

Changing the narrative: Equity in HLS podcast 2

00:07

Hello everyone, welcome to another episode of our podcast series, Changing the Narrative, in which we're exploring and sharing insights from various human learning systems, examples of practice that have what we think are interesting and helpful insights into embedding equity practices and principles into work. My name is Onika Winston from Collaborate. And I'm Gabriel Eiksteler from Thempra Social Pedagogy. We hope this series is valuable for everyone interested in relational approaches in their work.

00:37

but particularly for practitioners who would like to better understand how human assistance practice can intersect with intentional equity and inclusion practices. In this episode, we're joined by Andy Crosby and Zahra Bazarganian-Phor, who have been involved in the Gateshead Community Bridge Builders Project. Before we begin, could you share a bit about Gateshead? Well, I'm originally from Iran, but I've come to Gateshead

01:06

1998 to do my master degree in University of Newcastle. And since then, I'm living in Gateshead and it becomes like my second home. And I feel like the Gateshead is a very multicultural place and I've got neighbors from all over the places and most of them are very nice and

01:33

I've made fantastic friends from local people and as well like from people who are like me, a migrant in Gateshead. It's a very vibrant, nice place to live in and very safe place. It's a lovely place. Thanks. tell us a little bit about the Gateshead Community Bridge Builders project. Well, before I start, my role as

02:02

Bridge Builder, I was part of an inquiry about collecting stories from people who living in Gateshead. So it was a good experience for me to know people in Gateshead deeper and better and sort of open my eyes to some of the areas that

02:29

repeated in all the stories that had been collected by me and the rest of the group. So when Bridge Builders offer came up and at first I wasn't, I mean despite being educated for so many years because of visa and work permit I couldn't really work. I was just volunteering here and there. So I've lost my confidence to some extent.

02:59

Despite having lots of experiences and I could say knowledge as well. I'm not claiming much but I didn't have the confidence to go forward jobs like Bridge Builders role but I've been kindly nominated by two of the people I really looked up to in the community, Dr. Rich Gibbons and

03:29

because Akumar MBE, who's my line manager, director of the Gem Arts, who has hosted me as a bridge builder. So yeah, the bridge builder role was giving me the confidence to stand up for what I always believed and what I always felt that should be done for the community and the people who were living around me. That's amazing. Thanks.

03:58

Andy, I wonder if you can tell us a bit about what was the rationale for having a community bridge builders project and how did equity come into that equation? Yeah, sure. The gates of community bridge builders grew out of the Lang Kelly Chase Foundation's place inquiry. So Lang Kelly Chase was working with a few places around England and they were increasingly aware that being based in London,

04:27

They couldn't really make decisions wisely about how to deploy money in places they knew nothing about. So that led to them experimenting with devolving decision-making over their money to the places that they were working with. And Gateshead ended up being one of them. So in conversation with Kelly Chase, they asked if we wanted to set up this devolved decision-making group. And we did.

04:54

And we worked for a year long process of the transfer of the delegation of authority from the LNKB to this group of people in Gateshead, which struck me the whole time as a really exciting opportunity. And then once we completed that administrative process, when we had the devolved authority, then we had a conversation about what do we want to do? We've got this resource, what do we want to do with it? And people didn't know. And that really confused me.

05:21

threw me into a bit of a tailspin really, because I said we've been working for about a year to get to this point, meeting regularly, exploring things about systems, things about Gateshead. That led us to the insight that we didn't have the right people around the table, that if this was going to be about Gateshead, that the people in communities that make up Gateshead had to be the decision makers. And the group at that point was more made of people working in the Gateshead system.

05:51

people living in Gateshead. So we came up with an idea of creating funded positions for local people, specifically people from marginalized communities in Gateshead. And then we went out looking for those people. And this is how we found Zara and the other people like Zara. We went out through our networks to people who are well connected in different communities and we said, we're looking for people who are known and trusted in their community.

