

**Dialogue as Humanisation: Implications of Street  
Discussion Spaces in Côte d'Ivoire for Learning and  
Peace**

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## Abstract

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Literature on conflict and education often suggests that dialogue is a critical tool for restoring peaceful and humane relations between opposing groups, yet the meaning of 'dialogue' in these complex contexts requires both theoretical and empirical investigation. This study of dialogue in street discussion spaces in post-conflict Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire makes a distinct contribution to knowledge in these areas by both 1) providing rich, micro-level descriptions of dialogue processes and participant motivations and outcomes in non-formal learning spaces and 2) furthering theoretical conceptions of humanising dialogue through a joint reading of Martin Buber and Paulo Freire.

Using the concept of 'humanising dialogue' and data collected during four months of qualitative fieldwork in Abidjan, this thesis argues that dialogue in street discussion spaces extends beyond objectives of 'conflict resolution' or 'deliberation' often found in literature on dialogue in post-conflict settings. The spaces evolved during 20 years of political turmoil from 1990-2011, but current, post-conflict motivations for participation in spaces expand beyond politics to include sociability, life advice, mutual aid, information on current events and justice. While moments of 'I-thou' mutuality and awareness arose, tendencies to 'other' opposing political groups, or fall into 'I-It' relationships were prominent and the settings themselves perpetuated hierarchical structures and gender inequalities, indicating how Buber's two-fold, non-linear dialogue can contribute to Freirean concept of transformation. Observational data also illuminates how dialogue processes strongly impacted the ways that participants' vernacularized political discourses and situated themselves within peacebuilding processes. Re-examining Freire and Buber's humanising dialogue in this context indicates a need to revisit how politicisation, learning and awareness raising function within culturally specific, conflict affected settings. The data also reveals lingering divisions in a country recently emerged from conflict and indicates possible pathways to peace through non-formal learning and dialogue in the spaces.

## Declaration

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I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Marika Tsolakis

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CDVR: *Commission de Dialogue, Verité et Réconciliation*, Commission for Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation

ICC : International Criminal Court

FN: *Forces Nouvelles*, New Forces

FESCI: *Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire*, Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire

FENAAPCI: *Fédération National des Agoras et Parlements de Côte d'Ivoire*, National Federation of Agoras and *Parlements* of Côte d'Ivoire

FENAPAOCI: *Fédération Nationale des Parlements, Agoras et Orateurs de Côte d'Ivoire*, National Federation of *Parlements*, Agoras and Orators of Côte d'Ivoire

FENOPACI: *Fédération National des Orateurs, Parlements et Agoras de Côte d'Ivoire*, National Federation of Orators, *Parlements* and Agoras of Côte d'Ivoire

RGCI: *Rassemblement des Grins de Côte d'Ivoire*, Rally of the Grins of Côte d'Ivoire

RTGCI: *Rassemblement de Tous les Grins de Côte d'Ivoire*, Rally of All the Grins of Côte d'Ivoire

TD: *travaux dirigés*, seminars or working groups

UFHB: *Université Felix Houphouët-Boigny*

UNOCI: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

UNOPACI: *Union Nationale des Orateurs des Parlements et Agoras de Côte d'Ivoire*, National Union of Orators of *Parlements* and Agoras of Côte d'Ivoire

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## Glossary

*Abobo*: A large *commune* located at the Northern edge of the city, it is most associated with *grins* and with Muslim Ivoirian culture.

*Agoras and Parlements*: Street discussion spaces that favour former president Laurent Gbagbo and the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI). Pre-2011, meetings consisted of hundreds or even thousands but post-conflict spaces generally involve less than 100 people and have decreased in quantity.

*Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et des Patriotes*: COJEP, known commonly as *Jeunes Patriotes*. A youth movement supportive of Laurent Gbagbo and the FPI and led by Charles Blé Goudé. COJEP used *parlements* and *agoras* as platform to mobilise youth.

*Dioula*: An ethnicity in the Mande group, the largest linguistic ethnolinguistic group in West Africa. Along with French, Dioula is a lingua franca in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in markets. Sometimes spelled *Dyula* in English.

*Front Populaire Ivoirien*: FPI, Ivoirian Popular Front, the political party founded and led by Laurent Gbagbo. Based on socialist, anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist ideologies. The party is associated with *agoras* and *parlements*.

*Grin*: A group, generally consisting of men, who gather to drink tea and discuss politics or other subjects. Groups are formed by affinity, including ethnicity, profession or age and range in size from 5-25 members.

*Ivoirité*: A nationalistic discourse based on autochthonic citizenship. It arose in the 1990s as a way to disqualify political competition and marginalise foreigners.

*La Sorbonne*: The original street discussion space, formed in the public gardens at the Plateau in the centre of Abidjan. Animated at midday, *la Sorbonne* was a gathering site to eat, shop, get news, seek medical advice from healers and meet friends.

*Maquis*: An open-air bar, particularly associated with Yopougon.

*Nordiste*: An Ivoirian originating from the North of the country, generally of Muslim faith.

*Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix* (RHDP): Rally of Houphouëtistes for Democracy and Peace. A union of RDR, PDCI and other anti-FPI parties established in 2005. Most *grin* members support RDHP.

*Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR)*: Rally of Republicans, a party founded in 1994 in response to the xenophobic Ivoirité discourse prevalent in the PDCI. Alassane Ouattara was the party's first presidential candidate.

*Parti Démocratique de Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI)*: Party founded by Houphouët-Boigny, the country's first President, PDCI was the only recognised political party until 1990.

*Tea*: A type of 'Chinese green tea' prepared in a 3-cup ceremony at *grins*, common in Muslim West African tradition

*Treichville*: A small, densely populated borough of Abidjan, known to have a larger proportion of northern and foreign-background Ivoirians. More affluent than Yopougon and Abobo.

*Yopougon*: A large *commune* on the Western edge of the city, mostly associated with *agoras* and *parlements*

## **Chapter One – Introduction: Framing Ivoirian Street Discussion Spaces within the Context of Dialogue, Peace and Non-Formal Learning**

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### **Introduction**

In October 2015, The Tunisian Dialogue Quartet won the Nobel Peace Prize for its work in restoring peace and justice in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring in Tunisia. Mohamed Mahfoudh, a lawyer and member of the Quartet, stated that receiving the prize sent ‘a message to the world, to all the countries, to all the people that are aiming for democracy and peace, that everything can be solved by dialogue.’<sup>1</sup> Mahfoudh’s statement, seemingly lofty, reflects broader societal assumptions as well as a substantial body of academic literature on peacebuilding that presents dialogue as an effective, and even healing, force for resolving conflicts (Bohm, 2004; Buber, 1958; J. Lederach, 2003; Maxwell, Nagda, & Thompson, 2012). Yet dialogue, framed as both exchanges occurring in everyday as well as in institutionalised peacebuilding, can often differ from theoretical concepts (Elsdon-Baker, 2013) and research has shown that dialogue settings can even have unintended effects, reinforcing social divisions as opposed to mending them (Abu-Nimer, 2012; I. Maoz, 2011; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011) or failing to fully engage with or diminish power imbalances and injustices between different groups (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 1996; Yeakley, 1998; Young, 2011). For example, the same week that Mahfoudh and the Quartet won the Nobel Prize, news from Sudan reported major breakdowns in the National Dialogue processes, due in part to feelings of marginalisation from opposition groups. More so, this type of formalised ‘national’ dialogue often eclipses other dialogues occurring at a grassroots level in communities, schools and even homes.

A lack of clarity surrounding dialogue’s meaning and aims contributes to the abovementioned tensions; dialogue has become a blanket term for

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<sup>1</sup> For a full transcript of the Mahfoudh’s interview:  
[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2015/mahfoudh-telephone.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2015/mahfoudh-telephone.html)

exchanges occurring between two or more people, yet, beyond this, envisioned forms and purposes of dialogue vary and complicate its operationalisation. For instance, should dialogue involve governments or individuals from warring parties or solely involve in-group members? While some view dialogue as a normative approach of deliberation based on rational thought, consensus and political action, such as Habermas (1984, 1991), Rawls (1971, 2001) and Sen (1999, 2004, 2009), others suggest a more practically-oriented form of collective communication to facilitate mutual understanding (Bohm, 2004; Nagda, 2006; Yankelovich, 2001). Dialogue has also been conceived ontologically, as a way of being (Bakhtin, 1984; Buber, 1958, 2002; Freire, 1972, 1972; Gadamer, 2013; Sidorkin, 1999) that facilitates more peaceful relationships or as a way of learning and knowing that should shape educational practices (Dewey, 1916; Gill & Niens, 2014; Jarvis, 2012; Vella, 1994). Addressing a number of these elements, Paulo Freire (1972, 1993, 1998, 2007) suggests that dialogue is an epistemological and pedagogical praxis based on reflection and action for social transformation, a belief that has permeated peace education approaches worldwide (Gill & Niens, 2014; Trifonas & Wright, 2014).

This thesis engages with issues pertaining to dialogue's role in post-conflict settings by exploring dialogue at the micro-level. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how dialogue processes occur and how actors view their own participation in relation to personal, community and societal outcomes. To do so, I investigate what have been characterized as 'street discussion spaces' in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>2</sup> These spaces emerged during the political crises that gripped the country from the early 1990s until 2011 and provided sites to discuss current affairs and seek up-to-date information (Arnaut, 2008; Atchoua, 2008, 2016; Bahi, 2003, 2013; Cutolo & Banégas, 2012; Cutolo, 2012; Koffi & Silué, 2012). These discussion spaces and their

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<sup>2</sup> Street parliaments (*parlements de rue*), street discussion spaces (*espaces de discussion de rue*) and free speech spaces (*espaces de libre expression*) have all been used to describe the broader grouping of *parlements*, *agoras*, *Sorbonnes* and *grins*. I employ 'street discussion spaces' (*espaces de discussion de rue*) as it is fairly neutral, descriptive and used in a range of French-language articles and theses.

forms of dialogue mirrored the nation's political divisions: those in favour of then President Laurent Gbagbo resembled a type of 'street parliament' called *agoras* or *parlements* and perpetuated a highly nationalistic and anti-colonialist discourse (Banégas & Marshall-Fratani, 2007; Banégas, 2007; Cutolo, 2012, 2014; Konaté, 2003) and those in favour of opposition leader Alassane Ouattara took the form of smaller, traditional discussion groups called *grins* that generally brought together Muslim and 'Northern' Ivoirians,<sup>3</sup> or *nordistes*, whose citizenship and rights had come under attack (Atchoua, 2016; Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012). The act of dialogue in these spaces highlight the abovementioned tensions surrounding dialogue: they represent a unique form of civic engagement which some have likened to an African embodiment of Habermasian public space (Banégas, Brisset-Foucault, & Cutolo, 2012; Konaté, 2003), yet they also reinforced social divisions and in some cases became propaganda machines for xenophobic discourse (Bahi, 2013; Koffi and Silué, 2012). This research examines the spaces in the current environment of peacebuilding and reconciliation when dialogue has been suggested by the government, religious leaders (Mben & Loua, 2012) and international organizations (Interpeace, 2015) as the pathway to sustainable peace, yet little research or engagement with these groups has occurred. These discussion spaces also highlight the need to understand dialogue not only in terms of opposing sides speaking to each other but looks deeply into the meanings of dialogue in two distinct environments and how these meanings of dialogue reflect broader societal structures.

The remainder of this introductory chapter will present the rationale for this research through four main areas: the need for detailed, qualitative research on street discussion spaces in Côte d'Ivoire and the importance of bridging micro and macro level issues in dialogue studies; the interlinking concepts of violence, dialogue and peace and the contributions of an exploration of humanising dialogue; and the role of non-formal learning in creating spaces

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<sup>3</sup> Following the former President Felix Houphouët Boigny's 1985 decree for the country to be universally referred to in French as *Côte d'Ivoire*, as opposed to *Ivory Coast*, I use the adjective Ivoirian as opposed to Ivorian sometimes found in Anglophone literature.

for dialogue for peace. Lastly my own personal rationale and connection to this study are discussed. I then present the research aims and questions and subsequently provide a brief breakdown of the chapters of this thesis.

### **The Ivoirian Context and the Importance of ‘Everyday Life’**

The first rationale for this research originates from the need to understand the evolution of street discussion spaces at this critical juncture. While several Ivoirian and European authors took an interest in these spaces before the 2010-2011 post-electoral violence (see Chapter 3), only one empirical study by Sarah Vincourt and Souleymane Kouyaté (2012) has been conducted since 2011 and this solely investigates pro-Ouattara *grins*. Of the existing research on discussion spaces, Arnaut (2008), Atchoua (2008, 2016), (Cutolo, 2012,) Silué (2012), Koffi and Silué (2012), Banégas *et al* (2012), Banégas (2006) and Matlon (2014) have collected excellent interviews and speeches derived primarily from leaders or head speakers (orators) of the *agoras*, as opposed to spectators and more passive participants. Atchoua (2008), who provides a highly descriptive account of both *agoras* and *grins*, did not have full access to *grins* due to the sensitive political situation during the time he undertook his fieldwork and thus focuses more on *agoras*. In contrast, the qualitative research design of this thesis, which focuses on participants’ perspectives on dialogue, along with over 100 hours of observation in dialogue spaces, provides an in-depth account of dialogue and fills a distinct gap in research on the topic and how politics and the peacetime environment have impacted upon the spaces’ structures and aims.

In doing so, I highlight the concept of dialogue in ‘the practice of everyday life’ (Certeau, 1984) to explore how micro-level occurrences relate to events at the macro-level (Lefebvre, 1991). Analysis of the micro level enables observation of ‘everyday life’ and the ways in which individuals use ‘tactics’ to navigate and reinvent structures and ‘strategies’ imposed from macro level institutions (Certeau, 1984). I argue that dialogue and communication constitute an important tactic for Ivoirians; discussion spaces allowed for Ivoirians to reinvent political structures and to ‘vernacularise’ political discourse

(Anderson, 2006; Michelutti, 2008) and consequently render themselves powerful actors in the midst of chaotic and harrowing times (Cutolo, 2012; Arnaut, 2008). Understanding how local actors attempt to modify, contest or work within macro level contexts helps to unpick the assumption that dialogue generates change at a personal level which eventually impacts upon broader intergroup relations and societal structures. This qualitative, ethnographically informed approach also addresses the need for micro level research in post-conflict settings (Björkdahl, 2012; Björkdahl and Högländ, 2013; Fetherston, 2000; Finkel & Straus, 2012) and particularly on peace (Sponsel & Gregor, 1994).

In addition, this research complements studies that highlight the importance of micro-level dialogue in post-conflict African contexts, such as the Gacaca courts of Rwanda (Clark, P. 2010; Clark, J., 2010; Musoni, 2007; Stover & Weinstein, 2004), the Baraza community peace courts in the Congo (Poole, 2014) and the community-based approach to truth telling in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Wilson, 2001; Young, 2004). These efforts have demonstrated mixed results in terms of instauration of peace and prevention of violence, as well as creating an open environment of truth and healing. Unlike the above studies, this research focuses on grassroots spaces not yet considered for intentional use of dialogue and peacebuilding and thus provides valuable knowledge that could inform the creation of future national or institutionalised dialogue strategies in Côte d'Ivoire and beyond.

Furthermore, this research is relevant for conflict situations in its reconceptualization of dialogue, looking beyond intergroup contact or agreement-reaching so often found in literature and practice by examining the value of dialogue for participants intrinsically as well as extrinsically and by considering other personal, communal and societal benefits gained.

### **Dialogue as a Pathway to Peace**

As previously discussed, dialogue for peace can take on a number of meanings. In some settings, dialogue refers to political and governmental negotiations, such as the strategy of direct dialogue between two or more

political actors [e.g. the 2007 dialogues between Laurent Gbagbo and Guillaume Soro, mediated by Blaise Compaoré]. Commonly associated with liberal approaches to peacebuilding (Jabri, 2013), these dialogues often result in power-sharing or a settlement on terms at a macro political level and is often brokered by regional and international parties. On the other hand, community dialogue, interreligious dialogue, intergroup dialogue and other platforms to bring together differing groups as a way of promoting healing and changing perceptions of others is often promoted and can be observed especially in Palestine, Israel and the United States. In Northern Ireland, single-group dialogue has also been used as a way for groups to come to a consensus, as meeting with opponents was not yet viable (Church, Visser, & Johnson, 2002; Hughes & Donnelly, 1998). Some peace processes, such as in Burundi, Mauritania and Iraq have attempted to bring together a broad group of actors from government, civil society and religious groups to discuss problems and find solutions, perhaps in an attempt to combine both approaches (Timpson, Ndura, & Bangayimbaga, 2014; UNDP, 2009). However, the type of dialogue promoted depends on the context of violence and the possible pathways to achieving peace in each distinct case and the nature of peace and dialogue is inherently connected to the concepts of violence and conflict. In any case, peacebuilding must consider the relationships of local actors and community realities that impact upon how top-down peacebuilding is implemented (Stroschein, 2013).

Tensions of micro and macro are especially prevalent in research pertaining to dialogue, as the value of dialogue in conflict settings, and in education, lies in the belief that encounters at the micro level eventually effect change on the macro level. However, Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) explain that approaches to peacebuilding are generally focused on either the macro or the micro i.e. contact-based approaches derived from Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis' that focus on individual and group relationships (e.g. Steinberg and Bar-On, 2011; Yeakley, 1998) or deliberative approaches that focus on negotiations at a governmental and societal level (e.g. Young, 2011; Habermas, 1984; Björkdahl, 2012). While hybridity and the complex interplay

between local and international actors in peacebuilding contexts have been discussed (Mac Ginty, 2011; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013; Stroschein, 2012, 2013), a greater understanding of the connections between these local and global actions, particularly relating to dialogic action, are required. In particular, a better understanding of how the micro impacts of dialogue effect macro change are needed. This thesis explores the concept of humanising dialogue, found in the works of Martin Buber and Paulo Freire, as one means of linking the micro and macro views of peace and transformation. In particular, the importance of 'I-Thou' in Buber's work and 'conscientisation' in Freire's writings emphasise this shift from interpersonal dialogue to societal change. While Buber and Freire did not explicitly guide the data collection and research design of this thesis, they emerged as key theories during the data collection and analysis phases. Elaborating on Freire and Buber's concepts of humanising dialogue contributes to knowledge and constitute a unique aspect of this research: while Buber deeply influenced Freire, and is even cited in his influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), the two have seldom been explored together and a joint reading can address inconsistencies and critiques of their works and offer new perspectives on the meaning of social change, liberation and humanisation. In particular, Buber's non-dichotomised approach to dialogue and two-fold epistemological and ontological stances, derived perhaps from his lived experiences in violent conflict and divided societies, help to reframe Freire's work within fragmented post-conflict settings. On the other hand, Freire's more nuanced expressions of power and more developed pedagogical models give structure and applicability to Buber's ideas within contemporary settings. Chapter Two provides a more detailed description of both of their work.

### **A Note on Peace and Violence in Relation to Dialogue**

Peace has widely been accepted as 'a dynamic social construct' (Lederach, 1997, p. 20) without a singular form or meaning (see also Morris, 2000). However, in a large body of literature relating to peace, conflict and development, the use of Johan Galtung's (1976) concepts of positive and

negative peace and Lederach's (1995, 1997, 2003) notion of conflict transformation are prominent. In addition, Galtung (1976) sets forth the concepts of 'positive peace' and 'negative peace': positive peace is a setting with intergroup cooperation, justice and restoration of human rights and dignity whereas negative peace is merely the absence of organized, collective violence. In his later work, Galtung (2011, p. 6) states that 'the formula for peace is always equality, equity, and mutual respect' and occurs through the elimination of physical and structural violence. Galtung's concept of structural violence reflects those of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) in its inclusive of oppressive institutions and means in which individuals internalise norms. Galtung (1976) also observes three ways in which peace is achieved: *peacekeeping*, *peacemaking* and *peacebuilding*. *Peacekeeping* relates to negative peace and is reactive to violence, is non-dialogic and concerns halting or preventing future violence. *Peacemaking* is concerned with reaction to violence but also attempts to set forth possibilities for dialogue (Cremin & Guilherme, 2015). *Peacebuilding* embodies positive peace and requires active elimination of injustices and is proactive and preventative instead of reactive. Cremin and Guilherme (2015) also point out how the progression from peacekeeping to peacebuilding requires an epistemic shift of I-It relationships to I-Thou relationships and highlight the connection between positive peace and dialogue. However, the UN has appropriated 'peacebuilding' in ways that no longer reflect Galtung's original premises and thus care must be examined when evaluating such programmes (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013).

Finally, I draw out differences in the terms 'violence' and 'conflict' as both are used throughout this thesis. A conflict is often categorised or classified by number of deaths per annum and focuses primarily on physical violence, as opposed to structural or cultural.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when I describe Côte d'Ivoire as a post-conflict context, I refer primarily to the ceasing of armed conflict and do not make any claims about the presence of positive peace or justice, which various organisations (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2015; Lopes, 2015) have

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<sup>4</sup> The Uppsala Armed Conflict Database defines armed conflict as 25-battle related deaths per year over the incompatibilities between or within states.

observed a lack of in the country. Perceptions of injustice were frequently echoed in interviews and observations (See Chapter Eight). While this study does not measure levels of violence in a society or study direct links between violence and dialogue, it is important to consider the concept of violence within a discussion of peace, especially as this study pertains to participants' own perceptions of the phenomena.

Although Alassane Ouattara was peacefully re-elected on October 25, 2015, the lingering feelings of injustice and structural violence provide an important rationale for this research and also illuminate the challenges and need for dialogue in countries emerging from violent situations. For example, the low voter participation in recent elections and widespread boycotting of elections by the opposition party represents a common resistance tool in Côte d'Ivoire and previously have instigated protest and rebellion (McGovern, 2011) and thus the victory should be celebrated cautiously. Laurent Gbagbo's trial at the ICC, which began January, 28 2016, may awaken dormant tensions. Chapters Five - Eight also explores how perceived negative peace motivated many participants to attend and that positive peace was a desired outcome of participation.

### **Dialogue, Non-formal Learning and Peace**

This research fills a gap on research on learning peace in non-formal settings; studies on peace education programmes generally concern formal settings (Bajaj, 2008; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Davies, 2004; Leach & Dunne, 2007; Salomon & Nevo, 2002) though non-formal education has also been identified as an important site of education in conflict and post-conflict zones (Burde, 2014; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Morgan & Guilherme, 2014). As commonly conceptualised, non-formal learning or education refers to organised and intentional events that occur outside of structured schools whereas formal education denotes structured institutions and informal education refers to unintentional learning that happens in everyday life (Carron and Carr-Hill, 1991; Rogers, 2005, 2014) Education has also featured in many peace agreements in recent years (Dupuy, 2008), perhaps as a result

of the well-studied links between education and conflict (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2011; Pherali, 2013; A. Smith & Vaux, 2003), however these generally relate to access, reconstruction and curriculum.

The importance of non-formal learning has been re-iterated in the Jomtien and Dakar Education for All goals and in UNESCO's post-2015 agenda (UNESCO, 2014, pp. 6–7) which advocates 'flexible life-long and life-wide learning opportunities through formal, non-formal and informal pathways.' However, inaction on expanding non-formal education undoubtedly highlights the complexity of the normative value of the 'right to education' and its translation into laws or policy (McCowan, 2013); while non-formal education may be recognised as valuable, the mechanisms for its implementation, especially in fragile contexts, has no legal basis. These tensions also underscore the conflation of education and schooling in policy discourse and theoretical approaches (Aikman & Dyer, 2012; Greany, 2012), masking other sites of learning such as the family (Greany, 2012) and informal networks (Epstein, 1990) and social clubs (Tsolakis, 2012), religious or ethnic communities, social movements (Kapoor, 2009) or otherwise. In post-conflict contexts in Africa and globally, where youth are left out of both formal learning opportunities (Sommers, 2015) and where educational systems have been devastated (UNESCO, 2011), learning continues as people seek information in places that are convenient and accessible and from sources that they trust or in informal spaces like football fields, religious groups or community forums.

More so, the importance of social learning has been highlighted by Lavé and Wenger (1991), Kazepides (2012), Wenger (1999), Bandura (1977) and Vygotsky (1981) amongst others. By exploring this grass-roots form of dialogue, and understanding how learning occurs and how learners view their own participation, can provide valuable information on social learning and non-formal spaces. This information comes at a critical time when global trends indicate an instrumentalisation of youth and adult education for employability (Chovanec & Benitez, 2008; Mayo, 2003; Sukarieh & Tannock,

2011; Tsolakis & McCowan, 2013). The political nature of the Ivorian street discussion spaces also recalls the importance of social movements as a site of education (Holford, 1995; Kahane & Rapoport, 1990; Kane, 2012; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; McCowan, 2003).

### **Learning Peace and Citizenship Values Outside of School**

The concept of dialogue, whether in non-formal or formal spaces, is viewed as an important component of peace education. Many peace educators including Snauwaert (2011), Reardon (2010), Bartlett (2008), Shapiro (2002, 2010), Brantmeier and Bajaj (2013) and Trifonas and Wright (2014) advocate for a critical pedagogy of peace based on Paulo Freire's pedagogy. However, the majority of work done in this area has been either in formal schools or NGO-sponsored projects.

This interest in peace education and non-formal learning is further supported by increasing interest in how youth learn citizenship values outside of school (Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009; Gert Biesta, 2013; Hoskins, Janmaat, & Villalba, 2012; Keating, 2014), yet this research focuses on European contexts and emphasises the importance of children's lives outside of school, whereas in African and post-conflict contexts, many children never enter school and even more do not complete a primary or secondary cycle (UNESCO, 2015). Inside of schools, some attempts at peace and citizenship education have been attempted such as in Botswana (Ntheetsang & Jotia, 2012), Ethiopia (Semela, Bohl, & Kleinknecht, 2013), Kenya (Wainaina, Arnot, & Chege, 2011), Côte d'Ivoire (Davis, 2013) and Zimbabwe (Matereke, 2012) although research suggests that programmes often fall short of their aims. However Cunningham (2014) argues that peace education in Uganda has played an important role in building sustainable peace and lasting change. Quaynor's (2012, p. 43) extensive literature review of citizenship education in post-conflict contexts finds that in Africa, citizenship education is concentrated in Rwanda, South Africa and Mozambique and that African classrooms are 'marked by a desire for authority,' also echoed in research by Harber (1997) and Harber and McNube (2012), indicating a lack of 'seamless enactment' between teaching

practice and curriculum (McCowan, 2011) or the failure of the school and teachers to embody the democratic elements of the taught curriculum. More so, Tlhapi's (2007, in Quaynor, 2011) research in South Africa found that students demonstrated highly democratic behaviours in the family, among friends and in community groups but not in autocratic school spaces.

### **Implications for Côte d'Ivoire: Education and Peace**

In the Ivoirian context, practising and learning democratic ideals has occurred outside of school and in particular student unions have strongly influenced students' preferences for a multiparty system and for more humane relationships with international partners (Konaté, 2003; Smith, 2011).

Furthermore, recent surveys show that Ivoirians learn more about current events from trusted family and friends than from TV, newspaper or other sources (Pham & Vinck, 2014), indicating the importance of social spaces for forming concepts of citizenship, peace and politics. The low rates of primary and secondary enrolment, along with the low rates of learning in the curricular Education for Citizenship and Human Rights Curriculum (Davis, 2013) also indicate a need to reach out to populations in an alternative way. The findings in Chapters Five - Eight indicate that participants viewed the sites as places of learning about society and how to be and do in the complex and shifting political situation.

### **Locating the Researcher: A Personal Rationale**

My personal trajectory has also led to the undertaking of research on discussion and dialogue in the Ivoirian context. As the product of a Greek father and a Jewish-American mother, I recognise that my interest in dialogue certainly arose from a life spent on what Buber would call 'the narrow ridge' between two countries, two religions, two languages and two distinct ways of being. However, my formal interest in dialogue and learning began whilst working as an English Teacher in France and in Senegal where I observed how students used the dialogic nature of the language classroom and extracurricular language clubs as a platform to discuss important social issues. This led me to think more critically about deliberative debate and the importance of group sociability for vulnerable youth (Tsolakis, 2012) as well

as different means of enacting dialogic education in non-formal learning environments (Tsolakis, 2013). My interest in Cote d'Ivoire initially began during the 2010-2011 post-electoral violence when I became aware of student unions' influence over national politics. Having lived in Senegal and travelled in other francophone West African countries, I located these unions and their related street parliaments within regional actions for democracy and justice, such as the Senegalese *Y'en A Marre* movement of 2011. When an opportunity arose in late 2013 for me to combine PhD research with a dialogue-based participatory action research project run by an international NGO in Abidjan, I began to structure my research design around this project and further investigated street discussion spaces in Abidjan. However, funding issues caused serious delays to the project's start: faced with the decision of pursuing a similar methodology with the NGO in a different country or forging my own path in Abidjan, I could not turn away from what I believed was important research concerning the role of dialogue in Ivoirian street discussion spaces. Thus the driving question to understand the role that dialogue plays in our learning and daily interactions, as well as an interest in this distinct and dynamic phenomenon, led me to conduct this study.

### **Research Aims and Research Questions**

The first aim of this research is to reflect on the theoretical concept of dialogue in post-conflict settings through the exploration of the role of street discussion spaces, participant motivations and outcomes. The second aim is to give an account of dialogue spaces in Côte d'Ivoire in the post-conflict era and to understand how modes of dialogue/discussion and participant motivations and outcomes impact upon the achievement of humanising dialogue. Finally, a third aim is to draw out implications of dialogue for education, post-conflict contexts and non-formal education on a regional and global level.

### **Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this research is: *What are the implications of dialogue in street discussion spaces for the peacebuilding process in Côte d'Ivoire?*

The primary research question is addressed through the following sub-questions:

- 1) How does literature on education and peacebuilding frame concepts of dialogue?
- 2) What are the characteristics, processes and enabling factors of dialogue within the discussion spaces?
- 3) What are participants' motivations for and outcomes of engagement in street discussion spaces?
- 4) How can these dialogues be considered as contributing to peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire?

These questions address the broader scope of the key issues in the field which have been discussed in this chapter: the importance of micro level research in post-conflict contexts, the need to understand the current nature of Ivoirian street discussion spaces, the need for an elaboration of concepts of dialogue and how dialogue relates to peace and non-formal learning.

Furthermore, the questions allow for both theoretical and empirical investigation of these issues and the unique opportunity to consider theoretical concepts of a humanising dialogue within a distinct setting. The following chapters will show how dialogue is often framed as both a 'macro' and 'micro' level event yet Freire and Buber's 'humanising' dialogue may offer a pathway to bridging these. My research findings also demonstrate that the different forms and functions of the dialogue spaces relate to how members view their own participation within the peace process and that this aspect must be considered for those working in education, dialogue and reconciliation. Furthermore, participants in both groups identified 'macro' and institutional level changes as a first step in reconciliation and dialogue and did

not necessarily view their own spaces, which in many ways continued to promote social divisions, as a direct path to peacebuilding.

### **Summary of Chapters**

Chapter One has introduced the rationale, aims and research questions and has also defined key terms and concepts. Chapters Two and Three both provide a literature review: Chapter Two explores the concept of dialogue as humanisation in the works of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber and addresses some of the tensions inherent in historicity and humanisation, especially within Freire's works. It then considers how humanising dialogue applies to learning, to peacebuilding and African contexts and to other framings of dialogue. Chapter Three provides an in-depth account of the historical background of Côte d'Ivoire and the formation of street discussion spaces, as well as a brief discussion of the meanings and approaches to dialogue found in Côte d'Ivoire and how these concepts of dialogue are enacted in the context of reconciliation. Chapter Four describes the methodological approach to the research and explains epistemological and ontological foundations of research, all of which relate to the subject of dialogue. The study's qualitative approach using ethnographic tools is influenced by the 'extended case method.' Chapters Five - Eight present the original data collected in Côte d'Ivoire on street discussion spaces. Chapter Five describes the characteristics of the spaces and Chapter Six modes of dialogue within the spaces. Chapter Seven then considers participant's motivations and personal outcomes of dialogue. Chapter Eight then describes how participants view their own participation in spaces as relating to peace and social change on a broader societal level, including barriers to transformation and peace. Chapter Nine provides a brief synthesis of findings, drawing out key implications, and indicating potential areas of future research.

## Chapter Two - Towards a Dialogue of Humanisation: Education, Justice and Peace

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### Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review of the concept of dialogue and its application in education and peacebuilding. As discussed in Chapter One, dialogue is operationalised in a number of ways in peacebuilding contexts, ranging from individual processes of psychosocial healing to national forums for political negotiation, which in and of themselves reflect beliefs about the importance of both grassroots and macro level dialogue within peace processes. However, for many pedagogues and social theorists, dialogue forms the basis of educational exchanges and a just society, and also constitutes an ontological concept of human existence.

This literature review considers prevalent approaches to dialogue in the field of conflict and peace, primarily through the lens of Deliberation and Contact Hypothesis and then focuses on the concept of humanising dialogue through a joint exploration of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber's theories of dialogue. I argue that these two theorists, through their concept of humanisation, provide a cohesive argument for dialogue in *both* education and in social transformation from conflict that contributes to this field. In addition, I draw out points of tension between Freire and Buber as well as how their perspectives can strengthen one another, particularly surrounding the concepts of humanisation and historicity. I then discuss how their humanising dialogue relates to education, to the broader field of peacebuilding and dialogue, to African humanism and to the Ivoirian street discussion spaces. By reviewing this literature, the need for a greater understanding of dialogue within peacebuilding and education is highlighted, underscoring the importance of the empirical component of this thesis. The second half of the literature, Chapter Three, gives a historical account of dialogue, politics and education in Côte d'Ivoire and gives further justification for the study.

## **Framing Dialogue**

As discussed in Chapter One, society-wide beliefs as well as academic literature often treat dialogue as an important source of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Dialogue as a point of conflict resolution stems from its communicative value, the symbolic nature of bringing two or more people together to discuss and agree upon shared values. While the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* frames dialogue as ‘a meaningful interaction and exchange between individuals... with a view to increased understanding’ (Weller, 2013, p. 5), activities and acts labelled as dialogue can often exacerbate conflict (Abu-Nimer, 2012; Elsdon-Baker, 2013). Rather, dialogue is often ‘the container’ for work in forgiveness and reconciliation but ‘cannot assure the path that will unfold’ (Tint, 2009, p. 275). This thesis approaches dialogue not as a process or container, but as a true intersubjective experience between humans which constitutes an ontology, a way of being, and an epistemology, a way of knowing.

This relationship between our human existence, learning and peace is at the core of Freire and Buber’s work but surfaces less frequently in peacebuilding contexts. Instead, dialogue is often approached as deliberation, as a political act, or as a psychosocial approach often promoted through ‘contact hypothesis’ (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), yet the links between these micro and macro levels are seldom made. Björkdahl and Höglund (2013), Mac Ginty (2011), Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) and Stroschein (2012, 2013) also argue that the local and international levels of peacebuilding are generally poorly aligned and often do not take each other into account, particularly evident in dialogue approaches. I briefly discuss these two prominent methods, Deliberation and Contact Hypothesis, as a way of situating humanising dialogue within the context of peacebuilding.

### **Deliberation**

Deliberative notions of dialogue as conflict resolution often play a major part of peace negotiations. Dialogue as deliberation is derived from liberal democratic theory (e.g. Dryzek, 2002; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1984, 1991; Rawls, 1971, 2001; Sen, 1999, 2009) and is primarily

focused on consensus building involving communities, local and national government, civil society, and, often in the case of reconciliation settings, international mediators. In deliberative democratic theories, dialogue should occur in the public sphere, ideally involving members of government, community or school leaders, or authorities with decision-making power. These theories generally claim that societies, through a process of rational, public debate, should come to important agreements about shared values and norms that should influence how a community or society is governed (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Rawls, 1972; Sen, 2004, 2009; Dryzek, 2002). In peacebuilding, examples of this can be seen in the recent National Dialogue in Sudan, Burundi's Arusha Accords (Timpson, Ndura and Bangayimbaga, 2014) and the 1990s Malian peace process (Lode, 1997) which all involved extensive stakeholder involvement. This approach to dialogue is most prevalent in liberal peacebuilding concerned more with top down processes, rational thought and linearity (Jabri, 2013).

This type of dialogue as deliberation in the context of conflict and post-conflict societies falls within what Bekerman and Zembylas (2014, p. 45) call a 'macro' perspective of conflict that focuses on "real realities," and identif[ies] the sources of conflict at the explicit, conscious level, as rationally expressed and substantiated, and as mostly instrumental in nature.' Solutions to conflict in this deliberative approach thus focus on redistribution of resources and minimising of inequalities and solving problems in a pragmatic sense. Here, the meaning of macro refers to at an institutional level, involving NGOs and the state

Critiques of deliberative democracy include questions of inclusivity, identity and voice. In particular, there is much scrutiny about the relevance of deliberation in divided societies (Benhabib, 1996, 2002) and the presumptions of equality and ability to speak out (Young, 2004). In particular, Iris Marion Young (2011, p. 38) argues that the nature of deliberative spaces, such as classrooms or courtrooms, inspire fear in some people and that deliberative spaces generally privilege 'articulateness' and educated modes of speech.

Young (2011, p. 43) also questions whether, in situations of social inequality, whether 'the idea of a common good or general interest' can exclude viewpoints and groups. However, Black (2012) reminds us that vocalising one's thoughts at a meeting is not the only way to be 'present' or participate, and shows through analysis of empirical data of several deliberative polling experiments that silent members of deliberations did not necessarily feel 'silenced' as long as they felt that they had been given the opportunity to speak. Furthermore, measuring length of speech or 'quality' of interaction may not give an accurate viewpoint on reasons why or why not a person participated and how they viewed their own participation in the meeting. This suggests that a wider view of participation, including the internal elements of dialogue, and a greater emphasis on individual motivations and outcomes, could enhance studies of dialogue.

Furthermore, the application of deliberative concepts of dialogue, especially those concerning the public sphere and civil society, are problematic in an African context. Lewis (2002, p. 577) argues that 'power in Africa has long been exercised by entities other than the state' such as corporations, Bretton Woods organisations, the UN, religious bodies and NGOs. De Sousa Santos (2012) also argues that Habermasian public sphere privileges a Eurocentric concept of the world, and thus the type of dialogue within these theories relies upon models of government and society. Thus the Gramscian concept of civil society and the 'strong state' does not necessarily correspond to weaker African states (Tester, 1992). Furthermore, the elite-citizen social structure, present in many African countries and the historical dichotomy between colonial government and traditional leadership bodies (Mamdani, 1996) can also prevent the effective implementation of deliberative forums that link local communities to the government. Despite these challenges against deliberation in Africa, it would be remiss not to mention certain deliberative decision making spaces, such as the *kogtla* in Botswana (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999), the Ashanti councils (Wiredu, 1995), or the broader notion of the 'Palaver' and the concept of the village forum for decision making (Bidima, 1997), which differ from a Eurocentric public sphere but still embrace the

notion of consensus building and consultation. Wiredu (1995) emphasises the importance of consensus. Finally questions of identity (Gamson, 1992) and emotions (Nussbaum, 2015) must be considered in these discussions of reasonableness and rationality, also reflected by Waghid (2014).

### **Contact Hypothesis**

Many local level approaches to building peace derive from a perspective of conflict resolution and intergroup dialogue, primarily influenced by Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis.' Allport (1954) claims that when adversaries or members of disparate groups meet, this interaction can reduce hostility and prejudice, but only if four baseline conditions are fulfilled: authority sanction, equal group status, common goals and intergroup cooperation. Pettigrew (1998, p. 76) later expanded on this, adding a fifth condition of 'friendship potential' or that 'the contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends.' This theory has been at the basis of conflict resolution programmes in countries such as Israel and Palestine (Maoz, 2011; Maoz, 2004; Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002), Northern Ireland (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Hughes & Donnelly, 1998), Ethiopia (Svensson & Brouneus, 2013) and also has informed the creation of intergroup dialogue programmes in US university campuses (Dessel, 2010; DeTurk, 2006; Nagda, 2006; Yeakley, 1998).

According to Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), contact hypothesis represents a 'micro model' of conflict resolution that relies upon "less real realities" or the subjective experiences of individuals. Conflict hypothesis also derives from what Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) call the 'information' model that assumes conflicts originates in misinformation about the opposite group and that rectifying information about the other group will solve the crisis. Thus as opposed to deliberation, or 'macro models,' conflict hypothesis focuses more on interpersonal understanding as a pathway to peaceful coexistence and seeks to achieve peace through reparations of social structures, channels of

communication and individual and group relationships. This represents the more 'local' approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Stroschein, 2013) and in this thesis the term 'micro' refers to these events that occur on a personal, interpersonal and community level that do not, at least on the surface, relate to macro-level institutions.

One main critique of the hypothesis is that it ignores power relationships (Maoz, 2004) and does not create space for lasting sustainable outcomes if contact occurs in an artificial space (Steinberg and Bar-on, 2002). However, Maoz (2011) emphasises that a critical examination of the types of contact and the aims of the contact, for example whether it is to work on a shared project (e.g. Kopic and Senehi, 2009), listen to one another's experiences or find points in common, impacts the extent to which contact contributes to sustainable, intergroup relations. Maoz (2011) also points out that contact hypothesis has significantly more positive results in ideal situations, such as dialogue groups on North American college campuses (e.g. Nagda, 2006; Yeakley, 1998). Hewstone and Brown (1986) also claim that while contact can change an individual's opinion about another person or perhaps small group, the likelihood of that changing the individual's prejudice against an entire social, racial or ethnic group is highly unlikely. Furthermore, Contact Hypothesis 'appears to restrict the nature and causes of racism and ethnic divisions to individual ignorance and misunderstanding,' taking responsibility away from structural inequalities, laws or other institutions (Connolly, 2010, p. 170).

### **A Third Way: The Rationale for Dialogue as Humanisation**

This chapter argues for a concept of humanising dialogue as a relevant and beneficial way of conceiving of dialogue in peacebuilding contexts and a way of negotiating a 'hybrid' peace, or 'critical peace' (Jabri, 2013) that is conscious of both micro and macro processes. On a conceptual level, conflict entails a process of dehumanisation and a breakdown of dialogue and societies seeking to build peace must reconstruct peaceful relationships and institutions. This requires a concept of dialogue that goes beyond consensus

building or resolution of immediate conflict to allow for an 'epistemic shift' of participants to build peace constructively (Cremin and Guilherme, 2015) beginning from the local and personal level and radiating outwards. For Freire (1972) and Buber (1958, 2002), dialogue constitutes the essence of being human in this world or what Freire called an 'ontological vocation' and extends beyond organised 'dialogue events' to every aspect of life. This conceptualisation of dialogue provides an ontological and epistemic foundation that can imbue peacebuilding, and education within it, with a stronger meaning of justice, freedom and humanity. Buber and Freire also emphasise the importance of dialogue in educational exchanges, both inside and out of formal schools and for both children and adults. This connection between dialogue, learning and peace is a critical component which may be lacking in other micro or macro peacebuilding theories. In this section, I outline the bases of Freire and Buber's concepts of dialogue, humanisation and education. I then engage with critiques of their work and outline five primary elements of humanising dialogue.

### **The Foundations of Martin Buber's Humanising Dialogue:**

Martin Buber presents a distinctive concept of dialogue that pertains to the 'everyday encounters of man with the world' (Diamond, 1960, p. 3). His dialogic humanism has an eclectic range of influences including Judaic theology and Hasidism (Diamond, 1960; Buber, 1948), socialist utopianism (Buber, 1949; Honeywell, 2007) existentialism (Diamond, 1960) and education (Cohen, 1979; Murphy, 1988; Morgan & Guilherme, 2014; Weinstein, 1975). Events and movements of his time profoundly influenced Buber, including Zionism, the First and Second World Wars, the persecution of Jews in Europe and the creation of Israel (Friedman, 1998, 2002; Guilherme & Morgan, 2009; Morgan & Guilherme, 2012, 2014). In education, Buber worked as a professor in Germany and headed the Jewish Office for Adult education when the Nazi regime began barring Jews from accessing public education; he continued his work in adult education as a professor and collaborator with the Israeli government in the 1950s and 1960s (Cohen, 1983). In his texts and acts, Buber can be seen as embodying dialogue towards peace in his outspoken beliefs on a bi-national Palestinian-Israeli

state. Also, some have attributed the strengthening of German-Israeli relationship in the post-World War II era to Buber's own openness to dialogue with Germany (Avnon, 1998).

At the root of Buber's humanising dialogue is the belief that humans are constructed in relation to the world and to other humans. Buber reduces these encounters, or relationships, to two primary modes: I-Thou and I-It. I-It constitutes a monological relationship grounded in experience and objects whereas I-Thou relationships represent true dialogue and are composed of mutuality and wholeness and exist only in the present moment (Buber, 1958). However, one should not view these two relationships as binary opposites but instead as a two-fold way of being in the world (Metcalf and Game, 2012): I-Thou cannot exist without I-It and humans constantly shift between I-It and I-Thou relationships with the spiritual, human and natural world. While Buber laments that moments of dialogue too rarely occur, he insists that I-It moments of experience are necessary and allow society to function. In *Between Man and Man*, Buber (2002) recognises the importance of speech in human dialogue and distinguishes between three forms of communication: technical, monologue disguised as dialogue and genuine dialogue. 'Monologue disguised as dialogue' describes situations that bear the label of dialogue without containing true mutuality and may apply to many of the 'dialogue settings' that are created for the explicit purpose of peacebuilding. Technical dialogue describes the myriad of communications that we undertake in our daily lives and genuine dialogue is a moment of I-Thou. Furthermore, Buber does recognise that the I-Thou has different shades and variations between lovers, friends, colleagues and even enemies.

Buber's dialogue occupies what he calls the 'narrow ridge' between objectivity and subjectivity, providing a 'third way' between individuality and collectivism which he viewed as community (Friedman, 1998). Dialogue and relations exist in the space *between* of two people, which he also deemed important to the notion of conflict resolution (Buber, 1988), as this *between* is occupied by the shared elements and mutuality and where divisions between the self and

other cease. These beliefs of shared community relate to Buber's lifelong interest in utopian communities (Huston, 2007) and as early as the late 1890s, he belonged to a radical group of scholars who attempted to embody their beliefs in daily life (Simon, 1996), a foreshadowing of *kibbutzim* and his later experiments in utopian ideals.

Katz (1983) claims that Buber's work implicitly upholds a Kantian thesis, highlighting Kant's 'noumenal' as a direct equivalent to Buber's 'Thou' whereas Kant's 'phenomenal' equating to Buber's 'It.' However, Perlman (1990) refutes this, claiming that while Buber's two-fold existence may derive from Kant, a point also maintained by Walters (2003), that Buber allows for knowing through relation and includes knowing of a supreme Thou or God. Walters (2003, p. 6) also states that '[w]hereas Kant's grounding is in reason, Buber's is in experience,' and that Buber is focused more on how knowledge and being are created in the everyday. Nonetheless, Kant's influence on Buber reveals itself particularly in his valuing of human life and, as Kant, to treat human as ends and not means.

Buber's concept of I-Thou extended to his beliefs about education and about the student-teacher relationship. Dialogue should be the foundation of education (Kramer, 2013) and presents an alternative to what Buber views as common approaches to education: the 'funnel' and the 'pump.' The 'funnel' represents education where students are seen as empty vessels that teachers funnel information into, similar to Freire's 'banking,' or that students can themselves generate or 'pump' out knowledge independently without a teacher guiding them. Dialogue in education, as the third way, allows for mutuality and giving and receiving of knowledge, and strikes a balance between students generating knowledge and being instructed. Critical reflection for Buber occurs when children begin to actively 'select' the world, involving 'a radical process of conversion by which objectified, impersonal meaning is converted into the realm of the personal, or the I-Thou' and such learning must take place in a culturally and historically contextual manner (Murphy, 1988, p. 104). This concept of education also reflects Buber's view

that decision-making is a unique human capacity and humanisation requires treating others as independent, responsible and capable of making decisions (Friedman, 1954; Huston, 2007). While Buber's concept of I-Thou and I-It was not exclusively developed in the context for education, Buber wrote at length about the topic and frequently connected them (Weinstein, 1975). However, he did not develop a specific pedagogy like Freire, perhaps as this could prevent acknowledging the uniqueness of each encounter.

Buber maintains an ontological historicism which Batnizky (2006) explains is primarily concerned with remaining open in the 'between' rather than a 'timeless essence. Both the past and the future do not exist in a moment of dialogue, which exists only in the infinite potential of the present (Buber, 1958), thus the future is open to infinite potential. Buber's ontology is based on human relationality, which Walters (2003) also argues makes his work compatible with postmodern feminist thought and has been used extensively by Nel Noddings in her development of a feminist ethic of caring (Noddings, 1984; Johanessen, 2000).

In describing Buber's epistemology, Perlman (1990, p. 106) claims that Buber rejects an ideal description of the I-Thou encounter. Buber (1958, p. 126) suggests that I-Thou is defined or described by 'drawing of a circle excluding everything else that is not part of the encounter' and 'when the individual goes forth to the relation, he draws a circle around his reality, as it were, to indicate, but not to grasp, his Thou.' Buber resists a distinct typology or categorisation of what I-Thou resembles. This may explain why Buber's philosophy is implicit in many peace and conflict resolution programmes but is difficult to fully operationalise. A major weakness and critique of Buber's work is its relatively non-concrete nature and his resistance to categorisation makes empirical studies based on his work difficult to execute. Furthermore, Levinas critiques in many instances the weak ethical nature of 'I' towards 'Thou' in Buber's work (Bernasconi, 2004). A better understanding of his contributions, and explicit usage, could enhance strategies for conflict resolution (Morgan and Guilherme, 2014).

### **The Foundations of Paulo Freire's Humanising Dialogue**

Paulo Freire offers a critical, humanistic form of dialogue as praxis, or a process of reflection and action. Freire (1972) derived his influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* from experiences as an adult literacy instructor in the impoverished Northeast region of Brazil where he began to relate disparities in education to the chronic oppression and destitution of the populations. However, a military dictatorship forced Freire into exile in 1964 and until the early 1980s Freire further developed his pedagogy teaching and working in diverse places such as the US, Chile, Nicaragua and Guinea-Bissau and through his work with the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Freire's work has been expanded upon by North American critical pedagogy (e.g. Macrine, McLaren and Hill, 2010; Giroux, 2005; McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007; Kincheloe, 2004; Roberts, 2000, 2003) and popular education in social movements in Latin America (Kane, 2001). Peter Rule (2011) acknowledges the significance of dialogue for Freire throughout the span of his career:

dialogue is not just a descriptive category but also an ethical, axiological and ontological one. Dialogue is something that characterizes authentic human beings and their relationships as they strive to become, as they engage in their ontological vocation of being human.

This ontological vocation of being human required a constant struggle for justice and liberation of the oppressed *and* the oppressor through constant love and hope and this struggle required a dialogic foundation of education.

Not dissimilar to Buber's 'funnel' and 'pump', Freire argued against a 'banking' education where teachers deposited knowledge into students without encouraging critical reflection on the world and relied upon non-democratic, dehumanising teacher-student models. Freire's pedagogy was focused on literacy, primarily as this problem plagued his native Northeast Brazil and other contexts where he worked. Freire argues that a liberating education must be grounded in learners' experiences; to do so, teachers, through familiarising themselves with the students' world, should create 'generative themes' based on words and issues relevant to out of school lives. The concept of the 'word' and the 'world' interlink and demonstrate Freire's belief

in literacy as the possibility of literacy creating the construction of new ontologies and epistemologies (Roberts, 2000). Then, teachers can use themes to 'codify,' using pictures and symbols to assist students in naming and recognizing concepts. This relates to Freire's belief in the importance of dialogue in education for students to name the world, as discussed below. While conceptually similar, Murphy (1988) argues that Freire's emphasis on literacy extended Buber's global reach by framing it within a distinct literacy-oriented pedagogy.

Freire observed that the educational system reflected and replicated a society-wide dehumanisation and oppression that could only be upended through a radical process of reflection and action which Freire (1972) called 'praxis.' Through this, students would become aware, or develop critical consciousness (*conscientização*) which would enable them to radically change social structures. Freire's concepts of dialogue and of revolution are born from his dialectical materialist views, founded on Marxism and Hegelian dialectic thinking. Freire also participated in a broader movement of Marxist Catholics in Latin America called Liberation Theology and his deeply religious views transcended to his concept of love and humanising relations (Darder, 2002; McClellan, 1987).

Freire himself acknowledges the impact of Buber's I-Thou on his own conceptions of dialogue and humanisation. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972, p. 135), he states:

The antialogical, dominating 'I' transforms the dominated, conquered 'thou' into a mere 'it' in Martin Buber's phraseology. The dialogical 'I', however, knows that it is precisely the 'thou' ('not-'I') which has called forth his own existence. He also knows that the 'thou' which calls forth his own existence in turn constitutes an 'I' which has in his 'I' its 'thou'. The 'I' and the 'thou' thus become, in the dialectic of these relationships, two 'thous' which become two 'Is'.

Freire's own understanding of Buber's I-Thou contributes to Freire's own concept of self and other. Love and hope also features as a central theme in

Freire's work (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1997, 1998), which is central to Buber's perspective as well (Friedman, 1988, 2002). Glass (2001) points out that hope is also important the formation of Freire's historicity, for with hope can one remake oneself in spite of oppressive historical and social circumstances that construct us.

Freire's work has undergone critiques for several aspects of his work. Some have primarily centred upon the inadequate theoretical basis of his work and his insufficiently explained combinations of somewhat opposing approaches, such as historicity and humanism (Glass, 2001; Weiler, 1996). Others have commented on the limitations of a binary view of power and oppression, especially in post-conflict settings. In war torn societies, Gur-Ze'ev (1998) claims that:

his uncritical understanding of power/knowledge relations draws him to observe the decolonization process in Africa and elsewhere (undoubtedly a progressive development in itself) as suitable contexts for a national realization of critical pedagogy.

Here, Gur Ze'ev questions how Freire approached revolutionary contexts such as Guinea-Bissau and his possible oversight of oppressive relationships that existed in post-revolutionary societies where new leadership continued oppressing marginalised classes and argues that national projects of critical pedagogy in these contexts were not adequately implemented. Weiler (1996, p. 360) also notes that Freire's work was often conducted in post-revolution societies or environments receptive to his work, whereas in Guinea-Bissau which was undergoing a revolution, 'he was forced to take direct political positions rather than put forth generalized inspirational calls' and also may represent how Freire himself encountered complexities of implementing his work in complex settings. However, Freire himself, through the span of his career, modified his beliefs and his later writings (e.g. Freire & Shor, 1987; Freire & Freire, 1998, 2007; Freire & Macedo, 1996; Freire, 1993, 1998) present evolving perspectives on struggle, power and oppression that are less

binary and more based on complex and conflict-ridden situations such as his experience in reforming São Paulo's education system.

