Conflict Prevention in The Hague and the Metropolitan Area

2015-2016 Phase I
We hope Intersections provides an insight into our work and sufficient encouragement to go beyond our front window by engaging with the Institute in other ways.
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Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague

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Foreword

Cities today have become more important in maintaining order, peace, security, and justice. In a world where most of the global population now lives in urban areas, cities need to find responses to rapid change. Issues that were traditionally the prerogative of national governments, such as social cohesion, integration and counter-terrorism, have moved up the agendas of municipalities.

As the 2015 final report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance argues, the gaps in national and interregional governance are creating new spaces for cities as first-line actors in responding to not only local but also global challenges that include climate change, poverty and migration. They are therefore emerging as pivotal actors in a devolved landscape of urban governance.

In these ways, The Hague is an excellent example, with its unique constellation of international courts and organizations while also home to the Association of Dutch Municipalities. This requires a careful balance of responsibilities, first to residents of the city and then internationally as the city of peace and justice. While this dual role brings challenges, it also generates important opportunities for innovation that form part of The Hague’s distinctive social and cultural fabric. Therefore, I welcome this study that, as part of an international research project on the role of cities in conflict prevention, has selected The Hague as its first case.

The study is also important as it applies, for the first time in a local context, some of the principles of The Hague Approach, which was developed and launched by The Hague Institute in 2013.

The Hague Approach seeks to assist peacebuilders with their significant and often difficult role of creating sustainable peace.

This study in particular adopts and adds new knowledge to The Hague Approach principles of conflict prevention, private sector engagement, a network response, and the need to invest in strategic communication. For the latter principle, the study reveals the potential of education, youth, and social media in conflict prevention.”
network response, and the need to invest in strategic communication. For the latter principle, the study reveals the potential of education, youth, and social media in conflict prevention.

The following report presents several insightful findings, which include the need to: invest in education as a platform to instill citizenship; connect different stakeholder groups; and to raise greater awareness of the roles and responsibilities of institutions and actors within The Hague.

The findings are grounded in a participatory, inclusive process of consultation, which has been designed and facilitated by The Hague Institute. This process enabled a cross-section of stakeholders to reflect upon and critically assess their roles and contributions to conflict prevention in the city. In this way it brought together a unique community of practice committed to sharing expertise and strengthening cooperation.

These values are indispensable for cities given the complex demands and challenges that they must grapple with. Where the future can bring uncertainty, instilling a shared sense of history can strengthen one’s identity and sense of belonging at the city level. The Hague, with its heterogonous mixture of national, ethnic, cultural and religious groups, has made notable achievements in terms of inclusion and integration.

Nevertheless, challenges inevitably persist and we can never do too much or start too soon when it comes to conflict prevention. It is in this spirit that I both support this report and its recommendations to strengthen the responsibility for peace within The Hague.

Jozias van Aartsen
Mayor of The Hague
Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to present the main findings of the project, Conflict Prevention in The Hague and the Metropolitan Area, Phase I, March 2015 to March 2016. The project was led by The Hague Institute for Global Justice (The Hague Institute) and its purpose was to facilitate dialogue among key representatives of institutions and groups to determine how to strengthen the prevention of violent conflict and the constructive management of non-violent conflict in The Hague. The process, comprising a series of participatory workshops and working groups, critically addressed:

- the changing nature and threat of violence;
- the best practices, demands and challenges of designing and delivering preventive approaches;
- the current priority areas for policymakers and practitioners; and
- a set of recommendations and actionable measures for strengthening policy and practice.

Project Rationale

Cities face complex challenges in helping to ensure a stable, functioning and peaceful urban environment. States are increasingly relying on their cities to ensure these provisions given the global trends in rapid urbanization and the demand for decentralized systems of governance. In particular, the relationship between city municipalities and citizens is paramount in governance, especially in addressing the many difficult threats and obstacles, but also opportunities that cities and their inhabitants experience.

While The Hague is a stable, peaceful and functioning environment, it nonetheless encounters the underlying challenges that affect, in different ways, most cities. It remains susceptible to a range of pressures and tensions that can stem from the distribution of resources, migration, employment-unemployment, and policing. The strong reputation of the city and its worldwide status as the city of international peace and justice also bring uniquely high expectations.

In this dynamic context, it is necessary to maintain a preventive and proactive approach to addressing violent conflict and to managing conflict constructively and peacefully with a view to finding sustainable solutions.

