



WEAVING PEACE: EXPLORING THE MEANING OF TEXTILES FOR AFGHAN COMMUNITIES

A Workshop Report

This report is the account of a one-day workshop aimed at exploring how meanings of textiles could be connected to understandings of peace, with a focus on Afghan communities based in Scotland. The overall objective of the day was to create a safe and dialogical space where the participants could identify and explore key themes that could become the focal points of an a co-constructed research project.



AUTHORS

GIULIA CAROZZI, CLAIRE BYNNER, LAURA MIANI, LINDSEY K HORNER, AND MYK ANUSAS

THANKS TO

MORAY HOUSE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SPORT'S RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND IMPACT SEEDCORN FUND, FOR FUNDING THIS EVENT

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Background.....	2
Aims and objectives of the day and participants involved.....	2
The topic: Peace and Textiles	4
Methodology	4
How the room was set up	5
Agreeing an approach	5
Thinking of peace.....	5
Speed Introductions	6
Good conversations.....	6
From good conversations to dialogues between different participants.....	6
Exploring textiles	8
Introducing and touching textiles.....	8
Textiles, stories and meanings	9
Towards a research proposal	10
Sharing thoughts on peace.....	10
Towards action: propositions	11
Findings.....	12
The importance of dialogue in research co-construction	12
Peace and the meanings of textiles.....	13
Propositions: imagining possibilities	14
Workshops.....	14
Explore through making	14
Design and weave peace rugs	14
An exhibition.....	14
Film on rugs	15
Further Reflections	15
Conclusion	15
Post-Script	17
References.....	18

Weaving Peace: Exploring the Meaning of Textiles for Afghan Communities

This report is the account of a one-day workshop aimed at exploring how meanings of textiles could be connected to understandings of peace, with a focus on Afghan Communities based in Scotland. The overall objective of the day was to create a safe and dialogical space where the participants could identify and explore key themes that could become the focal points of an AHRC funded research proposal. Members of the Afghan Community based in Scotland, people working with them, and artists/experts in textiles were invited to take part in workshop. The workshop findings highlighted a keen interest on the participants' side to further investigate the connections between peace and textile through co-constructive approaches.

Introduction

The focus of this report is on the one day-workshop held at the Edinburgh College of Art on 22nd of July 2024, where different participants were invited to take part in a workshop aimed at 'playing' with ideas to surface different hopes and agendas represented in the room, different expertise and types of knowledge. Different activities were set up to facilitate conversation around understandings of peace and the creation of textiles.

Background

The workshop was funded by Moray House School of Education and Sport's Research, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Seedcorn Fund, as a first step towards applying for a bigger research grant, possibly with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The rationale behind having the sandpit day in advance of applying for the larger AHRC funding was to develop a co-constructed project from the point of inception. Co-constructed research is an aspiration for Research Councils yet calls rarely allow for its embeddedness in the early stages of proposal-development. A key aspect of co-constructed research is to bring together academics and community members in the co-identification of research interests and problems to be further explored (Horner, 2016) however, this important step is often overlooked. In order to enable and create the high level of trust and mutual respect that are central to get a co-constructed project set up (Faulkner and Bynner, 2020; Castleden et al., 2012; Koster et al., 2012), the project team applied for the Moray House School of Education and Sport's Research, Knowledge Exchange and Impact Seedcorn Fund to hold an initial workshop which could enable a more genuine project 'seeding'.

Aims and objectives of the day and participants involved

The aim of the day was the co-identification of possible research interests and problems to be further explored around notions of peace and its relation to textiles for Afghan Communities relocated in Scotland. A key objective to be met through a series of participatory activities- was the creation of trust and mutual respect among the participants. Working towards trust and mutual respect was necessary not only to ensure the participants' effective participation, involvement and dialogue (Faulkner and Bynner, 2020) in the proposal genesis, but also to make sure that they felt included, welcome and safe in the workshop space.

The workshop hosted a diverse range of participants; this was done to ensure that the possible AHRC proposal development included and reflected a wide range of perspectives, agendas and experiences.

The planning and the design of the workshop followed the ethical principles of mutual respect, equality and inclusion, democratic participation, active learning, making a difference, collective action and personal integrity, which are elaborated in the *Community-based participatory research: A guide to ethical principles and practice* (Centre for Social Justice and Community Action & National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement 2022). These principles were built in the design of the activities proposed during the day, whereby particular attention was placed in using approaches that could foster dialogical, relational and participatory ethos and practices.

The workshop saw the involvement of:

- **The Facilitating Team**

- Dr Lindsey Horner was project lead and facilitator; she works in Education and Peacebuilding at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh. Her expertise lies in inquiring into meanings of peace through arts-based research. She is author of the AHRC Connected Communities Critical Literature Review on co-constructed research
- Dr Myk Anusas was project co-lead and facilitator, he works at the Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh. He explores how the world can be perceived/shaped through surfaces and how notions of form intersect with politics and race
- Dr Claire Bynner was the lead facilitator. She had a key role in designing the workshop and the facilitation plan. She is a Lecturer in Social Justice and Community Action with a particular interest in facilitation of co-construction and collaboration with communities at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh
- Laura Miani was involved in the project as an artist, researcher and facilitator. Laura has a background in architecture, and holds a Masters degree in Textiles during which she started exploring the use of textiles to convey compelling messages about conflict, specifically in the context of Colombia/South America.
- Giulia Carozzi was involved in the project as a key listener and facilitator. She is undertaking a Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh looking at how ordinary places and spaces contribute (or not) to a sense of legitimacy.

