

Re-mixing the economy of welfare: what is emerging beyond the market and the state?

Seminar 2: Communities of 'difference': active citizenship in BME communities

Tuesday 19th May 2009

University of Bristol, Bristol Institute for Public Affairs

Notes

11.30 – Introduction and Welcome

Ranji Devadson, University of Bristol, welcomed attendees. **Tariq Mahmood**, chief executive of the Bristol Ethnicity and Citizenship Study Centre gave an introduction. He stated the topicality of issues around ethnicity and citizenship and how they interlink. It was observed that Britain has a different attitude to our continental neighbours, as here the issue of minorities' place in society is politically negotiated and bottom-up identity politics often emerge from the individuals and groups who wish to project these identities. Compared to other European countries we are far less statist and we expect government regulation to be done in partnership with civil society. Elsewhere in Europe citizens look more to the state to provide templates. Also, religion is now a feature of the civil society/state relationship, leading to innovation in the relationship. There is now a government minister for faith communities, and the common social science assumption that religion was/is not a mobilising force is proving to be incorrect. **Rebecca Taylor**, Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) introduced herself, and discussed the wider series of seminars of which today was a part. Today's session seeks to explore the nature of active citizenship in different groups and how government agendas and funding affect minority groups. **Sue Baines** introduced herself and explained how today's seminar fitted into the seminar series.

11.45 – Partnership and biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand – Wendy Larner, University of Bristol

Themes of governance; in the 1980s Wendy explored market forces of neoliberalism, and has more recently been looking into fast policy networks made possibly by globalised technology. Current focus is on new forms of individual and community

empowerment. Feminist, anti-poverty, indigenous and environmental campaigns have opened up new forms of governance. This has created interstitial spaces between the state, private and third sectors, with new brokers operating in complex ways at spatial and temporal levels. These brokers combine personal commitments, political activism and paid work. It is argued that social movements and community political activism are reshaping governance and the ways in which interaction occurs, creating a new space for intermediaries. However, positioning becomes unclear and a very complex interplay exists between radical individuals/groups and government. A New Zealand case study is presented, with its origins in the extreme (both deep and fast) growth of neoliberalism in 1980s New Zealand. More recently the government has been saying that neoliberalism is over and has tried to sustain global links by fostering community partnerships. Over a similar period there have also been profound social changes around Maori indigenous groups, with a struggle having been taking place to have past injustice recognised. This struggle has framed the move to a more collaborative policy making in particular ways. Local partnerships have been formed of multi-ethnic, multi-level organisations which deliver services and engage with policy making. Today, the Maori groups, supported by Pacific Islanders in NZ argue that their claims should be addressed before other migrant groups, due to their being the indigenous people. Thus, such claims are seen as separate from a policy of multiculturalism. As such, these partnerships have been very specifically targeting Maori and Pacific communities. Five years ago there was a shift towards wider partnership initiatives, but still targeted at Maori and Pacific communities. Thus the question is posed as to whether these social policies are designed to meet the challenges of poor groups, or whether they are a particular indigenous policies targeted at Maori and Pacific groups because of their particular claims. It is argued that small 'p' social policy should match the big 'P' of the Partnership agreement which entitles the Maori community to resources. There has also been a shift towards a very explicit representation of Maori customs in NZ politics. So the ongoing indigenous discourse(s) clearly play themselves out in policy debates. The brokers are significant in this complex relationship, with Maori and Pacific women significantly overrepresented as these brokers. This mobilises such individuals/groups, who can draw upon multiple knowledges to build these new relationships. Therefore, it is argued, new forms of governance are opened up through such radical political practices.

Questions

Madge Dresser, University of the West of England – what's the difference between human capital and social capital?

WL – human capital is the self, the expectation to get an education, to develop skills etc. Social capital is the benefits that accrue to communities through the activities they undertake.

Asif Khan, Bristol City Council – are brokers community or state?

WL – both, they could be hired because of their record of activism and now be employed by the state.

AK – is it, therefore, possible to challenge an authority of you work for it?

WL – yes, but maybe not as easily as if one were entirely independent. The politics which is done 'inside' is not that same as that which is done 'outside'.

Irene Hardill, Nottingham Trent University – is there therefore a significant movement from unpaid to paid activism/volunteerism?

WL – yes. But this is just one version of a complex system, concerned not just with the delivery of services but with the complete refiguration of systems.

Kristine Wellington, Hackney CVS – how long did the integration of Maori customs into political practices take?