Summary of Process & Main Findings

This project was designed as a pilot, delivered by the Conflict Prevention team at The Hague Institute. It forms part of a collaborative international research project that aims to understand how municipal and other local governance institutions in a selection of stable and fragile cities can prevent and mitigate violent conflict and to better understand the challenges they face. During the 12 months of the pilot, almost 100 representatives of the municipality, police, health sector, education, the private sector, civil society, youth, students, and academia, among other stakeholders, actively engaged in a guided and iterative process comprising:

- An initial consultative group meeting (25th March 2015);
- Two roundtable discussions (4th June and 22nd October 2015);
- A series of meetings involving several small working groups (July – September 2015);
- A final consultative group meeting (15th December 2015), which met to review and refine the findings; and
- A stakeholder meeting (9th of March 2016), to validate the recommendations and prioritize the actionable measures.

In March 2015, The Hague Institute formed and gathered a consultative group representing key stakeholder groups in the city.

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1 Hereafter, ‘The Hague’
2 See Appendix A for a complete list of participants
This meeting presented the initiative, and refined the design of the dialogue process and its objectives. The first roundtable, hosted in June 2015, involved a large group of stakeholders. Participants discussed the main manifestations of violent conflict within The Hague and identified aspects of best practices. During the summer, the same participants established working groups based on their professional roles and expertise, which enabled critical reflection on their unique contributions to conflict prevention, the challenges, and the priorities at the city and community levels.

A second roundtable in October 2015 provided an opportunity to build collectively upon the working groups by comparing perspectives and exploring common priorities, challenges, and possible ways forward. The roundtable discussions concluded that ultimately there is an urgent need for a change of mind-set on conflict prevention among the range of stakeholders. Further, participants agreed that greater awareness-raising should be the first step toward the design of more effective conflict prevention strategies, where stakeholders can critically review their attitudes and behavior but also question their common assumptions and biases.

During the final consultative group meeting in December 2015, the senior representatives produced a set of three recommendations and actionable measures, which the final stakeholder meeting validated in March 2016. The endorsed recommendations include:

- To improve communication and promote the responsible use of language among institutions and other local leaders;
- To understand the changing nature of conflict and to adopt tailored responses;
- To recognize interdependence among institutions and actors and to build networks for prevention.

To implement these recommendations, participants prioritized the following three actionable measures:

1. To invest in education to promote active citizenship and the use of schools as platforms to encourage critical thinking and debate;
2. To strengthen dialogue among street level police and young people; and
3. To further involve businesses in community-based activities and initiatives.

In bringing these three measures together, there was consensus on the need to integrate conflict prevention responses at the city and community levels and to foster increased cooperation among formal and informal actors.

Structure of Report & Acknowledgements

This report comprises four sections in order to summarize both the background and the findings of the project. Section 1 captures some of the stakeholder perspectives on conflict prevention in terms of the main approaches and challenges faced by the relevant stakeholder groups. Section 2 presents the main findings, followed by the full recommendations and actionable measures in Section 3. The report closes with some final observations and a set of next steps which would form Phase II of the project, 2016 – 2017.

The Hague Institute would like to express its utmost gratitude to all those who took the time to participate in this project. The enthusiasm to share insights in an open and constructive manner and to take ownership of the process demonstrates the strong commitment of institutions and individuals to reflective practice and collaboration. At the same time, the experiences and dedication of the participants remind us that The Hague’s contributions to peace and justice globally emanate from within the city as much as from its role internationally. In this sense, its responsibility for ensuring conflict prevention is both inward and outward facing.
1. Perspectives within The Hague on Conflict Prevention

This section builds upon contributions from senior representatives of the municipality, the police, health and education sectors, academia, civil society, businesses, youth, and students. It summarizes their perspectives on:

1. The dynamics of violent conflict and conflict within The Hague;
2. Existing structures and approaches to prevent conflict; and
3. The responsibilities of the different actors in conflict prevention.

While not exhaustive, the overview below demonstrates the complexity of conflict dynamics in The Hague and explores how existing conflict prevention efforts and approaches can be strengthened.

1.1 Causes and dynamics of conflict in The Hague

The discussions facilitated by this project frequently raised the structural inequalities between and within the quarters of the municipality, which were perceived to result often in alienation and the exclusion of certain groups in communities. There was consensus among the different stakeholder groups that it is essential to grasp the social dynamics at the level of the neighborhoods in order to fully understand conflict trends. These observations showed conflict does not take place in a vacuum but is instead rooted and manifested in everyday environments like the neighborhood, the square, or other places where local communities meet. More specifically, participants argued that conflict in the city is embedded in local power struggles, socio-economic differences, patterns of exclusion, and historical and contemporary processes of migration.

