

## Session 7

### DISSEMINATION OF *SHARED NARRATIVES*

Chair: Hans-Georg Fleck

#### **Presentation by David Harman (Bard College, Jerusalem).**

DAVID HARMAN: Dissemination of narratives in the context of this gathering is an educational challenge: it is an exercise in learning and teaching requiring some understanding of the fundamentals of both.

A widespread approach to education – learning and teaching – distinguishes between three target domains: cognitive, affective and motor. Most of what we do in formalized schooling arrangements, from kindergarten right through to universities, concentrates on the cognitive and, to a degree, the motor domains. Notoriously, schools have not succeeded in coping effectively with the affective domain. It is, for example, exceedingly difficult to determine a curriculum that will imbue, support and reinforce values. One notable exception to this can occur in schools that serve homogeneous student populations and reflect values that are both ubiquitous and heavily reinforced in the community environment – conditions that are rarely met in most contemporary schools.

There are, indeed, many examples of instruction directed at the cognitive growth of students but which may conflict with aspects of already ingrained affective positions that are ineffectual due to such clashes. Over the past few days this point has been illustrated many times and has become abundantly clear. This, of course poses challenges and complications to the planning of educational activities. (Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*)

Another theory that may serve as a guide in this respect posits that learning is triggered in situations in which a dissonance is created, that is, when new information or input conflicts with previously held knowledge or positions. As the mind does not tolerate dissonance over time, there is a need to bring the two into balance, or to consonance, either by accepting one and discarding the other or through a process of conciliation. Disseminating different – divergent - narratives naturally creates such conflict and we should consider the potential consequences. One such difficulty is that rejection of one or another narrative can be counterproductive in that it serves to reinforce negative stereotypes. For example, “such and such is rejected because it is a lie”, whereby lying becomes a stereotype of the other.

Yet another theory relevant to this discussion is that which views knowledge as a precursor to the formation of attitudes which, in turn and together with knowledge, contribute to the formation of practices. Often referred to as KAP, much structured

educational practice assumes this progression in its design. Seemingly, by introducing certain knowledge or information it is possible to influence the development of attitudes, conditioned upon their being environmentally supported or at least not negated, and then lead towards the evolution of behaviors emanating from the combination of the former. The knowledge-attitudes-practices paradigm has long been a central theoretical underpinning of instruction as well as mass education efforts and campaigns.

Over the course of the past several decades this pattern has been challenged repeatedly and a different theory introduced in which the dynamic is reversed: behaviors or practices become the precursors to attitude formation or selection and the latter in turn becomes a sieve through which knowledge is filtered, inevitably resulting in selectivity. Knowledge that conflicts with adopted or adhered to attitudes is modified or discarded. While most of the available research on this has looked at children and adolescents, logic would suggest that it is pertinent for all age groups. Indeed, among adults whose behaviors and attitudes are more likely to be “fixed”, new knowledge might be treated with great suspicion.

It is also vital to remember at all times that learning occurs within an environment; a context. It does not and, indeed, cannot occur in a vacuum. Thus, any attempt to trigger learning has to be aware of the environment in which the prospective learners live and function. The culture, norms, beliefs, myths and mythologies pertaining in diverse environments significantly influence learning and hence have to be taken into account when charting teaching activities. Dissemination, of course, has to contend with the same set of conditions.

All education and dissemination occur within a society that has its culture, norms and mythology and reflects them. We could, for instance, formulate a curriculum that would contain all of the content we have heard over the past sessions. It might even be a fine curriculum and could well be accompanied by an excellent textbook and teaching aids. But that curriculum will be taught by a teacher who is a member of a particular culture and its product – not by the curriculum’s authors. The teacher is hardly likely to teach material containing emotive elements without inserting his or her own point of view and opinions. Moreover, at the end of the school day, students reenter their natural environments which will reinforce the teacher’s point of view if, indeed, the teacher is a mirror of his or her environment and society, not necessarily that of the curriculum. Consequently, there has to be continuity between the messages of the curriculum and the general environment.

In planning for dissemination of ideas and narratives it is necessary to keep these attributes of learning in mind. However, first, it is necessary to determine what it is that is to be disseminated. The narratives themselves? The fact that the different sides in the dispute have different narratives? The fact that members of the two groups gather to discuss the narratives in an atmosphere of mutual respect and a real desire to understand the other?

Then it is necessary to determine the goals of the dissemination. Is it to convince one group of the veracity of the other’s narrative? Or perhaps, to make members of each group aware of the substantive points and affective significance of the other’s narrative? Or to drive home the points that discussion and exchange are both possible and useful in the process of seeking resolution; that narratives perhaps won’t change but at the same time will not be absolute barriers to arriving at resolution?