### **Exploring the Concept of Humanisation**

Buber and Freire share the belief that dialogue lies at the basis of a meaningful human existence. The concept of dialogue as a process of becoming more fully human does not suggest that humans cease to exist if not in dialogue, rather it offers a normative sense of being in world, and proposes a goal of becoming present and more fully human. This concept is not original to Buber or Freire, and has been explored by Gadamer (2013), Bakhtin (1984), Sartre (1945/2007) and others in European philosophic traditions and relates to larger quest to understand humankind's unique role in the world and what constitutes the 'good life.' Buber and Freire, perhaps due to their lived experiences of inequality and conflict, relate this term to peace and justice and what makes a 'good life.' Furthermore, Buber and Freire explicitly link this concept to education and learning and focus more specifically on the transformational aspect of dialogue and intersubjectivity which render them more relevant.

At the basis of this concept of humanisation lies a deeper philosophical concern about the meaning of the 'human' within this broader dialogic process. While this thesis cannot fully respond to this question, it merits a brief discussion. Freire and Buber were writing during periods of time where humanity's essence was often questioned, in both existentialism and in postmodernism, and build upon longer-standing religious and philosophical debates about the nature of human life and our relations to the human, natural and spiritual worlds. For this reason, Buber devoted himself to what he called philosophical anthropology, or an understanding of human life in ways that elude words or concrete observations (Silberstein, 1989) and though Freire himself may not have applied the same label, he also devoted himself to this process. This thesis focuses on only one way of constructing what it means to be human, through the dialogic relationships that exist in the world, though other approaches could be taken.

The concept of humanisation does not only have theoretical implications for peace and dialogue but concrete and policy oriented effects. Today, international organisations including the UN and World Bank have committed to the idea of development as the attainment of individual well-being and human flourishing, including but not limited to economic growth or GDP (Alkire, 2002; Stewart, 2013), a perspective derived largely from Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum's (2000) capabilities approach. The creation of the Human Development Index and human development reports (e.g. UNDP, 2014) constitute a prime example of human development's impact in this sector. Furthermore, approaches to education and international development have benefited from a more humanistic, justice-oriented theoretical framework (Flores-Crespo, 2007; Saito, 2003; Snauwaert, 2011; Tao, 2015; Walker & Unterhalter, 2010) that inherently supports concepts of humanising dialogue. A fuller concept of dialogue as humanisation could enhance educational and peacebuilding approaches by providing new ways to consider social transformation and renewing views on relationships, daily life and rebuilding from structural and physical violence.

Building upon Bekerman and Zembylas' (2012) terms 'micro' and 'macro' perspectives of conflict, where deliberation constitutes a 'macro' perspective and conflict resolution a 'micro' perspective, I posit that dialogue as humanisation represents a hybrid perspective that can simultaneously provide a focus on individual human perspectives and critical analysis of structural and physical violence and injustice that accompany conflict. A humanistic offers a relevant framework to look for moments of true dialogue in every type of relationship and setting, including deliberative settings and conflict resolution approaches.

### **Freire and Buber Together: Contributions to a Dialogue of Humanisation**

Freire and Buber represent a compelling choice to study together: Buber influenced the works of Freire, explicitly mentioned in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), yet they are seldom discussed together. The most complete accounts are perhaps found in Morgan and Guilherme (2014) in

their discussion of dialogue, education and conflict resolution and in Noddings' (2013) chapter on Freire, Buber, dialogue and care ethic. Other brief discussions include Guilherme and Morgan (2009), Roberts (1999), Shim, (2008), Christians (2004, 2010) and Murphy (1988). However, most of these works do not provide a lengthy or detailed discussion. For example, Roberts (1999) argues that Freire gives a political meaning to I and Thou that did not exist in the original text but does not fully elaborate on Buber's influence on Freire or ways in which the two diverge or converge.

A main concern of Freire's work, and one which I propose that Buber's concepts can contribute to in order to develop a more complete concept of dialogue as humanisation, is the overtly political nature of Freire's work. Freire believed that all education was political and framed his struggles for liberation within a Marxist-class-based political struggle, though as previously discussed, this diminished in his later works. However, in global contexts, this may be constraining, and especially in conflict zones, if dialectic constructions of the world place two groups against each other or if teaching and knowledge 'take sides' (Jansen, 2009). Beckerman and Zembylas (2012, p.43) also suggest that '[k]nowledges and emotions in schools of troubled societies are forms of power, and therefore they are never neutral,' and argue that instead of focusing on oppression, educators should ask "Does this pedagogy humanize and connect people? If not, what are the consequences, and how can these consequences be alleviated?" This is a reminder that within Freire's pedagogy, the emphasis should be on humanisation and liberation of the entire society as opposed to a singular group.

Freire's dialogic pedagogy provides a unique pathway for exploring Buber's infinitely adaptable concept of dialogue within the context of peace, education and dialogue. Unlike Buber, Freire's pedagogy has gained international popularity and has been enacted in multiple forms: critical pedagogy in North America and Europe, literacy programmes such as REFLECT (Archer & Goreth, 2004; Newman, 2008) and has influenced research methodologies of Participatory Action Research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Kincheloe, 2009)

and has been argued to be the most influential pedagogical and theoretical approach to peace education (Gill & Niens, 2014; Reardon & Snauwaert, 2014). Buber's concept of dialogue, on the other hand, largely remains in the theoretical sphere or more closely aligned with peace methodologies (e.g. Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002). A link between the two can perhaps help to bridge divergent strategies on peace and education, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

### **Foundations of Dialogue as Humanisation**

The following section outlines five primary elements of dialogue as humanisation, based on Freire and Buber's work: '*I-Thou and I-It*' '*Inclusion and Democratic Listening*,' '*Naming the World*,' '*Critical Consciousness as I-Thou*,' and '*Transformation, Community and the Present Moment*.' In exploring these themes, this section seeks to reconcile points of tension within the two author's distinct visions of humanising dialogue. Read together, the two offer a more comprehensive understanding of dialogue and its applicability in peacebuilding and education.

#### **I-Thou and I-It**

The essence of humanising dialogue, for both Freire and Buber, is the relational nature of human existence and thus dialogue as authentic existence. Freire (1972, p. 63) claims that 'I cannot exist without a non-I,' essentially expressing Buber's belief that 'all real living is meeting' (Buber, 1958, p.11). For Buber, as discussed above, dialogue could only happen within the context of an I-Thou relationship and requires a mutual 'turning-to'. Dialogue is a 'necessary posture,' albeit something that can be learned and refined, and suggests that our relationships are tantamount to living and changing the world. Freire and Buber do acknowledge that *life* can exist without dialogue, but rather that meaningful human existence requires dialogue, referring to an ontological concept of dialogue also reflected supported by Sidorkin (1999) and Gadamer (2013).

Beyond a normative ontological stance, dialogue also forms an epistemological way of acquiring knowledge. Without inquiry or praxis, 'men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (Freire, 1972, p. 58). Perlman (1990) also views Buber's epistemology as constructed on the 'narrow ridge' between objectivity and subjectivity, when one is in Thou. Freire (1997) and Buber (1958) emphasise the importance of communion with the natural world as well as with humans and God. Ultimately, dialogue and meeting with the other must occur in communities and contexts in which we live and move (Buber, 2002, p. 23) and also require love and humility (Roberts, 2000).

Having established the dialogical nature of being, we then come to understand self and identity through the construction of the 'Other.' The 'Other' in humanising dialogue cannot connote the 'subaltern' (Spivak, 1988) or a diminished, objectified body, for true dialogue allows only for mutuality and wholeness (Buber, 2002) and individuals become fully human only in engaging in such I-Thou relationships where we are the 'Thou' to someone's 'I'. The human 'Other' only exists in the realm of dialogue, not in the realm of objects and experience, or I-It. Furthermore, the 'Other' is not the opposite of oneself but part of oneself, differing from a Hegelian dialectic relationship and constituting a distinctive relational state (Metcalf and Game, 2012).

Both Freire and Buber view dialogue as a state of love whereas I-It relationships and oppressive relationships are made of desire, also a primary distinction between Hegelian dialectics and dialogue (Hudson, 2010). Buber (1958) extends this to say that dialogue has 'no aim, no lust and no anticipation' and that we no longer allow our preconceived ideas or memories to shape our view of the person or object.

Buber's concept of I-Thou responds to critiques by feminists such as bell hooks (1994), Weiler (1991) and Elsworth (1989) who claim that Freire does

not allow enough space for multiple layers of identity or struggle, including feminist perspectives. While Mayo (1999) defends Freire on this point, claiming that Freire encourages everyone to confront the oppressor within and recognises that we all have layers of oppressed and oppressor identities, this may not go far enough in dealing with the complexities of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, nationality or language. Buber's concept of dialogue entails seeing and accepting all the categories that constitute a person without reducing a person to any single category or configuration of categories.

The negotiation of power relations remains a source of tension between Buber's I-Thou and Freire's praxis. Freire believes that dialogue between oppressed and oppressor cannot occur and that 'those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanising aggression' (Freire, 1972, p. 71). However, Freire in his later works, e.g. *A Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) and in his talking books such as with Ira Shor (Shor and Freire, 1987), Freire further explains these views and moves away from such a distinct dichotomy, perhaps following challenges to implementing his work in Africa (Freire, 1978) or in Brazil (Freire, 1991). On the other hand, Buber does not fully address power in his I-Thou text and does not place limits on who can engage in dialogue with whom, though he notes that I-Thou relationships are 'delivered up to limitation by our own insufficiency, and also placed under limitation by the inner laws of our life together' (Buber, 1958, p.131). Buber looks beyond individuals to society's 'inner laws,' which implies that structural inequalities limit our relationships and capabilities to engage in mutuality. This indicates that society itself constrains individuals or groups from coming together, limiting well-being and potential for human flourishing.

Freire also argues that the oppressor needs to engage in the process of liberation, differing from empowerment literature that focuses primarily on disadvantaged groups. According to Staub (2002), in situations of violence, this involvement of victims and perpetrators is also important in creating understanding and building peace. However, Buber's concept of mutuality

would again lessen the need of an oppressor-oppressed dichotomy by focusing on community as opposed to a subject-object relationship. Drawing from Freire and Buber, we can ascertain that humanising dialogue is impacted by the social structures that shape our relationships and ways of being and doing in the world. Thus we constantly negotiate power and politics when constructing ourselves in relation to others. However, in a true moment of dialogue, these categories no longer exist and relationships are based on equality and mutuality.

### **Inclusion and Democratic Listening**

Freire (1998) and Buber (1958) both argue that in dialogue, one must avoid becoming subsumed in another's thoughts, emotions or beliefs which requires a deep form of listening which Freire calls 'democratic listening' and what Buber calls 'inclusion' (Buber, 2002). Gordon (2011) indicates that Buber also uses the term 'embracing' in later works to describe the process of inclusion. This aspect sets dialogue apart from empathy where one self-annuls or excludes 'one's own concreteness' (Buber, 2002, p.115). In *Between Man and Man*, Buber (2002, p.115) describes inclusion as 'a dialogical relation', which is 'the extension of one's own concreteness' and:

Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and, third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.

Inclusion, Buber explains, is the basis of genuine conversation and a life of dialogue. It underlines the fact that through listening and being in dialogue, our own personhoods are enhanced and enriched as we expand our realm of experience (Veck, 2013). Similarly, Freire's (Freire, 1998, p. 107) concept of 'democratic listening' addresses the need to maintain one's own position in conversation:

To listen...is a permanent attitude on the part of the subject who is listening, of being open to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other. This does

not mean of course, that listening demands that the listener be “reduced” to the other, the speaker. This would not be listening, it would be self-annihilation.

Thus he also maintains that while democratic listening should involve the entire consideration of the Thou, the aim is not to subsume oneself in the other’s ideas.

One key element of humanising dialogue is that listening, or inclusion, requires full consideration of the other. In terms of education, a teacher must understand a student as a whole person and attempt to meet his or her learning needs. In dialogue in peacebuilding, conflict resolution should not demand a person to give up one’s beliefs or to change but rather to remain open to the other and understand perspectives in a ‘between’ space.

### **Naming the World**

Within Freire and Buber’s work, the concept of naming the world and hence recreating the world play essential roles in a humanising dialogue. For Freire (1972, p. 61), ‘[d]ialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world.’ In naming the world, in reading the world, the namers then have the possibility to change it. Using Buber’s I-Thou terminology, by naming the world, the namer enters into an I-Thou relationship of wholeness and understanding of various systems, and gains the ability to shed the It categories of oppression.

At first glance, it may seem that ‘naming’ things would lead into an I-It relationship and oppose Buber’s idea of dialogue, as the realm of I-Thou exists without categories and in the present moment. However, Buber places an important value on I-It relationships and does not overlook the social structures and realities, or the It categories, that define us. Humans must constantly flow between It and Thou, leading Metcalfe and Game (2012, p. 360) to argue that the primary concern is ‘whether “It” concepts are put into dialogue with concrete reality or are used as categories to master reality.’ Thus in naming the world, or in living in the realm of I-It, one must think

critically as opposed to using categorisations to continue cycles of objectification and oppression. Furthermore, this concept of 'naming' brings into play Polanyi's (1967) beliefs that value and knowledge formation often occur in a 'tacit' manner and that these fragments can be brought together to create new ideas and theories.

The importance of acknowledging the I-It relationship plays an important role in post-conflict contexts where categorisations of different groups have created tension and violence. In such cases, conflict cannot be resolved and justice cannot be fully restored without recognising or naming incidents, things or categories. For example, in Rwanda, research has shown that in spite of the government's abolition of ethnic categories, people still *feel* them and that these categories still shape their lifeworld. This type of 'sweeping under the carpet' can be detrimental (Freedman, Harvey Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman, 2008; Weinstein, Freedman, & Hughson, 2007) and potentially enable the formation of I-It relationships to occur by denying the space for the self and other to turn towards each other (Buber, 1958). In a similar way, political correctness and 'colour blindness' or the claim to no longer see race or difference can become forms of 'monologue disguised as dialogue' (Buber, 2002) by limiting individuals from naming their experiences or problems in order to change them (Fairclough, 2003). For example, Norton *et al* (2006) found that in interactions with African Americans, white Americans avoided using racial categories to attempt to appear 'colour blind,' masking problems and therefore preventing explicit challenging of unjust or oppressive actions and speech. Naming differences, or using I-It categories can provide the pathway to I-Thou dialogue by opening the opportunity to see the other and the world in wholeness and by allowing critical consciousness to develop, as discussed below. More so, in comparison to Freire's dialogue, Buber's I-Thou and I-It provide multiple ways to name and see the world, beyond the Marxist dialectical framing of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' prevalent in Freire's work.

**Critical Consciousness and I-Thou**

As previously mentioned, a humanising dialogue requires naming the world and understanding one's own surroundings. This process leads to what Freire calls *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, which constitutes one form of an I-Thou relationship. However, while Freire deems critical consciousness, along with action, as the ultimate goal of education and dialogue, Buber's broader view of humanising dialogue accepts other endpoints and results attained from full mutuality with others and with the world.

Shor (1993) points out four key characteristics of critical consciousness: power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization and self-organization/self-education. When one attains a state of critical consciousness there is a 'dynamism between critical thought and critical action' where the individual experiences a high degree of empowerment and agency (Shor, 1993, p. 31). This level of awareness in the world and analysis and rejection of social categories and power structures complements the I-Thou nature of living in the present and shedding categorisations. Buber's idea of critical reflection in education also reflects critical consciousness, although for Buber, critical reflection is an inherent act of learning and sorting information (Murphy, 1988) whereas for Freire it is the direct result of praxis, or action. This can also be related to more active concepts of critical thinking (Davies & Barnett, 2015) in the sense that critical reflection and analysis should be coupled with socially-oriented action. However, in its general use, the term 'critical thinking' does not imply the political reflection present in the use of the word 'critical' by critical theorists who interpret and expand upon Marxist economic and political ideals, as Freire and Buber most certainly did. This differs from the criticality of 'critical thinking' which describes abilities to select, interpret and synthesise information, a concept further elaborated in Chapter 7.

Buber makes more explicit in his writing the ephemeral nature of critical consciousness. While Freire expounds the necessity of constant cycles of reflection and action, and that the struggle for liberation would be made and remade through dialogue as society evolved and reinvented itself (Freire, 1972), Buber considered the challenges and even impossibility of maintaining

a state of critical consciousness at all times. Freire (1998) does acknowledge the individual challenges of listening and engaging in dialogue in his later writings, yet these obstacles lie at the heart of Buber's work. For this reason, Buber (1958, p. 16-17) theorises that humanising dialogue can only truly exist in fleeting moments and that:

this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It. It does not matter how exclusively present the Thou was in the direct relation. As soon as the relation has worked out or has been permeated with a means, the Thou becomes an object among objects. [...] Genuine contemplation is over in a short time.

Humanising dialogue is not meant to be maintained permanently, as 'full mutuality is not inherent in men's life together' (p.131), assuring the reader that mutuality or consciousness is not required in every moment. More importantly, humans must remain open to the possibility of the I-Thou and strive to accept the wholeness of God, of plants and animals and of fellow humans and remain open when others open towards us. The existence of It relationships serves an important purpose, as discussed above, in naming the world and in organising ideas and experiences, though critical reflection or consciousness should still be at play in order to ensure that these It encounters do not oppress. The ability to step back, to observe a person in the world of experience or It, also acknowledges that humans are in themselves changing constantly and that we must constantly understand these changes both in I-Thou and I-It relations. Attaining I-Thou relationships of mutuality opens people to the potential for change and for life in the present moment, another cornerstone of humanising dialogue, discussed below.

**Transformation, Community and the Present Moment:**

The attainment of critical consciousness then leads to the next aspect of humanising dialogue: transformation and the potential of the present moment. This focus on change emphasises that dialogue is not a mere discussion used to understand others' viewpoints but must have as its ultimate endpoint the transformation of society and elimination of violence and injustice. Related to this notion of transformation are two key concepts: the present moment and

community. Humanising dialogue and thus critical consciousness exist only in the here and now (Freire, 1972), as only the present offers the possibility for true change or revolution within the world and our own lives and communities. According to Buber (2002), this state of present and potential occurs within communities and is described it as a state of 'no –thingness,' not nothing, but the absences of things and of categories, as a state of infinite potential (see also Metcalfe and Game, 2012).

This emphasis on the present moment and change relates to both Freire and Buber's Marxists and utopian ideals [See Honeywell (2007) and Buber (1949) on Buber's utopianism; Irwin (2012), Schugerensky (2011) and Torres (2014) detail Freire's utopianism]. Buber's (1949) *Paths in Utopia* discusses critiques and possibilities for developing an utopian, socialist ideal built on dialogue, contributing to Susser's (1979) assertion that Buber was an 'anarcho-federalist' who believed that the enactment of dialogue in disparate communities could eventually lead to networks of cooperative unions that could jointly address societal problems. For example, Buber envisioned political and social transformation originating in small, lived experiments such as the Kibbutzim in Israel (Buber, 1949). This contrasts with Freire for whom transformation equated to a Marxian class revolution leading to the restructuring of society into a just, peaceful space. Furthermore, Freire gives more weight to structural inequalities and historical patterns of oppression than Buber.

While Freire uses Marxist terminology of the 'collective,' Buber (2002, p. 37) views true dialogue as 'community' and not 'collectivity,' explaining that 'collectivity is not a binding but a bundling together: individuals packed together, armed and equipped in common, with only as much life from man to man as will inflame the marching step' whereas community 'is the being no longer side by side but *with* one another' and, in moving towards a goal, 'a dynamic facing of, the other, a flowing from *I* to *Thou*.' Buber was critical of 'collectivity' and their 'causes' and was concerned that the constant striving for action could mask the individual, or rather one could lose ones selfhood to the

'fiery jaws of collectivism.' (2002, p. 131). He required a more humane consideration of social problems, undoubtedly arising from his own experiences in Germany and Israel (Morgan and Guilherme, 2012). This also reflects Jensen's (2009) critique of critical pedagogy in post-conflict situations because of its oppressor/oppressed dialectic and the placing of blame on certain groups. However, it should be noted that conceptual similarities exist between Freire's collective and Buber's community, and that Freire did not necessarily use the term 'collective' in the way that it has been co-opted for example in communist societies, but rather to denote solidarity in a class-based struggle (McLaren, 2000).

Despite these differences, Freire and Buber's emphasis on the present moment and on transformation embedded in communities locate them both within the realm of the prefigurative. Van de Sande (2013, p. 230) defines the prefigurative as 'a political action, practice, movement, moment or development in which certain political ideals are experimentally actualised in the "here and now," rather than hoped to be realised in a distant future.' Prefigurative politics are generally associated with anarchist and left wing social movements, most recently in the events at Tahrir Square (Van de Sande, 2013), the Chilean student movement (Chovanec & Benitez, 2008) and the Occupy movement (Butler, 2012), but also previously with feminist movements (Epstein, 1991). Buber's commitment to the present moment and his utopian vision of society firmly root him within a prefigurative tradition (Honeywell, 2007). Freire's pedagogy also contains elements of the prefigurative (Mayo, 1999), as he does not believe that revolutionary, political education should wait to be implemented from above but rather at the grassroots level in culture circles.

One recent example of attempting to form a community in line with Buber's prefigurative vision is Neve Shalom, a community inhabited by Israeli and Palestinians. Feuerverger's (2014) longitudinal ethnographic research on Neve Shalom shows people committing to live together, attend school together in bi-lingual education and work side-by-side, in spite of broader

societal or political factors. Feuerverger describes a moment which I suggest may be dialogical, in which an elderly Palestinian man speaks Arabic to a young girl, only later to learn that the girl was Israeli-Jewish. The man explains how moved he was by this and how this momentary exchange also inspired hope for peace. Feuerverger's anecdote shows the ways in which education and experimental communities can create opportunities of dialogue at a grassroots level that could potentially create *more* moments of dialogue that impact on a societal level.

Despite differences in their views on the means of restructuring society, a humanising dialogue in the eyes of Freire and Buber, relies on revolution and change from the ground up, and focuses on making changes in the here and now. These actions are the result of critical consciousness and full mutuality in communities.

### **Humanising Dialogue, Education and Peace**

A humanising dialogue manifests itself in education that values relationships, openness and learning in relation to everyday life. While Freire and Buber both study the formal school as a site of education, they also consider more broadly the meaning of 'learning', or what Andreas Kazamias (2010) terms *paideia*. They also support the type of unintentional learning that occurs in daily life, or the concept that 'all activity teaches' (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012, p. 34). This is particularly important in the context of peace education, especially in conflict contexts where formal education has ceased to function and also in which formal schools have played a role in the conflict (Pherali, 2013).

Buber and Freire provide important thoughts on humanising education within context of conflict resolution (Morgan and Guilherme, 2014), focusing on mutuality between student and teacher, the fostering of critical consciousness and the aim of transformation. Freire's conceptualisation of critical, transformative education has influenced many peace educators (e.g. Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2010; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012; Brantmeier & Bajaj, 2013; Gill & Niens, 2014; Reardon, 2010; Shapiro, 2002; Snauwaert, 2011; Trifonas

& Wright, 2014). The concept of a critical, humanising education is also found in John Galtung's (1975) own reflections on education in the essay 'Schooling and Future Society' (1974) and Galtung and Wiese's (1975) critique of the vertical, individualistic nature of formal schooling and its role in reproducing capitalistic, dehumanising relationships at odds with positive peace.

#### *Education, politics and transformation*

Buber and Freire diverge slightly in their concepts of education, politics and transformation. For Freire (1972), education is an inherently political act whereas Buber understands the objective of education to be 'bettering the world', or the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* (Cohen, 1983; Murphy, 1988). Having witnessed the German nationalist infiltration in schools and the risks of indoctrination (Guilherme and Morgan, 2012), Buber preferred a 'humanised nationalism' based on ideals of unity, not power, and felt this was essential for the development of the Jewish nation. Cohen (1983) also explains that Buber believed in a supranational form of humanism that transcended beyond borders. Buber focused less on state and more on communities and groups of communities as the pathways to changing the world, eschewing an overly nationalistic agenda (Cohen, 1983). Morgan and Guilherme (2014) demonstrate that Buber's dialogue in education was political, but not defiant, as opposed to more radical thinkers such as Fanon. Rather, they argue that Buber's dialogic education 'has clear 'political' implications... [b]y putting a stop to, or at least hindering, the objectification of the Other, dialogical education makes it difficult for prejudices, preconceptions and racism to take a grip' (p. 58). In this way, Buber's bettering the world was broad and could take many forms, perhaps more fluid than Freire's idea of political education for class revolution.

#### *Teacher-Student Roles*

Freire and Buber both felt that a teacher's role was essential both for adult and child education. However, Buber's emphasis was more on cultivating a unique relationship with each student and for the teacher to serve as a guide for the student whereas Freire emphasised more the need for both teachers and students to 'overcome the oppressive realities in the classroom, in

relation to teaching and learning (Shim, 2008, p. 530). Buber argued that full mutuality between student and teacher would be inappropriate or even detrimental to the goal of learning (Buber, 1958), a point which he also maintained in regards to patients and psychotherapists and other special relationships (Cissna & Anderson, 1998). While a teacher should fully embrace a student in his or her wholeness, a teacher should 'prevent the relation from becoming fully mutual, because, if it were to become so, it would either destroy the educative relation, for the teacher's role as a guide is undermined, or it would develop into friendship' (Morgan and Guilherme, 2014, p. 108). Humanising dialogue between students and teachers emphasises critical consciousness, motivates students to know their world and to change it, and this learning process is supported by a relationship of inclusion and love. However, Noddings (2013) claims that a tension may exist between Freire's and Buber's role of the teacher and fears a 'too rapid withdrawal of the pedagogue' (p. 97) in Freire's process of conscientisation and that the teacher may need to play a more active role in developing critical consciousness. Noddings prefers a more active educator as suggested by Buber, who 'accepts both oppressed and oppressor, urging both toward positions that can be confirmed.' However, Noddings may overlook the fact that Buber and Freire formulated their ideas with adult learners in mind (Guilherme and Morgan, 2009; Mayo, 1999), as opposed to young children, which undoubtedly contributed to a more independent concept of teacher and student than Noddings envisioned.

Freire also walks this fine line between reciprocity, in the teacher-student/student-teacher, relationship where both teacher and student are seen as active contributors of knowledge in the learning environment. Freire (in Freire and Shor, 1987, p. 91) explains that the teacher 'can never stop being an authority or having authority' though this differs from authoritarian practices in the classroom. However, authority can devolve into authoritarianism when the students' freedom is no longer respected. In Buber's view, this would occur when teachers put students into categories, make assumptions about abilities or stop seeing the student as a 'Thou.'

Buber also understood the role of a teacher as imparting moral education. Buber felt that students generally resist being 'taught,' especially moral issues, and that education requires 'a tacit agreement' between student and teacher, or that students must accept the teacher's role in imparting knowledge (Buber, 2002, p. 125). Buber (2002, p. 108) also highlights the need for trust and confidence:

for the adolescent who is frightened and disappointed by an unreliable world, confidence means the liberating insight that there is human truth, the truth of human existence. When the pupil's confidence has been won, his resistance against being educated gives way to a singular happening: he accepts the educator as a person.

Acceptance by the student of the teacher's humanity is essential and perhaps even deeper than the concept of teacher-student/student-teacher of Freire. Moral education is further benefitted by classroom climate and teaching strategies that reflect the same values he or she teaches. This concept is also found in research regarding the importance of democratic curriculum and critiques of recent attempts at democratic education (Biesta et al., 2009; Fischman & Haas, 2012) and citizenship and human rights education (McCowan, 2009, 2013). Furthermore, he recognises that the teacher represents one of many influential forces in a student's life.

Teaching concepts to adult learners also poses additional challenges in conflict-affected settings, as Bekerman and Zembylas (2012, p. 214) observe that adults, already socialized and encultured, possess stronger group identity whereas children, 'not yet fully socialized into the historical realities which gave birth to the conflict' have less strong attachment to identity. Creating dialogic moments based on the present could present less resistance than with adults who already may be more fixed in I-It relationships with the resulting from social tensions.

## **Critiques of Humanising Dialogue**

One critique of using Buber's theory of I-Thou and I-It are challenging to translate to empirical research (Sweetman, 2001) or implement in a structured programme. I-Thou's fleeting and intersubjective nature make it difficult to observe as a researcher, as dialogue could take on an infinite number of forms many of which are internal processes. Some researchers on dialogue and peace have attempted to translate a humanising dialogue into observable categories. Using Buber's concept of 'real meeting,' Steinberg and Bar-On (2002) developed a typology for discourse classification to identify different moments of dialogue, defining a 'dialogic moment' as:

sharing with others, differentiation among individuals, listening, reacting in a non-judgemental way and trying to understand the other's point of view, which leads to a moment of cognitive and affective understanding.

However, Steinberg and Bar-On (2002), through their typology, perhaps inadvertently demonstrate that I-It or monologue is easier to identify: for example, through 'ethnocentric talk', 'attack', 'opening a window' are three of the six categories of discourse that they identify in dialogue sessions between Israeli and Palestinian dialogue participants, with one category representing a true dialogic moment. More so, creating such typologies or categories of dialogue brings I-Thou into the world of It, an inherent tension of researching this topic. This also echoes Burbules' (2000) critique that research on dialogue often places a surface judgement on what the observer views as a dialogic moment and instead of the mental or emotional processes of the participant. For these reasons, the researcher should not claim to empirically prove that I-Thou exists or occurred in certain durations at certain times. From interviews and observations, however, we can judge how speaking and listening occurs, if participants describe a process of inclusion and if participants feel that their agency and views have altered through participation.

Furthermore, the inherent focus on the present and future transformation contradicts beliefs about memory and the past within theories of dialogue. Remembering and honouring the past and forgiveness (Derrida, 2001) occupy

contentious space within a theory focused on living in the present. The importance of recognition and compensation for physical and emotional losses present a real, tangible need for many groups emerging from violent conflict. Olick (1999, p. 346) posits that dealing with the past involves 'remembering both that "memory" occurs in public and private, at the tops and at the bottoms, as reminiscence and as commemoration, as personal testimony and national narrative, and that each of these forms is important.' While a focus on the present is important, strategies of dialogue, such as psychosocial approaches that encourage catharsis and conflict resolution through personal narrative and testimony, would claim that directly engaging with the past is an important part of healing. A humanising concept of dialogue does not reject remembrance but emphasises the past and social and political norms as the locus for new constructions and potentials available in the present moment. More so, in *I and Thou*, Buber (1958, p. 16) discusses the importance of feelings in dialogue in creating genuine relations, claiming that 'the man who straightforwardly hates is nearer to relation than the man without hate and love.' Dealing straightforwardly with the emotions and not sweeping feelings or tensions under the carpet facilitates genuine dialogue and understanding. Nonetheless the relationship between past and present, especially in situations where people have undergone severe trauma, must be negotiated within dialogue settings.

In a similar vein, critiques of Freire and Buber have claimed that 'humanisation' is a weak concept. In particular, Glass (2001) and Weiler (1996) argue that Freire's humanisation as an 'ontological vocation' conflicts with his Marxist historicity, because a universal vocation for humans is incompatible with the context-specific historicity of Marxism. I argue that emphasising the *dialogic* nature of human existence addresses this critique and that by encompassing the past, future and present in I-Thou, history-specific concepts do not necessarily negate a belief in the universal values of humanity. Rather, universalism and context-specific meanings can meet in the between space of the 'narrow ridge,' as I-Thou (mutuality) and I-It (experience) are not binary opposites but exist in relation. In a peacebuilding

context, whereas discussed earlier, the psychosocial elements and personal and historic knowledge of events contributes to the ability to engage in dialogue, this interplay between the past, the present and the future can contribute to a better understanding of how to create potential for peace while still respecting and acknowledging past trauma.

More so, the concept of humanising dialogue seems to require 'ideal settings' or at least the willingness of both parties to engage in meaningful and open discussion. Attempts to create dialogue in a non-idealised setting can evoke attitudes of 'distrust, exploitation, competition, or personal gain' which can taint the virtue of a dialogical exchange (Kazepides, 2010, p. 102). While these encounters could not then constitute dialogue, but rather 'monologue disguised as dialogue' (Buber, 2002), speech and discussion between groups can have detrimental effects that must be taken into consideration. On the other hand, too much emphasis on creating idealised spaces, such as in the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) or Bohm's (2004) concept of dialogue, or looking at the standards of a 'humanising dialogue' in its theoretical conceptions, may overlook other values of human relationships and encounters. Social capital, sharing and improved living between communities can pave pathways or create conditions for future dialogic moments.

Furthermore, dialogue should be process-oriented as opposed to 'ends' oriented, though idealised ends are embedded in its normative ontology. However, if as Buber suggests, dialogue cannot be planned, how does this work within the context of peacebuilding and attempting to foster dialogue? In the post-conflict, donor-driven development environment, attention should also be paid to how dialogue becomes an 'activity' or goal within projects and programmes (e.g. Interpeace, 2015). A risk arises for specific visions and versions of peace to be prioritised that may not necessarily align with humanisation. However Mayo (1999) argues that liberatory dialogic education does not need to oppose mainstream funding yet that independent sources of funding can help to ensure that the aims are upheld.

## **Revisiting Contact Hypothesis and Deliberation**

Here I consider how the concept of humanisation compares to the two other approaches introduced earlier in this chapter – Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Yeakley, 1998) and Deliberation (Björkdahl, 2012; Yordan, 2009). I argue that humanising dialogue does not refute other approaches to dialogue but can imbue them with a humanistic purpose.

### **Contact Hypothesis**

The notion of ‘contact hypothesis’ could be enriched by humanising dialogue’s focus on the present moment and can also expand the notion of contact to extend beyond opposing groups to a more holistic vision of community. Buber’s emphasis on understanding from the other’s perspective enriches contact hypothesis and conflict resolution by putting less emphasis on agreement or consensus.

Furthermore, a major critique of ‘contact hypothesis’ and other psychosocial approaches to peacebuilding is their inability to impact structural oppression and violence. Humanising dialogue, on the other hand, gives a pathway to transforming individual level change to societal level, through changes in the community and action in the here and now, through processes of critical thinking and action. Furthermore, contact hypothesis requires equal status amongst participants which is not always possible. The prefigurative notion of change and emphasis on the present moment seeks for members to meet in the ‘between’ space between I-Thou, not overlooking inequalities or historic elements of the conflict, but suspending to accept the wholeness and human nature of the other. This also shifts focus from on meetings between groups to the intersubjective experience of the encounter.

### **Deliberation**

While Freire’s democratic approaches should be not conflated with liberal democratic thought (Glass, 2001; Gur-Ze’ev, 1998; McCowan, 2006), Torres and Morrow (1998, p. 9-10) draw out several compatibilities between Habermas’ ‘critical theory’ and Freire’s ‘critical pedagogy’ – noting their similar range of influences and the fundamental perspective that ‘the formation of the human subject in the processes of communication, of dialogue. However,

Morrow and Torres (2002) and Torres and Morrow (1998) do not engage with Freire's overtly anti-capitalist agenda which contrasts against Habermas' more liberal thought (Macrine, McLaren, & Hill, 2010).

Buber (2002, p. 43) does not oppose a rationalisation of the deliberative approach but says to his opponents, "Go on with your rationalizing, but humanize the rationalizing *ratio* in yourselves. Let it introduce the living man into its purposes and calculations, him who longs to stand in a mutual relation with the world." Nussbaum's (2015) concept of political emotions and the importance of understanding decision making processes not only from rational or even reasonable perspectives but also emotional also seems to add a more dialogic aspect to the concept of deliberation. This concept was also highlighted in Gamson's (1992) foundational works on formation of political ideals which showed that people's personal relationships to injustices directly impacts how they discuss issues and consequently act upon them. Thus emotions play a more central role in the formation of political thought than is often attributed.

Often, when parties enter into deliberations with the purpose of 'peace,' this pressurises different factions to concede to certain terms. While this may constitute what Buber (2002, p. 22) calls a 'technical dialogue [...] prompted solely by the need of an objective understanding' and 'belong[ing] to the inalienable sterling quality of "modern existence,"' Buber acknowledges that even these technical dialogues can lead to genuine dialogue in 'unseemly' ways. Genuine dialogue, 'where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being' can arise from spaces of technical dialogue or also 'monologue disguised as dialogue.' The concept of humanising dialogue here does not negate these more macro level, or deliberative approaches, but encourages examining the interactions that occur within them for true moments of dialogue and also recognises that these may not constitute a final solution but part of a longer process of change and transformation.

## **Humanising Dialogue and African Humanism and Socialism**

In applying Buber and Freire's work in Côte d'Ivoire, it is important to consider how these modes of thought apply to broader philosophies of African humanism. A humanising conception of dialogue finds parallels with various African philosophy and conceptions of communal life. While a singular African view or philosophy of dialogue does not exist, commonalities in African humanism and socialism consist of interlinking beliefs 'used to underscore the values of a common African heritage and the inherent struggle left to people who were exploited by colonial powers' (Bell, 2004, p. 36). African humanism in the philosophy of *négritude* (Senghor, 1974) and Ubuntu (Letseka, 2012; Shutte, 2001), African Marxism and Socialism (Cabral, 1979; Fanon, 2008; Nkrumah, 1965; Nyerere, 1967, 1968), as well as writings on African politics and civil society (Bidima, 1997, 2014; Chabal, 2009; Igwe, 2004; Makumbe, 1998; Mamdani, 1996), philosophy (Diop, 1974; Masolo, 1994; Soyinka, 1990; Wiredu, 1995) and learning and education (Bamgbose, 1991; Mazrui, 1986; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Omolewa, 2007; Waghid, 2013). These authors have all attempted to describe and characterise elements of what it means to do and be in African contexts. Some overarching themes are the negative impact of colonialism on the African psyche and community life, the decolonising of structures and of 'the mind' (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), the importance of community in education and in governance, embracing mother tongue education and oral transfer of knowledge. Community and reciprocity (Chabal, 2009) play an important role in establishing humanising relations and authentic being, which translate to the political sphere as a 'pattern of community mindedness' and manifested itself in 'concentric communities scaled up one over the other, from the family cell to the kingdom and in which various socio-professional groups were linked up with each other by a system of reciprocal integration' (Senghor, 1974, p.270). Community based knowledge, similar to Kincheloe's (2009) democratic knowledge, is important in Africa – knowledge belongs to communities instead of individuals and 'in the African understanding life is not possible without community' (Opoku, 2011, p. 418), which includes ancestors, divinities and nature. Swanson

(2012) also argues that African epistemologies are similar in their 'circular, organic, and collectivist' natures.

In particular, the South African concept of Ubuntu parallels aspects of Freire and Buber's humanism. For Villa-Vicencio (2009, p.114) Ubuntu represents the 'the importance of human social cohesion and mutual fulfilment,' and 'suggests that the realization of one's human potential can only be achieved through interaction with other people.' This humanistic concept, while not unique to South Africa<sup>5</sup>, has been mobilised, especially in education, to reinforce reconciliation and create a new education system based on equity and justice. While Ubuntu as the foundation for an African theory of education has been challenged (Horsmethe and Enslin, 2004) for its homogenisation of South African cultures and for the fallacious assumption that an African education can and should be developed, as a general theory of humanism, it can easily be viewed as similar to Martin Buber's relational view of human life.

Despite deep-rooted concepts of humanisation, African formal education has notoriously been associated with de-humanising forms of teaching and learning. For example, Shizha (2015, p. 307) explains that traditional education in Africa was student-centred, 'mirror[ing] Freire's antididactic approach to education that enables learners to take an active role against oppression,' the colonial imposition of systems, as well as inefficient and even violent school settings in post-colonial and modern era schools have divulged from this tradition. Freire himself attempted to further develop his pedagogy in Guinea-Bissau and later in Sao Tome (Freire, 1978) and acknowledged in these processes that critical pedagogy was not something to be transposed but to be rethought and reinvented in every context. This again requires skilled and knowledgeable educators who are comfortable dealing with complex themes and who are familiar both with broader issues of justice and oppression and with local realities and cultures. However, the complications of

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the Senegalese Wolof expression 'Ñit, ñit ay garabam' roughly translates to 'Man is the remedy of man' or that our problems are solved through coexistence and that we cannot exist alone. Ubuntu is also often compared to *ujaama* in Tanzania, although *ujaama* came to take on a more socialist connotation.

language and of poorly trained teachers, or teachers who emulated oppressive actions prevented his work from truly taking hold and continue to pose a barrier in enacting these visions of humanistic dialogue in formal education.

### **Humanising Dialogue and Street Discussion Spaces in Côte d'Ivoire**

Though humanising dialogue has robust theoretical foundations, less is understood about how dialogue actually occurs in real-world settings, especially outside of contexts in which it has been designed and implemented intentionally for peacebuilding purposes. The street discussion spaces of Côte d'Ivoire provide an ideal context in which to study the concept of dialogue. Considering dialogue in everyday life, and in micro settings, allows for an examination of enabling factors: what makes moments of I-Thou possible and, conversely, what prevents I-Thou from manifesting. Furthermore, the Abidjan-based spaces provide two distinct but related contexts that lie on either side of a conflict which both have their own distinct cultures of communication. This allows for an understanding of how learning and dialogue occur in different manners and how settings impact upon the nature of the dialogue and the ways in which participants speak, learn and act.

This includes considering the potential positive impact of human contact and interaction, even if it is 'monologue disguise as dialogue' or 'technical dialogue' (Buber, 2002, p. 21). In other words, how can meeting in a group and discussing impact members, even if it does not fulfil all the qualities of a humanising relationship? Of interest here is what lies between just 'chatting' and peace or social revolution – moments that perhaps go unnoticed when focused on aims of peace and understanding. The empirical investigation of this thesis will also highlight challenges of trying to observe moments of 'genuine' dialogue in an everyday setting. For example, local strategies and ways of humanising the other, such as 'joking cousins' (O'Bannon, 2008, see also Chapter Six), mutual help, learning and participation in life cycle events such as weddings and funerals. Other aspects of Ivoirian culture, such as

greetings and introductions, also reinforce cultural codes about what it means to be human, many of which broke down during conflict situations. If researchers only examine dialogue within forums that intend to establish justice, dialogue or peace, more organic forms in everyday life events critical to the peacebuilding and post-conflict phase, may go unseen. Furthermore, these local dynamics impact upon the successful implementation of top-down initiatives from national and international actors (Mac Ginty, 2011; Stroschein, 2012)

Of interest in the Ivoirian discussion spaces is that these sites, while somewhat focused on justice and peace, do not necessarily promote peaceful relationships between two groups. In considering Buber's insistence on community, Côte d'Ivoire allows the chance to observe how different communities within one society can potentially work towards justice through single group dialogue. However, complications may arise when justice takes on two different meanings, highlighting the need for a normative definition of humanity and peace, or at least an 'overlapping consensus' on such issues (Rawls, 1987).

The nature of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, as discussed in the following section, also leads to a discussion of learning, education and humanisation. The concept of Ivoirité, or autochthonic nationality (Marshall-Fratani, 2006; Straus, 2015) pushed the country into a mode of antagonistic and dehumanising dialogue, which was reproduced and learned in street discussion spaces and schools. Buber and Freire both viewed this type of nationalism as a form of I-It, dehumanising to both parties involved. This complex case of Côte d'Ivoire, where not just one 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' existed, along with persisting accusations of 'victor's justice' common to post-conflict contexts, also provide an interesting context in which to explore Freire's and Buber's dialogic paths to peace and freedom.

## Summary

This chapter has discussed how dialogue has commonly been approached in education and peacebuilding, often in 'deliberative' approaches or in 'contact' approaches that focus on macro or micro levels respectively. I then propose a third way of conceptualising dialogue through Buber and Freire's similar but distinct concepts of dialogue, explaining how the two pedagogues strengthen each other in the concepts of humanisation and social transformation. I argue that the framing of dialogue through Buber's and Freire's work constitutes a distinct contribution to knowledge, especially in its application in peacebuilding processes.

The chapter has also discussed five core elements of dialogue as humanisation derived from Freire and Buber's work and applied them to concepts of education, dialogue in peacebuilding more broadly and the African and Ivoirian context. The nature of the I-Thou and I-It relationships and their relationship to social change and peace are highlighted, also showing the fluid nature of dialogue in constrained contexts. Finally, I argue that this discussion of dialogue is relevant to the Ivoirian context of street discussion spaces and that little research has been done with regards to analysing and understanding patterns and processes in this setting. The concept of dialogue in Cote d'Ivoire's street discussion spaces and in public discourse will be discussed in the following chapter as a continuation of this literature review. .

## Chapter Three - Côte d'Ivoire: Street Discussion Spaces and the Political Crisis

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As the second section of the literature review, this chapter explores the history of Côte d'Ivoire, and social and political movements from the colonial era until today, as a backdrop to the development of a thriving culture of dialogue in street discussion spaces. In addition to a general historical background and the detailing of the political crises from 1990-2011, a discussion on the interfaces of conflict and education, and the role of youth in the conflict precede a discussion of the rise of street discussion spaces and the type of dialogue that occurs within them. A brief discussion of the current political situation and the post-conflict status of discussion spaces follows. This chapter serves as a backdrop to the study and provides a basis for the research, showing a marked gap in knowledge of how these spaces have transformed since the crisis as well as information detailing ongoing social tensions in the country.

### **Introduction to Côte d'Ivoire**

Côte d'Ivoire is a West African country of 22 million (UNDP, 2015), with a seacoast on the Gulf of Guinea and borders with Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea and Liberia (See Appendix 1 for map). The country ranks 172 out of 187 countries on the UNDP's Human Development Index, despite being world's largest cacao producer and the second largest economy in West Africa. Between 2002 and 2011 the country was divided between the majority Muslim North and the Christian South, with a United Nations buffer in place from 2004 to 2007. After post-electoral violence in 2010, the country has known relative peace and stability and has held peaceful presidential elections in October 2015.

Since the conflict's end in 2011, the economy has expanded rapidly, with GDP growing 9% in 2014 (UNDP, 2015). However unemployment remains high and 60% of 15-35 year olds are unemployed; the conflict significantly impacted on poverty, with rates rising from 38% in 1998 to 50% in 2008 (World Bank, 2015). Today, enrolment in education remains low with primary

net enrolment at 79%, up from 61% in 2009, and a secondary gross enrolment ratio of 40% (UNESCO, 2015). Conflict-affected areas in the North have disproportionately lower enrolment rates than the rest of the country (Dabalen & Paul, 2012).

Côte d'Ivoire is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country: French is the official language and over 80 national languages are spoken, mostly belonging to four main language groups: Twa, Kru, Mande and Voltaïque, as well as an urban dialect called Nouchi which incorporates French, African languages, English and Spanish.<sup>6</sup> As discussed in the following sections, Côte d'Ivoire has also historically received immigrants from across West Africa and a quarter of the population is of foreign origin.

### **History of Côte d'Ivoire: From Colonisation to Independence and the Era of Houphouët**

Formerly a colony within French West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire gained independence in 1960, followed by 30 years of single-party rule under President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, often referred to as the father of the nation and of the *Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI, Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire). However, the seeds of current geographic and ethnic divisions were sown during the colonial era through the plantation economy and society implemented by the French (Chauveau & Dozon, 1987; Kipré, 2010). The French encouraged migration from neighbouring colonies to provide labour for plantations, a policy which continued throughout the postcolonial era and eventually became a focal point of struggles for citizenship and recognition, especially concerning land ownership in the West of the country (Kipré, 2010; McGovern, 2011). For this reason, from the 1930s onwards, questions of 'autochthony' and 'allogeny' became deeply rooted in social discourse, with the creation of bodies such as the 'Association for the Defence of the Interests of Autochthones of Côte d'Ivoire'<sup>7</sup> to protect the local population from foreign

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<sup>6</sup> Nouchi is associated with youth and emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. It has close links to the rise of Zouglou music, of which Anne Schumann (2010, 2012) has detailed. Nouchi.com also has resources on the origins and usage of the dialect.

<sup>7</sup> 'Association de Défense des Intérêts des Autochthones de Côte d'Ivoire' (ADIACI)

workers and to valorise the identities of the 'forest' people, primarily from the West who had been marginalised as a less valuable workforce (Ekanza, 2006). Ekanza (2006) argues that this newfound ethnic and regional collective consciousness prevented the emergence of other forms of collective identities, such as 'working class,' 'manual labourers' or 'Ivoirians' and privileged ethnic identity as the basis of collective groupings. This fragmented construction of civil society would undoubtedly affect political and social movements in the following decades.

### **Post-Colonial Prosperity and the Myth of the 'Ivoirian Miracle'**

Considered the 'Ivoirian Miracle', the country flourished economically during the post-independence era, largely due to Houphouët-Boigny's economic policy, the expansion of cocoa and coffee farming and a liberal immigration policy that continued to welcome labourers en masse from Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea (Kipré, 2010; Tokpa, 2006). The first two decades of independence evoke memories of prosperity, peace and social harmony for many Ivoirians today (Kessé, 2009) although research from the era reveals deep ethnic and social divisions (Ekanza, 2006; McGovern, 2011; Zolberg, 1963). For example, sub-committees within the PDCI were formed primarily by ethnicity, indicating that political unity under a single party did not necessarily equate to social solidarity or cohesion (Djié, 2011; N'da, 1999). Furthermore, questions of immigration and nationality troubled the public and led to the government's 1972 nationality code that revoked citizenship status by birth in the country and required at least one Ivoirian parent (Blion & Bredeloup, 1997).

Nonetheless, President Houphouët-Boigny, a Christian of Baoulé origin from the centre of the country, made considerable efforts to equalise differences between the marginalized, Muslim North and affluent, Christian South, and to allocate resources equally regardless of ethnicity, nationality and geographic location. However he faced his own embezzlement and corruption charges in the late 1970s and received scrutiny for his disbursement of funds from cacao and other raw materials (McGovern, 2011). Houphouët-Boigny wished to be

regarded as a leader of dialogue and peace, not only within Côte d'Ivoire but within the region, and founded the Felix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for Peace, which he later donated to UNESCO and which publishes the journal *Dialogue et Paix* (Dialogue and Peace) (Mel, 2003). However, his erratic spending and indebtedness of the country in the 1980s, along with suppression of union and opposition groups, leave him with a mixed legacy: on one hand a symbol of peace and prosperity, on the other hand, a financially irresponsible and repressive leader.<sup>8</sup>

### **Multiparty Politics, 'Ivoirité' and the Ivoirian Crisis**

While rebellions did take place, especially amongst labourers in the West of the country, no major conflicts emerged between 1960 and the early 1980s, mostly due to general prosperity and relatively equal distribution of resources to the regions by the ruling PDCI. However, the economic slump of the 1980s driven by the global drop in cocoa and coffee prices led to a discontented populace, especially when public sector salaries, including teachers and professors, were slashed (Koffi & Silué, 2012; McGovern, 2011; Proteau, 2002). This economic crash also created an unprecedented, rapid urbanisation of Abidjan and the development of a unique urban culture and identity (Touré, 1985) that would play a role in the formation of street discussion spaces, as discussed later.

Pressure from labour leaders such as future president Laurent Gbagbo,<sup>9</sup> and from international lending bodies eventually lead to the opening of the political sphere to multiparty politics in April 1990 (McGovern, 2011), at which time Gbagbo's *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI, Ivoirian Popular Front) emerged as a leading opposition party. At the time of Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993,

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<sup>8</sup> Mike McGovern (2011) outlines some of Houphouët's eccentricities, including his decision to make his hometown of Yamoussoukro the capital of the country in 1983 for which he spent billions transforming what was essentially a small, rural town into an administrative hub with six lane highways. Most notably, Houphouët commissioned the colossal Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, the world's largest church building, at a cost of \$300 million. Built from concrete and 700,000 m<sup>2</sup> of imported marble, and boasting a 38-meter lantern, the building measures taller than St. Peter's in Rome.

<sup>9</sup> Laurent Gbagbo, a prominent left-wing politician who had been previously jailed by Houphouët was viewed as a charismatic leader and drew a wide membership base especially from students, teachers and farmers from the West of the country.

many assumed that Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara, a World Bank technocrat and member of the PDCI, would complete the presidential mandate until elections in 1995. However, following a power struggle based on constitutional technicalities, Henri Konan Bédié, the President of the National Assembly, assumed the presidency and, soon after, spearheaded a movement called *Ivoirité*, an ultranationalist campaign that aimed to affirm the 'Ivoirian identity' and called for the creation of a 'more homogenous' and 'unified' society' (Bédié, 1995, p. 1)

Bédié's *Ivoirité* served deep political purposes, namely to discredit Ouattara from running for elections in 1995 by questioning his Ivoirian origins: Bédié embedded *Ivoirité* into the 1994 Electoral Code, a law requiring full Ivoirian parentage to vote or run for public office.<sup>10</sup> A Muslim and *nordiste*, Ouattara's opponents accused him of having a Burkinabè father and he was banned from running in the 1995 elections. As a political strategy, *Ivoirité* enabled politicians such as Bédié, and eventually Laurent Gbagbo, to limit political competition while still maintaining a rhetoric of democracy (Akindès, 2001; Whitaker, 2005).<sup>11</sup> At the same time, *Ivoirité* allowed Bédié to use foreigners as a scapegoat for the country's economic hardships, capitalising on widespread discontent with the country's financial situation. At one fell swoop, *Ivoirité* put into question the full citizenship rights not only of Ouattara but of 25% or more of the population and created an atmosphere of fear and exclusion of Ivoirians of foreign ancestry, as well the Dioula/Malinké ethnicity, *nordistes* who share a similar language and cultural background with many Malian and Burkinabe immigrants (Dozon, 2000; Ekanza, 2006; Tokpa, 2006). In the words of Ruth Marshall-Fratani (2006, p. 23), *Ivoirité* 'profoundly reinforced the idea of territorialized autochthony as the ground upon which citizenship should be constructed,' and created an ethnocentric discourse that some feared could devolve into genocide (Scheuer, 2001; Straus, 2015).

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<sup>10</sup> Under Houphouët's regime, only one Ivoirian parent was needed to have citizenship and voting rights.

<sup>11</sup> Piccolino points out that the electoral code was in fact so broad that it could be used to disqualify almost anyone from running for office. In the 2000 elections, 12 out of 17 candidates were disqualified and Gbagbo was the only eligible candidate from a major party.

### **Politics of Exclusion and the First Ivoirian Crisis**

In light of the increasingly exclusionary discourse within the PDCI, a group of politicians primarily from the North formed a new party called the *Rassemblement des Démocrates Républicains* (RDR – Rally of Democratic Republicans), which represented interests from the North and also marked the beginning of a movement towards political parties based on ethnicity. Though not the founder, Alassane Ouattara would later join and become the RDR's presidential candidate in the 2000 elections. In the 1990s, RDR and FPI formed the *Front Républicain* and became close allies against Bédié and his attempts to block multiparty politics and boycotted the 1995 presidential elections in which Bédié won (Varenne, 2012). However, this alliance dissolved in 1999 when a military coup led by General Robert Gueï overthrew Bédié and both the FPI and the RDR entered into a power struggle for the 2000 elections, at which time Gbagbo and the FPI began adopting the discourse of *Ivoirité* against his onetime ally (Bahi, 2013; Mitter, 2003).