In further defining the main causes of conflict, health experts underlined how impaired health in the context of social deprivation (discrimination, lack of education and occupation) may lead to alienation and in the worst case to an “I have nothing to lose” mind-set. Minor local triggers can then increase tensions, insecurity, powerlessness and lead to aggression. The latter can eventually find a target (e.g. police, immigrants, mosques, and churches). Experts in policing concurred that the underlying drivers of conflict in the municipal context are the “alienation and exclusion” of certain individuals and groups.

Ethnic discrimination and socio-economic inequalities, among other structural factors, were raised as the main causes of alienation, which can be triggered by rejection in the job market, police violence, unfair representations in the media, and exclusion from the political decision-making process.

Representatives of civil society similarly pointed to a range of economic, social and cultural barriers to participation among many residents. There was emphasis on the economic factors, in particular the combination of high prices and low income which have restricted opportunities, increased frustration and led to unhealthy and antisocial lifestyle choices.

The alienation of youth was highlighted as a particular conflict risk. Representatives in the dialogue process suggested that increasingly some youth, whose identities are formed in the Netherlands, do not experience a sense of belonging to Dutch society and institutions. Some feel unrepresented by local and national politicians and are at times demonized by ‘mainstream’ media.

3 The Hague Institute is grateful to contributions from Ms. Ineke Bakker, Mr. Steven Broers, Dr. Erik Hoenkamp, Dr. David Laws, Ms. Alice van der Mark, Dr. Nanke Verloo, Mr. Richard Vriesde, and Mr. Johan de Wit. We also thank Mr. Thom Almeida for his assistance in compiling this section.
Representatives from the education sector also underlined the importance of understanding better the emotions of young people especially in schools where some suffer from anxiety, fear and frustration, which can eventually result in destructive attitudes if not addressed.

Discussions raised disruption, through differences in religious and/or ethnic backgrounds between long-time residents and newcomers, as a conflict factor. At the same time, academics in the group drew upon their previous research on social interactions in The Hague to argue that conflicts not only challenge local order and security but also provide an opportunity to engage with others whose narratives are usually unfamiliar and can therefore promote interaction and eventually engagement. Accordingly, it can be the lack of engagement and involvement by different stakeholders in a society that produces conflict and sometimes violence. Interestingly, representatives of businesses agreed with this observation although from a different perspective.

As an example, this group recognized that businesses tend to focus on security from their ‘doorstep inwards’, and then rely on government to take care of the safety of citizens and the more ‘outward facing’ public spaces. The distinction between ‘being secure’ and ‘feeling secure’ must be taken into account.

“The discussions facilitated by this project frequently raised the structural inequalities between and within the quarters of the municipality, which were perceived to result often in alienation and the exclusion of certain groups in communities.”

1.2. Current initiatives and approaches to conflict prevention

The process of dialogue revealed a range of ongoing initiatives and approaches to conflict prevention in The Hague along with reflections of best policy and practice. Stakeholder representatives highlighted overall the need to support community-based approaches in engaging with citizens and addressing differences. Participants also emphasized the importance of building on existing initiatives and approaches in designing effective solutions.

Negotiation was deemed to be a practical and constructive way to manage intercommunal differences, specifically in preventing escalation by forging agreements that respect differences, which in turn builds trust and improves communication. There was agreement that negotiation skills ought to be developed within schools since this is where young people encounter different ideas and perspectives. For example, the ROC Mondriaan teaches democratic citizenship, which instills in students the importance of participating in a democratic society and being good citizens. This is undertaken in several ways that include:

- replacing any negativity surrounding students in their personal, professional and social lives with positive experiences such as teamwork and cooperation;
- inspiring students with a comprehensive picture of their roles and responsibilities in a democratic society; and
- creating a sense of safety and security by emphasizing that students form a crucial part of society.

Outside of schools, community centers such as ‘De Mussen’ and communal events such as the ‘Hashiba’ in The Hague, were seen to provide opportunities for residents to enhance awareness and understand the cultures that exist side-by-side within communities, and as important networks to bring residents together. Civil society representatives referred to other successful initiatives such as
‘Stagehuis Schilderswijk’ and ‘STEK’ (Stichting voor Stad en Kerk) - a foundation which aims to connect communities. Other initiatives include ‘verbindingsplekken’ (“connection spots”) where members of neighborhoods come together on a regular basis to discuss common challenges.

These experiences demonstrated that social inclusion can be achieved through projects aimed at increasing inclusion in an enjoyable, non-judgmental and constructive manner, and by hosting a number of activities with low entry barriers for youths in communities.

