

Community and Spaces for Engagement

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Abstract

In the context of the increasing focus of university engagement with regional communities, debates about the notion of 'community engagement' have assumed a new critical urgency. This paper presents a reflective case study of community engagement by people associated with RMIT University to explore the notion of creating a 'space' in which meaningful dialogue with community members becomes possible. Such spaces must take into account the multiple identities of the participants in a dialogue; acknowledging a particular constellation of social relations that mean that dialogues become both negotiated and managed. Understanding the experiences and processes of working within these 'spaces' allows a more complex and dynamic understanding of 'why' communities engage rather than a focus on 'how' communities engage.

The construction and analysis of this case study is located within frameworks of globalization, culture and marginality, suggesting that this process of situating can shed new light on how we might approach questions of engagement in the contemporary world. Marginality is not identified so much as a site of deprivation, but much more as a site of radical possibility, an often unexplored space for engagement that can 'give voice' as well as isolate. The identification of creative spaces enables some radical perspectives to challenge the way we see, imagine and create alternative and new worlds.

Keywords: community, engagement, culture, spaces, marginality, globalization.

Only by coming to terms with my own past, my own background, and seeing that in the context of the world at large, have I begun to find my true voice and to understand that, since it is my own voice, that no pre-cut niche exists for it; that part of the work to be done is making a place, with others, where my work and our voices, can stand clear of the background voices and voice our concerns as part of a larger song.

J.E. Wilson, as cited by bell hooks, 1994, p. 185

One of the observations of this article is that a 'view of the world is never 'objective', but always located, informed by particular social and professional positions and historical moments and their respective agendas and one's own *status quo*. Thus, to locate this article, I have to locate myself within the origins of the particular lived experiences and discourses that involved me working with international students; skirting the boundaries of working both within a university and the several different cultural communities that these students engaged with. As Head of the International Students Centre, and the Intercultural Projects and Resources Centre, I played a key role in the development and facilitation of interactions with the various communities both within and outside the university, which these units worked with. I have called these influences and experiences *a priori* considerations, or assumptions.

I was also fascinated by the complexities within which different groups of students from many different countries (who had hitherto very little to do with each other) got together to talk, discuss, persuade and negotiate amongst themselves and then with the wider university community (whilst interacting with changes in socio-economic and cultural structures at local and global levels). Yet, through all this they managed to hold tenuously to a sense of their own cultural identity. Interactions and shared lived experiences with these students constantly reminded me of the multiplex identity from within which I too viewed and responded to the world. It also reminded me of the complex role I was playing as the key facilitator of their engagement processes.

This article is, therefore, written from within several different but interconnected levels. At one level are some of the issues and roles that I have assumed as a Third World individual, particularly when work and the individual enter certain kinds of Western academic concerns and discursive spaces.¹ At the second level, I am keen to map the complexity of having to negotiate simultaneously the space between mainstream Western academic concerns and my own intellectual and geographical/spatial dislocation. This creates 'the Other', the 'exotic', the 'native'; leaving me as a researcher and practitioner feeling like an intruder looking into my own personal space.

At the third level, I am interested in these interconnecting roles as they relate to certain aspects of ongoing academic concerns about culture and identity. I bring to these concerns the experience of having lived and been educated during the first half of my life in Third World countries. To 'tell where one comes from' is no longer just a process of situating epistemologically a person and/or theorist within a philosophy of ideology, as there is no single point from which one can definitely state that one comes from.²

It is important, therefore, that I begin by situating myself. I am a Malaysian, born in Malaysia in a period of educational transition and the ongoing implementation of the Positive Discrimination Program.³ In this social and political climate, my education was seen by my elders as an empowerment and channel for providing me with the skills to locate myself successfully and professionally. I went to school and undertook higher education in India, and then further education in Australia, which not only exposed me to a plethora of feminist and cultural studies, it has also made me subscribe to the discipline that Spivak⁴ has called 'new orientalism', where the English language constructs an object of study called 'third world'⁵, or post colonial⁶ literature. The fact that I have gone through a school and university system in India that reproduces ideas/knowledge from the West in English has made me a product of the homogenization of globally available ideas responsible for the creation of a global culture. This often affects discursive encounters between what I perceive as discourses of the West and my own subjectivity – which is already blended with my tradition and culture.

