

CONFERENCE REPORT

Citizenship and Communities

Identity and State in the 21st Century

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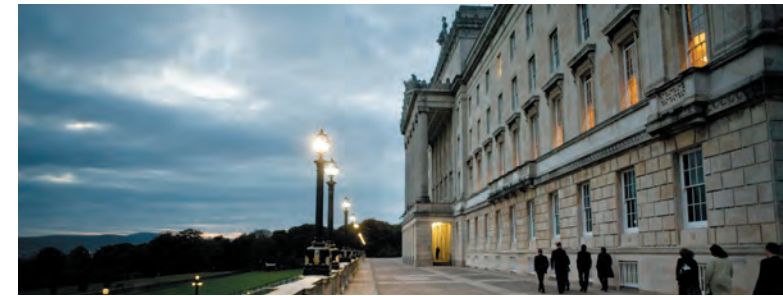
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Young Apeldoorn 2008

Partners



Buitenlandse
Zaken



Stormont Parliament Building

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Sponsors





Great Hall, Stormont Parliament Building

Foreword

Young Apeldoorn conferences are always lively, with lots of energy and a free flow of ideas. But this time we wanted to set our participants a more specific challenge: to commit themselves personally to actions to encourage positive change in society, and to focus their discussion on ideas for innovative projects which could be taken forward after the conference.

Holding the conference in the centre of Belfast and exposing the delegates to some of the community issues in tours of the Shankill and Falls Roads, guided by ex-prisoners, was an eye-opening experience for many of the participants (both British and Dutch) and got everyone thinking hard from the outset. High-quality speakers provided extra context, and dinner in the impressive surroundings of the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont enabled the conference members to meet some key political, business and cultural figures.

In the conference discussions, the wide range of personal backgrounds and experience made for a high quality of discussion and debate. The participants enthusiastically took up the challenges set by the organisers, coming up with an imaginative range of potential group projects, as well as a wide variety of individual commitments. An experienced panel commented on the project proposals, and a number of other participants offered help and support.



Guided Tour, Belfast

The level of enthusiasm, energy and commitment shown by the participants was highly impressive. The challenge now is to follow up the talk with action!

To help with this, the organisers will be producing a revised version of the "Young Apeldoorners' Book" with updated delegates' profiles, their reactions to the conference themes, and their action commitments. In the longer run, progress on the various action commitments will be tracked. A record of the success stories will be shared via the Conference website: they will also feed into the next main Apeldoorn Conference in 2009.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone involved - participants, organisers and our hosts in Belfast - for making the event such an enjoyable and productive event.

LYN PARKER

HM British
Ambassador to
the Netherlands



PIM WALDECK

Netherlands
Ambassador
to the United
Kingdom





Plenary Session



Guided Tour, Belfast

Conference Report

What distinguished this “Young Apeldoorn” from its predecessors was first of all the setting. We stayed in the Europa Hotel in Belfast, famously “the most bombed hotel in Europe” (damaged 33 times by IRA bombs during the “Troubles”). On the first afternoon we set the tone for the conference with a tour of the sectarian heartlands of the Falls Road and Shankill Road, where Republican and Loyalist ex-prisoners showed us around and told us about their own experiences. Here was another distinguishing mark of this Young Apeldoorn: the “real world visit”, a concept that has also worked well in the British Council’s “Network Effect” conferences.

The tour was, in Churchill’s phrase, the “war-war”. But the next two days went beyond mere “jaw-jaw”. The young Dutch and British participants – among them policymakers, business leaders, social entrepreneurs and NGO leaders - split into workshops that came up with firm commitments to carry out social-enterprise projects related to the conference’s themes.

Over the next few months the British Council will watch to see which commitments actually happen; and it will collect the stories of the ones that do.

The Northern Irish civil conflict was a guiding inspiration for the conference. If the Troubles could be resolved, then why not today’s ostensibly tamer Dutch and British issues of citizenship and community? The opening speech, by [Sir Alistair Graham](#), helped us understand how peace had come to Northern Ireland.

As head of Northern Ireland’s Parades Commission from 1997 to 2000, Sir Alistair had had a front-seat view. He told us that when he got the job it was hardly considered “a plum position of government appointments”. In 1997, the idea that the Unionist Ian Paisley would ever be working in a power-sharing agreement with the Republican Martin McGuinness seemed “inconceivable”.