Representatives of the police shared that promoting inclusion was also a crucial component of their strategies. In cooperation with the municipality of The Hague, the police introduced a project to prevent social tension via network relationships. The program focuses on diversity, equality, and the prevention of discrimination and ethnic profiling. At a local level, the police attempt to stimulate initiatives to increase proactive community involvement such as ‘neighborhood fathers’, ‘role models’ and ‘proactive citizens’, who provide positive contributions to their neighborhoods and help prevent crime.

However, while conflict often originates in neighborhoods, it cannot be dealt with solely at a local level. For this reason, there was a strong emphasis on creating ‘interlocal’ networks between districts and different police regions at the national level.

Health experts noted that the city has increased its attention on domestic violence and group violence, which can in turn address insecurities, anxiety and powerlessness, which often lead to aggression. Nevertheless, it was felt that the effectiveness of these approaches are restricted by a combination of legal conditions, privacy concerns, and a lack of action.

For the business sector, one of the main limitations of the current approach to prevention is the narrow self-interest from preserving their own security. As mentioned by one of the representatives of this sector, “in-house security is important to businesses; the actual danger however lies in the degradation of the surrounding community.” Businesses flourish in safe and secure environments and communities. Therefore, a better quality of life is mutually beneficial and should encourage investment.
1.3. The growing range and specialization of conflict prevention actors

Participants agreed there is a growing number of actors that contribute to conflict prevention. There is scope for these actors to realize their potential and responsibilities. The challenge, therefore, is for all stakeholders to share the same long-term goals, exchange information and collaborate. The prevention of destructive conflicts should be a multi-layered (from ‘jeugdconsultatie bureaus’, schools and neighborhood activities to focusing on specific high-risk areas) and continuous process (targeted interventions, but in a natural process of change and adaption).

To illustrate the mushrooming of actors, the health experts noted the importance of assisting general practitioners, emergency departments, psychiatric crisis services and (neighborhood) police to communicate and share information in a systematic way. It is these actors that will build a long-term trusting relationship with citizens, especially in high-risk areas. From an educational perspective, it is of crucial importance to question how it is possible for educational institutions to create spaces in schools where students can freely express their feelings, anxieties and fears and where teachers can facilitate debate and the exchange of ideas within a safe and constructive environment.

Businesses recognized their unique contributions to livelihoods and social interactions within the city and its communities. Businesses can empower communities through an increasing number of social activities, which can in turn stimulate integration, invest in young people and improve access to essential services.

“Face-to-face contact with individuals and maintaining close relationships with network partners in the neighborhoods were raised as key factors in maintaining public order.”
Involvement of more actors has in turn heightened specialization in conflict prevention. Police representatives identified a more active role in detecting the early signs of tensions that could be underlying drivers of conflict. To this end, face-to-face contact with individuals and maintaining close relationships with network partners in the neighborhoods were raised as key factors in maintaining public order.

It was proposed that police officers should be more understanding and accepting of different cultures, religions and identities within specific communities and at the societal level in order to foster better communication and mutual understanding.

As another vital group, civil society experts argued that the middle class have the potential to play a more influential role as they can be decisive in shaping the perceptions of problems that arise in their neighborhoods and they have the ability to influence decision-makers at the municipal level.

Equally, youth representatives advocated for a more active role as a bridge between cities and communities, which has been accelerated by the growth of social media.
2. Main Findings

This section presents the main conclusions and findings from the project. The first subsection explores the ways in which conflict and the city’s responses to conflict were interpreted by stakeholders and how they can be improved. The second subsection provides a more detailed overview of how, on the basis of the challenges and opportunities explored during the inception, concrete solutions and new approaches can be designed and implemented.

2.1 From experiences to expectations

*Understanding dynamics of violence*

When exploring urban insecurity, there are different levels and aspects of violence, which are all important and interconnected. In this project, the focus lies mainly on violent conflict, which can have different manifestations (criminal violence, riots and protests, armed conflict, and terrorist attacks) and distinct drivers (unequal access to services and spaces, social exclusion and marginalization, and lack of trust in public institutions). Violent conflict can consist of occasional episodes but can also become a transformative process which develops and triggers further violence. Repression and inappropriate responses by authorities and informal institutions often escalate rather than mitigate tensions.

