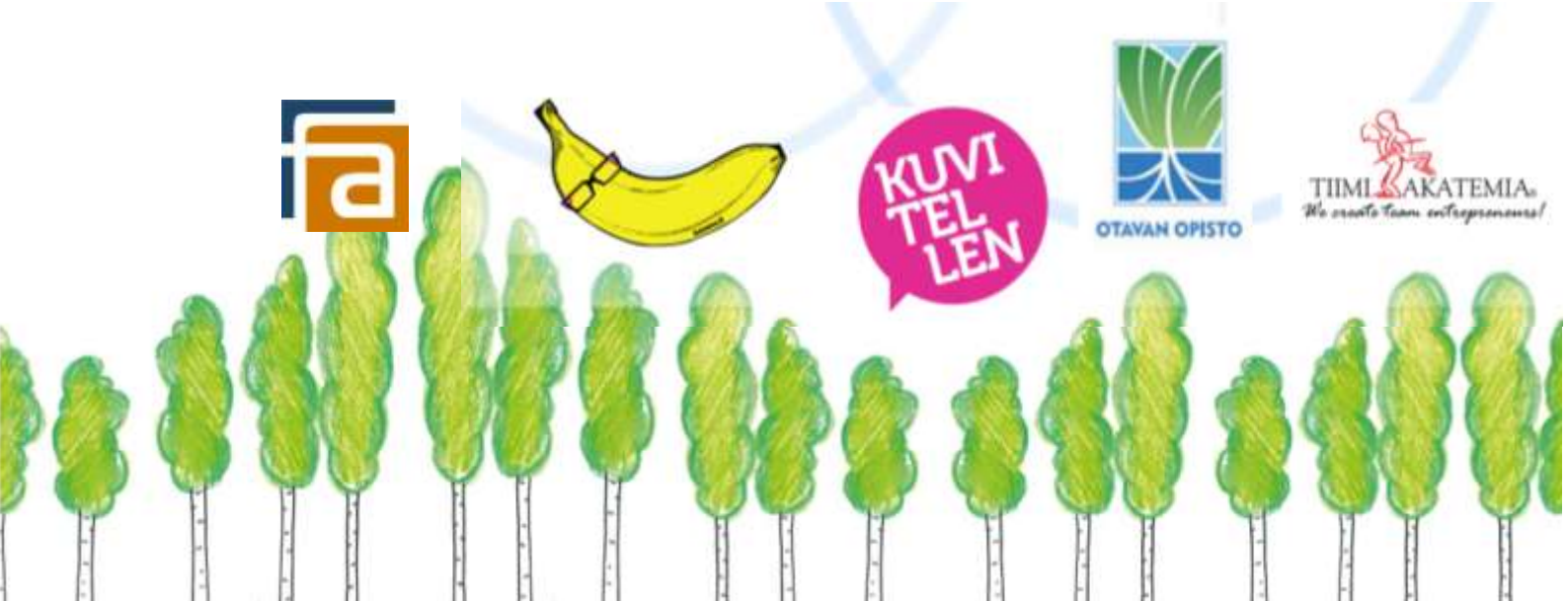
ART of HOSTING
Workbook

How do we host, design and harvest meaningful conversations that matter?

Training in Finland

Otavan Opisto 2012



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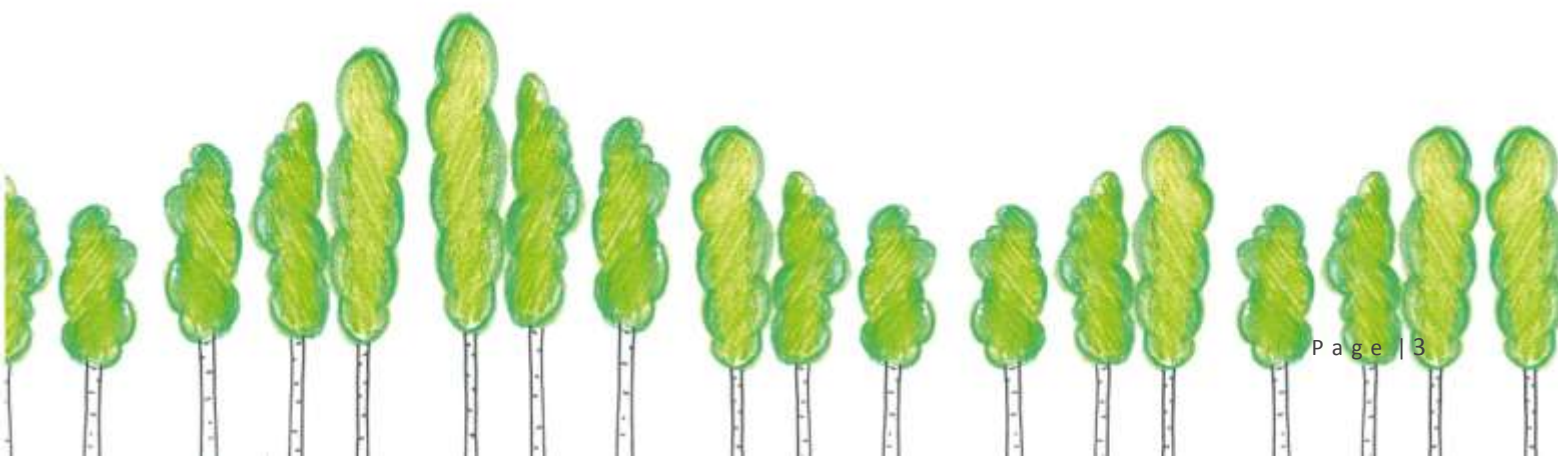


