**IDPAD MID DECADE SUMMIT - BRISTOL ‘S ONE CITY APPROACH**

**ABSTRACT**

“The Western world was created off slavery, yet history talks about the explorer’s bravery, (…) For over hundred years they had free labour (…) the forever grateful people, tried to destroy their minds” (Hoo, 2011, p.18).

History teaches us that Bristol notoriously developed and prospered as a trading port, trafficking enslaved human beings within the British Isles, and later from the 16th century as a major cog in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The city is less well known for its role in abolitionist and anti-racist movements, although Frederick Douglass, who campaigned here against slavery, in the mid - 19th century, visited it. In the 20th century, the Bristol Bus Boycott took place in 1965, as the local bus company refused to employ Black people; and in 1980, the St Paul’s riots occurred against a backdrop of urban social conflict and discrimination as a result of Afrophobia/Afriphobia. Today, people of African descent account for approximately 6% of Bristol’s population, but remain more disadvantaged in education and employment, than in England and Wales as a whole, (CODE, 2017, p.1). Our under-representation in public sector workforces and leadership reflects wider inequality in the urbanism’s employment patterns; e.g., there are less than thirty Black teachers in the city's schools, although Black youth comprise approximately 30% of Bristol’s student population. These breaches of the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) have therefore inspired me to advocate the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD), since 2015. I employ Black Emancipatory Action Research (BEAR) theoretical and methodological approach to interpretivism combined with functional and methodological pragmatism, for community participation and community empowerment of the African diaspora (Akom, 2011); with my methodological aim being to create knowledge for understanding with impact.

**ENABLING IDPAD THROUGH LOCAL PLACE BASED LEADERSHIP**

**RECOGNITION**

Despite being the fastest growing urban economy outside of London, and rating amongst the most sustainable British cities, 16% of Bristol’s population live in the country’s 10% most deprived wards (McLeod, 2018). Some of the most deprived areas of the city have high levels of environmental pollution, and correlate with high percentage African diaspora communities; “the city faces issues of slavery, forced labour and crime, according to UK Crimestats and Anti-Slavery Partnership in (Carden-Noad et al, 2017). With this in mind, the African ConneXions Consortium (ACC) was established in summer 2016, after the electoral victory of the incumbent Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees and other councillors of African heritage, and addressed IDPAD in a conference hosted at the Malcolm X Community Centre, St Paul’s. ACC is comprised of local African diaspora led organisations including African Voices Forum (AVF), Bristol Somali Forum, and Right Direction. Its aims are to lobby in terms of best political, social and economic practice, and to inform IDPAD through self-determination and community empowerment in partnership with the city’s African diaspora communities.

In 2017, AVF hosted a conference themed “International Decade for People of African Descent”; since then Bristol’s African led social enterprise Cognitive Paths has included articles on IDPAD in the urbanism’s annual Black History Month publications. In 2018, the ACC drafted a plan for local civil society to recognise IDPAD in collaboration with the local authority and other stakeholders. Actions taken included, the Lord Mayor of Bristol Councillor Cleo Lake actively advocating thematic objectives of IDPAD, during her tenure of office between 2018 and 2019. UWE Bristol, one of the city’s two universities, held an annual Africa Week for several years, and actively sought to raise the profile of outstanding alumni and students of African descent e.g. in photographic exhibitions. Recent actions by Bristol City Council’s current administration, the Commission on Race Equality (CORE), the City Office, and SDG Alliance, also reflect growing awareness of disproportionate inequality experienced by African diaspora communities in relation to IDPAD’s other thematic objectives, i.e. justice and development. In that respect, SDG Target 10.3 is key to reduce inequality through non-discriminatory laws and policies.

**JUSTICE**

Local African led organisations such as Black South West Network (BSWN) play a role in the UK’s Hate Crime Strategy, and contributed to the National Action Plan on Hate Crime published in 2016. However, during the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism Professor Achiume’s visit to Bristol in May 2018, in response to her query, “What does race inequality look like?” a member of the audience replied: “Black people are 3-4 times more likely to be tasered, and 9 times more likely to be locked up!” The Justice for Judah Campaign illustrates one such example where a member of the African diaspora was tasered by a member of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, allegedly without good cause. Judah Adunbi who was tasered, worked as a liaison between the local community and the Constabulary. As an act of police violence, this illustrates a barrier to efforts at recruitment and other initiatives recommended for changing the African diaspora’s perspectives of the criminal justice system. Another audience member alleged “Avon and Somerset Constabulary targets the Somali community around female genital mutilation (FGM); Islamophobia is used to demonise whole groups of people; FGM law has been manipulated to the extent it is used for ethnic profiling; families have had their passports confiscated, and young girls been examined”.