Narayan⁷ discusses the three positions I have alluded to as the three roles of Emissary, Mirror and Authentic Insider, which she suggests, are understood as 'preoccupations'⁸. I am aware that in order to understand the everyday cultural, political and academic environments and situations in which I live and work, I have to draw on the influences that these preoccupations have had in shaping my work, culture and identity, as well as in the way I too may construct and facilitate interactions with others. I am also aware of the contradictions that may arise in each of these areas and those arising from studying them in combination.

Globalization and Culture

Globalization, it has been argued, embodies socially destructive tendencies including (but not limited to) the highlighting of inequalities of resources and the breakdown of social cohesion and the imposition of western norms and the devaluing of local, regional or indigenous experience. For every discussion that anxiously predicts the loss of "local" patterns and behaviours, a counter-discussion argues that globalization actually works to reconfigure diversity, thereby intensifying localism, nationalism and regional identity. This paper does not presume that we all experience the world as cultural cosmopolitans, much less that a 'global culture' is emerging. But it does suggest that the "global" increasingly exists as a cultural horizon within which we (to varying degrees) frame our existence and work. The local connectivity compounds this already existing complex connectivity – yet offers new understandings and new "spaces" within which new ways of thinking and doing are emerging.

This paper discusses culture as a dominant variable that influences the way people organize, think, reason, solve problems, develop values and beliefs, and relate to insiders and outsiders. Global processes are understood, then, as specific cultural and economic events made meaningful only at those 'positions' where they are accessed and interpreted. Individuals at all sites and all times, then, have the ability to exercise power over their own activities, their own education and their relationships with others, and can highlight the significance of the local in the interpretation of the global/regional. Discussions of globalization often take

“culture” to mean something rather different, eliding it within the globalizing communications and media technologies through which cultural representations are transmitted. How precisely should we think of culture as a concept and an entity in relation to globalization? Tomlinson states that the principle that culture is “ordinary” makes what he calls questions of existential significance out of the things that every human being routinely addresses in their everyday practices and experiences.⁹

From this perspective, globalization alters the context of meaning construction because it affects people’s sense of identity, their experiences of places and of the self in relation to places, and it impacts on the shared understandings, values, desires, myths, hopes and fears that have developed around locally situated life. The cultural dimension, therefore, spans what Giddens¹⁰ has called both the ‘out-there-ness’ and the ‘in-here-ness’ of globalization: the connection between vast systematic transformations and transformations in our most local and intimate ‘worlds’ of everyday experience.

Meanwhile, the work of researchers such as hooks, Anzaldúa, West, Gomez-Pena and Minh-ha¹¹ has also started new debates about culture, identity and difference in which the notion of ‘choosing the margin’ and theorizing from those margins is central to their counter-hegemonic project. These margins – part-physical and part-metaphorical territory which has been described as the new frontier, or the ‘new space’, of radical resistance – have become central to how these individuals and their communities engage with those in “mainstream” (for example, the policies, strategies and systems of government and other institutions). This is what I would describe as a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. Part of this new consciousness is also what hooks¹² calls a new ‘politics of location ... marginality as a site of resistance’, and West¹³ calls ‘a politics of audacious hope’. This space of resistance – or of counter-hegemonic cultural practice – is found not just in words but in ‘habits of being and the way one lives.’¹⁴ In this way, such writers are mapping new ways of living, knowing, and acting in the world.