Sir Alistair Graham

Parades were a way that Protestant groups “marked out their territory”, asserting their dominance even over neighbourhoods where Catholics lived. Many parades ended in conflict. The approach the Parades Commission took was to insist on dialogue before it would allow any parade. If a marching group wanted to enter a Catholic area, it would have to show that it had tried to get the agreement of the local Catholics. If there was no evidence of dialogue, the Parades Commission could refuse to grant a license for the parade. On the other hand, if the marchers had tried to talk but the Catholics had refused, “we might impose a route the community would not like”, explained Sir Alastair.

The approach worked, he said. “Much to everybody’s surprise the Parades Commission survived and in my view played a significant role in defusing the power of parades to

disrupt life in Northern Ireland.” But, Sir Alistair suggested, even though Northern Ireland was now peaceful he thought it might still be segregated. He was going to join us on our tours of the Shankill and Falls Roads, and he was curious to see whether there were any signs of the communities coming together.

The tour was a highlight of the conference. It was a very practical introduction to the issues of citizenship, communities, identity and state. Many of us were still talking about it days later. Kudos to the senior Apeldoorn conference for planning to return to Belfast in 2009.

Some points we noticed on the tour:

- This post-conflict tourism works very well, thanks largely to Belfast’s famous political murals. On the Republican side, there is the famous mural of Bobby Sands; on the Loyalist side, the Queen Mother, but also a rendering of the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; on both sides, endless paramilitaries.
- Our guides were very aware that tourism could help defuse the



Guided Tour, Belfast



Guided Tour, Belfast

Northern Irish Troubles. Our Loyalist tour operator, EPIC, and their Republican equivalent, Coiste, were both created by the ex-prisoners who had personally carried out much of the conflict before becoming part of the peace process. Michael Culbert, of Coiste, says the political tours began when unemployed ex-prisoners noticed “quite a lot of tourists walking up and down the road looking at murals et cetera.” It was apparent that one key to ending the killings was finding paid work for former paramilitaries. Tourism now seems to be starting to replace sectarian conflict as an industry.

• The neighbourhoods we saw remain as segregated as Sir Alistair had suggested. People on one side of the “peace wall” are almost all Catholics and predominantly Republicans; on the other side, they are Protestants and predominantly Unionists. However, a corollary of that was that each neighbourhood had a very strong sense of community. Their streets were like a communal living-room, which they had decorated themselves, with the murals and monuments to people killed in

sectarian murders. Neighbours had a shared history. Passersby on the streets greeted our guides, and we were told that few people here locked their doors. Here was the “community” that policymakers are always talking about.

The next morning, we gathered in Belfast’s Grand Opera House next door to the Europa Hotel. Marcia Poole of Amnesty International, and Bas Heijne, a noted Dutch political columnist, delivered keynote speeches to give the delegates something to think about when they started planning their projects in their workshops.

Poole told the story of Amnesty. She made the point that since 2001 the group had extended its focus from political rights to “economic and social rights”: “basic education, healthcare, food and shelter”.



Marcia Poole

Previously, she said, Amnesty had found itself “looking at fair trials but not at corruption in the judiciary; demanding an end to violence against women but ignoring that girls were kept out of school, demanding that high-profile tyrants be brought to justice but not that justice be

extended to rural areas." Poole noted: "When we consider that there are more than 2 billion people living in poverty, this could easily be described as the world's worst human rights crisis."



Bas Heijne

She ended with examples of how groups of ordinary people could make a difference. For instance, after Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in May, some middle-class people living in an apartment block in central Rangoon, learning from foreign media how bad the situation in their own country was, began driving out to poor neighbourhoods to distribute thousands of bags of rice and help rebuild homes. They did this despite fears of harassment by soldiers. Poole didn't say so, but surely if people living under a dictatorship could do that, it would be rather easier to make a difference in the Netherlands or Britain?

Heijne talked about the clinging to identity we had witnessed on our tours. It was a common phenomenon around the world today, he said. In the Netherlands after the attacks of 9/11, a new

nativist movement was encouraging people to rediscover their "national heritage" and "Dutch identity". What to do about this? Heijne believed the economist Amartya Sen had the answer. Sen begins with the idea that when people feel their sense of self threatened by outsiders, they tend to reinforce their belonging to a group. Sen therefore says you cannot deny people's need for identity. Sen thinks people should be allowed to claim their particular identities. We are not all the same. But firstly, we shouldn't treat identity as destiny. So you might be a devout Muslim, but you are simultaneously many things beside that. "To see yourself or someone else only as a Muslim can be dangerous," explained Heijne. Secondly, he said, still channeling Sen, people had no right to deny others their chosen identities. It's fine to be a Dutch nationalist, as long as you don't want to stop someone else being a Berber nationalist. That is a key to living together.



