilst we have always strived to achieve a critical mass in terms of those engaged, it may be important as well to focus on interpersonal relationships. Extension of one-on-one meetings to form a chain of relationships and dialogues can occur, which can then extend into mass participation encounters.

- Tools such as playback theatre were regarded as useful. On the other hand, such spaces are not necessarily safe, and they can be expensive.

- Immersions and related experiences need to be 'real'. People, including young people, may not be interested in the details of process or negotiation but need to feel part of the process.

- There is also a need to listen to 'micro-answers' rather than seeking a meta-narrative. These micro-answers often stem from a grassroots level and from community interactions. In seeking micro-answers there is a focus on a community or individuals as a way of understanding history. These many micro-answers can create a level of important complexity that may not come from meta-narratives.

- Numbers and quantitative analysis can be used as a smokescreen and as a tool to project a sense of progress when there are underlying issues that haven't been resolved.

- The victims being left behind are the children of the perpetrators of violence and they must be included in the intergenerational dialogue process.

Stillness and contemplation & movement and celebration at the Mandela Dialogues 2. Pictures: Werner Ryke, Sujeewa de Silva.

4. Outlook

Impact

The Mandela Dialogues 2 provided a space for leaders and change agents in the field of memory work not only to develop new ideas for the professional and technical challenges of dialogue work, but also to engage with the difficult feelings and challenges of this work on a personal level. The shared experiences since the first encounter in June 2016 have had an impact on the intensity of the bonds between the participants and the drive to create change. During the last few

sessions, for example, participant Shaileshwori Sharma said *"This dialogue has helped me to overcome my helplessness and do something"*, and participant Ramesh Adhikari stated: *"The Mandela Dialogues have given me the reaffirmation that what I am doing in my country is worth doing, and additionally they have provided me with the global family to consult whenever I am in dilemma and confusion."*

All those who have been part of Mandela Dialogues 2 are looking back, but also looking towards the future. As participant Diego Diaz said in Batticaloa: *"I think the best part of the Mandela Dialogues is going to come in the future: It's our struggle together."*

For some participants, ideas for the future are already quite concrete. One example: Rajan Kathiwada and Ramesh Adhikari had already implemented a change initiative in the interim between the two encounters of Mandela Dialogues 2: Inspired by the encounter with practitioners from 'Clowns without Borders', an NGO in Cape Town, they have adapted their storytelling method and applied it in Nepal. On the basis of the stories they collected, they wrote a theatre piece on dealing with the past that has since been acted out in front of 15 000 Nepalese, sometimes in very rural areas, creating awareness for the experiences of victims of enforced disappearance and stimulating public dialogue about different narratives on the country's past and present.

Furthermore, several opinion pieces by participants and facilitators of the process have been published on the Nelson Mandela Foundation's website.[9] And, finally and importantly, 11 very concrete ideas for change initiatives have been submitted for seed funding, 4 of them will be supported and hopefully most of the others will continue to be worked on and realized as well.

Reflection: What do we as a hosting team see arising from this?

Besides the many reflections shared throughout this document, one observation is still occupying the hosting team of the Mandela Dialogues: the narratives of "victims" and "perpetrators" and even more so their continuing re-creation as laid out in Chandre Gould's reflection.[10] There was a sharp discrepancy between self-attributed powerlessness and very powerful actions and behavior. Much of these actions

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[9] https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/reflections-from-the-2016-mandela-dialogues
[10] https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Questioning_memory_work_-_Chandre_Gould.pdf

seemed to come from a place/energy of despair, anger and pain/hurt, but registered in the process as acts in the service of trying to achieve a just and liberatory future.

We have found some of these questions reflected by participants after the process, such as in the Liberation Theology reflection offered by the US participant group, who noted: *"The Mandela Dialogues also underscored for us the importance of holding action, critique, and vision in tandem. Action allows us to achieve material change. Critique ensures we do not become the metanarratives we aim to resist. Vision enables us to imagine otherwise. All three are essential for the work ahead. Yet we felt at times that the appropriate balance was absent from our Dialogue experiences. In particular, we felt that constructive critique – of the goals of the dialogue, of the processes and methods employed, of each other's practices and views - was sometimes missing. This was an important learning experience for us moving forward as we seek to build memory work processes that incorporate critique without inducing inaction or squashing imagination."[11]*

The question therefore arises: From which "inner place" are we acting and trying to shape the world and what reaction, what kind of change do we create with that energy? How can we employ and include necessary critique and find ways of acknowledging our despair and pain without closing doors for mutual understanding across differences, without squashing imagination? How do we, as those doing this difficult and demanding work, need to act in order to *really* create/shape a liberatory future? What would happen if we shifted our attention from overwhelming despair to the question of what it would take to create a liberatory future? Would this still be memory work?