06:20

who are active in their community, who hold a lot of relationships in their community. Don't need to hold any kind of formal position or any formal skills. We're looking for lovely humans. And then we held a meeting that people were invited to, and we just had a chat with people saying, this is the sort of thing that we're trying to do. This is what we think it will involve, but

it's really about you stepping in and shaping it once you're in the role. Does that sound like something that you're interested in?

06:50

And we were really pleased when Zara and other people like Zara said, yes, that sounds really interesting. We really want to be part of it. Great. So Zara, tell us a bit more about what motivated you to be part of it. What was the thing that captured your imagination there? Well, first of all, let me mention this bit now that Andy has mentioned about the beginning of Bridge Builder hiring or employing people.

07:19

I've done a lot of volunteering, and I've done a lot of courses here and there, just to fill my time, obviously I couldn't just sit down at home. And, but I don't have a CV. Still don't have a CV. And when the job came up and I was thinking, okay, that's probably like other jobs I won't be able to go forward because I don't have a CV and I don't remember what I've done and haven't written them anywhere. So, yeah.

07:48

Probably I'm not gonna go further with that. the beauty of that was that when we went for the event and I felt like how wonderful this group will be. And I was telling myself like there's so many fantastic people in that event that if they start working as a bridge builder, they will definitely make the changes that I.

08:16

always wanted to happen in the community and me being part of it that would be my dream job come true. Not being part of it, I'm happy that at last someone's starting it at some point. And then at the end of the event, they said like, if we want to apply for the job, there were only three questions that we had to answer. And we could have even answered that in our own language, which was

08:43

It was brilliant, you know, I was thinking like, I've never seen anywhere like people ask you, okay, be comfortable enough to answer the questions with all your heart, with your language, because obviously with second language, you cannot really express yourself as much as you can express it in the first language. So, well, I did that and I pour my heart out on the three questions that came up.

09:12

and I was lucky that I've been invited for the interview and the interview was as well very informal and I was talking practically to people that I knew and I didn't feel, I felt nervous but not that nervous as you go to a formal interview. yeah, starting as a bridge builder role obviously because for so long I was just supporting people and getting told what to do.

09:42

you have to do this one. So in the beginning it was a bit, I felt quite lost because sometimes we got was asking me, okay, what's your plan for, know, what are you going to do? said, well, you have to tell me and then I follow whatever you tell me. I said, no, Zara,

you're a builder, you have to have some plan and you have to work based on your plan and things. So it took me a few months.

10:10

and a lot of support from VKAS and the rich. Until I found my, you know, I found, I believed that it's a different new job, I could say, like different, way of approaching things. It's giving me, which I am just a normal person from the community, the authority to act or

10:39

do something regarding what I feel is necessary and what I feel is needed in the community. And that's why I felt like as a migrant, felt like language was one of the biggest barriers for people. So I focused on language barriers since then and I'm happy that I had the chance and I'm happy that I've been called to be there.

11:07

as a voice for the community that for so many years I felt like I'd been ignored. That sounds amazing and really inspiring actually. I wonder Andy, what were some of the things you were doing there to create an environment where people felt invited, involved and where some of those barriers like asking people to apply in a more formal way with the CV and all the rest of it.

11:35

All of these would have been barriers that would have meant someone as amazing as Zara would not have been part of the project. Yeah, as I said earlier, we went out looking for people. What we didn't do is design a role and ask people to show up with particular qualifications and demonstrate technical skills or anything like that. We wanted to find people because, as we said, as I said, this work needs to be representative of the people and communities.

12:04

who make up Gateshead. So what we did is we tried to approach the whole thing as people and recognizing that the very people that we want to reach, the very people that we want to work with, as Zara has said, English might not be their first language. Okay, we all know that applying for a job is stressful at the best of times. So how can we take the pressure off people? The thing about

12:33

inviting people to apply in their own language. We also invited people to apply through spoken form rather than through written form if they wanted. Nobody took us up on those offers. Everybody applied in writing and in English. But what a number of people said to us is just putting the offer out there showed people that we were thinking about them. It showed people that we were doing things differently. And that removed some of those barriers that the tsar has spoken about.