Similarly, ‘community engagement’, as it is discussed in the following case study, is a construct of a particular constellation of social relations; a meeting and weaving together of dialogues that are negotiated and managed. It is searching for a way to engage with a contemporary global world. It is the connection between vast systematic transformations and transformations in our most local and intimate ‘worlds’ of everyday experience. When such engagement happens in spaces that are not seen so much as sites of resistance or deprivation but more as sites of radical possibility based on mutual respect and the exercise of imagination, then they can become places of creative engagement. People take part not because they have to, but because they want to work together for a better future.

Case Study: The Southern Grampians and RMIT University

As mentioned earlier, I began my work in RMIT University as an International Student Advisor and Manager of the International Students Centre (ISC). The main responsibility of ISC was to provide a point of contact and support services for all

international students at the university. In this role, I was particularly interested in ways in which debates about identity, difference and representation emerged in my discussions and meetings with the international students. I realized that my whole process of building relationships with others was in fact a process of face-to-face dealings with 'the cultural other' and I acquired understanding and new perspectives through listening and talking. As others joined discussions after they had begun, it became a process of opening into and creating space for other people. I draw on Mel King's description of this continual process of 'opening up' by getting to know people whilst sharing and negotiating the transformational nature of this relational creative space.¹⁵ Like me, the students were fascinated by the complexities that emerged when different groups of students from many different countries met locally in the city, in the suburbs and, for some at least, when they traveled to other parts of Victoria and Australia. These encounters and exchanges reminded them too of the multiplex identity from within which they too were viewing and responding to the world.

Many students expressed their desire to meet with, and talk to, local people outside the university context so when I received a call one bright morning from the (then) Melbourne Institute of Textiles inviting my students to join them on a hospitality trip to the Southern Grampians region in south-west Victoria. These hospitality trips had been initiated by a small group of woolgrowers in the Woodhouse Nareeb region and surrounds. I welcomed the opportunity and so did the students. The region is adjacent to the border with the neighboring state of South Australia, and is 285 kilometers west of Victoria's capital, Melbourne. Major industries of the region include agriculture, horticulture, processing, engineering, retail, tourism and education and the visit provided a good contrast to life in the city.

On their return, my students were enthusiastic about the opportunities to connect with a rural community—especially as their own experiences of life were so different to what they had encountered on the trip that this difference presented enormous potential for new learning. Meetings between people took place at an intersection of the local and the global. And the students were not content with "taking tea"; they wanted to become much more involved with the community they had visited and its way of life. Rather than being just visitors, they wanted a deeper engagement. However, they were also keen to negotiate a shared understanding of how they wanted to be in this new world of study and life. They wanted to understand and experience the everyday practices that contribute to what Tomlinson¹⁶ has called 'people's ongoing life-narratives, the stories by which we, chronically interpret our existence in what Heidegger calls the "thrownness" of the human condition'.

I was also impatient to understand the kind of cultural identities formed through travel, migration, international education and intercultural exchanges. As an educator and as a newly arrived migrant myself, I was also finding that, in an increasingly globalized and post-modern world, the stories of the everyday living and struggles—even the most essential and taken-for-granted notions of identity, sense of belonging and representation—were not receiving much consideration. How do I respond as an educator in the age of globalization? How do I communicate with students, and the communities we were engaging

with, about the need to 'transgress'¹⁷ against cultural prejudices and narrow boundaries? How can we, as educators and researchers, be radically challenged and responsive to a multicultural world in order to demonstrate ways of creating new language, rupturing disciplinary boundaries, decentering authority, and rewriting institutional borderlands in which power, identity and difference becomes a condition for sustainable engagement? The opportunities for a meaningful exchange between international students from a variety of countries and an Australian rural community meant that such questions might be explored in practical ways.