Therefore, the design of any preventive strategy should not be limited to only addressing and responding to the violence itself, but should also consider the drivers and root causes of conflict, and design systems to tackle what has been defined as structural violence. Building on the notion that individuals and their personalities are shaped by their social and cultural context, project participants stressed that the perception of violence and insecurity can also lead to violent conflict. In that respect, domestic realities as well as other micro-social realities play a pivotal role in where personalities are shaped. Studying interactions within communities is crucial to informing adequate policy responses, especially in a multi-ethnic city like The Hague, where religious, national and ethnic groups coexist.

Linked to that, participants agreed that research should focus at the level of neighborhoods, where this interaction happens most regularly and relationships are formed. Neighborhoods can also be considered a platform where different stakeholders that might traditionally remain neutral, such as businesses, have shared interests and therefore have an incentive to become involved in conflict prevention efforts. More specifically, public spaces can be significant hubs for conflict, but also for peace. An accurate study of the way people interact here can provide insights into how social dynamics work. In particular, understanding the complex relationships between street-level police officers and young people in some quarters of the city of The Hague emerged as an issue to consider and prioritize.

*Main challenges posed by existing approaches and opportunities for improving conflict prevention*

Building on existing approaches and experiences, there was consensus on the importance of knowing and understanding ‘target groups’ in anticipating violence and in preparing effective responses.

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4 Structural violence refers to the deep divisions that underpin and produce open and direct violent conflict. Such divisions can be along political, social, economic, ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural lines. They are complex by nature and require far-reaching and long-term responses at the institutional, policy, societal and individual levels.
However, it was noted that due to the increase in migration flows and mobility of citizens, institutions are no longer able to respond in a timely and effective way to these challenges. It is thus necessary to build connections and communication channels, especially between institutions and communities, with the aim of strengthening information flows and improving institutional preparedness in dealing with a rapidly changing society.

Participants stressed the importance of knowing and engaging both formal and informal networks, as they are both essential and complementary in dealing with conflict and preventing violence. Informal conflict mediation practices by citizens or local leaders should also be taken into account, as they are often very effective when applied in their context of origin.

The design and implementation of an ‘infrastructure for peace’ demands cooperation among different institutional actors (tribunals, police and municipalities) and the engagement of the private sector and civil society. In fact, improving democratic participation and allowing for a more active role of women is important in building ownership and strengthening common identities, which are the foundation of peaceful societies.

Finally, how conflict is perceived and presented was also stressed as a vital component of conflict management. Acknowledging the importance of media in shaping public opinion and raising awareness was therefore considered a very sensitive but important issue. In fact, it was agreed that media can sometimes have a controversial role in both preventing and fomenting violence and therefore should be included in a constructive way. Better preparation before talking to the media would help local leaders to manage expectations on what they can achieve and may mobilize more community support and active engagement. Identifying the right messenger can also be an important asset for conflict management as he/she might be in a better position to help build bridges and act as a mediator between conflicting parties.
2.2 From expectations to actionable measures

*Tailor made responses to local capacity and resources*
Participants prioritized the scalability and applicability of initiatives to prevent conflict. The design of initiatives should be based on available resources, facilities, expertise and manpower. As stressed by the business representatives, by limiting the scope of interventions, the latter can become more focused and realistic in their attainment, ensuring better implementation and engagement from all parties involved. Additionally, by tailoring approaches to the context in which they are applied, taking in the cultural, political, social, economic and religious realities of that context, initiatives will have greater chances of success.

*Improve systems to transfer knowledge and preserve existing networks*
The lack of a structured and developed network to transfer and preserve knowledge, communication and cooperation can hamper the long-term effectiveness of conflict prevention initiatives in the municipal context. Many participants stated that mobility within various stakeholder organizations (police, municipality, and civil society) has led to a loss of institutional knowledge, best practices and, above all, relationships. As people switch careers or retire from the work place, it is crucial to ensure the timely transfer of knowledge. Incoming actors should be instructed and informed about operational arrangements and institutional best practices.

*Building networks based on interdependency*
Participants agreed that networks that encourage active communication, tailored educational programs and the sharing of expertise between various agents and agencies are vital. The local government must be seen as an equal partner in these networks. The municipal administration should play the crucial role of coordinating these efforts and build upon existing networks and communities, in close cooperation with other forms of local leadership.

Within these networks, stakeholders must reflect not only on their contribution to preventing the escalation of conflict but also their role in causing tensions in the first place. Examples of the latter include: businesses and political entities not providing equal opportunities; discriminatory attitudes by the police; and stereotyping by the media. Education, in particular, was recognized by all participants as a primary platform to invest in the next generation and to create the foundations for more responsible and inclusive citizenship.