WL – it was generally acknowledged in the 1970s, but there were elements being integrated from the 1950s onwards, e.g. elements of Maori adoption practice.

Roy Greenhalgh, Southampton University – are the activists taking similar ethnic volunteers into organisations to provide for ethnic groups, or do they have to compromise?

WL – efforts have been made to expand capacity more widely, but there is a wide range of views on the subject.

12.20 – The changing role of refugee-community organisations in the UK – Nando Sigona, University of Oxford

Integration occurs when refugees are empowered to contribute to society and to exercise their rights and responsibilities. Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) are strongly shaped by government policy and cannot really escape it. RCOs are organisations set up by asylum seekers and refugees to help other asylum seekers and refugees, although they often do not truly represent the community which they purport to be representing. RCOs can; empower, provide a voice, respond to needs, mediate, sustain networks and fill service provision gaps. But they also have downsides; often they have poor representation and exclusion, funding is insecure,

they rely on volunteers and there is an emphasis on individual cases rather than on longer-term projects. But what happens to RCOs when the reception policy for asylum seekers is fundamentally changed? The 1999 Immigration Act changed policy from asylum seekers being able to settle where they wanted to dispersal schemes. Also, asylum seekers and refugees were no longer on benefits, instead on a separate, 'second-tier' scheme. Central to dispersal was housing, as if one is in need of a house then they'll go wherever one is. In practice, accommodation did not follow the dispersal and cluster approach, and most were sent to the cheapest areas to live. A very large number were 'dispersed' to Manchester and the surrounding towns, with Birmingham also receiving a large number. In 1999 there were only 3 or 4 RCOs in Birmingham – by 2003 there were over 30. Similar increases have occurred in Manchester. Recently there has been a significant increase in the size and diversity of refugee communities, with services not ready to provide for these. As a result there has been an increase in far right political groups and social tension. In such communities, individuals and families are often very isolated and as such the growing number of RCOs have served an important function in offering support and social events, which make life easier. There is a responsive defensive element in this, with previous waves of migrants feeling that they have been let down and thus wanting to provide support such that future waves are not similarly let down. NGOs and the authorities have the power to control with NGOs form/thrive and which do not, by directing their support and resources accordingly, with local authorities keen to have just one individual or spokesperson who they can consider as 'representing' a community. It is concluded that dispersal limits the potential of RCOs to meet the goals of integration. Despite official recognition, RCOs have only a secondary role as representatives, and the integrity of RGOs is limited by an emphasis on control in asylum and immigration policy.

Questions

Cherry Dursley, Amana Education Trust – refugees are often seen as the least 'deserving' poor and vilified by the media. Wendy's paper on New Zealand spoke of how the Maori's claim for support was prioritised, and as such the brokers have a good knowledge of and access to the system. RCO brokers, on the other hand, lack the institutional knowledge to participate in the emerging governance networks. Can this change?

NS – RCOs are by their nature transient organisations. There is also the issue that they are by necessity close to the state and depend on it for survival. They need a network of links that go beyond the immediate need for funding.

? – how does the work by the big players in this area affect the work of RCOs?

NS – Refugee Action aim to empower communities, but they often just give initial help to start-up RCOs and then abandon them.

1.33 – Slavery Fatigue? Communities, Cohesion and the Remembering of Slavery and Abolition in Bristol – Madge Dresser, University of the West of England

By the late Twentieth Century, the social changes which have occurred in Bristol have created space for a useful debate about how we remember and conceptualise the slave trade. In order to understand Bristol, it is important to understand its history of slave trading. Many organisations which formed during, and as a result of, the slave trade still exist today and provide services for the people of Bristol. There have been different views and interpretations of Bristol's slave past throughout post-abolition history, with for many years the typically conservative view of not mentioning it holding sway. At the 1907 centenary of abolition the role of the slave traders and their contribution to Bristol was celebrated. By the mid-Twentieth Century there was celebration of the end of the slave trade, but little acknowledgement of Bristol's key role in it. From the 1960s onwards a new cohort of afro-Caribbean youth and new waves of liberal professionals and students began to settle in Bristol and created space for a more open discussion of the past, although racial tension made open discussions of race and slavery hard. However, it was acknowledged and discussed that Bristol's slave past influenced the present and should be faced up to. Culture is important in racial discourse in Bristol and identities are complex. The new dwellers had less shame about Bristol's past and were more keen to encourage debate. Yet even in the 1990s there were merchant and explorer events which failed to recognise their interlinks with the slave trade, and there was no monument to commemorate slavery in Bristol until 1997. The bicentenary of the abolition of slavery was widely celebrated across the UK, including in Bristol, where many local programmes were administered. However, black groups in Bristol had reservations about how commemoration projects took place and they extent to which they represented their communities. A statement of regret was signed, which only served to create debate over whether apology for the past is relevant, and in turn served to stoke the fires of those who feel we should not

apologise. The tendency to dismiss white response in such cases ignores that white groups do have genuine concerns about ethnicity and poverty.