Answering these issues and questions constitutes the first step in developing dissemination strategies. Absent a clear definition of what it is that we seek to disseminate and what our objectives are in the process of dissemination, any subsequent decisions will lack definition and remain blurred.

It is always easiest to focus on schools and schooling when discussing dissemination. Schools are relatively easy to access, they offer captive audiences, there are known vehicles that can be utilized – for example, curricula, text books, etc -- and there is a readily available army of disseminators: teachers. Easy, perhaps, but not necessarily the wisest and most potentially productive avenue.

Schools exist within communities and generally mirror a community's ethos. What is taught in schools generally has to be supported by the community for it to be properly taught and learned. If this is the case in subject matter contained in the normative curriculum, it is far more pronounced in issues that contain sensitive emotive and political aspects. In these the community and school have to function in tandem. It is also important to bear in mind that teachers usually are products of the communities in which they teach and will most often sustain – and seek to inculcate – that which the community expects. Moreover, students spend only x number of hours in classrooms and a substantially larger number of hours in other frameworks, engaged in diverse activities and pursuits.

The environment assumes even greater significance than just its influence on school comportment; it permeates most arenas in which schoolgoers are likely to be active during the bulk of their waking hours. Complicating this scenario further are the rapid development and spread of interactive and communicative technologies that serve to extend individuals' horizons well beyond their immediate communities of membership. New communities are coming into being in cyberspace and they, too, are fast becoming sources of influence and knowledge. The competition, as it were, for the attention of the learner is growing apace.

Educators – especially those working in formal school frameworks – have little control over the larger environment, and as time marches forward and there are greater opportunities for participation in out-of-immediate-community situations, the arena becomes murkier. To this it is necessary to add a purely technical, but nonetheless significant factor: the availability of classroom time for the introduction of extra-curricular topics. Increasingly, the distribution of classroom hours is dictated by the requirements of national examinations which have demanding syllabi. At the same time, the school day and week are not being extended; if anything, they are contracting due to economic constraints. Hence, just finding the classroom time to deal with the complex issues of narratives becomes very difficult.

All of this complicates the selection of appropriate target audiences for dissemination. In viewing environments in which attitudes are shaped, different groups and clusters of people emerge as being the most potentially effective and influential opinion leaders and setters. It is towards these groups I would suggest that the main dissemination efforts be directed. It is they and their members who will influence school curricula, help modify and even break the stereotypes that are all too pervasive in both societies and facilitate the onset of dialogue and exchange. Adults - young and old - rather than school-age children and youth would clearly be at the forefront of such a target audience. Indeed, they include the very teachers upon whom the instruction of

school curricula is dependent. The opinion-moulders in societies are the key to effective dissemination.

There are numerous ways of approaching adults, singularly and in diverse groupings, in order to both broadcast messages and to trigger dialogue. In addition to gatherings such as the present one here in Istanbul, as well as within the region itself, utilization of the media – radio and television foremost – and internet-based outlets offer effective vehicles for dissemination.

In our region stereo-typification is endemic. Lacking in frameworks – formal and informal – to meet, the populations of the area rarely engage in any meaningful dialogue. Where people do gather, they very quickly discover that stereotypes are easy to transcend. While differences remain and people continue to adhere to “their” narratives, at least they discover that interaction, communication and discourse are possible and can even be friendly. Trust can begin to build and with it the understanding that, divergent narratives notwithstanding, there is a basis for acceptance leading to compromise and then to resolution.

Personalizing the interaction gives the interlocutors faces; they become people and the exchange more personal and possibly even affable. Giving the dialogue a more human face helps erode the stereotypes and can filter down from adult groups, easing the dissemination process among youth.

Media can also be utilized effectively. There is a high degree of media participation on both sides. Engaging the media as well as the internet – for example, discussion groups, chat groups, varieties of internet based communities -- can also increase interactions and communication, leading towards a lessening of tensions and breaking of stereotypes. The narratives themselves do not – should not – be the first item for discussion. First, it is important to build channels of communication and respect for “the other”.

The cleavages that characterize the various groups living side by side in the region are not limited to Jew and Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian. There are also significant intra-group differences that require bridging and are no less complex. Here, too, direct communication has been lacking.

Finally, it is critical to note that dissemination is a process, not a one-time effort. It takes time to alter behaviors and influence attitudes. The disseminator is well advised to evolve a long-range strategy rather than a quick attempt to accomplish this most difficult task. In the end, we seek dissemination strategies that are productive, not non-productive or, worse, counter-productive. In this regard, attention has to be paid to intra-community, not just inter-community processes.

