

## ‘Towards a more cohesive society’ –

### Workshops hosted by the Poverty and Inequality Initiative

#### University of Cape Town

#### November/December 2014

In November/December 2014, the Poverty & Inequality Initiative (PII) hosted a series of four one-day workshops to explore the following themes:

- Identity and social cohesion
- Rebuilding trust in a segmented society
- Youth, safety and social cohesion
- Designing a socially cohesive society.

The Poverty & Inequality Initiative (PII) is a multi-disciplinary UCT initiative dedicated to addressing critical social challenges around the persistence of poverty and the deepening of inequality in South Africa. Whilst the PII supports and profiles work across a wide range of topics and disciplines, two themes have been selected for special attention and focus:

**(1) Youth and their development;** and **(2) Social cohesion.**

Social cohesion is perhaps one of the most difficult yet fundamental challenges in South African society. Social cohesion speaks to the glue that binds us together, forging a common sense of identity, humanity and belonging, as embodied in the notion of Ubuntu. Social cohesion speaks to issues of trust, respect, dignity and diversity and a willingness to act on behalf of the marginalized in the face of persistent inequality.

Whilst there is widespread agreement that it influences economic and social development, and thus that nurturing a more cohesive society is an important policy goal in itself, there is far less consensus on what constitutes an appropriate definition of social cohesion in the South African context, or about the kinds of policies required to promote a more cohesive society.

South Africa’s tumultuous and violent past came to a political end in 1994. While a great success in many regards for a near-peaceful transition, tensions remain high as the country struggles to reform the socioeconomic realities that face South Africans daily. For this reason, the National Development Plan highlights social cohesion as one of its strategic goals for 2030, an objective

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echoed in the constitution. The Constitution provides the key impetus underlying South Africa's social cohesion agenda, stating that 'the country belongs to all who live in it, united in diversity'. The aim behind promoting a social cohesion agenda is to facilitate stability as government seeks to address the injustices of the past and the new economic challenges arising for the developmental state. However, with little understanding of what constitutes and facilitates social cohesion, and whether levels have improved or deteriorated since 1994, it becomes difficult to justify policies aimed at promoting social cohesion, and to assess whether or not these have had any impact on society.

A key objective for the PII-led work programme on social cohesion is to identify and define a coherent, collaborative, scientifically rigorous, inter-disciplinary research agenda for the next two to three years. The objective is to produce work of the highest academic calibre that explicitly provides policy insights and practical recommendations for government on how to promote social cohesion in South Africa. To launch this endeavour, in November/December 2014, the PII hosted a series of four one-day workshops on key themes, bringing together researchers, practitioners and policy makers working within these broad areas to share knowledge and identify critical gaps. Each workshop took the format of two presentations followed by discussion, guided by three key questions. This report provides a brief summary of proceedings at each workshop, identifies the key cross-cutting themes that emerged and proposes ways to take forward this work agenda.

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## Day 1 – Identity and Social Cohesion

### Session 1

In his presentation, *Race, Identity and Social Justice*, **George Hull** highlighted that identity and equality were often considered as conflicting ideas, particularly when considered at the individual, or micro-level. However, identity and equality were complementary in issues of group equality, where equality between groups sharing a different identity was a process easier to implement and manage than between individuals. But it was important that the experiences of the group demanding equality be articulated in a way that is understandable to external actors, notably policy makers. Hull argued that if key parts of a group's experiences are unintelligible to members or to others outside the group, this inaccessibility forms part of a disadvantage, specifically hermeneutical injustice, serving to negate and exclude the demands of others because their lived experiences seem alien to policymakers and activists alike. Here, advocacy plays an integral role in shifting dominant narratives and broadening public discourse about rights and access.

Hull traced the historical formation of race, arguing that despite race existing solely as a construct, the racialization of certain groups had become a tangible and structured reality. For decades societies have used the erroneous concept of race to divide people into different groups, driven by numerous motivations such as economic and political advancement. However, the shared experiences of the constructed group serve to reinforce a common identity. Thus racialization could potentially lead to the formation of identity through shared experiences of being classified as a race, and the shared agency that results from this process. Consequently when race has been part of the way in which groups have been formed, it can be a key contributor to the creation of new identities.

Oftentimes, the shared experiences that give rise to constructed group identities are not intelligible to those outside of the group, leading to grievances enabled and perpetuated through structural conditions that serve to silence the plight of the group. By way of example Hull explained that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century feminism and the rights and equality of women had little public support through public policy and discourse – because women experienced hermeneutical injustice. But the rise of feminist theory in the last century has created a discourse of equality that has permeated policy globally, albeit imperfectly. This lengthy process has been enabled and mainstreamed by the provision of a common language in feminism that is accessible and translatable in the broader public arena, leading to values shifting slowly towards feminist thinking. The challenges of feminism can be paralleled by the experience of racialized groups that exist on the margins and experience hermeneutical justice, articulated clearly in the writing of Biko and Pityana in South Africa, and Du Bois in the USA.

Hull proposed that the way to deal with hermeneutical justice was to make people intelligible to themselves, and thereafter, intelligible to others. Consciousness about the experience of marginalized groups could be raised through: language proficiency of already articulated discourses by those experiencing the injustice; diverse media outlets that shared their experiences; translations of modes of communication made available to those outside of the group; and a disaggregation and desegregation of the lived experiences of those within the group that acknowledged their agency and diversity. While greater knowledge of the experiences of diverse groups would potentially highlight commonalities and facilitate social cohesion, this was a lengthy process that was not always guaranteed.