- **Participants/co-inquirers**

- Abdul Rashidi
- Bilal Wardak BEM, Afghan Communities Leader and Community Councillor in Inverclyde
- Dorothy Armstrong
- Farkhonda Kabiri is a Community Development Officer at the Scottish Refugee Council, where she focuses on women's empowerment and capacity building. She has a background in community work in Central Asia.

- Hazar Khalil serves as the Regional Integration Coordinator for Southeast Scotland at the Scottish Refugee Council.
- Mrs Katrin Rashidi
- Professor Nichola Khan is Chair of Human Geography and Ethnography, specialising in refugee migration, mobility, and forms of displacement in Afghan migrant life in Pakistan, the UK, and France.
- Noorullah Salihe
- Regional co-ordinator, city of Sanctuary
- Roqea Ahmadi coordinator of Maryam Amiri's Charity Community
- Said Ahmad Sadat
- Sarwar Ahadi, with extensive experience of working in Evaluation, monitoring and research projects and programs in Afghanistan, currently living in Scotland

In total the workshop numbered 17 including facilitators, and had a gender balance of 10 women and 7 men.

The topic: Peace and Textiles

The workshop was built around a theme that was left intentionally loose, so that the various participants could have an input in co-shaping a tighter focus for the AHRC proposal in case they did find the topic proposed of interest.

The theme, which the workshop focused upon, was on how textiles are often overlooked in having a political role in people's everyday experiences (Andrä, 2022); whilst textiles, literally, surround and enwrap us, the meaning that they hold often goes unnoticed. Textiles can be representative of people's identity, they can be evocative, through their textures, of people's pasts and context; far from being neutral or "naturally peaceful" (Andra, 2022, p. 1487) objects, textiles, such as flags, military uniforms and tapestry, can have a central role in wars and military operations as semiotic forms of identification (Andra, et al. 2019; Guillaume et al., 2016). Although the relationship between textiles and their socio-political meanings remains still a topic only marginally explored within the social sciences, there is an overall tendency to focus more on textiles' relationship with violence and so relatively little has been researched on how textiles, in their ordinary materiality, can play a role in both challenging violence and offering "nonviolent alternatives" (Andrä, 2022, p. 1487) symbolically as well as with regards to their process of making. For example, while Afghan refugee experiences have been understood to a limited extent through war rugs woven in Peshawar camps (Mascelloni 2009), the relationship between textiles and Afghan migrant life is largely under-researched compared to other cultural fields such as traditional music (Baily 2011; Doubleday 2022), or everyday rituals of labour and associated cultural meaning-making in the UK (Khan 2020). The workshop was designed to understand better how this gap might be filled through a co-constructed project.

Methodology

The workshop was built by making use of participatory approaches aimed at the co-construction and co-creation of a research proposal. The various methods chosen were designed in accordance with the guidelines presented in *How to Design and Plan Public Engagement Processes* (Faulkner and Bynner, 2020), in *Co-constructing Research: A Critical Literature Review* (Horner, 2016)., in

Public Dialogue and Deliberation: A Communication Perspective for Public Engagement Practitioners (Escobar, 2011) and in *Dialogue in Public Engagement: A Handbook* (Faulkner, 2011). Overall, the workshop was divided in three parts. In the first part of the day a series of activities were proposed to explore ideas and understandings without constraints, to free up possibilities and creativity and to do preparatory ground work for working together collaboratively and with textiles. The main aim of the first part of the workshop was agreeing an approach to working together and communication between research and communities/participants informed by the principles and practices of dialogue. This approach fitted well with having a theme left purposefully loose: the research team avoided providing the participants with specific definitions of peace or proposing to concentrate on a specific type of textile.

In the second part of the day the focus shifted on textiles; a series of activities and presentations were designed to explore further textiles' meanings and processes of meaning making through their crafting.

The third part of the workshop had a slightly tighter focus: research ideas, thoughts and feelings drawn from the earlier sessions were brought together to envision a possible research project. Each of the activities designed had a specific purpose in relation to the ethical principles and the creation of engagement, which both must sit at the heart of any co-constructed project (Horner, 2016).

Throughout the day, the participatory activities were interpolated by the research team offering short presentations on specific topics and providing more specific context and background information about the project. In doing so the intentions behind the workshop were explained, as well as how the specific activities that the research team had designed related to the wider theme and research approach.