The challenge facing us is to evolve a continuous process of dialogue and interaction that will ultimately lead towards understanding, if not acceptance, of different narratives. Such dialogue and openness are vital.

HANS-GEORG FLECK: Thank you very much, David, for making us sensitive to the background of dissemination, but also to the possibilities, and also for pinpointing the problems which occur. We mentioned the problems within the school systems already, and I would also mention that the logistical and political problems to bring people together. We are talking about groups of adults who are supposed to meet, and all of us know how difficult is to bring people together from both sides at one place. It is not accidental that we have to meet here in Istanbul.

DAVID HARMAN: That's true, but we have other mechanisms we can use. We can use chat groups, distance learning systems, live, fully interactive systems. Maybe we can get around some of these issues using newly available technologies.

MOHAMMED DAJANI: It is not that easy.

AS'AD GHANEM: I want to thank you, David. This is something very usable, and we have to really think about what you suggested here. But I have a few questions.

You have spoken to us about only the school and the young generations. Now, I am old but I think that I can learn a lot about the other history, the other group's history. And I think that throwing everything on the shoulders of the new generation is not taking responsibility for ourselves, our generation, which is no less important than the next generation.

MOHAMMED DAJANI: This is the lost generation.

AS'AD GHANEM: No, no, no, I don't agree with that. I think we can also affect the others. At least this is something that we have to think about. So with whom to work is the question, and I think that it is no less important to work with adults rather than just young people.

And secondly, I think that when speaking about affecting the new generation, I am not sure that the best way is to let the young people meet together. Let's start with the teachers meeting together. They are the agents of the school systems, the educational systems, to the new generation, which I think is most important and less difficult.

There is another issue. What are the tools of education? I am trying to evaluate what I learned from my teachers regarding identity and values and so on. I think it is maybe ten percent of what I have. The rest I got from the neighborhood, from my parents, from the TV, from the radio, from my interaction in the market and from Mr. Rubinstein in the newspapers. So it is something that we have to think about, what are the tools that we use in order to bring the data to others, that is the agents, the newspapers and so on?

I think that the fact that the Jewish majority doesn't know Arabic is the main obstacle. For me it is maybe a technical aspect that somebody can make a decision and teach the next generation Arabic and they can see TV and see our speech rather than hearing it from someone who didn't understand what they said in the newspaper or on Iraqi TV, and he starts to explain to the Jews who listen to him what they mean, and he explains something different because he doesn't really understand what they mean by their stories. So he may know the language, but he doesn't get across what the real discussion is.

So what is it we want to disseminate? Is it the history of the other? Or the legitimacy of the history of the other? It is the basic idea that you want one group to understand that the other group has a narrative, and they have different items in it.

I was interviewed by the Minister of Education, Limor Livnat, when we published this 100 Concept Palestinian History, and she threatened to take us to court, and I said that I guess that I am not going to sleep tonight because you are threatening me. But the important thing I told her is that you can help your people in this regard only by translating our terms, and let the Jewish students know that the other people has a different narrative, they have different heroes, they consider Rabin and Ben-Gurion not only as heroes but as something else, and they consider Arafat not only as a terrorist

but something else. Let your new generation judge what they want to choose, and not only what you have chosen for them.

Do you know that in the Israeli Arab education system, we don't learn anything about Palestinian problems after 1948? It ends in 1948. As far as history books for Arab students in Israel go, there is nothing, nothing about Palestinian problems after 1948.

MOHAMMED DAJANI: But there is nothing before 1948. Is there?

AS'AD GHANEM: Is that your point? Okay.

Legitimacy. I think what I want the other to learn is that it is legitimate that the other has a different history and he has a right to it. I will tell you what we did, and what we are going to do.

We published this *100 Concept* and then the Ministry attacked us. This led more and more Arab teachers to ask for this booklet. And then the Minister of Education understood that these twenty-four Arab academics and professionals produced something much more serious than what they have for the students. So then they stopped the project and they started writing a new booklet that includes much more serious attitudes to our history.

Thus we succeeded because we attacked from the outside. I know that this is true, that we didn't have any chance to do this through the Israeli system. But we did it from outside. Our plan now is that we are going to produce new textbooks for teachers, and then after that for students, and then we will push the government to consider our history rather than only their story about our histories. Which I think is very important.

So I think that it is no less important to think about dissemination in the media, and think about other agents that can affect how this new generation will think about the other's history and the other group's history. PAUL SCHAM: Most of the people here are academics or people who write about history, and many of us are involved in conferences already. I was wondering if you have suggestions for methods other than the traditional academic one of writing something and then putting it out there and it is up to the population to look at it. Because we want the book that comes out of this seminar not only to be a bestseller but to end the conflict.