### *Key reflections*

Following the presentation, participants reflected on themes pertaining to developing a research agenda for social cohesion. Specifically, participants agreed that race was an erroneous concept that had been embedded in structural injustices and was the basis of multiple identities globally. However, once it had been scientifically confirmed that differences between races were inconsequential, there were two visible outcomes that formed the basis for complex and oft troubled social relations: 1) Those disadvantaged by the construction of race experienced dehumanization and the effects continue to reverberate across society today, perpetuated by hermeneutical injustice; 2) Those who benefited disproportionately needed to undergo a conscientization process of reflection on the structures that perpetuated their privilege. This led to animated discussion on social cohesion in context of the persistence of stark differences and great inequality on racial lines in South Africa. The question was raised of whether or not it was more urgent to address the imminent rise of violence and protest as a result of these injustices. Some participants suggested that social cohesion needed to be a secondary consideration to the very real material challenges facing South Africans, which led to the final question being posed: is social cohesion desirable in South Africa at this time?

### *Session 2*

The second presentation, *Social Cohesion: Sacrificial, Spectacular, and Spectral*, by David Chidester, highlighted the inherent complexities associated with promoting social cohesion in the presence of complex ethnic identities in a capitalistic society. Specifically, Chidester illustrated how resources from indigenous religions, such as connections to ancestry, proved flexible in their identity and provided a basis for social cohesion that benefitted and maintained elite systems, with little measurable benefit to those 'represented' by these displays of cultural identity. This flexibility could often embed identity and culture within a capitalist system, each thriving and benefitting from one another under the nuances of 'social cohesion'.

Chidester cited the example of the FIFA World Cup held in South Africa during 2010. During the World Cup, large corporates included symbols of African identity in their marketing and sponsorship strategy. Zolani Mkiva, a traditional praise singer, was the first act of the opening ceremony and used the opportunity to call upon all South Africans to work towards the world's social cohesion agenda. Vertical cohesion, that requires hierarchy through traditional leadership structures and symbols, was used to market the World Cup as a unifying process that returned the world to the cradle of humanity in Africa – both figuratively and literally. However, drawing on indigenous resources for the World Cup blurred the lines between the sacred and the commercial, with the latter ultimately co-opting the former in a way that perpetuated vertical cohesion with little gain for the broader members subscribing to the identity considered. This capitalist process led to misinformed and insincere exposure of the identity, at the expense of broader horizontal social cohesion.

Chidester recommended that greater consideration be given to curriculum development about religious diversity. Currently, the Constitution promotes a type of social cohesion that facilitates traditionalism and enhances hierarchical cohesion that concentrates rather than distributing gains. The (re)distribution of resources is particularly key to social cohesion – something which required further research. Chidester concluded that the failure in promoting social cohesion could be partly attributed to the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of existing policy. Any future efforts at promoting horizontal social cohesion would therefore need to define and measure existing levels comprehensively.

## Plenary Session

In the plenary session participants considered potential points of action informed by the following three key questions:

1. *What are the key research and policy gaps in the field of social cohesion?*

The first step should be to find a definition of social cohesion that allows for measurement and assessment, while drawing on key socio-economic and well-being indicators already in use. Importantly, these would need to take into consideration potential measurements of hermeneutical injustice/advantage. Before making policy recommendations, it is crucial that a research agenda investigates and addresses the desirability and usefulness of the concept of social cohesion. To this end, a 'stock-take' of existing policies on social cohesion and their outcomes (i.e. whether these policies produced horizontal or vertical cohesion) is needed.

Lastly, it was stressed that throughout history there were two processes of social cohesion formation observable – a coercive, top-down process implemented by a leviathan and a more consultative process facilitated through a social contract by non-state leaders. Further research is required to assess if and how social cohesion can be facilitated, and the opportunities and constraints involved.

2. *What kinds of research or collaborations or approaches are needed to effectively address these gaps?*

It was generally agreed that any study of social cohesion should be trans-institutional and interdisciplinary. It was noted that while numerous groups (such as MISTRA and the School of Religious Studies at UCT) had already completed research projects on social cohesion, further research was needed to assess the opportunities, constraints and policy impact of this research.

3. *What are the key barriers to promoting social cohesion as a policy agenda in its own right, and to promoting social cohesion in society at large?*

Participants stressed that there were different levels and types of social cohesion which included some and excluded others. The fact that state policy does not differentiate between these variables and acknowledge the role of multiplicity in nation-building may have contributed to 'undesirable' types of social cohesion. Furthermore, it was important to distinguish between nation-formation and nation-building, as social cohesion had different negative and positive consequences in each instance.

It was also agreed that the state should not be viewed as the end implementer of the social cohesion agenda, and that there is a need for different agencies of implementation – such as a social cohesion movement facilitated by grassroots and civil organizations. However, this is particularly difficult considering the lack of trust in South Africa and the need for protest to challenge structures that perpetuate socio-economic disparities and injustices.

Participants encouraged researchers to consider the role of the global political economy on social cohesion and identity. Domestic policies do not exist in isolation of the labour movement across borders, international economic constraints, and increasing access to information via mobile technology. Each of these has a direct impact on identity formation, the development of hermeneutical (in)justice and ultimately, social cohesion.