How the room was set up

The room in which the workshop was held had different tables with writing and drawing materials that the participants could use to take their own notes, and/or respond to some of the prompts proposed throughout the day. Seats were not assigned, so people spontaneously sat where they wanted, forming groups of 4/5 per table. This approach allowed people who needed the support of a translator to sit together. Throughout the day various activities and exercises involved participants working in different groups, so the mix of people in groups changed and people had opportunities to interact and get to know people they had not met before. The workshop was designed to mixed group size, whereby some activities took place in pairs, others in small groups, and others involved the full group.

Agreeing an approach

Thinking of peace

To let the participants express their views and understandings without being influenced by the research team, an introduction exercise was designed. As participants waited for everyone to arrive in the room they were asked to write down on post-its what words came to their mind when thinking about peace. The noted words were left with the participants and were used in a later stage of the day. This quick exercise was planned to orientate the participants towards the

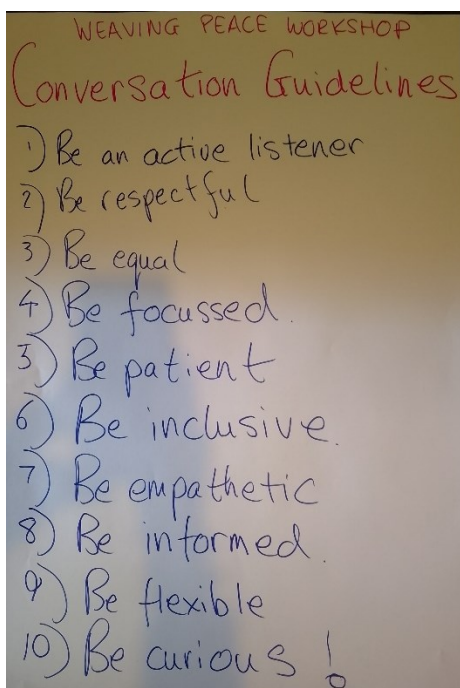
topic, to be a fast and easy exercise, and to start with an active and creative engagement from the outset.

Speed Introductions

In order for the participants to familiarize with the other people in the room and begin to create informal connections, an ice breaker exercise was designed. Participants were asked to form pairs and to tell each other a little about themselves, giving only information they were happy and comfortable to share (e.g. likes, dislikes, skills etc.). Then they introduced each other to the group. The facilitation team took part in this activity too. This was an important opportunity to remind one another of the communalities in the likes-dislikes and to ease the formality that academic spaces often evoke.

Good conversations

As a way of gathering understandings about conversation guidelines and help people to overcome obstacles to fruitful and respectful communication and support active listening (Faulkner, 2011), participants were invited to co-create some principles for effective communication that could be used during the workshop. In finding agreement about such guidelines, the participants had to gather around a shared flipchart which offered itself as the first clustering point for the co-construction of a joint understanding of what a safe and dialogic space could look like and establishing how to work together.



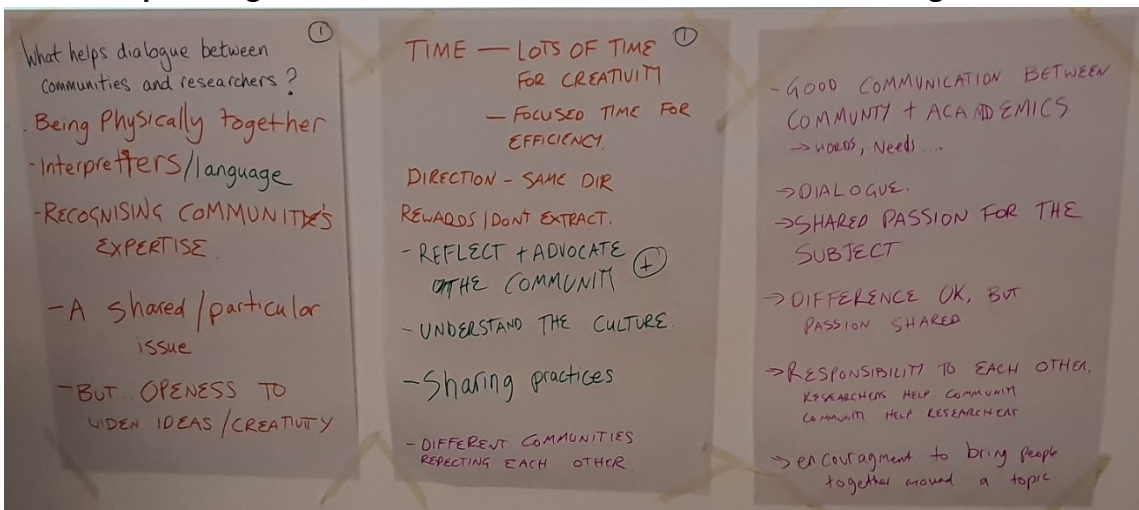
From good conversations to dialogues between different participants

In order to build understandings around the participants' meaning of dialogue, and to validate the legitimacy's of the participants own personal experiences (Faulkner, 211) a buzz activity was set up. Participants were asked to discuss in pairs what dialogue meant to them. This activity was set as a "warm up step before a longer exercise involving a larger group" (Faulkner, 2011, p. 40). To prompt the buzz activity Claire introduced the parable of *The Blind Experts and the Elephant*