More seriously, I wonder if you can discuss ways of disseminating among adults, both Palestinians and Israelis, in the region and among Jews and Arabs elsewhere. The central idea, and I agree completely with As'ad in this, is the existence and legitimacy of the narrative of the other. Of course Israeli Arabs, for example, are quite aware that there is a Jewish narrative. They have been taught that through their whole school career. So that is not the problem.

AS'AD GHANEM: The problem is that we don't know our narrative.

PAUL SCHAM: But I am saying that another problem in this case is that there is not a symmetry of narratives. Israeli Jews and American Jews, who I think are relevant in this, are much less aware of a narrative of the other, or a serious narrative of the other, and they don't take it seriously.

How can we try to get it across to them them, whether it be through dialogue or other means? I was wondering if there were some thoughts about how to try to get it beyond the academic walls or even into the policy community in Washington where I work now.

MICHAEL ROSEN: Get a few rabbis to excommunicate it.

PAUL SCHAM: Can you help? Don't get yourself excommunicated though. So those are my questions.

JEFF HELSING: I think that what David laid out was both very useful and very much grounded in reality. And I sort of have a bad news, good news approach to this. The bad news, which is in a way kind of good news as well, is that this has not been done very successfully, really, in other societies to this point. With the exception of Northern Ireland, and I'll come back to that in a minute.

But I think it is important to realize that many other societies are grappling with this very issue, which is about how to teach about history when there are different narratives or different groups in society with a stake in the writing, the teaching, the understanding of history. It is oftentimes simply ignored. There are countries like Rwanda and Guatemala that do not teach history beyond the beginning of their respective conflicts. It is not just that they teach one way, but they don't teach it at all.

But there is beginning to be -- and this is sort of the good news part of it -- a recognition in places like Rwanda, Guatemala and elsewhere, that in fact history has to be not only taught, but it is important in critical components of the society and a society's ability to build for the future, to educate future generations, to reconcile, and to accompany -- in the case of Guatemala, to accompany a truth, an accountability process, as a way of integrating the indigenous people into the society of Guatemala.

First of all, as David pointed out, this is a long process, and you cannot just create something and plop it down in a bookstore, in a classroom or in a society, hoping the contents will resonate in and of itself. So I think, and I agree with David, you have to think of other vehicles. The school systems are not going to adopt something immediately. Neither one is.

School systems change very, very slowly. They tend to be followers rather than leaders. However, as David suggested, there are other mechanisms. He mentioned the internet. What about the possibility of following the model of a website that I think is very interesting and useful in this context, and that is *bitterlemons.org*. In other words, taking a website that brings out the issues that have been discussed in the last two days. *Bitterlemons* is a forum for the perspectives of both sides, run jointly by Yossi Alpher and Ghassan Khatib. [It has since, unfortunately, ceased to exist, but is still available on the Internet – Editors] They choose specific critical issues, with an Israeli and a Palestinian perspective on each, and it contains a lot of disagreements, but it is both equitable and respectful, and it is a great, great educational tool. I don't know how it is used in your respective societies, but I can certainly tell you that those who study your conflict elsewhere in the world are using that website to a large degree.

That is one way I think that you may be able to raise consciousness, particularly if you use it in college settings or through NGOs. But there are also NGOs that are doing some work in your communities that I think shouldn't be discounted.

Some have mentioned IPCRI before. The Middle East Children's Association (MECA) not only has Palestinian and Israeli teachers working together, including some on the teaching of history, but they are in fact developing a journal, and I think it will soon set up a website on which they will actually talk about using curriculum and best practices, lessons learned; that is, what works and what doesn't. And this kind of content will be very useful to teachers who are already starting to find ways of working without the immediate curriculum. It isn't necessarily easy, but they have a good track

record of doing this, and there may also be ways in which you could use this as a vehicle for this sort of work.

The Prime group that Eshel Klinhouse has worked with has started to do this, and I saw you had a copy there of your curriculum as well. They have experience with this, and one thing that I will say, and this is critical wherever you are, that you cannot put something like this into a classroom without first training the teacher on how to incorporate this. Because you know, think about the difficulty in which all of you know, as academic scholars, experts in these areas, just the difficulty that you have in engaging in this topic. You can imagine that for a teacher without your grounding and expertise, it will be very difficult without real training to do this.

Here is where I will come back to my Northern Ireland case. Northern Ireland began with some experimental schools and a few integrated schools back about a generation ago. They simply introduced new curriculum, including this kind of history, into the schools on a very limited basis. And it was risky. And they were in some cases condemned for it, but these were teachers and parents who were willing to start by introducing a new sort of way of looking at the other. Not agreeing, but at least trying to create a process of understanding the other. And this curriculum, as I said, it started in just a very few schools. But it has since, in the last five years, been adopted for every school in Northern Ireland. But it took a generation. And you have to be willing to invest that amount of time to get people to begin thinking more broadly.