13:01

Zara has said to me a number of times, a number of spaces that have these things been in place, she wouldn't have applied. If we'd asked for a CV, she wouldn't have applied. If we hadn't put that stuff about language, she wouldn't have applied. So it's really trying to take a

human approach to it and also also be human ourselves in those situations. One of the things that we talk about about what this work is, there are two sort of central tenets. One is about extending the range and number of people who get to participate in decision making.

13:31

The other thing is also about changing the ways in which decisions are made, changing the ways in which power is exercised. And what that means is very, very relational, very, very human to human. Part of how this work operates is that we don't have any sort of a normal line management structure. What we have is a team of human beings who are working together, trying to do some really tough stuff in really tough conditions, but doing it together as people and

14:01

The emotional connection and emotional support that exists in the work is, I mean, it's just beautiful and really powerful. I wanted to go back to what you were saying a little bit about power, Andy. You talked about how it was important to look at power when it came to decision making. What did you do to make it possible to be able to shift that power? mean, Zara's touched on certainly the first point here already. When we talk to the bridge builders about

14:29

When we talked to the people who are interested in applying to become a bridge builder about this work, as I said, people were really excited about it. It sounded amazing. sounded like Zara's described it as her dream for community. When people then had gone through the recruitment process and been offered the job and then started the job, things were very, very different. When it had moved from being like a hypothetical opportunity to being something concrete that people are in, and now you have power, now you can figure out like what to do with your community.

14:59

That was overwhelming to people. So my experience there was a number of people basically saying, Andy, tell me what to do. Andy, tell me what to do. Andy, play the traditional boss here. And it wasn't just me, but because of the role that I play, a lot of that came my way. So one of the steps that we took is just having to resist that. Because people were struggling, really, really struggling, it's very easy to

15:29

out of love, out of care, want to take away people's struggles. That would have been the wrong thing to do. Because this whole idea about shifting power is finding people like Zara and trusting her and the connections that she have in the community to surface and do what's best for the community. So I had to shut the hell up there. Of course, I've got ideas, right? Of course. But I had to sit on my hands at that point, resist that temptation which

15:57

which is inside me as much as it is coming from outside me and all of the stuff that I've been encultured to believe about my role and what good leadership looks like. But just then also respond by reassuring the bridge builders that you'll get there. There is no hurry. So the gift

of time at that point. One of the things that there wasn't was you have to have a fully worked out plan within the next three months. It was explore

16:27

build relationships, use the relationships that you've got, talk to your community, trust the process, we trust that things will emerge and things emerge at different rates for different people. Interestingly, and Zara correct me if I'm wrong about this, but I think that you were actually one of the first people to develop an idea with your community about what to do, whereas for others, took more time. Yes, I was one, I think some of them had ideas, but obviously,

16:57

took them slightly longer time to... But for me, was years that I had that in my heart. And I really felt like how much it's needed, how much the community needs the support and how much community needs someone to do something for them regarding what I'm doing now. And it was always a pain here because I love to help, but I felt like, okay, if I knock on the door of the...

17:25

people, if I say like, how can I help you? say, who are you? Don't, you're just a stranger. We don't trust you. But being part of this role and gaining the confidence and knowing that I have a team behind me to support me when, I don't know myself, when I need extra support gave me the confidence that like now I can say my name, not in

17:54

not only my neighborhood, like wherever I go, because I work with asylum seekers and refugees. I mean, I feel so overwhelmed with the welcoming hug and hello that I get from the communities that I go to. like I could say, like people now know I'm someone that I could be a voice for what they need. And if I couldn't do anything for them,

18:23

I would definitely help them to get to the right people to be heard or to do some action regarding what they need support with. So I had that in me a few years ago, but I didn't have the confidence or I didn't have the power to stand there and say, I'm here, give me your hand, I help you. see, like being a bridge builder, being part of that team, sitting at that table,

18:53

All of us sit around it every two weeks and knowing that all of us have equal level of right to talk and to discuss what we believe in or what we want to do gave me that confidence and that power to stand taller for my community, for the people that I can understand and I can feel what they are going through. That was great. Thank you, Zahra.