## Day 2 – Rebuilding Trust in a Segmented Society

### Session 1

In his presentation, *Community cohesion: reflections on civil society and state interventions*, **Hugo van der Merwe** argued that South Africa was not simply segmented because of racial divisions, but also because violence had destroyed the capacity for cohesion at various levels of society. Apartheid required societies to turn in on themselves, thus creating community divisions that have been difficult to reverse. The result was a legacy of anger and violence turned inwards, as opponents within communities are easier to attack than the state – creating a culture of violence within communities most affected by apartheid policies.

Post-1994 there was a continuation of the violent culture embedded in society, a natural response to socio-political conflict. Van der Merwe described how in surveys violence was perceived as the 12<sup>th</sup> ‘unofficial’ language, the only way to solicit a response in the face of conflict, and a legitimate mode of communication for grievances. But violence also served a cohesive purpose: for example, van der Merwe showed that vigilantism served to bring people together to collaborate for a set purpose. Nevertheless, he mentioned that violent movements often start out as non-violent and champion resilience, dignity and compassion before frustration sets in when demands are not met. This illustrates the potential for positive cohesion, and how frustration at the slow pace of reform often mutates these positive aspects into negative, often violent, responses.

In the face of such complexity, van der Merwe explained how the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVVR) sought to build the capacity to engage with violence, conflict and divisions in society. In particular, CSVVR nurtures local activists and provides support in the face of community- and family-based violence. The Centre also engages with the state on existing policies, while facilitating and observing interventions to assess their effectiveness.

One such state intervention analysed is the Community Works Programme (CWP), which guarantees work to selected members for projects chosen by communities through a participatory approach. The CSVR conducted six case studies across South Africa and found that those that were planned with greater community participation were more likely to run effectively, and that this participation ultimately had a cohesive effect. But the CWP was susceptible to tensions around the gendered nature of the work (predominantly viewed as ‘women’s’ work), political patronage, narrow worker solidarity, and discontent with the salary and working conditions. Despite these constraints, the CWP presented a unique opportunity for facilitating social cohesion at a communal level while allowing participants to earn a wage and subsidize low income.

In conclusion, van der Merwe reminded the workshop that social cohesion was not always positive and that interventions may reinforce existing channels of violence or political patronage. It was therefore important that policies be tailored to local settings and worked, through expanded networks and co-operation, to include those who were marginalized.

### Key Reflections

Following the presentation participants discussed the potential presented by the CWP (and other state interventions) as an opportune case study on social cohesion and state policy. By looking at such programmes, researchers could develop a methodology of assessment for social

cohesion that considers the links between disability, gender, youth, violence, and family relations. The initial conditions of each case study would need to be assessed, followed by an analysis on why some interventions worked while others did not. Furthermore, a research project on these interventions would need to consider the opportunities for innovation, while assessing the barriers to efficiency and expansion. Lastly, participants were cautioned against promoting a state-led agenda for social cohesion in isolation of other channels. Hence an adequate assessment of state interventions to promote social cohesion would need to consider whether or not these promote unwanted dependency, and whether state officials exhibit the political will required to sustain interventions after the end of their terms.

This led to discussion about levels of social cohesion and how to promote an integrated and inclusive approach. While it was acknowledged that the CWP serves as a stepping stone and provides a sense of dignity to participants, there is also the need to involve the corporate sector in these interventions to move people into permanent employment. The CWP has the potential to serve as an accreditation facility in providing skills training for future employment for those in the programme. However, such accreditation was also dependent on the kind of work required by the community as the CWP selects projects based on community feedback. If the projects required were semi-skilled, then participants had the possibility of moving into more skilled work afterwards. But if the chosen projects were low-skilled, such as sweeping or collecting trash, then participants were in danger of not acquiring skills that facilitated future employment.

This integrated approach highlighted the need for employment opportunities, but it was also important to consider that there were other non-economic deficiencies present in society, such as the lack of cohesion. Thus as much as economic impact was crucial to well-being and cohesion, so too was fatherhood & masculinity, or access and participation, for example.

## **Session 2**

In his contribution, *The Neurobiology of Trust and Social Decision Making*, Jack van Honk emphasized the difficulties faced by individuals living in 'high-threat' environments, such as townships, that require a shut-down of cognitive processes in order to respond to constant immediate dangers. The result is that people enter a more primitive state of psychological processing that tends to facilitate anti-social and destructive behaviour, including violence. In addition to the effects experienced in the present, evidence points to such trauma being passed on to children and their offspring biologically. Thus unsafe environments breed generations of people who experience a heightened sense of fear and concern for personal safety, while at the same time they are unable to experience healthy cognitive processing.

Van Honk then considered the Northern Cape Urbach-Wiethe disease (UWD) population (featuring calcification of the amygdala), characterised by brain damage and high alcohol abuse, particularly among males. For this reason, research focuses on females. The presentation explored levels of altruism and morality after basolateral amygdala damage in the unique case of 50 individuals in the Northern Cape. This type of brain damage, reported van Honk, was characterised by higher levels of trust and better levels of cognitive processing. Van Honk illustrated how the amygdala was critical for processing social relations and levels of cognitive processing. Findings from this research showed lower levels of trust in the Northern Cape than in the general population, which could be explained by complex social history that leads to distrust of unknown people. However, those with UWD in the same population exhibited

significantly higher levels of trust, despite social expectations that results would be similar. Van Honk's research also found that while richer people were more likely to put someone in harm's way for the greater good, those with UWD had a more difficult time doing so.