So I think that I agree with David, and I'll just reinforce that by concluding, that this can be done, but it has to be done slowly, and it has to be done right. Because it can backfire, and it can create more problems than you had to begin with.

But there is recognition on the part of foundations, funders, not those that are just interested in this area of the world, but interested in education in general, there is a recognition of the increasing importance of history as a critical topic in societies that are in conflict or emerging from conflict. And my organization is now creating an initiative based upon the very interest in educators around the world in this topic, one that has been ignored for a long time, but is ripe to get more and more support for.

So I hope that at least this gives you a sense of what is possible, and a little bit of hope that this is something that can really take root and resonate and have an impact.

ESHTEL KLINHOUSE: I have to agree education does not lead a revolution, it comes after a revolution. It could not, at least a formal system could not produce or lead to any kind of revolution, but it can be taken in parts. We have to be very modest about our ability to move.

For example, I think I am very significant in the life of my students, and after I teach them, maybe they are telling me the significance of the leftwing or of the Arab lovers and so on. But then they go back to their parents and see TV, and my effectiveness may be even negative, if I am not doing my work here properly. We know, for example, concerning the Holocaust, that most of the knowledge that students have about it is obviously not from the school system, although I spend thirty hours per year teaching the Holocaust in my classes. A movie or two does the job better than I do, because they are much more impressive and much more accessible, and contain much more than a history teacher who teaches for the *bagrut*.

On the other hand, we perhaps should not be that pessimistic and say education cannot move anything else, and I want to give two small examples from my daily life.

One of them is about a group of teachers who are not only teaching the massacre of Kafr Kasem in 1956, but taking the children to the annual memorial day in Kafr Kasem itself. Whoever participates in this ceremony, whoever reads the text itself, will be affected by it. That helps to move some of the students to a different approach and to other things.

And concerning the Kfar Kassem massacre, you should know that we are not alone in this environment of changing opinion and attitude. The fact that I can teach Kfar Kassem much more significantly is due to the fact that Rubik Rosenthal produced an excellent book about it – *Kfar Kassem: Events and Myths*. And in fact there is a small film that I use in my classes. That means I am not alone in my struggle for the pupils to understand this event. And I am not working in an empty environment.

Another example, just a few days ago, I was teaching the Arab revolt of 1936-1939. You can see how the Zionist narrative is changing: instead of describing the clashes between Jews and Arabs as a pogrom, much more neutral words are used.

YOSEF GORNY: In the *Haganah Book* as well it is called a revolt.

ESHEL KLINHOUSE: When I am teaching this period, I try to decide if we should talk about Arab gangs or about Arab fighters. I put a simple question to my students: What does it mean when we call this a group of fighters or a gang, what are the implications of that?

And immediately half of the class will say it is obvious, because they are bad and we are good. The fact that I pinpoint that in my school in itself may not be so important. But it matters. If I keep on doing it and another teacher does it, things might begin to change and maybe we will move from the cognitive approach, which is obviously dominant, to affectively and maybe emotionally and so on.

The other experience I want to share with you is when I tried to introduce the Palestinian narrative concerning the Balfour Declaration. I told the students, we know the Israeli story of the Balfour Declaration, let's learn what the Palestinians think of it through this booklet.

The Palestinian narrative starts with Napoleon offering to give the Jews of Akko some kind of autonomy. It continues with the claim that there was a committee of British who were figuring out how to control the Arabs, and decided to send in Zionists in order to accomplish that. This was the narrative. And I tried my best to introduce the Palestinian narrative without leaving my own side.

One of the dangers that I have found in this is that at the end of the session, students came to me and said, so what is true? So everything that you taught us until now is wrong? So where are we going from here? It was as if I had taken a big hammer to break their world.

So this is one of the dangers of introducing the opposite narrative, and it was a 180-degree opposite.

BENJAMIN POGRUND: What did you say to them?

ESHEL KLINHOUSE: I tried to explain to them that there was a notion of narrative, and that was rather new for them. You know, history for them is like for many people, it is an objective idea.

But the thing is, we cannot leave our own society and step into another society in an hour and a half. It is a process. It is not something that is done easily. You have to do it very carefully.

Now, the narrative, as we are handling it, the student must cut it into small pieces, and understand it as we go along. But eventually I think that you can recognize the other side, or your side might recognize that there is another story, that there is another perspective about how things happened. And then when we first meet them, that might help to promote peace. Peace in the long run.