In the 2000 elections, Ouattara's Ivoirian parentage was rejected and he was barred from running. Without any significant opposition, and with many pro-Ouattara, RDR voters boycotting the vote, Gbagbo easily won the presidency. However, a period of social unrest followed the 2000 elections and subsequent constitutional reforms (Arnaut, 2008), highlighting society-wide tensions not only about electoral results but about the essential question of *who* is Ivoirian. In 2002, a civil conflict erupted, generally called, the 'Ivoirian Crisis' (*la crise ivoirienne*<sup>12</sup>), instigated when a group of northern soldiers mutinied and descended on the South on September 19, 2002, contesting the legitimacy of the government, airing grievances about exclusionary *Ivoirité* and demanding re-elections (Dabalén and Paul, 2012; McGovern, 2011). They quickly took control of the North and attempted attacks on Abidjan.<sup>13</sup> The national armed forces quickly retaliated, creating a state of panic and fear

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<sup>12</sup> Most accounts of conflict in Côte d'Ivoire avoid the term 'war,' although supporters of Gbagbo are now most likely to use this term (see Chapter 8 of this thesis).

<sup>13</sup> The *Forces Nouvelles* (FN – New Forces), created in 2002, was a coalition of different militias from the North, and would be the main opposition group involved in peace negotiations until the end of the conflict.

across the country. Outbreaks of violence, along with attempts at dialogue between the two parties, occurred until the end of 2002, with little success.

Peace and reconciliation processes, controversially mediated by the French, were achieved through the Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement in 2003. However, fighting resumed again in 2004, following the attack of a French aircraft near Bouaké which was retaliated by French forces. During this time, the country remained divided between the North and South, and government services such as education essentially halted in the North (UNESCO, 2011). More than 700,000 people were internally displaced and up to 500,000 children were out of school between 2002-2004 (Dabalén and Paul, 2012).

Various accords in 2005 and 2006 sought to broker power sharing and resolve points of contention, including the affirmation of Ouattara's eligibility as a potential presidential candidate. In 2005, the RDR, PDCI and a handful of smaller parties formed an alliance called the *Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix* (RHPD – Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace) that consolidated power against Gbagbo and strengthened the chances of a victory against him in future presidential elections.<sup>14</sup> However, complicating the situation, the North under Guillaume Soro<sup>15</sup> and the *Forces Nouvelles* (FN) were far from a homogenous group and contestations about taxing and governance destabilized the northern regions (Speight, 2013) whereas disagreements about the government under Gbagbo and his concessions in the peace agreements also created rifts in the FPI.

### **The 'Second Ivoirian Crisis': 2010 Post-Electoral Violence**

The Ouagadougou peace accords of 2007, and the strategy of direct dialogue between Soro and Gbagbo gave hope for lasting peace. In these accords,

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<sup>14</sup> These shifting allegiances exemplify Ivoirian politics. Bédié, who created the concept of Ivoirité and attempted to exclude Ouattara from politics, is now his closest political ally. As journalist Leslie Varenne (2013, p. 53) comments, 'Ivoirians really forgive a lot.'

<sup>15</sup> A former president of FESCI and roommate of Charles Blé Goudé, Soro was not directly under Ouattara but leading the FN which supported Northern rights and hence the RDR.

Soro was appointed Prime Minister of Gbagbo's government and following this, the country remained relatively calm and the UN barricade dividing North and South was removed. The long-awaited presidential elections of October 31, 2010 were viewed as a pathway to lasting peace (Konaté, 2012; Atchoua, 2014, 2015). However, tensions resurfaced between pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara camps after the run-off election between the two men on December 2, 2010. According to the *Commission Electorale Indépendante* (CEI - Independent Electoral Commission), Ouattara won 54.10% of the votes while Gbagbo received 45.90% of vote, and the international community quickly accepted Ouattara as the legitimate winner. However, the *Conseil Constitutionnel* (Constitutional Council), which must also validate the results, annulled votes from some Northern regions and proclaimed Gbagbo the winner. On December 4, 2010, both candidates took the oath of office and appointed cabinets, with Ouattara recognised by the Independent Election Council and international community and Gbagbo by the Constitutional Council. Despite international and internal pressure, Gbagbo refused to step down and fighting ensued, first in Abidjan and then extending to other regions as the months progressed, with around 3,000 people killed between the elections and Gbagbo's arrest by UN forces on April 11, 2011 (Bassett & Straus, 2011; Straus, 2015). Ouattara was instated as president shortly afterwards while Gbagbo and his youth leader Blé Goudé, both charged with four counts of crimes against humanity, now await trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC), which began on January, 28 2016.<sup>16</sup> During the writing of this thesis, Côte d'Ivoire peacefully re-elected Alassane Ouattara who received nearly 85% of votes.

The complexities and origins of the Ivoirian crisis cannot be fully investigated within the scope of this thesis. Newell (2012, p. 31) argues that 'while the international media have treated this war as another example of primal ethnic opposition and religious war...ethnicity and religion remain fluid categories in urban environments, dynamic categories of urban sociality rather than age-old

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<sup>16</sup> Gbagbo's wife Simone also faces charges from the ICC however the Ivoirian government has not surrendered her. She was tried in Côte d'Ivoire in March 2010 and received a sentence of 20 years in prison.

cultural rivalries.’ Reducing the conflict to North-South or Muslim-Christian insufficiently describes the multi-layered causes of the conflict, including land ownership and struggles with postcolonial identity and modernity (Allouche & Zadi Zadi, 2013; Dozon, 2000, 2011). However, these complexities have contributed to the formation of dialogue in a range of spaces, as discussed below.

### **Non-Formal Sites of Learning: Student Unions and Social Movements**

A generation of young people who had become disempowered by the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s were at the nexus of the Ivorian conflict (Schumann, 2013). The emergence of street discussion spaces and other youth groups, and their subsequent politicisation and militarisation is attributed to economic insecurity and low levels of education which allowed for ‘political manipulation’ and ‘buying of consciousness’ of vulnerable adolescents and young adults (Atchoua, 2008, p. 175; see also Bahi, 2013). The *Fédération Estudiante de Côte d’Ivoire* (FESCI – the national students union) is the first example of this, emerging in the early 1990s, the group was at first linked to struggles for multiparty politics but then became engrossed in pro-FPI, xenophobic discourse (Smith, 2011).

In 2002, FESCI joined a union of pro-FPI youth movements, including *Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et des Patriotes* (COJEP – Panafrikan Congress of Youth and Patriots) which is often referred to as *Jeunes Patriotes* (Young Patriots). The broader allegiance, also called *Jeunes Patriotes*, was led by Charles Blé Goudé, a former FESCI president and Gbagbo’s future Youth Minister and was an alliance of various pro-FPI political groups that developed in the first two years of Gbagbo’s presidency, during which:

the cleavage between pro-FPI and pro-RDR populations continued to grow in the schools, the universities, the rural areas, and the army. The latent nationalism of the FPI became state policy and was echoed with increasingly xenophobic and

radical accents by pro-FPI youth and student groups in Abidjan.  
(Marshall-Fratani, 2006, p. 25)

The group used explicitly anti-Ouattara discourse and was in direct contact with FPI, Gbagbo's political party (Konaté, 2003; Smith, 2011). Additionally, Banégas (2006) argues that groups within the *Jeunes Patriotes* like COJEP and FESCI also framed their struggle as fighting against a colonial past and against French interference in current affairs and were fighting for a new era and a new youth identity within Ivoirian society.

While the *Jeunes Patriotes* represent the largest and perhaps most politically implicated youth group, student and youth associations throughout both the North and South organised themselves as 'self-defence committees' and controlled 'hundreds of checkpoints in and around towns under government control...in many case they equipped themselves with clubs, batons and other types of weapons' (Lefkow, 2003, p. 42). Furthermore, these 'self-defence committees,' which became the norm across the country (Banégas, 2011; Speight, 2013) may have recruited under-18 year olds who would qualify as child soldiers (Chelpi-den Hamer, 2010). Many young people were out of school, in part due to the ravaging of schools and fleeing of teachers due to conflict (UNESCO, 2011).

The presence of political activism in student unions shows possible motivations for discussion spaces that have to do with asserting one's own identity as opposed to creating peaceful relationships. They also demonstrate the importance of social movements as a site of political learning, as has been explored in settings across the world (Holford, 1995; Kane, 2012). However, the politics being learned were more of exclusion than inclusion.

### **Conceptualising Youth**

The Ivoirian context also draws out the complexity of defining or categorising 'youth.' While the UN and other agencies often define youth as 15-24, they also acknowledge that youth is a socially determined category, which in Africa also relies upon the ability of young people to secure financial security and

marital status (Sommers, 2010). In his study of discussion spaces, Atchoua (2008) calls young people from 21-30 'youth' and classifies adults as from 30-45. The plasticity of the term 'youth' is also demonstrated by leadership of so-called youth organisations: for example, 'youth' leader Blé Goudé is now in his mid-40s and many youth leaders of street discussion spaces have remained in the organisations as they transitioned from youth to adulthood.

The interface of youth, politics and conflict is important for understanding dialogue in the context of street discussion spaces. The newly empowered role of young people within the political sphere changed generational relationships that impacted how dialogue occurred within spaces and gave unprecedented power to younger voices. This valorisation of young voices by the government gave leeway for them to occupy public space and to become important transmitters of political messages, as discussed in the following section.

### **Street Discussion Spaces and the Ivoirian Crisis**

The phenomenon of street discussion spaces form the focus of this thesis' investigation and are a direct product of the conflict highlighted in the above sections. Extensive studies of these spaces, and especially their contribution to grassroots politics and the public sphere in Africa, have been carried out by various researchers of Ivoirian and European backgrounds (Arnaut, 2008; Atchoua, 2008; Bahi, 2001, 2003, 2013; Banégas et al., 2012; Banégas, 2007, 2011; Cutolo & Banégas, 2012; Koffi & Silué, 2012; Konaté, 2003; Silué, 2012; Vincourt & Kouyaté, 2012). With the exception of Vincourt and Kouyaté (2012) and Atchoua (2016), almost no investigations into the status of street discussion spaces have occurred since end of the 2011 conflict and the role of their dialogue in the era of peace and reconciliation is virtually unknown. Furthermore, researchers have paid less attention to motivations for participation and individual outcomes, as well as the consideration of the meaning of dialogue within these spaces.

While grouped under the title of 'street discussion spaces,' this umbrella term includes groups with distinct forms and social and political geneses:

*sorbonnes*, *parlements* and *agoras* in favour of Laurent Gbagbo and *grins* supporting Alassane Ouattara are both discussed in this thesis as sites of dialogue and learning in the public sphere. The following section aims to provide a historical overview of the spaces, as well as a basic description of their roles in the decade of conflict that marked Cote d'Ivoire from 2000-2011.

### ***La Sorbonne, Agoras and Parlements***

Researchers generally agree that the '*Sorbonne du Plateau*' represented the first street discussion space; located in the heart of the central business district, and surrounded by banks and government offices, the Sorbonne came alive daily at lunchtime with affordable dining options, traditional doctors and newspaper vendors (Bahi, 2001; Silué, 2012). In its inception, the Sorbonne did not have a political affiliation though spoke outwardly against the monoparty system but eventually became overtly pro-FPI and Laurent Gbagbo during the 1990s when the FPI became the symbol of hope for a 'lost generation' (Anne Schumann, 2012). When Gbagbo became president in 2000, the Sorbonne transformed from a resistance group to a pro-state group that 'existed as a socially reconstructed political form' (Kessé, 2009) and influenced political actions but also provided a place for youth to 'meet to debate the evolution of current politics' (Koffi and Silué, 2012, p. 151).

After the 2002 crisis, similar spaces began proliferating rapidly across Abidjan and the country, taking on names such as *sorbonnes*, *parlements*, *congrés*, and *agoras*. Some of the most notorious include *le Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo* (The All-Powerful Congress of Abobo), *le Parlement de Wakouboué* (the Parliament of Wakouboué), the *Espace Franc-Parler* and *Sococé* (Atchoua, 2008). *Parlements* and *agoras* regrouped hundreds and even thousands of members, sometimes with smaller break-out groups, but relied upon the orators to animate the space. In order to speak, one had to be vetted and known by the leaders of the space (Cutolo, 2012).

Politicians who recognised the influence of youth in the political sphere aided in the proliferation of discussion spaces through tacit permission to occupy

public space, as well as funding and privileged meetings and communications with those in power. For example, a 2008 news article details the visit of FPI President Affi N'Guessan to the Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo, one of largest street discussion spaces (Tayoro, 2008). At the same time, politicians increasingly approached leaders to transmit messages, garner support and eventually take part in armed combat (Banégas, 2011). Politicians also enabled the formation of national federations of *parlements*, *agoras* and their lead speakers called *orateurs* (orators), which enhanced the effective transmission of messages throughout the country. In particular, the *Fédération Nationale des Agoras et Parlements de Côte d'Ivoire* (FENAAPCI), *Fédération National des Orateurs, Parlementes, et Agoras de Côte d'Ivoire* (FENOPACI) and *Union National des Orateurs des Parlements et Agoras de Côte d'Ivoire* (UNOPACI) controlled the majority of pro-Gbagbo discussion spaces. At their height, the various associations regrouped around 300 *parlements* and *agoras* throughout the country. Cutolo (2012) explains that these different associations were encouraged by the FPI as a way to diffuse power and decrease competition. The similarity in names and function of the spaces may also demonstrate a form of mimicry which Newell (2012) says is at the core of Ivoirian youth identity and that copying from or counterfeiting is an acceptable activity.

### **Grins**

In the same period, *grins* also multiplied, attempting to fill the same role of political information and mobilisation for RDR supporters. *Grins* are generally associated with cultural practices of Northern Ivoirians and neighbouring countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea, and revolve around making tea. While largely informal and community-based, the identity politics of the 1990s and 2000s caused *grins* to become politically mobilised channels of information (Atchoua, 2008). In 2003, Bazoumana Dembélé formed the *Rassemblement des Grins de Côte d'Ivoire* (RGCI, Rally of *Grins* of Côte d'Ivoire) as a counter-movement to the national federations of *agoras*, *sorbonnes* and *parlements* (Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012). According to the president of the RGCI, Lassina Bamba (Expert Interview, 2014), as many as

18,000 *grins* exist in Côte d'Ivoire. Later, another pro-RDR space emerged which attempted to create broader discussion groups, in the manner of the *agoras*, for the RDR, called *Université de Temps Libre* (UTL - University of Free Time) (Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012); while their political orientation is the same as *grins*, their genesis and form make them a distinct category. However, apart from a brief revival in the 2015 presidential elections, UTLs no longer exist while *grins* remain as prominent as before.

Literature on *grins* generally describe them as principally attended by males, from the ages of 16 until 60 or older, and generally are grouped together either by age, proximity, affinity, profession or other commonality (Atchoua, 2008; Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012). Unlike *agoras* and *parlements*, *grins* were relatively small, with a maximum of 20 members. Due to their fears of violence or repression from the Gbagbo regime, meetings were generally not open to the public since during the Bédié and Gbagbo eras, Ivoirians of Northern background living in the capital were routinely harassed. Activities like drinking tea, wearing *boubous* (Muslim-style dress) or having a beard could provoke harassment by police, soldiers or 'self-defence committees' (Banégas, 2011; McGovern, 2011). Therefore, while the *grins* occupied the street they did so in a more exclusive manner. More detailed description of *grins* and the dialogue that occurs within them is given in Chapter Five.

### **Street Discussion Spaces: Identity and Politics**

Street discussion spaces primarily served as a site for local populations to receive up-to-date information in an increasingly uncertain environment in which the media could no longer be trusted (Atchoua, 2008). However, beyond the role of informing people, Bahi (2013) argues that discussion spaces enabled youth to form new, positive identities in the midst of difficult economic times. In the 1990s, in- and out-of-school youth occupied a low social status: violent protesting by FESCI and university students shed negative light on student culture and out-of-school youth came to symbolise the social degradation and political failures of the PDCI political regime (Proteau, 2002). Breaking from the stereotypes of unemployed, marginalized and 'good-for-nothing' (Die, 2011; Poteau, 2002), discussion spaces became

a springboard for young people to become leaders and to display their power and knowledge. Vincourt and Kouyaté (2012) also observe that speaking in *grins* related to imagined identities and the opportunity for participants to act out their dreams and aspirations, including demonstrating their knowledge and capacity to debate.

These educational and political aspirations are easily observed in the names of discussion spaces. *Agoras* and *parlements* often adopted epithets with educational connotations e.g. *l'université à ciel ouvert* (open air university), *amphitheatre à ciel ouvert* (open air lecture hall) or *faculté de sciences politiques* (faculty of political science), and the members adopted nicknames like 'professor' 'teacher', or 'dean' (Bahi, 2013; Banégas, 2007). Similarly, other spaces took names of political forums or events, such as *l'ONU* (the UN), Kléber, Marcoussis (important peace agreements of 2003), Congress, Duma or Senate. These imagined roles as educated decision makers and street politicians sometimes transformed into real political or economic power, motivating youth to 'look for recognition and status, money and consumption, employment and social seniority' (Cutolo, 2012, p. 57), status and security (Banégas et al., 2012; Djié, 2011; Silué, 2012) or simply the opportunity to 'stand up as men' and defend the country against colonialism (Banégas, 2007). The imagined identities and functions of the spaces also relate to Newell's (2012) discussion of the importance of mimesis and bluffing in urban Abidjan, and Ivoirians' pride in being able to successfully reproduce or mimic other cultures.

In addition, Bahi (2003) and Atchoua (2008) note that these discussion spaces fulfilled desires for associative life and group sociability within difficult, isolating urban settings. *Grins* in particular had cultural origins in community-based mutual help (Atchoua, 2008; Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012; See also, Chapter Six). However, this element of *grins* and *agoras* has not been fully explored in studies of the spaces, which tend to focus more on the political roles of spaces. Furthermore, the literature on street discussion spaces often tends to focus on the 'youthfulness' of members. However, this research examines the spaces 8-15 years after some initial inquiries (e.g. Atchoua,

2008; Atchoua, 2016; Bahi, 2003; Cutolo, 2010; Silué, 2012) and revisits the question of 'youth' and how members view their own age and status over the course of their long-term participation. Here, the concept of social capital and its contested place in discussions of non-Western contexts also bears relevance. While further discussed in Chapter 7, the concept of social capital not necessarily in a Bourdieusian concept of reifying inequality but rather in the role of strengthening networks so that the weaker in society can rise up is relevant. There is a strong argument for the roles of these social relationships. Davidheiser (2005) also notes the importance of 'joking cousins' and special relationships for capital in peacebuilding in terms of having unique structures. Meagher (2006) and Tanguy et al (2008) have also challenged the ability of social networks

Finally a deeper understanding of the concept of 'identity' within these spaces of political discussion is of utmost importance. Gamson (1992) for example highlights the importance of own's own identity in relating to and forming opinions about socially divisive issues, arguing that if we identify with a group against which injustice has occurred, we are more likely to speak up in favour of others, even if not personally afflicted.

### **Examining the Concept of 'Street' in Street Discussion Spaces**

The existence of discussion spaces in the public sphere has drawn scholars to these sites and invited analysis of grassroots politics, and deliberation in African settings (Bahi, 2003; Banégas et al., 2012; Cutolo & Banégas, 2012). For one, the transformation of public space by the discussion space actors is of particular interest. Bahi (2013) explains that discussion spaces generally displayed few indicators or signs distinguishable from the broader public space or street. Rather, the speakers and listeners altered sites through their presence, reflecting urban geographer Massey's (1994) argument that space is constructed through social interactions and the people, things and acts that occupy it. Djidé (2011) supports this concept when he argues that 'youth' and 'street' are inextricably bound in the Ivoirian context and that the street became transformed into an extra-statal and extra-legal space through

youth's expression of power and virility. However, this space of power eventually gained recognition and voice within the formal political sphere and became a place where youth could catapult themselves into positions of power or wealth (Cutolo, 2012). Furthermore, as Dawson (2014) describes in the context of Bulgaria and Serbia, the trajectories of participants influence how and why they decide to protest or emerge in the public sphere,

The importance of the 'street' for Ivorian youth political engagement can easily be likened to other reclamations and occupations of public space. In 2011, at the peak of the post-electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire, the street also became a stage of resistance of the Arab Spring and later in Spain's Indignant (M-15) movement, the global 'Occupy' movement, Turkey's Gezi Park occupation (Kuymulu, 2013) and the Senegalese '*Y'en a marre*' (We've had enough) movement. Referring to the Arab Spring but equally applicable to other social movements, de Souza and Lipietz (2011, p. 621) argue that through occupation, 'public spaces in a weak sense turned into public spaces in a strong sense as they turn politically *vital*.' The political uses of spaces, and the youth actors themselves, altered the meaning and value of the street itself. Yet, as a site of resistance, street-based movements also become vulnerable to attacks by police, armed forces or, in the case of Occupy (Juris, 2012), eviction which can now be seen in the demolition of the Sorbonne and police intervention in pro-FPI meetings. These global discussions of the 'street' and public space emphasise the importance of understanding the dynamics of street discussion groups, especially as they pertain to dialogue, violence and politics, especially as violence has become increasingly urbanised and 'civic' as opposed to civil (Beall, Goodfellow, & Rodgers, 2013). Social movements in African contexts take on new meanings and must be understood in contexts of civil society and resistance distinct from Europe and other regions (Tall, Pommerolle, & Cahen, 2015) and with distinct influences from religion, culture and music.

### **Beyond 'Dialogue as Deliberation': Considering Habermasian Critiques of Street Discussion Spaces**

Dialogue occurring in street discussion spaces is most often linked to Habermas' concept of the public sphere and communicative action (see for example Atchoua, 2008; Bahi, 2003; Silué, 2012). In considering the descriptions of dialogue set out in Chapter Two, street discussion spaces were of interest for the deliberative aspect of dialogue and their potential to enact political change.

However, while discussion in *agoras* and *grins* occurred in the public sphere and revolved around politics, they did not exist as perfect models of a deliberative forum or public space, as per Rawls (2001), Habermas (1984, 1987) and Sen (1999, 2009). Rather, they highlight some of the critiques of deliberative democracy and the challenges to fostering dialogue in the public sphere discussed in Chapter Two. For example, Bahi (2003, 2001) noted that although the discussion spaces generally consisted of a heated, political debate, the participants all belonged to the same party and rarely contested political leaders (see also, Atchoua, 2008). Bahi (2003) and Banégas, Brisset-Foucault and Cutolo (2012) also note that males dominated such spaces and that preference was generally given to older members, although one could also gain respect and authority based on one's oratory abilities. Finally, the clubs did not exist as a way of reconciling differences or finding consensus between disparate groups but rather advocating for the power of political parties and mono-lateral thinking, often through non-deliberative means including violence (Atchoua, 2008; Interview, Séverin Kouame, 2014). While these spaces demonstrate the strong desire for citizens to engage in political discussions and to influence decision making by political leaders, they also indicate a potential reinforcement of dehumanising relationships and perhaps 'monologue disguised as dialogue' (Buber, 2002).

Furthermore, dialogue in the discussion spaces was and continues to be heavily influenced by media, though not in the way that Habermas envisioned. Media did not necessarily replicate spheres of power nor rely on the printed press. Dialogue content was often informed by what Ivoirians call *titrologie*, or

the act of reading the newspaper headlines at a local vendor without necessarily purchasing the paper (Bahi, 2001). See Appendix 2 for photographic examples of 'titrologie' in Abidjan. Post-2002, digital media also played an important role for young people as both an organisational tool and a means of transmitting messages globally and locally; this included videos of meetings, discussions and acts of violence intended for both allies and enemies to see (Bahi, 2013; Schumann, 2015; Silué, 2012). In the 2010-2011 post-electoral violence, the hashtags #civ2010 and #civsocial became important tools in debating issues and for reporting violence, sharing security information and seeking emergency assistance (Interview, Diaby, September 2, 2014; see also Pitroipa & Olivier, 2013). Again, these tools can act in humanising ways, as a way to connect or debate, or can spread rumours that heighten tensions and contribute to conflict.

Bahi (2001, p. 161) argues, for example, that the manifestation of public space in Côte d'Ivoire differed from the Habermasian in the sense that it included the most marginalised levels of the urban population, even if only in certain neighbourhoods in Abidjan. Furthermore, the diversity of Abidjan's population and the range of participation in various forms may necessitate the consideration of a multiplicity of public spheres that can accommodate for both 'excluded groups as well as more mainstream configurations' and that allows 'shifts with the rise of new social movements, new technologies, and new spaces of public interaction' (Kellner, 2000, p. 267). Furthermore, the use of public space and the street as sites of political expression in Côte d'Ivoire challenges both the Habermasian notion of space as well as Ekeh's (1975) concept of two publics in Africa, since political action occurs beyond previously conceived notions of 'public' and 'private.' For example, traditional leadership bodies, and not only the government, controlled decision making, and action in the sphere occurred often through the poorest and most marginalised as opposed to a bourgeois class. Considering the public sphere as a series of networks and groups, such as through Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of 'assemblage' as a relational process of interaction also relate to this network. Furthermore, groups striving towards of humanising relations first within small communities and then throughout society as a

whole harkens to Buber's (1949) concept of social change occurring in small communities.

Findings on the characteristics of street discussion spaces in Chapters Five through Eight will provide the opportunity to consider dialogue in new ways and engage with concepts of humanising dialogue discussed in Chapter Two, as well as previous comparison's to Habermas' public sphere.

### **Post-2011: Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Dialogue**

Since April 2011, Alassane Ouattara has served as president, leading impressive economic regrowth as well as significant infrastructural improvements (World Bank, 2015). However since the end of the crisis, street discussion spaces have lost their prominence and in particular the number of *agoras* and *parlements* has significantly declined. This is attributed to destruction of the *Sorbonne du Plateau* on April 19, 2011, shortly after the conflict (Châtelot, 2011) with other prominent sites such as the *Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo* and *Parlement de Wakouboué* (see Appendix 3 for photographic documentation). Furthermore, many prominent FPI leaders and orators such as Idrisse Ouattara of FENAAPCI and Jean-Marie Konin of FENOPACI fled the country after Gbagbo's arrest on April 11, 2011 or were arrested, creating a leadership vacuum and climate of fear. *Grins*, on the other hand, remain relatively unchanged in number and size, but have lost their strong political tendencies (See Chapter Six and Seven).

The government has been criticized for its weak attempts at restoring justice and consolidating peace (Amnesty International, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015) and Ouattara has been accused of focusing too heavily on economic reconstruction (International Crisis Group, 2014). More so, few Ouattara supporters have been charged with crimes as opposed to more than 150 Gbagbo loyalists, raising some concerns about unequal justice processes (IRIN, 2014). The *Commission de Dialogue, Vérité et Reconciliation* (CDVR - Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission) was created shortly after the conflict and was presided by Charles Konan Bédié, a member of the PDCI who also served as prime minister to Gbagbo in a power-sharing government

from 2005-2007, also sparking concerns of a lack of neutral leadership (Lopes, 2015). The commission's work, which ended in December 2014, has received critiques from the international community for not adequately bringing about justice and for lacking clear objectives (Human Rights Watch, 2014, 2105; Lopes, 2015).

With violent flare-ups in the west in 2012 and 2013 (International Crisis Group, 2014), and fears of weapons still in circulating throughout the country, reconciliation must extend beyond political leadership to the grassroots level and address tensions surrounding citizenship, landowner rights and other divisive issues (Interpeace, 2015). For example, an uprising of the *Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (FRCI – Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire, the army composed of former FN and government fighters) and an increase in armed robberies of vehicles in the north of the country (Human Rights Watch, 2015) raise fears of instability and violence in the North. In Abidjan, the population has voiced frustration and anger with the government's failure to control urban violence perpetrated by a youth gang called *Les Microbes* or 'The Germs' who have terrorised Abobo, Yopougon and other working class areas of the city since 2011. Alain Zouzou of the *Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour la Paix* (CERAP – Centre for Research and Action for Peace; Interview, December 2014) explains that these groups, which were inspired by the violence perpetrated by FN, have failed to be policed due to tacit acceptance by the government, perhaps based on fears of reprimanding the FN who has been a supporter of the regime.

### **Meanings of Dialogue in the Ivoirian Context**

While this thesis has primarily addressed dialogue through the lens of humanisation, it is equally important to considering Ivoirian perceptions of the term. It seems that in Côte d'Ivoire, many people uphold the belief that dialogue can lead to peace, and a member of the CDVR truth commission told me that Côte d'Ivoire had intentionally included 'dialogue' in the title of their truth commission because of this strong culture of dialogue in the country. The CDVR's approach was primarily public hearings and truth telling through

investigations throughout the country (cdvr.ci) and was focused more on the cathartic nature of dialogue as a means to conflict resolution. However, this concept of dialogue also seems to be engrained in the national psyche, largely thanks to Felix Houphouët-Boigny who has created a strong association between dialogue and conflict resolution and who is credited with the quotes: '*Asseyons-nous et discutons* (Let's sit and discuss) and '*La paix n'est pas un mot, c'est un comportement*' (Peace isn't an word, it's a behaviour). Dialogue here seems to be in the vein of both conflict resolution and about a way of living or being, as a 'behaviour,' potentially indicating a type of lived experience as described by Buber (1958) and Freire (1972) (see Chapter Two).

Dialogue remains associated with Houphouët-Boigny and the media capitalises on this to portray both Gbagbo and Ouattara as peacemakers. For example a November 23, 2014 headline from a pro-Ouattara newspaper *Le Patriote* detailing his negotiations with military forces read: '*Ouattara, face à la grogne des militaires: Comme Houphouët, son arme, le dialogue.*' (Ouattara, faced with discontented soldiers: Like Houphouët, his weapon, dialogue'). Here, dialogue as a political strategy is seen as evoking the spirit of the beloved '*vieux,*' or father, Houphouët-Boigny.

Ivoirians also demonstrate a strong belief in dialogue as the path to reconciliation. Data from the 2014 Afrobarometer (2015) survey indicates a tendency towards dialogue as conflict resolution: six out of ten Ivoirians believe that national reconciliation happens through confession, forgiveness and general amnesty. However, this open dialogue may be difficult to achieve because according to Pham and Vinck's (2014) findings in a survey of 1,000 Abidjan residents, 29% of Ivoirians do not feel safe speaking openly about their experiences in the conflict. Thus while confession and forgiveness are seen as the best path to dialogue, most Ivoirians may not feel able to achieve this.

Furthermore, Pham and Vinck (2014) found that two-thirds of the population had little or no trust towards neighbours, 62% did not trust their own ethnic

group and 69% did not trust members of another ethnic group and 78% had little or no trust for members of another political party. Yet findings from Afrobarometer (2015) and Pham and Vinck's (2014) study show that Ivoirians easily live together. Unlike highly divided societies such as Northern Ireland or Israel and Palestine, Ivoirians live in close proximity to each other and have high levels of contact. More importantly, Ivoirians are open to such contact: Afrobarometer (2015) found that only 2% of Ivoirians would not want to have a neighbour of a different religion or ethnic group, and 11% of Ivoirians would not want an immigrant or foreign worker as a neighbour. Pham and Vinck (2014, p.28) feel that the survey's findings 'suggest that although people may have good day-to-day relationships with others, an underlying sense of mistrust remains.' Thus, as discussed in Chapter Two, while there are high levels of contact, these remain superficial and not focused on mutual understanding. Therefore, the contact required may need to either go beyond 'superficial' levels (Yeakley, 1998) or perhaps engage in deeper processes of humanisation and mutual understanding.

Some community-based attempts, such as Mben and Loau's (2012) dialogue project in Abobo, have attempted to bring people together, although these are often misguided: for example, Mben and Loua (2012, p. 15) hypothesised that 'people don't like each other because they don't know each other' [translated by the author], contradicting the above survey findings. Rather creating spaces where mutual understanding can flourish, as opposed to simply creating spaces of contact, should be of top priority. Furthermore, the CDVR's limited public confessions, while perhaps fulfilling the population's idea of reconciliation, did little to promote forgiveness or provide paths to move on (Lopes, 2015).

In addition to intergroup contact, one important step will be restoring dialogue and trust between the population and government. Pham and Vinck (2014) found that 79% of Abidjanais have little or no trust in local or municipal authorities and 73% have little or no trust in national authorities. They also found that at least half of the population felt that the government had unfairly treated them. This lack of faith clearly extends to government-sponsored

reconciliation and dialogue. Furthermore, we can assume that public deliberation in the post-crisis period was low: 34% of people felt able to participate in national or city-level (35%) processes, slightly more at 46% at local level. While street discussion spaces may have once played a role in enabling participation at the local level, their links to city and national politics seem diminished since the crisis. Examining ways to re-engage with these spaces could increase trust and participation in government.

The findings from Afrobarometer (2015), Pham and Vinck (2014), Lopes (2015) and Human Rights Watch (2015) all indicate that a 'negative peace' may currently be in place in Côte d'Ivoire. While open violence and conflict may have been halted since 2011, lines of dialogue, understanding and justice have yet to fully be established in society. Further understanding of how dialogue can better be established and used to construct positive peace is of utmost importance and draws out the need to better understand sites of dialogue such as street discussion spaces in their current modes of practice.

## **Summary**

This chapter has described the political and historical backdrop to the formation of Street Discussion Spaces. Then through a description of the spaces, and their role in the urban milieu, the role of dialogue, and dialogue as a form of deliberation, is discussed and challenged. Finally, through considering the current and historical approaches to dialogue within the Ivoirian context, some indications for the exploration of dialogue in current discussion spaces are made.

This chapter, along with Chapter 2, demonstrate how the research questions for this thesis have been derived by showing a need for further conceptualisation of dialogue in education and peacebuilding as well as  
The next chapter will discuss how this research setting has informed the qualitative research design and the research questions of this thesis.

## Chapter Four – Research Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, I discuss the thesis' epistemological basis and how these beliefs about the construction of knowledge have informed this study's qualitative methodology, research design, methods and data analysis. In particular I highlight how a constructivist epistemology corresponds to the theoretical foundations of this study and in particular the dialogic construction of knowledge. This epistemology is then linked to the ethnographic methods informed by the extended case method as well as other works within the fields of education and peacebuilding.

I subsequently address ethical issues and my own positionality, including the ways in which my own status as a European female influenced data collection as well as ethical concerns involving my own safety and that of participants. Issues of language and translation are also addressed. This chapter emphasises the importance of framing research within the overarching research objectives of understanding dialogue and its impact on participants and also highlights the relationship between the study of dialogue and the research methods chosen.

### **Epistemology and Dialogue**

As this thesis explores the concept of dialogue and the ways in which individuals and groups learn and form ideas through sustained interactions, I locate myself within a constructivist epistemology that emphasises the importance of social construction of knowledge. This was related to my emphasis on dialogue as well as interest on individual motivations and perceptions.

Theories of dialogue, such as those presented by Buber and Freire, also emphasise a subjectivist epistemology where 'the knower and respondent co-create understandings' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 33). Buber and Freire differ, both propose that people come to understand the world through categories and knowledge transmitted through social

relationships but that *through* these relationships people can also change their surroundings and realities.

In this research, I take a dialogic approach to knowledge, drawing from what de Sousa Santos (2002) calls 'diatopical hermeneutics,' where theories are not viewed as complete, concrete entities and that each culture, place and time has its own *topoi* that it draws from which can be used to enhance one another. This is similar to Freire's (1997, p. 92) concept of 'epistemological encircling,' a strategy of understanding something's true nature by contrasting with what it is not. In a study on dialogue, this type of epistemological bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966) is necessary to piece together information in complex situations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) and also allows for theories to be applied and understood in diverse contexts. This thesis' interest in understanding dialogue necessarily impacted my engagement with theory and the decision to allow different theories from various regions to dialogue with each other as opposed to remaining fixed in one approach or tradition, which also enabled me, through a dialogue with my own findings, to focus on both Martin Buber and Paulo Freire as theories of dialogue.

This epistemological approach inherently affects the researcher's own attitudes and stances in the field and requires acknowledgement of the many differences between my own beliefs and those of participants and collaborators. This approach leads to greater respect for indigenous knowledges (Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013), hopefully minimising Freire's (1972) concept of colonial privilege and de Sousa Santos' (2014) notion of 'epistemicide,' or the minimisation of indigenous knowledge by Western theory and theorists. This approach was essential, since many participants were aware of and angered by inequalities and the disrespect of Ivoirians and Africans by Europeans. For example, Serge, a participant in *agoras* introduced in Chapter Five, told me that Ivoirians 'want to share with everyone. But we don't like people talking crap, we don't like when people take the piss out of us. *Voilà*. Because what you know, I know.' Serge wanted to express to me that although I was European, with a university degree and with my own beliefs, this did not make me, or my knowledge, superior to local knowledge.

Validating different ways of knowing and expressing knowledge became integral to both conducting research and analysing data. For example, *agora* participants were often well versed in Marxist theory and this framed their world view and view of knowledge (more discussed in Chapter Six).

Additionally, participants often explained that being an eye-witness constituted one of the most important ways of knowing and thus also impacted upon participants' strategies for seeking information within *grins* or *agoras*. Being not only aware but able to engage with these different frames of knowledge enabled me to be a more effective researcher in a different cultural context where questions of power and inequality were at play. This epistemological stance then contributed to the choice of a qualitative research methodology and ethnographic methods, as detailed in the following sections, and to the theories presented in Chapter Two.

## **Methodology**

The research's rationale and questions, lend themselves to a qualitative, in-depth study focused on lived experiences in micro sphere settings and on observing the world in its most natural state. More so, an emphasis on dialogue required a methodology that considered the importance of my interactions with participants and that allowed an open-ended, evolving design. For this reason, I selected a qualitative methodology which relied upon on interviews and participant observation, a method allowing me to engage in dialogue with participants and to attempt to embrace their experience (Buber, 1958). As described above, the research questions deal primarily with the role of dialogue for members of discussion spaces. The questions examine the characteristics of the dialogue as well as the motivations and outcomes of participants and the potential for humanising dialogue and peace on a broader societal level. These questions, which investigate the phenomenon's structure as well as the participants' own perceptions of it, lent itself to a qualitative study. While a large-scale, quantitative study, or even a mixed-method study, could have been done with a broader survey of *grins*, it would have lost the rich description from ethnographic methods and would no longer impart valuable micro level information. Finally, as described in Chapter One, a primary rationale of this study was to provide much-needed and up-to date

information on the current state of *grins* and *agoras* and to examine participants' own views on their participation and outcomes which required attention to detail and immersion in spaces.

This methodology also responds to research needs within the domains of peace and education. Beckerman and Zembylas (2012, p. 38) claim that in research on peace education:

ethnographic thick description resonates with our complex experience....In our work we insist on the complexities of human interaction and emphasize the multiple contextual levels of analysis that need to be accounted for – i.e. micro-, mezzo-, macro-, exo.

This focus on the micro and macro, at the heart of understandings on dialogue presented in this thesis, could best be accomplished by in-depth observations, interviews and other tools described below. Similarly empirical research, as opposed to a purely theoretical study, is also required in elucidating meanings of peace (Galtung, 1996, p. 22), which entails:

the never-ending exploration of the term 'peace', checking the discourses surrounding 'peace' for over- and under-emphasis, and particularly for subjugation of discourses. We must draw upon all meanings of 'peace' in all corners of history and geography, using fully the transnational nature of peace studies.' .... theories-construction (plural) is an endless enterprise, and absolutely crucial to that spiral. Commentary, on the other hand, is less important.

Thus in this study on dialogue and peace, it is also important to gather these ground up experiences, and to use ethnographic data and local understandings to guide the construction of knowledge and theory as well as policy and practice in the field.

This research was primarily influenced by the 'extended case method,' a qualitative methodology that provides researchers the basis to expand upon theory and to connect micro events of daily life to larger, macro theoretical questions through ethnographic methods. First developed by anthropologist Gluckman (1961) of the Manchester School, the method sought to respond to

the need to link ethnographic research at the micro-level to broader theoretical questions. This approach was later brought to sociology primarily through the sociological research of Michael Burawoy at the University of California, Berkeley (1991, 1998, 2009) and Burawoy and Verdery (1999). The extended case method seeks a fine balance between theory and lived experience and emphasises the use of participant observation and other ethnographic tools. Through immersion in the field and the examination of everyday life, inconsistencies or errors within theory emerge, in which case Burawoy suggests that '[w]e begin with our favourite theory but seek not confirmation but refutations that inspire us to deepen that theory. Instead of discovering grounded theory we elaborate existing theory' (Burawoy, 1998, p. 16). Burawoy (2009) also suggests that one can consider several related theories and draw out, through the analysis, the most relevant. This methodology, first developed in former Rhodesia and used extensively in southern Africa also indicate its potential applicability within sub-Saharan African contexts. This approach to research complemented the study's objective which was to both give a descriptive account of the dialogue in *grins* or *agoras* but also to contribute to theoretical notions of dialogue through gaining an understanding of the spaces and thus naturally lead to a qualitative research design. Extended case method research has focused on issues of social justice, social movements, and violence in schools (Glaeser, 2005).

The research methodology chosen balances on the *emic* and the *etic* – drawing out information inductively but recognising the theoretical baggage that I carry as a researcher, unlike more purely inductive forms of research such as grounded theory (Tavory & Timmermans, 2009). Emic, or research taken from the perspective of the group, would be impossible as I am not an insider, yet a completely etic stance, as an outsider, would also not be appropriate, especially as I developed relationships and began participating more in *grins* and *agoras*. More so, I desired my study to have a strong link to the pursuit of social justice, human rights and equality as found in Freire's and Buber's work; a self-identified Marxist, Burawoy's (2004) emphasis on 'public sociology' and the role of the ethnographer working towards these overarching goals aided me in placing these concepts within the methodology

While my study does not take on action research or participatory action research, a methodology advocated by some critical pedagogues and Freirean scholars (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Kapoor, 2009; Kemmis, 2006; Kincheloe, 2009), a methodology that concerns itself with justice and social transformation complements the aims of the study and the notion of dialogue.

The extended case method also gave me a pathway to dealing with bias and identity in the research design (further discussed in the section on Positionality) and my decision to undertake research in a country where I was an 'outsider'. Burawoy views participant observation as a key research method but also openly encourages reflection on how the researcher changes the setting. The researcher's role therefore does not effect the validity of a study but rather supports the belief that researchers are engaged in 'data generation' as opposed to 'data collection' (Mason, 2002). This inductive approach was also appropriate given my personal relationship to the study. Entering the field with a relatively open mind was an absolute necessity, given that I had never been in Cote d'Ivoire nor observed a street discussion space apart from online videos. Furthermore, the bulk of literature written on the topic was published pre-2011 or soon after the conflict so many factors remained unknown, including access to spaces, safety and the relevance of French as a language for observations and interviews. Thus reliance on a qualitative methodology that was relatively adaptable to the realities I encountered was of utmost importance.

## **Research Design, Methods and Data Collection**

### **The Field of Study and Research Design**

Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 4) posit that all qualitative research involves:

an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

In my case, this naturalistic approach to research involved using primarily ethnographic tools: semi-structured interviews, non-participant interviews,

participant observation, non-formal observation and participatory mapping activities.

The length of time in the field lasted four months, from August to December 2014, however I was quickly immersed in Abidjan life and the two different spheres of the discussion groups. In the first two days, expert interviews began, and within two weeks I began interviews and observations with participants (See Appendix Four for a research timetable). This time period, one year before scheduled elections, captured the spaces within a moment of significant political and social change. If conducted even six months later or earlier, the study may have resulted in different findings, especially with regards to justice and the politicised nature of the *grins*. This highlights the importance of situating the knowledge within the distinct historical moment (Freire, 1972) in order to understand the meaning of dialogue at this time, what Morgan and Guilherme (2012) call relating the texts to the 'zeitgeist.'

While unsure of my access to discussion spaces before arriving in the country, I had decided to visit multiple spaces if possible, as observing a broad range of *grins* and *agoras* would allow a more complete view of the research field. I ultimately visited 33 *grins* and six *agoras*, totalling nearly 100 hours of semi-structured observation. However, I spent more time in certain spaces such as *Grin 2*, *Grin 12*, *Agora 2* and *Agora 3*<sup>17</sup> which also enabled me to gain in-depth of knowledge and to see how life changed from day to day in the spaces. The following sub-sections describe my main methods of collecting data: interviews, participatory mapping and observations.

### **Interviews**

30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 *grin* and 15 *agora* participants. Interviews were guided by a set of 12 questions (see Appendix Five for Interview Schedule), but each interview differed substantially depending on information provided by the participant, his or her role within the discussion space and the type of discussion space. For a list of the participants and brief descriptions of them, see Appendix Seven. All

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<sup>17</sup> While participants have pseudonyms, discussion spaces are ascribed a number.

interviews were done individually, except for Marc and Pierre who were interviewed together.

The sampling of these interviews, though purposive in both cases, occurred very differently between *grins* and *agoras* and illuminated how the spaces function. Initial access to *grins* was found through contacts at NGOs, journalists who had worked with the groups and taxi drivers. Interviews with *grin* participants usually followed my visit to their space; after attending a *grin*, I would be able to ask the leader of the *grin*, or my contact person, if I could have someone's number or would directly sample at that moment and I often left each *grin* with a few phone numbers. There was little gatekeeping in terms of both accessing the spaces or the members themselves and *grins* did not have to report to a larger governing body for permission. *Agoras*, on the other hand, rarely met publicly and were more cautious of foreigners because of their anti-Western stance and status as a political opposition group. Contact with *agoras* often had to come from leaders of two national associations, FENAPACI and FENOPACI. In many cases, I had to attend meeting with the gatekeepers and was introduced a part of their official delegation. Then, presidents of the individual *agoras* decide who I could interview. For example, I received from a local journalist the contact information of two presidents of *agoras* within FENOPACI, unknown to me; the presidents refused to talk to me until the FENOPACI's president approved. I called the president, who I had already met but had not offered these contacts initially, and asked for permission to interview the presidents. This may have posed some ethical issues in terms of the data and also of the participants' inability to refuse an interview with me if ordered by a national leader, however the formal consent sheet gave me the opportunity to discuss the research in private with the participant and allow them to ask further questions and decide to participate. Also, unlike the *grins*, I interviewed four *agora* participants who no longer attended *agoras*. Because of the lack of public meetings, most casual *agora* attendees no longer had the chance to be bystanders as they were in the past, and I also found it important to understand why they stopped. In both groups, certain participants became 'active partners' who understood the goals of my study and helped me to carry out my research (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2013,

p. 152) and, understanding that I wanted to observe the spaces as they were without disrupting their normal activities, often included this in introductions or sought ways to arrange meetings so that this could occur.

I purposively sampled to include a range of ages and 'roles' within the *grins* and also to have female representation, although this was more difficult. Ultimately, I chose to sample people based on the categories that they gave me, such as *côro* (Dioula word meaning leader, see Chapter Five) youth, woman and not necessarily on how I viewed them (Loflaand, 1976 in Gibson & Brown, 2009). In this way, I began to see that age was more fluid concept or that actors who were considered 'youth' in the 2000s were still viewed in those terms. For example, at *Grin 12*, when I asked to speak to a young member, they suggested a 36 year old man who was the president of the local youth chapter of the RDR (Field Notes, October 18).

Sampling was representative of the entire population of *grins* and *agoras*. Three female members may have been slightly oversampled in proportion to female participation at meetings but gaining insights into barriers to their participation as well as their contributions was important to this research. I also chose to interview the same amount of *grin* and *agora* participants, although there are significantly more *grin* observation hours. This is highly indicative of the research environment where *grins* were accessible and highly active whereas *agoras* had either disbanded or existed in the shadows. While each *grin* and *agora* had its unique composition of members, sampling is generally representative of the demographics I encountered in the field: the majority between 20 and 40 years old with some older and younger members mixed in. Data on ethnicity was not collected however judging from participants' names, and details that they shared, religion was usually revealed. All but one *grin* interviewee was Muslim and all *agora* participants were Christian, which was a generally representative of the populations of those discussion groups.

Within Abidjan, I did not initially target any particular neighbourhoods but I strove to have observations in a range of *communes*<sup>18</sup>, and especially those notoriously affected by the conflict: Abobo, known as the ‘home of the *grins*,’ and Yopougon, ‘the home of *agoras*.’ Treichville, Anyama, Adjame, Port Bouët and Cocody were also sites of observations and interviews, covering 7 of 13 communes in Abidjan. I also visited the capital city of Yamoussoukro and Bonoua which enhanced my knowledge of issues surrounding peace and reconciliation on a more national level and also gave insights into the history of the country. Participants always chose the site of the interview, which in part responded to questions of power and positionality but more importantly ensured the participant felt safe and at ease. Allowing participants to choose the site also gave me insight into who they were, what activities they enjoyed and what their lives resembled. Often, interviews took place in people’s homes, in churches, on street corners, in the *grin* spaces or in places of work.

In addition to speaking with participants, 18 expert interviews were also conducted with NGO workers, government officials, professors, activists and journalists (see Appendix 9 for a list of organisations and institutions). These interviews gave baseline knowledge and perspective on *grins* and *agoras*, both before and after the crisis, and also helped me to triangulate data from *grins* and *agora* interviews and observations, especially regarding freedom of speech and assembly, the current political climate, the extent to which spaces had been integrated into NGO and national dialogue programmes and general public perceptions of the groups. These interviews did not adhere to the interview schedule but varied depending on the organisation and role of the person.

### **Participatory Mapping**

Participatory mapping is a common approach when working with youth or when attempting research methods which minimise unequal power dynamics (Milligan, 2014). Participatory group mapping was conducted with three *grins*

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<sup>18</sup> Communes are similar to boroughs. The characteristics of different communes are described in Chapter 5.

and one *agora*, in the study's key areas: Yopougon, Treichville and Abobo. These maps allowed members to share how they perceived their areas and enabled me to make comparisons between different areas of the city (See Appendix 10 for an example). For this activity, I brought large sheets of poster paper, pens, markers, post-it notes and tape to the meetings. The groups determined what geographically constituted their 'neighbourhood' and drew a map, including their discussion space, other sites of importance such as schools, other *grins* or *agoras*, churches, mosques, shops, banks, markets or households. I also asked them to identify any sites of violence during the 2011 post-electoral violence. This activity occurred during meeting times with the exception of the *agora*: because of the sensitivities of public meetings, the leader did his own map and we discussed and amended it with a few of his members. This activity also highlighted group dynamics and processes of learning and dialogue. For example, in *Grin 12* (December 20, 2014), I observed how, like in dialogue, members recognised one another's strengths and assigned leadership roles for the process based on this, and not on age or other hierarchies.

### **Observations: Semi-structured and Unstructured**

Observations, both semi-structured and unstructured, constituted an important part of data generation. I took a semi-structured approach to observations in the spaces and created an Observation Schedule (Appendix Six) that set forth general categories of information that I sought, yet allowed me to remain open to information that presented itself in the course of a meeting (Gillham, 2008). Unstructured observations occurred in everyday life and helped to inform my semi-structured observations. The total hours of semi-structured observation were: 80.25 hours in *grins*, 18.5 hours in *agoras* and 21.25 in related dialogue activities such as NGO events, local associations, political rallies and similar events. See Appendix Eight for a table of observations.

Participant observation within the extended case method (Burawoy, 1991, 2009) acknowledges and encourages the researcher's engagement and the inevitable impact of an outsider within a space. As a guest, and following the

Ivorian custom of 'asking for the news' (see Chapter Six), I generally spoke at every meeting. Usually, I introduced myself and answered preliminary questions and as the meeting progressed was able to ask questions and even contribute my opinions to the discussion when appropriate (see also below on Positionality). I tried to minimise my obtrusiveness by following social norms of greetings and recording my observations as discreetly as possible. To ensure that participants remained at ease and free to speak, I recorded observations by hand and not with an audio recording device. Some photos of groups were taken although not analysed as data but rather as a way to illustrate certain aspects of the spaces discussed in the data analysis and to jog my memory about meetings or events. Members often expected me and invited me to take photos and all photos in Appendices 10, 16 and 17 are taken by the author and have been authorised to use in this thesis.

Observation notes became a mix of thick description, annotated dialogue and my own initial analyses. I would often indicate times, such as the length that one person spoke or the length of time that people stayed on a subject but these were not analysed quantitatively. These handwritten notes were re-transcribed nightly, along with any voice memos I took afterward, as soon as possible, filling in gaps or details when lacking. As Gilham (2008, p. 68) explains, these observation notes became an important part of the 'inter-subjective process.' Additionally, my smartphone became an invaluable research tool where I would regularly take notes when chatting with people or when observing meetings. Using a phone was often more discreet and less intrusive than pulling out a notebook in semi-structured and non-structured observations as it gave the appearance of engaging in a familiar activity and perhaps enabled people to feel less 'observed.' These phone notes were added to the daily field notes in my computer but sometimes have a different style because of the slower writing speed on the electronic device (See Appendix 11).

I also created dialogue maps, often several during the course of a meeting. For 5-minute intervals, I would map the flow of dialogue between members and also note important types of speech (e.g. question, agreement, joke, disagreement). These maps helped to keep me aware of the inclusivity of

dialogue, the seating arrangements, fluctuating number of members in session and the topics discussed. It also helped to understand if and when particular members dominated conversations and if this linked to other factors, such as discussion topic. These maps were drafted in my notebook, photographed and loaded in to the typed up field notes at the end of the day. I later created digital versions of these for data analysis. For more on how I used these, see Chapter Six.

My role as 'observer' at *grins* and *agoras* differed due to various dynamics. In *grins*, the group was smaller and I was generally brought along as someone's 'friend'. I was generally treated as a guest, with the exception of three *grins* that I frequented often, yet allowed within the circle of conversation and expected to participate. I could sit where I chose, though often was given a comfortable chair and a drink at first-time visits. For *agoras*, I visited most with several members of the national board of FENAPAOI. In these meetings, I always had a seat at the front with the national board and was introduced as part and parcel of their team. Furthermore, the oratory nature of *agoras* as compared with the discussion-group style of *grins* meant that I became far less of a 'participant' within the *agoras* than the *grins*, although this was similar to other attendees.

Finally, I also included semi-structured observations of events and activities that I attended that were related in some way to dialogue or peace, as these broadened my understanding of the meaning of dialogue in the Ivorian context and gave me insights into the ways 'dialogue' was being approached in the peacebuilding context. See the Table of Observations in Appendix Eight for further details. Unlike *grins* and *agoras*, the names of these events were not anonymised as they were public and the titles and sponsors reveal important information about them.

### **Transcriptions and Language Issues**

Transcriptions began whilst in the field and were completed upon my return in January 2015. I hired a transcriber partially to expedite the process but also to give back to the local community and provide research training and financial

benefits to a young Ivoirian [For a copy of training documents and contract, see Appendix 12]. To ensure accuracy and continuity, I re-listened to interviews while reading his transcripts, making corrections when needed. I completed all thirteen *agora* transcriptions, as two interviews were not recorded but rather noted by hand. I did seven of the 15 *grin* interviews and five of the nine recorded expert interviews.

All interviews were conducted in French and the transcripts were analysed in their original French language. After coding the data, when key parts of the transcripts were identified for use in data analysis chapters, I personally translated the excerpts, and maintained the original French alongside the English in a separate document in case of any future questions (example in Appendix 13). For questions about the Ivoirian French-based dialect called Nouchi, as well as colloquial expressions particular to Côte d'Ivoire, I reached out to contacts in Cote d'Ivoire. For general French terms and translation queries, I contacted a London-based translator.