19:20

Would you say that you saw a shift in your approach when you had more power? Did you see a shift in terms of how you were with the community and was there any impact on the community itself when that shift happened? Well, I was always there, but I never approached them because I felt like, you know, I'm not the right person. But being in the

role, I could go to them and I could say, I'm here if there is anything you need to discuss with or I'm here as well.

19:50

Yes, a few times, like their approach to me was like, remember one of my neighbors, we've been neighbor for many years. And I always thought they are like perfect family, you know, but you don't know what's going on inside everyone's house. And one day she came and knocked on my door and said, sister, I want to speak to you. And I said, yeah, of course. And then I invited her in and she, you know, she

20:19

her heart out about the stress she is going through about what social worker approached them. And she was so scared about what we all know what social workers could do, but not all of them are bad. But the fear that comes to families when they hear about social worker and the letter they receive from social worker. So she started talking to me and it was about weekend.

20:45

And I just told her, I just reassured her that this letter is nothing, they're not gonna take your children away, definitely they're not gonna do anything. I am here, I will come back early from my work if in case something happened, I will be there to talk on your behalf. And she felt so relieved when she was going out of my house and she said, thanks God you've been here and I discussed it with you. I was so scared about it.

21:12

you know, this letter and the people who coming next week to visit us and things. So, I mean, they know that now they know that they can come to us and they can trust us and we can do something for them if, you know, if they feel like they don't have the power themselves to, you know, be there for their own rights, you know, so that, I mean, I should say like, I feel I'm so grateful for,

21:42

For the, it's not power, I said, like for the confidence I've received through this role, that now I'm not afraid to, you know, show my hand of help to people who need it, you know, like now I don't say like, oh, I'm different, or what do they say? I say, I'm a human and the other person is human, so I feel like,

22:10

I need at this point to just go forward and give that person my hand. Just say like, are you all right? Can I do anything for you? Before probably I would have looked at that situation. My heart was shredded and I just had to pass because I didn't feel the confidence and the power that I can be there for this person. This person is another human being. What could be wrong with that? We are here to help each other. It doesn't matter.

22:40

If I'm not covered, she's covered. If I'm from this religion, she is from another religion. I am a human and she's, or he is a human. So I just, you I'm here for you. Come on. If there's anything I can't do for you, let me know. You cannot understand sometimes the power of

smile. You know, like I've heard from asylum seekers that say like, I felt so lonely. And when I was walking in streets, no one smiled to me.

23:09

Please smile to us when you see us. You see, like that smile can make the connection and can bring hope to some people's heart and life, you see. So now I am proud to say that I am in the situation that as a human being, I have the power, the human power to be there for another human being. So that happened because of the role.

23:36

It's amazing to hear you talk in such a passionate and such an empowered way, though. I think it really shows that it's kind of almost like you feel liberated, kind of unburdened. And I think that's really important to keep in mind. You were talking about like that, power of a smile and all these little gestures that we are able to show to each other as humans when we feel like we're within an environment

24:05

where we can have that confidence, where we're encouraged to do that, where we're given that sense of empowerment. So I think that's just a really nice practical example of just how much it can mean. I think there's, there is also something there that I remember from your example of practice that you were talking about sort of this metaphor of, it's not just about adding more seats to a table and giving specific people

24:33

a seat around the table, we need a different table. We need to build a new table together. I think that kind of very much speaks to both that real practical sense of like, we want people to feel like they're part of this from the very beginning, from the very outset. But also, we need to do things in a way that we still need a table where decisions are made. It's just that we need to co-design them.

25:01

I think your language of liberation is really important there, Gabriel. Because the thing about more seats at the existing table is it would be trapping people like Zara. It would be requiring people like Zara to make the same sort of evidence-based arguments in the same sort of way and to show up in the same sort of professional, which can often mean dehumanized way. Those old tables, Zara couldn't talk about the power of a smile.

