



Philosophy  
Circles

## Weaving the bridge

Hampshire P4C leader Pat Hannam drew my attention to this video stimulus. Two villages on opposite sides of a river in Peru rebuild the rope suspension bridge between them every year, as they have since the 15th century. It's a beautiful piece of sustainable engineering which brings the whole community together.



Play the 'Bridge of Life' game, as described by Marching Auxiliaries<sup>2</sup>: Break groups into teams of 4-10. Mark off an area that is wider than all the team members standing side by side. Each team needs to get one member from one side of the area to the other without touching the ground or being carried. They could lie down, forming a human bridge for the person to crawl across, or pass the person down the line in a prone position, with team members shifting position in line as necessary.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqI-D6JQ1Bc>

At first. It seems there's no ambiguity, tension or conflict of ideas: just a great example of collaboration, sustainability, community etc. You can add some salt to the sugar by putting them in the story. They are the villagers, and someone arrives from the government and says, "*We can build a steel bridge that will last for 50 years. It will take cars as well as pedestrians, so it will be much better. You can do other things instead of wasting your time building something that only lasts a year.*" Would they want the bridge to be built?

Now you have a clash of concepts: modernity vs tradition, efficiency versus community, collaboration, sustainability.



Whatever they decide to do, you can continue the narrative to throw up a new question. For example, if they decide against the steel bridge, announce that a few months later, workers arrive to build the steel bridge anyway. "*You can keep rebuilding your rope bridge if you want, but there are other people who want to drive from one side of the river to the other. So we are going to go ahead and build the steel bridge.*"

What would they do then? *Would they try to stop the bridge being built? Or let it happen? Once the steel bridge has been built, just 50 metres from their rope bridge, would they keep building the bridge when it is no longer necessary?*

### NEXT STEPS

*Can they think of other traditional activities that carry on in the face of more modern, efficient alternatives? What would motivate people to stick to the tradition?*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.madance.com/mazone/dance/TeamBuildingGames.pdf>