Though a second language for almost all participants, French plays an important role in daily communication in Cote d'Ivoire, especially in Abidjan, and is not limited to those with a formal education. All participants had a strong grasp of French and I did not encounter any major communication lapses. However, Ivorian Popular French does differ from standard French (Chumbow & Bobda, 2000; Djité & Pli, 2007). As the primary translator, I had to make decisions about how to translate idiomatic expressions and whether or not to 'perfect' speech in English. This was also a complicated process: as a non-native speaker of French who is well-accustomed to Francophone West African patterns of French, some particularities of Ivoirian French may have eluded me. Also, participants had varying levels of French mastery - some used more academic language whereas others employed less fluent constructions; for example, Marie possessed more basic French abilities whereas Kouassi and Aristide had high levels of French. This is reflected in the translations where some quotes appear more smooth and articulate than others. In my translations, retaining accuracy and voice was a priority, yet I was acutely aware that choosing to use certain colloquialisms could affect how readers would judge the participants (Gibson and Brown, 2009) and paid

attention to how my translations were coming across – word-for-word accuracy and meaning were constantly negotiated to give each participant justice.

### **Positionality and Dialogue**

Considerations of reflexivity and positionality are important within the qualitative methodology that I undertook. As Rose (1997, p. 19) says, reflexivity is a 'strategy for situating knowledges; that is, as a means of avoiding the false neutrality and universality of so much academic knowledge,' yet Rose points out the limits and barriers that occur when researchers attempt reflexivity without action. Recognising inequality, for example, does not necessarily diminish it. Rose suggests that by limiting generalisations and making one's own viewpoint clear, the researcher can avoid some of the false pretences of positionality.

More so, these issues of positionality strongly link to the concept of dialogue which runs throughout this thesis. Research, especially in cases where the researcher is an outsider like myself, often has the tendency to take on an I-It relationship where the research subject becomes objectified. To counter this, Burawoy (1991, p.4):

advocate[s] neither distance nor immersion but dialogue. The purpose of field work is not to strip ourselves of biases, for that is an illusory goal..... thus an "I-You" relation between observers and participants replaces a "we" relation of false togetherness and an "I-they" relation in which the I often becomes invisible

Burawoy essentially claims that I-you (akin to Buber's I-Thou) in social research is the ability to make one's own positions and opinions explicit, not try to hide them or rid ourselves of them, not unlike Rose's suggestion in the above paragraph. In this study, I attempt to make my own stances clear and to highlight when my own interpretations or views are expressed as opposed to the participants. As discussed previously, I also take note of participants' own epistemological stances which undoubtedly differ from my own and from the literature with which I engaged in this study (Shizha & Abdi, 2013).

Thus both in the field and in writing this thesis, I recognise that being a white, European-American woman studying for an advanced degree impacted this study and its findings. I also came to see how other aspects of my identity and life experiences, such as traveling and living in Mali and Senegal, my family's Jewish and Greek backgrounds and the loss of my mother at a young age also impacted how participants and I related to each other and viewed each other as humans, along with what type of information they chose to share with me.

I contend that the thesis' core subject and my research design enabled me to engage in dialogue, hopefully with moments of I-Thou understanding, as a participant observer in *grins* and *agoras* and subsequently provided a space to address these important issues of difference and power. Apentiik and Parpart (2006, p. 36) argue that local participants also desire to learn about the background of the foreign researcher, creating a 'mutual curiosity' that opens 'avenues for interaction, learning and knowledge exchange.' My participation in *grins* and *agoras* created a space where participants and I could work towards, and sometimes achieve, moments of humanising, horizontal dialogue in the eyes of Freire or Buber. In these instances, we engaged in debates on topics of inequality, neo-colonialism, polygamy and immigration, as well as the current political events of Côte d'Ivoire and the economic crisis in Greece. However, this type of dialogue was not universally achieved in all of the spaces and happened more frequently when I had established a familiar relationship with a space. These moments often happened after meetings, as I walked with members and discussed and clarified the day's events (e.g. Field notes, December 4). However, each initial meeting with a street discussion space provided a time when participants asked me questions about myself and my research and allowed for sharing and transparency.

Another unique dimension of my position as a researcher was the act of going between two opposing political groups. My informed consent sheet, along with my personal introductions, always disclosed my research's aims and design. Participants' knowledge of this often led to them asking questions about what

the 'others' thought or said about them. I tried to use this as an opportunity to open lines of communication and show that in many cases prejudices were more minimal than perceived, acting perhaps as a proxy in dialogue. My radio report (see Ethics section below) puts these two groups in dialogue with each other in a format that will be accessible by the participants curious to know my findings.

I also tried to acknowledge my own political positionality throughout the research, through both dialogue with participants and in my own field journal notes. For example, I recognised going into the field that I had accepted a biased coverage of the Ivoirian post-electoral crisis and believed that Alassane Ouattara legitimately won the 2010 elections while Gbagbo occupied his rightful place at the ICC. However time spent in the country and in dialogue with many people made me see that these dichotomies were far from true and that the current Ouattara regime was problematic in many ways, despite the international community's unwavering support. While I showed empathy with both communities from the start, I also recognised my familiarity with Malian and Senegalese culture and how that helped me to identify with *grins* who shared many of their traditions including the tea ceremony. Recognising the potential for political and cultural bias, I also engaged in the local act of *titrologie*, reading of the newspaper titles, and bought papers from the various political sides on a weekly basis, as well as consulting various media sites. This allowed me to keep abreast of discourses in both political domains and to be aware of the potential areas of discussion that either group would be approaching.

While some literature on research methods warns that participants might expect compensation (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006; Greany, 2012), my experience proved otherwise. Ivoirian hospitality places importance on receiving guests and I experienced this through being offered water or a soft drink upon arrival at meetings, being given comfortable seats or people paying for my transport home. While I sometimes felt uncomfortable with these gestures, as participants and discussion groups spent large portions of

time describing economic hardships and because I was aware of my own financially privileged position, I also recognised that these acts of sharing were the very essence of the discussion groups – solidarity, friendship, self-help and mutual protection.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues of this study hinged upon protecting the anonymity and safety of the individuals and groups who allowed me to enter their spaces and lives. This was first achieved through the process of informed consent. The importance of oral agreements in West African and the distrust or added formality of having a signed consent form led me to seek informed consent verbally, a common practice in cross-cultural research (Liamputtong, 2010) and accepted by British Educational Research Association (2011). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, and because of negative views that many held towards western journalists,<sup>19</sup> my information sheet which I printed and gave to all participants including those done with NGOs, professors and government officials, helped to build trust and confirm my student status. It also allowed participants to share my information with others, helping me to gain access to new spaces. When I met each participant for an interview, I would give him or her the information sheet to read and we would discuss any questions. After addressing any questions or concerns, I turned the recorder on and asked each participant to confirm that I had given him or her the information sheet and that we had discussed it. I then asked if he or she had any further questions and finally I asked for permission to record the interview. See Appendix 14 for the informed consent sheet and a transcription of the informed consent process which includes an instance of re-explaining aspects of confidentiality before recording.

One ethical challenge of this study was my inability to completely hide the anonymity of certain participants, as the details of their lives or their discussion spaces were so prominent or well known in Côte d'Ivoire. However,

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<sup>19</sup> This is largely to do with unethical practices of some journalists and researchers, in particular participants noted sociologist Benoît Scheuer whose ethical practices have been questioned in the making of the documentary *Côte d'Ivoire : Poudrière Identitaire*.

these participants in the public eye gave me permission, and even encouraged me, to use their full names. For purposes of consistency and protection, I have anonymised all participants of *grins* and *agoras* and the names of spaces but acknowledge that certain details could indicate a participant's identity. Researchers such as Arnaut (2008), Banégas (2007, 2012), Cutolo and Banégas (2012) and Cutolo (2012, 2014) have not anonymised their findings however I feel that this is the safest approach in the current climate and the one which corresponds most fully with the BERA codes of ethics. Experts who I interviewed are not anonymised unless this was requested. Experts who were explicitly cited in the text are referenced in the Expert Interviews section, following the Bibliography, and are cited as expert interviews in the text..

Furthermore, in this post-conflict context, I understood that interviews could bring up potentially disturbing or disruptive subjects or memories. I remained an empathetic listener and emphasised the participants' right to end the interview at any moment, however this never occurred. More troubling was the potential risk to participants by my presence at spaces, especially *agoras* who were more concealed due to the political climate. Furthermore, I was concerned that *agora* leaders, and in particular members of the national federation, viewed my presence as an opportunity to gather larger meetings and draw more attention to their efforts to revive the spaces. Fortunately, these *agoras* also had security guards to protect members and myself at these events. No instances of violence involving these groups occurred during my time in Côte d'Ivoire although police were regularly known to prevent meetings of groups associated with *agoras* and the FPI.

Another concern was clarifying my role as a researcher and my inability to directly assist groups or individuals, economically or politically, an issue that has been felt by other researchers working in more disadvantaged communities (Apentiik and Parpart, 2006; Greany, 2012). Ensuring that participants did not take part in the study because of hopes for some financial compensation or other benefit was essential, as well as providing answers

that they felt were 'right' in hopes of receiving compensation. I also had to clarify that I was not a journalist at almost every *agora* – many were hesitant to be exposed in the news but did understand and welcome academic research. At my initial site visits and discussions with participants, I explained that I was not a journalist and also emphasised that my research was on education and not politics in order to reinforce this position. In *agoras*, because of my link to the leaders of national associations for some current interviewees, I also had to reiterate my status as an independent researcher and also emphasise that members were not obliged to answer any questions which made them uncomfortable.

Avruch (2001) also warns that ethnographers in conflict and post-conflict zones may risk becoming politicised or in favour of a cause. I encountered this more frequently with the *agoras* where some viewed me as potential advocate for their political party in Europe and a link to funding. I worked to establish boundaries and often explained that the validity of my research would be compromised by giving monetary or material gifts to either *grins* or *agoras*. However, this underlying motivation for participating in the study did need to be considered, though I do feel that all participants accepted interviews to genuinely help my research and as a way for them to share their story.

Finally, a main objective is the dissemination of this research to the participants in order to honour my goals of transparency. For this reason, an oral and written report in French will be prepared for participants before March 2016. To uphold the spirit of dialogue which underpins this research, I hope that the outcomes of this thesis can potentially be used by the participants and others to contribute to building peace and creating dialogic encounters.

### **Generalisability**

While discussions of validity generally lie within the realm of quantitative and positivist research, qualitative researchers grapple with similar questions, albeit using different terminologies and approaches. Instead of validity,

qualitative researchers often seek to attain generalizability through assessing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Denzin, 2008; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1999). In this study, credibility, ensuring that the findings represented the topic of study, was established through snowball sampling, my familiarisation with the sites and creating an atmosphere of trust and openness. Transferability, which responds to the notion of replicability within positivist research, addresses the extent to which the findings can be applied to another study. The theoretical aspect of this work does this as does the extensive information given on the country and phenomenon studied. According to Shenton (2004), the researcher must provide enough evidence of the case for readers to make transfers based on their own knowledge of other settings but it is not the responsibility of the researcher to make these connections. The transferability of this study is also achieved through the rigor of the study and clarity in expressing the methods, participants, restrictions, any organisational affiliations or otherwise. Confirmability is provided by the data trail, including photographs, lists of organisations, interview questions and other research materials provided in the appendices. I have also shared in this chapter and the Introduction some of my own beliefs and assumptions. Triangulation of data sources as well as member checks to get feedback from participants about my interpretations of data also enhances this studies dependability, as does stablishing connections with professors Nguessan Julien Atchoua, Aghi Bahi, and Ebenezer Koffi at UFHB also enabled me to receive feedback about my interpretations of data, also help to establish dependability.

## **Data Analysis**

While data analysis occurred from the moment I stepped into the field and began data collection, thematic analysis of interviews and observations began upon return to London. I first coded interview data on a print-out of each interview for a deeper reading and making notes, or what Miles and Huberman (1994) call 'early steps analysis.' I then entered this coding into the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo to be able to access and search terms more easily and to identify themes throughout the entire data set. From

here, initial concepts and codes were made into a list of super-ordinate themes that clustered together related categories. Appendix 15 provides a table of these themes. I did this by going through the list of codes and combining similar topics and finding overarching themes. Furthermore, as I became more focused on the idea of humanising dialogue, as described below, I was able to see how certain codes fit within themes from the literature and this also helped to regroup and reorganise super-ordinate themes.

In addition to thematic analysis, observations were analysed by using conversation maps (example in Analysis Chapter One) and in going over the field notes to identify characteristics of dialogue and how these corresponded to participants' accounts of the spaces. When interviews and observations corresponded to the same *grin* or meeting, these texts were read closely together, along with conversation maps (an example of this type of analysis is evident in Chapter Six). This triangulation is not for validation but for adding rigor and depth to the qualitative methods (Flick, 2002). Looking at these observations in conjuncture with the interviews allowed me not to 'verify' what the participants had reported but rather to observe tensions within their self-perceptions and the recorded actions in the space. While I did not thematically analyse every observation, quotes and anecdotes that were relevant to already-identified themes were brought out and analysed for meaning. More attention was ultimately paid to interviews, as the study was focused on the role of the space for the participants and their own accounts of this, however the observations gave important descriptive data which has shaped Chapters Five and Six. Furthermore, the near- 'focus-group' style of my initial visits to groups gave important information about spaces and their changing role in the post-conflict era. To avoid cherry picking data or quotes and anecdotes that proved a particular point, I constantly went between data sources and observations to ensure that I had not missed any information and that concepts were supported throughout the data. As I began building explanations, I kept an open mind by considering numerous reasons for a participant to say or do a specific thing. My relationship with professors at the

university also allowed me to test out ideas with experts in the field before coming to final conclusions.

Closely observing these themes while reading through observations and interviews allowed me to then hone in on theories of dialogue that I found more relevant to the study, as recommended by Burawoy (2009). Before entering the field, I had read extensively on dialogue and focused on theories of democratic deliberation (e.g. Gutmann and Thompson, 2004; Rawls, 1991; Habermas, 1984; Sen, 1999) and Paulo Freire's (1972) dialogic pedagogy, with some familiarity with Martin Buber's (1958, 2002) primary works. However, while in the field and during analysis, themes of love, solidarity and relationships, 'othering' and exclusion and social change became prominent. In my fieldnotes from October 21, for example, I make a note about Martin Buber and humanisation and wonder about possible I-It or othering. For this reason, during and after initial analysis, I returned to study more carefully the works of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber and these ultimately became the primary theoretical lenses of my study. Thus I initially analysed data, returned to the literature, and then returned to my analysis and applied some of the key terms of Freire and Buber to then deepen analysis.

## **Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated how the epistemological stance of the researcher has been influenced by social constructivist approaches to knowledge which are highly appropriate in relation to the research questions' focus on dialogue. The study's emphasis on dialogue has informed the methodologies, research methods and data analysis. The research methods, including interviews, observations and participatory mapping, have been described as well as the thematic approach to analysing data. This section has also shown how positionality and ethical concerns have been addressed by the researcher, including protection of participants' anonymity as well as the researcher.

## Chapter Five - Characteristics of *Grins* and *Agoras*: Setting the Scene

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While both categorised under the umbrella of ‘street discussion spaces,’ *agoras*<sup>20</sup> and *grins* have distinctive histories, physical characteristics and modes of participation. This chapter describes the qualities of both spaces and gives an understanding of the context in which dialogue occurs. It also brings up issues of leadership, gender, violence, ethnicity and the geography of Abidjan. A list of the participants and brief descriptions are found in Appendix Seven and a list of the discussion spaces is in Appendix Eight. All the names in the following chapters are pseudonyms that I have applied.

This chapter highlights the importance of understanding discussion spaces within a changing socio-political context and highlights how *grins* have become depoliticised and more visible whereas *agoras* have reduced in size and in number and have continued a political struggle revolving around Laurent Gbagbo and the disempowerment of the FPI. Many changes between the literature reviewed in Chapter Three and the findings presented here are highlighted.

### Introduction to *Grins*

As described in Chapter Three, *grins* are a cultural discussion group whose main activity consists of ‘gathering around tea,’ in 43-year old NGO worker Lassina’s words. Members generally sit on benches or chairs in front of participants’ houses or businesses like hair salons, electronics repair shops or phone booths. There is a small subset of *grins* that meet at ‘cafés,’ generally regrouping taxi drivers and youth, such as *Grin* 5, 27 and 31. See Appendix 8 for table of observations and Appendix 16 for photographic examples of *grins*. On three occasions, I observed *grins* that met *inside* a house or courtyard but these were an exception. Members generally sat in a semi-circle or circle, in groups of four to twenty people. While *grins* do not require special equipment or materials to function beyond what would be found in a typical

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<sup>20</sup> *Parlements*, *agoras* and *Sorbonnes* are interchangeable terms and do not reflect differences in forms of dialogue or political affiliation. I have chosen to use ‘*agora*’ as an umbrella term for these polyvalent spaces as I find the allusion to the Athenian agora more descriptive than a parliament or university, however *parlement* is often used by the members and is also brought up in the text.

Ivoirian household, members' socioeconomic status, and formality of the space, were revealed through the *grins*' possessions, including: quantity of tea cups and size of the teapot, brand of tea, benches or chairs (chairs are more expensive), construction of tin roof or concrete floor and a message board. The meeting times and durations of *grins* varied: *grins* whose members worked usually gathered at night, like Lassina, Moussa and Doumbia, or only on the weekend, like Idrissa, a school teacher in his early 40s. Taxi drivers or transport workers like Mohamed and Bamba often met their *grins* in the early mornings at cafes or every other day depending on work schedules.<sup>21</sup> Members told me that the time of day determined whether a focused debate (late at night) or a space for chatting and leisure would occur. A handful of *grins* had acquired a permanent space where members could be found at any time of day or night, though not necessarily making tea or debating, such as *Grin 28* in Yopougon - Wassakara or the *Grin 12* in Abobo - Anador. Rather, members used the space to gather, relax, pray or discuss until evening or another time when a larger grouping of members would assemble to actually 'do' the *grin*.

In *nordiste* culture, *grins* also function in a purely, apolitical fashion during holidays and life cycle events when men spend the majority of the holiday together in a *grin* making tea, eating and discussing whereas women cook and socialise in their own area (e.g. Observation September 21, 2015 in Anyama). These ceremonial *grins* differ from what my study focuses on, as they are non-permanent spaces and generally involve family or close neighbors.

In many ways, *grins* reflect what Lefebvre (1991, p. 41) calls 'a café' in both form and function:

generally an extra-familial and extra-professional meeting place, where people come together on the basis of personal affinities (in principle and at least apparently), because they have the same street or the same neighbourhood in common rather than the same profession or class (although there do exist some cafés where the clients are predominantly of the same class or profession). It is a place where the regulars can find a certain luxury, if only on the

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<sup>21</sup> Taxi drivers in Abidjan generally do not own their car but share with another person who works for the same company and work every other day.

surface; where they can speak freely (about politics, women, etc.), and where if what is said may be superficial, the freedom to say it is fiercely defended; where they play.

Grins highlight the need to study 'everyday life' that Lefebvre talks about in the sense that leisure time, and not only the working time which Marx focuses on, is important for understanding how social change and society functions. As Lefebvre argues, the café is a place where people can 'critique' the everyday and make meaning of it, not dissimilar to Habermas' concept of space and the lifeworld but more explicitly concerned with the nature of space. This ability to speak politically allows for members to 'vernacularise' (Anderson, 1991; Michelutti, 2007) macro level concepts and transform them into local meanings and where projections about their own involvement in the macro level are also formed. Dawson (2014) also underscores the importance of café culture in Serbia and Bosnia as a way for local communities to discuss politics and move towards action.

Since physical meeting spaces generally were polyvalent, members needed to demarcate their use of the territory. Tea, a defining element of *grins*, often accomplished this signification of space, and Amara explained that making tea and setting out chairs indicated to members that the *grin* had started for the day. It also facilitated exchanges with strangers:

*Voilà*, it [tea] brings people together. Even when you're alone. When you make tea, you know, people come and sit and chat with you. Because there are people who are bored. They're alone. They wander around, they don't know who to talk to. They pass by you and there's no conversation between you. At a certain moment, when he sees you making tea, he comes and sits. Then, you're definitely going to discuss. Automatically, the grin starts to grow - he sends for his friend, like that. [...] Often [grin members] pass by. When they don't see someone they leave. They want to sit, so as early as 4:00pm, I come sit at the grin. And I put out the chairs. When I put out the chairs and then the others come and sit. When they pass, if there aren't chairs, there's no one else who says 'no, I'll put out the chairs'. I knew that it was only me that put out the chairs, so, when I come, I start putting out the chairs and then I sit.

Amara describes how tea is a way to invite strangers or new people into the group but also signals members commencement of activities. He also explains that some people are 'bored', perhaps because they are not working or in school, and thus a *grin* would allow them to spend time more actively, also suggesting that being 'alone' is not desirable. This connects to a primary motivation for attendance, discussed in Chapter Seven, to have fun and relax. In some *grins*, an implicit understanding that every day at a certain time and place, they would do the *grin*, as in the cases of Souleymane, Moussa, Ismaël, and Idrissa, yet this tea-making would transform a space into the *grin*. The concept of the tea ceremony, a culturally embedded act, also demonstrates 'friendship potential' (Yeakley, 1998) as a point of contact within the 'contact hypothesis' can be created through mutual sharing, but that this might be facilitated by a shared culture, such as being *nordiste*. This friendship potential, also understood as a potential for mutuality, gives a concrete demonstration of how I-Thou dialogue can be created in daily life, an element left largely vague within Buber and Freire's concept of humanising dialogue.

### **Modes of Participation**

Participants generally began attending *grins* in late adolescence, although many described growing up watching their 'big brothers' and 'uncles' partaking in the activity (Lassina, Mamadou, Amara, Souleymane, Moussa, Idrissa and Aby). Mamadou, Amara and Doumbia also mentioned how they began around the time they finished secondary school when they were unemployed and had nothing else to do and one of the primary motivations or aims for participating was 'passing time' (Bamba). For this reason, once participants found work, their modes of participation changed (Lassina, Ousseney and Doumbia). For example, when I first met Mamadou in September, 2014, he was often at the *grin* at 4:00pm but in November he secured a tutoring job and did not arrive at the *grin* until after 8:30 or 9:00pm. Amara spoke of another *grin* in the neighbourhood that had disappeared after the 2011 crisis because all of the members got jobs. However, employment did not prohibit participation and *grins* both in Treichville (Souleymane's *Grin* 11) and in Yopougon (Idrissa's *Grin* 23) reported all of the members were either employed or in school. Characteristics of wealthier neighbourhoods, such as more distance between houses and less shared public space likely restrict *grins*.

Most interviewees, with the exception of Lucas who was not Muslim, viewed the *grin* as part of their culture and thus an enduring part of their lifestyle, even if time or obligations restricted their availability. However, many long-term participants in *grins*, some more than 20 years, discussed how the nature of the spaces changed significantly after 2002. In Yopougon, one member told me that while he had participated since the 1980s, it was in 2002 that they became more organised and felt a need to protect themselves. This is linked directly to the army mutiny by Northern soldiers in 2002 and the subsequent retaliations against northerners in Abidjan and the discrimination against northern and foreign people seen by the rise in 'patriotism' and *Ivoirité* (Cutolo, 2012). Diaby, a founder of the *Rassemblement des Grins de Côte d'Ivoire* (RGCI) and onetime 'rector' of the *Sorbonne du Plateau*, explained that while *grins* had existed for decades if not centuries, the motivations and modes of participation became politicised because of the hostile environment towards Muslims and the need for heightened solidarity, communication and self-defense. Diaby explained that this constrained environment provided the rationale for the creation of the RCGI in 2006 as a parallel structure to *agoras* to mobilise northern Ivoirians. Again, we see here how politics becomes 'vernacularised' in the spaces (Marchelutti, 2007) and how micro level spaces adopted and modified the discourses from above, adapting to national and international events.

### Leadership

In *grins*, the nature of leadership shifted and connected strongly with both age and experience. In their most traditional and ceremonial manifestations, *grins* relied on age-based leadership designated to a *côro*, Malinké term for elder, who acted as both a source of wisdom and a moderator (Atchoua, 2008; Kouyaté and Vincourt, 2012). However, this study found that age no longer constituted the definitive prerequisite for leadership. Any *grin* could identify the *côro*, the eldest, even when age differences were not significant and my official introduction<sup>22</sup> at initial site visits generally occurred with the oldest person, signifying that the *côro* maintained an

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<sup>22</sup> Introductions are a cornerstone of Ivoirian culture. When brought to a *grin* for the first time, I would be offered water, then my host would make a formal introduction to the elder, explaining who I was and my research. Next, I would be asked 'the news' to which the appropriate response is 'nothing serious' (*rien de grave*) and then briefly explain the purpose of my visit. This also happened in *agoras* but the introduction was more likely to occur with the president as opposed to the elder.

important, if not symbolic, role. For example, Moussa, a man in his late 50s, and Souleymane, in his 30s, were both *côros* and leaders of their respective *grins*, because they were both the oldest, hosted the *grins* in front of their homes and provided necessary materials for tea.

When age did not determine leadership, often people who either provided the space or maintained it acted as leaders or were given the title as a form of respect. For example, at a *Grin 8*, a young man held the *grin* nightly in front of his house in a shared courtyard. Bamba and others identified him as a leader because of this fact, yet the young man himself denied this because he said he was not the oldest. Idrissa, on the other hand, accepted that he was the leader because he took the initiative to organise people every Sunday:

Yes, it's me, I can have a friend who is older than me but who comes to my house. It's not because you're the oldest that you create a *grin*, no, but because the people feel close to you. So they came to be with me. That's how we became a bigger group.

Idrissa feels that people come to his *grin* because he is the nexus of the social circle. Since he convokes the group, he is the leader. Often, when I asked *grins* if they had a name, they would say it's '*Chez*' whoever's business or home they occupied or sat near. This type of leadership and ownership can also render the space fragile or more vulnerable to the availability of the person. *Grins* died when the person leading moved to a different neighbourhood and left the country according to Lassina, Mamadou, Amara and Doumbia.

Leadership could also be attained by the knowledge and information that one contributed. Like Lassina and Amara, Doumbia, an insurance agent and father of three, saw himself as the leader of the *grin* because he possessed information:

No, I'm not the *côro*. There are people older than me, there are older people in the *grin*. There are 3 or 4 people who are older than me at the *grin* but since I move around a lot, when there is information in town, I report back to the *grin*, either when there are work opportunities we tell the *grin*...it's that kind of information that made them pick me as the leader of the *Grin 29*, so it's like that.

Doumbia recognised that his resources, mostly due to his work which puts him in contact with people in Abidjan, makes him an important person for the other members. Lassina and Amara who were also involved in local branches of their political party, RDR, and also in NGO work expressed similar experiences of being considered a leader.

Thus while elders had multiple functions, they did not necessarily actively lead debate or dialogue. Rather, Amara explained also that you had to involve older people in projects and groups 'for things to work,' meaning the approval and participation of an older, respected person would give the group legitimacy or respect and Fatoumata also noted that they could resolve conflicts between different members. However, their most valued role was in imparting life experience and advice, expressed strongly by the youngest members like Mohamed, Lucas and Mamadou. In *grins* with formalised leadership boards, such as those of Fatoumata, Lucas, they created '*Comités des Sages*,' best translated as a Committees or Councils of Wise Men. This gave the older men a respected and valued role while granting young members administrative and organisational power. These dynamics reflect larger cultural shifts occurring within Ivorian culture and also demonstrate how the crisis altered age-based relationships (McGovern, 2011).

### **Gender**

Men dominated *grin* spaces, with rare regular presence by women. Professor Nguessan Atchoua (Interview, September 2014) posited that women avoided *parlements* and *agoras* because of violence whereas some *grin* members, such as Idrissa, claimed that women did not enjoy the same topics of conversations. Several people told me of *grin de femmes* (women *grins*), but no one could verify the existence of a single one. Women's participation in *grins* is probably limited by both a lack of interest in a traditionally male setting and the existence of gender-specific modes of political activism and women-only social networks. For example, women organised marches during the 2011 crisis, notably in Abobo and Koumassi which ended in violent retaliation by government forces (Banégas, 2011; Varenne, 2013). However, at the time of the research, women's groups often focused on tontines and mutual aid as opposed to political discussion.

However, some women did self-identify as *grin* members, such as Fatoumata, a woman in her late 40s who owned a fabric shop at the Wassakara market in Yopougon, and was president of the women's branch of the highly organised *Grin* 28. However, her membership was based less on the dialogic aspect of the *grin* and more on the social network. She stated that she did not have time to sit and chat, as the societal and familial demands placed on women did not allow her:

I mean for men, when they get off work, they are often there [at the grin]. Well, they are there. They drink their little coffees, they talk about everything and nothing. Whereas us, we have our household duties. I mean, you go out in the morning, you come sell [at the market]. At night, you're tired, you have to go home to take care of your responsibilities, so in that moment, you can't have the time to go sit and chat.

Fatoumata feels that sitting and talking is an activity for men, who even when working do not share in the division of household labour. Aby, a 22-year-old female *grin* participant who began participating when the 'older brothers' in the *grin* would send her on errands, also highlighted similar barriers to participation. She could stop by in passing but for no longer than 30 minutes:

[laughing] Maybe, it's hanging out with friends and then, uh, my other responsibilities, because, you know, being in Africa, a woman in Africa, even if you're not married, you have to be at home. Help with the household chores and stuff. So, I can't leave my chores and come sit at the grin and then... [pause] from time to time, I even have my own business that... doesn't really allow me to go to the grin.

First, Aby makes a distinction between her own friends and her '*grin*,' distinguishing this from other types of socialising. She also says that cultural restraints, even for unmarried women, prevent her from sitting for extended periods. Interestingly, neither of the women felt unwelcome in the spaces and both of them enjoyed the topics of conversations, which some male members like Idrissa assumed that women did not. However, *grins* are largely based on friendship groups and friendship within different societies and cultures is embedded in concepts of masculine and feminine sociability (Adams and Allan, 1998). For example, Aby probably enjoyed the company of the *grin* because she was a self-avowed 'tomboy' who felt more at

ease in the company of men and loved football, thus shared a topic in common that she discussed with the men in the space, whereas many other women would not have the same level of interest or comfort. As a young woman, Aby may also have adapted to changing social norms which could include the increased ease of gender-mixing in the public sphere.

### **Introduction to *Agoras* and *Parlements***

During my fieldwork from August to December 2014, *agora* and *parlement* meetings generally occurred in public spaces such as street corners, with a circle of chairs or standing up. Some groups also met at people's homes (Observation, December 3, 2014) or in *maquis*, outdoor bars typical to Côte d'Ivoire and particularly associated with Christians as they serve alcohol. These small, and often clandestine groupings, contrasted starkly with accounts of pre-2011 *agoras*. For photos of *agoras*, see Appendix 17. During my fieldwork I observed five different *agoras* and the general assembly of a national federation, FENAPAOI. FENAPAOI claim 13 spaces and FENOPACI around 30, in contrast to roughly 300 *agoras* and *parlements* which permanently occupied vacant lots and public space in the Gbagbo era (Cutolo, 2012). Since they had provided publicity for the former government, they once had free reign and little regulation (Vincent; see also Cutolo, 2012, Arnaut, 2008).

Many participants and non-participants described *agoras* in their ideal state: a large audience, often over 100 people, listening to the speeches of orators and animators who would share the breaking news of the country, along with other historical, political and social analysis. However, the *agoras* that I was able to observe had taken on a new form, in some ways more comparable to *grins* in size and discussion style. While past *agoras* would have required chairs, speakers, tents and, most importantly, microphones, today's groupings were either done in secret, or in discreet locations that could not be readily accessed. Unlike the large public groupings where anyone could visit, these new spaces were generally private, small and with people who were known to share the same political beliefs. While some of these re-born *agoras* had attempted to hold occasional large meetings, the members acknowledged that the temporary nature of the space and the reduced number of observers meant that it was far from resembling pre-crisis days. Furthermore,

gathering crowds could be challenging, and created tensions between contrasting visions of local *parlements* and national federations. Observing *agoras* in their current, 'natural' state proved challenging because, not wanting to disappoint me, *agoras* would often try to organise larger meetings for my benefit, though I had the opportunity to see both small and large meetings not arranged on my behalf.

Serge, Kouassi, Gerard and Vincent also described that they had formed their own groups from informal meetings and encounters after the crisis. Kouassi for example said that he met neighbors in Yopougon and started talking and they had the same opinions so they started to talk more and gather frequently. This particular group then formed *Agora 5*, an *agora* that is still attempting to maintain organisation and structure. Others, such as Vincent's *agora*, have remained an informal entity, although he is himself an active member of a national federation and liaises with them frequently. While Kouassi was not a board member of an *agora* before the crisis, he had become more active after 2011, whereas Serge, Gerard and Vincent had already organised *agoras* before 2011.

Also, groups that have attempted to rebuild themselves are not always viewed as being 'authentic' *parlements*, even by their own members. In one observation, I was sitting and chatting with the president of *Agora 5* in a large public lot where the *agora* met. A man approached and appeared quite hostile and unhappy with my presence. I had handed him my information sheet so he could understand that I was not a journalist or 'spy,' but he repeatedly asked me 'why are you here and why are you studying the *parlements* – has the president lied to you?' He asked the president if *parlements* still exist, as if to prove a point. The president replied that yes, *parlements* exist and are convoked by the national association but that they do not function as before, to clarify that he was not misleading me about the extent of the group's activities. Thus even groups who are trying to rebuild themselves face challenges in maintaining legitimacy.

Today, most *agoras* do not have a permanent presence in designated public spaces. Though two spaces claimed to meet daily, I could not verify this by showing up unannounced because of safety and cultural norms. However factors caused me to

believe that the spaces were attempting to portray a greater level of activity than existed. One president of an *agora* who claimed daily meetings could only meet me at the space on Sundays. Philippe, a president told me that while they *had* held daily meetings, the internal divisions within the FPI had caused them to ‘take a break.’ In my field journal, I reacted to a discussion with the president of an *agora* when I inquired about visiting: though he claimed daily meetings, when I asked if I could come, he called the Secretary to organise my visit, invite speakers and find chairs. The lack of chairs struck me as odd, and when I asked him about the chairs, he replied that they lacked chairs since the crisis, over three years ago. In my field journal, I wondered ‘if they are meeting every day, where are they sitting?’ (October 7, 2014). Groups perhaps wished to portray themselves as more organised or more like a *parlement* should be in their pre-2011 embodiment. Any groups that were meeting regularly were not having a bigger impact outside of their own neighbourhoods or people within their immediate circle and probably hoped to protect themselves to a certain degree. For this reason, most Ivoirians that I encountered, from taxi drivers to NGO workers to academic experts, expressed the belief that *agoras* no longer existed. Even the leaders of FENAPAOCI, at their general assembly in late October, stated their goal was to ‘re-establish’ the *parlements*, acknowledging that the groups had significantly diminished since 2011.

### **Changes to Agoras in the Post-2011 Context**

The limited existence of *agoras* after the 2011 crisis was attributed to two factors: actual physical spaces had been limited and the political and social climate felt hostile, as expressed by Philippe, Narcisse, Gerard, Bamba, Marie and others. While many of the most notorious spaces had been built on or destroyed, such as the *Parlement de Sideci* in Yopougon, the *Tout Puissant Congrès d’Abobo*, the *Sorbonne du Plateau*, the *Parlement de Wakouboué* (see Appendix 3 for photos), there was no lack of empty lots in Abidjan in which to assemble. I asked Narcisse if the physical destruction of *agoras* was the only reason and he conceded:

What prevents them... first they occupied all the spaces. But in reality, the spaces aren’t the problem. It’s not because they occupied the spaces that people don’t gather anymore. But after having occupied these spaces, the government decided to track all the people that organised the spaces. I mean, people came back from exile and they decided to meet somewhere or other to talk about politics, the

government decided to track all these people and put them in prison. That's how I ended up in prison. *Voilà*.

Here he suggests that the fear of being tracked, more than the lack of space that prevents people from starting up *agoras*. While sitting in a gathering of six men underneath a tent on a busy road, Gerard also explained that they have a space where they meet but he does not call it a *parlement*: 'we don't have it marked as a political space, we don't say that we are talking about politics.' He then pointed to a vacant lot behind them and said that someone could start an *agora* there but it would be impossible out of fear. Professor Nguessan Atchoua agreed that construction on previous *agora* sites was a strategy to prevent groups of people from gathering and the even the razing of Rue Princesse in Yopougon in the name of urban development has also been identified as the current government attempting to prevent large public gatherings of Gbagboistes (Schumann, 2015). I also observed first-hand the police preventing a meeting of FENAPAOI on October 25 in Yopougon and read about other instances in newspapers, an issue I also discussed with civil society activist Samba David, imprisoned at the time of the writing of this thesis after a public demonstration in September 2015.

On three occasions in September and October 2014, I visited the site of the former *Sorbonne*, which is now a parking lot,<sup>23</sup> and the adjacent '*Jardins Publics*' (public gardens in downtown Abidjan) which was the Sorbonne's original site until 2000. At the *Jardins Publics*, on my first visit I noticed a small group of men engaged in loud debate and later asked Narcisse and Kouadio about this gathering. They informed me that the people only discussed religion, not politics, confirmed upon further observation where a religious debate between Protestants and Catholics took place (Field Journal, October 17). This also demonstrates how group of people debating in that space does not make it the Sorbonne. Self-identification of the space and its uses, not the physical space itself, imparts meaning and purpose (Massey, 2005).

However, alongside feared repercussions, former attendants also showed disinterest in the spaces. Kouadio, a board member of COJEP, felt that he could not be seen discussing politics in public and because of his elevated status had 'nothing to learn'

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<sup>23</sup> The Sorbonne was razed shortly after Gbagbo's capture in April 2011.

from those involved. Furthermore, many participants described the spaces as being dangerous or even violent. Jean-Luc, Vincent, Pierre, Marc, Serge, Aristide, Marie and Philippe all noted that they or other people felt unsafe because of attacks on *agoras* during or after the crisis. For this reason, Philippe and Kouamé explained that they have a designated board member for 'Security' and many *agoras* avoided doing large gatherings at all. Aristide said that his former parlement had not tried to reassemble after the crisis because they had been attacked and now people were too scared, as evidenced by members like Pierre Mark and David who feared violence in spaces and reported that they talked about politics only in small groups or when doing 'titrologie' in their own neighbourhood. Again this emphasises the changing nature of space (Massey, 2013) and how this physical nature of the space then impacts upon the ability for dialogue to occur. Furthermore, it also challenges Bohm's (2004) rather neutral concept of space and emphasises the difficulty of creating ideal dialogue settings in real life context.

### **Modes of Participation**

Most members began participating in *agoras* after the political crisis began in 2002 with the mutiny of northern soldiers, as this is when many people felt that they needed a line of communication outside of the regular media. The president of *Agora 5* explained that oral communication was important in African and Ivoirian culture and that many people could not access the written press. Pierre, for example, began participating after he was a victim of violence in his native western region. Still young, around 13 at the time, he arrived in Abidjan and wanted to understand what was happening and why he had undergone his own personal trauma:

So, that's when I began trying to understand a bit why there were such divisions in...these divisions within the Ivorian population.... 'Why, why why?' so I wanted to understand a bit more so I went to listen. [...] During the crisis, there were lots of *agoras*, *parlements*. Yopougon, everywhere. So I went to see, listen.

Others mention this same time period and similar reasons relating to what some call the 'failed coup d'état' or the first crisis in 2002 when describing their initial experiences. Kouadio, a law student in Port Bouët and low-level orator, recounted his own experience:

When did I start? Really, in 2002. 2002. 2002. Right after the failed coup d'état. *Voilà*. That's when I really started going. When I became interested in *parlements* and *agoras*. [...] We were informing ourselves. With the war and everything, the war. Because that was around 2002. *Voilà*. At every moment there was belligerence in Cote d'Ivoire here. So the country was split in two, it was a fact that annoyed every Ivorian, you understand? So, that meant that we wanted to get information all the time. Money had disappeared from the hearts of Ivoirians, we were more interested in the socio-political situation. So, because of that, we found out where the *parlements* and *agoras* were and that's who informed us a lot. *Voilà*.

This stressful event drove many people to seek information in the *agoras*, mostly because they no longer knew what to believe or trust in the media. The *parlements* and *agoras*, rooted in the FPI politics, were strongly associated with FESCI, COJEP and other actors within FPI's 'patriotic galaxy' and so they felt that the news they received was quicker and closer to the source than what was available on TV or newspapers.

However, most participants also admitted that the 'information' they received was not always factual. Part of the process of participating was sorting out the information, such as for Marc, who only attended *agoras* as a spectator:

Hmm, yeah for me, it was after the crisis in 2002. After the 2002 crisis, I was 12... 13 years old. After that, when I started to go to *agoras* because I wanted to have a little hope, in fact, because of the crisis we were a little stressed in our heads. Since in the newspapers, there wasn't... we felt that there were 'unspoken' things actually. And in the *agoras*, there were people who bring information. I don't know if it is true or not. They say that they get it [the information] from a minister or whoever. And then it comforts us, so it's... we went there to get this kind of comfort. We went for the comforting and to give ourselves a little hope, to see what the people could tell us, in a less heavy way than on the TV actually. Our truth, actually. Because the state didn't tell us everything. So the *agoras* allowed us to have another way of seeing the news, another type of information.

Marc reveals the dual desire for information and hope. He also describes how in moments of crisis, having the latest information becomes critical and begins to allude to the importance of having different sources of information in light of unreliable Ivoirian news media.

Marie also expresses this desire to be informed. She wanted to get news but also acknowledged that neither newspapers nor *parlements* were reliable sources of information:

In 2002, when the crisis started. You needed to go. You needed to go to the *parlement* to be more informed about what was happening. Maybe the papers don't say much, they don't talk, they don't tell the truth. They don't tell us what's really happening. Often, they put things in big letters on newspapers to sell them but really they don't say they truth. So we went to the *parlement* to listen...that the people told us the truth, told us what was happening. Some told the truth, others didn't really either [tell the truth].

Marie recognises that exaggerations were told in *agoras* but she was less critical of the *parlement* than the newspapers. In my observations, I heard information that I knew was false. For one, several times people talked about President Ouattara being from Burkina Faso instead of from Côte d'Ivoire. In one session at *Agora 3*, Aristide, who was orating, said that 3,000 people died in one day at a specific event of the crisis, a clear exaggeration considering the death toll of the crisis totalled around 3,000.

The relationships between teaching and learning as it relates to age and status is an important point to be explored further. In both *grins* and *agoras*, this willingness to learn from others' strengths and knowledge is very prominent and may have a deeper cultural signification. In the *agoras* you also see this in the ways that the orators 'specialised' in certain topics. For example, Gerard was a top-level orator became the 'specialist' in the news coming from one Western region. Vincent said that he was an expert 'analyst' – that he didn't bring new news but rather was known for his analysis of information and situations and Kouamé said that he was an expert on law. Toh and Banegas (2006) also comment on this specialisation, noting it as a way of gaining respect and notoriety and also contributed to the notion of the orator as a 'professor' of a specific subject. This way of speaking could provide a potential means of mutuality, in the ability to share and learn from one another but could also diminish wholeness by objectifying the person or limiting him or her to one aspect his or her identity.

Unlike in *grins*, dialogue did not focus on sharing among members. However, Davide and Jean-Luc, who were both active after the crisis in smaller groups, described a dialogue that seemed inclusive. Jean-Luc, who meets with a small group in Port Bouët describes this group and their processes:

....when there's a recent event, we debate about that. *Voilà*. We debate it. Today, it's not like before, like before I was an orator. I don't go to a space now to speak to a public audience but we meet in a small group that we called 'TD' [travaux dirigé] and we exchange views on the given subject. Everyone gives his point of view on the subject. That's how we operate here. You see, we haven't made an organisation here. As far as I'm concerned, uh, but in other places they have made, they made their organisation. They have a president, a bureau. But here, we don't work like that. *Voilà*. We don't have a president, we don't have a bureau. We meet and we discuss. Everyone gives his point of view on the situation.

Another reason that dialogue differs in *agoras* could be the different ways in which they model their knowledge transmission. At the observation at *Agora 4* (Nov 11), the vice president called it a '*université en ciel ouvert*' (an open-air university) as well as at the General Assembly, a portrayal set forth by Bahi (2003), Silué (2012) and Atchoua (2008). Partially, they claim the university style from their roots as a *Sorbonne* with different faculties, departments and professors. Dr. N'guessan Atchoua (Interview, September 8, 2014) attributed the rise of *agoras* to an excess of educated, unemployed people, thus many people involved in forming *agoras* had knowledge of the university system. However, the university metaphor also extends to the lecture styles and passive listening. On the other hand, *grins* did not attempt to model themselves on this as their framing of learning is rooted in community and family and without a strong emphasis on knowledge of French.

### **Leadership**

Unlike *grins*, most *agoras* have an elected board, although the democratic nature of such 'elections' seems to vary. Aristide said that the most negative aspect of *agoras* was actually the instability of leadership and constant 'coups' that were being attempted, often motivated by leaders from the FPI and COJEP. These elected boards were responsible for organising the space and securing materials such as

microphones, speakers, chairs and tents. Unlike *grins*, pre-2011 *agoras* required significant investment in expensive electronics and furnishings, often given as gifts by politicians (Cutolo, 2012). The leadership board also scheduled various orators and planned different topics to discuss. When the orators were speaking in front of a crowd, this was called a '*plénière*' or plenary session. Orators were expected to speak, uninterrupted, for at least one to three hours according to Narcisse, a well-known orator from Yopougon. Before or after the orator, there could also be smaller '*travaux dirigés*' or TD, meaning seminars, when people were more likely to ask questions and engage, said Kouadio, Kouamé, and Jean-Luc. However, audience members could not just raise their hand and speak but had to write down their name on a list (Jean-Luc, Philippe, and Aristide). I observed only one 'plenary'-type meeting and five TDs, and a microphone was present in only one of the 11 *agoras* observations. For example, In *Agora 3* in Yopougon-Kouté, the president described the two larger meetings that I observed as 'mini-plenaries' because they had no speakers, microphones or tent and the number of people attending, between 50-70, did not qualify as a real plenary. Also, the space and time of the meeting was not permanent: people gathered once they saw or heard something happening on the corner and quickly dispersed afterwards, which I assumed was due to safety reasons. In three cases, the leadership had arranged for an official orator but the orators cancelled at the last minute, leaving the president of the national federation to become a *de facto* orator.

Age and leadership had a different relationship in *agoras* than in *grins*. While in the pre-crisis days, the spaces generally were perceived as youth dominated (Arnaut, 2008), during the time of this study, many leaders were older, some above 50 years of age. In my interview with Philippe, a medical technician in his mid-thirties who viewed himself as a moderator, he explains:

Yeah, at *Agora 3*, most of the *parlementaires* are older people. They are older people. Because the majority of young people who are there, most of them have left the neighbourhood [...] oh, to live elsewhere, there are some in exile in Ghana. Some in the villages. Because Kouté felt the crisis eh, [pause] really at the last moment. People came to Kouté at the end of the crisis. In the beginning, people were seeking refuge in Kouté, escaping other neighbourhoods. But at the

end, the armed men, the FRCI came to Kouté, really, they killed... they did a lot of damage. That's why people are really scared. I even left and came back.

M: So there aren't a lot of young people?

Philippe: There aren't as many young people. But now there are young people, some are there, who are interested in the thing. But they are scared, they are still scared.

M: Young people are more scared to speak than old people?

Philippe: Yes, the old people aren't scared.

Philippe and others felt that young people had become more vulnerable during the crisis, as they often engaged in fighting and rendered themselves targets. Today, elders can go outside to talk politics as they probably are not viewed as a threat, nor are they scared of being attacked, like younger people. Philippe also mentioned that old people understood that *agoras* were not their domain— they were happy to allow the younger people to run the show and understood that they had something to learn from young people:

Outside of the parlement, we can do things according to age. But once you're inside the parlement, things aren't done by age anymore. Because, what the young person knows, the old person needs. And if the old person knows something, he asks for the floor and then he teaches and the young person takes note. But when the young person also knows, he takes the floor and he teaches and the old person takes note. This was something special in the *parlements*.

This is a concept of mutuality that could be reflected in Freire and Buber's notion of horizontal learning relationships and intersubjective relationships. However, in my observation notes, at TDs and larger meetings, old people held a respected role. At meetings in *Agora 3*, I noted that the old people sat in the 12-16 chairs in front whereas young people, women and children stood behind. Thus some authority of elders remains, certainly engrained in cultural norms not unlike those of *grins*.

The national associations also dominated local leadership, unlike in *grins*. Only two of four national associations, FENOPACI and FENAPAOCI, were active post-2011 and continued to provide information and assistance, although it seems that their financial stability had diminished since Gbagbo was no longer able to fund them.

Both FENOPACI and FENAPAOI seemed to exert a certain degree of power over the individual *agoras*. For example, in late October, a journalist gave me the phone numbers of two presidents of *agoras* which I had not yet heard of. When I called, both of them told me that they could not speak to me until they had permission from the president of FENOPACI. I had already met this person and immediately called him for permission to meet. This was not initially granted until over a month later. FENOPACI leadership also informed me that they advised the groups to meet in secret and had devised strategies for transmitting information. Thus while *agoras* did have free reign in many aspects of their regular activities, the orders of national leaders also impacted their discourses and decisions. For example, as discussed in the following section, the divisions within the FPI also impacted the national associations and their respective *agoras* in terms of what messages should be transmitted to members.

### **Gender in Agoras**

*Agoras* were male dominated spaces, both before 2011 (Matlon, 2014) and during my fieldwork. None of the participants could name a female orator, although one person claimed to have seen a one or two women speaking at the Sorbonne. Women would attend to listen, but as with *grins*, they cited time as a barrier. At the events that I attended, there were few women and those involved appeared older. However this does not comment on women's political involvement; women's associations and women's branches of political parties played an active role in political mobilisation. Rather the structure of *agoras* was not amenable to women's participation and Dr. Nguessan Atchoua hypothesised that women, already victims of violence, avoided places where violence could be more prevalent. The gendered division of space, and the feminine aspect of private space versus masculine public space, has been challenged (Massey, 1994), however women use public space differently to men in Abidjan. For example, Matalon (2014) describes how women were present at the Sorbonne, but as food vendors. Again, this highlights how belonging in the space and in the dialogue also relied upon intentions and desire to take part. Furthermore, the performance of masculinity and power in the public sphere (Hearn, 2006) partially motivated orators, and Banégas (2007) has also discussed how youth used the ultranationalist discourses of *agoras* to 'rise up as

men.’ This may also indicate that becoming an orator did not factor into many women’s aspirations.

Marie, the only female *agora* participant interviewed, said that she lived across from the space near her house in Yopougon and would generally stop by on her way back from her job as an accountant around 6:30 or 7:00pm. By that time, all the seats were taken so she would wait in the back. She never spoke or even asked questions and usually didn’t stay long before going home but did occasionally visit the *Sorbonne*. She was recruited into the leadership board of her *parlement* in 2013 because they wanted a female treasurer whom they could trust with money. This highlights the fact that when women were involved in *agoras*, it was often due to intentional recruitment. For example, *Agora 2* also had two women on its board and had also reported to have created a ‘*conseil de femmes*’ to include local women, though I never observed this group. FENOPACI had a few board positions designated to women, though these seemed to be more about symbolic inclusion. A fuller analysis of gender roles in these spaces, and the differences between *agoras* and *parlements*, is recommended in future studies.

### **Comparing *Parlements* and *Grins***

As this chapter has demonstrated, *parlements* and *grins* have very different origins, physical characteristics and modes of participation. During my fieldwork, I wondered why *parlements* and *grins* had become constructed together as ‘street discussion spaces’ in French and Ivoirian scholarship (Atchoua, 2016; Bahi, 2003; Banégas, 2011). As Burbules and Rice (1991) argue, comparisons of difference are only viable when a degree of sameness or point of compare exists. Buber also focuses on how ‘sameness-and-difference’ draws people into mutuality (Metcalfe and Game, 2012). Furthermore, while *grins* and *agoras* may have different geneses and different purposes in their original contexts, the social and political context of Côte d’Ivoire, as well as the intentional construction of *grins* as opposition spaces to *agoras* by national leaders like Diaby, a founder of the *Sorbonne* and later of the RCGI, allowed for these two types of spaces to become interconnected. The parallel purposes of political mobilisation and information during the crisis brings them together, in spite of differences in structure and dialogue.

What also draws these two groups together are their intentions and self-identification. In Abidjan, the streets, *maquis* and bars abound with young people, and especially young men sitting and talking, who at first glance resemble groups described in this research. In my field notes, I occasionally wondered: why are the security guards on my street who are making tea tonight *not* a *grin*? Why are the young men gathered daily at the newspaper vendor, who I know is pro-Gbagbo, not an agora? Doctor Nguessan Atchoua explained (Interview, October 10, 2014) that certain elements of *grins* and *agoras* distinguish them from casual spaces, namely permanence and regularity. I found that in *grins*, mutual aid in the form of financial contributions for life events was essential in 'creating' the space. Self-identification as a *grin* or *agora* and as part of a broader movement of shared values and purposes also help to characterise spaces. For example, the security guards making tea did not view their tea-making as connected to any other socio-political space. In *parlements* and organised *grins*, artefacts such as membership cards served to create this distinction. At *Agora 5*, which resembled a group of middle aged men chatting in a circle near in a large public lot, most of the men were carrying their membership cards with them, helping to set them apart from other groups or gatherings (Photo in Appendix 17). As mentioned later, certain aspects of Wenger's (1999) community of practice also appear in the discussion spaces: the use of traditions and artefacts, like tea or membership cards, create 'boundaries' between the group and the rest of the public space and also demarcate sites of dialogue as opposed to other activities. Massey (1994, p. 5) also brings up the importance of the political environment and how both the:

particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that 'beyond.

Global and national events were clearly influencing and creating the spaces just as much as the actual physical actors present and these draw the actors together and provide a basis for comparison.

### **Violence in *Agoras* and *Grins***

One factor that has altered spaces in post-conflict Abidjan is the role of violence leading up to and during the crisis and the current absence of *armed* violence, although many note the presence of structural violence – see Chapters Six and Eight. Many mentioned related to the danger and risks involved with *agoras*, especially after the crisis when people felt tracked by FRCI or police (Marie and Philippe, for example). However, the extent to which these groups pushed people to violence and whether they remain in the shadows because of their involvement remains unclear. Is this why Pierre and Marc felt very negative and said that even if the spaces were open today, they would not join? When Philippe claimed that he had nothing to fear in the post-crisis phase because he had not spoken badly like others, was he alluding to speech that encouraged violence? Interviews with human rights activists, NGO workers and professors such as Alain Zouzou of CERAP, Julien Atchoua of the UFHB, Ana Ballo of Bogolan Productions and Open Society in West Africa, and Yacouba Doumbia of the Ivoirian Movement for Human Rights (MIDH) confirmed that these sites were indeed places of mobilisation and that violence often had connections to messages transmitted in *grins* and *agoras* (Interview, September 16, 2014).

Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2009, p. 31-32) issued a report in 2008 describing *agoras* and *parlements* as the following:

Though they are not formally part of the state-security apparatus, especially in the years following the war, members of these groups played an active role in matters of national security, including manning checkpoints on main roads in government-controlled areas, checking civilian identification, and generally taking on tasks usually carried out by uniformed government security forces. These groups have also been used by government officials to violently suppress opposition demonstrations, stifle the press and anti-government dissent, foment violent anti-foreigner sentiment, and attack rebel-held villages in the western cocoa- and coffee- producing areas. In almost all cases, crimes perpetrated by these groups benefit from total impunity.

Thus even before the worst violence was committed in 2010-11, *parlements* were already known to have engaged in violent or divisive activities. While the report

clarifies that they were not militias, it confirms that many members had weapons. Interestingly, in the context of the post-2007 peace accords, the report states that since *parlements* and *agoras* were not militias, they also could not benefit from Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes (see also Arnaut, 2008), which posed a problem again in 2011. Furthermore, while Ouattara's justice system has been widely recognised as far from equitable, *agora* members' feelings of being unfairly punished under the current regime could be enhanced by experiencing a decade of near total impunity from government and police impunity.

However, *grins* also were involved in self-policing and self-defence and some *grin* members openly admitted their participation in fighting in the post-electoral crisis, including Diaby and others at observations such as at *Grin 7* and *9*. Fatoumata talks about how the men of her *grin* would patrol the market at night and Doumbia vividly remembers 'Operation Casserole' a self-protection strategy where people would bang pots and pans to warn the neighbourhood of imminent attacks. However, *parlements*' history of combative speech was more easily documented and traced due to their public nature and ability to rally large crowds. As Alain Zouzou, Project Coordinator at Centre for Action Research for Peace (Interview, December 18), explained: *grins* and *parlements* were essentially doing the same thing – preparing people 'morally and spiritually' for conflict. The only difference was the public and private spheres in which the discourses occurred. For example, certain actions that occurred could be directly related to speeches given at *parlements*. Narcisse, a well-known orator, told me:

Narcisse: We inform people. For example, when France, when the French army came and shot at the *Patriotes*. The French army wanted to overthrow Gbagbo. You remember, at the Hotel Ivoire?

M: Yes

Narcisse: We were the ones who gave that information in the *agoras*. And we asked our comrades to go to the Chief of State at the time's (Gbagbo's) residence. And everyone went there.

Narcisse refers to a well-known instance where Gbagboists defended his residence in 2004 against a feared French attack during which many people were harmed.<sup>24</sup> While Narcisse does not specify in his interview what the crowd was ordered to do there, he clearly wants to demonstrate the power of the messages given by orators and the willingness of people to listen to them. However, the messages passed through *grins* were probably less coordinated and also less publicly known. In the book *Abobo La Guerre*, Varenne (2013) describes many ambiguities surrounding violence in Abobo in terms of who ordered groups to perpetrate acts and the nature of militias.

This thesis' objective was not to discern whether the groups were violent or who had participated in violence, but rather to understand individuals' experiences in the groups and the current processes of dialogue. For this reason, I never asked a direct question about participation in violence unless the participant first provided the information. While perceptions of violence and the crisis were important to the study, such as Aristide and others' *agoras* insistence on non-violence and that their weapons were 'words', I did not seek to uncover any essential 'truths' about their participation in violence.

### **Ethnicity and Religion**

The relationship of ethnicity and religion to participation in *grins* and *agoras* contributes to understandings of the discussion spaces. For example, a group of Christians from the west of Côte d'Ivoire would never be viewed or identify themselves as a *grin*. While some members of *grins* were not Muslim, they were always in the minority and though *grin* members came from various regions of the country, they generally had origins in the northern or western regions or in other West African countries like Mali, Senegal or Burkina Faso. On the other hand, the political nature of *agoras*, and the history of the FPI, meant that *agoras* were often more ethnically diverse. The former and current presidents of FENAPCI are *nordistes*, as are some well-known orators like Fofana (not interviewed in this study)

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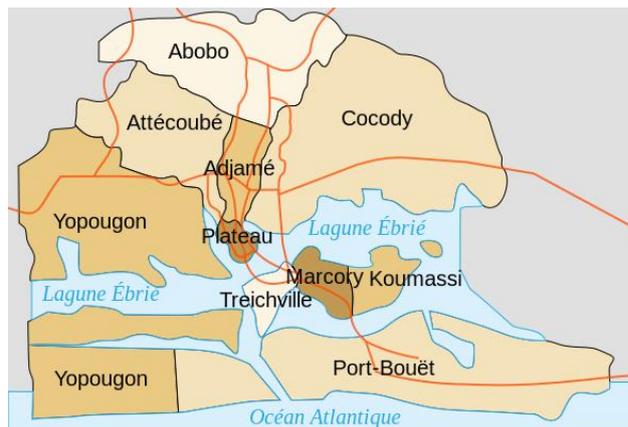
<sup>24</sup> Mike McGovern's (2011) *Making War in Côte d'Ivoire* also mentions Blé Goudé's speeches that encouraged violence. Although Blé is not an orator he often spoke at Parlements or his messages were transmitted there.

and many prominent FPI members such as Abdou Drahamane Sangaré and Mouhamed Koulibaly. However, when *agoras* and the FPI began adopting xenophobic language and targeting northern Ivoirians, many FPI members switched to the RDR. Diaby, a founder of both the *Sorbonne* and the RGCI, made this switch in the mid-1990s and Lassina stopped attending the Sorbonne in the early 2000s. Mouffe (2005, p. 20) argues that humans are 'always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities' and these overlapping affiliations render impossible a categorisation *grins* or *agoras* in purely ethnic or religious terms.

### **Abidjan's Geography and Street Discussion Spaces**

A discussion of Abidjan and its spatial realities is also important to the study. The district of Abidjan, located in the southeast of the country (See Appendix One) is divided into thirteen *communes*, similar to boroughs. During the 2010-2011 crisis, violence extended throughout the city including the wealthier *commune* of Cocody where Hotel Ivoire, Gbagbo's residence and Université Felix Houphouët-Boigny are located. However, Abobo and Yopougon were the epicentres of violence with Yopougon perhaps undergoing more damage. These two *communes* are the biggest in Côte d'Ivoire and extremely diverse: Yopougon has a population of 688,235 whereas Abobo has a population of 638,170, although Abobo has higher population density (INS, 2013). Thus these two *communes* make up over one-fifth of Abidjan's population. Abobo, located at the Northern edges of the city has historically been a point of entry for many migrants coming from the North, and houses a large Muslim population. In the context of the 2010-2011 crisis, Abobo housed the '*commando invisible*,' the Abidjan-based pro-Ouattara militia, whereas Yopougon is known as favouring Gbagbo and having more residents from the West and South. Population data of urban *communes* of Abidjan from the National Institute of Statistics (2014) reveal that Yopougon and Abobo have distinct ethnic compositions but are both highly diverse. However, there is a greater concentration of North Mande, Voltaic and West African backgrounds in Abobo than in Yopougon, lending some truth that the notion that Abobo is more heavily dominated by northerners and immigrants. Krou and Akan, ethnic groups from the West and South, are in larger proportion in Yopougon, which would also support the belief that Yopougon is more in favour of Gbagbo. While these statistics loosely support the idea that more *grins* exist in

Abobo and more *agoras* in Yopougon, members often refuted this generalisation. At an observation with *Agora 4* in Abobo-Belleville, a member said that calling Abobo a pro-RDR area was a ‘pure lie,’ though he later contradicted himself by claiming that Yopougon was 90% Ivoirian and thus did not face the same insecurities and crime as Abobo, insinuating that Abobo population was primarily foreign.



Map 1: Abidjan

In my study, I saw more *agoras* in Yopougon and more *grins* in Abobo. However, this should not be used to reinforce population differences or political leanings between the two communes. Pre-2011, Abobo housed the largest parliament in Cote d'Ivoire, called *le Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo* (All-Powerful Congress of Abobo), now razed and replaced with a Shell station as shown in Appendix 3. Conversely, one of the largest and well-known *grins*, *le Grin de Marcoussis-Wassakara* exists at the Wassakara market in Yopougon. I observed 15 *grins* in Abobo and five in Yopougon, three in Anyama, four in Adjamé, and six in Treichville. I observed three *parlements* in Yopougon, one in Port Bouët and one in Abobo, with some FENAPAOI board meetings in Cocody. While an even distribution of *grins* in each commune was not achieved in observations, I found that characteristics of *grins* did not differ significantly, with the exception of physical characteristics like paved streets, chairs and streetlights in more middle-class Treichville and parts of Adjamé. Additionally, three *grins* and one *agora* did participatory mapping activities where they mapped their areas and put in the various resources as well as marking areas where events had occurred during the crisis (See Appendix 10 for example). All four maps indicated religious diversity, inferring ethnic and regional diversity, with

mosques and churches being present in all neighbourhoods. However, only one *grin* was in close proximity to an *agora* or *parlement*.

Some *agora* participants like Narcisse, a well-known orator, Vincent and Kouadio would no longer set foot in Abobo, nor would other *parlementaires* that I chatted with, such as the former President of *Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo*. I suspect that this may have to do with personal actions taken out during the crisis and fears of retaliation. However I found that orators and other public figures often felt uneasy in public locations even Yopougon. I once ran into Aristide, a well-known orator and president of a national association, in front of a busy transport hub in Yopougon while we were both headed to the same meeting. I told him I had arranged for his friend and colleague to pick me up at the transport hub and that we could wait for our friend together. Aristide explained that he could not wait on this busy corner or in front of a popular pharmacy nearby, laughing that this apparently obvious security breach had eluded me. Yet for me it really did not seem evident; no reports of active violence or disappearances occurred during my fieldwork and he seemed in his safety zone. Rather, most reports of violence were related to the 'microbes,' a youth gang in Abobo or police prevention of large demonstrations of FPI-related groups. Thus the complexities of each neighbourhood certainly eluded me.

## Summary

Drawing from observations, interviews and participatory mappings, this chapter has provided rich descriptions of the nature and life of *grins*, as well as addressing issues of space and geography, gender and politics. It has also highlighted how leadership does not depend on age but on a variety of factors in both types of spaces. This has addressed my research's objective of understanding the spaces' current state in the post-2011 environment and has drawn out how these qualities begin to foster different types of dialogue. In particular this chapter has also shown a transformation in the spaces resulting from a shifting political context that favours RDR and *grin* participants. This chapter also recognises the prevalence of violence in these spaces during the conflict and the reluctance of some to join now. Chapter Six then explores in more detail the nature of dialogue in the spaces.

## Chapter Six - Dialogue in *Grins* and *Agoras*

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While the previous chapter has described the characteristics of the spaces and participants, this chapter begins to explore how the dialogue within spaces occurs and highlights similarities and differences between *grins* and *agoras*. This chapter links the physical characteristics of *grins* and *agoras* to the actual processes of dialogue, underscoring the importance of understanding how different actors engage in dialogue to seek different ends. Top down and bottom up influences of dialogue construction are also noted, such as national federations, media and local happenings.

The following section describes characteristics of dialogue, including the concepts of ‘everyone gives his point of view’ (*chacun donne son point de vue*), ‘talking about everything and nothing’ (*parler de tout et de rien*) and ‘public speaking skills’ (*l’art oratoire*). Consensus and contradiction within *grins* and *agoras* will also be discussed and the importance of friendship and interethnic alliances are used to both prevent and mitigate conflict. The chapter also touches on the content of the dialogue, including political ideology and religion. Dialogue maps are used to illustrate how dialogue occurred in the spaces versus how participants viewed their own participation. For example, perceptions of ‘everyone’ speaking differed from observed patterns of speech.

### **Dialogue in *Grins*: *Chacun Donne Son Point de Vue***

When asked about how they discussed or debated in their *grins*, many participants stated that ‘*chacun donne son point de vue*,’ or ‘everyone gives his point of view.’ To members, the act of speaking in a *grin* meant ‘giving one’s point of view’ without a broader goal of convincing or winning others over, even when they framed these exchanges as ‘debates.’ Describing the discussion as including ‘everyone’ thus implies an even distribution of speaking and also, as interview data revealed, that each person’s opinion had a value regardless of age. These examples from interviews with *grin* participants demonstrate this concept:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In thematic coding of interviews and observations. I also included similar expressions such as ‘everyone expresses’ or ‘ideas’ ‘opinions’ etc

No, well, actually the objective [of the discussion] is to discuss, to bring...um...how do you say, discuss, how do you say, everyone expresses his ideas. That's mainly the objective. (Ousseny)

Often when someone has a point of view about a debate, everyone gives his point of view. There is someone else who says, 'I agree,' and another who says, 'I don't agree. Older brother, what you said, I don't agree with that,' and we stay like that and then we leave on friendly terms with no problem. (Moussa)

Here, both Ousseny and Moussa resist the idea that agreement or consensus is the goal of discussing. They felt that expressing and maintaining one's opinions, as opposed to changing them to match other members', was accepted and did not pose any barriers to friendship, supporting ideas behind deliberation and informed consensus. Lassina takes this concept and extends it further to consider the topics of the subjects and from where they originate:

So, the subject that we debate about, we give the floor to X or Y. Everyone gives his opinion, some give their opinion, they insist that 'that's the truth' but there are others who say 'No, it's just one idea, bla bla bla.' But the subject [of debate] comes from...from everyone, actually. Depending on the worries of each person or depending on what's happening. It could be a personal problem, shared amongst us. Amongst us, how do you say that, the system we are up against. So I give my worry and then my worry becomes everyone's worry. Everyone, everyone who's at the grin, who has something to say. Some will share the same idea as me. There are others who will say 'no, what you think, that's not how it is.' And then we debate. Often we draw a conclusion. We also often leave without a conclusion. You know. And often what happens is that before we leave, we find the subject for the following day. That happens. That we say, 'we'll meet tomorrow with this subject.' *Voilà*. So depending on our worries, our problems, current events, the subject comes.

Lassina here also touches on an important element of debate, which is that the subject often arises organically, from whatever major events occurred in the media or in the major or minor events' of members' daily lives. This organic mode of dialogue seems to reflect Buber's concept that dialogue should not be evoked as an aim but 'the ongoing emergence of aims or ideas without an end point of objectification' (Metcalfe and Game, 2012, p. 361). Thus '*chacun donne son point de vue*' also provides a means for people to share their problems and to receive

feedback or 'consolation' (a theme discussed later). Any topic of importance to an individual can become a topic of debate, even personal problems. Interestingly, Lassina uses the phrase 'system that we are up against' as a source of topic for debate, highlighting the fact that different members have different reactions and to the macrosphere and this in itself creates dialogue.

Often a subject could arise from my presence, by asking me about life in Europe or my perspectives on Côte d'Ivoire. I found that the subject often turned to immigration (e.g. *Grin* Observations on September 18, October 7, and October 12 in Abobo). In a field journal entry from September 25 at *Grin 2* which met in front of a member's laundry business located in a small shack on a dead-end dirt road in Abobo, I described having a personal problem, the theft of my mobile phone, and my desire to go to the *grin* to better understand what happened and to receive consolation. When I arrived at the *grin* and we discussed the theft, I mentioned that I had an insurance policy for my phone which led to talking about insurance in Europe versus Côte d'Ivoire and then about the national health insurance policy, which then became a full-fledged debate about the Ouattara administration. Thus the fact that 'everyone can give one's opinion' allows for a diversity of topics and permits fluidity between the macro and micro issues that dominate members' lived experiences.

On the other hand, the relationship between giving one's opinion and listening to others' opinions often seemed tenuous. In an excerpt from my fieldnotes on September 16, only my second observation and first at *Grin 2*, I also describe the concept of '*chacun donne son point de vue*' before it had begun to emerge in data analysis:

There wasn't one person who was giving permission to speak. The conversation was coming and going. There was disagreement. One person would say what he thinks, another one would chime in or disagree. Another would agree. Sometimes it would break into mini dialogues between two people, sometimes everyone was talking amongst themselves and sometimes everyone was in the circle. Because it wasn't really a circle (spatially) people were speaking over others' shoulders. If I did a dialogue map, the conversation would not be centring on one person but bouncing around a few, with some others completely silent.

In his essay 'The Elements of the Interhuman,' Buber (1999, p.79) describes the majority of conversation today as 'speechifying' where 'people do not really speak to one another, but each, although turned to the other, really speaks to a fictitious court of appeal whose life consists of nothing but listening to him.' For Buber, too much time is spent 'talk[ing] past one another' as opposed to engaging in a true dialogue where the other is 'confirmed.' In the cases of the dialogue in the *grins*, it also seems that some 'speechifying' occurs in the sense that speaking, and not listening, is often the prime motivation. Giving one's opinion may not be a way to truly listen and understand in full mutuality.

### **'Parler de Tout et de Rien'**

Many participants and non-participants described *grins* as spaces where people would gather around a teapot and '*parler de tout et de rien*' or 'talk about everything and nothing'. This expression, 'to talk about everything and nothing' infers a certain informality, like 'shooting the breeze' or chatting inconsequentially. However, it also points to the fact that they could bring up any subject in the *grins* and also relates to the ability, as stated above, for each member to contribute. Most members said discussions related to sports, religion, politics and things happening in their lives. Souleymane and Mamadou describe this meaning of 'everything' in the macro political and social way as well as everything in the sense of their daily lives and micro level concerns:

Yes, we talk about politics. We talk about everything, everything, everything that you can imagine. We talk about religion, about politics, the world's current state, the atrocities in the world. Heeeeey, we talk about everything, everything but in a respectable way, like, in a way....and then everyone expresses what he thinks and then by doing that we try to see what is good and what isn't good. *Voilà*, it's that, in our grin we talk about everything. (Souleymane)

My main motivations? First off, where I'm coming from now, Grin 2. That's our meeting. And plus we are all about the same age [pause]. *Voilà*, we're all the same age there. So, we can talk however we want. We can discuss whatever. Everything and nothing. Politics. Um, excuse me, but love. Relationships between girls and boys. Ideas. Newspapers. The university. We talk about everything. (Mamadou)

This idea of ‘everything’ often had more to do with macro-political ideas whereas ‘everything and nothing’ had a stronger relationship to the inconsequential daily happenings. For this reason, it surfaced more in the dialogue in *grins* than in *parlements*, as the *grins* were also more concerned with daily life and issues. However, dialogue in these spaces was characterised by the ability to discuss any type of topic, including familiar and more global.

### **Consensus, Contradiction and Conflict Resolution in *Grins***

Today, subjects such as religion, sport and everyday life occupy a greater proportion of discussion topics and allow more space for differences in opinion than the more politically oriented discussions of the past. Furthermore, as the following section shows, factors such as evidence-backed claims, friendship and traditional Ivoirian mediation processes allow for contradictions to occur without escalating into more serious conflicts.

Some members expressly sought *grins* that they knew to be more contradictory: Ousseny liked to go to a particular *grin* because he knew that one person would always challenge him there. In another *grin*, described in an article in the *l'Inter* newspaper (Diaby, 2015), the *grin* would pick a topic and the divide the group into opposing camps to have a more ‘realistic’ debate. However, while members often claimed that they disagreed often and strongly, observations revealed the potentially superficial nature of these contradictions. For example, debates often emerged when two members disagreed on factual details regarding a person or an event, as opposed to deeper political or ideological matters. At *Grin* in Abobo-Anador (November 18, 2014), I watched a heated debate between a few members, including Mamadou and Amara, about the educational background of the Minister of Education. After nearly 15 minutes of discussion, Mamadou took out a smart phone and looked up the information on Wikipedia and the conflict was resolved immediately. Although this debate had actually sprung from a more politically relevant topic about the government’s capacity for handling the military uprising that had occurred the previous day, they did not focus on this potentially more upsetting or polarising topic.

Consensus however was not important in regards to supporting the current President for whom most members had voted. In fact, most *grins* openly criticised Ouattara, as Lucas explains:

the subject of the debates changed. Before, everyone criticised Laurent Gbagbo, now it's the new power that we criticise [...] we criticise the current power. We're partisans but we criticise when there is something untruthful, when there are things that aren't good.

Lucas acknowledges that members of the RDR have the right to criticise the party when they do not support its actions, which, in the case of such relatively homogenous groups could encourage space for critical thinking and reflection, indicating possibilities for dialogue. Some members often espoused contradictory opinions just to force their co-members to reflect (Field Journal, October 3; Diaby, 2014). For example, several significant events such as a military mutiny in the once-rebel stronghold of Bouaké inspired stronger political debates within *grins* concerning Ouattara's actions. Ouattara's failure to improve the economic situation of his constituents was also frequently criticised.

When asked how they could contradict, participants responded that they needed arguments and evidence in order to express their opinion or contradict one another or the current government. Ismael describes this:

Yes yes, if you don't agree. But you have to have enough arguments to contradict. If you don't agree or if you learned or read something somewhere that doesn't agree with what the imam says or with an older brother, you simply say, 'well, me, I saw this place, this book...' or 'I heard this thing which doesn't agree with what you said so, me, I don't agree and here are the ideas that he had.' But with knowledge, you know, you can contradict. But with knowledge. With supporting evidence.

Contradiction is possible when you have a basis for it; without supporting evidence, fellow members can discount or dismiss your proposal. This encourages members to conduct their own research or also to become 'experts' in certain fields. However, as Doubmia expresses, this knowledge builds throughout ones participation and as one grows into a role as a knowledge giver as opposed to a receiver.

The idea of 'everyone giving one's opinion' as a form of debate influenced the nature of contradiction and consensus. Here Doumbia and I discuss this:

Doumbia: People even contradict me. I don't agree and then everyone gives his opinion. Very often we don't agree, there are two sides or even three sides and then the next day we come back to the subject and we can come to agreement or not.

M: Ok, so is the objective to come to an agreement?

Doumbia: Well, the objective is that everyone wants to get his message across. For example I have a message to put out, and if I can have X or X with me, if I can convince them to be on my side to debate the messages, so it's my message that I want to get heard. That's all.

M: So sometimes you let things go even if you aren't all in agreement?

Doumbia: Even if we don't agree, we let it go.

Doumbia seeks to have a few members on his 'side' to support him in the debate and for his message to be 'heard.' Furthermore, Doumbia, and some others like Mamadou, have also brought up the idea of reflection, of letting an idea sit until the next day and coming back to discuss again. Thus the regular frequency with which *grins* meet indicates that members also have the time to consider others' arguments and perhaps over time shift their beliefs. This consistency of meeting together could help for groups to form consensus and move towards normative goals (Sen, 1999, 2009) which would also reflect the process of reflection leading towards action within the concept of humanising dialogue.

However, the ability to come to a consensus or to agree to disagree depended on the subject matter. For example, subjects such as politics proved more difficult and members preferred to maintain friendships and well-being as opposed to arguing. Lucas explains that in his grin, rather than consensus on political issues, 'all of us, what we want is well-being. When we reach consensus and conclusions, it's that. It's well-being – whether you're for or against, it's well-being that we are always seeking.' This indicates that although the dialogue of the spaces often concerned politics, the basis of the dialogue came from their personal relationships. Well-being here could also relate to the idea of a better world and of bettering their own

situations, which is at the heart of the connection between the micro and macro levels of dialogue.

In *grins*, I noticed that contradiction was accepted to a certain level but members would have strategies to interrupt or distract from the tension. In *Grin 11* in Treichville (November 20, 2014), there was a heated debate between the leader, Souleymane, and another man. It went on for several minutes without any sign of someone conceding. Then, another member, Amadou, stood and approached Souleymane, the leader, who was in the middle of debating and whispered in his ear. I wrote in my notes that I thought this could be to distract him. Amadou seemed to have intentionally done this as opposed to shouting over the crowd and adding to the noise. After Amadou whispered, Souleymane was forced to stop what he was saying and react to what he had heard. Souleymane stopped the debate to announce that the wife of a member had just given birth. Then everyone congratulated and asked when the baptism would take place and if the *grin* would make a contribution. There was no return to the debate and the focus completely shifted. The following day, I called Amadou to ask about what he had done. He confirmed that it was a strategy to distract people and stop them from fighting and that ‘when there is...when a debate gets too heated, you need to create something to break the rhythm.’ Amadou seemed very pleased about his strategy and its success at that particular moment.

However, situations such as the above rarely occurred and members often just switched topic without fanfare when a consensus or agreement could not occur. For example, at the *Grin 24* in Abobo (December 3, 2014), I watched the group of 10-13 men debate about the *candidature unique*<sup>26</sup> for over an hour. It became apparent that no conclusion could be made, so suddenly someone asked a Burkinabe member about the political situation in his country and then the discourse entirely switched to the coup and Blaise Compaoré’s whereabouts.

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<sup>26</sup> *Candidature Unique* refers to the ‘*Appel de Daoukro*’ made by Henri Konan Bédié, the head of the PDCI, who controversially announced that the PDCI, and other parties in the RHDP alliance, would not present a candidate for the 2015 elections.

### **Conflict Resolution: Friendships**

Friendships influenced the level to which people were willing to contradict and disagree and on what subjects. Ismael said that they avoided politics since it could be too divisive of a subject:

Marika: Are there people of different political parties in the grin?

Ismaël: In the grin, yes, there are people from different political parties in the grin. Yes, yes, there are. But, we don't make an issue of it, you know, we don't make a big deal of it because....honestly, that can divide us, can lead us to fight or do things that are against our religion, so subjects like different political parties, in any case, we don't make a big deal about but everyone analyses things according to his own thoughts, his way of thinking about things and that can draw the attention of others.

Using a different strategy, Idrissa would just make politics into a joking matter to ease any tensions for a *grin* member who was Christian and FPI. Regarding disagreements, he says:

Idrissa: Well, with us, there isn't this problem. We haven't experienced this problem. We are such good friends, we tease each other, we make fun of each other. 'You, your Gbagbo, isn't he in the ICC, go and look for him there.' We say things like that, it's not fighting. But, before, we couldn't do that, it was too...but now, with friends you can say that. But, outside, like that, people don't know you so someone could think something about you but with friends we joke. There's no problem, it's like with the guy who comes to see me, everyday we discuss, we're together.

Marika: Do you make jokes?

Idrissa: We joke a lot, we make a lot of jokes. It's fairly important. That calms people, that soothes. It allows us to not take certain things too seriously. We make a lot of jokes.

He told me that in the space, they avoid politics because they don't want to alienate people. However, instead of ignoring their differences, they prefer to make light of this as this seems to ease the tensions. Amara also talks about friendship allowing for different political opinions, but in a different way. Whereas friendship prevented political discussion in the previous two *grins*, in this *grin* it seemed to allow for more trust that then created a safe environment to contradict:

Yes, they [minority parties] have a lot of freedom of expression. Because we are not afraid of each other. We have known each other for a long time. We aren't afraid of each other. *Voilà*. Now, when those who don't already know us, when they come maybe they are cautious. But sometimes, when they see the dialogue, we can be neutral, when they see that the others also express themselves who aren't RDR, who have the courage to express themselves. But those, the old members of the *grin*, they know that no one can hurt them. We know each other. Perfectly. Our families know each other, we can't hurt each other. So, they contribute their points of view. But we too, we appreciate that. *Voilà*. We appreciate that.

Amara embraces different viewpoints but this is easier in a context where he feels safe and supported by people who know him. Mamadou, a member of the same *grin* as Amara, confirmed this, explaining that there was one member with different beliefs who usually came in the evening and they would debate but that friendship, and as discussed below interethnic alliances, helped create an atmosphere amenable to contradictory debates. However, Amara and Mamadou's *Grin 2* was a site that that I consistently visited throughout my time in the field. I noted that the one FPI member they identified did not frequent the space as often as Amara and Mamadou. Also, this FPI member was still a Muslim and *nordiste*, sharing common cultural and religious values with them. Here, Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1954) concept of homophily, which posits that friendships are formed based on shared characteristics, could also help to explain why debate was possible here between parties of different political beliefs. Lazarsfeld and Merton classify homophily as: value-homophily relating to attitudes like political affiliation or status-homophily regarding age, race or sex or acquired traits such as occupation or education. In the case of Mamadou and Amara's *grin*, although they did not have value-homophily with the opposer, they possessed status-homophily that potentially prevented conflict and erosion of friendship. The importance of friendship here also relates again to Yeakley's (1998) concept of 'friendship potential' and how people engage better in dialogue when they believe that they can be friends with the member of the 'outgroup'. However, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire shows that the boundaries of 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' are often blurred and change depending on context.

### **Conflict Resolution: Interethnic Alliances**

In addition to their strategies of avoidance or joking, several people also mentioned interethnic alliances as a strategy for regulating conflict. Interethnic alliances, sometimes called 'joking relationships' or 'cousins' (Davidheiser, 2005), are a historic means of establishing harmonious relationships between different ethnic groups, notably within the Malian empire (Kouyate, 2009). These alliances established rules about conflict and joking between different ethnicities, relations and even age groups to prevent tensions and provide clear protocol for resolving any disputes. While the government has also attempted to mobilise these in the peace and reconciliation processes like the CDVR, interethnic divides, which also often fall along political lines, proved stronger than such customs. These interethnic alliances have limitations and may work best in a familiar circle of friends, as they clearly were not able to prevent ruptures at a broader societal level. However *grin* members like Doumbia used these alliances as strategies for easing tensions:

So I use the alliance thing to tease a bit the 'Syllas' [last name], so I use the alliances to tease, to tease, tease so in that way I often send some ambience when someone there is miffed, I say a little something to amuse the group to tease, to tease and then, well from there the subjects come, there are subjects that come from there so. It's like that.

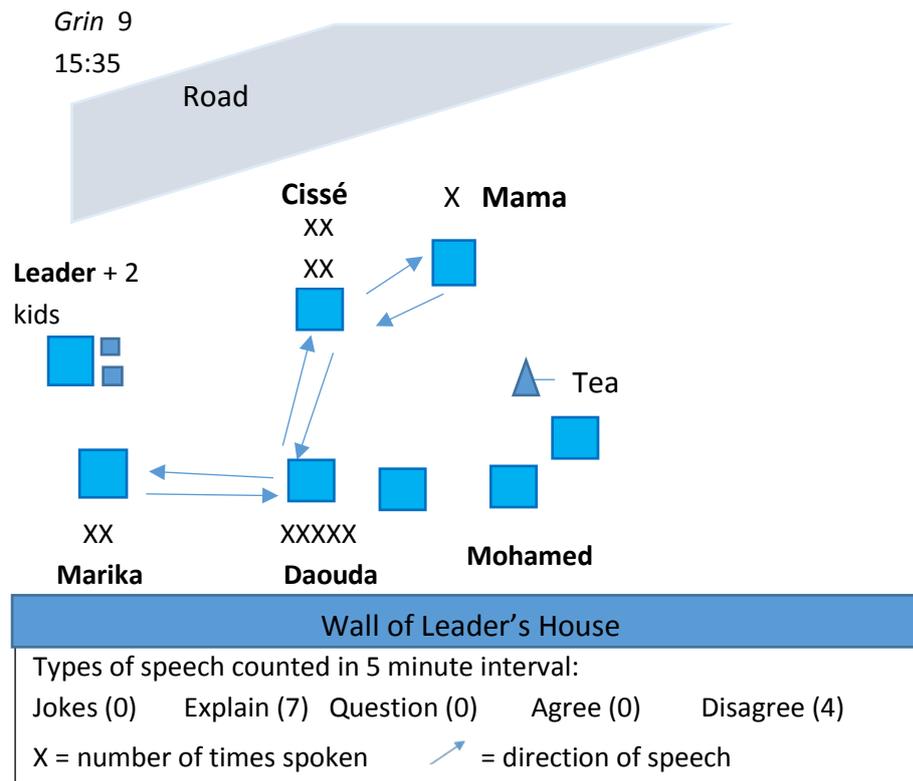
Here, Doumbia says that he uses joking and interethnic alliances to calm conflicts. He infers that the alliances are humoristic and thus also create a distraction which can then bring about new topics of discussion and move the group on from whatever conflict had ensued. Also Amara talks about alliances, contradictions and conflict:

You can say, 'oh you, you're not thinking straight!' because the argument you are giving isn't solid. One can say that, 'you too, you don't know anything'. So it's shocking. So the other is shocked, he replies and when he replies it becomes heated. So there is always a third person next to them to say, 'You need to calm down, no, it's not like that,' who tries to stay in the middle. Often it finished. But apart from that, are there conflicts? No, there haven't been any conflicts as such in the grin. Mostly because we can't have conflicts. Ah, because of the alliances. There is an alliance. There are Senoufo, with who, with the Yacoubas. All that, we are allies. These are African values that we haven't betrayed. You can't fight with a Senoufo.

Amara seems to insinuate that while contradictions do occur, mechanisms like inter-ethnic alliances assist in managing these conflicts so that they do not turn into larger disputes. The interethnic alliances 'humanise' people in a way that they no longer feel that they can get into a serious dispute because that person is in some way related and not a foreigner or enemy, creating a 'between' or shared mutual space in Buber's terms. Furthermore, they demonstrate a 'local' aspect of conflict resolution that is perhaps useful at the micro level but not necessarily recognised within internationally-imposed peacebuilding concepts (Jabri, 2013).

### **Dialogue Map of *Grin***

During observations, I made discussion maps in my field journal to better illustrate patterns of speech. These observations occurred at five-minute intervals since members frequently changed seats or new members joined. In the example below, arrows indicate how speech flowed between members and X indicates the number of times people spoke. I also noted types of speech that I heard (in this instance, 7 explanations and 4 disagreements). This following example, from late September, occurred at *Grin* 9 in the Peka-18 district of Abobo where the members, many of whom worked as drivers or in transport, were discussing immigration:



Dialogue Map of Grin: Grin 9

As the diagram above shows, the conversation involved four people of the eight seated in my space, and primarily between two members, Cissé and Daouda. Similar to Bohm's (2004) describes an ideal dialogue situation, the members are seated in circle facing each other and with a small enough group so that everyone can see each other. As depicted above, the leader was generally silent although he did interject later when the debate became too heated. In my notes, I wrote that 'they disagree openly with each other. They can speak over each other – there is no permission asked and they don't have to listen either.' At one point, Bamba turns to me and says this how it is in the *grin*, 'everyone gives his opinion. We respect life.' I note that Daouda and Bamba, the two main speakers, are around the same age although not the oldest. After the above observation map, the younger participants spoke, though only occasional interjections, until the debate begins to focus on the youngest member, Mohamed, and his job in shared transport. When the older ones begin questioning Mohamed, he argues back. I wrote, 'Mohamed, the *gnamboro* [transport worker], is younger than the others (19) but is still yelling to get his voice heard over the others, since people are talking at the same time. No one needs

permission to talk.’ This was in response also to thinking about if age could impact the participation of members, but in this case it did not seem important. Rather, participants seemed to engage when they felt that they had something particular to contribute, through their personal or professional knowledge. An interview with Mohamed, the youngest member, highlighted this notion of everyone being able to speak as a part of the teaching-learning process associated with dialogue:

Marika: In the debates, do you ever come to a consensus?

Mohamed: Yes, we often come to a conclusion. Often it stays like that until we know who was right and who was wrong. Either we turn the page or we stay like that [disagreeing] until we go home.

M: Ok, I see. Ha. And since you’re younger than the other people, what do you do to get the floor?

Mohamed: Well, actually, in the grin, when there’s a debate like that, you’re not obligated to ask for permission to speak. You give your opinion. You give your opinion, it’s always like that. You’re not required to ask for permission before stepping in. Because, we often say that in life we never stop learning. Maybe what I want to say, maybe the other guy doesn’t know it. It’s through me that he is going to learn certain things, and it’s like that, through him, that I’m going to learn a lot of things too. So, like, the permission is open to everyone. Permission is given to everyone.

Earlier in the interview, Mohamed said that they usually discuss things relating to their day to day life and that ‘everyone tries to comment’. He feels that everyone can participate because each member has something valuable to contribute. However, the idea that ‘chacun donne son point de vue’ is both contested and supported by the dialogue map. People generally gave ‘explanations’ as opposed to disagreeing or asking questions, which does indicate a type of ‘giving opinion.’ However, the map also shows that far from everyone participated, at least in that interval. As my notes also show, even when others do participate, the dialogue is dominated by two members. Mohamed’s statement that no one needs *permission* to talk is illustrated in my observations, even though not everyone takes advantage of this freedom. I also noted this after an interview with Mamadou, a member of *Grin 2*, who mentioned that the debate was often between him and another member, which I also observed on multiple occasions. The idea of ‘everyone giving his opinion’ may be more of a feeling of possibility rather than a reality. Furthermore, the patterns of discussion

often depended on the time of day. In an interview with Mamadou, he told me that nights were when the debate became more centred and focused, as opposed to the multiple side conversations that I had viewed in the above observation. However, I noted that this sometimes lead to people talking over each other instead of listening. Being 'heard' may not be as important as just expressing what you want to say. Yet, listening to others must also play a role in the learning process that Mohamed describes.

## Dialogue in *Agoras*

### *Parler de tout et de rien*

While *agora* participants described their dialogue as 'talking about everything,' only those in the post-2011 context inferred that 'everything' also meant personal issues. With the exception of Vincent's description of comedic orators who 'entertained the public and talked about "everything and nothing,'" the theme did not surface for pre-2011 parlement and *agora* participants. However, the newer forms of *agoras* that surfaced after the crisis and that were generally smaller in size did sometimes evoke the term. For example, Vincent talks about the new group he has formed in his new neighbourhood in Port Bouët, having fled Yopougon after the crisis. Vincent says that this group is informal and that they just found each other in the neighbourhood through friends that had similar political beliefs:

But like I said, since the post-crisis period...I was in Yopougon, I moved to this neighbourhood. It's with friends, I ran into a friend who told me, *Voilà*, there's another guy who's on our side, *Voilà* there's another and another and sooner or later, we met in courtyard, a courtyard that was central and we began meeting regularly to chat about everything and nothing, not necessarily politics.

Again, for him everything and nothing is not strictly political but here has more to do with informal chatting with friends. He called these groups TD (smaller meetings, see Chapter Five for discussion of TD and *plénaires* Vincent later went on to say that now, because their friendships are more important than the party divide within the FPI, they have ceased talking about politics and mostly play chess or discuss other less controversial issues.

Kouassi described another instance of '*parler de tout et de rien*' in post-conflict *agoras* when meeting a new group of people in his new neighbourhood after the crisis:

Aside from politics, we were meeting...in a friendly way, to share...You know, our worries, current events. But we were talking about everything and nothing. It was difficult to meet because in the meantime there were a lot of non-identified, armed men. Who...who were around, who suspected everyone of everything and nothing. So, it was a bit complicated. When, eventually, um...the climate calmed down, that's when we started meeting informally to chat. Still talking about political news but mostly...about the Ivorian crisis and the imprisonment of Gbagbo. First in Korhogo and then his transfer to the Hague.

Although politics was still a focal point of their discussions, PA expresses the concept of '*de tout et de rien*', perhaps because it lacks the structure of the pre-crisis parlement. However, the fact that he uses the term 'friendly way' and also 'our worries' indicates that their own personal lives was playing a larger factor in the post-crisis space, which could also contribute. More so, Kouassi's use of 'everything and nothing' about the police suspecting them reinforces the idea of inconsequentiality – that the police were suspecting them for trivial or non-existent reasons. Political discourse is rooted in their own personal lives, linking the micro and macro issues happening in the country. As in *grins*, talking about everything and nothing also had to do with both the subject matter and conveying a certain mood. It was a way of passing time. The casual mood of '*de tout et de rien*' and the ability to chat about inconsequential things was a luxury and created a barrier to participation for women (as noted in Chapter One) as well as some working people, married people or those who lacked time to participate due to other obligations.

### **National Federations' Influence upon Dialogue**

*Parlements* may have also undergone changes due to broader shifts in national leadership. Before the crisis, there were three federations that organised *parlements*, *agoras* and orators: FENAPCI, FENOPACI and UNOPACI (see Chapter Three for more details). These national federations allowed for heightened coordination in the messages that were being transmitted and also gave the groups more authority. After the crisis, due to the exile of many leaders such as Idrisse Ouattara of

FENAPCI, these organisations and the *parlements* within them came to a standstill or at least drastically changed their methods. The interim president of FENAPCI and the president of FENOPACI both described their methods of outreach having changed. FENOPACI has tried some ‘mobile *parlements*’ where they just come with an orator to an area and have a one-off event. Otherwise, they organise clandestine meetings, relying on their local leaders to gather members to meet and then transmit messages. FENAPCI also has taken this approach, calling them ‘information cells’. In 2013, FENAPAOCI was created to fill the so-called leadership vacuum – unlike the other groups, FENAPAOCI took a more public approach, asking members to come out of the shadows (General Assembly, Oct. 25, 2014). It also seems that the internal party divide, what one *parlementaire* referred to as ‘bicephalism’ of Affi and Gbagbo, has weakened these national structures, and their *agoras* within. These tensions were heightened during Affi Nguessan’s 2015 presidential campaign and again in Gbagbo’s 2016 trial at the ICC.

### **Contradictions and Consensus in *Agoras***

*Parlements*, with their different types of discussion format and more inherent political agenda, approached conflict and consensus differently than *grins*. The role of consensus within the spaces has also evolved alongside the current divisions in the FPI and the split between Affi Nguessan and Laurent Gbagbo.

Though *agoras* unilaterally supported the FPI, Vincent claimed that differences of thought existed amongst members of the same party. Referring to pre-2015 spaces, he explains that:

So I was saying that orators, we were all on the same side but we didn’t necessarily have the same points of view. So that meant that when you finish speaking, for example, the public wants to know certain things. There is a part of the audience that is maybe agreeing with you, with what you said. But there is another part that wants to understand, that wants to show you that what you argued...doesn’t stand up to the critique that they made of the situation. So, *Voilà*. The debates were heated. Just because we’re in the same party doesn’t mean that we have the same way of thinking, the same way of seeing things. Between us even, there were differences.

However, part of being an orator also required being able to engage with these critiques and perhaps try to convince the audience to agree. Serge also felt really strongly about the ability to disagree, referring to the current problems within the party:

Ah ! But ! Look ! But Clearly ! No, we contra [cuts off], no ! Here, you aren't obligated. Maybe you have noticed currently in Côte d'Ivoire that the party is nearly divided in 2? Oooh! There's the Affi bloc and the Gbagbo bloc. You saw this right? But they're in the same political party. So, oh, there is no problem, there is no problem. There is no problem. No problem. In the parlement, you can have different ideas than me, I mean, you aren't obligated to see the same way as me. It's not for sectioning off, eh.

Here Serge acknowledges the divide, although this interview was in early November 2014 before divisions became more entrenched and a partition of the party occurred. Kouassi also says that it is generally easy to contradict, but with manners and that when one person speaks the others must listen, otherwise you are impolite to interrupt. He explains that if you want to disagree sometimes people can directly bring up their contradiction when someone is speaking but otherwise, 'you let the person finish because when you will have listened better, you will be able to argue better.' Kouassi says that you can only thoroughly disagree and argue if you understand the other person's argument. While Kouassi describes an active type of listening, I often observed passive listening and typical forms of crowd participation, potentially related to cultural norms of conversation.

There was some contradiction perhaps in the form of questions at the mini-plenary at Kouté orated by Aristide. When they opened up to questions from the audience, the second one came from a man who said that he did not agree with boycotting the 2015 presidential elections. He said that this was betrayal and that they should call off the elections entirely. However, the orator responded by explaining that the man was actually in agreement with him and that by boycotting the elections, the elections would not take place, styming any further contradiction. While question and answer sections of the meetings were observed, these were often cut short. At one event *Agora 3* in Yopougon, I noted that the well-known orator asked if the crowd wanted a 'Question and Answer' session and they said no, they wanted him to speak, and so continued for 30 minutes (December 7, 2014). At the end of the

speech, the FENAPAOCI leaders who chauffeured him were hurried to leave and did not allow any time for questions. .

Contradictions in *agoras* and *parlements* became more sensitive with the internal party divides in the FPI. FENAPAOCI wanted all of its *agoras* to be pro-Gbagbo and against Affi N'guessan as the FPI's candidate for the 2015 elections. Supporting anyone other than Gbagbo was viewed by some as a betrayal and the president of *Agora 5* also told me that 'you can't speak badly about Laurent Gbagbo. You can criticise him but you can't denigrate him.' This would make it difficult to have an open conversation about the issue. Furthermore, Jean-Luc, a member of FENOPACI, explained that when working in a federation everyone needed to agree on key issues. He felt that the federation should say who they should support and everyone should follow suit:

That's why I said earlier, that since it's a federation, normally we should all have the same point of view and then work together. But when the ideas are...are different, are divergent, it's better to let things sit for a while and let them evolve. Because currently, the federation should tell us 'we need to support so-and-so.'

In this current climate, he found it too difficult for the federation to actually establish consensus so he believed it better to avoid controversial issues altogether. However, unlike *grins* who did this to preserve friendship, fears of alienation and need for political unity seemed more important in *agoras*. This also shows the difficulties that even similar groups can have, in attaining the overlapping consensus required in deliberative forms of dialogue and sheds light on some of the complications of dialogue processes for peace, within one's own group identity or political group.

Instead of going to *agoras* to have their opinions challenged, it seemed that participants sought confirmation and consolation in similar beliefs. This relates to the emotional aspect of politics (Nussbaum, 2013), and not the rational, as many were comforted and consoled people to hear people speaking what they *wanted* to hear or say. In my first observation at *Agora 3* (October 11, 2014), I wrote about how the audience seems soothed by listening to messages that they agreed with. In a different occasion at the same *agora*, on December 6, 2014, I listened to a well-known orator, Gerard, give updates about Blé Goudé at the ICC, ordering the crowd

to 'stay serene' (*restez serène*). He continued by telling them that Gbagbo would soon be free. Both the orator and audience probably knew that little truth existed in his statement, yet this consoled the audience and perhaps even Gerard to express their sincerest political emotions. At a large meeting at the Tout Puissant Kremlin, which FENAPAOI had helped organise before the FPI's congress, the orator, Aristide, told the audience that Gbagbo would return soon and that the members of the parlement, whose neighbourhood borders the airport, would be the first ones to meet him when he landed. These statements, not based on fact, serve to keep people engaged in the political struggle, giving them hope about their current position. At another meeting at *Agora 2* on December 12 2014, the orator told the crowd that the congress happened and that Affi Nguessan, Gbagbo's intra-party adversary was 'finished. Dead.' Their motivation was not to tell what was true but what would keep the audience engaged and motivated, and thus also narrowed the space for contradiction to occur. This element of hope, however, seems different than what Freire and Buber are suggesting – it is still based on partisan issues and not on the formation of a just society in broader views.

### **Political Discourse in *Agoras***

Data revealed two different kinds of 'talk' about politics: the first consisted of *talking about* politics in discussions in both *agoras* and *grins*, which generally related to current events. However, in *agoras*, there was also *talking* politics, engaging in ideological discussions about politics, which was often the primary, if not only subject. In this case, the participants were reciting the 'party line' or discourse prevalent in the party, not just information or ideas about elections or elected officials. In my coding of observational and interview data, I differentiated these two concepts with the codes 'politics' and 'political discourse'. This political discourse that arose may be one of the key elements that distinguished *agoras* and *grins* and highlights the differences not only in religion or in ethnicity but in beliefs about how the country should be governed and relate to the rest of the world.

One example of a repeated ideology is anti-imperialism. McGovern (2011, p. 88) calls this 'resentment against French neo-colonial presence in and control of Ivorian politics and economy' a 'master trope' of the FPI and patriotic galaxy, further

analysed in depth by Cutolo (2012) and Arnaut (2008). I noted this anti-French discourse in observations of *agoras*, for example:

The president goes on a speech against the French and how they lie to the Ivoirians. The French want to steal everything. Gbagbo opened their eyes. (November 11, *Agora 4*)

He talks about cacao prices (something that has been a lot in the newspapers lately) and about how it's all lies. Then talks about France, Nescafé, their domination and how the system just enriches a few people in power. He uses the anti-imperialist, anti-France discourse that was at the heart of Gbagbo's agenda. (October 11, *Agora 3*)

These concepts also arose in interviews, such as with Kouassi:

You take Côte d'Ivoire. There's oil. Largest producer of cacao in the world. Third producer of coffee. Producer of gold. Diamonds. Leather. Etc. Etc. And that the population is in a precarious situation of poverty. You understand? And that some students, I'm talking about, or rather some fathers of families can't send their children to school. Any yet there are lots of expatriates who live in big houses and make lots of money, for example. You understand? Or we spend millions to make war in other countries, that the USA spends billions on war, that their army is maintained while...the people are suffering here. So something isn't right. It's first of all an ontological interrogation, I mean, for man to question himself in relation to his history.

Kouassi, a university student who is clearly well-educated shows his depth of knowledge about these themes of French and Western economic domination in West Africa. Interestingly, he points to the need for people to reflect and question their assumptions and beliefs. His mention of 'ontological interrogation' and questioning of historicity also show a familiarity with Marxist thought which was also prevalent in Gbagbo's discourses (e.g. Gbagbo, 1983). I often reflected in my notes that I also believed in many of the principals that *agora* participants expressed but grappled with the ideology that was spoken and the realities of Gbagbo's policies and acts.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Gbagbo's earlier career as a professor, unionist and political dissident all indicate his socialist, anti-imperialist beliefs, on which he has authored a number of books. However, he altered this discourse during his presidency to legitimize his presidency and resist foreign involvement in the crisis.

Along with FPI ideology, other themes resurfaced in meetings, interviews, and political propaganda and news articles. Nelson Mandela was often evoked in relation to Gbagbo because of his struggle for justice and also for being a 'man of the people'. Aristide, an animator-turned-orator and a founding member of FENOPACI, quoted Mandela in our interview, even citing, falsely, a page and line number. It seemed that having a knowledge of Mandela's life was important for the collective discourse and perhaps aided Gbagboists to form an identity as an 'oppressed group' and frame the FPI as a party of peace. However speeches and writings of Gbagbo's do not indicate that these associations originated in his own discourses. In an interview with Gbagbo for *Jeune Afrique* magazine in 2010, he says that while he respects Mandela, he is also highly critical of him and his negotiations, and that 'Mandela is a politician, not a myth' (Gbagbo, 2010). However, his youth leader Blé Goudé, who may have been more influential in terms of influencing orators because of his prominent role in street meetings, often compares them.

Apart from Mandela, orators and political leaders also evoked Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK Jr.) in terms of defining their struggle against oppression. However, at one speech by a political leader at the FENAPAOI General Assembly (October 25, 2014), he used an example of MLK Jr. leading the struggle for black freedom in the USA and how his dream was for blacks to be equal to whites but that today, blacks are not only equal, blacks were in power and a black man was the president of the white people. This was also quoted in the newspaper article that detailed the event (LG Info, October 28, 2014). Yet MLK Jr.'s message here seemed misconstrued and somehow used to encourage the oppressed to eventually dominate the oppressor. Fieldnotes describe how, after Martin Luther King Jr., a comparison with Mandela followed directly:

At 13:11 he's still on Mandela talk. He is making elaborate metaphors bringing together Mandela, Martin Luther King and Gbagbo. This puts Gbagbo on a very high level and makes it difficult to dispute him. Harder for the audience to contradict. It is a powerful emotional appeal. (October 25, 2014)

Then later I comment:

Narcisse (an orator) often uses this same South Africa discourse when we are talking. Are discourses recycled? Is it comforting to hear

the same thing repeated? Or the more it becomes repeated the more it becomes a truth? How does discourse and how do orators reinforce and create truths? (October 25, 2014)

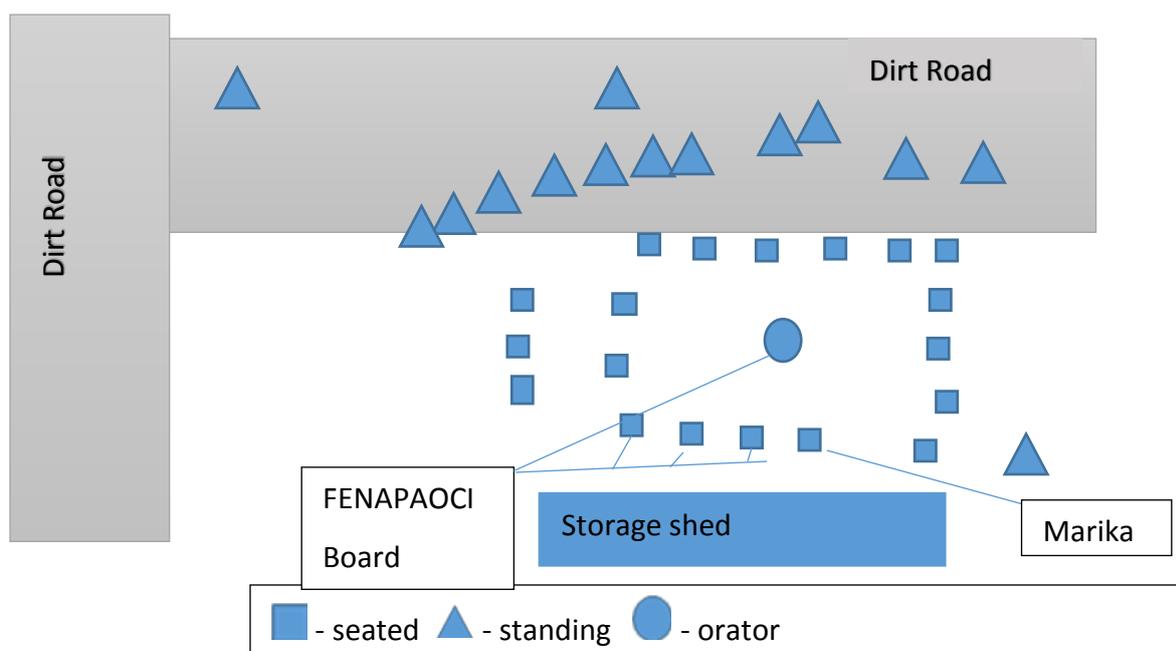
By listening to the same speeches, repeated by different people, eventually certain messages can become engraved into the collective psyche, becoming unquestionable truths. In using Jung's (1970) concept of the 'collective unconscious,' Mandela would seem to be an archetypal figure that was utilised to shape the population's idea of Gbagbo's life and mission.

Kouamé acknowledged this type of repetition as a standard practice in *agoras*. I asked Kouamé about how they continuously found new oration topics if they were meeting daily. He responded that the objective was not to have new topics, partly because the same people would not attend every day and partly because people did not mind hearing the same thing twice. This repetition also renders *l'art oratoire* more rehearsed than attendees may perceive (see Chapter Seven). While the audience hears a speech as if for the first time, the speaker may have already delivered the same talk, or a variation, several times. Orators undoubtedly possess considerable talent but the effortless and spontaneity so revered by observers was to an extent falsified.

The fact that many of the *agora* members recited very similar political discourse may directly relate to the structure of *parlements* and *agoras* and their styles of message transmission. Top-level orators, two of which I interviewed formally and a handful of others informally, did tours of the entire country. For this reason, most *agora* participants could explain the difference between Gbagbo's socialist values and Ouattara's neo-liberalism and displayed a high level of understanding about his ideology. This serves as an important reminder that the conflict, especially in Africa, is often oversimplified in ethnic or religious terms, when in fact complex political ideologies are also at play.