25:31

And certainly what I hear, and I love listening to Zara talk, is about liberation. And for me, it's about actually like returning to how we're meant to be as people, how we're meant to engage with each other, and just getting rid of all of the nonsense that gets put on us by what we think professional means, how we think we have to show up in any sort of decision-making environment.

25:59

So what did you learn then about centering equality, equity and inclusion through that human learning systems approach? And what ways has HLS kind of helped you promote equity? It's a little difficult to make the bridge between the two things because I think the language of

human learning systems, even the language of equity, it can be quite highbrow language. And we don't use that language specifically.

26:28

in the work of the bridge builders. in terms of, certainly in terms of the three parts of HLS. So the human part has been coming across loud and clear in everything that we've been saying. The way the bridge builders was designed was about finding people and empowering them to be the wonderful humans that they are. The systemic part, I think, was very much about trying to center the diverse communities of Gateshead. You they're parts of the system which often

26:57

have no voice and have no power. And we probably don't have the time or space to go into this right now, but it's really wonderful where we are at this point in time. So the fourth year of the Bridge Builders experiment, where there is a growth of different community of intersectionality of different communities actually coming together and doing stuff together. So a very, very concrete example of that is we've had some wonderful work in the deaf communities in the Northeast.

27:24

which culminated in a Deaf Arts Festival, the YI Festival, which was in November last year. Great festival, entirely designed by young deaf creatives. Alongside that, we've had work in the African communities of the Northeast, which is very much centered around sports. And what we see right now is those two things are coming together. And the African communities and the deaf communities are looking at how they can do sports together as a way of connecting as human beings.

27:54

It's really exciting. It's entirely unplanned. So much of it is just organic, spontaneous. It comes from the people. I don't want to pretend for a second that there is any sort of strategy here, other than if we empower people to be themselves, amazing things will happen. I think the learning part here very much shows up in the way that

28:18

we do things and that everybody in the room is enabled to do things like it speaks to that like like we don't have a strategy have to fit into it. It's about experimenting. So with with Zara with the other bridge builders they've tried stuff and they've seen what what works and if things don't work that's fine. And even if things do work they may have a time limit in which case they may need to evolve into something else or we may want them to evolve into something else. One of the things that we're very clear on is that

28:48

We're not in the business of service delivery. So things don't need to stand still. Things need to evolve in reflection of how we are all evolving as people, how the relationships are evolving and strengthening. And that for me is fundamentally a learning approach. I have a question around what you were saying about the emergent work in, know, people leading being the strategy and seeing what comes out and kind of following what works. Was that a comfortable?

29:18

place to be in? How was actually doing it in practice? Well, as Andy said, because for myself, I should say, I was not really working. I was not part of the normal. I was very much marginalized, I could say, when it came to the usual table that you were talking, Gabriel.

29:45

So I was not counted in that table at all. I was there, but they didn't ask me my opinion. That's why I always had a lot of opinions towards what I was supporting people with. And it always broke my heart, but I felt, OK, I'm nobody here. I'm not the main person who runs the group. So.

30:08

Anyway, you know, like I've started my role to focus on language barrier. And I knew that people who come to the country for the first six months, they are not allowed to go to college. Or some of the people who were running English classes, their funding didn't agree to have people who are here less than six months to attend those classes. And these people were the, I don't know how to say that.

30:34

They needed to learn English because they needed to communicate. They provided them shelters, food, but how can they communicate? They didn't provide communication skills for them despite they had time and they needed that as much as they needed food and shelter. After four years of working with asylum seekers from hotel,

31:03

and through Bridge Builder supporting them with learning some English classes. I couldn't change the system because I don't know why, probably there's something that doesn't benefit them if they give such opportunity to people. Okay, as soon as you get to the hotel, there are some sessions that you could join and learn some English.

31:33

I don't know why they don't do that. But what I did as a bridge builder and being in different meetings, being with different people, it become their voice. people didn't know that they couldn't go to college for the first six months. People didn't know that they only get nine pounds per week per person, which is nothing, absolutely nothing. It doesn't cover anything for them.