SAID ZEEDANI: I think the assumption of some is that we have some sort of an agreement about how to proceed, or that we have reached some sort of a shared understanding about it, which is not the case. We thought we engaged in serious discussions about completing the narratives, and I think we have a better understanding of the concerns of the other, of their feelings, of their attachments. But before we start the process of dissemination, we must have some shared understanding of the shared values, or at least have identified and agreed what happened.

So I think talking about dissemination is premature. But if I may add, of course I have some problems with Zionist Jews, but at least one of the problems that always surfaces, almost in any encounter, has nothing really with moderation or the opposite of it.

There is such a thing as to understand feelings. You call it cognition and affective, but I want to talk in terms of how to understand "affectively" or "feelingly".

I am talking about my experience at the checkpoint. I think you do not understand it. You understand it in the abstract, but more importantly, I mean, this is the impression that I get here, and it is not an impression, it is a conviction, that you Israeli Jews do not really know, do not understand feelingly, affectively, what it means and how it feels to be under occupation.

Of course you understand the literature. These people are poor, they suffer this much, but you do not understand the feeling affectively, and because of that, we talk about the lack of symmetry, and everybody agrees on it, but you do not really appreciate that.

TAMAR HERMANN: Well, what is the solution? That we will be under occupation, and only then we shall understand? There are things that you can only understand through your intellect. I understand that you say that you don't know what sex is unless you do sex, so you don't know what is occupation unless you do occupation? I don't understand where you are heading.

SAID ZEEDANI: No, no, I am talking about occupation, not about sex. Engaging in sex is not a collective enterprise.

HANS-GEORG FLECK: Although we are entering very interesting stages, please try to stick to your topic.

SAID ZEEDANI: I mean, why Istanbul? Because out of that context, here in Istanbul, we are equally interlocutors. Once we land at Ben-Gurion Airport, we are not equal, and you should know how to appreciate the symmetry and what it entails. That is the issue. And that also applies to dissemination.

It is much, much easier for you, in spite of the difficulties that you mentioned. It is almost impossible for Walid Salem. I know it, he knows it. Even if he says otherwise, he cheats you and I cheat you. We cannot go to a Ramallah school with this stuff. That's it.

ADEL MANNA': Concerning tools for dissemination, there are different tools, but the question is whether we are speaking about the same subject or other issues. For

example, in our center we had a series of lectures that continued with Ford Foundation financial support for four years. We brought Palestinian lecturers each week to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and they presented the Palestinian narrative to a group of Israelis in semester-long programs. Then there was a series of lectures and meetings with different Palestinians. And you find out in the end that for most of the people, you see that there is some change and perhaps that is disseminated. When you have participants who themselves could take this knowledge to other people if they are educators or journalists or other such leaders, then you perhaps have developed circles of dissemination.

But nonetheless, my feeling at the end, though it was a success, and we loved that, at the end of the day you know that the group is so selective that some of the people started and ended in the same point. I saw some people in the first session, and after two years they continued to ask more or less the same questions with the same mindsets.

So this issue is really very difficult and very complicated. And we are speaking here about intellectuals, and all are graduates of universities, but when we speak about kids it is much more complicated. Because the experience of the last twenty years of those dialogues and meetings and encounters between Jewish and Palestinian youth, even when most of them are Israeli citizens, and I am speaking now without the problem of the occupation, and many times it is counter-productive. As was pointed out. Because they have to speak Hebrew, and many of the Arabs can't speak good Hebrew, and you have the stereotypes, and when you have the encounter with all of these disadvantages that the Palestinian kids have in that meeting, then it strengthens the stereotypes rather than helping to bring people together and understand each other.

TAMAR HERMANN: A nation that is engaged in a liberation struggle cannot allow itself to "understand" the other side. So when one clashes with the political purposes of the collective, it is very unrealistic to expect to educate the younger generation until the older generation reaches some closure. I am talking about this as a political scientist here, and as a political activist. But realistically it doesn't make any sense. Can you imagine the Jewish *Yishuv* or its authorities in 1947 and 1948 starting to try to understand the British narrative or the Palestinian narrative?

The question is, how do you bring in the notion only that the other side thinks differently from you without really bringing in the content in a way that stands in opposition to the existential situation of the people involved?

This brings me to Northern Ireland. I spent three months [in the summer] WE NEED TOP CHANGE THIS TO THE YEAR – DO YOU REMEMBER THE YEAR WE MET IN ISTANBUL? in Northern Ireland. The conflict was alive and kicking. I thought that I was coming to a post-conflict society. There were three people killed each week, I mean only one per evening. So it wasn't big enough to capture the media, and we all thought it was a very quiet society, but there were riots in Belfast when I was there. Cars were burned.