Van Honk noted that while it is functional and helpful to be hyper-vigilant in dangerous communities, the effect is that people move into a more emotionally primitive state to ensure their safety. Personal safety was pertinent to building attachments and making sense of oneself relative to the rest of the world; the repercussions of its absence being that people lose a sense of agency, coherence and connections. Therefore, while there were people who were direct victims of violence, those who witness violence were also deeply affected in this regard. Oftentimes, children who witnessed vigilantism and violence in their neighbourhoods and homes were negatively impacted. However, even if not present during childhood, this sense of safety and self could be mediated through enabling relationships later in life.

While this research showed that trust can be measured and explained through neuroscience, van Honk emphasized that further research was needed on how to facilitate trust outside of the UWD population.

### **Key Reflections**

Participants made the point that these deficiencies were not only experienced in poorer neighbourhoods prone to violence. There is an observable relationship between economics, politics and social trust levels but this takes different forms in different settings. Participants cautioned against pathologizing 'non-whites' in South Africa by underlining that: 1) The prevalence of depression in townships is surprisingly low, compared to relative levels elsewhere. This points to high levels of resilience or underreporting and requires adequate research; 2) Negative behaviour associated with violence was often emphasized and pathologized, while white-collar crime was seldom attributed to the same level of social pathology.

Participants discussed how to build trust, including institutional trust, in society. Research shows that young children are born altruistic, but are ultimately raised to capitalize on good behaviour for personal gain. One option is that school curricula impart these values, and some have already begun the process; e.g. the IJR is testing a UNESCO project called 'Teaching Respect' that seeks to instil these values in children. However, there is also the issue of a lack of trust between different groups. Social pain can hurt more than physical pain and more thought is needed on how to bring people from different group identities together and heal the psychological trauma associated with social pain. This requires an honest conversation about inequality, however difficult to achieve.

### **Plenary Session**

In the plenary session participants considered potential points of action informed by the following three key questions:

1. *What are the key research and policy gaps in the field of social cohesion?*

It was agreed that further research needed to consider the mutual 'woundedness' of South African society, and to explore the role of families and affective bonds in addressing trauma and

rebuilding trust. Healing is a crucial part of this process and involves assessing changing social experiences across class, race and ethnic groups in South Africa.

There is also a need to do a stock-taking exercise of national programmes such as CWP, and explore how they could be integrated and used to assess levels of social cohesion. At the same time, participants stressed that research was needed into the role of the state to answer key questions such as: Is it important that a national identity and social cohesion are facilitated and for what purposes? Also, what resources does the state have to facilitate social cohesion?

Most importantly, deeper thought was required on the definition and aspects of social cohesion, particularly the positive and negative forms of cohesion prevalent in society and how these took shape and form. For organizations that successfully promoted social cohesion, it was also pertinent to ask whether or not their interventions could be scaled-up at a national level. Some case studies worth exploring in this regard included:

- The Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process
- A comparison on social cohesion between Bokfontein and Manenberg, De Doorns and Grabouw
- Khayelitsha and interventions to improve social spaces
- Unusual sources of social cohesion, such as gangs and mob violence/vigilantism
- Community festivals and their role in promoting social cohesion.

It was suggested that it could be useful to apply multi-dimensional research and conduct cross-sectional, longitudinal and ethnographic studies of each of these case studies to understand their complex dynamics.

*2. What kinds of research or collaborations or approaches are needed to effectively address these gaps?*

Participants proposed that research collaborations be explored with MISTRA, the HSRC and the Department of Agriculture in the Western Cape, who are interested in promoting social cohesion in rural areas. Japan and the African Development Bank also have an interest in exploring the relationship between trust, social cohesion and agriculture, and could be a potential partner in the analysis of De Doorns and Grabouw. The corporate sector was also recommended as a key collaborator for any social cohesion research in urban and rural areas.

*3. What are the key barriers to promoting social cohesion as a policy agenda in its own right, and to promoting social cohesion in society at large?*

In South Africa, diversity represents a unique barrier to assessing trust and social cohesion nationally because it makes modelling and comparisons difficult, but not impossible. It is important that all studies of social cohesion consider diversity and the heterogeneous experiences within communities, and even families.

## Day 3 – Youth, Safety and Social Cohesion

### Session 1

In his presentation, *Kids, Gangs and Crime: What's to be done?* Don Pinnock addressed three questions: what constitutes gangs, why gangs exist and whether there are possible solutions. He stressed that the nature and structure of the neoliberal city gave rise to social ills similar in every globalized economy and in this way South Africa was not unique. These social ills – such as gangsterism, drug abuse and violence – had an impact not just on the first generation of parents but also on subsequent generations. This finding had been highlighted by epigenetics: damage to foetal brain development caused problems with dopamine and serotonin levels that potentially lead to violence, which could be passed on genetically. He argued that, for this reason, the drug problem in Cape Town was closely related to health challenges in the area. By way of example, his research found that a number of children and teenagers involved in gangs took drugs, and also exhibited mental and physical health problems, challenges which they may have inherited from their parents and subsequently passed on to their children.

Pinnock defined gangs as a group of people that congregate for criminal purposes, and distinguished between three different groups in Cape Town:

- *Warrior gangs*: masculinity gangs found predominantly in black townships
- *Merchant gangs*: centred on buying and selling drugs
- *Defense gangs*: rooted in the apartheid era, including many older members e.g. the 26s, 27s and 28s.

