

Abstract : BA International Conference 2016

Time Travel and Social Cohesion: Gulshera Khan

General du Plan of France defines social cohesion as: “ A set of social processes that help instil in individuals the sense of belonging to **the same community** and the feeling that they are recognized as members of that community.”

Social Cohesion is what holds societies together. A key component for social cohesion is social justice. This is the measure of the extent of fairness and equity in terms of access to and participation in the political, socio-economic and cultural aspects of society.

When examining the five principles of time travel, we then realised that it contribute to achieving social cohesion:

- ▶ Focus on local sites and stories – in the same community
- ▶ History from below- the “ bottom up approach” – about giving dignity and acknowledgement to ordinary people
- ▶ Key Questions – connects today with the past – use of our history to make sense of issues of today
- ▶ Interaction between community/ school / society –
- ▶ Reflective dialogue- discuss, challenge and find a way forward **together** - this is when greater understanding takes place, when we question, get clarity and find ways to address preceptions

In our South African context, of a short 23 years of democracy social cohesion programmes are increasingly needed.

Our country's has a definite plan and a vision until the year 2030. which clearly defines strategies to achieve social cohesion, amongst many other priorities.

“Despite progress since 1994, South African society remains divided. The privilege attached to race, class, space and gender has not yet been fully reversed. Despite rapid improvements in access to basic services, in general, the quality of services continues to be affected by who you are and where you live.”

In order for this, we need to identify what are the present challenges.

I quote

Some major challenges: Unemployment is particularly high among the youth. Women still suffer from discrimination in both the education system and in the labour market.

QUOTE “Even though apartheid no longer exists on the statute books. It is this inherited psyche of racial, gender and sexual orientation prejudices and stereotypes, breakdown in values, inequality of opportunity and massive poverty, as well as competition for scarce resources, which helps fuel racism, xenophobia and gender-based violence. The country cannot achieve

unity and social cohesion without reducing the gaps between rich and poor, black and white, women and men, city and country.

Our countries long term goals are

- Knowledge of the Constitution and fostering Constitutional values
- Equalising opportunities, promoting inclusion and redress
- Promoting social cohesion across society through increased interaction across race and class
- Promoting active citizenry and broad-based leadership

In practice increased interaction between race groups are limited. This gives rise to perception and the discrimination continues. It is only at work place that there is a "superficial" interaction understanding. Economic wealth is gradually replacing race differentiation.

Highlighted in our national Development Plan that says

"Cultural activities and art can also play a major role in facilitating the sharing of common spaces. In addition art can foster values and facilitate dialogue and healing, thus restoring pride among African, Indian and Coloured South Africans. The country must support and encourage the production of art work and stories that facilitate healing, nation building and dialogue."

Every NGO, govt department and programme **should** engages in programmes that aims to address developmental issues.

As a NGO, Port Shepstone Twinning Association our focus is the youth, bridging the gap between the older generation, racial divides, urban / rural programmes, creating opportunities for the unemployed and even international cross cultural tolerance and diversity challenges. Within this, all time travel held are based on Social Cohesion outcomes.

Since 2008, we have been researching local sites, writing up the "forgotten" history, developing scenarios for time travel activities. Whilst the focus has been education, we have realised that our major contribution in all of our programmes has been social cohesion.

We have been fortunate to receive internal funding on two occasions, with this we have created jobs by training persons in facilitation, activity leaders, prop management, labourers, drivers, seamstress, In addition use of local home stead as change facilities so that the local people whose heritage it is, can earn. One of our sites is now becoming a tourist attraction.

The community has taken ownership. King Shakalsivavna Mtwalume Time Travel, 1828.

This year, we have attracted 5 thousand people, since it is an amphitheatre set out, it was much easier for 200 people to participate in the time travel while the thousands looked on, this is generally not a case in a time travel and is unique for this site.

I would concentrate on our latest Time Travel, held to commemorate women's day and social cohesion, which was held on 17 August 2016.

This Time Travel had taken over a month of planning and preparing. From the start, the site is a huge bush and we had to engage with the municipality.

Picture

Taken a month to clean with literally tons of dirt and broken bottle pieces.

Picture

This site is at the entrance of the Town and can be a huge tourist attraction and family social weekend gatherings.

The Time Travel- Port Shepstone South Wharf 1905

The scenario of the time travel is about building the harbour wall. Three distinct race groups, identified by the clothes, The English were the engineers and foremen, the Indian were the indentured labourers working on the sugar cane field and the Black were men from the local community, majority were working in building the harbour.

In a Time Travel, one does not keep the age and sex and from dressing up in different costumes arises questions. Throughout the process from planning stage, was a social cohesion process. eg the use of utensils. In Hindu custom, Cow is a sacred animal and if a board was used to slice beef, it was taboo to use this board. Otherwise, one would just label words like "racists" prejudice"

For a glimpse of this time travel activity, I put together a short video.

The question is, did we achieve our goal of Social Cohesion? Did we create a better understanding of one's history, greater understanding of one's background, costumes, beliefs and practices.

If the focus is Social Cohesion, then Time Travel can make a contribution- but one should always be careful not to create animosity, negative feelings, fuel hatred as the past and some facts are very disturbing.

Time Travel specific to social cohesion programme goal must be to achieve the set out objectives.

Research is a very important aspect of this. We have recently completed the Catholic Mission research in SA and focussed on 2 mission stations. While we were able to demonstrate life at Emaus Mission in 1905, we were able to achieve how did people live together to survive during this period. I can tell you more than before, so much attention and focus is now on the mission station history that all schools in the neighbourhood has requested to participate, to feel part of their history and heritage, despite it being a deep rural area.

Go back to the definition—to achieve social cohesion there must be a sense of belonging in one's own community.