These hospitality trips slowly became an extension into the broader community of the region by engaging with a wide range of local schools, families, non-government organisations, land-owners, small businesses and the local Council. The subsequent development of the RMIT International Community Exchange (RICE) Program was based on the understanding that the role/place of human interactions at significant intersections can be a key reference point for educational projects. Students developed a deep conviction that the 'partnership' they were building and the 'space' that it created provided a real incentive for their participation as members of a community. In a new 'home', where they had come to learn and live, there was now an opportunity to participate not as visitors but as partners. The 'space' (or intersection) was a place where their identity was not seen as simply the 'other' but also as an agent capable of engaging as an individual and as a member of a collective. Many voices—including those of farmers, Aboriginal elders, café owners from rural towns, and others who would not normally be considered as colleagues—were heard in the planning, initiation and development of the RICE Program in the University. The range of voices portrayed a new way of being together in new and old ways of knowing and doing. As Dennis O'Rourke has said, people who are on the margins can create new understandings because 'that's where things come into clear focus.'¹⁸ At the end of the first four years, about a thousand international students from over thirty-five different countries had visited the region under the exchange program.

Three years after the partnership began the relationship between the community of this region and the university was formalised. What had started as a visit by twenty-two students and myself in early 1994 became, by October 2001, one of the largest partnerships the University had ever been involved in—absorbing funds of around \$5 million for its development and involving about thirty-five local schools, 300 community members, over twenty community organisations, the local Shire Council and its affiliated committees and more than thirty-five staff members and several senior management from the University. It had also attracted profile and support from the growing International Student Association at the University, several external student and community groups in Melbourne as well as several government groups and industry members through the Committee for Melbourne, the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID), the Victorian Indonesian community association, and several others. The formal funding partnership to the Victorian State Government consolidated the primary partnership between the Southern Grampians Shire Council and the University.

Most importantly, this partnership had also invited into the RICE Program the innovative and complementary work done by Outreach Australia at the Lanark

properties at Branhholme, the student elective programs out of the (then) School of Architecture and Design and the University TAFE Learning Network framework and community capacity building model, therefore bringing together a complex, dynamic and engaging framework into the vision and future of this partnership. Three years later, the University announced the development of a new 'flexible learning' and regional research centre to be located in Hamilton; and also as a critical component of the University's Community & Regional Strategy and group. So we need to ask why this partnership grew so quickly and became so broad.

A Space for Engagement

The RICE Program involved a mutual exchange of ideas and cultural practices, and it energized further opportunities. Discussions about identities and representations that took place in the intersections described above enabled everyone involved to tap into the convictions of others and to connect their feelings to both the purpose of the program and the individual meaning of everyday work. The new space was a productive encounter between the spaces of 'what has been' and 'what could be'. University staff and students, farmers, café owners, host families, Aboriginal elders, young children from local schools and local youth were all directly involved in the development of the partnership at a conceptual level; thereby shaping its future.

Rather than being marginalized from the core of what was being planned and discussed either inside the walls of a tertiary institution or in the head of a lone farmer walking through the paddocks, there was a space emerging that enabled a gathering of ideas and critical feedback. The space was collective and also exciting because it enabled a departure from paths already trodden. As suggested earlier, the notion of marginality moved from being a site of deprivation to a site of radical possibility – a creative space for engagement and for 'giving voice'. Such creative spaces offer up new perspectives to imagine and create alternative worlds in which cultural difference and diversity can find voice within the new world 'disorder'. While this disorder is perceived by many as more of a threat than an opportunity, writers such as Sandercock¹⁹ argue that the dilemmas of difference – in all its cultural, social and spatial manifestations – are a challenge to the current ways of theorizing and planning. This disorder, in effect, provides the creative space within which something new and different can emerge.

This partnership, then, provided a 'space' in which issues such as identity, difference, and diversity were not submerged into a homogenizing form of convergence. Human activities, while anchored in specific regions and locales, are linked to other places and levels through complex political, economic, social and cultural networks of communication and action. The struggle to find voice leads to a new form of theorizing, as bell hooks²⁰ has explained when she wrote:

I have been working to change the way I speak and write, to incorporate in the manner of telling a sense of place, of not just who I am in the present but where I am coming from, the multiple voices within me ... When I say then that these worlds emerge from suffering, I refer to the personal struggle to name the location from which I come to voice – the space of theorizing.