With this in mind, claims have been made of a major drive to increase diversity in the workforce and leadership of Bristol’s criminal justice system has commenced. Notably, the Queen's Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Mrs Peaches Golding OBE, in collaboration with the Mayor’s Office and existing BAME Magistrates successfully engaged in an initiative that has increased the diversity of the local Magistracy earlier this year. Moreover, this exercise resulted in swearing in of one of the UK's most diverse (as regards ethnicity, religion, age and gender) group of Magistrates. The newly established Commission on Race Equality (CORE) spearheads the quest for equality and social justice, by aiming to be representative of Bristol’s diverse ethnicities; and encourages public debate on racial inequality and discrimination. In Summer 2019, I organised a Roundtable on Afriphobia in collaboration with IDPAD Coalition UK, which was hosted by UWE Bristol’s Social Sciences Research Group, and attended by place based representatives of the African diaspora, including the Deputy Lord Mayor, CORE and AVF, as well as Avon and Somerset Constabulary. Community leaders voiced some discontent on issues resulting from continuing Afriphobia/Afrophobia in Bristol, which highlight the importance of implementing Targets for SDG 16 for peace, justice and good governance.

**DEVELOPMENT**

Bristol’s One City Approach reflects awareness of links between IDPAD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; this represents an innovative attempt by local place based leaders, to map the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), into the urbanism’s blueprint for social, economic, and environmental development until 2050. I concur adopting a holistic and human rights based approach to the 2030 Agenda facilitates agreed themes of the One City Plan that include Health and Wellbeing, Learning and Skills, Connectivity, and the Environment. For example, a sample of organisations researched by the University of Bristol identified 100% of Targets for SDG 4 are relevant to the One City Plan; only 54% of local children received a ‘Pass’ grade in their secondary education highlighting socioeconomic disparities in the city (Carden-Noad et al, 2017, p.6).

In that regard Bristolian narratives from people of African descent include, “School to prison pipelines (exist) where black children are identified as trouble makers as soon as they begin schooling.” Moreover, the student attainment gap of approximately 25% overall between Black and White youth at all stages of education is growing cause for concern which local actors including Bristol’s educational institutions, the City Office and CORE are beginning to address. Notably, Bristolian youths of African descent highlighted better access to training opportunities and paid employment, amongst their aspirations at a conference held between them and local place-based leaders, in October 2019. Learning and Skills and Connectivity are therefore important themes in Bristol’s One City Plan that CORE is working to implement through an inclusive One Bristol Curriculum for the urbanism’s secondary schools. It is also claimed that efforts are being made by Bristol City Council to facilitate Health and Wellbeing of African diaspora youth, e.g. through collaboration with Bristol Somali Youth Project to tackle stigma and break down barriers. These are signs of progress towards inclusive achievement of sustainable development goals. However, the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Mrs Peaches Golding OBE acknowledges, “there is more that the City can do to increase the aspirations of some of its communities and individuals, to bridge inequalities in health and well-being, employment and housing and to provide a more sustainable future for all its residents” (African Voices Forum, 2018).

**CONCLUSION**

Bristol’s African diaspora communities face various challenges such as the state party’s lack of political will to implement IDPAD’s Programme of Action and thematic objectives, as well as fiscal austerity leading to the lack of resources. Nonetheless the resilience of local place based leaders from the African diaspora community working collaboratively with regional and international actors, has achieved some success towards IDPAD’s thematic objectives of recognition, justice, and development. Importantly, cross-sectoral collaboration between the public sector, private sector, and civil society as well as with academia has raised awareness of links between IDPAD and the SDGs. For example, policy makers recognise the importance of teaching culturally appropriate educational curricula in schools and higher educational institutions, in accordance with SDG 4. Moreover, the emergence of processes and structures such as Bristol’s One City Plan and Commission on Race Equality (CORE) demonstrates willingness of local actors to collaborate to address Afrophobia, which disproportionately marginalises and excludes people of African descent globally. CORE is an outcome of continuing work towards social justice, despite adversity posed by populist anti-immigrant nationalism and fiscal austerity, which highlights Targets for SDG 10 and SDG 16. In that regard, Bristol’s One City Approach including the One City Plan and One Bristol Curriculum, demonstrates cross-sectoral commitment to achieve inclusive social, economic and environmental development of the urbanism, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It therefore remains imperative that people of African descent continue to engage in community participation and community empowerment to fulfil universal human rights for all, through policy interventions and decision-making where necessary.

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