And indeed, only five percent of the students there studied in this integrated school. After a generation of effort only five percent were in a Protestant/Catholic school. So it tends to make clear the fact that the eyeglasses that people were looking through in Northern Ireland were, shall we say, quite a bit more complicated.

To be practical I suggest that you address the Voice of Peace, and maybe they

can have a series of lectures presenting each narrative without talking about if it is Arab or Israeli, but this is the Palestinian narrative, and this is the Jewish narrative about these issues. [Voice of Peace no longer exists. – Editors]

We have an internet site which is called Crossing Borders, in which we have a section for the Palestinian society and for the Israeli Jewish society, and we can put the materials there on people who are interested in really getting there and learning something. And we are developing a course for high school students which will be extracurricular, in which we will have a simulation on the internet, so we don't have to bring the students to the same location, but they can meet in cyberspace. And we plan to have one group playing the role of the other in order to understand the complexities of the situation.

So practically I think we can offer you this platform in order to promote your issues.

YOSEF GORNY: I had a talk with Walid, and I am not sure that we understood each other correctly, but from my point of view, through not understanding, perhaps something came out of it. I proposed to Walid that we should start to speak about tragedies. What I meant was collective tragedies, not only the Arab and the Jewish tragedies, but also to deal with tragedies of other people and the way they were treated.

I think that Walid understood it only on the personal level. But I am thinking as well about a comparison discussion about collective tragedies in the last hundred years.

The idea is to start from the emotional dimension, and move on later to the rational dimension. I think that this approach should be included in the history books for the students in both educational institutions – the Jewish and the Arabs. But first of all it should be discussed openly and constantly with the Arab and Jewish teachers of history.

In this connection, I want to mention the Bereaved Families Forum, a group of families who have lost children in the conflict, and they come without any ideology. They want to tell their personal story, an Israeli story, a Palestinian story. It is amazing the way that is going.

WALID SALEM: Because you use the very important word "tragedy," and since I do strategic planning, then I will use what I hear today to prepare some kind of strategy. But I am sure it will not use the internet a lot because Palestinian access is still not widespread. We should look for other ways in addition, since not so many have internet.

And the main language problem is that you need people who speak English well, which eliminates most Palestinians and many Israelis as well.

ILAN TROEN: How difficult it will be to construct a story that can be taken into a Jewish school in Israel, let alone into all kinds of settings abroad, where opposing narratives are so bitterly contested.

There are many organizations which have arisen in the last number of years which argue that the discourse has become very vehemently anti-Israel, and I think even in terms of Israeli society. Only on Fox News does Israel come out relatively unscathed. Regarding *Haaretz*, I have a good friend who says he will read it, and he'll buy it, but he will only publish in *Yediot Ahronot*. There is a widespread attitude of having to choose camps in a bitterly contested dispute.

There is a great sense of being besieged, whether it is accurate or not, and

whatever dissemination is attempted must take into consideration the mistrust of both sides and that both communities really feel vulnerable and misunderstood in the face of narratives or accounts that are prejudicial. That makes people very self-defensive from the outset.

So it is not merely that we are going to make you understand our side, something has to be done in order to make both sides appreciate, even if they are wrong, what the other's sensibilities are. Otherwise we get no place, and then you get another NGO being organized to say we have to counteract them because they are siding with their perspective, but not with ours.

YUSUF NATSHEH: What concerns me as a Palestinian is that we have major differences between the Palestinians and the Israeli society. For example, when you have your own kids and you are trying your best to educate them, you spend hours and hours and the first moment your kid goes out to play with the other, in the street or on the playground, you are afraid that your education will collapse, or at least it will be lost.

But reconciliation is not going to be productive unless a political breakthrough happens. We are not ministers or legislators but we are educators. We are intellectuals. Each of us can really affect a certain circle of our own. This is what I believe.

So let's also think about means, how we can educate people in this crucial time when the majority is coming to lose faith in both societies, that peace, it is not attainable in the near future. In previous years, hopes were much greater than today.

BENJAMIN POGRUND: I spent more than a quarter-century as a journalist in South Africa, on the country's leading newspaper. I was a reporter and later, chief editorial writer, and over the years my work was aimed at trying to persuade whites to change, to give way on apartheid. For a lot of the time I saw that the majority of whites were not changing. I came to view myself as a walking, talking, living example of the failure of the written word to achieve anything.

But it also dawned on me that the information and the opinions that we were publishing were in fact seeping into people's minds. It needed a trigger event to bring it to the fore, to see that the issues that we had been dealing with for years suddenly came to the surface and that there was a public consciousness about them.