Despite these distinctions, there was a noticeable overlap between different groups. From Pinnock's research it became clear that there are number of factors that feed into the creation of gangs, including (but not limited to) the international economy, health issues, and inappropriate education. Moreover, the pervasive challenge of absent fathers in South Africa leads to complexities surrounding masculinity, including posturing and peer pressure, in order to make sense of being a man in such a social context. Pinnock stressed that gangs were not an outcome of one individual cause, and if policy attempted to limit gang activity based on singular assumptions, the problem would worsen.

He 'cautiously' recommended the following possible interventions to deal with gangsterism:

- Revitalize agriculture – because the agriculture sector was collapsing in rural areas, people are migrating to urban areas, heightening tension in already resource-challenged areas;
- Fix the criminal justice system and wage war on drug syndicates; and
- Fix the education system, identify and select appropriate interventions to improve pathways for development from a young age.

### Key Reflections

Participants agreed that macroeconomic, political and grassroots factors contribute to the pervasiveness of gangs. Specifically, the structure of the global political economy (which was inherently capitalistic) limited the capacity for states and local actors to distribute the gains from economic development equally. State officials were often co-opted as beneficiaries of the international drug trade, and some areas were under the leadership of gangs operating as de facto states as police were complicit in illegal activity. At the grassroots level, gangs were the

outcome of multiple complex processes that included socio-economic constraints and family challenges. Oftentimes, younger members were recruited into gangs and/or drug trade by older family members, thus contributing to the 'embeddedness' of gangs in particular neighbourhoods where community members benefit from gang activity directly or indirectly. Anxieties and fears for personal safety prevented reports to police on violent behaviour. These macro and micro contributions to gang activity created a sense of respect for gang members, who often wield significant power in the community in relation to their rank in the gang.

Contributing factors to the creation of gangs were complex and not easily remedied, and participants discussed potential interventions that address this intricacy. While numerous NGOs and the state had rolled out programmes, these were limited and often worked in isolation. Instead, it was recommended that multiple organisations partner and provide a holistic approach that targets and reaches gang members and at-risk youth. Partnerships would allow organizations to focus on what they did best – but politics in the NGO and funding world means that while this could work well in theory, in practice there is still much to do.

This led members to consider the role of the state (particularly if it was viewed as a failed state in some regards) in promoting positive social cohesion and curbing gang-related violence. If pressure was applied in the police force, there were still challenges to curbing the criminal activity of international drug syndicates. Some recommended the implementation of tax free zones and structures of accountability to provide different economic incentives and options to those in areas most affected by gang activity. However, it was cautioned that the capacity of the state to implement systemic change should not be overstated. There were serious crises in capacity at a local and national government level, some of which facilitated the activity of gang members. Instead of looking to the state or NGOs in isolation, it was important to have a research agenda that considered credible alternatives to gang activity, including (but not limited to) market interventions and family support.

All participants present agreed that, like vigilantism, gang membership pointed to the capacity to organize around a common goal and represented a form of social cohesion. It was important that any moves to curb such activity also consider potential avenues to displace negative cohesion through positive interventions.

## **Session 2**

In his presentation, **“Peer relationships and networks in schools: increasing risk or building resilience to violence amongst young people”**, **Patrick Burton** explored young people's experience of violence in schools. The research considered contributions at the micro, meso and macro level to high risks of violence among youth, including individual risk from substance abuse and educational attainment, family challenges, and societal and structural concerns including the presence of gangs, poor governance and rapid urbanization.

The research found that school violence had remained largely constant over the past few years, but repeat levels of victimization were very high. 30.5% of students who had experienced sexual violence had experienced it three or more times. There was also concern that the most predominant sites of violence in schools were classrooms or playing fields, which meant that violence was being committed by peers as opposed to outsiders. While the media tended to focus on the more overt forms of violence, such as stabbings, the predominant forms were

rooted within school structures and included bullying and theft. These acts emphasized a pathway to greater social deviance for students engaged in aberrant activities.

The research underlined that unsafe school environments contribute to a lack of attachment to education, ultimately creating a fragmenting effect in society. Furthermore, within many schools students reported that crime and violence are problems in their communities. However, it was encouraging that the findings indicated that the youth had the desire to engage in healthy spaces, but that there were often significant barriers to doing so. Creating a conducive and cohesive space for youth was therefore important in facilitating youth agency.

### **Key Reflections**

In the discussion that followed participants advocated for a holistic approach, with interventions beginning early at the primary school level. These did not have to mean armed guards in schools with little effect on actual safety – besides making parents feel that their children were safer – as there was no link proven between security infrastructure upgrades and safety in schools. Nevertheless, there were interventions that had proved effective for educational outcomes: school management and effective teaching capacity were helpful in improving an environment conducive for learning. It would also be important to consider how families could provide adequate support for students, many of whom experience conflict both within the home and schooling environment.

Burton's presentation was also linked to Pinnock's when participants queried the presence of gangs within schools. While the data could not say if school violence was gang-related, it was possible that gangs were operating within schools. A number of students that dropped out were prone to gang involvement, and there needed to be preventative measures to keep children in school as opposed to reactive measures to reintegrate them after drop-out.

Lastly, it was pointed out that much of the conversation had centred on schools in disadvantaged areas, and there was a risk of pathologizing these areas. It was important that any intervention considered the opportunities, and constraints, facing the education system; particularly that there were also numerous structural problems arising from former model-c schools, including evidence of racism, deviance and increasing inequality. Any attempt to remedy the education system required a genuine participatory approach that represented the views of diverse stakeholders.