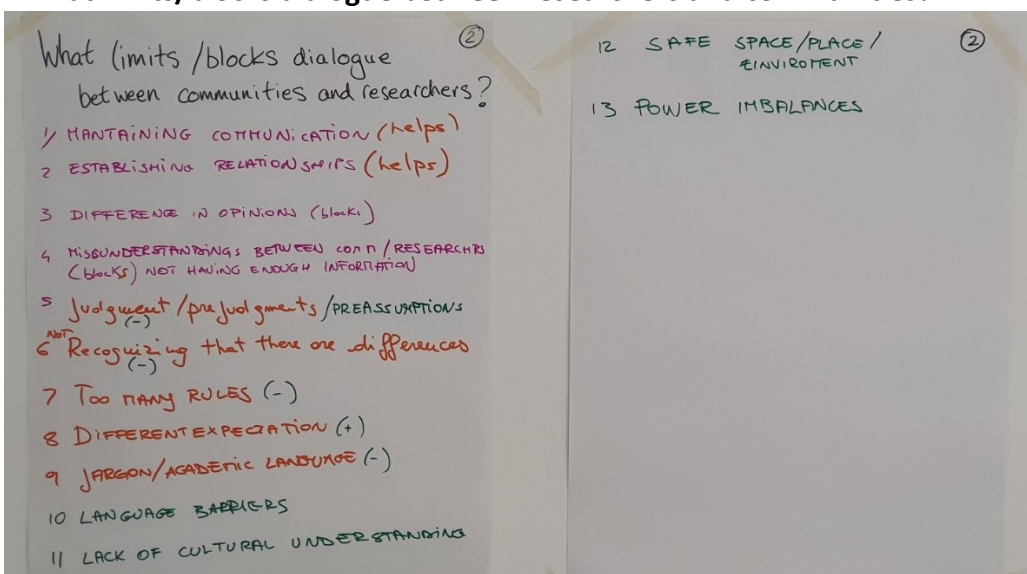
(Earliest version: Tittha Sutta, Udāna 6.4, Khuddaka Nikaya). Drawing out the need to listen to multiple perspectives to gain a deeper understanding, the role of dialogue and research were here introduced as part of the same thing.

In the buzz activity participants recorded and discussed their first reactions and responses to meaningful experiences of effective and productive dialogues. Those were then further explored in a larger group activity. A carousel, with the aim of “pooling ideas and knowledge” (Faulkner, 2011, p. 40), followed the buzz activity. A carousel in an exercise that sees small groups moving around the room, and attending to specific questions present at various stations. Its aim is to build further understanding making use of the knowledge produced by the previous group (Faulkner, 2011). For this activity the facilitation team had designed 3 different questions to be explored in small groups at three different stations, with a facilitator present at each. The three questions presented at the stations were designed to widen what was discussed first in pairs, bringing in to focus the relationship between communities and researchers. The questions presented at each station were:

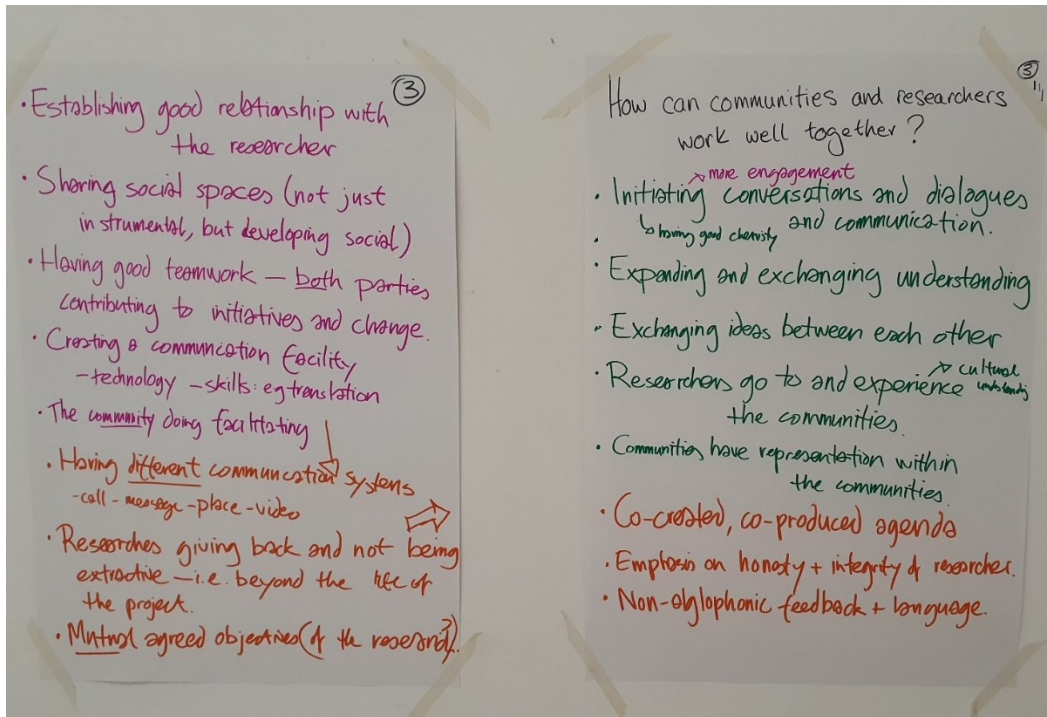
- What helps dialogue between communities and researchers work together?