32:02

If they are running English classes, they should make sure that they get transport covered as well. So after the first year I was running the group, so many different community centers, so many different churches started to run their English classes. And I could say 90 % of them covered the cost of the travel for them. I couldn't change the system, but I did that little bit of step.

32:31

that helps them to have the opportunity to go to different groups, to different places, to improve their communication skills because they're parents. At the end of the day, if you're

parent, know, like children looks up to you, but if every time you can't speak English and someone comes to your door and you turn to your child,

32:55

your child has to translate it for you, next time the child won't look at you as the hero or you know someone that you know better than me so I look up to you. They see the parental place will be demolished, you see. There's so many things that language barrier is just a name but it has so much root under that and it could cause so many

33:24

so many things which we don't want to happen in families, know, in community as well, you see. I just wanted to come in to just expand on what Zara said in answer to your question, Anika, about how easy or hard was it? An interesting thing about Zara being here part of this conversation is Zara was one of the people who found it easiest to work in this way and the bridge builders who found it hardest to work in this way.

33:52

are the ones with the most experience in professional institutions. So for example, one of our bridge builders previously worked in local government and everybody found it hard when they stepped in as I've already covered because it is quite different. But Zara found her feet within a couple of months, maybe three months. And then all of the work that Zara has described built from that and evolved from that and snowballed. And it's heartbreaking, Zara, to hear you say that you haven't changed the system.

34:22

Because what you're trying to do is like unpick the hostile environment policy. And that's, that's a massive thing, but you are changing the system. You just described an example of where the English classes around Gateshead and now providing covering transport costs. Because you've taken that human perspective. And there's something for me really fascinating about, about Zara's experience and the other bridge builders experiences that actually Zara describe yourself as having been marginalized, not having held professional roles. One of the things that I see.

34:50

is that you weren't institutionalized in a way other bridge builders were, which made it easier for you to step into this human way of doing things. Several of our other bridge builders have got much more professional experience than Zara did, and they struggled because there was a massive amount of unlearning to do. There's a voice in your head going, it's not safe to do things that way. We don't do it that way. We have to do it this way. Zara didn't have that voice. Zara just had her voice.

35:20

I think it speaks to this really interesting point about like, a lot of us are really unhappy with many aspects of the system, what we often describe as the system, but we feel like we can't change it because it's too big and it's kind of not within our sort of powers to change it. And yet I think Sarah, exactly what you did was kind of, found a way to just use your agency to make the system a bit more humane.

35:50

to find ways to kind of say like okay the formal system is still as it is and still not ideal but actually we can find ways to complement that with the stuff that makes the human difference that's very much kind of grounded in what's important to the people in my community what might make the difference and how can we kind of add more to the system to kind of make sure that that happens. I think there's also something really beautiful there about

36:18

the importance of those diverse perspectives because Zara, you weren't coming from working with the system. You weren't kind of limited by the system perspective. And so it allows you to think outside of the box and to come up with solutions that perhaps someone who has been working in the system wouldn't see just because of the fact they might have those blinders on created by that environment. I'm curious for the both of you, what are...

36:44

some specific examples that you feel like others can learn from your work in terms of how to be more equitable in their own work? Well, I don't know what exactly to say, but

37:01

Being one of those people made me feel their pain better, I guess, you see, like, that's why like having people from within the communities that that you want to work with. Probably they see some little angles that you as an outside of the that specific community won't see or won't feel so.

37:30

I think like being a migrant myself and felt isolated for so many years and despite I could speak English, say like my English was not that bad, I could communicate but still I felt isolation because obviously I had no family around here but my husband and my son and I felt like my son was very much

37:59

lonely, like didn't have many friends, wanted to go to stay overnight with friends from school, but I couldn't let because I didn't know them. And as well, I couldn't ask them to come over because I felt like they might see me as a foreigner who they don't trust probably at the end of the day, you know, so I didn't feel confident to approach them, to invite them even to my place. So I felt isolated and lonely for so many years, not only me, my son as well. So

38:29

The pain that I've been through and the help that I've got from some other communities that by chance I've got to know about them gave me the experience of like what the people who just come to the country go through, you know, like, I don't know if it's good enough for your question, but I felt like if I wasn't in those...