The delegates then separated into five different workshop groups. Each group spent much of the next day and a half discussing the topic of



The concept that would persist, he argued, was social stratification by class.

Charles Clarke, the former British home secretary and a member of the Apeldoorn Steering Board, had come to Belfast for the conference. Asked "What is the point of 'Apeldoorn'?", Clarke came up with three:

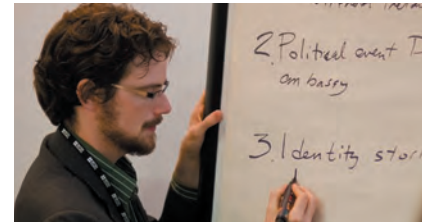
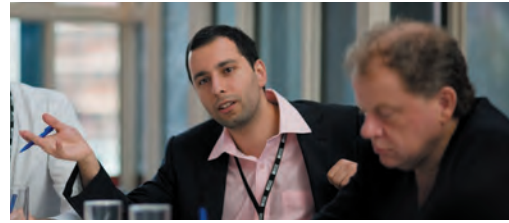
- Even in a globalized world, people don't really understand another country's experience. Our tours of Belfast, to cite the latest example, had shown the Dutch something fundamental about the UK. (Incidentally, many of the British participants found the tours as eye-opening as the Dutch did.)
- When it came to issues like integration and the environment, "getting perceptions from similar but different countries is helpful."
- Networking.



Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke

the conference. Each had to come up with a commitment to action (either as individuals or as a group) that would make things better. Much of the debate inevitably involved schemes that already existed: the "Buurtvaders" project in the Netherlands, for instance, whereby in crime-ridden, often immigrant neighbourhoods, some men have been appointed as "neighbourhood fathers", to dissuade youths from making trouble. This has apparently worked well. Or there was the Dutch "buddy project": a native Dutch person becomes "buddy" to an immigrant and shows him something about how the Netherlands works. Or there were non-Muslims who fasted during Ramadan as a way of getting closer to and understanding Muslim colleagues or friends.

The title of the conference had made no explicit mention of immigration, yet almost all the workshops gravitated instinctively to this theme. One person did suggest, though, that 30 years from now we might think of ethnicity as quite an odd way of analysing cleavages in society.





Lord Alderdice and Anna Lo MLA

The networking went on nonstop in Belfast, especially that Monday night. We went for a group dinner at the Northern Ireland assembly at Stormont. It's a beautiful building – an important fact, because its beauty probably helped persuade some sectarians that serving in parliament here would be a more appealing life than making bombs. After dinner we filled the benches on both sides of the Assembly, to hear Lord Alderdice, the Assembly's former speaker and former leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, explain how he and others

had persuaded the former sectarians to sit down in this room together.

In an insightful, moving and sometimes funny speech, Alderdice drew on his own experiences as a psychiatrist. Negotiating with Loyalists and Republicans, he suggested, was much like talking to two people in a bad relationship. At first the mediators had taken the short-term line: "We will talk to you, but stop shooting and bombing people."

After that, much of the work was about finding compromises that didn't offend anybody's pride. For instance, he asked, why were the assembly benches we were sitting on blue? Because it was a colour with which both sides identified. There had been similar quarrels and compromises over where the various sides would sit in the chamber; and on, and on.

The next day, the workshops convened for the last time. They then presented their projects to all the delegates in a plenary session.



Workshop Session

The plenary had something of the feel of a Revivalist church, as people stepped up to the microphone and pledged their commitments to action. It was moving to see the effort, intelligence and ingenuity that had gone into the workshops. Most of their projects – the result of hours of earnest debate in their groups – were aimed at drawing poor youth in Britain and the Netherlands into the political and business mainstream. A jury judged each idea. The group whose project works best – not in a powerpoint presentation, but in real life in the months to come – will be invited to next year's senior Apeldoorn conference.

Workshop 1 started by presenting a neat side-idea: a "meet and eat". A group member from one of the Hague's more affluent neighbourhoods invited a group member from one of the city's less affluent immigrant neighbourhood, and his friends, to dinner at his house. This invitation was reciprocated, so that both members would gain a better insight to one another's lives. Intended to help the workshop group achieve its overall aims with greater vision and sincerity, the idea received an ovation from the plenary.