- What limits/blocks dialogue between researchers and communities?



- How can communities and researchers work well together?



The purpose of these activities was trying to understand the expectations of the participants in relation to establishing good communication practices. This was done by inviting a discussion on participants' own perspective and experiences with regards to functioning and malfunctioning dialogic relationships between different communities, and communities and researchers. Through these activities, the participants began to put into practice those same principles they were referring to by pooling together common knowledge and expectations.

Exploring textiles

Introducing and touching textiles

"To set the scene" and "to provide information" so that the participants could "engage meaningfully and confidently with the topic" (Faulkner, 2011, p. 43) of textiles, Laura Miani ran a presentation about her own research project. She described a project called "OJO!" which explored the many layers and interactions of pattern, colour and politics in the textiles of Molas from Panama and Colombia. This included the role of culture and heritage, the impact of tourism and consumerism, the motifs and symbols as well as the materials they are made with – including in her own project printed onto bullet proof clothing. By bringing in the room pieces of textiles from Colombia and Panama as well as others she produced during her MA, she was able to introduce the participants to the layers of meaning that textiles have: textiles speak through their materiality and their process of making, about the socio-political context in which they are produced.

Textiles, stories and meanings

In order to explore how textiles are carriers of meanings, and in particular of comfort, the participants were asked to present to their small table groups a textile of their own choice¹. This activity was set in three steps:

1. Participants were encouraged to first simply describe the physical characteristics of the object, focussing on its material quality
2. Participants were then invited to share the story of the textile and how/why it had a particular meaning in their life
3. With a facilitator joining each group, shared learning points, insights and communalities were noted down

The purpose of this activity was to start testing if the idea of working on the relationalities between textile and peace found resonances among the participants' personal experiences.

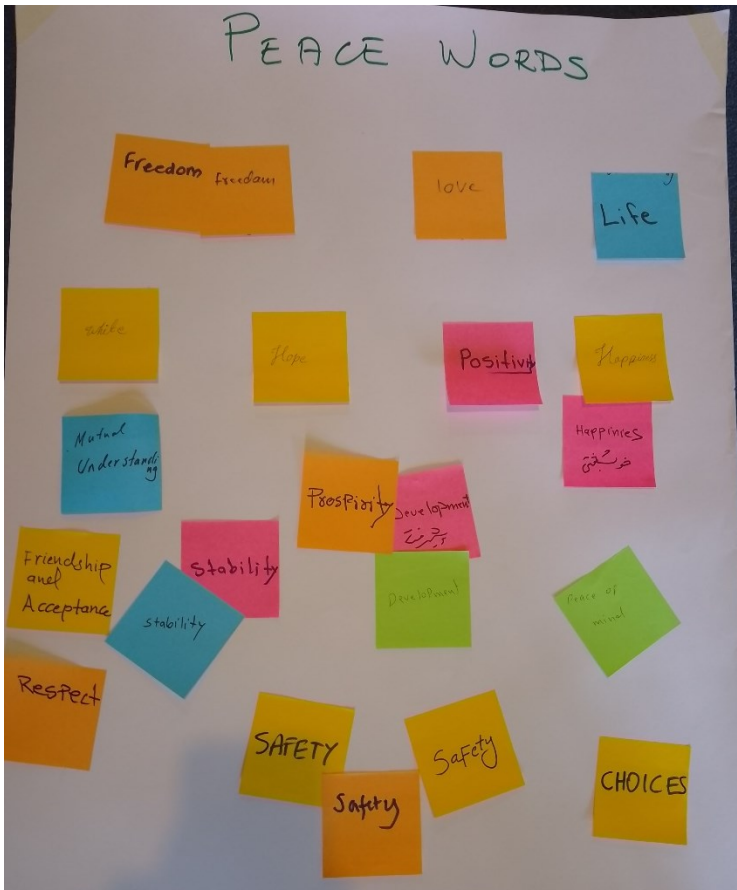


¹ When participants were invited to take part to the workshop, the project team recommended that each would bring with them a textile that was comforting for them

Towards a research proposal

Sharing thoughts on peace

In order to move closer to the theme of the workshop and begin to explore it more directly, the participants were asked to share thoughts and feelings that they associated to the word *peace*. They were invited to draw from the notes taken in the first exercise they had undertaken when they entered the room as well as to contribute impromptu. A facilitator made sure everyone had the opportunity to contribute and collected the key words on a poster so that everyone could visualize and note similarities, commonalities and differences.