ART of HOSTING

INTRODUCTION:

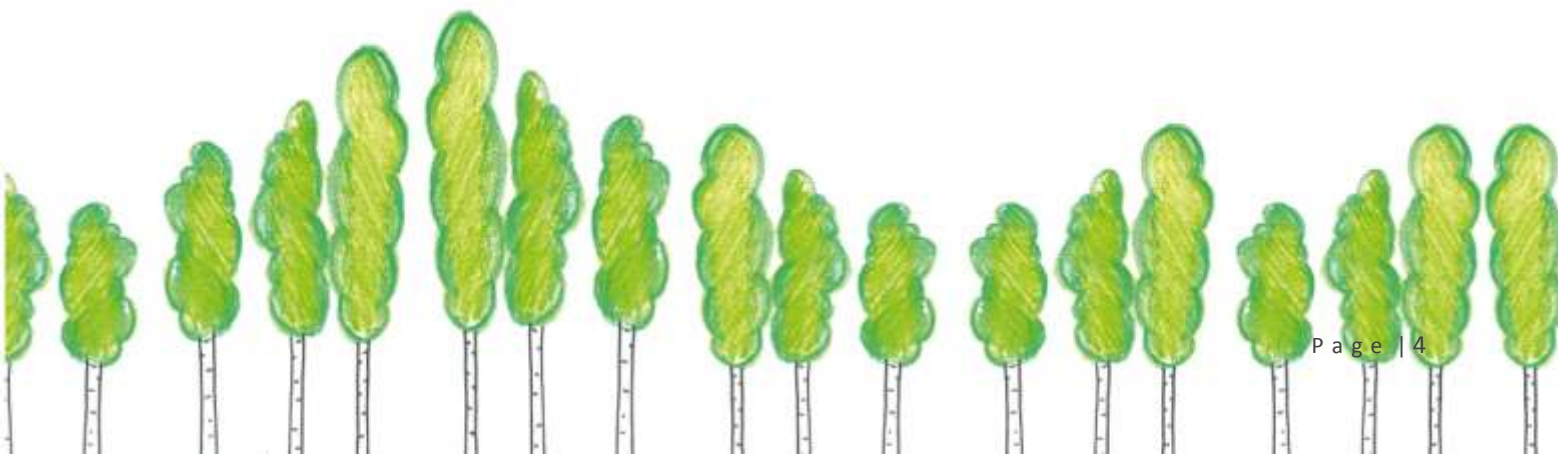
Participatory Leadership through the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter is an experience for all who aspire to learn and find better ways to work with groups in ways that nurture collective intelligence, shared learning and effective action for change.

Welcome to the Art of Hosting Finland training! We will particularly look at what it takes to consciously design and host processes that deepen your dialogue and facilitation skills, by introducing the elements of design, mental frameworks to understand how to work with emergence and complexity, and practical tools to support you as practitioners in your line of work.

Today's complex and high-speed environments are calling us to engage multiple styles of leading and learning. We must know how to generate collective intelligence and how to call on everyone's participation and leadership. We need to generate shared clarity of purpose and create spaces for nonjudgmental learning. At the same time, we are asked to exercise hierarchical leadership. We are accountable to our stakeholders and must take decisive action when needed. Learning how to stand in this paradox and how to navigate the territory between too much chaos and too much control, is the key to leading transformational change.