According to Hall, Sandercock, hooks, Trinh T. Minh-ha and West,²¹ people are now deeply engaged in a struggle to win ‘power’ over their own work, values and perspectives as a response to globalization. A space is being opened within which the nature and extent of globalization itself can be debated. This space is then utilized as a discursive practice—or a way of thinking, speaking and acting that interacts with changes in socio-economic and cultural structures (local and global), so that they become part of one’s “place” and “home”. Driving participation in such a discursive practice is a sense of excitement, capacity, or higher purpose, so that we might create new opportunities for the next generation. This is very different to notions of identity that are embedded in nostalgia, or searching for “home”, “roots”, or “belonging” in some pure ideal sense. We must continually make new “homes” and Anzaldua²² describes the pain of crossing into, or inhabiting, the space of Anglo culture, of exceeding parents’ expectations, of finding oneself in alien territory, of making that space one’s own by continually challenging institutional discourses. hooks²³ has also stressed the dynamic process that takes place by writing:

Those of who live, who ‘make it’, passionately holding on to aspects of that ‘down home life’ we do not intend to lose while simultaneously seeking new knowledge and experience, invent spaces of radical openness. Without such spaces, we will not survive.

For all the people involved in the RICE Program, the challenges of globalization, global education, rural recession, changing social values, local-global tensions were not unknown. But what the RICE Program offered was an opportunity to discuss these issues—and to be able to negotiate one’s perspective from conversations with those who came from different places, experiences, disciplines, locales and histories within different spaces that appeared to be marginal. Hall²⁴ points out that marginality may remain peripheral to the broader mainstream yet it has never provided such a productive space as it is does now. And this is not simply because of new openings within the dominant spaces that those outside can occupy. According to Hall,²⁵ new understandings can be seen as

the result of the cultural politics of difference, of the struggles around difference, of the production of new identities, of the appearance of new subjects on the political and cultural stage ... for we cannot forget how cultural life, above all in the west, but elsewhere as well, has been transformed in our lifetimes by the voicing of the margins.

Conclusion

While it is common to talk about how we can involve communities in the kind of work universities do, many of us who work with communities “in the field” have reflected on the nature of these engagements and have seen the importance of understanding not *how* communities engage, but *why* communities engage. That is why the ‘margins’ are important because they provide the space to meet others and respond critically to situations or ideas, enabling those who participate in dialogue to be stirred to a new awareness of self (identity), to encompass a new sense of dignity in what we may say is an ‘identity crisis’, and be encouraged by a new hope. Complex global socio-political changes that are creating moral and practical

dilemmas become the context for spaces for engagement because they can only be understood through an intersection of different knowledge paradigms, experiences and practices. Such spaces have become more inclusive – particularly for peoples who were colonized or marginalized. This, in turn, enables an examination of the deep ideological legacy of colonialism and gives the participants in dialogues the confidence to identify key issues and make important contributions. A revitalized discourse on identity and history challenges, and potentially refreshes, the discourse on local sustainability. It engages the communication of feelings that emerge from experiences with the ‘more-than-human’ world²⁶ and offers ways of engaging with the irregular and unpredictable in a language of the emotions as much as the intellect.

Deepening into such a ‘space of engagement’ takes effort as well as attentiveness and empathy. It also requires the building of skills that subsequently enable the practitioners to deepen into more than one ‘space of engagement’. It enables the engaged to contemplate the unpredictable, the irregular, and the almost unimaginable, and to create images and a rich language that can be interpreted in different ways by different people. It also reminds us of the importance of carefully examining both the actions and the assumptions that make up our everyday life.