Questions

Daljeet Singh, BECON – how important is class in debates around slavery?

MD – class is more pronounced in the north, and there there have been more prominent abolitionist movements from working class groups. Middle class groups who organise celebrations of abolition often find it easier to overcome racial guilt than they do to overcome class guilt.

Asif Khan, Bristol City Council – there is a link between the apologists debate and the debate around reparations. This link has the effect of encouraging dissent from other groups angry about 'their' resources being sent in such a way.

MD – there is a sense of hurt that reparations have not been paid to black communities in the way that they have been paid to Jewish communities/Israel. But responses to this are very fractured.

? – Liverpool did a far better job of getting black community activists to play a prominent role in the commemoration.

MD – Liverpool had money given far earlier to commemorate the Irish community. Also, the slave trade in Liverpool was later than in Bristol, so has a more recent legacy.

Lunch

14.30 – Third Sector Round Table session and open discussion

Ranji Devadson explain how this session aims to look at how the state of play in the third sector reflects and responds to what has been said in the morning session.

Daljeet Singh, BECON; this is a timely seminar in terms of exploring how the credit crunch is affecting voluntary, and particularly BME, groups. The crisis is adding complexity to the relations between state and society. BECON is committed to the principles of community empowerment in the North East. The region has a fairly small voluntary sector, with around 400 organisations, most of which concentrate on service provision, with a lot of single-issue groups. BECON do outreach with local CVSs to encourage organisations which have formed to keep going. The government provides infrastructure support for the third sector with the expectation that it will meet the needs of the community, but the organisations are bewildered by the constantly changing policy situation in this regard. Meaningful work that is

being undertaken using government funds needs strong leadership. There is some support from Newcastle City Council, but BECON is working with organisations to encourage partnerships when bidding for funding, to increasing the likelihood of receiving any. However, it is not yet known how useful this will be when bidding for state contracts. There is a fragile relationship between the state and voluntary organisations, and BME organisations are often excluded from funding policy.

Questions and Comments

Ranji Devadson, University of Bristol – if BME organisations do not have much of a voice, could that be due to the history of the region?

DS – to raise an informed voice is a challenge. BME groups are way behind the rest of the sector, so when policy moves on they are often left behind. For example, currently national indicators dictate where funding is directed, and if organisations do not understand these, they will find it very hard to attract funding.

Ejaz Ahmed, Pakistan Forum Bristol and South Gloucestershire – whilst policy makers are rightly conscious that all the funding should not be going to one community, the current system is contradictory. Some single issues get large amounts of funding, whilst others get heavily criticised if they get any. The funding arena is heavily politicised.

? – BME organisations have no idea what PSA, targets etc mean, so get confused and lost. There is little tradition of written policy language, so such community groups are lost without even getting in to the system.

Roy Greenhalgh, Southampton University – compacts are failing, because no one really understands what they are all about. The danger is that guidelines dictate and everyone has to fall in line with them.

Kristine Wellington, HCVS – agrees that they are very confusing, and as a result organisations have little confidence in them.

Kishore Kanani, HCVS – they are just another layer in the already complex process of setting up and running a voluntary organisation.

Kristine Wellington and **Kishore Kanani**, Hackney CVS; there are around 1,600 voluntary and community groups in Hackney, serving a community of around 200,000 residents. However, these organisations are polarised; there is an older established group who get the majority of the funding and support, and there are newer grassroots organisations who get very little. Hackney is notorious for crime and deprivation, and HCVS seeks to help organisations engage with the community.

Groups on the ground find themselves a long distance from the policy process and HCVS helps these by meeting them halfway. They try to put stakeholders around a table to help them understand and shape the process, thus paving a way for local people to represent their community. They offer one-to-one surgeries to help new organisations get off the ground, and have brought in community accountancy and legal organisations, based at the HCVS, to work with community groups on specialist issues. This link between HCVS and companies allows the latter to encourage volunteering among staff and the former to pass on expert advice to members. Since formation, HCVS has grown tremendously and so has the number of voluntary organisations in Hackney. Certain communities need treating with great sensitivity about their particular needs, e.g. Orthodox Jewish, refugee groups etc. Organisations need clear funding advice, and those at the grassroots need to realise that funding is dependent on success.