In this training we will practice staying focused and centred in the midst of both chaos and control. We will gain frameworks and skills for hosting conversations that matter, for inviting collaborative leadership, and for generating collective intelligence and learning to create wiser solutions together.

If you are asking yourself how to facilitate change towards a better world, we offer you a space together with other people that aspire to discover new ways of collaboration to create innovative solutions adapted to the needs of our reality. Be present and join others who wish to explore this new way of participatory leadership.



ART of HOSTING

About this Workbook

To find out more about the network and join the AoH email list visit www.artofhosting.org***.***

This workbook is intended to be a personal reference journal, to help you remember, focus and deepen your learning. It shares the basic assumptions and our current understanding of the topic and how the Art of Hosting practice can serve. It includes several tools and practices that the community of practitioners has found simple and helpful and it provides you with different resources i.e. books, links and information that can guide you further.

More in-depth conversation and knowledge sharing can happen online, on the AoH Ning site http://artofhosting.ning.com

Purpose of This Training

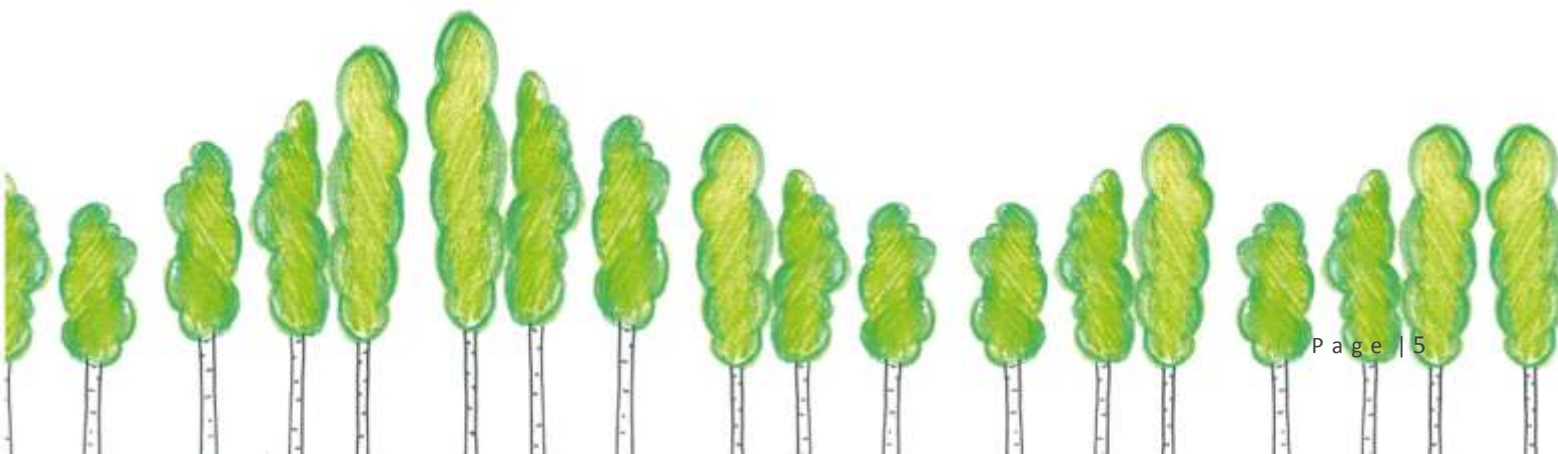
A new type of leadership is being called for in corporations, businesses, non-profit organizations, associations, schools, communities and families. This style of leadership generates fresh thinking and creates shared commitment to solving critical challenges in sustainable, inclusive ways.

We call this Participatory Leadership.

This kind of leader can skillfully call important conversations and connect different perspectives to address our complex challenges and to grow into our creative possibilities. He or she knows how to create opportunities where the essential knowledge present in even a large group can be shared in a short period of time.

The three-day Art of Hosting and Harvesting Meaningful Conversations creates a rich learning environment in which you will:

- explore and practice methods for activating collective intelligence and host meaningful conversations whether it be with 3 or 1000 people,
- harvest what emerges into essential action steps,
- understand the theory behind participatory leadership methods
- learn tools for project creation



ART of HOSTING

"Art of Hosting" — A Community of Practice

A growing group of practitioners is adding to the inspiration and evolution.
"The Art of Hosting" (AoH) is not a company or a trade mark but rather a community of practice engaging in the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter – be it in the family, in organisations or in large scale assemblies or summits.
This web or network of practitioners is connected across all continents serving the needs of different communities in different contexts and frequently exchange learning and experiences about what happens when we engage the collective intelligence in co-learning and co-developing solutions to complex challenges.
We have learned that the principles of self-organisation, participation, ownership and non-linear solutions are the key to both individual and collective discovery.
This is different and complimentary to more traditional ways of working, which are often based on rational planning and full control of the process, in order to ensure that planned results are achieved. - Both approaches are needed.
Participatory Leadership is particularly useful in dealing with issues and challenges of a complex nature.