Towards further exploration to understand potential themes to be presented in a research proposal, a metapanning activity was designed. The aim of the metapanning exercise was to ensure all voices could be heard, to share and pool knowledge and perspectives, to build understanding between participants and to find common grounds so that the themes which had emerged could be further explored. Metapanning is an activity divided in two stages: “the first involves individual brainstorming without judgement or interaction, to come up with 3 (say) responses to a set question. The second stage is an interactive clustering exercise in which the whole group makes decisions about which individual contributions sit together and what categories are appropriate.” (Faulkner, 2011, p. 41)”.

For the first stage, participants were asked to note down on post-its what themes and feelings of peace touched during the workshop they were interested in further exploring. In the second stage of the activity, participants then presented their own ideas in front of the group and a facilitator

clustered the post-its into themes, grouped under headlines. This clustering activity was designed so that participants could begin to prioritise commonalities of intent and to develop a first co-identification of key topics that they were interested in exploring further. This activity took place towards the end of the day when participants have had a chance to build enough confidence to provide detailed and full explanations of their ideas and processes and to express this (in English or with the support of translators) to the rest of the group.



Towards action: propositions

“To set the scene” and “to provide information” as Laura had done previously, Lindsey introduced the origin of the idea to organise the workshop. This was to facilitate a final discussion about how we might progress the ideas explored so far. This was left to the last part of the day so that an ‘origin narrative’ did not sway the day and inhibit genuine co-construction of ideas. Lindsey introduced the idea of a peace rug, retelling Laura’s story of how textiles are political, but couching it also as an everyday, small ‘p’ political.

The presentation discussed how weaving rugs is an esteemed art form that is intensely lived and embedded in Afghan culture (Charland 2011) and their dynamic development of rug designs to include stories, beliefs and prayers and reflect and adapt to the different conditions of the Afghan people (Barmaki 2020), including the well-famed ‘war rugs’ of the 70s. This is what made Lindsey think about what a peace rug might look like, and how the rug might be used as a metaphor to explore peace in relation to: trade; the Globalisation of the rug market including colonial trade and expansion, and also the UK as a host country of Afghan refugees. Furthermore the symbolism of ‘flying carpets’ explored by Barnett (1995) offers synergy with the theme of migration and refuge as its ‘traveller’ characteristics tell a story of movement and crossing of space and place. A final activity was set up as an opportunity to generate and create ideas and action to start visioning a future project. In order to envision further research possibilities that could take a

tangible shape, a series of different propositions leading from the initial idea of creating peace rugs and the previous clustering activity (which included rugs also), were presented on flip chart paper and hanged in the room.

The propositions presented were:

- design and weave peace rugs
- explore through making (other than rugs, e.g. kites, tapestry as discussed in the meta plan)
- keep workshopping
- put on an exhibition

Those propositions meant to be only tentative suggestions towards imagining the outcomes of a research proposal and were left intentionally vague and open so that the participants could add their own preferences and inputs. Some flip chart papers were also left blank so that the participants could create their own propositions. This exercise was aimed at bringing research into concrete scenarios that could help all the participants leaving the room with something tangible to think with.

Findings

Through the activities that took place during the workshop, the participants showed a keen interest and a desire to take forward and be involved in the project. The research team was able to identify some key findings to guide further actions towards the writing of a proposal for a research grant.

The importance of dialogue in research co-construction

Throughout the activities designed, and following from a brief presentation in which the concept of dialogue was introduced, the participants highlighted the importance and the centrality that dialogue plays in the sharing of ideas and production of shared knowledge. They further elaborated on the guidelines presented, emphasising the pivotal importance played by respect and inclusivity in meaningful dialogues. Having respectful and focussed communication as well as creating an inclusive environment where everyone is given equal opportunities to participate were seen as key qualities in ensuring a safe and productive relationship between researchers and communities. The different participants highlighted that the capacity to be an empathetic and attentive listener is of paramount importance; such quality was perceived as fostering a truly respectful environment.



Whilst there was an appreciation that researchers are experts in their fields, the participants stressed that often the specialized/formal language used in academic settings blocks rather than enables the explorations of ideas. Too often research ideas are presented to the communities as unshakable. Appreciating communities' expertise, using an approachable language and leaving ideas open to be further explored were seen as key elements in terms of enabling a genuine and effective dialogue between researchers and communities. An appreciation of the communities' culture was mentioned as a key element in fostering dialogue, whereby, it was stressed, differences in opinions, contexts and backgrounds shouldn't become stifling pre-judgments, blocking the capacity to be open to the other's perspective. Differences were seen in general as enriching knowledge-creation; however, it was noted that in order for those to be enhancing in the co-construction of a research project, there had to be a shared passion among the participants for the topic researched.

Misunderstandings between communities and researchers were seen as potentially being product of power imbalances and of lack of mutuality; not giving enough time towards the creation of trustworthy relationships was highlighted as a barrier to the creation of a genuinely co-created, co-constructed and not extractive agenda. The importance of physically sharing spaces and allocating ample time for communities and researchers to familiarize with each other were identified as simple yet key elements in ensuring the flourishing of dialogue. Finally, having too many rules governing conversations between communities and researchers was seen as a potential constraint to an open and creative dialogue.