## Dialogue Map

The following provides a dialogue map of a parlement in Yopougon on October 11. The national board of a federation of *parlements*<sup>28</sup> had arranged to bring both an orator and me to the space to discuss the current problems within the FPI, so the space had assembled a larger group than usual. However, the scheduled orator cancelled at the last moment and the president of the federation, Aristide, agreed to fill in for him. On the way to the event, the president of the *Agora 3*, also on the board of the federation, explained to me that it would be a 'TD' (*travail dirigé*, a seminar) as opposed to a plenary, which meant 'between us, no microphone, no speakers'. However, he also said that they had organised to have an orator so that I could see how it 'really was' as opposed to how the currently meet on a daily basis. Thus this type of meeting, of which I observed three at *Agora 3*, one of the closer to idealised form of an *agora* that I was able to see.



Dialogue Map of Agora: *Agora 3*

The above dialogue map shows Aristide in the middle of a circle of chairs; gradually a standing audience gathered in the street, with more than 65 people by the end. During the five-minute interval of this dialogue map, only Aristide spoke. In my observation notes from the event, I noted that he would often direct his speech to me, the longest stretch for two minutes, addressing me as *Madame* and using my

<sup>28</sup> I do not disclose the name of the federation in this anecdote as it could compromise anonymity.

foreign status as a reason to explain facts about Laurent Gbagbo. However, he generally stayed in the middle and addressed the group. At some moments he solicited crowd participation e.g. 'if you agree, clap...louder!' and the audience obeyed. He was theatrical: when talking about someone pulling Simone Gbagbo by her hair, he approached me and touched my hair. After 34 minutes of uninterrupted speech, the moderator spoke for two minutes and the 'counsellor' asked me a question about my presence. Then, the audience was allowed to ask questions but after two questions were asked and answered within 14 minutes, the president of the *agora* whispered into Aristide's ear that it was time to leave. Then the speech abruptly ended and we returned to the car and quickly left. Once en route, I told the national federation board with which I was travelling that they had a large audience. They responded that it was nothing, although he amended his description of the event from being a 'TD' to a 'mini-plenary'.

In a later interview with Philippe, on the board of the *Agora 3* where this meeting occurred, he explained that an orator speaking for an extended amount of time was normal:

The orator doesn't give permission to speak [to others]. We say 'we have time,' the orator is there. He is going to discuss for 30 minutes. 30 minutes, he talks, he talks. He gives information, when we are happy we applaud. And when he finishes he leaves.

In this case, the orator has a different role than a moderator: he does not need to ensure equal participation in a debate but rather comes with information to share and leaves. Philippe then went on to tell me that after the orator left, the members would discuss the orator's speech and information but that a question and answer session would not necessarily be conducted. However, Philippe felt that having a moderator was an important part of *parlements* since debates did happen during moments without an orator. In a later visit to the same group, where an orator was not present, I saw such moderation in action.

## Summary

This chapter has drawn out some of the primary elements of dialogue occurring in *grins* and *agoras*. For one, it mapped out how the importance of 'everyone giving his

opinion' in *grins* as opposed to the audience-orator dynamic in *agoras*. Dialogue maps also demonstrated stark differences in how dialogue occurred in the different spaces, with smaller settings and increased participation by members in the *grins* versus larger audiences and focus on a speaker in *agoras*. The spaces also had distinct methods of resolving conflict and accepting contradiction. However, despite these differences in forms, the *agoras* still viewed themselves as talking about every subject. In both spaces, as highlighted by the dialogue maps, the perfection of being able to speak was more important than the act of speaking. Nonetheless, the dominance of political ideology in the *agoras* revealed that real underlying differences between the dialogue in *grins* and *agoras* continues to exist and maintain divisions within Ivoirian society.

These findings underscore the thesis' argument that local processes of dialogue must be understood in order to connect them to broader, macro happenings within the country, as meanings of dialogue differ substantially between groups. In the following chapter, these forms of dialogue will be linked to participants' own motivations and outcomes.

## Chapter Seven – Motivations for and Outcomes of Participation in Dialogue Spaces

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The previous two chapters have described the qualities of *agoras* and *grins* and the form and content of the dialogue that occurs within them. This chapter examines the impacts of the spaces and dialogue on the individual participants, with a focus on personal outcomes in learning, social capital and well-being and demonstrates how learning reflected the types of dialogue that occurred in the spaces. Thus the lecture style of *agora* dialogue that emulated formal schooling, and in particular higher education (See also Atchoua, 2008; Kessé, 2009) effected participants differently to the more private, community-based dialogue of the *grins*. Both groups also discussed acquiring both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, although non-cognitive skills seemed more prevalent in *grin* members, including motivation, self-perception, social competencies, resilience and self-control (Gutmann and Schoon, 2013), whereas *agoras* described more cognitive skills such as memorisation of facts and critical analysis (Anderson *et al*, 2001).

Findings revealed that personal motivations and outcomes were often enmeshed: the initial motivating factors often lead to the intended outcomes, although potentially attributed to the reflective nature of interviews which allowed for participants to make such connections in hindsight. Also, motivations for participation changed alongside the shifting socio-political realities: for example, most *grin* members were initially drawn to the spaces for cultural reasons (Lassina, Mamadou, Amara, Souleymane, Moussa, Idrissa and Doumbia) but information and self-protection became more prominent motivators from 2002-2011. However, after the 2011 post-electoral crisis, *grin* member motivations shifted from political to economic, and while *grin* members today still sought information, it generally took a social or economic, as opposed to political, form. Members' own shifting identities and statuses also shaped outcomes: as junior members aged and became 'older brothers' such as Moussa, Idrissa and Doumbia, they transitioned from recipients to sources of knowledge, giving a more fluid understanding of age relations and hierarchies often discussed in *grins* (Vincourt and Kouyaté, 2012). Similarly, participants in *agoras* could become orators or leaders as time passed, although the concept of 'youth' seemed less affixed to

actual age as to the embodiment of a 'young identity' such as 'youth' leader Blé Goudé who was well into his late 30s at the time of the 2011 crisis.

Participation in the spaces afforded social benefits to members, though these also differed between *grins* and *agoras*. In particular, a type of 'bonding capital' (Leonard, 2004; Putnam, 2001) allowed for members from the same group to gain status, economic gain and political voice through participation. In *grins*, participants brought up themes of bonding capital in the form of membership in itself, in the solidarity and 'brotherhood' that developed and which also extended to sharing of information, financial assistance and life-lessons. In *agoras*, capital or benefits gained was represented by access to important people and political power and for orators, a certain degree of fame (e.g. Narcisse, Aristide, Kouamé).

This chapter reveals how the act of participating in dialogue influenced the learners beyond the space. Theories of dialogue often highlight either personal or societal outcomes that focus on change and that generally relate to mutual understanding between diverse groups (Buber, 1958, 2002; Yankelovich, 1999), structural changes and lessening of oppressive and unjust relationships (Freire, 1972) and improved well-being and democratic structures (Sen, 1999). However, the act of being in dialogue spaces may correspond to the desired outcomes both of participants and in the literature. Furthermore, intrinsic benefits and values of participation may exist in participating, allowing dialogue to be seen as a positive act in itself.

### ***Grins***

*Grin* members' outcomes differed from *agora* members' for reasons relating to the different form of dialogue and motivating factors. *Grin* members reported to acquire cultural, economic and social benefits by participating in the spaces, which were so deeply embedded in tradition (see Chapter Five). The following sections discuss social capital, advice and learning through intergenerational exchanges, well-being and reflection.

### **Social Capital**

*Grin* members were attracted to the spaces because of perceived social capital and interviews and observations showed how members acquired tangible and intangible

benefits as a direct result of participation. Unlike Bourdieu (1986) who saw social capital as a way of perpetuating social hierarchies and inequalities, members felt that the inclusive nature of the group and the intermingling between ages and professions allowed for lower income members to benefit from more successful or established ones. Instead, social capital seems to reflect Bankston and Zhou's (2002, p. 286) assertion that it 'does not consist of resources that are held by individuals or by groups but of processes of social interaction leading to constructive outcomes.' Similarly, it reflects the concept of bonding capital provided by Putnam (2001) in which these interactions strengthen the standing and status of a group. These 'constructive outcomes' were often what motivated members to join a group yet the processes of dialogue in and of themselves also constituted a desired outcome.

The unique identities of members converging in a space also lead to important outcomes. Idrissa describes how the various careers of the members were significant to his own outcomes in the space and how members provide important information about not only life but also politics, particularly during the crisis:

In the grin there, I learn a lot of things, lots of things about life. Because we give each other a lot of information about what's happening, whatever it may be, especially when there were political tensions here. We gave each other a lot of information. Whenever we met, one would say 'in my neighbourhood, this is what happened,' another person would say 'it sounds like this is going to happen'. So that way we are all informed about what's happening outside. And then in the grin, there are men with different types of jobs. There are electricians, ironsmiths, teacher... that means that we help each other too. Whenever I need an electrician I tell my friend, I call him over. I don't pay him, because when he needs me he calls me and I do what I can, so we help each other in the group.

Here Idrissa explains how a group of people with different trades could support each other through difficult periods. The *grins* provide an extra shield of support in vulnerable economic times and a resource base for daily needs. There also seems to be a shift from a political focus to economic focus that reflects the social realities of the *grins*. Again, this shows a type of bonding capital and also the collective,

shared aspirations of the groups. While dialogue was their 'activity,' the benefits of being in the group extended beyond the time spent together talking.

*Grin* members did not talk about learning public speaking and most of them did not indicate learning job related skills during their time in the *grins*. However, they did view the *grin* as important for making connections that could lead to jobs, representing an important form of social capital. The presidents of RGCI and RGTCI (the two national federations of *grins* in Cote d'Ivoire) also stated employment as the primary objective of their organisation.

Additionally, bonding capital was often acquired in through the practice of giving *cotisations*, or financial contributions. A typical practice in Côte d'Ivoire (Etienne, 1966) and West Africa (Ndione, 1994) *cotisations* were described by almost all *grin* members (except Diaby and Aby) as financial support for members in 'happiness and sadness' e.g. births, deaths, weddings, baptisms or illness. In more formalised *grins*, such *Grin 15* (November 9, 2014) or *Grin 12* (October 19, 2014), official meetings were held outside of normal 'discussion' times, usually on a Sunday, to collect each member's contribution and to discuss official business. Other groups such as *Grin 11* chose not to have a formal monthly contribution, as it created 'too much disorder' (Souleymane). Doumbia also explained that members of his *grin* who had successfully emigrated to Europe or other countries continued to contribute funds to the *grin* to support the group and maintain their bond to the space.

*Cotisation* also denoted membership in the *grin*, as opposed to casual participation. My transcriber, a self-described *non-participant* took me to a *grin* that he knew of one day (*Grin 5*, September 28, 2014). In my field notes, I expressed surprise that he did not consider himself a member, as he seemed very comfortable and actively participated in the debate. Later on, I asked him why, if he spoke so much and went semi-regularly, was he not a member. He replied that he did not participate in *cotisation* and thus he had no obligations to the members for life events or to the group as a whole. This commitment to helping one another is a fundamental part of the *grin* and perhaps separates it from being a group of friends chatting. It was a boundary that delineated the group and also facilitated outcomes for the group by providing stability and financial assistance when needed.

However, while financial help was economically beneficial, it also signified a deepening of relationships and a turning towards the other. Members helped each other in difficult times both financially and morally; furthermore, members saw it as a personal benefit because by helping others they in turn received financial and moral support. This created the potential for mutuality created a shared 'between' space for members (Buber, 1958). This type of mutuality was described by Amara as becoming like a family:

When you come in a grin, in the beginning you are reticent, but at a given moment, you become like brothers. And sometimes, when there is a baptism, a death or a happy occasion, you contribute. Because we have already become a family. We contribute, so outside of your family, you have other people.

The familial nature of *grins* may relate to their original, cultural meaning in which they revolved around life events like marriages and funerals. However participants like Mamadou, Amara, Mohamed, Lucas and Ismael who were young and living away from their birth families, these spaces provided a new form of family to help navigate the urban chaos of Abidjan. Thus the practice of cotisation in *grins* lead to increased stability for members whilst enhancing the environment of trust and support within dialogue. As described in Chapter Eight, this leads to not only personal but perhaps broader societal outcomes as a result.

Sometimes 'family' was also expressed in terms of solidarity, not in the sense of political solidarity (Featherstone, 2012), but rather an environment of mutual support and brotherhood, often from sharing the same daily problems. Amara explained how solidarity fostered a constructive learning environment:

I had already said earlier, I said first that what I took from the grins is solidarity. And more than solidarity, there are also exchanges. That's what I like the most. Because there is news. There is information that we learn in the grins. And in all the sectors because there are drivers, mechanics, teachers. So we learn. So the grin is that type of learning. A...miniature school. Because there a teacher can come tell me how the teaching methodology happens. So it has an informative purpose. It educates. So in the grins, we learn a lot. If you really want to learn, you learn. And in the grins, there's brotherhood above all, that I received. From a young age that I attend grins, I've experienced brotherhood. Because, it's rare... it's true that I saw it once but it's

rare that I find myself in a *grin* where the guys argue... Because sometimes it's people with the same problem that meet in the same *grin*. People with the same problems. Sometimes, them, when they have the same problems, they console each other.

Amara presents two contrasting visions of learning from each other. On the one hand, members learn from people with different knowledge and expertise – thus a teacher could explain about his methodologies just as a driver could contribute other knowledge. At the same time, the solidarity and brotherhood that underpin the *grin* are shaped by the members' shared problems and worries and thus enhance learning. He then goes on to talk about how the people in one *grin* all wanted to go to Europe. So when they meet, they talk about Europe and shared strategies for how to emigrate. Interestingly I observed a similar trend at *Grin 8* in Abobo-Sagbé (October 7, 2014) where the group discussed migration and one member, who had attempted and failed, explained differences between routes to Europe via the Sahara or boat. Shared problems also meant that shared solutions were possible and thus members benefited from one another's experiences.

### **Advice and Intergenerational Knowledge**

The practice of transferring knowledge was an important element of dialogue within the *grins*, and unlike in the *agoras* where youth voices were dominant (Banégas, Cutolo and Brisset-Foucault, 2012), the *grins* embodied an intergenerational form of learning. Life advice and learning was an outcome for younger members; at the same time, giving this advice seemed to allow older members to fulfil a perceived social duty and also constituted a valued being and doing for them. This constituted a mutual enhancement of well-being, or a mutuality of dialogue (Buber, 1958). For some younger members, like Mohamed, the presence of an older member was an important prerequisite of a *grin* because amongst those of 'the same generation,' they would not follow each other's advice but 'do what we wanted'. Furthermore, intergenerational exchanges were framed both in terms of youth learning from older members and older members learning from youth.

Age ranges varied widely depending on the space. Souleymane, a 36 year old, was amongst the oldest at the *grin* he held at his house, where many members were in their late teens and early 20s. To those other boys he was an 'older brother.'

However Souleymane was also in regular attendance at Moussa's *grin*, a man in his late 50s who was *his* 'older brother' but also a 'sage'. There were *grins* with primarily older members where no one was under 35 (such as *Grins* 1, 17 and 22) and there were *grins* that ranged from teens to late 60s (*Grins* 2, 16 and 18) and then there were *grins* of all young boys 16-30 (*Grins* 7, 8, 9 and 13). In *grins* with intergenerational contact, dialogue could also play a restorative role in the post-conflict era: intergenerational ruptures occurred in Cote d'Ivoire during the conflict, and armed violence in particular, led to youth exerting force and power on local communities, including elders, in an unprecedented manner (O'Bannon, 2014; McGovern, 2011). This constituted a type of I-It relationship, a breakdown of dialogue within communities that requires healing and which may be done in part through *grins*, also suggested by Doumbia below.

This type of intergenerational mentoring is often found in more formalised programmes such as mentorship programmes. For example, Gutman and Schoon (2013) propose mentoring programmes as a way of encouraging non-cognitive skill development, yet this occurs informally in the *grins* and seems to impart the same elements of non-cognitive skill development. Furthermore, Gutman and Schoon (2013) find that mentoring is most beneficial when relationships are sustained. What Gutman and Schoon call 'social and emotional learning' are considered processes to teach skills in school yet in Africa, the community plays a larger role in imparting these values (Shizha & Abdi, 2013; Shizha, 2015) whereas the school is more often a site of cognitive learning imparted in hierarchical fashion. These non-cognitive skills are important for individual and societal economic growth, as economists have proven in recent skills (Heckman, 2006), underscoring the importance of such learning in the context of rebuilding after peace on a communal and societal level.

#### *Advice Passed from Older to Younger Members*

Many young members spoke explicitly about the benefits he acquired by participating in a *grin* with older people. Lucas said that while he had sometimes gone to younger, more casual *grins*, he realised that it was not as valuable as at *Grin* 12 where I met him, which had a board, a permanent covered space, television, coffee machine and members with substantial resources:

And yes, I looked, yes, I wanted to have a youth grin. But those grins, it's always the same subjects, it's the things, the unemployed there that I don't like. Because I'm frequently...I'm from a poor family. When you come from a poor family you shouldn't sit too much with people who are poor. It's very dangerous. You need to learn with grown-ups so that you can have life experiences. It's very important, I don't like to sit too much...otherwise, there are a lot of youth grins, from time to time when I don't have anything to do, I come sit, we sit, we debate. But not all the grins are like this one, here there's an Apatame [Ivoirian word for covered roof] where everyone comes to sit, it's not the same thing as a 'circumstantial' grin.

He also the difference between the organised *grins* and 'circumstantial' *grins* that are less organised, perhaps meet less frequently and with less purpose are of less value to him. This highlights that members choose to attend *grins* based on affiliation, like ethnicity, but also on other factors such as the various forms of cultural or social capital that they can attain, such as learning from the life experiences of other members. His experience also demonstrates that it is possible for *grin* members to engage in dialogue with people from different social backgrounds. While Lucas seemed more concerned with learning about life experiences for economic success, Certain *grins* in Treichville also had a level of cultural capital in the form of religion that attracted members. Ismael selected his *grin* because it was near his workplace but also because he felt that he could learn a lot about Muslim faith from Moussa, an Arabic teacher and owner of an Islamic bookshop, something he valued highly but had not been able to learn within his home environment.

In interviews, Mohamed, Lucas and Ismael said that advice and guidance was an explicit reason to attend *grins*. Lucas explained that he comes to 'learn a bit about life,' especially in navigating the unfamiliar terrain of Abidjan:

Advice mostly advice. How to succeed, how to stay on the right path. You see, in big cities, there are always problems. They will advise you on how to behave. 'You shouldn't hang around with that person, it's very dangerous. You will have problems. Do you know where you're headed?' So it's advice, mostly advice here. In terms of money, they say it's not important. It's the advice, that's more important.

Lucas sought financial and moral support from his *grin* and expected to be shown the right way to live in Abidjan. As a student at the university, far from his home and

family, everyday challenges in the urban environment seemed particularly difficult for him. Mohamed, a 19 year old working in the transport sector, also said that the *grin* facilitated his integration into Abidjan and that the *grin* came to his side in resolving a work-related conflict while also advising him on how to avoid similar situations in the future. He also said that some of the *grin* members were from the same region and so they took him in because of that.

*Elders self-perceptions as teachers and learners*

Elders generally sensed their responsibility to guide younger members and saw it as a general duty of a *grin*. Souleymane, an Arabic teacher and *grin* leader, also took particular care in how he gave advice and instructions so as to not alienate the younger members:

Marika: You say that bluntly?

Souleymane: Bluntly, but with manners as to not frustrate him.

M: How do you say it? Gently?

S: Gently, politely, because for the other to listen to you, you must be smiling. You have to understand him and then you have to listen to him. But if you, you don't want to understand him, listen to him, you shout at him. Even me, if you shout at me, I won't listen to you again. He's a human being like you, you listen and then you contradict him and then you pray God that he also changes. It's like that. But you must not impose what you think because he's an adult. If it's a child here, it's not a problem.

Souleymane recognises that in order to help someone, for the advice to be received and for learning to occur, he must also 'understand' and 'listen' without imposing his beliefs. This could reflect his a desire to achieve more humanising I-Thou relationship (Buber, 2002) that reflects love and mutual understanding. In education, like Freire, Buber also thought the role of a guiding teacher to be essential in raising awareness and felt that especially when teaching adults, one must allow the room for exploration (Morgan & Guilherme, 2014; Guilherme & Morgan, 2009). This listening could be indicative of the type of 'inclusion' (Buber, 1958) – about not imposing your idea nor trying to wholly become subsumed in the other, but just understanding the other in his or her wholeness. Souleymane also seems to embrace some aspects of

moral education, realising that his role as a teacher is more to teach behaviour and how to act in society.

However, Ismael, one of the younger members in Souleymane's *grin*, did not view the advice as being given in the same gentle manner, though he welcomed it, saying: 'we need the thing too, because we go for that goal, to, inform ourselves, to learn with them. So every time that they shout at us, we accept and we follow the rules.' He clearly distinguishes between 'us' and 'them,' or the 'youth' and 'elders', perhaps indicating an I-It relationship (Buber, 1958). However, it could also highlight the importance of the teacher within Freire's and Buber's thought as a means of learning and engaging in meaningful, transformative dialogue. The need for an authority figure, even for young adults, is important, and they sought that guidance, especially if family structures were weaker and formal schools did not provide the same open learning environment.

In relation to intergenerational exchanges, Doumbia also reiterates that 'the youth have something to teach us' and also about how he transfers knowledge from the *grin* to his broader life:

If there's someone younger who is there, with whom we always talk, often in other areas he can give us information regarding phenomena, about the questions I have. Me, I learn a lot through that. Me, I can teach my children, do you see? There are certain things, at certain moment, there is a divide between father and son in our culture, there's a lack of communication. But if we learn at that level, if we learn at that level, you see that really the communication corrects a lot of things.

Doumbia describes 'with whom we always talk,' indicating the importance of regularity. This regularity of meeting might increase members' perceived trust or reliability of information, according to Aby. However, for Doumbia this space also seems to be an important bridge of a generational divide that he feels is negative. The divide between 'father' and 'son' that he describes seems to be a societal one, not just occurring in his own family. In the space, he is able to value the information on current events that young people have, while still being able to contribute his own knowledge (Doumbia viewed himself as the leader of the *grin* because of his social

networks). Perhaps, the spaces allow moments of 'I-thou' dialogue that would otherwise be difficult and thus creates a humanising dialogue between generations. In this case, humanising dialogue also allows for the exploration of multiple conflicts in a society, beyond class struggle or an oppressor-oppressed dichotomy. In the case of Doumbia, the post-conflict context impacted dialogue but the conflict was impacted by other shifting relationships, such as gender, class and, in his case, generation.

Idrissa felt that young people could get advice from old people while old people could also learn from younger generations. However, he emphasises their younger status as 'babies' and 'nephews' and expresses that they can learn from them 'even if' they are younger:

Not with the same ones, it changes a bit, there are people who leave, there are people who come, it changes a bit. Those ones, when we started they were babies but today, even if they are our nephews, they are in the grin. They benefit from certain advice. When we discuss, they say some things, they inform us because they know things that we, we don't know.

Like Ismael, he frames relationships as 'us' and 'them'. Thus while there is perhaps an 'othering' or a division between the older and younger members that could constitute an 'I-it' relationship Idrissa also demonstrates a certain amount of respect. He continues to say that everyone comes with 'his knowledge, his information. That means that without going out, you learn a lot of things from outside.' Thus perhaps he does not really create a hierarchy between the different types of knowledge but recognises that certain people have different forms of knowledge based on life experience.

In relation to intergenerational exchanges, Doumbia explains that 'the youth have something to teach us' and also about how he transfers knowledge from the *grin* to his broader life:

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#### *Continued Obstacles of Age Hierarchies*

While many *grin* members said that age relations did not impact their way of speaking in *grins*, others did indicate a shift in speech, particularly related to manners. Lassina explains this:

Because there are grins that are headed by elders. There's maybe the leader who is 60 years old. And then there's the youngest of grin who is 16. Do you see? But, I mean, there are certain behaviours to have. In front of elders. So you won't talk, me for example who is 40 years old, won't talk to someone who is 60... as if I was talking to my equal. Well...

Lassina raises an important tension: do these social norms and values indicate an I-It relationship? Or humanising relationships and learning occur within these social norms? Yusuf Waghid (2015) argues that speech that promotes humanising dialogue should have constraints, using the example of a village wherein the chief denies speech to certain individuals since immature, unjust speech can deny justice.

Gutmann and Thompson (2004) also suggest placing constraints on speech to temper unjust or harmful speech, suggesting a need for voices of reason or of moderation. However, Lassina's belief that that an older person would not be his 'equal' is more problematic, especially considering teacher-student roles as conceived by Freire and Buber.

Furthermore, some observations in *grins* also revealed moments in which elders' contributions to dialogue or to conflict resolution were not rational or useful as Waghid (2015) expresses. One such case occurred at a *grin* Abobo which I had frequently attended (December 21, 2014). While sitting at the *grin* with 7 or 8 young men, a teenage girl, one who I had often seen around the space, was chased out of her house by a boy of a similar age. Scared and crying, she had clearly sought refuge in the crowd of people so that the boy would not abuse her, whether physically or verbally I was not sure. The boy continued shouting at her when the eldest member of the *grin*, affectionately called 'Prési' for president, took on the role of mediator. Prési, drunk and unable to handle the situation reasonably, proceeded as such: he made the boy tell his story but not the girl and then chastised the girl, making her kneel and ask forgiveness from the young boy. He then sent them both inside. None of the *grin* members said or did anything though a few appeared uncomfortable. Afterwards, I expressed my dissatisfaction with Prési's handling of the situation to Amara and Mamadou and they replied that they could not interrupt him and that that was 'just how Prési was.' If they intervened, it would have created even more noise and problems, more unwanted attention from neighbours. Thus the age dynamic did not always contribute to more just dialogue and humane relationships within the *grin* or within society as a whole. Prési reinforced male dominance, did not listen to both sides of the story or try to teach a lesson to the *grin* and to the two teenagers. It also highlights the importance of teachers and leaders who can engage critically with other members when challenging moments do arise in order to promote learning and potential for change.

### **Increased well-being**

Different abilities were also formed within *grins* that helped members to achieve valued beings and doings in their personal lives. As in Sen's (1999) capability approach, the members were able to realise certain things that they valued.

Fatoumata, a Women's President of the large and well-known *grin* in Yopougon told

me how she had been forced to leave her studies when she was younger to work to support her family, although she knew that she could have ‘[gone] far, very far even.’ As a result she felt she had an unrealised potential, in spite of her success as a shop owner in the Wassakara Market. Through her activities as the Women’s President, and the opportunities that came from her participation in the *grin* during the post-2011 reconciliation phase, she gained self-confidence and felt that she had finally actualised her potential. In one anecdote, she described how through her role at the *grin*, she had been invited to do a radio debate at Radio Yopougon with a local politician:

Well, I told myself, maybe somehow, I mean, my destiny, I hadn’t yet achieved my destiny [prior to participation]. So one time we [the *grin*] even went to Radio Yopougon, did debates about the CDVR. Well, there was an MP [*deputé*] who was there, a MP. We did the debate and, frankly, I was on top. So much that she asked me for my phone number! And when I came home, there was a feeling of pride that came to life within me. I told myself, well well! Me, a fabric seller, if an MP, if I can debate with an MP, it means that I can become an MP! So somehow, when I do that, it makes me happy because I tell myself that there’s something that I was meant to do that I couldn’t do before.

Fatoumata’s experience shows how her role as a leader expanded her capabilities set by allowing her the opportunities to do more meaningful work that she had aspired to but not been able to achieve, thus improving her well-being.

On the other hand, participants also described how the *grin* improved their well-being in smaller ways. Doumbia expressed that the *grin* increased his communication skills, especially with his children, and thus helped him to be a better parent. Mohamed described improvements to his well-being through motivation to seek work and also protection in neighbourhood disputes. In both *grins* and *agoras* (post-crisis in particular), social networks developed that allowed members to traverse difficult moments and to perhaps even feel some sort of agency or power, even within a small realm.

### **Reflection and Emotions in *Grins***

Both *agora* and *grin* members described developing critical thinking skills and reflecting, yet this developed in different ways. The *grin* members did not report

needing to develop skills to sort through true or false information, as in *agoras*. Rather, participants developed reflective skills through the debates, and the space allowed for disagreement, as discussed Chapter Six. However, the regularity of *grin* meetings, and the opportunity to repeatedly discuss the same issues with the same people allowed for a certain level of reflection and the opportunity to change one's opinion or learn new concepts through dialogue.

Often times, reflection was expressed as having happened after a disagreement or a debate where a conclusion was not found and then members would continue to discuss the following day or another time (Mamadou, Doumbia ), showing the effect of meeting with the same group repeatedly in terms of change or transformation. Furthermore, the personal nature of reflection could underscore the importance of emotions and irrational thought in dialogue, a point argued in Yankelovich and Friedman's (2010) critique of the overemphasis on rationality within the term 'deliberative democracy.' In other words, in deliberations and other decision-making forums, the importance of feelings, personal experience and other 'irrational' factors often influence decision making factors.

Reflection was linked to both knowing the other members and knowing oneself, as described Aby:

Yes! Yes yes yes yes yes yes, the grins have a really fundamental role to play in this because when we go sit down in the grin, everyone tries to update what he is ref..., what he thinks, and the others bring him new ideas, how do they say? If you don't...say what you're suffering from, no one can find you medicine. And also in the grins, we learn a lot, we learn to know ourselves. To know the others, except, when you know others, when you know yourself, when you know others you can avoid a lot of things.

Souleymane also has a similar outlook on understanding and knowing oneself through exchanges:

From the grin, the positive aspect of the grin, it's the gathering, the exchanges, the understanding, and then each person knowing himself.

While self-knowledge is implicit in Buber's I-Thou and I-It relationships, Jarvis (2012) has also described an I-Me relationship. The importance of knowing oneself, and one's evolving relationship to the world, is an important foundation in dialogue and in socially-based learning and leads to ability to 'name the world' in the context of dialogue. Furthermore self-knowledge is regarded as an important non-cognitive skill (Gutman and Schoon, 2013). If self-knowledge is an outcome of *grin* involvement, it could have positive indications for the role of *grins* in future peacebuilding projects and also about the importance of focusing on personal growth in dialogue projects, as opposed to intergroup communication.

Souleymane talks about how his learning in the *grin* was different from in school. It had more to do with controlling his emotions, especially when in the dialogue. Also, he explains that he learned to love people:

Souleymane: Yes, a lot even, what I learn in the grin even there there's a lot that I didn't learn at school.

Marika: Like what?

S: Daily life, how to behave in life, it's in the grins that I learned how to contain myself being angry, when you're angry how to control yourself being in your anger, it's there in the grins.

M: With the friends there?

S: With friends there and then how to love each other. It's in the grins, I learned a lot in the grins.

As McConnell (1996) discusses in regard to cosmopolitan citizenship, if we can learn to love and forgive people close to us, such as our family or friends, it opens up the possibility of loving and forgiving people outside of our own groups or those who we disagree with. This is an important transferable skill and perhaps a prerequisite to the type of love required by Freire and Buber but who perhaps discuss less how the ability to love the 'other' can be cultivated. Souleymane indicates that the love and humanisation required *for* dialogue are actually attained *through* dialogue, as opposed to formal schooling environments or the family. This also relates to notion of the prefigurative, also discussed in Chapter Three and Eight, and the learning aspect of prefigurative movements wherein members embody a new vision of society by doing (see also Fielding & Moss, 2011; McCowan, 2010). Nussbaum

(2015) also elaborates on the importance of political emotions and rational decisions being influenced by our family and communities. The aspect of love and personal relationships in learning about society and life here supports this concept.

## **Agoras**

The impacts of *agoras* on the participants are discussed in the following thematic categories: political and personal motivations, public speaking, critical thinking and orator-specific motivations and outcomes.

### **Motivations: Transitioning from Politics to Friendship**

*Agoras* continue to locate themselves within the political struggles of the FPI, particularly the liberation of Laurent Gbagbo and the end of the Ouattara regime. For example, the theme of FENAPAOCI's General Assembly in late October was 'What role for *parlements* and *agoras* in the liberation of Gbagbo?' Alongside broader organisational motives, individuals also had political motivations for attending in post-2011 – mostly to get information about politics and to continue to debate. In an observation of a typical post-2011 *parlement* – a small group of people chatting relatively informally - one person told me that the *parlements* and *agoras* were meant to explain Gbagbo's politics and that the fact that they could share information in 'record time' helped the government at the time (Field Journal, November, 22, 2014). Referring to pre-2011 *agoras*, he said 'Laurent Gbagbo was a product to sell. And we sold it well. Morning, noon and night, we sold it. We sold it well.' This role as a type of propaganda machine for the man and his party is looked at with a certain degree of pride. He also pointed out that the national federations, like FENAPAOCI, aided in 'selling the product'. Thus, they did not necessarily talk about politics as a general theme but as related to the FPI, the party's ideologies and actions, as discussed in Chapter Six.

Interestingly, in observations and interviews with participants of post-2011 *agoras*, new reasons for attendance also emerged. For example, at *Agora 4* in Abobo (November 11, 2014), members explained that they were a '*lieu de fraternité*' – a site of brotherhood or solidarity, where they could help each other while also being a 'political tribunal.' However this group was hesitant to rebrand themselves as a *parlement*, preferring the term 'meeting space' to describe its smaller, less formal

structure. In my notes about this group, I commented that they sounded more like a *grin*, in response to a member saying, ‘when you get off work, you come talk, exchange. Forget stress. Get information.’ Another one said ‘it’s a family.’ Someone else also compared the space to the ‘*arbre à palabre*’ which also has more traditional connotation like a *grin*.<sup>29</sup>

However for both current and former *agora* members talking about politics seemed riskier. This was due to the perceived lack of freedom of expression and the risks about speaking out against the government. Many young people, such as Pierre, no longer were involved in *agoras* or were even aware of their current activities:

It doesn’t really go with my objectives. To go to an agora, to say what? I’m not a politician. I’m not political. Now if, maybe at the university level, if there’s a student problem that definitely affects me, I will give my opinion. But on a political level, it’s dangerous. I think. My safety, my safety. Because after all, we are in Côte d’Ivoire, you never know. You imagine that I would go in an agora to speak, give my point of view which wouldn’t necessarily please the current power in place? Eh, I don’t know. Better not to.

Pierre finds that speaking in public about politics, and especially against the government, was a risky endeavour. He felt more comfortable speaking in the university environment and about issues that directly concerned him as a student. His experience as a young person between 2002-2010, where conflict continuously resurfaced, also shows through in his view that Côte d’Ivoire was an unstable and potentially volatile environment, despite the current state of peace.

### **Public Speaking and *l’Art Oratoire*: Listening and Learning in Dialogue**

In *parlements* and *agoras*, speaking often occurs in a lecture format and the founders and speakers enjoy and perpetuate numerous comparisons with higher education, as evidenced by the ‘Sorbonne’ and its various ‘faculties’ and ‘professors’ (Cutolo, 2012; Interview, Nguessan Atchoua, 2014). However participants distinguished many differences between learning in formal education and *agoras*, in terms of both processes and outcomes. For one, Vincent felt that learning occurred in a manner that was culturally relevant in *agoras* because learning through oral

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<sup>29</sup> *Arbre à palabre* or palaver tree is commonly considered the village meeting spot where decisions are made and conflicts resolved. See Bidima’s (1997) book on the palaver and modern African legal practice.

communication was a culturally embedded act and also responded to the literacy skills of the general population:

There's things to gain in the thing. You see? We had, like we generally said, the African doesn't read often. And it's true. One often says that the African doesn't read. The African is more disposed to listening, so to oration. When you get there, you learn more things about different subjects. So you have gained more information. It's a veritable means of learning. Maybe being informed about what's happening, and here and elsewhere in the *agoras* and *parlements*. Because you haven't often got access to books to read this, to read that. So, he who has read, he shares what he read. *Voilà*. So.... I think it's that enrichment that we had: to be more informed.

For Vincent, the oral nature of information enabled learning amongst a broader subset of the population than formal education but he also believed the African, and thus Ivoirian, learning style was to listen. He also points out that those who could read and had access to various sources had the opportunity to share their knowledge with participants, which also enhanced the learning outcome of those participants by rendering them teachers.

Furthermore, the participants viewed this learning as different from what they experienced in the classroom. For one, Vincent identified *agoras* as being less 'bookish' (*livresque*) and more focused on 'current events'. Kouamé also commented that this was different than the university because of the range of subjects to which they were exposed and the ability to be in contact with economists, politicians and lawyers:

There were economists who explained to us. That started to really enrich us. That increased our knowledge and I saw that even in our lecture halls, being present in our lecture halls is good. But the best would be to be in the spaces where we talk a little about everything. *Voilà*, there, I wasn't only obligated to listen only to law courses. Someone can talk to me about politics because there were also people who did political science, who will explain how we should do politics, the strategies, everything. There were people who did economics, these people they give us courses on it and it's free. So that led me again to do my own research. And I made discoveries. So I found these places very important, so much that if I didn't go, I really didn't feel right.

Kouamé feels that unlike a university, he was exposed to various subjects that would otherwise be inaccessible to him as a law student. Exposure to the subject lead him to do his 'own research' and learn new things independently, although the subjects seem to revolve around Côte d'Ivoire. This also reflects the type of learning that Freire and Buber advocate within a humanising dialogue: an education rooted in the everyday lives of students and that addresses pertinent issues for their ability to engage in political and social change. Also apparent is how Koaumé was able to select and apply information through personal research and how the speakers were not the end point of his learning.

Learning through exchanging with others constituted a recurring theme in *parlements* and *agoras* and members believed that everyone had something to contribute on the basis of personal or professional experience. Davide framed his experience in the *agora* as being particularly an exchange between young people:

We meet, amongst young people, we learn. Each person, someone here, someone has an experience in the economic domain, he comes to share his experience in front of the audience, in economics. In a specific domain. Me too, I can come share my knowledge in the domain of English. Certain techniques to be able to speak English, at this level... and we come to learn to speak in front of an audience. Learn how to present a subject, all that. And one must say that during...the people... those who were going there, those who went there, the young people were affected by that. When you went home, your manner of speaking changed. And one of the leaders, or the heads, the first head was Blé Goudé, it was, I could say, the master, the master of speech, he had art, he had art in speech.

Davide explains that he learned through other young people about specific subjects and that he could, in theory, come to share knowledge in his area of expertise, as a first-year English student at the university. Here he expresses the dual ability to be a learner and teacher in the *agora* space and more specifically an 'expert.' This also indicates the ability of attendees to develop critical listening skills such as assimilation and synthesis, a directly reflection of the structure of the *agoras* and cultivation of different 'specialist' orators and emphasis on lecture-style, thematically oriented speech.

The dialogue format also directly contributed to another key learning outcome expressed by both orators and passive participants: public speaking, or *l'art oratoire*. What truly impressed Marc, Kouadio and Davide was the fact that the orators did not have a paper or even notes. Davide noted that 'everything they say is coordinated, as if there was an introduction, a body and a conclusion. Yet they didn't even have a paper. And that's what was really extraordinary. That attracted more people there.' Davide also described the how he altered his speaking style as a result of the *agora*, and that he learned 'how to talk. What gestures to make when one talks. What attitude you should adopt. How to make a speech,' yet he never once spoke, not even to ask a question, at a parlement or *agora*. Nonetheless, *l'art oratoire* impacted his ability to act as a leader in campus and religious youth organisations. Like Davide, Marc never spoke at an *agora* but claimed to have learned to speak publicly and 'how to try to convince someone' using gestures and 'non-verbal language.' This also reinforces the importance of 'silence' in the dialogic process of learning (Zimmerman and Morgan, 2015). While emphasis is often placed on active participation, those who are silent in dialogue spaces may also absorb speaking and dialogue skills which transfer outside of the spaces.

### **Reflection and Critical Thinking**

Some promotion of critical thinking skills may be evident in *agoras*. Kuhn (1999, p. 22) considers critical thinking as a form of 'evaluative epistemological understanding [...] in which all opinions are not equal and knowing is understood as a process that entails judgment, evaluation, and argument.' Faced with a situation where not all information was truthful, attendees relied upon varying sources outside of the parliaments to form their own opinions. However Davies and Barnett (2015) have created a spectrum of typologies of critical thinking that put critical consciousness and action at one end of and pure analysis with no social awareness at the other end. As discussed in the next chapter, the ability for reflection to be translated into action, at least in a manner that promoted justice and peace, was not necessarily cultivated in *agoras*. This section considers the ability for students to evaluate information, reflect and form and argue opinions through *agora* participation.

Members claimed that the unreliable nature of information in the spaces required them to synthesise information from various sources, outside of *agoras*, and form

their own opinions. This type of reflection can be seen as an outcome of the dialogue in the way it altered participants' views and thinking processes. For example, Vincent says that 'it was up to each person to sort through what is good and not good' since 'there was information that was given that wasn't necessarily true.' Thus reflection and the ability to consider different points of view and their validity was a skill cultivated in the spaces. Marc also discusses this process in more depth, talking about how he also needed to consider various sources alongside *agoras* in order to form his own opinion:

Me, I went just to listen, listen to the different points of view and then try myself to make my own idea and then I went home. Yes, I didn't go to speak or anything. Maybe now if I go, I can speak. But we didn't go to speak.

Marc felt he learned to discern information, largely as a result of the unreliability. This also highlights Bigg's (2001) differentiation between lecture and seminar format in higher education and how those with higher critical thinking skills are able to benefit from larger, lecture type settings because of their ability to critically reflect, though Biggs does not favour this type of learning as it favours more privileged learners or those with adequate skills to begin with, such as Marc. Pierre, who was interviewed at the same time as Marc, framed his reflection as a type of awareness or critical consciousness (Freire, 1972) that occurred through the process of dialogue and reflection:

Well, for me, how did that influence my daily life...Me, I don't know... in fact... In the beginning, I went with sole objective of knowing where I could find the truth. To understand what is really happening. Information, and then make my own truth, my conception of what is happening in the country. To have an idea, an opinion. Because, like he (Marc) said, what we saw on TV wasn't necessarily what was happening in the country. We had to listen to people too. *Voilà*, read the newspapers that aren't necessarily from the same side as the party in power. I read the opposition newspapers. I read the newspapers of the ruling party. Then, myself, I tried to make my own idea. That changes my daily life because that at least allowed me to not be set, set on everything that people tell me. Above all, what I see on TV. *Voilà*, what I see on TV. That allowed me to...to understand political life. How people act. How life in politics works in Cote d'Ivoire. How that happens. More or less understand, a bit, that it's not

super...supermen (politicians). They were men who had something in common with me. Could I give them my trust? *Voilà*, that's about all.

Pierre is able to position himself in relationship to politicians and power in the country through his own reflections and synthesis of various informational sources. He also seems to be 'naming' his world in the Freirean sense (Freire, 1972) through learning about the forces behind his daily experiences. While he was able to develop a reflective spirit that became a positive influence in his daily life, Pierre later admitted that many youth did not reflect independently and were at risk of manipulation within the spaces. More so, Kouadio attributes his similarly described 'critical spirit' to knowledge he had acquired through formal schooling and university that allowed him to develop his 'own culture too'. Thus critical thinking skills developed in *agoras* were also assisted by other educational experiences outside of the spaces and those less equipped could not adequately process information. There was not a teacher or leader directly 'embracing' Pierre and the other young people who could ensure or guide critical reflection.

Being able to reflect on others' opinions and on current events also empowered people to speak at *agoras*, in smaller TDs or in front of the crowd. Apart from a good level of French, *agora* members stressed the importance of having 'justifiable' arguments since the audience members were often 'more educated than you,' in Kouassi's words and also reflected by Narcisse. According to Aristide, in order to do a 'debate or a press conference. You have to read a lot. You have to have a general culture.' Aristide also explained that as a result of his participation in *agoras*, he began reading different books and news articles because public speech required a breadth of knowledge of African history and politics, as well as news and current events. Similarly, Vincent explained that 'When I take the floor, it's because I've put things into perspective to sufficiently analyse the situation.' However, for this reason he says that he cannot be convinced 'on the spot' by someone else's argument, because 'my argument, I had developed it, my ideas, I had developed them.'

However, he did believe that his opinions could change with reflection over the longer term, again showing the ability to evaluate information to formulate and reformulate opinions. He gave an example of having supported Gbagbo's decision to

take part in the 2010 elections, despite many others in the party disagreeing. However, in hindsight he now felt that the country ready had not been ready for the 2010 elections and that the elections were not ultimately 'decided by the people,' and had consequently reformulated his opinion. Facilitating this ability to reflect, in Kouassi's opinion, are the long-term meetings of spaces which allow time for participants to solve disputes or return to difficult questions multiple times. This reflects literature on 'group dialogue' (Nagda, 2006; Yeakley, 1998) and other research on peer dialogue that extol the virtues of purposeful, continuous meetings in order to establish trust and relationships over a longer term. In contrast to this research, many of the 'dialogue' and 'peace' events that I observed in Cote d'Ivoire were 'one-off' events, such as peace concerts (*Concert pour la Humanité*, October 18) and one-off debates (e.g. *Sous l'Arbre de la Sagesse*, Dec 12, 13) and did not work to sustain long-term meaningful contact. This might be an obstacle to creating a humanising dialogue between groups in Cote d'Ivoire.

## Orators

Orators of *agoras* expressed different sets of outcomes than participants who only claimed to listen. These were linked more to their relative positions of power and notoriety and becoming an orator was a valued outcome for some. Of the 15 *agora* interviewees, Narcisse and Gerard were well known orators before the crisis, Aristide and Vincent were orators of a lesser degree of fame and Philippe and Kouamé were 'animators' of smaller *agoras* who had stepped into larger roles in the post-crisis era. Since *agoras* did not exist on the same scale as before and during the post-electoral violence, many orators no longer spoke in public but were still engaged with national federations. Interestingly orators such as Narcisse, Aristide and Kouamé refuted the idea that one 'learned to speak' and they described the skill as a feeling or innate quality. Narcisse argued that it required charisma, a good knowledge of French and the ability to 'bring your arguments, make a convincing and consequential development. Coordinated and short. Coherent.' However, Philippe, Jean-Luc, and Vincent did feel that these were learned traits that were acquired through participation.

Many orators described fortuitous entries into the position, often by speaking out on an issue when they felt dissatisfied with the discourse or stepping in when a

scheduled speaker did not arrive. Their participation within the *agoras* themselves catapulted them to become speakers in their own right and to climb the ranks of the *agora* world. Philippe describes his first time speaking in Yopougon in the pre-crisis era:

How did I become an orator? Uh, at *Agora 3*, eh, if I remember correctly, there was a plenary. There was a plenary and they were supposed to debate about, uh, the social projects of Laurent Gbagbo. His government's programme. And two weeks earlier, I had attended the same debate at SIDECI [a large parlement in Yopougon]. So, I had taken notes on certain information. And after that, when I finished taking notes, I went online. I went home and I did research on the FPI government's programme. And I found a document. I read it and it interested me. When I finished reading it, and when this subject was planned at *Agora 3*, in the beginning I wasn't on the first list. People were supposed to speak, but three people spoke. I wasn't satisfied with what they were saying. So I asked that they put my name on the second list. And they put my name on the second list and when ...my turn came to speak came, they gave me the microphone. Back then there was a microphone with speakers even in plenary. And I debated about the problems. I said what I knew about Gbagbo's project. The government's programme. I said they were well formed; they were good for the people, for the population. And the people really liked it, I had very loud ovations. And that's what allowed me to continue being an orator of the parlement. That allowed me to come express myself. *Voilà*. That's how I became an orator.

In Philippe's case, the fact that the audience 'really liked' his speech is what he felt allowed him to 'express himself' and become an orator. Furthermore, his prior participation in *parlements* and the analysis and research that he did as a result of his participation enabled him to have confidence and 'arguments' to speak at *Agora 3*. This process of reflection, of speaking and of being accepted that leads to becoming an orator. This also relates to the 'being listened to' element of dialogue – and perhaps that he felt that the crowd had engaged in some level of I-Thou relationship, because he said what he felt, and that was also accepted and encouraged.

Vincent who also had a similar experience of becoming an orator by chance, when a main speaker did not arrive, also felt that the crowd's response to his speaking

enabled him to become an orator. This also brings up an element of dialogue or mutuality between speaker and audience:

that really attracted some people, our way of presenting, our way of explaining, and also responding to certain questions, of giving our opinion. So, there are some, who, well, who encouraged us, *Voilà*, to embrace this path of being an orator. So that's how, little by little, I became an orator.

He expressed a sensation of getting in front of a crowd and the audience liking what he had to say, which was reiterated by Gerard, Aristide, and Philippe, especially during the first time presenting in front of a crowd. However, research in *parlements* in the mid-2000s also shows that FESCI and COJEP also had significant roles to play in recruiting students and graduates to start and lead new *parlements* (Cutolo, 2012) and thus not all orators experienced this transformation from listener to speaker. Cutolo's (2012) study of orators describes elaborate training processes that orators underwent, including auditions.

Some orators also attested to the impact that *l'art oratoire* had on other areas of their lives. Philippe, the current secretary general and in-house orator at *Agora 3*, described how developing an ease in public speaking impacted his learning and performance on the job. Philippe works as a lab technician in a hospital in Yopougon and found that the ease he found in talking in public enabled him to ask more questions and to not be afraid to express his point of view and that he is 'no longer ashamed to say what [he] thinks':

Whereas before I was so scared, when I don't understand I couldn't ask. So I had this deficiency, 'I didn't understand, I won't ask anything'. That means that I didn't learn anything! And then I leave. But today, when I go somewhere, when you talk and I don't understand, I ask that you explain clearly the thought that you just said. And that helps me to learn better.

By feeling more comfortable to ask questions, he felt that his opportunity to learn was widened and that by being brave enough to voice his opinion, he was also allowed to get feedback from superiors that would help him grow. Thus this confidence in public speaking did not only relate to giving speeches like an orator but also to engaging in dialogue with others and expanding his knowledge. Thus the

knowledge goes beyond *presenting* as many of the orators did but asking questions, and questioning the world. This could indicate a higher level of reflection and awareness, questioning the world (Freire, 1972), which could assist him in his dual vocations as orator and lab technician but also in his interactions in daily life. However, if this type of benefit extends only to orators, or those at the top of the hierarchy, than it would not provide adequate pathway to humanising dialogue.

Narcisse indicated his own satisfaction with the social position that he gained through his participation and expressed pride in his achievements and that his participation in *parlements* also allowed him to know several important figures in Ivoirian politics and society. High-ranking orators such as Narcisse, Gerard and Aristide also used the social network acquired through their roles in *agoras* and *parlements* during the post-crisis era in which their lives significantly changed and they went from roles as collaborators of the state to the opposition. Aristide explained that being the president of a successful *agora* gave a status but also made a person vulnerable to control by politicians. Narcisse had been imprisoned and Gerard, Aristide, Vincent had been in exile either in the interior of the country or in Ghana, and their releases and/or return to Abidjan life was largely facilitated by the social and economic network available through the *agoras* and *parlements*. However, the economic benefit of being an orator was no longer as lucrative as before the crisis (Cutolo, 2012) and many struggled financially. Certain aspects of orator's social capital had diminished significantly due to the role of the FPI in the current political climate and raises the question of to what extent financial benefits were a valued outcome of participation for orators, or other participants, and how that has changed now that the groups are no longer in favour with the government.

Though the social capital of orators had perhaps diminished as an outcome, cultural capital of orators still held strong. At the General Assembly of *Parlements* of FENAPAOI on October 25, 2015, one of the hosts extolled their talent, referring to them as 'eminent professors,' conveying the esteem held for these speakers. The presenter went on describe them all as 'graduates' and 'professionals.' However, interviews with the orators themselves, such as Narcisse, refute this assertion: one of the most well-known orators still active in Côte d'Ivoire, Narcisse, did not attain his

Baccalaureate or work professionally outside of the FPI. While some orators were accomplished professionals, including professors, schoolteachers and civil servants, many others had not finished their education, had tumultuous family lives (Interview, Atchoua, October 7, 2014) or had been able to find work in spite of education [also found by Cutolo (2012) who describes *agora* creators as recent, unemployed university graduates]. However, the ability to reproduce and mimic was a revered skill in urban Abidjan climate (Newell, 2012), so for the audience, their skills as speakers and the aura they gave off may have been more important than actual diplomas.

However, orator's interview data also reveals that speaking in public was a sensation that they enjoyed and thrived on. Narcisse and Aristide enjoyed the sensation of 'giving a political education' to people as well as the electric feeling of getting up in front of people and moving the audience. In one meeting with both orators and politicians present, Aristide had given a particularly emotional speech that the crowd had demonstrably enjoyed (Observation, December 7, 2014). His fellow board members congratulated him afterwards, saying that he had worked the crowd into 'hysteria'. They also said several times 'tu as gbayé!' 'Gbayer' is a *nouchi* word that means to sing the praises of someone in front of him or a group, in the style of a griot.<sup>30</sup> To say 'gbayé' in this context describes both the passionate and theatrical manner in which Aristide had spoken but also the level of praise he had given to Laurent Gbagbo.

In some ways, the performance given by the orators was in itself a desired outcome for the spectators, many of whom were motivated to attend the *agoras* for the pleasure of their *l'art oratoire*. At the same time, the ability to speak in public and to perform was a valued being and doing for the speakers themselves. The outcomes of listening and of speaking are mutually fulfilled by the audience and orators. For this reason, Professor Julien Atchoua (Interview, October 10, 2014) and researcher Souleymane Kouyaté (Interview, September 5, 2014) also speculate that many of the former orators, no longer able to speak in public in *agoras*, have now pursued

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<sup>30</sup> In West Africa, griots functioned as the keepers of oral history and entertainers.

careers as preachers or religious leaders, particularly in Evangelical churches, where they are able to continue speaking in public.

## Summary

This chapter has discussed the outcomes of dialogue on the individual participants with particular regard to learning. While *grin* members focused on learning life lessons and cultural values, *agora* members connected their participation to formal skills such as public speaking and analysis of information. Orators in *agoras* also talked about learning to synthesise information and to speak in public in a way that pleased the audience, however orators' outcomes were more related to social mobility and power. In the *grins*, an important outcome was bonding capital, or a social network that increased well-being through improved access to jobs and financial support for life events through *cotisations* as well as increased well-being. While both non-cognitive skills and cognitive skills were expressed as outcomes in the spaces, *grins* tended to result in more non-cognitive skills whereas *agoras* produced more cognitive learning outcomes. These outcomes are important as they show that dialogue in these spaces serves an important role for participants and one that extends beyond the notion of 'peacebuilding.'

## Chapter Eight - Reconsidering Relationships between Dialogue and Peace

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### **Framing Dialogue and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire**

As discussed in Chapter Three, popular Ivoirian conceptions of dialogue uphold the belief in the relationship between dialogue and peace, a connection frequently evoked by politicians and the CDVR truth commission. However, participants did not necessarily view their street discussion space participation as dialogue in the context of humanisation and positive transformation and most agreed that the violent conflict had made dialogue, especially in public and between different political groups, difficult. As Pierre explained:

One talks about 'crisis,' but there was a war in Cote d'Ivoire. There were a lot of atrocities, not only people who attended, how do you say, the *parlements*, but Ivoirians. So it was a bit difficult to get together to talk. -

Furthermore, the different spaces had different beliefs about what peace was and how it should be achieved. *Agoras* had much stronger political, collective motivations that influenced their belief that the spaces should primarily work for peace and justice, although these terms came with their own biased framing. On the other hand, many *grin* members felt that life had returned to some degree of peace and normalcy and that justice had been restored and the discussion spaces played a more important role in areas of peacebuilding such as economic stability. *Thus agora* and *grin* members had very different views about the status of peace in the country and also believed in different paths to achieving it, both within and outside of their spaces. While divisions frequently arise in post-conflict societies, especially within the context of 'victor's justice,' underscoring the importance of this study's micro level view of how such opinions are formed and changed.