Questions

Andri Soteri-Proctor, TSRC – do HCVS have any idea how many organised activities occur in the sector which they are not yet capturing?

KW & KK – they are acutely aware that they are not currently reaching all of the diverse range of faith groups or homeless groups.

Asif Khan, Bristol City Council – are there some grassroots groups who relish being the underdogs?

KW & KK – the management of organisations have in some cases had to separate themselves from those within the organisation who liked to stir issues up and be more subversive.

Berhanu Kassayie, Praxis; Based in London, Praxis began by focussing on human rights campaigns both domestically and nationally. By the late-1980s the needs of refugees had changed and so the services offered by Praxis changed, with voluntary organisations in the field becoming part of Praxis. It facilitates communities to develop organisations which they want, not by simply organising themselves. It provides space for groups and have at times attracted grants for the organisations to use. They have worked with RCOs on a one-to-one level to help with their work. Concepts of cohesion are very different between policy and on the ground. Focus on 'capacity building' ignores the role of helping the relations between the refugee community and the receiving community. The Home Office used to undertake annual consultations and conferences – albeit without the input of the refugees

themselves – but this stopped in 2005. The third sector is seen as an important deliverer of services, but individual providers often lose out as funds are allocated to very specific organisations, so those who wish to provide a more general service lose out. A further problem is that many of the individuals involved see volunteering as a means of working towards paid employment, and when they get this they stop volunteering.

Asif Khan, Bristol City Council; highlights the slave trade apologist movement by citing the example of the band Massive Attack, who refused to play at Colston Hall because of its slave trade connotations. As an employee there at the time, Asif was charged with trying to attract a more diverse range of communities to Colston Hall. In Bristol, 50% of voluntary funding goes to BME organisations and 50% goes to other organisations, and post-2001 there has been a requirement for consultation with the city's diverse communities. The Council took the step of paying people to turn up at meetings, so that there would be greater participation from BME voluntary groups. But when the money dried up, so did attendance. The Council have in the past been accused of being racist, but things have moved on in Bristol. The year 2005 was pivotal; London bombings and the race riots of Birmingham and Oldham/Burnley. Now Bristol City Council give out around £2.4m in funding to 34 voluntary groups, and faith groups are being targeted by this for the first time.

Reflections by **Duncan Scott**, TSRC;

- Research in the past was largely male and largely looking at men. Now we have far better balance, but how can we find out more about what's going on? We have a responsibility to make research interesting and social. On this theme, if we want to conduct research, we must first find out who we are and where we are coming from.
- How do the third sector see things? They necessarily see things through the lens of their organisation. Agencies get more money if they are staffed by good people.
- There is an overload of paperwork/targets and a huge over-ambition by policy makers and the big voluntary organisations. But the voluntary sector has major constraints and will never change the world. We need to understand the smaller picture and disengage to an extent from the big picture. We must see the local context, be grounded and see the strength in the roots.

- There must be support to help people/groups become better at doing well-defined things.
- We must avoid tribes of researchers descending in organisations/areas but not really telling the researched what they are doing. Academics need to keep their feet in the door with agencies, and need to write realistically about what they are seeing, and to be critical about what they are seeing/reading.

13: 50 - Concluding comments

Patricia Rodge, The Children's Society – there could be better connections between academia and the third sector; the latter really struggles with evaluation, which the former could definitely help them out with.

Madge Dresser, UWE – the new Vice-Chancellor at UWE is very into the idea of engagement, and the voluntary sector needs to make clear to academia how it sees it as being able to get involved.

Duncan Scott, TSRC – the university hierarchy and pressure on academics to publish can make it hard for them to get involved. So the third sector needs to explore where the interested and able researchers are.

PR – but how can the third sector find this out?

Roy Greenhalgh, Southampton University – there is a lack of continuity between meetings, as due to constraints on time and availability organisations often send a different representative to each meeting.

PR – as a third sector organisation they find it very hard to get free evaluation.

Ranji Devadson, University of Bristol – how easy is it for faith groups to get funding?

Asif Khan, Bristol City Council – it is tricky because when one group gets funding and another doesn't it can cause controversy. But does not think that funding one group will harm another.

Eddy Hogg, May 2009