Peace and the meanings of textiles

Textiles were seen by the participants as being ordinary bearers of meanings, able to present and sustain people's identities, heritage and culture. Through their material qualities and the time employed to craft them, textiles were perceived as showcasing care and respect for the other, aesthetically displaying values of hospitality and principles of generosity. Although the textiles gathered in the workshop at first seemed to bring into focus differences among cultures, upon scrutiny the participants were able to spot and reflect upon important transcultural commonalities. Such commonalities pertained to the techniques used in crafting them, patterns and colour combinations and reasons behind the making. Participants reflected upon how textiles offered them different entry points into the exploration of commonalities beyond fixed identities.

Overall, whilst the participants recognised that war impacts the production and the meaning of textiles, there was a general agreement about textiles' potentials in terms of evoking as well as producing experiences and feelings adjacent to peace. Textiles, in the forms of kites, hats, blankets and shirts were seen, both in their materiality and symbolism, as everyday expressions of peace, where peace was intended as freedom, prosperity, love and happiness. The fact that some textiles, especially rugs, travel, carrying with them different cultural patterns and eliciting connections with one's own homeland as well as with different cultures which might make use of similar crafting techniques or give akin meaning to certain patterns, was seen as a quality that could foster togetherness and respectful dialogue about different cultures and traditions. Such aspects resonated with participants' understanding of peace as respect, mutual understanding and acceptance. One participant noted how textiles, seen as important means of self-expression, and usually crafted by women, could be seen as an empowering tool: on the one hand, through

their making, it was argued, women could gain economic self-sufficiency, this was seen as an important step towards mental wellbeing and as a booster to women's self-confidence. Overall, these aspects pertaining to gender equality were connected to understandings of peace as development, choice, prosperity and peace of mind.

Finally, it was noted how handicrafts are made using traditional skills, knowledge and expertise passed down from generation to generation. It was highlighted how the provenance of the handicrafts should be valued and recognised in its geographical specificity, against the risk of misappropriation fostered by a capitalist rush towards automated production, which erases traditional expertise and knowledge present in the physical gesture of hand-making.

Propositions: imagining possibilities

The participants imagined what the outcomes of a research project based on weaving together peace and textiles could be.

Workshops

Regardless of the specific outcomes, it was highlighted how workshops like the one held, were central in fostering further and deeper understandings on the theme of textiles and peace, and for effectively co-creating a shared project. So, workshops were seen not so much as specific outcomes, but more as key to the process of co-construction.

Explore through making

The idea of exploring through making was seen as a key in the process of further understanding the connections between peace and textiles. Participants stressed how through a series of sessions aimed at making, specific skills and techniques could become the heart of the project. This was seen as an important element by the participants as it was stressed how the process of making should be always part of the discussion around meaning of peace shouldn't be overridden by the outcome in itself.

Design and weave peace rugs

Rugs were the focus of many conversations among the workshop participants, and they seemed to be textiles, which attracted a lot of their attention and energy. Participants proposed to explore further the meaning of peace through designing rugs patterns.

An exhibition

The idea of putting on an exhibition of hand-crafted textiles was seen as an important one to showcase not only the richness of the Afghan heritage and expertise but also to highlight how migration could be seen as a creative act of weaving together the past and the present, the old and the new. In order to bring alive those dimensions, the participants explored the possibility of exhibiting not only textiles but also a film around the stories of Afghan community members who settled in Scotland and the meanings that certain textiles carry for them.

Film on rugs

This outcome was proposed by the participants. They came up with the idea of making a film on what carpets meant to Afghan Communities relocated in Scotland. Three key questions were developed in order to give further shape to this specific outcome.

- What have rugs meant to you in the past and what rugs did you leave behind?
- What rugs are you living with now and what do they mean to you?
- What might a rug look like which expresses your experience of moving to Scotland?

Further Reflections

The research team identified some key points that are deserving of further attention and consideration:

- Given the interest that the participants showed towards the development of a research proposal, and given the cross-cultural diversity of the participants and the research team, it might be beneficial to think about the possibility of developing research methods collaboratively. A first starting point towards this aim would be to explore which methodological approaches are currently used in research projects conducted in Afghanistan.
- The research team is aware that, although the themes presented in the workshop were left intentionally loose, so that the participants could maximise their exploration, the research idea behind the workshop wasn't originated by Afghan community members. This bares the risk of making the process of research design led by non-Afghans and potentially not being truly responsive to the community's needs. In order to address this issue as the development of the project goes forward, it might be important to have Afghan leadership on the project as well as to make sure that the onto-epistemological assumptions framing the project are critically scrutinised, so to avoid the prominence and hegemony of western-centric approaches to research.
- Given the language barriers, it might be vital to ensure the presence of translators at each point of the project development; this would require the research team to go through specific training in terms of working with translators. As language was mentioned by the participants as a key barrier in communication, it might be important to think about integrating key concepts in the language spoken by the participants. This hopefully will be an important step towards making use of different epistemological traditions.