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[11] https://www.nelsonmandela.org/uploads/files/Reflection_-_Liberation_Theology_for_Memory_Work_-_Doria_D._Johnson__Jarrett_M._Drake__Michelle_Caswell.pdf

Annexure 1

Immersions in Cape Town

The immersions were generally well received. The edginess of conversations as well as the exploration of spaces not often seen in tourist Cape Town was praised. The immersions sought to explore some of the more hidden levels of oppression and trauma in the city. However, there was also a call for greater contextualisation for each immersion. The immersion exercises included:

Constellations work: An experiential process which offers participants a systemic way of looking at a current situation, exploring the questions that are present at that moment. The process focuses on how past and current lives are related to one another. A guided facilitation process was undertaken by facilitator Undine Whande and participants were able to learn about the technique. During this process, a representation of the traumatic past of South Africa was constellated by some participants. Those who attended this immersion found the experience very rich and it helped to develop a deeper understanding of the South African context.

Dialogue encounter between former combatants: The Human Rights Media Centre hosted a second dialogue between four former combatants (two who were part of the ANC's military wing and two former conscripts of the apartheid state). Two of the participants of the MD 2 process were in this dialogue. Participants were able to engage with those involved in the dialogue afterwards.

Clowns without Borders: The NGO *Clowns Without Borders* conducted a workshop including seniors from Masiphumelele Senior Club (Philippi) and youth from Khayalitsha. The approach was to create a trustful atmosphere in which to share personal stories with each other and enable participants to respect one another's humanity. The encounter was followed by a dialogical reflection on the methodologies used.

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation - Healing Indicators: Healing Indicators is a community orientated methodology for assessing what a "healed community" looks like. Indicators are used to develop plans and to adopt strategies for healing a community. This immersion was of great interest to many of those in the field who were looking for practical methods and tools to measure change. The immersion

consisted of a community dialogue in Delft and Blikkiesdorp. Whilst participants seemed unimpressed by some of the dialogue content, the trip to the township provided a graphic understanding of the inequality present in South Africa. There was also an interest in learning more about Healing Indicators and other methodological tools used by practitioners.

A tour of District Six and the "Ask a born free" dialogue: Participants visited the District Six Museum as well as the empty site where District Six used to be. District Six Museum staff explained the history of the area and then accompanied the participants to Langa and Bonteheuwel, two townships where those forcibly removed were sent. In the afternoon they were part of a dialogue with young people which focused primarily on race and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. The dialogue programme is part of the on-going efforts of the District Six Museum. Whilst the content of the dialogue was unsettling for many, there was also an appreciation of the 'rawness' of the discussion.

Immersions in Sri Lanka

Assisted greatly by Sri Lankan academic and activist Dr Malathi de Alwis, immersions were held in the Batticaloa District, Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The region was chosen as it was wracked by conflict and is ethnically diverse with a large population of Muslims (25%) and Tamils (72%). The landscape has led to a cycles of violence between different groups and the area was a major LTTE stronghold during the war. The immersion exercises included:

Butterfly Peace Garden – Created by Paul Hogan with the support of Fr Paul Satkunanayakam, S.J.S, in 1996, the Peace Garden provides a place for children to create, play and engage. Currently, 25 girls and 25 boys from the villages of Thiraimadu, Panichchedi and Pillaiyaradi in the Sathurukondan (areas which suffered from extensive violence) follow a six-month programme.

Monkey's Tale Centre for Contemplative Art – Paul Hogan raised money from the UK, USA and Canada to establish a creative centre with an alternative curriculum for children dealing with trauma following the devastating Tsunami in 2004. The programme surfaces multiple layers of trauma.

The Valkai Group – Formed in 2005 after a series of meetings between locals and international workers, this group meets informally with women in the Batticaloa district. The group does not seek outside funds, has not named itself, and remains an informal collective. This differs from many collectives which became NGOs after the war or the Tsunami.

Inter-Faith Dialogue Centre – Supported by the Centre of Peace Building and Reconciliation, the Centre seeks to foster dialogue across religions.

Swami Vipulananda Institute for Aesthetic Studies –The Institute has linked students, communities and traditions in the East. The integration seeks greater integration with the community and performers.

Discussion with ex-LTTE Cadre – A roundtable discussion was held with former LTTE cadres, many of whom were disabled and struggling to survive. It was a powerful discussion with these former combatants as they related their stories and continued hardships.