As Ferguson²⁷ has argued, it may not be too much to hope for a future in which we can recognise differences without seizing them as levers in a struggle for power. Margin and centre can draw their meanings only from each other. Neither can exist alone. In the margins (spaces), a capacity for simultaneously exploring problems amid new forms of practice and understanding that challenge existing structures and systems, is enhanced. Exploration of this enhanced capacity can lead to a much better understanding of the empowerment of individuals, groups and relationships and this, in turn, can lead to the transformation of existing and over-arching systems, policies and procedures in which the individuals, groups and interconnected networks are embedded.

When there are ‘spaces’ or ‘structures’ that enable all voices to be heard and considered, then the outcome is always far better than anticipated. Such ‘spaces’ (beginning in the “margins”) will always start with, and privilege, the perspectives (and participation) of those with the least power and those who are most disadvantaged. However, any decisions that emerge need to be scrutinized as to their impacts in a range of domains that are layered and interconnected. Globalization involves extensions of social relations across the world-space, defining that space in terms of historically varied meanings and practices. Yet, new possibilities emerge out of the simple understanding of a “space” that takes into account the multiple identities of its participants, and as a construct of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together.

Urban, rural and remote regions in Australia and internationally continue to provide a rich and fertile “space” for teaching and research. If the emerging interest in the scholarship of community engagement can in some way be attentive to current debates and insights about how to build and facilitate spaces for engagement, then we might have a deeper understanding of the reasons why communities come together and want to discuss their own future. As hooks²⁸ said, those who are ‘simultaneously seeking new knowledge and experience, invent

spaces of radical openness'. This can create endless possibilities for building sustainable, trusting and transforming relationships between communities and institutions within this contemporary global world.

Endnotes

¹ Narayan (1997, p. 121) uses the term "Third World subjects" broadly to refer to individuals from Third World countries temporarily or permanently living or working in Western contexts whose communities, achievements and culture have not been regarded as part of 'mainstream Western culture'. She states that individuals from these categories are positioned in interesting ways in 'projects designed to make the curriculum more responsive to achievements that have been marginal to the pedagogical gaze of mainstream western culture—a position that accounts for their being assigned these very roles'.

² See Supriya Pattanayak and June Allan, 'Decentring Western Hegemony and Valuing Local knowledge in Cross-Cultural Setting', Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health, Melbourne, Australia, Jan 12-15, 1998.

³ See Nadarajah (1991). The Positive Discrimination Program in Malaysia was drafted after World War II and was greatly felt in the local Malaysian schools systems; especially through the quota system access to higher education for non-Bumiputeras (all ethnic groups other than the Malays).

⁴ See Gayathri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York, 1993.

⁵ There are several debates surrounding the definition and meaning of the term 'Third World'. Baeur (1981) suggests that the term is the creation of foreign aid and is a product of 'Western guilt'. It is used in this study not only as a mental construct or abstract notion, but also as a concrete notion to denote Asian, African and Latin American countries that are marked by their poverty, lack of bargaining strength in the international political economy, and subordinate position in the international hierarchy of countries. This, however, does not deny the diversity that exists within each country, but there is a commonality defining 'a world of their own' that can be contracted against the more developed countries. Thus this conception of the Third World is not just economic, but also historical, social and cultural (Pattanayak and Allan, 1999).

⁶ While post colonial theory, on the one hand, has been celebrated as the 'privileged locus of voices of difference, opposition and resistance' (Lai-Ching 1998); on the other hand, caution in the deployment of a single term 'postcolonial' is suggested (McClintok, 1992, Shohat, 1992) as it fails to address the political implications and the complex issues of continuities and discontinuities in relations of power and domination under and after colonialism. Dirlick (1994), Appiah (1991), Spivak and Guha (1988) and Bhabha (1994) indicate how the

postcolonial perspective itself marginalizes; and have further highlighted the relationship between a postcolonial perspective and intellectual formations under global capitalism.

