I once had the honour to meet the first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova. She said something that has stuck with me ever since: “Once you have been in space you appreciate how small and fragile the earth is.” I think she meant that Space is a good place to be if you want to put things into perspective. So that’s where I went, in January 2013, to the 2012 Asian Mediation Association Annual Meeting, with an imaginary Sputnik, when I was asked to present some thoughts on international trends in mediation at the 2012 Asian Mediation Association Annual Meeting.

From the higher vantage point, I quickly found that there are established trends, emerging trends and fads, and that in trends are established everywhere. However, some emerging trends are manifest in all places at once, while others are more localised – and these are all the start of professional bodies at national level. The Asian Mediation Association and the European Mediation Network Initiative are examples of something similar happening regionally, inspiring the birth of the African Mediation Association and the American Mediation Network Initiative. And to head off government regulation, we need to establish a self-regulating field with a proper framework for ethical standards and business practices in mediation.

Established trends

Of course, mediation itself is an established trend - a prevailing tendency that is gaining momentum. But what are the established trends within that established trend?

* First, I see a clear awakening of the user - especially the repeat user. If it is starting to dawn on them that mediation can help get what they need: achieve goals, reduce risks, secure certainty, take less time, cost less, save face and preserve reputation. This is leading to a new and healthy shift from a supply-led field to a demand-led field.

* Second, I see a trend towards professional mediations, and from facilitative mediation to more evaluative styles.

* Third, I see a trend towards more professional bodies at national level. The Asian Mediation Association and the American Mediation Network Initiative are examples of something similar happening regionally, inspiring the birth of the African Mediation Association.

* Fourth, I see a trend towards embracing mediation more enthusiastically. It is becoming more popular, and there are many new examples.

Emerging trends

Here’s a summary of my view from space and I would very much welcome your views! It is an important subject. Trend analysis is used for future-spotting and to inspire new thinking and developments. Fads seem to be a flash in the pan, positive, young at heart.

Emerging trends

Fads

Fads are a bit harder to see from space because they are too nascent. It is hard to tell a trend from an awakening of the user. They are doing it because mediations and procedures do not self-regulate consistently in quality. Training and education are at sophisticated levels and the field is now starting to credential knowledge, skills and experience - open at first transparent and credible, but some of it opaque and lacking conviction. This emerging trend towards proper credentialing needs to be more sustained and established, more international and more serious and credible.

* First, there is a trend towards more professionalism. This is leading to a new and healthy shift from a supply-led field to a demand-led field.

* Second, I see a trend from passive forms of mediation to assertive practices, and from facilitative mediation to more evaluative styles.

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