*Moving beyond traditional paradigms of conflict prevention*
The participants concluded that there is an urgent need to change current mindsets as a first necessary step to build more effective preventive strategies. Adopting the principles below would contribute to the design of new frameworks and approaches:

- Asking questions first instead of lodging complaints in the search for answers;
- Focusing on constructive and cooperative relationships to work on specific issues in order to generate and retain knowledge;
- Creating clear and transparent municipal ‘accompanyment’ and participation;
- Encouraging dialogue between different positions and building networks among stakeholder groups, and especially between police and youth;
- Investing in education and empowering young people, who are often considered only as victims or perpetrators; and
- Recognizing social interdependency and focusing on common goals.
3. Recommendations and Actionable Measures

This section distills from the project a set of recommendations and suggests some actionable measures for implementation. The recommendations and measures below have been discussed and endorsed by a large representation of the stakeholder groups involved, and should therefore be considered as the main results of the project. While they are directed at specific groups and institutions, together the recommendations reflect the need for a more profound transformation in mind-set in terms of how relationships are perceived and interactions occur.

1. Improving communication and promoting the responsible use of language among institutions and local leaders

Communication and the use of language can have a significant impact in shaping perceptions and ideas, and can therefore contribute to tensions or promote peace. Positive language that highlights qualities and opportunities, rather than threats and weaknesses, could contribute to better prevention efforts. Also, more consideration is needed to promote multiple points of view, instead of reaffirming preconceived biases and narratives. To this end, journalists, among others, must develop trusting relationships with institutional and local leaders so that accurate information can be disseminated.

As actionable measures for implementing Recommendation 1:

a. Raise awareness on the power of language
Participants in the consultations emphasized the crucial importance of how leaders communicate, the choice of words, expressions and the attitudes they adopt when addressing different groups or stakeholders. If we consider the issue of violent radicalization and extremism, it is easy to understand how important language can be in shaping perceptions and determining reactions. How can leaders and communicators become more aware about the responsibility they have and learn to adopt appropriate language and narratives?

One way could be to facilitate two or three informed sessions among spokespersons, to discuss and train them on how to responsibly frame speeches and become more aware and careful when addressing certain groups or discussing sensitive topics. Media could also become involved in these sessions. An alternative or complementary suggestion could be to focus on promoting joint press releases by police and decision makers, to avoid mix messages and ensure the uniformity of public statements.

b. Invest in social media
Social media can trigger grievances and cause the escalation of violence, so there is a strategic need to use social media to encourage resilience and peace. Such investment demands a better understanding of how communication and specifically the uncontrolled use of social media can exacerbate tensions rather than help peace-building efforts. The Hague Institute could contribute by building a network of young people and professionals, social workers, police officers with the support of a social media specialist to create a network where information can be shared and different narratives can emerge.

There are several instructive examples from the private sector in using new communication tools to
transform interactions with customers in terms of transparency and participation. A similar approach could be adopted with the police and/or municipal institutions. Experiences from other parts of the world were mentioned and demonstrate how social media can build peace and prevent violence, for example, the fostering of inter-ethnic dialogue by the Salam Shabab online youth network in Iraq and the YaLa Young Leaders network between Israelis and Palestinians. It has also been used to help prevent gang violence in the Brazilian favelas, resource disputes in sub-Saharan Africa, and against the violent tactics of FARC in Colombia. Online apps can also help create a consistent dialogue and information exchange between local communities and institutions, like the French Proxibuzz, that aims to maximize the efficiency of local institutions in meeting the demands and need of their citizens, with a particular focus on the management of public spaces.

c. **Peace begins at home**

The Hague - international city of peace and justice - has traditionally been very engaged in supporting international initiatives to promote peace and stability across the world. The Hague, however, is a divided city, where social, ethnic and cultural divisions persist. In this respect, there is an opportunity to experiment and invest in bridging divided communities and promoting community building. Branding is crucial for such an approach, where a symbolic venue in the center of the city could become a meeting point and an icon for processes of revitalization. ‘Building inclusive cities’ could be a possible slogan for this initiative. The visual representation of the city as divided by a symbolic line, the use of arts to engage but also show that appearances can mislead are all elements that could help in this branding exercise to raise awareness on the social and cultural barriers that can ultimately hamper peace and security.
2. Understanding the nature of conflict and adopting tailored responses

While conflict often originates locally, it cannot be captured only within the borders of neighborhoods. While some issues are geographically located, key drivers often transcend specific boundaries, relating more to the aforementioned structural or systemic issues. Simultaneously, initiatives must be adapted to available resources, facilities, expertise and manpower and eventually be broken down to simpler issues, in order to maximize efficiency and ensure local ownership.