⁷ See Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

⁸ Narayan (1997) states that when individuals from Third World backgrounds enter the discursive spaces of mainstream Western academic contexts, they enter a 'field of Preoccupations' where a variety of concerns about inclusion, diversity and multiculturalism are already in place and being played out. These concerns also become Preoccupations in another sense, when they construct roles that function as locations. These locations work to shape our entrance, influence what is expected of us, and give us a place that often puts us in our place.

⁹ See John Tomlinson, *Globalisation and Culture*, Oxford Printing Press, Blackwell, 2000.

¹⁰ See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 95.

¹¹ See the work of researchers such as hooks (1990, 1994, 1998), Anzaldúa (1987, 1990, 1981, 1999), West (1992), Gomez-Pena (1993), Minh-ha (1994, 1999) who have started similar debates from the 1980s about culture, and particularly identity and difference in which the notion of 'choosing the margin' and theorizing from those margins is central to their counter-hegemonic project.

¹² See bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York, 1994

¹³ See Cornell West, 'The New Cultural Politics of Difference', in Ferguson, R., Gever, M., Minh-ha, T. T., and West, C. eds. *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Mass: MIT Press. pp. 19-36. 1990.

¹⁴ See bell hooks. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge. 1994.

¹⁵ Description of Mel King's work as narrated in Leonie Sandercock. *Towards Cosmopolis Planning for Multicultural Cities* Wiley, England. 1999.

¹⁶ See John Tomlinson, *Globalisation and Culture*, Oxford Printing Press, Blackwell, 1999, pp. 17-18

¹⁷ I have borrowed the word 'transgress' from hooks (1990, 1994, 1999) and Giroux and McLaren (1999) to indicate the notion of education as the practice of a freedom that encourages the development of critical awareness and engagement. However, I extend this notion to suggest that the engagement with community involves the praxis of action and reflection upon the world in order to change it for the better. This describes a process that is organic, unpredictable and always being negotiated. From this perspective dialogue isn't just about deepening understanding, but is part of making a difference in the world through co-operative activity involving respect, common purpose and mutual gain.

¹⁸ Dennis O'Rourke is a documentary filmmaker who talked about his interest in people on the margins in an interview with Amruta Slee published in the *Good Weekend*, 9 December, 2000.

¹⁹ See Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis Planning for Multicultural Cities* Wiley, England, 1999.

²⁰ See bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York, 1994, p. 45.

²¹ Researchers such as Hall (1996), Sandercock (1998), hooks (1990, 1994, 1999), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1999) and West (1999) discuss cases where people are now deeply engaged in a struggle to win 'power' over their own work, values and perspectives as a response to globalization. Through such struggles, spaces are being opened up within which the nature and extent of globalization itself can be debated.

²² See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands – La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, 1987.

²³ See bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York, 1994, p. 148.

²⁴ See Stuart Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees' in Morley, D., and Chen, K. eds. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*. London: Routledge. 1996, pp. 25–46.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 45.

²⁶ I have borrowed this term from David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous – Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. Abram believes that the root of the ecological crisis is a flawed view of reality itself, spawned by our modernist tendencies to imagine ourselves as distant observers, speaking about the world rather than engaging with it as intimate participants. This more-than-human world is thus the world we organically experience in its enigmatic multiplicity and open-endedness, subject to its own mood and metamorphosis. Abram claims that we need to move towards a way of thinking that strives for rigor without denying our kinship with the world with a quality of relationship. While there is no question of abandoning literacy, Abram adds that our task is that of taking up the written word, with all its potency and 'patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land' (p. 273).

²⁷ See Robert Ferguson, 'Introduction: Invisible Centre', in Ferguson, R., Gever, M., Minh-ha, T. T. and West, C. eds, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, MIT Press, Mass, 1990, pp. 9–14.

²⁸ See bell hooks, 'Marginality as Site of Resistance', in Ferguson, R., Gever, M., Minh-ha, T. T. and West, C. eds, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, MIT Press, Mass, 1990, pp. 341–343.

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