The following sections draw out contrasting visions of what dialogue and peace mean in the post-conflict context in Abidjan for *grin* and *agora* members. This chapter discusses participants' beliefs that dialogue is not a precursor to peace but that aspects of peace must precede dialogue. The chapter also engages with the concepts of transformation

and action and the intertwining of self and other and the ability for critical thinking within the spaces as a means of converting speech into action.

### **Possibilities of Action: Linking Dialogue to Peace**

Here, discusses two dimensions of humanising dialogue are considered: critical thinking and intertwining of self and other, in members' views of the relationship between dialogue and peace. From Buber and Freire's perspectives, mutuality and relationships enable critical consciousness and reflection that in turn permit action. While in this study, it was not always possible to view concrete actions arising from moments of dialogue, the potential for these to occur is also discussed using vignettes and stories from members.

### **Possibilities for Intergroup Contact**

The quality of contact between two opposing groups has been a subject of investigation for social scientists and policy makers for decades. As discussed in Chapter Two, the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) which has significantly influenced research on intergroup dialogue (e.g. I. Maoz, 2011; Maxwell et al., 2012; Nagda, 2006; Yeakley, 1998) postulates that contact between two opposing groups, or within a single group, can remedy fractured relation when certain conditions exist. Alternatively, single-identity approaches to conflict resolution such as in Northern Ireland (Church, Visser & Johnson, 2004) have been used when contact between groups may lead to further tensions or conflict. However, a humanising approach to dialogue requires a mutuality, an intertwining of self and other that extends beyond just communication or empathy. In Eastern Europe, Stroschein (2012) also demonstrates how coexistence, as opposed to conflict, generally occurs in mixed communities as a result of interdependence and ultimately convenience in the functioning of daily life and thus conflict must be examined more carefully in more integrated, yet in many ways divided, societies.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, Ivoirians interacted and intermingled and often possessed complex and overlapping identity and group affiliations. However, while day-to-day interactions easily exist between people, these are more likely what Buber would call

'monologue disguised as dialogue' or transactional exchanges. This could also be described as 'superficial contact' where participants avoid more polarising issues, as opposed to 'deep contact' where participants go beyond the comfort zone (Yeakley, 1998). Pierre explained:

We aren't necessarily divided, Ivoirians. A guy from the North, the guys who are RDR, are friends. We play ball together, we go clubbing together. But we don't necessarily agree on certain points. But we aren't going to kill each other because of that, take knives, a machete, a knife and then stab each other, no. [silence]. It's the political debate that feeds this hate. *Voilà*. That feeds this hate, *Voilà*.

While he felt able to disagree with his peers, these actions did not lead to violence. Rather, he believed that 'political debate' in *agoras* instigated violence. Here, consideration of the meaning of 'political' is important; while Freire (1972) would always argue for a political dialogue, here politics is construed in a negative, divisive way and reflects a broader distinction between politics understood as formal party politics, in contrast to all relations of power and forms of organisation in a society. This emphasises the need for a normative perspective of justice and peace as goals of politics and of political education (Snauewart, 2011). This would rely upon non-violence, equity and fairness, which were not necessarily advocated in political struggles in Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, he views mixing and intergroup contact as something possible *outside* of the spaces. Indeed, Ivoirians now interacted and mixed in many aspects of daily life, yet the spaces did remain starkly divided by politics and, as a result, by ethnicity and religion.

In relatively homogenous groups, or with one or two 'outgroup' participants, personal relationships occupied such a primary role that it could also act as a barrier to critical consciousness, evidenced by widespread discomfort in discussing controversial and political issues. This preference for more 'superficial contact' in the form of small talk (Yeakley, 1998) sometime blocked critical consciousness or critical thinking. For example, Idrissa explained that in order to accommodate a member of his *grin* from a different political party, the group avoided polarising topics:

Yes, it's my friend, my colleague, he's a teacher at the high school, he's from the South and me I'm from the North. In a little bit he is going to arrive. We are together every day, he, he's FPI. Well, us [the grin], we're supporters, a good number of us, of RDR. We avoid talking about subjects that can anger a bit because whether you like it or not, everyone had a part in it [the conflict]. There are subjects that we refuse to approach to not ruin our friendship so that we stay good friends always.

His *grin* had been meeting for 15 years and his Christian, FPI friend and co-worker of 10 years told me that he did not go to *agoras* even though he was FPI and that they seldom talked about politics, and always without any bitterness. Idrissa raises the point that friendship and community are more highly valued by the members than political discussion. This also shows that in the dimensions of humanising dialogue, the existence of mutuality, love or friendship in a Thou relationship does not always lead to the critical thinking or awareness required for action. For example I observed that Idrissa moderated the discussion and the most political topic to arise concerned water shortages, and when names like Gbagbo were brought up, Idrissa quickly admonished the person. In some *agoras* this was also the case: Vincent, as discussed in Chapter Six, had ceased to talk about politics with his small, newly formed *agora* because of the political tensions in the FPI and the group's inability to come to a decision.

While this suppression of debate could indicate a move away from humanising dialogue, it also seems to allow for moments of I-Thou and trust which could have equally significant impacts on the ability of dialogue to translate into wider changes. These moments of trust were highly regarded by members. For example, Aby felt that lack of trust was the biggest barrier to peace and argued that *grins* were able to foster such trust:

When you trust someone, even if someone tells you that the person committed a crime, you're really...you hold your ground. You have a hard time believing it. However, when you don't have trust, all it takes is a tiny spark for it to go up in smoke. So there is above all is this key word... I would say the key is trust between...

Though Aby's *grin* was homogenous, she seemed to view the relationships as being a priority in extending outwards and building trust between groups, showing the

importance of trust in a mutual relationship. It also highlighted the importance of 'deep contact' even in single-identity groups. Aby's view was also expressed at *Grin* 24 in Abobo-Té on November 24, when a member explained to me that *grins* created 'dialogue and friendship' and that this helps them to avoid war because 'if you are friends with people from other ethnicities or groups, you can't kill people of that same group.' Here, they make the case that dialogue leads to friendship which prevents conflict; so in Idrissa's *grin*, the fact that members were friends with a Christian of a different ethnic group could help them to reconsider rumours or information about others. Here, dialogue that is relatively 'bonding' in nature can help to create bridging capital.

This supports some principles of the 'contact hypothesis' and shows cases in which single member contact could lead to greater tolerance of a whole group. This concept is also supported by psychological experiments where proximity to an individual lessens the chance of the person causing harm, such as in Milgram's studies of authority and hierarchy. Nussbaum (2015, p. 197) commenting on humans resistance to giving electric shocks to other participants in Milgram's studies claims that 'people behave worse if the people over whom they have power are presented to them as dehumanised nonindividual units ... and better when they are encouraged to see the other as an individual with a name and a specific life story.' The potential for I-Thou, not only the trust, but the humanisation itself, can perhaps prevent violence and escalation of conflict in some settings where positive relationships are formed.

How could this be applied to a setting in which a moment of conflict could have been transformed into a moment of mutuality or an I-Thou encounter? One example is given by Vincent who recounted a meeting of *agora* leaders in Koumassi, a more politically mixed neighbourhood than his own. The gathering took place in an empty classroom of a school during which Vincent saw a security guard that he identified as Muslim. The guard rolled out his mat and began praying in front of the door of their meeting room. At this point, Vincent felt scared to speak in front of a person that he believed was his enemy or a potential spy. Increased trust in members of another religious group, through

dispelling of rumours and better relationships with even a small number of Muslims or RDR members, could have enabled Vincent to have a more humanising encounter with the Muslim security guard.

### **Critical Thinking and Openness in Single-Identity Groups**

However, in relatively homogenous groups, critical thinking and openness to the other can still be observed. For example, at a *grin* in Abobo-Té on December 13, 2014, I observed as one discussant, a key informant and the person who had brought me to the *grin*, began complaining about foreigners taking Ivoirian jobs. Several of his friends seemed shocked with this suggestion, as it mirrored the type of discourse used against *grin* members and Northerners during the Bédié and Gbagbo eras – one dubiously asked him ‘are you even RDR?’ Several minutes were spent trying to understand his perspective and to lead him away from a xenophobic discourse. Eventually, the other members helped the man clarify his point: he wanted politicians to create better training programmes to improve job opportunities for Ivoirians, compensating for informal business networks that advantaged some immigrant groups like Nigeriens and Lebanese. The members lead him away from espousing an anti-foreign discourse and enabled him to reconsider his stance or at least understand why his previous argumentation was not desirable. The members were all adults, roughly between the ages of 35 and 60, and this type of guiding was accepted and seemed familiar. In this exchange we also see the convergence of multiple elements of dialogue: mutuality, listening and critical analysis. From Buber’s perspective, this could lead to action in the future by perhaps the man’s treating of foreigners with more tolerance or lobbying for job training in a more humane way. Thus, creating these micro instances of dialogue that slowly build to increased trust and social change can impact broader societal relationships even when dialogue occurs between members of the same group.

The relatively homogenous political culture of *agoras* could also work towards increased trust, as opposed to the promotion of violence as in the past. Nussbaum (2015), drawing from Kant, Mills and Milgram’s experiments, argues that humans have an innate tendency to follow commands and ‘the pack’ but that this can be used for positive ends. In this case, the *agoras*’ hierarchical nature, if harnessed correctly, could be used to

promote humanising discourses. For example, *agora* leaders and orators encouraged members to promote intra-party peace, such as at a small board meeting in Adjouffou on December 3, 2014 when Aristide, a president of a national federation, told the group not to speak badly of another FPI faction that supported elections, since they 'are our brothers in the same house. We can fight with family and reconcile. Don't call him a traitor. Try to bring them back.' *Agora* members attended meetings in pursuit of information or protocol for how to behave or respond to current events. In the past, Blé Goudé and prominent orators were able to shift FPI discourse following important events like the 2007 Ouagadougou Accords, telling members to accept peace and embrace the new powersharing agreements for peace (Cutolo, 2012). As opposed to encouraging 'negative emotions,' leaders can promote love, positive emotions and pursuit of a 'critical public culture' in public discourse (Nussbaum, 2015, p.213). However, this type of promotion requires training and support of leaders and orators, a fact which some members reference below. Thus, while groups may not be ready to engage together in dialogue for peace, there are examples in their current dialogue that show potential through relationships and critical thinking that there is an openness and willingness for change.

### **Converting Dialogue to Peace: Action and Inaction**

Here, the relationship between dialogue, community and transformation are drawn out and linked to the characteristics and processes of dialogue, as well as the motivations for participation discussed in previous chapters. A distinction between *grins* and *agoras* exists in terms of their intended changes and modes of transformation and how they understood peace related to the broader goals of the group. *Agora* participants viewed change on a political, collective level whereas *grins* viewed change on an individual or community and group level. This also relates to the nature of the dialogue and members' motivations: while *agora* dialogue generally consisted of political discourse and was motivated by liberation of Gbagbo, the *grin* members were concerned about personal development, solidarity and employment, highlighting a connection between poverty, peace and development. Furthermore, the *grins* existed more as a site of leisure, such as Lefebvre's 'café,' where political beliefs and actions were formed, whereas in the

*agoras*, politics was primary, not incidental. This changes views on how transformation and action should occur.

### ***Agoras and Grins: Challenges to Converting Dialogue to Action***

*Agora* members viewed the transformation from dialogue to action as an important part of the political movement. Here, *agora* participants expressed frustration with the emphasis on speaking and inability to progress the group. Kouassi views this challenge as the only negative aspect of *parlements* and *agoras*:

Kouassi: If there's a negative aspect, there's...[pause] uh, you can't only talk. It's true that speech can influence action, but one must act. You understand? I mean, act in the sense of changing the day-to-day. Of changing, I mean, that there's an impact. On the political level, on the economic level. On the cultural level. *Voilà*, you can't only talk. You also have to act. You shouldn't only have a 'salon democracy' or a spoken democracy only. You must take actions. When I talk about actions, I'm not talking about violence or arms. I mean that you must also use democratic means, like marches or meetings. These things, to permit the state, the actors of the state, to adhere to a certain social programme. [...] Most of all it must move on to action. I only talk, it's chit-chat, it stays as debates, as contradictions, that's all. And after, and after it must be felt in the day-to-day.

Here, action is constructed collectively and debate should serve a purpose to inspire collective action like 'marches' and 'meetings.' However Kouassi ensures that I do not interpret 'action' as violence, aware that violence has been associated with *agoras* in the past. Yet this very past history of violent action may in fact contribute to a more inactive group in the current political climate, as members experience fear and reticence to aggressive or conflict-prone settings.

The frustration with 'chit chat' was also felt by *grin* participants, since their structure tended more towards the conversational. However, admonishing of talk was related more to the impact it had on productivity and on cycles of unemployment, and as being viewed as 'vagabonds,' in Souleymane's words, as opposed to collective action and political change. For example, Doumbia explained how people in his *grin* felt that it was a 'waste of time' to talk but because they were not working and improving their own

social situations. Though he does not frame it within the concept of collective action such as *agora* participant Kouassi above, Souleymane admonishes *grins* failure to address serious societal and global issues:

The negative aspect of the grin. The time that we spend in the grin, we could use to do other things, that's the aspect that I deplore a lot because we, can start doing our grin at 9:00pm and we stay like that until 1:00am. You imagine someone who wants to do some research or rather someone who wants to learn something, or other stuff. [...] You should look at the other countries. The countries with a lot of grins are underdeveloped countries because the grin can't make someone grow, one should say that clearly. Because the grin leads us to exchange [discuss] about futile things. Often we even repeat what we said yesterday, what we just said today, tomorrow. Often we even come to sit and then we look at each other and we don't have anything to talk about, yet the world is moving fast. What can we contribute to changing the world? [...] So you see the negative side of the grin for me, is the time that we spend there, you see. Take the 'education side' of it for example. Today it's deplorable but the time that we spend in grin, can't we think of spending that time there telling people to put their children in school, to learn, you see. It's the only side that me, I deplore

Here Souleymane relates unemployment as a negative effect of *grin* membership, although *grin* members were generally not all unemployed. However he is also concerned that they could use their time to mobilise their community for issues like education. As a Qur'anic school teacher and former resident in Saudi Arabia, Souleymane was deeply concerned with Islamic extremism and his *grin* often discussed issues of Islamic extremism and Boko Haram. Here, he may have felt powerless in enacting real change. But interestingly, as the *côro*, or leader, he felt passionately that his space prevented young people, such as Ismael, from engaging in delinquent behaviour and provided a space to learn more about religious issue. Perhaps Souleymane overlooks the fact that the motivations of the members do not involve changing the world or even local or national politics. Rather, the changes and actions resulting from *grin* participation surfaced in members' empowerment for example or the ability to network, resolve conflicts and find work, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

Furthermore, within the framework of humanising dialogue, the need to value small scale changes as building up into longer-term transformation is also necessary.

### **Grins: Action at the Community Level**

However, some work for social and political transformation was more explicit in certain *grins*. At the highly organised and established *Grin 12* in Abobo, I arrived one evening to find two men addressing a crowd of around 25 people. These two visitors were successful, employed former members or official members who had left the neighbourhood. They came to motivate the group, stating that after nearly 15 years of existence, they needed to do more, to 'rise up,' by pressuring the mayor and using their voting power. One recalled the era of Gbagbo and anti-Northern sentiments, when 'they ripped up our papers,' encouraging them to empower themselves now. He coached them on getting investments and organising themselves better to access funds for the *grin's* joint association which members had founded to address social issues in the neighbourhood. The struggle here, even if collective or communal, involved improving themselves through solidarity and their relationships.

Like *Grin 12*, many *grins* were taking action through formalising themselves into associations and NGOs. Cissé Sindou (Interview, October 24, 2014), an editor of the pro-Ouattara newspaper *Nord Sud*, explained that this trend of creating 'associations' was driven by the desire to access municipal funding and to have formal recognition. Sindou edited the weekly feature 'The Debate Continues,' a two-page spread that features a *grin*, engaging them in a debate about a current political or social issue. Several *grins* that I observed had been featured in Sindou's column, many of which were already associations. Other *grins* had created side organisations that members were involved with, such as an investment fund for members. These associations served a distinct purpose, beyond chatting and but often arose from their discussions about social issues, thus they preserved the dialogic nature of the space while progressing onto action in new forms. Lassina describes how his group came to form an association:

In a *grin*, *Voilà*, we were meeting like that at night. But one day, we decided, but look, this is the environment that we're living in. What can we do? Isn't it better to fight that? Isn't it better to tackle the insalubrity in

which we live? Isn't it better to fight against violence? Because we suffer from violence. Isn't it better to tackle that? So that's how we formalised ourselves, I mean, I mean we went from the grin and then we created an informal association and then from that informal association, we created what we call today 'La Jeunesse Citoyenne pour le Developpement d'Abobo' (Youth Citizens for the Development of Abobo). And most of the organisations amongst Abobo, the organisations that exist here, originated in grins.

The frequent meetings of people living in the same area and facing the same problems can perhaps lead to action, if the right individuals take on the roles of creating associations and targeting key issues. This also enabled communities to work towards goals of peace or justice independent of the government. As Lassina further elaborated:

When you go up to someone, you say, 'so, your neighbourhood is dirty or your borough is dirty, you have to lead him to understand that the insalubrity is dangerous for him. *Voilà*. And it's true that the state is there, that the borough exists, but... it's not only the responsibility of the state to fight against insalubrity. *Voilà*, it's everyone's business.

He believes that *grins* should not wait for the state to fix their problems and that their spaces of dialogue can and should promote action in the 'here and now.' Also, an element of 'critical consciousness' of humanising dialogue surfaces in using the space to lead someone to understand. Amara also took the same approach in his organisation of blood drives, saying that you have to explain and illuminate why it's important to give blood. Like Lassina, Amara also described *grins* as effective spaces for passing messages about his NGO and association work, especially in public health.

However, other members felt that *grins* were effective in creating changes because of their direct links with political power. Lassina, Amara, Diaby, as well as the presidents of the RGCI and RGTCl understood that *grins* were a powerful network of word of mouth which lured politicians to them. *Grin 22*, for example, had different levels of membership, each with corresponding fees. While a normal membership fee cost 1,000 FCFA (a little over £1), a 'member of honour,' generally politicians or public figures, paid upwards of 50,000 FCFA. Unlike *agora* participants who saw themselves as being linked to politicians through *agoras*, many *grins* members considered themselves co-members

with politicians. Certain *grins*, such as Diaby's *Grin 20* in Adjamé, were known throughout Abidjan as being a meeting place for politicians and journalists. However, most *grin* members like Lassina, Bamba, Mohamed, Ismael and Aby reported that politicians would only come before elections or during Ramadan to discuss and make gifts. Nevertheless these potential community relationships also have the ability to translate micro level dialogue to macro level action. While Souleymane felt that all the 'important decisions' of politicians were made in the *grins*, politicians' involvement seemed more related to keeping a loyal voter base and communicating messages when needed.

This difference in *goals* of action through dialogue also indicates a need to better understand dialogue spaces if harnessing them for peace projects. Action for dialogue in the *grins* was more related to Buber's concept of 'tikkun olam' or bettering the world, whereas *agoras*, in their political state, had more ideas of collective action and political revolution.

### ***Agoras: Desire for Formalisation by the State***

In contrast to the *grins*, *agoras* viewed themselves as key sites of reconciliation that had been overlooked by the government. Perhaps because of their previously close relationship to power, they considered their sites as potential spaces that could and should be used for public authorities. Their relationship between dialogue and the state was very different – while *grins* were seeking local support and help, *agoras* wanted more national status in the dialogue and reconciliation processes. The peace that *agora* members seemed to aspire to was what Perkins (2002, p. 47) calls 'civil peace' which relies on 'accords, laws, justice, courts, and so on.' For example, Jean-Luc recognised that *grins* were organised because of the members' relatively protected status and that *agoras* and *parlements* still lacked basic freedom of speech and assembly:

They organise grins, it's true. But the *grins* and the *parlements*, where is the difference? Simply the means of exchange. But why encourage one group and martyr another group? The grins go on because the people who lead them feel safe maybe. [pause] More at peace to do them. But the others, you see, for me. The issue of dialogue should be organised by our public authorities. And the speech should be organised. And not only

used for grins. The population doesn't need political overtones to be able to dialogue. To be able to speak. I want them to organise speech for speech's sake and not because it belongs to a politician or political issues.

Thus another barrier to reconciliation involving the spaces is the inequality between the spaces in feeling freedom of expression. He also wants the ability to speak for speech's sake and felt that formal initiatives by the state could help to remedy the perceived inequality and censorship. Here he expects 'civil peace' to remedy this while overlooking any other underlying issues which might prevent people from wishing to speak in public. He saw dialogue as directly connected to peacebuilding only if the government institutionalised it, as opposed to seeing any direct peacebuilding occurring from their existing meetings.

For *agoras*, formalisation also related to how the spaces should be used as teaching and learning sites and also as sites of reconciliation, as for them, this aspect of reconciliation and justice was a more primary issue. Philippe also wanted the state to formalise them:

we can even invite university professors to come teach people about more important subjects. If the state organises that, it can be a canvas, um, for raising awareness for peace. It can avoid war. It can be a canvas to make people aware of the problems of society that the state wants to address. You see, that can also help in the battle against poverty. Go in the *parlements* and then teach people to manage...to manage themselves.

However, these concepts of linking dialogue to the peacebuilding efforts were highly theoretical and also should be understood cautiously, as 'peace' has often been evoked in the FPI discourse for an agenda that did not always uphold values of peace and justice for society at large.

Nonetheless *agora* members did understand that that the simple act of speaking with others could in some ways bring about justice. Some members described the *agora* as a site of catharsis, an alternative to the CDVR where members could be heard – underscoring the importance of both speaking and listening in mutual dialogue (Buber,

2002). The president of a parlement, Jean-Luc describes his experience of members using the space for this purpose:

Not so long ago, we had a little meeting. The skin of people. We weren't expecting them to show the scars of what they suffered in the war. From the FRCI as well as by unidentified men. But the man who comes, who tells us 'my brother, look at what I experienced.' He shows you the scars, from how he was slashed with a machete, a knife and everything. How he was tied up. It's you who is sitting there, you are in charge of the parlement. It's not you who is going to heal him. But in telling you, he is relieved. There's the first solution for reconciliation. The *parlement* isn't a place where people of only one category come. There, there, each Ivorian comes to say what he experienced. That would certainly be different than the CDVR which, I don't criticise, it was their method. But for me, personally, I thought that their approach was partial to one category of Ivorian that ...ended in being pleased by the suffering of all the Ivorians. He who won was delighted that the other lost. [...]That can't bring peace. That can't bring about reconciliation. That's my point of view. It's the *parlements*. That are the spaces that allow everyone to express themselves. If in continuing, one can organise these *parlements* like Gacacas, like...like subdivisions of the CDVR. The CDVR could have used them. Because, what is it? It's to listen to people. We could have organised them, recuperated the *parlements* and made them spaces where the people came to express

In the beginning of this account, when Jean-Luc describes the man who showed his scars, it is apparent that both the process of speaking and listening are important to members as a form of dealing with trauma. However, while he sees the value in this, he feels that this type of dialogue could have been more effective if formalised and his solution was that the government could have organised the spaces to work towards reconciliation. Again, the role of the government is perceived as important in this process and that making the spaces like Gacaca would give more legitimacy and scope for *agoras* to suggest solutions or play a larger role in the CDVR process. However, here it is important to consider the fact that while he views the *agoras* as being 'open' and inclusive to all Ivorians, evidence from this thesis and past research has shown that spaces are partisan and not always welcoming to outsiders. However, his feelings about the CDVR were shared by Ivorians of both political sides and his suggestion to include

the dialogue spaces in the processes could have been useful in engaging the society in peace and recognition more broadly.

### **Perceptions of the Peace-Dialogue Relationship**

The dialogue in *agoras* and *grins* highlights the complicated nature of rebuilding peace and the connections between local, international and global factors in dialogue at the grassroots level. Findings challenge the concept of dialogue as a direct path to peace but rather points out cyclical and intertwining natures and also underscore the different views of peacebuilding and dialogue held by different groups involved in the crisis. *Grins* no longer saw themselves as working on political change or peace efforts, as their president was already elected into power. However, *agora* members remained firmly rooted in a political struggle and viewed macro political issues as a serious barrier to building peace. This draws out the complexity and necessity of achieving a hybrid peace (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013) that address both top down and local levels.

### ***Agoras* and Top Down Perceptions of Justice**

A primary obstacle to dialogue was the injustice felt by *agora* members relating to the imprisonment of Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé at the ICC, alongside the failure to bring any of the ruling party's actors to trial locally or internationally. This sense of injustice, as described earlier, was a key motivating factor for *agora* and *parlement* participants. In this sense, their dialogue and discussions in the *agoras* were perhaps building towards peace in *their* own perspective, yet had little to do with rebuilding relationships or working with the current government. Furthermore, it was a dialogue firmly rooted in the past. Many *agoras* still debated the constitutionality of Ouattara's election (e.g. Observations Dec. 11, October 25, December 12, 2014).

On this point, Pierre explains that, 'Well, one has the impression that there's a two-tier justice [or two-speed justice] and that's what's going to always fuel the *agoras*, unfortunately.' Thus the presence of the *agoras* directly relates to injustice and has a historical basis. From their inception, *agoras* centred upon political issues, first *monopartisme* in the era of the *Sorbonne*, and later against threats from the Northern rebellion and the political causes of Gbagbo (Atchoua, 2008; Konaté, 2003). This idea

that injustice fuels the *agoras* may also relate to how many *agora* participants viewed the peace process. For many, peace was required from the top down, starting with the liberation of Laurent Gbagbo and Blé Goudé from the ICC, along with various other prisoners in the country. Once this occurred, then other issues they viewed as barriers to peace could be addressed. For example, Kouadio explained, 'But to achieve peace, it's simple. They liberate Gbagbo, they liberate Blé Goudé, it's finished. The rest, we will deal with that here. The rest are details. The occupation of houses, arbitrary arrests. All that.' Narcisse also mentioned the occupation of houses and that 'Gbagbo must be liberated' before real peace could be achieved. Davide felt that peace and reconciliation could begin only when prisoners were released:

The barriers to peace, it's that... there are numerous barriers, eh. For me, personally, I think that for Ivoirians to come to peace, what I can ask of the authorities...of Cote d'Ivoire is to liberate all those that are in prison, for example. And then try to take on the reconciliation process. I assure you that if all these people in prison are freed, the month that follows, the political situation will be calm in Côte d'Ivoire, the people will begin to take on the reconciliation process.

For Davide, maybe after people have been freed they can begin to reconcile but not sooner. Thus the reconciliation between people is important, but more important is the top-level action in order to bring about people's ability to reconcile.

On the other hand, Marie feels that political prisoners must be liberated, and links this with her dissatisfaction with the government to feelings of injustice and exclusion:

The first thing, it's to liberate him, he who is there. Blé Goudé and the president. If they are liberated, it's finished. And then, if this president who is there, there, if he leaves, there's no problem. Even if, what's his name, Soro Guillaume [current President of the National Assembly], even if he takes the presidency, there's no problem. He's an Ivoirian like us. There's no problem. But he who is there, he's not an Ivoirian. Everyone knows it, but they imposed him on us. Because he knows everyone. Because he knows all the big guys from America, from France, in any case, the EU, he is known. They imposed him on us. Even today, you're going to go....how to say, in a big company in Plateau [downtown Abidjan], everyone from his place, he put them there. Once, on a TV

station, they asked why he put all the people from the North, he said it was an 'ethnic readjustment' [*rattrapage ethnique* – a phrase used by Ouattara to describe the placement of Northern Ivoirians office as a type of affirmative action]. You see that's very serious. They accuse everyone who's there for nothing. They accuse them...but the rebels, they are there. They aren't hiding, the proof being that last time, last week, when they had an uprising.

While she initially indicates the liberation of Gbagbo as the solution to conflict, this does not fully solve her other qualms, namely the legitimacy of the government and the perceived exclusion of her party from positions of power. Her discourse reveals elements of autochthony in her perception that only 'real Ivoirians' should be in government and that still believes that Ouattara is not Ivoirian, 'like us.' Marie had experienced direct violence during the conflict and had family who still had not returned from Liberia. Her wounds are deep and impact her ability to see the other as a 'Thou' as opposed to an 'It.' Her speech reveals that liberating prisoners may not really relate to peace as much as to aspiring for her party to have power again and that a 'top down' justice may not fully bring her peace.

Serge has very similar outlooks however he makes the direct link between the imprisonment of Gbagbo and other injustices with the inability to make peace:

Here in our country, the real peace, real peace for Ivoirians is first of all to free the political prisoners. Because we know that, no, that one there [referring to Gbagbo at the Hague] didn't do anything. They put him in prison, we know very well. They [Gbagbo and Goudé] didn't do anything. Those who did, those who planted the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, they are free, as we know. We know each other well here. *Voilà*. They are in prison and one asks us to take part in reconciliation. Make peace. But what type of peace can we make? But if our brothers, they put, from our side, everyone is in prison or in exile. You see? It's not normal. It makes it so that peace doesn't work too much in Côte d'Ivoire. When they free... and when they give... then then, when they tell us the truth about everything that happened in Cote d'Ivoire, it's the truth that they find. This truth, people prevent, prevent it from coming out. We need it to live better in Côte d'Ivoire, it's why we're like that, we're like that, we're like that. We are waiting, we think that with time, when God will have touched their hearts, they will try to change. So we are waiting for them.

Serge uses a lot of 'us' and 'them' in his speech and there is a high level of blame for the current government. His statement of 'what kind of peace can we make' within the current context of victors justice indicates that feelings of 'otherness' prevent people from engaging in reconciliation activities. He also indicates that he is waiting for 'them' to change, as opposed to meeting or a relationship of mutuality. This also brings up issues from Buber about communities and individuals and the need to understand individuals as part of a community as well as on an individual level within the concept of dialogue, as we are acting on multiple levels at all times. Even if Serge could have what Buber (2002) calls 'moments' of dialogue with individuals, if he feels part of a group that is socially oppressed, this will make any reconciliation activities, or any dialogue with opposing groups, very difficult. For him, the 'truth' about Gbagbo, about the illegitimacy of the current government, the truth about everything which he feels wronged about, must come out. This also relates to the precursors of effective contact with opposing groups in Allport's contact hypothesis relating to equal status and support of authorities and laws. This is a barrier to consider in future dialogue programmes or attempts to engage with people.

This reliance on the liberation of prisoners and processual justice seems to correspond to the deliberative concept of dialogue discussed in Chapter Two, more concerned with macro level peace and smoothing out systemic inequalities (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012). While some research in conflict zones has shown that '[a] peace process that only involves political elites is unlikely to bring long-term peace' (Atmar & Goodhand, 2002, p. 109; see also Pickering, 2007; Stroschein, 2013) and Fletcher and Weinstein (2002) have also criticised the reliance on 'technical peace' and truth commissions as opposed to holistic processes. However, Ahkavhan (2009) has found that ICC interventions in African political contexts can actually contribute to further violence. In Burundi, Nee and Uvin (2010) found that different groups and communities voiced contrasting preferences for the means of achieving peace. Integrated Hutu-Tutsi communities preferred local dialogue strategies whereas more isolated communities preferred trials and truth commissions. Preferences also changed depending on whether there was more tendency for perpetrating crimes or victimisation. These cases show that

there is no one 'correct' or efficient pathway to peace through dialogue and that a combination of top-down and grassroots approaches may need to occur in any given country. The disparities between *grins* and *agoras* show how important understanding and accommodating for these preferences is. However, within both *agoras* and *grins*, participant narratives show that while many view top-down justice as the best way to bring about peace, this will clearly not enable dialogue on its own, as many participants still held onto 'self' and 'other' categories.

However, some top-level justice could contribute to making actors at the micro level more ready and open for dialogue with the 'other.' The need for national level justice may also relate to the concept of 'historicity' discussed in Chapter Two. Experiences of violence affect the collective and individual psyche and are a part of humans historical construction in the world (Brouneus, 2010) and dealing with these traumas is necessary for moving forward and for dialogue. Changing the future does require with grappling in some way with the past, even if the change occurs in the present in a moment of infinite potential (Buber, 1949, 2002; Freire, 1972). This can also be related to Zartman's (2001) concept of 'ripeness' or the readiness of populations to engage in dialogue that is fostered over time and in conjuncture with other actions by the state, civil society and personal grappling with the past.

### ***Grins: Peace through the Top Down and Development***

Though *grin* members also felt that 'victor's justice was a barrier to peace (Mamadou, Lucas, Diaby), many expressed the belief that peace and normalcy had been restored in Côte d'Ivoire, such as Mohamed and Souleymane. Since Ouattara's regime had restored most basic political and social needs revoked during the Gbagbo era (Straus, 2015), their view of peace was related to restoring human dignity and economic stability after years of discrimination.

However, top down justice did factor in as an important source of peace for *grin* members. Though Lucas is critical of some the perspective that liberation of prisoners was the path to peace, he felt that solutions should come from the top down:

One can't do reconciliation like 'They only need to liberate the people [prisoners], liberate the people for the cause of reconciliation, they should let everything go.' Amnesty is not the solution. Reconciliation is when there's justice that we will recognise for years, justice to demand...the fact that the justice system says really, you have done wrong to this group of people or to this person. You see that that calms a bit the fervour, it calms a bit. The unnecessary, endless arguments won't happen again. And then, they will change behaviour. That's it, you know. They must try to reintegrate the men, so, there can't be reconciliation without justice.

[...] So, reconciliation is when the Justice System will condemn at least 2-3 people as an example. You will see that that is going to change, that will reconcile, *Voilà*. That's all. And then there were a lot of crimes, we can't reconcile one fine morning like that, we get up and say 'we have reconciled' no that doesn't happen like that. We need strong actions. It's not enough to give money to people to say that we have reconciled. No, it's not money that can reconcile but strong actions by... by politicians, rulers to pacify our hearts a bit. Because during the last 20 years we experienced in Cote d'Ivoire, we experienced impossible things

Lucas believes a real, sustainable justice needs to happen at the governmental level and involves fair trials of people from both sides, not just the liberation of prisoners in Gbagbo's camp. However, in addition to that, he said that people really needed to ask for forgiveness and to grant it. Interestingly, Lucas, a Christian from the West of the country who voted UPDCI (pro-Ouattara RHDP alliance), had a different profile than many *grin* members.

Mamadou, a *grin* member felt that there was already peace but that this was a result of the president's order 'not to touch anyone. Not to say anything. It's peace. In this way, no one troubles anyone. We are free to speak how we want. That, I guarantee you. Free.' Again, this begs the question of whether this perception of peace as established from above is productive and how that relates to their own identification with dialogue. Mamadou has a negative idea of peace, in the sense that there is no violence, though he acknowledges aspects of victor's justice. While here, Nussbaum's (2013) argument that peace and tolerance can be cultivated through strong leadership, it also demonstrates the participant's distancing of peace from the *grin* and from his own

actions. For example, personal forgiveness is of secondary importance to national-level forgiveness, for example between Ivoirian politicians and also between Ivoirians and the international community.

*Grin* members also envisioned peace from the top down occurring through the success of the government's development projects like waterworks and bridges. Fatoumata felt that peace and development would come because of the government's positive work in improving the livelihoods of *all* Ivoirians, not just of one political party. She cited two examples: the improvements to water access, since water cuts had recently inconvenienced her area of Yopougon and the construction of the third bridge<sup>31</sup> in Abidjan that improved traffic and circulation between the north and south of the city. She used this improvement as an example:

Well, I think these are things that calm the heart. *Voilà*, the bridge that was just finished. Well, one won't say that it's just members of the RDR who should cross it. It's for everyone to cross. So these...these actions, development, it really contributes to consolidating peace. It strengthens reconciliation. Because someone who is hungry, you can't talk to him about reconciliation. Or rather someone who has lost everything, you come, the person has lost everything during the crisis, and you want to talk about reconciliation. Me, I think that when it's like that, your message won't be heard. *Voilà*, some actions... with the gifts of the first lady who is helping women constantly, women from everywhere, from everywhere. Really it calms the heart, it makes it so that today, the discourse has changed a bit. Really the people have calmed down, they've put water in their wine [mellowed out]. I mean, there's always the case of black sheep. But not the majority, the majority today don't look...I would say the president's party, the work it does, and it's benefits to the whole population, it benefits the whole population, it's that work that people look at. So, slowly slowly, I think that if all that the president said, if he is able

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<sup>31</sup> The third bridge, named for Henri Konan Bédié, is widely regarded as a symbol of the country's peace dividend and monumental triumph for Ouattara. Bédié had barely begun its construction in 1999 when the coup that destabilised the country delayed works until after Ouattara's presidency in 2011. For RDR supporters, it signifies peace and the efficiency of the government. For FPI supporters, it symbolises what they view as a technocratic, neo-liberal approach to development and peace. Abidjan is situated on a lagoon and residents depend on the bridges to circulate.

to do it, *Voilà*, during these two terms, I think that reconciliation will be really true. And then we will start laughing.

For Fatoumata, the more the country develops, the happier everyone will be because their immediate needs will be satisfied but also perhaps because they will feel that the government, although not necessarily belonging to one's political party, will be working for them too. Again relying on the government and her party, she does not engage with other reasons why her neighbour would not be content with the government's work. However observations at *agoras*, revealed that members clearly did not view these as part of a peacebuilding agenda but as evidence of the government's neo-liberalism, of his disregard for their group and needs and of not dealing with real issues in the country. For example, at a December 12, 2014 meeting at *Agora 1*, several members complained about water issues and about how people have to travel far to get water that is not even drinkable. I noted here that water could be a *shared* issue between *agoras* and *grins*, a potential of agreement, but discourses about the causes and solutions varied highly between spaces.

Despite engagement in dialogue-based spaces, dialogue in and of itself as a solution to the injustices was not often brought up. Furthermore, varying perceptions held by *agora* and *grin* members about the barriers to peace and the desired society also contributed to different perceptions about how peace should be achieved. Participation in *agoras* represented a type of 'societal' or communal dialogue between a group and the state, since most *agora* attendees felt to a certain extent 'othered' by the government and were seeking a more humanising relationship that *grin* members had already acquired. *Grin* members, though frequently discontented with the government, could focus more on local peacebuilding and on self-advancement since they already felt in a more dialogic or humanising relationship with the government and systems of power.

These top level acts should somehow facilitate better, more open dialogue at the grassroots level, yet positive peace also requires action on all levels of society. Furthermore, a deeper analysis of what is meant by peace and justice in the discourses of *agora* members should be considered. For example, the discourses of hoping for top-

down justice are also accompanied by discourse of 'othering,' including the continued referral of Northern Ivoirians as 'rebels' and 'Burkinabe,' which indicates a need to unpack the meaning of peace held by different groups. Evidence in this chapter also seems to show that dialogue may be needed to reach an 'overlapping consensus' (Rawls, 1991) or an understanding about what an acceptable idea of peace and justice will be for members of both *agoras* and *grins*, who in many ways represent beliefs of the two fractured groupings of Ivoirian society. For example, this chapter has shown that an overlapping consensus of peace in Côte d'Ivoire could include liberation of political prisoners and trials of Ouattara supporters as well as development projects and employment opportunities for Ivoirians of all backgrounds. This shows to some extent the limits of single-group dialogue in this process.

### Summary

This chapter has shown some of the complexities in linking dialogue to peace in a post-conflict setting and has highlighted the challenges of balancing national reconciliation and local level peace. Furthermore, it brings up the different ways in which *grin* and *agora* members enact dialogue within their spaces and how this potentially can work towards peace and transformation from the ground up and from the top down. The type of dialogue, along with personal experiences, impacted upon perceptions about how peace should be achieved and if their discussion space should play a role in that. This draws out the importance of viewing 'local' in a multiplicity of ways and not as a homogenous set of beliefs and emphasises the need for humanising dialogue through the continued development of grassroots action. It also shows an inconsistent ability of individuals and groups to translate reflection into action, in terms of both personal and societal change and a lack of consensus on meanings of peace across society.

The meanings and purposes of dialogue are inherently linked to the forms of dialogue in the spaces and the motivations for participation. While dialogue is often viewed as a local process, this chapter also shows that participants require actions from above, both in instituting justice and in creating development projects and employment that better the lives of individuals, indicating a need for a 'hybrid' perspective of peace (Mac Ginty,

2011). The contrast between preferences for peacebuilding strategies is also related to the styles of dialogue in the groups. Though *agoras* are critical of the West and liberalism, their approaches to dialogue and learning actually resemble those more than local structures. On the other hand traditional methods in *grins* may reflect more community-oriented approaches to peacebuilding (Tuso, 2011). Thus the meaning of 'local' in local peace must be reconsidered in every context, recognizing the diversity and complexity of what both approaches to dialogue and outcomes of dialogue and peace should be. Dialogue was not the primary identified goal but served other roles for participants.

## **Chapter Nine – Conclusion**

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### **Introduction: A re-statement of the research problem and questions**

This thesis has woven together a story of street discussion spaces in Côte d'Ivoire and considered their role in the post-conflict context where dialogue is considered essential for rebuilding and reconciliation. In particular, I have considered the value of both Martin Buber and Paulo Freire's concept of humanising dialogue and its value in better understanding the relationship between dialogue and peace. I have also considered how the characteristics of spaces have influenced processes of dialogue and motivations and outcomes participation. This study draws out the value of the spaces in and of themselves for the participants, and highlights the importance of situating dialogue in the everyday lives of those engaged, in this case youth and adults in post-conflict Abidjan. It also considers the theoretical links between dialogue and peace and how dialogue participants view their own participation relating to justice, peace and social transformation.

This research locates itself within the broader fields of peacebuilding, education and dialogue and the aims of the thesis are briefly restated here. First, this research sought to reflect on the theoretical concept of dialogue in post-conflict settings through a qualitative study of street discussion spaces in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Secondly, it aimed to provide an account of dialogue spaces with the purpose of unveiling characteristics, motivations and outcomes of dialogue in their relation to the achievement of humanising dialogue. Finally, the thesis intended to draw out implications of dialogue for education, post-conflict contexts and non-formal education more broadly.

The aims of this thesis have been accomplished through responding to these four research questions:

- 1) How does literature in education and peacebuilding frame concepts of dialogue?

- 2) What are the characteristics, processes and enabling factors of dialogue within the discussion spaces?
- 3) What are participants' motivations for and outcomes of engagement in street discussion spaces?
- 4) How can these dialogues be considered as contributing to peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire?

To explore how this research has responded to the research questions and aims, I reflect briefly on the concept of humanising dialogue constructed in Freire and Buber's work and summarize the characteristics of the spaces. I then explore five dimensions of humanising dialogue that were introduced in Chapter Two and used throughout the thesis to consider Research Questions Two, Three and Four. I then discuss limitations of this perspective and ways in which the findings may not be considered as humanising dialogue as well as limitations of this study. Then recommendations for policy and future research are presented along with a brief reflection on peace and dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire before a final conclusion.

This chapter highlights how this thesis has contributed to knowledge in a number of ways; for one, it constitutes the first major study in the post-conflict era of both *agoras* and *grins* and the first to focus on the aspect of learning, dialogue and peace, filling an important gap in the existing literature on this topic. By taking a micro lens to the issue, I have also demonstrated the importance of grassroots phenomena and national and global issues. Then through a discussion of Freire and Buber's humanising dialogue and its application in peacebuilding settings, this research has enriched meanings of dialogue and provided a unique engagement of the two educational thinkers. This research has highlighted a need for increased understanding about the broadly held notion that dialogue can transform societies and bring about peace and justice and emphasised the need to understand micro level dialogue as well as local ideas about peace and justice alongside macro ones.

### **Responding to Research Questions: Conceptualising Dialogue**

This thesis has demonstrated that dialogue is often invoked for conflict resolution in a range of contexts because of its symbolic aspect in bringing to contesting parties together (Atkinson, 2013), though approaches to its enactment vary. In particular, I found that dialogue in peacebuilding settings often derives from ‘deliberative’ and ‘conflict resolution’ perspectives. Dialogue as deliberation reflects liberal political theory concerned with communication in the public sphere, with rational decision making and consensus building (e.g. Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Habermas, 1984, 1991; Sen, 1999). Conflict resolution approaches generally rely on intergroup and interpersonal dialogue with an aim of psychosocial healing and often derive from Allport’s (1954) and Pettigrew’s (1998) ‘contact hypothesis,’ and aim to resolve conflict on an interpersonal level through engaging opposing parties in dialogue. These approaches focus on either the macro or the micro level, yet I argue that dialogue in peacebuilding requires approaches that can synthesise micro *and* macro level processes. This research has emphasised the importance of a concept of ‘humanising dialogue’ found in the work of Martin Buber and Paulo Freire, through analysis of dialogue in Ivorian street discussion spaces. Freire and Buber both see dialogue as a necessary element of meaningful existence and as a process of developing a critical consciousness that can then enable people to make changes in their own world. Freire and Buber are concerned with micro level processes, especially in the learning environment, but make clear links as to how these micro level changes should eventually result in broader communal and even societal actions.

Through a joint reading of their works, a concept of humanisation was elaborated upon and five key themes were drawn out: *‘I-Thou and I-It,’ ‘Inclusion and Democratic Listening,’ ‘Naming the World,’ ‘Critical Consciousness,’* and *‘Transformation, Community and the Present Moment.’* These elements construct a concept of dialogue that is focused on mutuality and ‘the everyday encounters of man with the world’ (Diamond, 1960, p. 3) and on learning and on enacting change in the here and now. Buber and Freire also share normative views on a just society and on the importance of

dialogue for bringing about changes to achieve justice. In discussing Freire and Buber, I highlighted how their different approaches to politics, education and the role of student and teacher can enrich the meaning of dialogue. Furthermore, Buber's distinctive epistemology and ontology of dialogue mediates some tensions in Freire's work, especially regarding a universal humanisation and a historicity implicit in Marxist approaches.

### **Responding to Research Questions: Characteristics of *Agoras* and *Grins* and Personal and Societal Outcomes**

Drawing from observations and interviews, Chapter Five described the discussion spaces and highlighted changes since the conflict. Findings show that *agoras* and *grins* remain distinct spaces, but that many *agoras* now resemble *grins* in their size and more discrete locations. *Agoras* have reduced in size and number due to both fear and to a dispersed leadership body, as many national and local figures who once animated and organised the spaces have fled or are incarcerated. Spaces remain *generally* divided by political affiliation and to an extent religion and ethnicity, with many exceptions.

Members identified processes of dialogue, such as the importance that 'everyone gives their opinion' and that the subject of debate, especially in *grins*, related to the problems facing members. However, while both types of groups 'talked about everything,' *grin* members' discussion revolved around personal, community and national problems, while *agoras* drew influence from a broader collective consciousness, stemming from political affiliations and national federations of *agoras* and *parlements*. This contributed to an almost uniquely politically-oriented discourse in those spaces, as well as a framing of their motivations around collective action and broader issues such as the liberation of Laurent Gbagbo.

Confirming Vincourt and Kouyaté's (2012) findings, older *grin* members did not necessarily dominate the conversation, and were often silent, chiming in only to resolve disputes. Leadership roles had stronger correlations with perceived knowledge or with providing the meeting space, instead of age. While not necessarily authoritarian in style, younger members had to employ

specific manners and cultural protocols to question or contradict older members. In *agoras* on the other hand, youth had traditionally been at the helm of the movement, but an ageing membership base, as well as the fear of youth to be involved in risky activities associated with *agoras*, led to the older generation taking an active role in organisation.

Benefits of dialogue were both intrinsic and extrinsic in *grins* and *agoras*. Intrinsically, *agora* members discussed the pleasure of speaking and listening whereas *grin* members often described the pleasure of sitting and making tea in the company of friends. However, there were extrinsic benefits which motivated members to join: members of *grins* had more communal and personal motivations and outcomes, whereas *agora* members viewed their outcomes on a collective and political level. These will be discussed in the following section.

### **Exploring Dimensions of Humanising Dialogue in Grins and Agoras**

The following section considers the findings of Chapter Five-Eight within the dimensions of humanising dialogue set forth in Chapter Two. This allows for a final reflection on how the research findings have compared with concepts discussed in the literature review.

#### **I-Thou and I-It**

This ontological aspect of Freire's and Buber's dialogue may be more complex to observe empirically in the dialogue spaces. Whether the real moments of dialogue contribute to a more human, more meaningful existence is difficult to judge, especially with a limited time in the field. However, findings did show how members highly valued that members placed on their interactions and also the importance of togetherness and many also have strong links to their region and ethnic group; as in other African contexts, the notion of the individual is difficult to separate entirely from community relationships (Chabal, 2007). This ontological notion of 'self' being constructed in the 'other' was also discussed in Chapter Two on the notion of Ubuntu, *ujamaa* and *négritude*. This may relate to Buber's point that one cannot have

an aim of dialogue but that dialogue happens organically and as an aim in and of itself.

This research highlights the importance of relationships in these spaces, though these relationships could not always be categorised as mutual. Chapters Six and Seven suggests that meeting regularly over a longer period of time provides greater opportunity for mutual relationships to occur, and that these relationships allowed for disputes to be resolved and consensus to occur. However, these relationships often took place in neighbourhood groups, friendship groups or what the members called 'affinity' groups, indicating a high level of bonding capital but a low level of bridging capital (Putnam, 2001).

Some elements of bonding capital (Putnam, 2001) included money, jobs and connections, and in some cases social protection. In the *grins*, *cotisations*, or group contributions, either on a monthly occasion or for members' life events, provided an important safety net. Strategies for conflict resolution for *grin* members often included joking cousins or relying on kinship bonds and ethnicities. Bonding capital for *agoras* related to unity in the political struggle and motivations centred upon FPI politics. However, personal relationships often did not factor as highly in the *agoras*, as the spaces were larger and members sometimes travelled to different neighbourhoods to listen. However, Chapter Six and Seven describe special dialogic aspects of the relationship between the orator and the audience and some changes in smaller post-2011 spaces.

Chapter Eight revealed the importance of trust in order to engage in dialogue: one way in which the spaces contribute to increasing moments of dialogue is perhaps through creating a space for people to meet over an extended period of time which can then allow the space for a dialogic encounter to occur. This reflects literature on 'group dialogue' that underscores the importance of continuous meetings to establish trust (Nagda, 2006; Yeakley, 1998). The discussion spaces contrasted with many 'one-off' dialogue and peacebuilding

events that occurred in Abidjan which did not achieve this type of meaningful relationship, though observed in longer-term NGO programmes, such as a UNICEF-led youth dialogue project (UNICEF, 2015) or the Peace Club project at the university (RECEPE, 2014).

### *Relationships and Dialogic Learning*

For *grins*, the intergenerational aspect of the groups created a learning environment centred upon life advice and learning how to 'be' but also extended to current affairs. However, the willingness of older members to learn from younger members, such as Moussa, Doumbia and Lassina, reflected broader societal changes. Older members recognised that the younger generation had valuable knowledge and skills, especially regarding technology and school-based learning. However, many young people sought out *grins* with older members because of the high value placed on knowledge acquired with age and experience (e.g. Mamadou, Ismael, Mohamed and Lucas). With many *grins* now creating formal associations recognised by the municipality, youth found strategies to include older members in leadership positions, such as consultative 'wisdom' committees while younger members took on administrative tasks such as at *Grin 12*. This concept could also indicate a level of horizontal student-teacher/teacher-student relationship (Freire, 1972, 1998), with older members having the ultimate authority but allowing youth space to explore, learn and progress the group. Agoras, traditionally youth dominated, had also found ways to include elders in their group and also found more participation by older members in post-crisis spaces.

### **Democratic Listening and Inclusion in Education**

Freire and Buber acknowledge that dialogue extends beyond speaking and must also consider listening. They describe a process of 'democratic listening' (Freire, 1998) or inclusion (Buber, 1958) that requires full consideration of the 'other' without letting go of one's own self. This plays a particular role for educators who must attempt to understand a student's whole being and consider his or her needs.

Observational data also showed that listening in *grins* was not as important as speaking. Members often talked over each other at the same time, perhaps revealing some aspects of their motivations or their preferences for dialogue style. While both *grin* and *agora* participants felt that 'everyone gives their opinion,' mapping of the dialogue showed that often a few members dominated the space. However, the potential ability to speak, rather than the actual time spent speaking was deemed more important, also found by Björkdahl (2012) in research on deliberative forms.

There is also some evidence of mutuality in speaking and listening in the case of orators who felt a sense of mutuality and inclusion in being able to perform speeches that pleased the population. However, as discussed previously, the ability to listen while still maintaining one's beliefs is essential and not to be overlooked, presenting a challenge for *agora* audiences who may not have a 'teacher' figure that encourages critical thinking and questioning. While Pierre and Marc indicated that a part of the learning process in *agoras* related to listening and discerning between true and false information, this indicates a need for more information on how people sort through evidence in the dialogic process of reflection-action and the relationship between listening and reflection.

### **Naming the World**

This element of humanising dialogue relates to the process of learning and to being able to identify and name the world in order to change it. We can see here that participants did engage in this activity. For one, the ability to discuss current events gave context and meaning to the world. In the case of *agoras*, members began to name topics like neo-imperialism, globalisation and other phenomenon that were affecting their lives but for which they previously did not know how to frame and apply to the conflict affecting their lives.

Furthermore, the spaces honed cognitive skills of analysis and memorisation that enabled them to more effectively name their worlds. For *grin* members, naming had less to do with politics but more about naming problems in their

communities. In *grins*, knowledge of the self also enhanced the ability to name the world and to reflect and act in difficult situations.

Codification necessary for naming sometimes happened through the newspapers, e.g. *titrologie*, but also through the presentation of orators in *agoras*. Here we can also see how the processes of listening, of naming and of reflection and critical consciousness ultimately depend on each other. It is also important to recall Chapter Five and the ability of participants to be in the space without necessarily speaking, although most members of *grins* felt that everyone had the opportunity to talk. Speaking in *agoras*, for non-orators, was not generally possible, but still gave them the discourses that they used to name their world.

Learning was another important motivation and outcome. For younger parliament and *agora* members, learning to speak and to form arguments, or *l'art oratoire*, was an important outcome that many expressed as having translated to their academic careers. In *agoras*, becoming an orator was also a valued outcome as it gave status, authority, wealth and even fame, as in the cases of Narcisse, Gerard and Aristide (also found in the research of Banégas, 2012; Cutolo, 2010). While these things had diminished due to the FPI's fall from power, within their own community orators held a prestigious position. Participants in *agoras* also appreciated the multidisciplinary aspect of the learning and the ability to broach a number of subjects, such as law and economics. From a dialogic pedagogical perspective, the learning was targeted to their daily needs and originated out of daily life, which seemed to encourage participation.