38:57

moments of isolation and loneliness and I didn't get that pain in me. It wouldn't bring the light out of me to be a kinder person, to understand people, to tell them I've been there,

don't worry, it's not the end of the day, it's not the end of the light. In a few years time, two, three years time,

39:24

you will be different, life will be much better, know, don't worry, it's hard, but you can get through because we all have been in the same situation. And they trust me because they see me as one of them, you see, they see me as a person that is not just talking, have been in the same situation, you see. I think you absolutely nailed that Zahra, like the thing that I heard there, the thing you said right at the start.

39:51

is you have to let yourself feel other people's pain. And the thing that you said at the end there is the way into that is to actually to allow yourself to feel your own pain. I think the route into equity here in all of this, it's about emotion, which connects to like the human way of doing things. There's no way we can be more equitable if we don't understand what other people are going through, what they're feeling. And we can't actually engage on a human way with what other people are feeling. We don't also start by being honest about what it is that we're feeling.

40:21

Which connects back to, know, the building a new table, the more human way of doing things. Yeah. What you were saying about how your own lived experience allowed you to form connections of trust with people so that they were able to come to you as a community bridge builder, and then you were able to better support them. Yeah. Very inspiring.

40:41

Andy, what's something from your perspective that you hope others will take on board or will experiment with to be more equitable? I mean, a big thing about what we've done here, it comes back to the issue of power. So often when we talk about communities, when organizations are trying to work with communities, it's very much on a sort of consultation model, but the institution retains the power.

41:12

The big thing that we've done in the Gates of the Community Bridge Builders is the decision-making power over chunk of money sits with Zara and her Bridge Builder colleagues. That sort of thing is tremendously important because it's only by doing things actually in a bold and different way that's enabled all of the great stuff that you've heard Zara talk about.

41:40

We could quite easily have retained power in a more traditional way. So Zara could have an idea and I could make decisions about what to do with it. But then we're filtering it through this and he's gesturing to my head, my face, like all of this, all of the stuff that I carry. And that's not equitable. That's just, that's maintaining the status quo. So in terms of a point about how we'd be more equitable, we have to get serious.

42:08

about shifting power, particularly decision making power, to people who are different from the sorts of people who currently make decisions and allowing people to make decisions in a different way to the way decisions are normally made. Yeah, great point. And I think your example of practice really shows that amazing things happen when we take that seriously, when we actually believe in

42:36

the power of communities to first of all know what's the issues that matter, what might make the difference and then to also have the resources to do something about it. And it's been just a beautiful conversation with you guys about just the creativity, the imagination, the confidence, the kind of self-belief that comes from it. And I think it shows very much that community isn't just a place where you live. Community is about

43:05

the people that come together, that support each other, that build their collective identity about it, and that start making all these connections with others in their same locality. But as you say, think we need to really take that seriously, not just play around with it because it sounds like a nice thing. We need to be serious about it requires us to show some vulnerability, and that perhaps includes both the emotional vulnerability

43:34

to be human, but it also includes the kind of almost financial vulnerability in terms of to put some resources into this, to believe that when we trust the process, actually amazing things will blossom, will flourish that we wouldn't have expected. We couldn't possibly have foreseen because we don't know what happens when great people with lots of ideas, real passion and lived experience come together to kind of make a difference.

44:04

So thank you very much to both of you. I'm afraid that's really all we've got time for. But before we kind of wind up the conversation, I just want to sort of give you the chance. Is there anything that you feel like we haven't touched upon, anything that you really wanted to get off your chest? I said in one sentence, if the powers, if those people empowered,

44:32

put the power aside and become a human being, just human being, not with the titles and things. Definitely, world would be a better place to live. And Zara has summed it up for both of us. Thank you very much. Thank you so much for being part of it. And thank you to our listeners for tuning in.

44:55

Make sure to check out the rest of the series as we continue to explore more examples of human learning systems practice from projects and ideas around equity. So until next time, take care.