Conclusion

The workshop stimulated a vibrant dialogue among the participants who in wrapping up the day expressed their gratitude for the relational and safe space that the workshop had provided. They stated a keen interest in being involved in the project and hoped a research grant could be secured for it. One of the reasons for their enthusiasm seemed to relate to the positive nature of the project, with a focus on peace in its multifaceted meanings, over war and violence.

The co-constructed ethos and dialogical nature of the day was mentioned as of being of particular importance for the participants. Such ethos was embodied throughout the workshop by the

participants who worked in full harmony, bringing alive the seven ethical principles elaborated in the *Community-based participatory research: A guide to ethical principles and practice* (2022).

Post-Script

A follow-up questionnaire was sent to all participants along with a draft copy of this report. The questionnaire asked about an evaluation of the workshop and feedback on the report, including if the participant would like to be named (and how) or listed anonymously.

The questionnaire received an 84% response rate.

Over all feedback about the organisation and running of the workshop was very positive. When broken down into the organisation, venue, effectiveness of separate activities (e.g, carousels on research community collaboration, meta planning etc.) average scores for each ranged between 4.3 to 4.9 out of 5.

When asked what they would take away for the workshop indicative answers included “The activity demonstrated the value of bringing together diverse perspectives and co-creating research that resonates with community experiences” and “how textiles can serve as a medium for exploring complex themes like peace, identity, and socio-political issues”.

When asked what they would do as a result of the activity indicative answers included “apply the principles of co-construction and dialogue in future meetings and events with women I am working with to ensure that all voices are heard and valued” and “[I] would be very keen to stay involved as project develops into a funding proposal, and other related events/activities”.

When asked what could be improved indicative answers included “involve more Afghans who has skill of art” and “providing more language support for participants who are not native English speakers” and “More nuanced summarising sometimes”.

When asked to comment of the draft report all but 1 participant reported it was a fair representation of the workshop. When asked in the next question what they would like us to edit/change or add they did not provide any details.

When asked if they like to stay in touch and receive up-dates about how the research proposal in developing all but 1 participant selected yes.

When asked if they would like to help in the development of the research, 80% of respondents said yes, with 20% offering to review proposal drafts from a community/topic perspective; 60% offering to join the advisory board of any future research; 10% saying they could offer a letter of support for the project from their organisation; 10% offered to promote future research events and invite Afghans; and 10% offered help in facilitated events.

References

- Andrä, C. (2022). Textiles Making Peace. In: Richmond, O.P., Visoka, G. (eds) *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi-org.eux.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77954-2_125
- Andrä, C., Bliesemann de Guevara, B., Cole, L., & House, D. (2019). Knowing Through Needlework: curating the difficult knowledge of conflict textiles. *Critical Military Studies*, 6(3–4), 341–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2019.1692566>
- Baily, John (2011). *Songs from Kabul: The Spiritual Music of Ustad Amir Mohammad*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Barmaki, S. (2020). Afghan Rugs Pattern in a Visual Ethnographic Perspective. *International Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 2020, pp. 96-104
- Barnett, P. (1995). Rugs Я Us (and them): The oriental carpet as sign and text. *Third Text*, 9:30, 13-28
- Castleden, H., Morgan, V. S., & Lamb, C. (2012). “I spent the first year drinking tea”: Exploring Canadian university researchers’ perspectives on community-based participatory research involving Indigenous peoples. *The Canadian Geographer*, 56(2), 160–179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.2012.00432.x>
- Centre for Social Justice and Community Action & National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2022). *Community-based participatory research: A guide to ethical principles and practice* (2nd ed.). Durham University.
- Charland, William. (2011). War Rugs: Woven Documents of Conflict and Hope. *Art Education*, 64:6, 25-32.
- Doubleday, Veronica. (2022). *Three Women of Herat: Afghanistan 1973-77*. London: Eland Books.
- Escobar, O. (2011). *Public dialogue and deliberation: A communication perspective for public engagement practitioners*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Beltane
- Faulkner, W. (2011). *Dialogue in Public Engagement: A Handbook*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Beltane.
- Faulkner, W. & Bynner, C. (2020) *How to Design and Plan Public Engagement Processes: A Handbook*, Glasgow: What Works Scotland.
- Guillaume, X., Andersen, R. S., & Vuori, J. A. (2016). Paint it black: Colours and the social meaning of the battlefield. *European Journal of International Relations*, 22(1), 49-71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066115573336>
- Horner, Lindsey K. (2016). *Co-constructing Research: A Critical Literature Review*. AHRC and Connected Communities.
- Mascelloni, Enrico. 2009. *War Rugs: The Nightmare of Modernism*. Milan: Skira Editore.

Khan, Nichola. 2020. *Arc of the Journeyman: Afghan Migrants in England*. University of Minnesota Press.

Koster, R., Baccar, K., & Lemelin, R. H. (2012). Moving from research ON, to research WITH and FOR Indigenous communities: A critical reflection on community-based participatory research. *The Canadian Geographer*, 56(2), 195–210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.2012.00428.x>