### **Plenary Session**

In the plenary session members considered potential points of action informed by the following three key questions:

- 1. What are the key research and policy gaps?*

To begin with participants enquired the value and usefulness of social cohesion as a concept, what it stood for and how it would be measured. It was also asked whether social cohesion could be positive or negative, and how the concept could be more grounded in realities facing people, as opposed to it being used as a panacea in the face of great poverty and inequality. It was also important that this investigative exercise consider the different elements of social cohesion, and the alternative ways it had been conceptualized in different schools of thought e.g. as trust, empathy, social capital, nation-building etc.

For this reason, the next identified gaps were the different levels at which social cohesion operated: it was important to understand the links between government, family, business, civil society and social cohesion. This also required an understanding of relationships between the international donor community, local communities, and the ways that expectations in this arena influenced policy and programme choices at a grassroots level. Participants also highlighted that there was as much diversity within single communities and socioeconomic groups that needed to be disaggregated to provide a more comprehensive picture of social cohesion. A better understanding of social cohesion in South Africa could also be facilitated by a stock-taking of existing projects that promoted social cohesion, and whether these could be evaluated, synthesized and scaled.

## *2. What approaches are needed to address these gaps?*

It was agreed that effective collaborative networks across sectors were needed to address the research gaps highlighted above. Processes to facilitate ways to address the gaps identified included sourcing funding, learning and experimenting with social cohesion, longitudinal research and ultimately policy. This required a continuous conversation between researchers, NGOs and government. Community radio stations were also a unique partner because they represented the community voice – and this was necessary for any meaningful process on social cohesion.

The Western Cape Government would be doing an audit on youth-related spending to assess what existed in the city. This kind of monitoring and evaluation was important as numerous organizations were not doing the work they claimed to be doing. M&E provided an opportunity to strengthen the work that was conducted efficiently.

It was recommended that decision-makers take the following approach to developing a social cohesion strategy:

1. Identify 10 key issues pertaining to youth, safety and social cohesion that need urgent attention
2. Identify 10 support processes to address each of the 10 key issues identified in (1).
3. Identify 10 key structures/institutions to facilitate and manage those 10 support processes identified in (2).

This proposed 10x10x10 model would contribute a diverse arena of interventions that were traceable to root issues, and would enable a common vision across sectors for dealing with the challenges raised above. This process represented a potential opportunity for a research team to identify the best outcomes for the aforementioned 10x10x10 model.

## *3. What do we need to do to promote social cohesion as a policy agenda?*

Barriers between sectors were identified as the most prevalent barriers because they meant that there was limited space for a holistic and integrated, multi-sector approach to social cohesion. Issues of trust and the legacy of unemployment meant that focusing on social cohesion without addressing the root causes of divisions and tension would be inadequate.

## Day 4 – Designing a Socially Cohesive Society

### Session 1

In his presentation, ***‘Social infrastructure, empowerment and cohesion’***, Edgar Pieterse highlighted the success of racist infrastructural planning in the colonial and apartheid era, and its contribution to current challenges in South Africa. Economic challenges such as unemployment and inequality manifest spatially and underpinned the decline of urban upgrading through government housing subsidies and building programmes. Since the 1970s, South Africa experienced a conjoining of deindustrialisation, massive urban influx and a decline in state provision of basic public housing. The post-apartheid state inherited this disaster and has had to contend with informalisation along with high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Pieterse argues that the coinciding of these fault lines into one space has led to a ‘cumulative disadvantage’ for those living in high-density areas, reinforced by spatial marginalisation, which leads to violent behaviour.

Pieterse stressed the need to get the timing and sequence of public investments right in poor neighbourhoods in order to enhance livelihoods, public health and access to urban opportunities. If interventions were not timed well, they would exacerbate existing problems or become irrelevant to the communities under consideration. For this reason, newer frameworks call for a shift from a focus on enhancement of livelihoods at the individual household level towards the primary intervention of public investments accessible more broadly in a community. These systematic interventions begin with a participatory approach, creating space for community members as key organizers and activists working towards a final vision for community care, public spaces, and the best possible design. This was something that could not be done by a bureaucrat as it requires a community engagement process to ensure dignified outcomes for community beneficiaries. Pieterse proposed that development of a ‘citizenship academy’ could help to facilitate such agency and initiative more broadly in the country. One of the key findings of his research was that it is possible to develop new typologies of neighbourhood renewal premised on enhancing existing informal business and livelihoods, but that this requires buy-in from a community that was able to organize.

### Key Reflections

Participants responded keenly to the presentation. It was agreed that there is a need to stimulate the urban and rural economies simultaneously as rapid urbanization places pressure on limited urban resources. Because of the interdependence of the rural and urban economies – through remittances, food security and ecosystems – it is important to facilitate inclusive growth in both spheres and to involve all stakeholders in dialogue around planning. It was agreed that the ‘citizenship academy’ offered a great way of facilitating engagement and, if successful, could provide a collaborative space for the C3 process.

Discussion shifted to focus on issues around housing. The majority of incomes across the continent are so low that they are not ‘bankable’ and thus people are not eligible for the credit needed to buy into the real estate market (only 3% of houses in Sub-Saharan Africa are mortgaged). There are ten urban areas nationally that have been targeted for development by large property companies, but the primary focus is on financial gain rather than integrated and equitable living. Such urban growth needs to be innovative and to enhance public-private relationships in order to promote social cohesion, particularly in the case of mixed housing.