The main project: "reverse mentoring". Many companies send their executives to mentor youths, particularly in poor or ethnic neighbourhoods. But in this project, the youths will come to the company at lunchtimes to teach the company's executives how to use new technology: Facebook, Hypes, iTunes et cetera. This will "bring the



Closing Plenary

community to the company", bridge generational and other gaps, honour the skills of the youths involved, and educate both sides. Specifically, many executives would like to understand what their own children do on social-networking sites. The project will be carried out in both the UK and the Netherlands. The idea gets around the main obstacle that stops many busy people from getting involved in such projects: lack of time. In this case, the executives don't even have to leave their building. As one group member phrased the pitch: "If you're time-poor, contact SWITCH and we'll bring the community to you!" The workshop group listed many delegates to the conference whom it wanted to use as contacts, hoping to tap their specific skills or networks. A senior businessman present spontaneously offered his

company as sponsor for the project. He demonstrated his commitment by giving his mobile phone number on the spot.

Workshop 2 had several proposals. One member of the group wanted to hold a series of conferences in London on the theme of citizenship. He asked: "What makes people shift their identities between local, national and transnational (e.g. climate change)?" Another group member proposed setting up an event, together with the Dutch Embassy in London, that would study different approaches to multiculturalism. As soon as the plan was presented in the plenary, the Embassy promised to work with the Fabian Society to host a seminar on the subject. But the project that excited most interest from the jury was the idea of collecting stories of young immigrant role models, and perhaps presenting them on a website that media could use. These role models will answer the questions, "Who/what inspired you?" and "What needs to change?" Collecting the "identity stories" of these role models would show young people, particularly those of ethnic origin, ways to succeed while juggling their different identities.

Workshop 3 had asked itself: "How can we get people to engage in the political process and politicians to engage in local communities?" Its main project is to increase the traditionally low voter turnout in the twin cities of Hull and Rotterdam by 5 per cent in the European parliamentary elections of June

2009. First the workshop will carry out research to measure voter attitudes. Then it will follow various approaches, among them retraining politicians to communicate with voters, taking politicians into schools, and perhaps naming and shaming politicians who are too lazy to engage. After the project, the workshop will measure voter attitudes again.



Closing Plenary

One member of the jury promised to "eat her hat" if the workshop achieved the 5 per cent increase. However, this workshop like all the others got several offers of help from delegates in the hall. "Obviously I'm in on it," or, "I'm your man," were typical responses.

Workshop 4 was inspired by Barack Obama's slogan, "Yes we can". This handed responsibility to individuals, voters, communities, rather than making them merely the objects of the state's actions. The workshop's main proposal was to create a bilateral conference dubbed an "Even Younger Apeldoorn".

Youths from neighbourhoods in East London and Amsterdam, many of whom would never even have been abroad, will be brought to a conference in the Netherlands to discuss issues relevant to them, such as the problems of extremism and violence.

Workshop 5 pointed out that a great many approaches to the problems we had discussed had already been tried before. To avoid reinventing the wheel, it therefore proposed to identify and reward the best social programme implemented by a large company. This would encourage companies to engage in social action. The workshop also wanted to encourage young professionals without children, such as themselves, to become school governors. This group traditionally barely engages with local schools, yet has a lot of knowledge to offer. The Young School Governors' Network aims to link school governors under 35 and encourage more young people to become school governors.

The jury praised workshops 3 and 4; the voter-turnout and "Even Younger Apeldoorn" and school governor projects, for having "the most clear and most focused plans". But it commended group 1, of the switch mentoring scheme, for its creativity.

That was it. Now the question is who implements their project or projects best. The British Council will keep track. It will share all stories that emerge through the Apeldoorn website, and through this conference's space on the LinkedIn site. Any success stories will be communicated to the senior Apeldoorn conference next year. The conference ended with praise for the faultless organisation by the Working Group and its local partners. The event was compact, all the venues were inspiring, the delegates were varied and driven, and now it is up to them to turn their commitments into action.

Simon Kuper is a journalist for the Financial Times



Workshop Session



Closing Plenary

Conference Participants

MODERATORS

Mr Gerard Lemos | Deputy Chair, British Council
Ms Louise van der Laan | CEO, LW International

SPEAKERS

Lord Alderdice | President of Liberal International, and Former Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Sir Alistair Graham | Chairman, PhonepayPlus, former Chairman of the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland
Mr Bas Heijne | Writer and Essayist, NRC Handelsblad
Ms Anna Lo | Member of the Legislative Assembly for Northern Ireland, Alliance Party
Ms Marcia Poole | Senior Director for Communications and Information, Amnesty International

WORKSHOP CHAIRS

Ms Genevieve Dowokpor | Director, Youthology
Ms Tanja Jadnanansing | Adviser Youth/Multicultural Society, NOS News
Ms Adriana Lukas | Consultant
Ms Lotte Pitcher | Director, PAM Internet
Mr Joeri van den Steenhoven | Chairman and Co-founder, Nederland Kennisland