As actionable measures for implementing Recommendation 2:

a. Create concrete initiatives at the community level
One of the main points stressed during the consultations has been the need to focus on neighborhoods and communities. Interactions and tensions ultimately occur at this level, which is where solutions should be designed. Encouraging communities to develop local initiatives and exploring ways in which they can be involved, for example, in the design and planning of new public spaces (e.g., a public garden or a carpark) could enable effective bottom-up solutions, tailored to the capacity, needs and resources of the communities. Another possible measure, inspired by Tesco supermarkets in the UK, would be to provide incentives to small and medium businesses/chains to invest in those quarters of the city where there are higher rates of poverty and social exclusion, under the condition that they hire local residents. This could have beneficial effects in terms of revitalizing local economies and at the same time creating jobs. More generally, it may be possible to focus on service providers such as the police and the health sector. Interactive problem solving and cooperation based on shared interests could be a basis to foster community building and promote the revitalization of a neighborhood.

b. Connect informal platforms rich in local knowledge to official channels
Many neighborhoods and communities are already using informal gatherings and platforms where local leaders and stakeholders share strategic information. Nevertheless, it remains a challenge to transfer the local knowledge of these networks to the official local and even national governmental institutions and channels overseeing conflict prevention. Creating ‘data pipelines’ and hosting introductory sessions for local and governmental parties would ensure local ownership and an efficient transfer of knowledge. This could entail local platforms visiting, or being visited by, governmental agencies in order to see where they could benefit from cooperation, or creating an integrated approach like the ‘Handreiking aanpak van radicalisering en terrorismebestrijding op lo-
kaal niveau’ (Guide to tackling radicalization and counter-terrorism at the local level) by the Netherlands Office of the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism. It is also very important to connect existing communities of practice that often do not work in synergy. For example, participants expressed the need to connect and facilitate cooperation between the police, the healthcare sector and educational institutions, to enhance cooperation on matters related to youth and with a specific focus on teenagers.

c. Replicating this process at the quarters’ level
As mentioned in Section 2, it is at the neighborhood level where most of the interactions among stakeholders take place. Therefore, it is at this level that the potential for conflict and peace arises. Building on the consultation process that The Hague Institute has facilitated at the city level, it would be timely to conduct a parallel process in one of the quarters of the city, to better understand local dynamics and the interactions among different stakeholders. In particular, young people and women should be further empowered and seen as protagonists of current and future conflict prevention efforts.

An idea expressed during the consultations was to designate young women as point of contacts at the neighborhood level, to improve coordination efforts at the broader city level and at the same time favor local ownership. The final objective should be to see how these micro-levels can be connected to the municipality and how complex relationships could be better understood and strengthened.
3. Recognizing interdependence and building networks

Stakeholders in conflict prevention must realize that their ultimate goals are aligned, although each actor might have a different approach or priority. The repercussions stemming from violent conflict in the city extend to all stakeholders. Similarly, stakeholders must come to see that their own actions directly affect the interests and rights of other stakeholders. Consequently, networks that encourage the active communication and sharing of expertise between various agents and agencies are a necessity. Within these networks, stakeholders must reflect critically not only on their role in preventing the escalation of conflict but also their role in causing tensions in the first place.

As actionable measures for implementing Recommendation 3:
a. **Invest in secondary education**

The importance of education and the need to invest in future generations stood out as one of the priorities and most urgent measures to take in order to build integration and sustainable peace in the city. The society is becoming more and more diverse. Political, social, cultural, religious and economic divisions have become more acute as an effect of migration and rapid economic changes. In response, schools can provide a safe space for debate and the exchange of ideas, positions and thoughts. It is the place where differences should be expressed and not repressed, critical thinking welcomed and concerns listened to. Schools are also ideal places where relationships and networks are being shaped and created. Building on the expertise of the Netherlands Debate Institute, the organization of debates involving a representation of students from different quarters of the city and representing diverse religious and cultural identities, could help stimulate the free exchange of ideas on sensitive topics, build connections, stimulate critical thinking and promote engagement over exclusion. The debates could take the form of discussion clubs. A possibility could be to incorporate discussions on international and local news in the curricula or as free-time activities. Giving voice to counter narratives and allowing participatory decision-making on the themes to be discussed provide the right signals from the start. For example, vocational schools should be among the beneficiaries of such initiatives, given the need to encourage discussion on these topics and in these ways. To facilitate interaction and help build linkages, debates could be combined with more recreational activities and sports, where parents and families can also be occasionally involved.