There is a tendency for housing to be mixed rather around varying levels of employment (i.e. income earners). There is a risk of further marginalisation among the poor and unemployed with the new models of housing under development in South Africa.

Furthermore, only 28% of jobs are in the formal sector with implications for tax revenue and spending. A consequence of this was the fragmentation and informalisation of basic service providers, where people pay for their own public services (such as water, electricity, etc.) but mostly through 'mafia-based' provision of basic services (such as gang members regulating who had access to water or electricity). Importantly, NGOs could also become de facto/pseudo states through providing basic services. The implications of this phenomenon need to be considered in relation to urban and rural planning, and social cohesion.

Promoting an integrated policy environment where sectors and state departments do not work in isolation is critical for this planning process, along with a shift at the grassroots level where people begin to focus on shared rights and equal access to promote social cohesion.

## **Session 2**

In their presentation, ***'Making the invisible visible: connecting disability to design'***, **Harsha Karthard and Theresa Lorenzo** highlighted gaps in planning and the challenges these pose to people living with disability in South Africa.

While disability was firmly on the international agenda, and South Africa has made great strides in this area, policy implementation lags behind. This is in part due to the fact that disability has been framed as a health sector concern. Disability is not merely about the burden of disease that resulted in disability, but also about the quality of life for people living with disabilities. In many countries disabled people are missing from the public arena, contributing to their marginalization in society. It is important to note that there are different dimensions and degrees of disability, as well as different models of disability, including:

- Medical model – defines disability as a deficit and inability, which puts the healthcare practitioner in a position of power (focuses on the body and impairment and how this can be 'fixed');
- Charity model – creates dependence through a one-sided transaction in which the disabled person is always the beneficiary;
- Social model – the outcome of research by persons with disability, and shifts the focus from impairment to a disabling social world (it is possible that there would be no difference in experiences for those with and without disabilities if the world was designed more consciously); and
- Human rights model – people with disabilities are people first and need the same basic human rights as all others.

The office of the Premier in Northern Cape drew on the latter two models, and committed to making use of Community Development Workers (CDWs) to assess the livelihood strategies, gaps, opportunities and constraints faced by people living with disability. CDWs were able to address some of these barriers by improving communication between all parties and facilitating participation in economic activities. Integration and communities of trust were enhanced by

time, reciprocity and reliance, unity, support and team efforts. This could be enhanced through design of interventions that promote social cohesion through:

- a strong family focus
- delivery of inclusive services
- building a robust system of accountability through hearing the voice of those living with disability
- managing disability transitions
- acknowledging complexity and uncertainty when designing.

A multi-sectoral approach is needed to develop and consolidate effective partnerships for change and policies that include the voices of those living with disability. Lastly, accountability and reciprocal learning were important to shift the policy environment in the long run. Curricula need to be transformed in order to change attitudes and instil values related to diversity. One approach would be to develop 'collective partnerships for change' that bring together supportive networks working in different sectors.'

### **Key Reflections**

In discussion, participants acknowledged that inclusive design for all was necessary. While there was legislation in place governing access to buildings in South Africa, enforcement was often difficult. What leads to change in behaviour is direct exposure to and engagement with issues of disability. The challenge is that there is no institutional guideline for teaching on disability at UCT, for example, and there is a lack of incentive from professional associations (engineering and architecture accreditation boards) to make such training compulsory.

The Global Citizenship programme was recommended as a potential tool for engaging with students, providing an opportunity to reflect on inclusive planning for development. Also, Residence Life at UCT had committed to racial integration, making it possible to integrate along other fault lines through multi-disciplinary approaches that crafted a student-led discourse on inclusion.

### **Plenary Session**

In the plenary session members considered potential points of action informed by the following three key questions:

1. *What are the key research and policy gaps in the field of social cohesion?*

Participants agreed that there was a need to explore and understand the definition of and difference between social cohesion, social capital and integration, and to develop a South African definition that reflects the unique context facing the country. With regard to design and planning, students should be enabled to reflect on and engage with planning for inclusive spaces. This innovative training would require contributions through partnerships from activists lobbying to address social inequality and mobilizing collective action.

It is also necessary to give thought to what kind of space is needed to facilitate social cohesion, and whether existing spaces can be repurposed. This requires a dialogue with civil society, government and business because each contributes to a different level/type of social cohesion. More research is needed on how this takes place, whether there are overlaps and what interventions have been successful in each sector.

Other research questions/themes raised included:

- The economics of disability
- The economic cost of not developing a socially inclusive society
- A case study of bodies that have facilitated social cohesion successfully (e.g. body corporates, home owners' associations, informal settlements, schools, local metros and organizations such as Lotus Park and Thembalethu, and local government)
- A study of the Residence Life surveys for trends in social cohesion at UCT.

2. *What kinds of research or collaborations or approaches are needed to effectively address these gaps?*

Potential collaborators included the Extended Public Works Programme and a partnership with CDWs. These role players could be linked to a Citizenship Academy to explore existing work, and the gaps and opportunities therein. It is also very important to engage with grassroots organizations on the spaces available in their communities, and the stigma around spaces that are not being used efficiently.