### **Critical Consciousness**

Critical consciousness, or as Buber calls it critical reflection, is a key element of humanising dialogue that enables students to recognise and eventually act on injustice. Opportunities for critical consciousness arise from ability to debate and contradict, a skill developed in both types of spaces, though at times constrained. Buber also contributes the concept of critical consciousness

being an ephemeral moment and not a constant state. While some moments of awareness were perhaps seen in members, it was more complex to identify than a complete and radical transformation. However, as stated above, consistent engagement in discussion spaces increased opportunities for dialogue through the simple act of meeting.

Many *agora* members talked about developing a political awareness through their participation. However, history has shown that the politics of *agoras*, at least in the pre-2011 era, were not necessarily based on a vision of peace and justice but rather on exclusion (Banégas et al., 2012; Marshall-Fratani, 2006). This highlights the need for a normative understanding of justice within dialogue, as provided by the concept of humanisation.

Opportunities for critical consciousness often centre upon tension and conflict that enable people to gain awareness through exposure to different perspectives. However, in both politically mixed and homogenous *grins*, personal friendships were generally prioritised over having difficult discussions about politics. This supports Nussbaum's (2015) argument about the centrality of emotions in political decision-making and demonstrates the importance of friendships and relationships in discussion spaces. However, it also shows how these relationships can both encourage or enhance decision making but also at times hinder the advancement of thought or of just social relations. However, even in homogenous groups, critical thinking could be encouraged such as members challenging each other's viewpoints or purposely playing 'devil's advocate' to spark debate. Yet in the *agoras*, findings also showed that participants had to possess a degree of critical thinking skills in order to sort through unreliable information and that the spaces themselves could be dangerous for those who accepted information at face value.

### **Community, Transformation and the Present Moment**

This research has also shown some challenges of the concept of the 'present moment' concept within Buber and Freire's work. Buber and Freire both agree

that dialogue requires being in the present moment and in a space of limitless potential, however the past can be a major obstacle in reaching this state. Also, the cathartic nature of speech for some members and the challenges in bringing about peace when injustices, both present and past, are still deeply felt at a national level can prevent this ability to remain grounded in the present. Psychosocial approaches to dialogue, such as contact hypothesis and intergroup dialogue provide a greater scope for considering the trauma of the past but this must be oriented towards a future that is based on mutuality and equality. Here, the oscillation between I-It and I-Thou provided by Buber also gives the ability to see value in examining the past but using this as a means of then existing in the present.

Furthermore a barrier to peace mentioned in Chapter Eight by *grin* and *agora* members was a lack of action in translating their discussions into concrete results on a collective and community level. This transformation from dialogue to action is complex and, especially considering the negative and violent actions that resulted from spaces in the past, there may be a hesitancy to act too quickly. However, *grins* demonstrate a tendency to focus on building towards the present moment in community oriented spaces, similar to Buber's (1949) and Freire's (1972) prefigurative ideals. An interesting post-conflict development was the increasing formalisation of *grins* into local associations. This can be perhaps seen as a 'tactic' (Lefebvre, 1991) to navigate bureaucracy by entering into the formal sphere, and attempting to receive funding and grants to improve their members' status. Members often worked together for betterment of their country beginning with their own community, by providing services, sharing information about health and other issues and supporting each other financially.

### **Reflections on Ivoirian Street Discussion Spaces: A Lack of Humanising Dialogue?**

While the spaces were undoubtedly sites of communication, instances of 'genuine dialogue' may have been less frequent than 'dialogue disguised as monologue' or even 'technical dialogue,' especially in *agoras* where specific messages were meant to be transmitted (Buber, 2002). However, Buber's

concept of I-Thou and I-It relationships is important for thinking about how and why potential moments of dialogue do arise, as well as considering what made the sites conducive to learning a range of valued information. Meeting together to discuss on a regular basis can expand the amount of opportunities to think critically and also foster a sense of trust and care between members.

At the same time, essential elements of the spaces seemed to go against a notion of humanising dialogue based on mutuality. For example, hierarchical structures and the gendered nature of the settings may pose a challenge to the groups in their ability to function in a just and inclusive way. However, the age-based hierarchies, as discussed above, are more complex and may also complement the teaching and learning relationships.

Women generally did not participate in spaces, undoubtedly related to gender dynamics in Cote d'Ivoire and women's own preferences for engagement in politics such as women's associations or branches of political parties. Women's use of time and participation in the informal economy prohibited them from participating in the same manner and women's informal associations, even those associated with male associations like Fatoumata's, had less emphasis on dialogue and more on mutual aid and tontines. However, those who did take part seemed to have no inhibitions in speaking or participating though this may also relate to their own personalities.

These spaces are also sites of socialization where norms are challenged, including age, ethnicity and religion. For example, Chapter Three showed that learning often occurred in horizontal fashion between young and older members and that younger members, who often had more experience in formal education or knowledge of technology, were viewed as a source of learning for older members. At the same time, younger members preferred being in spaces with older members in order to gain important life advice or to learn more about politics. Thus age hierarchies may not be oppressive but can also be seen as fulfilling an important part of dialogic teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the role of orators, particular to *agoras*, highlights more hierarchical structures and rules for speaking that reflect the groups'

modelling of higher education and formalised structures. It is useful to draw on Margaret Mead's (1970) distinction between post-figurative, co-figurative and pre-figurative, where a post-figurative society depends on knowledge transmission from older to younger, co-figurative constitutes peer learning and pre-figurative denotes learning transmitted from the younger generation to the older. In the spaces, depending on the stratification of ages in a space, all three forms of learning seemed to occur. Furthermore, the changing and volatile climate, in many ways driven by the conflict, requires older members to seek out knowledge from youth in a pre-figurative sense.

### **Buber and Freire's Dialogue in Contexts of Conflict**

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that Buber and Freire provided a useful tool for considering dialogue within the spaces as both a communicative process and as a tool for building peace and justice. For one, the spaces engaged with politics, education and community life, which both authors consider interwoven. They enabled an analysis of how the dialogue occurred and what value it had on intrinsic and extrinsic levels. A humanising dialogue also helped to explain how the highly localised ways of discussing politics related to historicity: how humans we are constructed from our historic context but also have the ability to change it, in this case through dialogue. More so, the characteristics and processes of dialogue in and of themselves were impacted by historical factors.

The use of this framework has also enabled the research to highlight some challenges in humanisation and the 'present' moment. Moments of humanisation are difficult if not impossible to empirically observe. Yet discourses and observations showed moments of 'It' as well as moments of reflection and understanding, as well as learning, that could represent 'Thou.' However, through participant's ideas of relationships, as well as observing moments of conflict resolution and when members changed their mind or listened to another person, the *potential* for mutuality and understanding, if not the demonstrated in the *actual* moment, was revealed. Furthermore, the balance between the 'present' and the need for sustained, long-term dialogue

should also be emphasised. The use of humanisation as opposed to deliberation or conflict resolution gives dialogue a broader meaning more related to positive peace (see Chapter One). In this way, dialogue and peace are not a causal relationship – peace is not only the end of dialogue, but dialogue is a means and an end.

### **Justice, Peace and Dialogue: A Complex Relationship**

This thesis examines the relationship between dialogue and peace, one that is upheld in popular thought, academic literature and political approaches. Often dialogue is viewed as the prerequisite to peace, however some findings from this study suggest that peace, and justice, must be restored to a certain extent before dialogue can occur. Injustice still exists in Côte d'Ivoire, as documented by international NGOs (Amnesty International, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Lopes, 2015) as well as this study's observational evidence of the limiting of public speech by *agora* members and imprisonment of key leaders.

Though Fletcher and Weinstein (2002) warn that international justice measures such as trials cannot solely bring about peace, this research found that power relations and sense of justice was so deeply affected by certain national and international events, such as the imprisonment of FPI members, that it was difficult for *agoras* to envision dialogue with *grins*. While Akhavan (2009) and Nee and Uvin (2010) have found that international criminal trials, truth commissions and other macro level strategies can deter violence in African contexts, Nee and Uvin (2010) also stress the need to understand different requirements of different communities in the same country – victims and perpetrators or minority/majority groups have different needs. While FPI supporters in *agoras* saw the ICC as a deterrent to justice, many *grins* did view Gbagbo's trial there as an important step in building peace. Furthermore, if one considers the prerequisites for positive contact within the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954): equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, support of authorities or laws and personal interaction/friendship potential, we can see that realising these prerequisites may also require action at the macro political level. For example, acts by the government to

assure population that FPI members were treated fairly, for example, could give a greater sense of 'support of authorities' and 'equal status' to achieve meaningful contact.

However, drawing on Buber, I argue that dialogue can always occur, regardless of macro level interactions. Even the smallest of moments between people, from the same or from opposing groups, can contribute to the eventual building of peace from the ground up. However, this will be enhanced by strong political action towards reconciliation and restoration of justice. Furthermore, the concept of 'single group dialogue' could have potential to create better relationships and should be viewed as a potential site of peace and dialogue. Groups, like *grins* and *agoras*, have also proven to have access to large swaths of the population and can be a resource for mobilising grassroots populations for peacebuilding causes.

### **Reflections on Methodology and Methods**

As stated above, this study's qualitative approach to research, informed by ethnographic methods and the 'extended case method' (Burawoy, 1991, 2009) were relevant to answering the research questions. This study was able to take a theoretical challenge and consider it within a real-life context. In addition, various researchers from peace, peace education, conflict and genocide studies encourage the use of qualitative, micro level research which can pay attention to strategies of individuals (Fetherston, 2000; Finkel & Straus, 2012; Stroschein, 2013). More so, having a micro level perspective enhances research on dialogue, as one of the main justifications for dialogue in the micro setting is for the macro level changes that it is supposed to produce and this research unveiled some of these links, at least in the perspectives of participants.

However, other approaches to research could have been taken: for example, a discourse analysis of discussions could have provided interesting insights into meanings of dialogue in the spaces. A longer fieldwork period or a longitudinal study spread over time would have allowed more understanding of the groups' evolution, particularly during elections. An in-depth ethnographic study of a singular group could have also provided important

information, yet would not have contributed the breadth of knowledge about discussion spaces in Abidjan. Furthermore, a quantitative approach including surveys could have given interesting information but would not have given the in-depth approach of this study. Employing a different conceptualisation of dialogue in this study could have coloured the study in different ways as well, potentially affecting the selection of methodology and method. Using a 'capabilities' lens (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) could have also given the study a focus on empowerment and change.

While my time in the field was constrained to four months, I feel that my approach to research was able to respond to the questions of this thesis and while in the field I experienced 'data saturation' in observations of discussion spaces. The intensive approach that I took also allowed me to develop relationships with individuals and groups that was key to achieving this research in an environment where foreigners are not always trusted and helped to maximise my time in the field.

### **Directions for Future Research and Policy**

This study opens the paths to research both in the Ivorian context and more globally in areas of peace, education and dialogue.

*Some possible considerations and avenues of further research stemming from this study include:*

- 1) Future studies should consider micro level research in dialogue settings to attain information about relationships, beliefs and social structures that contribute to or inhibit peace and dialogue processes.
- 2) A study on the aspects of gender and performativity of masculinities and femininities in the spaces will enhance knowledge of the discussion spaces, as it was not in the scope of my research to address this. This information could shed light on gendered aspects of dialogue, politics and peacebuilding.
- 3) Research on the contribution of the effects of emotions and community on political beliefs, peacebuilding and education in Côte d'Ivoire and other contexts can reveal important information about motivations for participating in dialogue.

- 4) Further exploration of Martin Buber's and Paulo Freire's work and its presence in peacebuilding and education discourses could help to refine and contextualise concepts of dialogue and learning.

*From these findings, some policy implications for governments and organisations working in peacebuilding include:*

- 1) Interveners in peacebuilding must understand that they are 'contexts full of diffuse relations and incremental interactions' that probably are not visible at first (Stroschein, 2013, p. 284). Micro level dynamics must be considered, especially in creating dialogue settings.
- 2) More understanding of how grassroots dialogue spaces can be used for both conflict prevention and resolution is required. International and local agencies should not avoid groups or spaces that are viewed as 'controversial' but work with them. Many *agora* groups felt marginalised by the current regime and left out of important dialogue strategies though they felt their dialogue spaces were relevant to the national truth commission.
- 3) In the case of adult participants, dialogue programmes should consider skills development, employability or other interests that will motivate and engage participants in dialogue processes. This will help to align non-formal adult education with peace education and contribute to an enhanced feeling of justice and peace through improved well-being.
- 4) Citizenship and Human Rights Education curriculum in Côte d'Ivoire should consider how to implement more dialogic strategies in education and how to extend to non-formal spaces and adult learners.

### **Reflections on Dialogue and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire**

This thesis was completed shortly after Côte d'Ivoire's first presidential elections since the 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis. While my data collection ended in December 2014, I continued observing elections and political news throughout the writing process and was frequently reminded of this thesis' importance. From personal correspondences, news and social media, I witnessed the street discussion spaces' evolution during the campaign period. In a more troubling moment, a key *agora* participant and a civil society activist interviewed for this thesis were arrested in September 2015 during a political

rally, finally released in February 2016. In more optimistic moments, I saw some *grin* participants become active and empowered during elections, one even posing in promotional pictures with Ouattara. I also saw changes in perspectives: a pro-Gbagbo informant who once told me that he would boycott the election became a vocal pro-election advocate, and another became pro-Ouattara in the weeks ahead of the election as he felt it the best pathway to peace in the country. While injustice and separatism may still exist, many Ivoirians and street discussion space participants strongly desire peace and are willing to reflect, to reconsider past opinions and to build a better future.

However, there is still work and research to be done in the Ivoirian context. While the October 25 elections occurred peacefully, only 55% of the eligible population voted and Ouattara received nearly 85% of the vote. This does not necessarily reflect unity: large portions of the population abstained in the elections of Bédié in 1995 and Gbagbo in 2000, a fact that contributed to sentiments of disenfranchisement and eventual violent protest (McGovern, 2011) and Gbagbo and Blé Goudé's ongoing trial at the ICC may cause instability. Peace is an on-going process and street discussion spaces, as well as the Ivoirian government and international partners, must continue their commitment to dialogue, justice and peace.

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## Expert Interviews

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## Appendices

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## Appendix 2: *Titrologie* in Abidjan

*Titrologie* is a common daily act in Abidjan where people gather around a newspaper stand and read the days headlines and comment on them. There are upwards of 20 daily newspapers in Côte d'Ivoire.

*Example 1: Riviera II, November 24, 2014*



*Example 2: Bonoumin, September 15, 2014*



## Appendix 3: Construction on Former *Agora* Sites

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*Example 1:* The *Sorbonne*, the epicenter of *agoras*, is now a parking lot.



*Example 2:* The second largest *agora* in Côte d'Ivoire, the *Tout Puissant Congrès d'Abobo* (All Powerful Congress of Abobo) is now a Shell Petrol Station.



*Example 3: A prominent agora in Yopougon, 'Parlement de SIDECI,' has now been constructed on, the land supposedly sold by the government.*







## Appendix 5: Interview Schedule

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*Below is the interview schedule for Grin and Agora participants, translated here into English. While interviews diverged from these questions, they provided a general blueprint.*

- 1) When did you start going to *agoras/parlements/grins*?
- 2) How many have you attended or still attend?
- 3) Why did you start going?
- 4) Has your grin or agora changed since the crisis? Why and how?
- 5) Do you think that you learn in the space? If so, what?
- 6) How has the space impacted your life?
- 7) Do you like to speak in the space?
- 8) Can you ask questions? Contradict?
- 9) Will you ever stop going?
- 10) In your opinion, why are there so many grins/agoras in Côte d'Ivoire?
- 11) In your opinion, what are the barriers to lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire?
- 12) Do grins or agoras play a role in building peace?

## Appendix 6: Observation Schedule

*This is the schedule for observations of dialogue sessions. These will take place in different agoras and grins. Observations will be recorded with pen and paper, as audio recordings may impact the content and modes of discussion*

### **The characteristics of dialogue to be observed are:**

Physical Location and Attributes (e.g. what neighborhood, inside/outside, home, chairs, tables, set-up of group (circle, speaker facing audience, etc.)

Characteristics of speech: Language (French, Nouchi, Malinké, code-switching), formalities of speech (i.e. opening and closing processes, introduction of new members), formal/informal language registers

Group Composition: Number of people, gender, age range, family relations, hierarchies

Subject of conversation: Discussion topic(s) e.g. politics, Ebola, newspaper headlines, international news, religion; means of topic selection; how subject arose

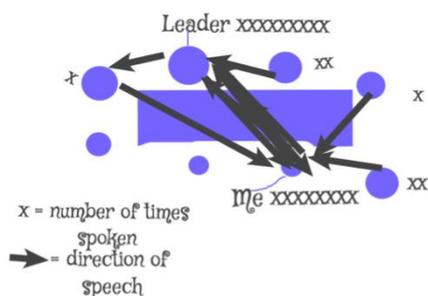
Leadership roles: Presence of leader, role of leader in managing discussion (topic, speech), interaction between group and leader(s)

Patterns of discussion: Statements, Initiation versus Response, Contradiction, Agreement, Jokes, Addressing 1 person/vs Addressing group (signified by arrows in the conversation map below), Means of obtaining permission to speak

Food/Beverage Consumed: Beer, Tea, Peanuts, Other

Music: Reggae, Zouglou, Coupé-Décalé, Religious or other

**Discussion Map:** I will also draw 'discussion maps' to quantify and illustrate the number of times people talk, the layout of the space and the direction in which speech moves. This is an example from a group interview/discussion:



## Appendix 7: Table of Interview Participants from *Agoras* and *Grins*

List of Participants					
Name	Discussion Space	Age	Gender	Occupation	Neighbourhood
<b>Aby</b>	<i>Grin</i>	23	F	Student/Street vendor	Yopougon-Banco
<b>Amara</b>	<i>Grin</i>	29	M	NGO founder/ Part-time work in NGOs	Abobo-Coco Service
<b>Aristide</b>	<i>Agora</i>	28	M	Former civil servant, President of national federation of agoras	Cocody
<b>Bamba</b>	<i>Grin</i>	27	M	Student	Abobo -Sagbe
<b>Davide</b>	<i>Agora</i>	19	M	Student	Youpougon -Micao
<b>Diaby</b>	<i>Grin</i>	50-60	M	Journalist and Politician	Adjame
<b>Doumbia</b>	<i>Grin</i>	38	M	Insurance Agent	Anyama
<b>Fatoumata</b>	<i>Grin</i>	44	F	Fabric vendor	Youpougon -Wassakara
<b>Gerard</b>	<i>Agora</i>	45	M	Unemployed/Orator	Yopougon/Cocody
<b>Idrissa</b>	<i>Grin</i>	43	M	French Teacher	Yopougon- Banco
<b>Ismael</b>	<i>Grin</i>	26	M	Delivery boy	Treichville
<b>Jacques</b>	<i>Agora</i>	50	M	Headmaster	Cocody -Riviera II
<b>Jean-Luc</b>	<i>Agora</i>	36	M	Philosophy Teacher	II Plateaux

<b>Kouadio</b>	<i>Agora</i>	33	M	Accountant	Riviera Palmeraie
<b>Kouamé</b>	<i>Agora</i>	27	M	Student, Orator	Port Bouet
<b>Kouassi</b>	<i>Agora</i>	28	M	Student	Yopougon
<b>Lassina</b>	<i>Grin</i>	43	M	Self-employed/NGO Founder	Abobo/Angre
<b>Lucas</b>	<i>Grin</i>	19	M	Student	Abobo-Anador
<b>Mamadou</b>	<i>Grin</i>	27	M	Private Tutor/Entrepreneur	Abobo -Coco Service
<b>Marc</b>	<i>Agora</i>	25	M	Student	Cocody
<b>Marie</b>	<i>Agora</i>	50-60	F	Accountant	Yopougon
<b>Mohamed</b>	<i>Grin</i>	29	M	Transport worker ( <i>ngambro</i> )	Abobo - PK-18
<b>Moussa</b>	<i>Grin</i>	50-60	M	Islamic bookshop owner	Treichville
<b>Narcisse</b>	<i>Agora</i>	40-45	M	Unemployed/Orator	Yopougon/Cocody
<b>Ousseny</b>	<i>Grin</i>	29	M	Private Tutor	Abobo-Golf
<b>Philippe</b>	<i>Agora</i>	36	M	Medical Technician	Yopougon - SIDECL
<b>Pierre</b>	<i>Agora</i>	25	M	Student	Yopougon/Cocody
<b>Serge</b>	<i>Agora</i>	34	M	Unemployed, occasional private tutor	Abobo - Belleville
<b>Souleymane</b>	<i>Grin</i>	36	M	Coranic Teacher	Treichville
<b>Vincent</b>	<i>Agora</i>	40	M	French Teacher	Port Bouet

## Appendix 8: Table of Observations in Grins and Agoras

Space	Date	Location	Time	Duration		Number of People
				(hours)	Language	
<b>Grins</b>						
Grin 1	09-Sep	Adjamé - Logement 220	14:30-15:00	0.5	French/Dioula	6 to 7
Grin 2	16-Sep	Abobo- Coco Service	16:30-19:30	3	French	7 to 12
Grin 3	21-Sep	Anyama	13:00-16:00	3	Dioula	22 to 28
Grin 2	24-Sep	Abobo- Coco Service	16:30-18:30	2	French	7 to 12
Grin 2	25-Sep	Abobo- Coco Service	15:00-15:30	0.5	French	2 to 7
Grin 4	27-Sep	Ababo - Banco	11:00- 15:00	4	French	3 to 5
Grin 5	28-Sep	Abobo- Banco	10:00-11:30	1.5	French	20 to 25
Grin 6	28-Sep	Yopougon - Saint Andre	17:30 - 19:30	2	French/Malinké	5 to 9
Grin 7	29-Sep	Abobo -Golf	17:30-20:00	2.5	French/Dioula	4 to 12
Grin 8	07-Oct	Abobo-Sagbé	20:00-21:30	1.5	Dioula/French	4 to 13
Grin 7	08-Oct	Abobo-Golf	16:40-18:40	2	Dioula/French	2 to 9
Grin 9	12-Oct	Abobo-PK18	15:15-17:15	2	Malinké/French	4 to 9
Grin 10	13-Oct	Treichville – Ave 21	18:30-20:50	2.25	Malinké/French	6 to 16
Grin 9	14-Oct	Abobo - PK18	15:30 - 17:30	2	Malinké/French	3 to 7

Grin 2	18-Oct	Abobo - Anador	16:40-18:40	2	French/Malinké French/Malinké/Bamba	5 to 6
Grin 11	18-Oct	Treichville - Ave 17	22:00-24:00	2	ra	2 to 23
Grin 12	19-Oct	Abobo-Anador	16:30-18:30	2	French	22 to 25
Grin 12	21-Oct	Abobo-Anador	9:50 - 11:50	2	French/Dioula	3 to 8
Grin 12	21-Oct	Abobo - Anador	18:50-20:30	1.75	French/Dioula	3 to 9
Grin 12	22-Oct	Abobo - Anador	18:20-18:45	0.25	French/Dioula	5
Grin 13	22-Oct	Abobo-Mobil	18:50-20:15	1.25	Dioula/French	2 to 6
Grin 14	24-Oct	Abobo-Anador	17:30-18:30	1	Dioula/French	4 to 9
Grin 15	09-Nov	Abobo - Anador	16:40-18:05	1.25	French	18
Grin 11	13-Nov	Treichville - Ave 17	22:00-24:30	2.5	French/Dioula	3 to 17
Grin 16	15-Nov	Treichville - Ave 14	21:00 - 23:45	2.75	French/Dioula	3 to 9
Grin 17	16-Nov	Abobo - Jean Tai	19:40 – 20:40	1	Dioula /French	20 to 21
Grin 2	18-Nov	Abobo-Coco Service	17:40 – 21:25	3.75	French	6 to 12
Grin 18	19-Nov	Treichville - Ave 21	17:00 - 19:40	2.75	French/Dioula	2 to 13
Grin 19	19-Nov	Treichville - Ave 22	21:00 – 21:15	0.25	French	4
Grin 19	20-Nov	Treichville - Ave 22,	21:15 - 22:30	1.25	French/Dioula	11 to 12
Grin 11	20-Nov	Treichville - Ave 17	22:30 – 24:00	1.5	French/Dioula	11 to 15
Grin 20	21-Nov	Adjame - 220	14:20 -14:35	0.25	Dioula/French	5

Grin 21	22-Nov	Anyama	15:00-16:30	1.5	French/Dioula	23
Grin 22	22-Nov	Adjame - Marie Therese	18:10-19:25	1.25	French	4 to 11
Grin 23	23-Nov	Yopougon - Banco II	15:10-16:40	1.5	French/Dioula	11
Grin 12	23-Nov	Abobo - Anador	19:35 - 20:10	0.75	French/Dioula	25
Grin 24	23-Nov	Abobo-Té	20:30 - 21:30	1	French	3 to 11
Grin 22	24-Nov	Adjame - Marie Therese	8:15 - 9:15	1	French/Dioula	4 to 10
Grin 25	04-Dec	Adjamé - Logement 220	18:50 - 20:40	1.9	French	4 to 11
Grin 18	05-Dec	Treichville - ave 21, rue 17	18:00 - 20:15	2.25	French/Dioula	4 to 9
Grin 26	05-Dec	Treichville ave 21 rue 22	18:50 - 19:05	0.25	French	10 to 12
Grin 27	07-Dec	Abobo - Anador	20:00 - 21:45	1.75	French/Malinké	4 to 13
Grin 28	09-Dec	Yopougon - Wassakara	17:00 - 18:15	1.25	French/Malinké	4 to 11
Grin 25	09-Dec	Adjame - 220	19:00 - 20:00	1	French/Bété/Malinké	11
Grin 29	10-Dec	Anyama - Chateau	17:45 - 18:30	0.75	Malinké/French	4 to 5
Grin 30	13-Dec	Abobo Té - Doki	16:45 - 19:30	2.75	Malinké/French	4 to 13
Grin 31	14-Dec	Abobo - Houphouet-Boigny	10:45 - 12:00	1.25	French	8 to 13
Grin 32	14-Dec	Yopougon - Banco II	16:45 - 17:30	0.75	Malinké/French	16 to 18
Grin 33	14-Dec	Yopougon - Port Bouët II	17:45 - 18:30	0.75	Malinké/French	14 to 16
Grin 28	15-Jan	Yopougon - Wassakara	15:45 - 18:00	0.25	French/Malinké	8

Agora 1	26-Sep	Yopougon - Croix Rouge	10:00-12:00	2	French	06 to 8
Agora 2	07-Oct	Adjoufo - Port Boët	17:00-18:30	1.5	French	13
Agora 3	11-Oct	Yopougon - Kouté	18:00-19:30	1.5	French	16 to 64
General Assembly	25-Oct	Yopougon - Mairie	10:30-14:30	4	French	15 to 80
Agora 4	Nov-11	Abobo Baoulé	16:00-17:00	1	French	21 to 25
						3 to
Agora 5	Nov-16	Yopougon - Sogefiha	16:20-18:20	2	French	10/15?
Agora 5	Nov-23	Yopougon - Sogefiha	17:20-17:50	0.5	French	4 to 8
Agora 2	Dec-03	Adjouffou - Port Bouët	18:30 - 20:00	1.5	French	12 to 14
Agora 3	Dec-06	Yopougon - Kouté	18:30 - 20:00	1.5	French	16 to 60
Agora 2	Dec-07	Port Bouët - Adjouffou	16:45 - 17:30	0.75	French	60 to 80
Agora 3	Dec-12	Yopougon - Kouté	17:45 - 20:00	2.25	French	15 to 55

Total:

39 Spaces

98.65 hours

## Appendix 9: List of Institutions and Organisations

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Interviews were conducted with individuals from the following institutions and organisations. A '\*' indicates that the interview was recorded.

### International NGOs:

International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) \*

AVSI \*

Interpeace \*

Search for Common Ground \*

### Local NGOs:

Radio Mozaïk\*

Bogolan Productions

Centre pour la Recherche-Action pour la Paix

Regional Center for Peace Education (RECEPE)

Mouvement Ivoirien pour les Droits de l'Homme (MIDH)\*

Action et Paix

CUCLOD

ETABIEN

### Political Organisations:

Congrès Panafricain des Jeunes et des Patriotes (COJEP, *Jeunes Patriotes*)

### Federations of Agoras and Grins:

Rassemblement des Grins de Côte d'Ivoire

Rassemblement de Tous les Grins de Côte d'Ivoire

Fédération Nationale des Agoras et Parlements de Côte d'Ivoire

Fédération Nationale des Orateurs et Parlements de Côte d'Ivoire

Fédération Nationale des Parlements, Agoras et Orateurs de Côte d'Ivoire

### Government:

Commission de Dialogue, Vérité et Réconciliation (CDVR)

Ministry of Education: Citizenship and Human Rights Education Section

**Civil Society:**

Les Indiginés de Cote d'Ivoire\*

Fédération Estudiante de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI)\*

**Journalists:**

*Nord-Sud* Newspaper

Independent Journalist\*

*Inter* newspaper

**Education:**

Université Félix Houphoët-Boigny (3 professors, 2 interviewed) \*\*

Independent Educational Specialist



## Appendix 11: Sample of Observation Notes

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*An example of observation notes from a grin. The beginning of the notes are taken on my iPhone and the second half, indicated by a change in font, were transcribed from handwritten notes.*

**Grin 12, October 21, 2014,**

**Abobo Anador**

**3 – 9 people present**

**Time: 18:50 – 20:20**

**Languages: French, Malinké**

### **Notes from phone:**

**18:50 3 people**

They are watching TV. Also a space to hangout. D is calling the guy to come for me

Talking about the Ivoirian team: 'Ivoirians don't like discouragement'

The Secretary comes. We talked about Greece and Côte d'Ivoire differences for 10 mins.

**19:18**

Starts talking about Affi Nguessan. Talking about the trial. There are 5 people, three talking

Showing agreement: Voila! (Agree) (Follows with je suis d'accord)

"Les militaires on va les laisser" = his predictions for what will happen at the trial.

The older man comes, they catch him up on what they are debating about. Each person is talking for a short time, 15 to 40 seconds.

The secretary talks more than the others. The secretary is younger than the *conseiller* guy.

He was at the cyber café printing something for the NGO about an *atelier* about victims

**At 19:21, 7 people**

Tche!! - a way to emphasise a point or agree with someone

Talking about Human Rights Watch. Bringing up their info and facts. Facts are important, like the members said "il faut convaincre". Agreeing with each other on these points

One guy saying that Cherif should be tried... Other guys disagree and say no it was war crimes, different than massacre of innocent people. I see that it's ok to disagree

Talking about peace... 'On vie la paix' ... they feel generally that they are in a peaceful place.  
 Les signaux forts ...these trials are part of signals for peace ?  
 People need to be asked 'sorry' .. Everyone has said sorry except FPI.... That is what makes it hard for them to move forward (this is echoing what Lucas said. I wonder if he got the idea from the grin.)

Talk about Banny... Not encouraging! They laugh about Banny. But don't seem him in a negative light.

It seems to be a social corner. A place to socialise that doesn't involve spending money or drinking. They can be comfortable because they are in the company of people they know or trust. But people aren't necessarily there to debate.

No tea  
 Mosque sounds.

Street is quiet, not a lot of traffic. Dead end.

D starts talking, but the others are not listening. They are all arguing and talking at the same time. Four people all at once. They are talking about the social projects, how the government spending is too much money on roads

Then they stop and start listening a little bit more to each other, but I'm not sure why.

### **19:29 7 people**

Talk about health problems here. One thinks there's not enough doctors, other disagrees. Debating what the real problem with the health system is. The secretary says the real problem, it's the budget.

I have not participated so far and they seem to have forgotten about me. I wonder if this is also done for my benefit or if this is the natural way that things happen.

Education for Health – the doyen says  
 Est-ce que c'est faux?? -> this is an appeal used often to get people to agree with you, bolster your argument and support.

Gesturing: Wide gestures. Passionate speech.

They are critical of the government, they don't think Ouattara did what he was supposed to. 2013 was supposed to be the year of health and what?? Nothing! D says he heard some piece of information from a guy; the older man laughs and says you can't trust that source.

They put in on the table and move on. I think the older guy was the one to kind of table it. But I don't think they reached a conclusion. Just kind of got tired of it and moved on.

Go back to debate about govt and budget. Lots of pointing fingers.

Younger ones are watching the game. Sometimes the debaters stop talking and watch too.

I don't think they notice me except for one in the blue shirt, younger, who looks and smiles once or twice when they are really yelling at each other. The debate is between 4 people and now breaks up into 2 and 2

The younger one on the side adds in something. It's all in French with random Dioula phrases

The snap fingers to get people's attention.

"Toungara...? Who told you?" They care about sources!! And care about knowing whether information is true or false.

The older guy touching the blue shirt guy, telling him no, explaining

I don't think that age has big role in being able to debate. "C pas vrai!!" Disagrees with D's info. D says he is supporting him

Secretary stands up and makes his point... D looks down to the side. Old man more on D's side.

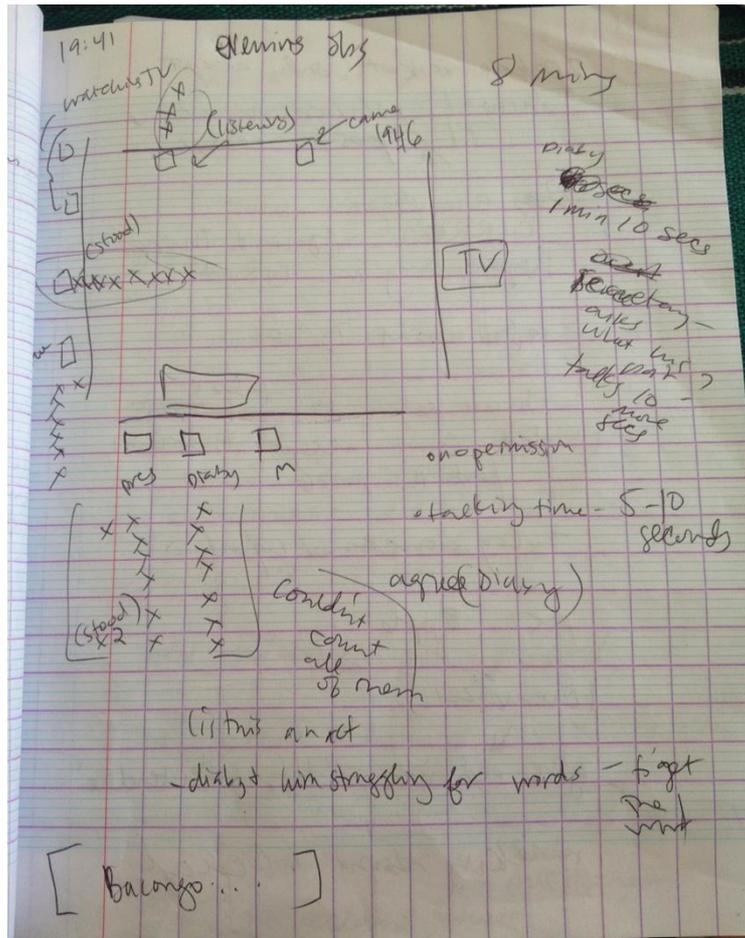
They are still talking about the spending on international issues

Daf --?? Diplomatic something? (*clarify term later*)

I'm on the side, D's back is to me. I'm not in the circle

At this point I move my note taking to the book because they are clearly not paying attention to me.

19:41 Conversation Map (Photo from field journal)



I marked in my book that at one point D spoke for 1 min 10 seconds. Secretary asked what his point is, he clarifies for 10 more seconds. The talking time is about 10 seconds each. They are constantly interrupting and sometimes not even listening. (Interesting because the one guy who was at \_\_\_\_\_ was saying how this wasn't like the \_\_\_\_\_ at all but certain moments of the debate certainly resembled that. People standing up, getting heated, and no one really listening. I guess they did listen generally more and were also more interested in getting to the heart of the matter, through listing sources, etc.

Secretary Kanté stood 2x. Old man stood 2x.

They did not need permission to speak. I couldn't even keep track of all the times they were talking. But you can see that it's the 4 of them, plus 3 interjections from the boy next to the entrance. (8 min obs/convo chart)

D and the Secretary seem to have some sort of rivalry. Like to argue with each other. Or just know that they have opposing viewpoints.

Debate is about international politics but about the FPI and post crisis. They are fighting about current affairs and things happening in the government. Current decisions being made. Not necessarily party-oriented.

"I'm not saying it's false but I can't accept it as true without the proof" the old man says.

They are very concerned with information.

**At 19:50 there are 9 ppl.**

They lower their voices and start talking about some internal problem within the group. "il faut l'entendre" the older man, giving advice. There is something going on with a negotiation, a person in the board who maybe has done something shady with the \$?

Someone gives the advice to put a committee into place to look into things. Someone needs to talk to the guy, convince him to quit because he's not up to the job. He doesn't have the time.

They are talking quietly and poised about this matter. "il était naïf". They are looking for solutions. They talk about money management again - - "il reclame jamais". The secretary is talking the most. Secretary stands up again when he talks. "l'argent a trop duré avec lui" Something was going on with T\_\_\_\_\_ and 40,000 CFA.

**20:00** Secretary stops, passes the remote to a younger guy and tells him to put the news on.

**20:04** The guy in the blue shirt leaves. Mohamed, the younger guy in red from the morning comes. There are 9 ppl. Still debate happening but the youngest are not talking.

There is church music now, replacing the mosque music from before. Now they are talking about politicians.

Subject: Dominique Strauss Kahn and the girl. Saying that he didn't rape her, it was a plot against him, etc etc. The younger guy who sat next to me starts adding in. Now they are joking about politics. Not really a serious debate.

It strikes me that I'm often not in ppl's homes. Only Adama, Amadou and Silué. Even though several ppl this morning lived nearby, going to their house for interview was not even an option. Nor was meeting D at his house an option.

3 ppl were completely silent the entire time.

Political debate begins again. Again it's D and the secretary. D contradicting what he has to say.

Not sure there is a conclusion. I have to say that at this point, I can't take it anymore. The speaking over each other, the argument. It seems tired and repetitive. Maybe I'm tired but I'm finding it hard to follow and getting distracted by the TV. I just want to go home, I don't feel that there is good energy in the space.

## Appendix 12: Training Document and Contract for Transcriber

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*The following is the Guide and Contract for my transcription assistant.*

### **Comment Retranscrire :**

- Quand Marika parle, indiquez-le par la lettre M. Quand l'interlocuteur parle, indiquez-le par le code donné dans le titre d'enregistrement (PG1, EX2)

ex:

*M : Tu habitais dans quel quartier ?*

*PG7 : J'habitais à Abobo.*

- Indiquez les pauses/silences par trois points ...

ex :

*PG7 : C'était difficile.... Bon... on entendait beaucoup de bruit.*

- Si quelqu'un rit, écrivez :[rire]. Si les deux personnes rient, met les deux noms :

ex :

*M et PG7: [rire]*

- Si vous ne comprenez pas une phrase ou un mot (ou vous n'êtes pas sur de ce que vous entendez) met un point d'interrogation entre crochets avec la minute et le second:

ex :

*PG7 : C'est lui le chef du grin et puis ...[ ? 1.44].*

- Le titre du document devra être le même code que l'enregistrement

- Vous pouvez vous en servir des abréviations (ex : bcp pour beaucoup, mtnt pour maintenant, Ct pour c'était, eske/keske). Faites-signe à Marika les significations.

### **Anonymat**

- Si vous travaillez dans un endroit public, il faut toujours se servir des écouteurs
- Ne parlez jamais des contenus des enregistrements et de transcriptions, sauf avec Marika
- N'écrivez jamais les noms dits dans les interviews. Remplacez-les par X.
- Ne sauvegarder jamais les documents/enregistrements sur un ordinateur. Ils doivent être gardés sur la clé fournie par Marika
- Garder la clé dans un endroit sûr.
- Une fois que la transcription est faite, ramenez la clé à Marika pour qu'elle puisse sauvegarder dans son ordinateur.

**11 octobre 2014**

**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

### **Contrat à Duré Déterminé**

Diaby Mohamed Lamine s'engage à:

- Retranscrire les interviews dans des délais raisonnables
- Garder la confidentialité et l'anonymat des contenus de ces enregistrements et retranscriptions

Tsolakis Marika Zoe s'engage à :

- former M. Diaby sur les techniques de retranscription et les éthiques de recherches
- expliquer les exigences de la confidentialité et l'anonymat
- fournir une clé USB pour sauvegarder les documents
- payer M. Diaby pour chaque retranscription une fois qu'elle soit finie

M. Diaby a le droit de refuser n'importe quelle retranscription selon sa disponibilité et volonté. Mme Tsolakis fournira autant d'enregistrements qu'elle souhaite.

Le tarif de retranscription sera à 10,000 FCFA pour chaque trente minutes d'enregistrement.

Nom : \_\_\_\_\_

Signé(e) :

Date :

Nom : \_\_\_\_\_

Signé(e) :

Date :

## Appendix 13: Example of Interview Transcription and Translation

<p>Marika: Bon, toute a l'heure tu disais que...un jeune ne peut pas...débattre avec un vieux. Un père. Mais j'ai remarqué aussi qu'au Parlement de Kouté, ils sont plus des vieux.</p> <p>Philippe: Oui</p> <p>M: Tu étais parmi les plus jeunes que j'ai vu ce jour-là.</p> <p>P: Oui, au Parlement de Kouté, largement les parlementaires sont des personnes âgés. Sont des personnes âgées. Parce que la majorité de jeunes qui était là, beaucoup ont quitté le quartier.</p> <p>M: Ont quitté le quartier ?</p> <p>P: à cause de la crise post-électorale.</p> <p>M: Pour aller ?</p> <p>P: Oooh, pour habiter ailleurs, y en a qui sont en exile au Ghana. Y en a qui sont dans des villages, euh... parce que... Kouté est quartier qui a vécu la crise... eh... vraiment...au dernier moment. Les gens sont venus à Kouté vers la fin de la crise. Au début, les gens venaient se réfugier à Kouté, fuir les autres quartiers pour venir se réfugier à Kouté. Mais vers la fin. Des hommes armés, les FRCI sont entrés à Kouté, vraiment ils tué... ils ont fait beaucoup de mal. Ça fait que les gens ont peur, beaucoup. Même moi, j'étais parti. Je suis revenu.</p> <p>M: D'accord. Donc il y a pas beaucoup de jeunes ?</p>	<p>Marika: So earlier you were saying that... a young person can't... debate with an older person, a 'father'. But I also noticed that at the <i>Parlement</i> de Kouté, they are mostly older people.</p> <p>Philippe: Yes</p> <p>M: You were among the youngest that I saw on that day.</p> <p>P: Yes, at the <i>Parlement</i> de Kouté, most of the <i>parlementaires</i> are older people. They are older people. Because the majority of young people who were there, most of them have left the neighborhood [...] oh, to live elsewhere, there are some in exile in Ghana. Some in the villages. Because Kouté felt the crisis eh, [pause] really at the last moment. The people came to Kouté at the end of the crisis. At the beginning, people were seeking refuge in Kouté, escaping other neighbourhoods. But at the end, the armed men, the FRCI came to Kouté, really, they killed... they did a lot of damage. That's why people are really scared. I even left and came back.</p> <p>M: So there aren't a lot of young people?</p> <p>P: There aren't as many young people. But now there are young people, some are there, who are interested in the</p>
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P: Les jeunes sont pas aussi nombreux. Mais maintenant il y a des jeunes qui ...quelques un qui sont là. Qui s'intéresse à la chose, mais ils ont peur. Il y a encore la peur.

M: Les jeunes ont plus peur de parler que les vieux ?

P: Oui les vieux ils n'ont pas peur.

M: Mais pourquoi ? mais toi tu n'as pas peur ?

P: moi je n'ai pas peur, parce que je me dis que... aujourd'hui, le fait de fréquenter les parlements m'a permis de comprendre un peu la politique. Eh... [pause] les changements de régimes en Afrique se font souvent par la violence. Vous voyez ? [pause] après la violence, quand la régime finit par s'installer, il cherche peut être à coopérer avec la population. Donc, on part d'une situation de terreur pour venir à une situation de camaraderie. Vous voyez ? Moi, ce qui m'a fait revenir, c'est que je devais passer mon diplôme de technicien de santé. J'étais en train de passer mon diplôme de technicien de santé quand il y a eu la crise. Vous voyez ? Moi, ce qui m'a fait revenir, c'est que je devais passer mon diplôme de technicien de santé. J'étais en train de passer mon diplôme de technicien de santé quand il y a eu la crise. Donc, j'ai fui, je me suis dit quoi, 'est-ce que je reste dans ma fuite et puis j'abandonne mes études ? Ou bien, je prends le courage de revenir et puis je continue mes études ? j'ai

thing. But they are scared, they are still scared.

M: Young people are more scared to speak than old people?

P: Yes, the old people aren't scared.

M: But why? But aren't you afraid?

P: Me, I'm not scared because I say to myself that... today, the fact of going to parlements has allowed me to understand politics a bit. Um, [pause] regime changes in Africa often happen through violence. You see? [pause] After the violence, when the regime finally is put in place, it tries to maybe cooperate with the population. So, you go from a situation of terror to a situation of camaraderie. You see? Me, what made me come back, it's that I needed get my Medical Technician diploma. I was in the middle of getting the diploma to be a Medical Technician when the crisis happened. So, I fled, I said to myself what, 'am I going to stay fleeing and then give up my studies? Or am I going to have the courage to come back and continue my studies?' I gathered the courage to come back and then continue my studies. There are some who came back, but they caught them and put them in prison! There are even some who they killed. But myself, when I was

pris le courage de revenir et puis continuer mes études. Y en a qui sont revenus, mais on les a attrapé et les ont mis en prison ! Y en a même qu'ils ont tués. Mais moi même quand je faisais, quand je fréquentais les parlements, je n'ai pas distillé des discours de haine. Les parlements ne distillait de discours de haine ni de...de xénophobie. Donc je n'ai pas eu peur de revenir, sincèrement. Parce que je me dis que je ne me reproche rien. Vous voyez ? qu'aujourd'hui, le régime m'arrête, je dois demander ...on me donne...le motif pour lequel on m'arrête. Il faut qu'il soit juridiquement valable pour que je sois arrêté et peut être emprisonné. Et si il y a pas ...Donc je me sens libre. Je suis un citoyen, c'est inscrit dans notre constitution que le citoyen est libre. La cote d'ivoire c'est un pays de liberté. On peut y revenir, on peut y travailler, tant qu'on est pas allé contre les lois du pays, mais on vit tranquillement. Bon. C'est ce qui m'anime. Moi, c'est ce qui fait que la peur est dégagee. Je n'ai pas peur, je n'ai plus peur.

doing, when I was going to the parlements, I didn't spread a discourse of hate. The parlements didn't spread messages of hate or...of xenophobia. So I wasn't scared to come back, honestly. Because I say to myself that I have nothing to feel guilty about. You see? So if today the regime arrests me, I have to ask... one gives me... the motive for arresting me. It needs to be valid judicially for me to be arrested and maybe imprisoned. And if there isn't... so I feel free. I am a citizen, it's written in our constitution that the citizen is free. Côte d'Ivoire is a country of liberty. One can come back there, one can work there, as long as one hasn't gone against the laws of the country. But we live tranquilly. Well, That's what motivates me, that makes the fear go away. I'm not scared, I'm not scared anymore.

## Appendix 14: Receiving Informed Consent Sheet and Transcription of Recorded Informed Consent

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# Le Dialogue et les Espaces de Discussion de Rue

Août– Décembre 2015

Renseignements pour les Participants



Je souhaite vous poser quelques questions sur tes expériences dans les espaces de discussion, aussi bien que tes avis sur la réconciliation et le dialogue en Cote d'Ivoire. Je m'intéresse à comment on apprend en parlant avec des autres. Voici quelques informations:

### **Pourquoi fais-je ces recherches?**

Je souhaite connaître vos perspectives pour mieux comprendre comment ces forums pourront servir aux générations futures. Construire une paix durable dans votre quartier et dans la Côte d'Ivoire c'est ma priorité.

**Qui sera impliqué dans cette étude?**

Je voudrais parler avec environ 30 personnes qui participent ou participaient dans des espaces de discussion de rue (tel que les grins, les agoras ou autres). Ces personnes seront choisies au hasard.

**Qu'est-ce qui se passera?**

Je propose de vous faire une interview de 20-30 minutes. Vous attendriez à des questions sur: le dialogue, les forums tels que les grins et les parlements, la paix, la réconciliation, et ce dont vous voudriez aborder.

**Et si vous décidez d'y faire partie?**

Si vous y acceptez, j'enregistrerai l'entretien et le retranscrirai. Après je lirai la retranscription et l'analyser pour mieux comprendre tes idées. Je ne cherche pas de bonnes réponses, seulement votre point de vue et ton expérience personnelle.

Mes recherches seront publiées en forme de thèse doctorale et dans des articles de journal. En plus, je trouverai un moyen de partager les données avec vous, sous forme de blog, ou rapport audio ou vidéo.

**Aurai-t-il des inconvenances ou bénéfiques en participant?**

En vous offrant une occasion de réfléchir et de discuter en toute confidentialité, j'espère que vous en bénéficierez. Certains se sentiront bouleversés ou mal à l'aise en parlant des thèmes abordés. Si jamais vous désirez d'arrêter de parler, on s'arrêtera. Vous pouvez vous retirer du projet à n'importe quel moment. Je ne prévois pas de mal physique ni mentale résultant de votre participation et je prendrai toute mesure possible d'assurer votre confort. Vous pouvez choisir l'endroit où on fera l'interview.

**Votre participation, cela m'aidera?**

Votre interview me donnera un optique plus profond de la situation actuelle à Abidjan et m'aidera à lutter pour la paix et la cohésion sociale en Côte d'Ivoire. Bien sûr, cela m'aidera

**Qui saura votre participation dans le projet?**

Je serai la seule à savoir que vous avez participé dans ce projet. Dans certains cas, mon assistant de recherche retranscrira les interviews, mais il ne connaîtra pas votre nom – il n'aura que l'enregistrement sans aucun détail identifiant. Si vous préférez que je fasse la retranscription, faites-moi savoir. Dans tous les cas, je serai la seule personne à pouvoir lier ton nom à l'interview. Je garderai les transcriptions et les enregistrements dans un endroit secret et sûr et je changerai ton prénom dans tous mes rapports, aussi bien que ton quartier et ton espace de discussion et d'autres détails qui pourraient vous exposer.

Je ne dirais à personne ce que tu me racontes, sauf si je craignais un danger imminent. Dans ce cas, je vous adresserai en premier lieu pour trouver une solution.

**Est-ce que vous êtes obligé d'y faire partie?**

C'est vous qui décidez de faire partie de ce projet. Même si vous acceptez, vous avez le droit de vous retirer à n'importe quel moment. Si certaines questions vous rendent mal à l'aise, vous pouvez simplement refuser d'y répondre sans avoir à vous justifier.

**Comment connaîtrez-vous les résultats?**

Je ferai un rapport avant Décembre 2015– je veux que vous m'aidiez à trouver le meilleur moyen de partager ces infos – soit écrit, audio ou vidéo.

**D’ou vient le financement de ces recherches?**

Le financement pour ces recherches vient de l’Institut de l’Education de l’Université de Londres.

**Ce projet a été évalué par la Comité de l’Ethique de la Recherche de l’IOE.**

**Merci d’avoir lu cette fiche de renseignements. N’hésitez pas à me contacter:**

**Marika Tsolakis**

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**Example of Recorded Informed Consent, Transcribed from Interviews**

*Example 1:*

Marika: Ok, so, I gave you the information sheet?

Mamadou: Ok, yes.

M: Did I explain it to you?

Mamadou: Yes.

M: Did you understand everything?

Mamadou: Yes, I understood.

M: Do you have any other questions?

Mamadou: No.

M: Do you give me permission to record the interview?

Mamadou: Yes, there’s no problem.

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*Example 2:*

Marika: Do you give me permission to record this interview?

Aristide: Yes, no problem.

M: Did we discuss enough the information sheet?

Aristide: Yes.

M: Do you have any questions?

Aristide: No

M: Ok we can begin...

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*Example 3:*

Marika: Do you give me permission to record the interview?

Marie: Yes, we can record it but it won't be published. Because I don't want to have any problems.

Marika: Like I said, this will be anonymised, in confidence. Nothing that you say will ever be linked to your name.

Marie: Promise?

Marika: I promise. That's why I am giving you the information sheet. Because I am a student, not a journalist. I have to follow the ethics code of the university. I have to respect the participants and their safety. But like I said, you're not obliged to answer any question if you don't feel comfortable. And if you want to stop, we can stop at any moment. Like that, Stop. There's no problem.

Marie: Ok

Marika: So is it ok?

Marie: Yes.

## Appendix 15: Table of Super-Ordinate and Sub-Ordinate Themes

Characteristics of Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreement</li> <li>- Contradiction</li> <li>- Asking questions</li> <li>- Language: French, Malinké</li> <li>- Asking permission to speak</li> <li>- 'chacun donne son point de vue'</li> <li>- 'parler de tout'</li> <li>- Discussion</li> <li>- Debate/Argument</li> <li>- Joking</li> </ul>
Mutuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'les alliances ethniques'</li> <li>- Cotisation/ mutual aid</li> <li>- Love</li> </ul>
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formalisation</li> <li>- Political activism</li> </ul>
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sorting information true/false</li> <li>- Memorising</li> <li>- Speech Making</li> </ul>
Embracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening</li> <li>- Love/care for others</li> </ul>
Anti-dialogic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lying</li> <li>- Manipulating by politicians</li> <li>- Violence</li> <li>- Hierarchy</li> <li>- Barriers to speech</li> </ul>
Characteristics of Agoras and Grins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age</li> <li>- Orators</li> <li>- Leadership</li> <li>- Tea</li> <li>- Gender</li> </ul>
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having fun</li> <li>- Forgetting problems</li> <li>- Learning</li> <li>- Protection</li> <li>- Discuss titrologie</li> <li>- Need information about crisis/political situation</li> <li>- Liberation of Gbagbo</li> </ul>

Elements of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connection to formal school</li> <li>- Learning – for formal economy</li> <li>- Learning – life lessons</li> <li>- Information – current affairs, breaking news</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information – getting important news</li> <li>- Having Fun</li> <li>- Forgetting problems</li> <li>- Learning about life</li> <li>- Learning about current affairs</li> <li>- Social protection</li> <li>- Self-advancement/ connections with political power</li> <li>- Solidarity</li> <li>- Information</li> <li>- Cotisations</li> </ul>
Barriers to Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Injustice</li> <li>- Censorship</li> <li>- Occupation of houses</li> <li>- Occupation of parlement/agora spaces</li> <li>- Political prisoners</li> <li>- Unemployment</li> <li>- Lack of forgiveness</li> </ul>

## Appendix 16: Examples of Grins

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Grin 15, November 9, 2014



Grin 9, October 12, 2014



Grin 7, September 29, 2014



Grin 2, November 18, 2014



Grin 17, November 16, 2014



## Appendix 17: Photos of Agoras

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Agora 3, December 12, 2015



Agora 2, December 7, 2014



Agora 5, November 16, 2014.



Agora 3, October 11, 2014