b. **Build networks among police and youth**

Relationships between police and youth are often tense and riddled with conflict. Both are, however, important actors in preventing conflict and furthering social cohesion. Creating long-term networks among police and youth will not only enhance their relationships and build trust; it will also encourage the sharing of knowledge and information. Such networks could be built or improved by hosting events like football tournaments between young people and police, as currently done in the Schilderswijk neighborhood, or by organizing a ‘Unity in Community’ dance event for police officers and young people, as in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA. Both events attempt to stimulate reconciliation and unity. During recent consultations, representatives from the police and the Mondriaan schools also expressed interest in the possibility of creating a joint initiative where police could be trained on how to interact with young people and, specifically, how to effectively use social media to engage and to create new communication spaces. Representatives of the police as well as young people emphasized the importance of and need for mutual confidence building processes.
4. Final Observations of the Report and Proposed Next Steps

This report marks the end of the first stage of the project, which has achieved at least three objectives:

1. Increased awareness on the dynamics of conflict within the city of The Hague and its metropolitan area, with a particular emphasis on the need to address the root causes of violent conflict and through inclusive systems and networks of decision-making and governance;
2. A better understanding of the important role that each stakeholder group plays both in conflict and peace dynamics and increased awareness on the responsibility of each actor in participating in conflict prevention efforts; and
3. The creation of a unique network of professionals, representing the key communities of practice in the city, who have now established direct links and are exploring opportunities for collaboration.

“Working with relevant stakeholders, The Hague Institute is committed to oversee the design of these measures which will form Phase II of the project, provisionally from June 2016 to May 2017.”

Based on the recommendations above, the consultative group and The Hague Institute agreed to focus on and prioritize the following three actionable measures as detailed above:

1. To invest in education to promote active citizenship and the use of schools as platforms to encourage critical thinking and debate;
2. To strengthen dialogue among street level police and young people; and
3. To further involve businesses in community-based activities and initiatives.

Finally, as another natural next step, this pilot project has produced some important lessons and a model for dialogue that could be shared and possibly applied to other cities in the Netherlands and beyond.

The Hague Institute is also committed to this broader initiative which would extend the project and the process beyond The Hague, thereby supporting recent efforts to improve horizontal cooperation, coordination, and the exchange of best practices among cities.
## Appendix A

List of stakeholders that have contributed to this project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>WORKING GROUP</th>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abarkane, Yassine</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Social Worker, Schilderswijk</td>
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<td>Achamlal, Rachida</td>
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Leenhouts, Jos
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Macaluso, Agnese
Mans, Ulrich
Meijs, Cecile
Metzemakers, Hans
Moonen, Petra
Mosk, Pierre
Movlazadeh, Zahid
Muller, Erwin
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Post, Willem
Putten van, Paul
Rach, Chesley
Richelle, Jacobus
Ros, Angelo
Smith, Fabienne
Soomeren van, Paul
Spruijt, Martien
Strijland, Julia
Struijk, Tanja
Teunissen, Jorrit
Tuijl van, Peter
Ubachs, Frank
Velde van der, Roland
Vente, Babette
Verhoog, Gert Jan
Verloo, Nanke
Vlaskamp, Wybren
Vorisek, Maarten
Vos van der, Marinus
Vriesde, Richard
Vrijmoed, Ollie
Westerlaken, Mark
Westerveld, Yvette
Wiggers, Arthur
Williams, Abi
Wit de, Johan
Wolfslag, Job
Zweerts de Jong-Mostert, Marije

Business
Rapporteur
Business
Education
Education
Police/Municipality
Convener
Education
Business
Education
Police/Municipality
Health
Police/Municipality
Civil society
Education
Education
Youth
Education
Youth
Events
Police/Gemeente-Educ
Health
Police/Municipality
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Business
Education
Education

VNO-NCW West
The Hague Institute
Bridgizz
University of Amsterdam
Independent/Mondriaan College
Municipality The Hague
The Hague Institute
Leiden University
Media Markt
The Hague Academy for Local Governance
Municipality The Hague
Parnassia
Municipality The Hague
GPPAC
Leiden University
Netherlands Debate Institute
Student
FD Roosevelt Academy
Student
The Hague Institute
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Parnassia
Municipality The Hague
Independent/EC-EU
Mondriaan College
The Hague Institute
DSP-group
Municipality The Hague
RNTC
Parnassia
Student
GPPAC
independent
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AS Watson
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Municipality The Hague
Oxyma/MKB
Municipality The Hague
Municipality The Hague
VNG
The Hague Institute
Siemens
Mondriaan College
Mondriaan College

*YPS: Young professional/students