PLENARY PANEL

Ms Anna Carragher | Chair of the Grand Opera House Trust
Ms Karen Kiernan | Senior Broadcaster Business & Economics Journalist, BBC
Mr Maarten van den Bergh | Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Akzo Nobel nv
Lord Wallace of Saltaire | Deputy Leader, Liberal Democrat Lords Group
Co-Chair Steering Board

REPORT WRITER

Mr Simon Kuper | Journalist, Financial Times

DELEGATES

Mr Dennis Alciyan | Trainee, NOS
Mr Richard Allan | Head of Communications, Northern Rail
Mr Rajeshwar Anand | Operations Director, Kwiqa
Mr Edward Andersson | Head of Practice, Involve
Mr Jan Willem Blok | Head Government Affairs NL, ABN AMRO
Ms Saskia Braam | Consultant, Ebbinge & Company/Lideke Wery Foundation
Mr Ben Brinded | Head of Business Development Lloyds TSB Global Services Ltd, Lloyds TSB Group
Ms Leyla Çakir | Chair, Muslim women organisation Al Nisa
Mr Jochem de Groot | Political Adviser, Liberal International
Mr Paul de Kuijer | Young European of the Year 2007, Heinz-Schwarzkopf Foundation
Mr Alex Fenton | Research Associate, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge
Mr Navraj Ghaleigh | Lecturer in Public Law, University of Edinburgh
Ms Hermione Gough | Deputy Director, Department for Children, Schools and Families
Ms Kate Groucutt | Vice Chair, Young Fabians
Ms Wassila Hachchi | Controller and Adviser, Ministry of Economic Affairs

Ms Agnes Kallenberg	Economic model coordinator, Shell Netherlands Refinery
Ms Philippa Kramer Mr Jeroen Lammers	UK HR Manager, Akzo Nobel Adviser Fiscal affairs, Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW)
Ms Nienke Leenstra	Adviser Public Affairs, Dutch Bankers' Association
Mr Conor McGinn Ms Claire McNulty Mr Daniel Mes	Executive Member, Fabian Society Independent Science Consultant Policy Officer, Directorate General for Competition, European Commission
Mr Umar Mirza Ms Susan Nash	Chief Editor, website: "wij blijven hier" National Executive Committee Member, National Union of Students
Ms Gail Orton	Public Policy Advisor, Clifford Chance LLP
Mr Martin Oswald Ms Stephanie Peacock	Business Analyst, Shell Youth Representative Labour Party NEC, Labour Party
Mr Ewoud Poerink	Project manager, Dutch Centre for Political Participation
Mr Mark Rusling Mr Arif Shah	Chair, Young Fabians Public Affairs Executive, Business for New Europe
Ms Linda van Beek	Adviser European Affairs, Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW)
Mr Ralph van de Wiel Ms Margreet van den Beukel	Secretary, Divosa Staff member at Department of Public Social Services, Municipality of Rotterdam
Mr Wiebren van Dijk	Policy Officer, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
Mr Jorn van Etten	Assistant Director M&A Advisory, RBS the Netherlands
Ms Ebeth van Loon	Adjunct Head of the Housing Policy Section, Housing Department of Amsterdam
Mr Niels van Zeben Mr Michiel Veldhuizen	Project Adviser, Oranje Fonds Director UK Trade and Investment Netherlands, British Embassy The Hague

Mr Tino Wallaart	Political Assistant, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Ms Johanneke Weitjens	Advisor Financial Markets, Dutch Bankers' Association
Mr Ben Woldring	CEO, Bencom BV (Bellen.com)



Guided Tour, Belfast

Conference Organisation

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Ms Louisewies van der Laan	CEO, LW International
Mr Kees van der Waaïj	Chairman, Unilever Nederland NV
Prof Dr Niek van Sas	Professor of Modern History, University of Amsterdam

WORKING GROUP

Mr Mark Baldwin	Project Manager, Benelux Region, British Council Netherlands
Ms Joanna de Jong-Keogh	Project and Partnerships Manager, Benelux Region, British Council Netherlands
Ms Manon de Ruijter	Project Manager, Benelux Region, British Council Netherlands
Mr Bob Fairweather	First Secretary, British Embassy The Hague
Mr Paul van Zijl	Economic and Social Affairs Officer, British Embassy The Hague
Ms Marie-Therese Hengst	Intern Political Section, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, London
Ms Emma Kay	Second Secretary Political Section, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, London
Mr Bert van der Lingen	Senior Advisor Western and Central Europe Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Stage, Grand Opera House

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