The Schools Improvement Initiative at UCT was also recommended as a potential partner in assessing the impact of design, planning and architecture on social cohesion. The Innovation Space at the Graduate School of Business, and Properties & Services (Keith Cartell) at UCT were given as examples of spaces used for interactive learning that may facilitate social cohesion.

3. *What are the key barriers to promoting social cohesion as a policy agenda in its own right, and to promoting social cohesion in society at large?*

Some of the barriers identified included that there is little or no integration of different disciplines or spaces, meaning that students are often trained to think in silos and this has implications for when they enter the working world.

## Emerging themes and issues

In each of the workshops, debate emerged around the definition, meaning, desirability and usefulness of the term social cohesion within the context of the raft of developmental challenges facing South Africa. Participants agreed that while social cohesion has featured prominently in policy discussions, an adequate measure for social cohesion has yet to be developed. Discussion at all of the workshops pinpointed key themes for further investigation:

- Clarify and define social cohesion in way that promotes a 'human' identity and celebrates diversity and difference beyond national symbols
- Explore redistribution/addressing economic inequality as a key component of social cohesion agenda, and explore whether social cohesion and material need are substitutes or complements.
- Focus on families as building blocks of social cohesion ("first 1000 days" health campaign and issues around masculinity/fatherhood as crucial part of social cohesion agenda?)
- Explore the human capital dimensions of promoting social cohesion (education and health as pathways to development)

- Explore agency and roles of state and other actors in promoting social cohesion (state, universities, communities, civil society organisations).

### **Conclusion: The Way Forward**

A work programme building on these recommendations for research, collaborative partnerships and exploring new initiatives could contribute significantly to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the challenges related to social cohesion in South Africa, a first step in what would hopefully be an ongoing priority in the development agenda for the country. The workshops helped to identify a core group of UCT researchers, and some key external partners, who agreed on the following steps to take this process forward:

- Explore further dialogue, collaboration and research on emerging key themes;
- Conduct a full literature review on social cohesion research (locally and internationally), including an assessment of official policy and frameworks, and identify research gaps;
- Explore development of a social cohesion index/barometer that could track changes annually;
- Solicit papers and review pieces on key questions and emerging themes to advance the research/policy process;
- Consolidate research and learning through focused workshops/roundtables;
- Extend dialogue and draw in partners at other universities (through Carnegie3 process), research and advocacy institutes (eg. IJR, MISTRA, CJCP and CSVR), and graduate students;
- Explore funding sources for the research project (Carnegie3; PSPPD; NRF).

Any useful agenda for social cohesion would need to consider a collaborative approach involving state, non-governmental organisations, business and the research community – a challenging, but imperative task for South Africa’s development agenda.

## **Appendix 1: Participants**

### ***Day 1: Identity and Social Cohesion***

Don Foster – Department of Psychology, UCT  
Matthius Brenzinger – Department of Linguistics, UCT  
Carolyn McKinney – Department of Linguistics, UCT  
Leslie Dikeni – Non-affiliated  
Crain Soudien – Transformation and Social Responsiveness, UCT  
Safiyya Goga – HSRC  
David Chidester – Department of Religious Studies, UCT  
Francois Botha – DISCHO, UCT  
Hugo van der Merwe – CSV & UCT  
George Hull – Department of Philosophy, UCT  
Buhle Zuma – Department of Psychology, UCT  
Jeffrey Sehume – MISTRA  
Theresa Lorenzo – Disability Unit, Department of Health and Rehabilitation Science, UCT  
Marlese van Merwe – Journalist

### ***Day 2: Rebuilding Trust in a Segmented Society***

Francois Botha – DISCHO, UCT  
Lameze Abrahams – Department of Psychology, UCT  
Jeffrey Sehume – MISTRA  
Kenneth Lukuko – Institute of Justice and Reconciliation  
Hugo van der Merwe – CSV, UCT  
Jack van Honk – BBI, UCT and the Helmholtz Research Institute, Utrecht University  
Marlese – Rothko, Daily Maverick  
Theresa Lorenzo – Department of Health and Rehabilitation Science  
Stanley Hankeman – Institute of Justice and Reconciliation  
Don Foster – Department of Psychology, UCT

### ***Day 3: Youth, Safety and Social Cohesion***

Ammarah Kamish – Policy Unit, Western Cape Government  
Catherine Ward – Department of Psychology, UCT  
Ariane De Lannoy – Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT  
Robert Morrell – Research Office, UCT  
Clare McDonald – SaVI, UCT  
Guy Lamb – SaVI, UCT  
Isabela Faller – VPUU  
Tim Conibear – Waves for Change

Elizabeth Benninger – Waves for Change

Patrick Burton – Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention

Theresa Lorenzo – Disability Studies Programme, UCT

Maya Schkolne – CSV

Nina Callaghan – Children’s Radio Foundation

David Abrahams – Department of Social Development, Western Cape Government

Don Pinnock – Southern Write

Noah Maltz – The Safety Lab

Laura Freeman – SAVI

#### ***Day 4:- Designing a Socially Cohesive Society***

Edgar Pieterse – African Centre for Cities, UCT

Harsha Kathard – Disabilities Studies Programme, UCT

Nyambura Mwangi – Residence Life, UCT

Federica Duca – PARI, WITS University

Kathy Michell – Department of Construction Economics and Management, UCT

Theresa Lorenzo – Disabilities Studies Programme, UCT

Reinette Popplestone – Disability Services, UCT

Aninka Claassens – Centre for Law and Society, UCT

Rosalie Cimbali – Centre for Law and Society, UCT