There were events beyond our control which determined people's attitudes. These were the political breakthroughs that happened. And in the case of Africa, it was the Congo, where we saw blacks murdering and raping whites, that had a terrible effect on whites in South Africa. There were also troubles in Mozambique and Angola. All had disastrous effects on pushing the whites to the right.

The African National Congress was banned and took a decision in 1961 to turn to armed resistance. Fundamental to this, it also took a decision not to kill white civilians. It was a strategic decision, and also based on the non-violent teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. The ANC's decision proved decisive eventually in enabling South Africa to move away from apartheid with relative peace – many people died, but it was relatively peaceful compared with what could have been. Over the years there were only about two major bomb attacks by the ANC.

There was no hope among blacks for change for many years. Whites wouldn't even talk to them. The struggle went on for decades, but when circumstances changed, whites were not frightened that they were going to be murdered and were willing to end

apartheid.

Coming to Israel and trying to carry over some of what I learned, I don't have use of the power of the daily newspaper headline anymore. But I see the work that we do with Yakar and Mickey Rosen as drops of water from the tap. It's slow and tedious. But we run meetings, we get fifteen people or two hundred people, depending on the issue, and they are not always friends. Yakar is religious and Orthodox, and most people are conservative. People come and they often don't like what they hear there. We are not preaching to the converted all the time. But it is drops of water, and those drops are vital.

I believe that meetings like this in Istanbul are some of the drops of water that are necessary. And it is slow and tedious and we keep saying that.

But again, we are subject to circumstances. The suicide bombings have had a disastrous effect on Jewish thinking in Israel. There is no question about it: people were driven to the right. I have left-wing friends who have suffered, or know people who have, and who have said to me, I don't care about Palestinians any more.

Yusuf is correct: a political breakthrough is needed. But the drops of water are needed to bring about the breakthrough. The breakthrough is needed to bring about the change.

So it is slow, David is right, but we must look for all possible methods. We have to be concerned about the internet: some dreadful material is doing the rounds, with hatred being disseminated both by Jews and by Arabs. It is a big problem in our lives because people read the internet and believe it. We have to counter it.

Regarding the drops of water, we advertise our meetings in a small way. It is expensive, but to me the mere fact that we advertise helps to make normal what is abnormal. When I advertise that a revolutionary like Walid Salem is coming to talk...

MICHAEL ROSEN: I get complaints in *shul*.

DAVID HARMAN: This is obviously not a topic that we will resolve in any way, shape or form. Mickey, at the opening session, you made the distinction between shared narratives and sharing narratives.

If we wait to start a process of education and dissemination or whatever you want to call it, until we have a "shared narrative" then we will wait until hell freezes over. What we have to do at this juncture is begin a process of going a little deeper and just understanding that each side has its own narrative, and what a narrative is.

Why? Because it's clear to each side that the other side has a different narrative, because if it didn't have a different narrative we wouldn't have a problem. So clearly there is a different narrative. We have to understand, to get understanding of what the substance is. So we say understanding feelings. First you understand. First you know. Feelings are extra environmental. They exist within an environment and are influenced by it, but they are larger.

Without solid information, without solid knowledge, we go nowhere. And when the feelings are neutral, positive or negative, we have to begin somewhere. And then it is a process. In some cases certain kinds of feelings develop, in other cases other kinds of feelings develop, so we have to avoid them from the very beginning. This is so that in the process of exposing the different narratives, one to the other, that we don't achieve counter-productivity and more of an emphasis of negative stereotypes.

We can put together wonderful textbooks. There are countless examples of

textbooks with wonderful illustrations and methodologies, and they stay on the shelves. They don't make their way to the classrooms. So putting together textbooks is no answer. It has to be there, but then it has to be accompanied with teacher training, and then we have to look very carefully at who the teachers are they and where are they coming from, and what kinds of environments. Remember that at the end of the day in any formal school system, the classroom door is shut and the teacher remains inside with the students. What occurs is not necessarily what the textbook would have one say or do.

Finally, a drop here and a drop there. It begins with a process that might possibly engage the internet as an interactive tool through which people are actually engaging each other. There may be only a few participants initially, but participation begins to snowball.

The issues are highly complex and they are not going to be solved easily. We have done a job of laying out some of them on the table. We do need a strategy and a plan, but first it has to be said that there has to be a decision that this is important enough to put in the time and the effort to develop a strategy and plan in order to start a process.

Without our doing anything at all there is learning taking place. People watch television, listen to the radio, talk to each other. Attitudes are formed and influenced, all without any direction or intervention. The sooner a mitigating voice enters the discussion in an effort to introduce some measure of balance, the better. And then the process continues - and the more sound and sane the intervention, the greater can be the understanding that ensues.