Paradoxes at Work

In leading organisations today and even more so when applying participatory or collaborative leadership, we operate in a world that is not black or white—but rather black and white and all the shades in between. We need to be able to operate in complexity and hold opposites or paradoxes:

- Chaos and Order
- Content and Process
- Leading and Following
- Warrior and Midwife
- Action and Reflection
- Hosting and Consulting
- Individual and Community

"Throughout the universe order exists within disorder and disorder within order. We have always thought that disorder was the absence of the true state of order. But is chaos an irregularity, or is order just a brief moment seized from disorder? Linear thinking demands that we see things as separate states: One needs to be normal, the other exceptional. Yet there is a way to see this ballet of chaos and order, of change and stability, as two complimentary aspects in the process of growth, neither of which is primary"

Multiple Levels of Focus

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

The AoH is a four-fold practice that requires us to operate at four levels at once—individual, team, community/organisation, and global. These four levels are connected, and learning at each of these levels informs learning at the others.

Individual

- To connect to our own motivation and reason for choosing a different way of leading
- To strengthen our individual courage to lead as hosts

Team

- To train the competencies of collective reflection and wise action
- To practice co-creating, co-deciding and co-hosting strategic meetings, focus groups, community conversations, etc.

Community, Organisation etc.

- To experience working in unity with other leaders
- To experience new organisational forms and work at co-creating relationships that serve the needs of our organisation or community.

Global

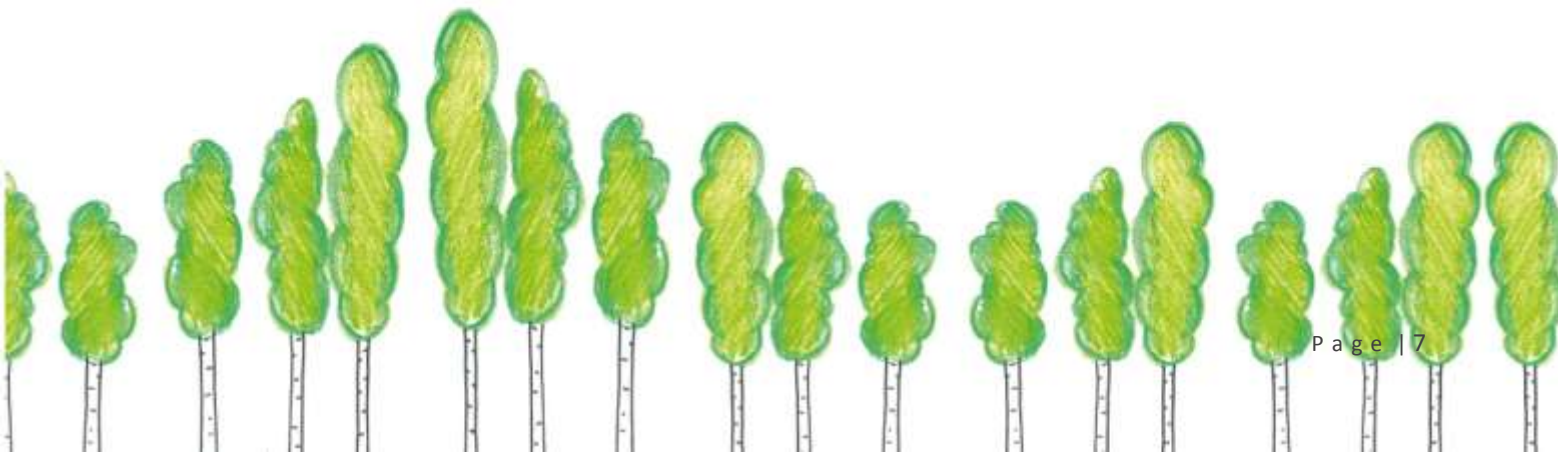
- To understand the bigger context that we are always part of
- To benefit from knowledge and experience of a global or "trans-local" network of practitioners and learners in this field

Content of the Training

The seminar is designed to provide participants with an introduction to the approach described above. Our intention is to provide a good balance between in-depth teaching sessions on the key elements of the approach, combined with introducing some relevant tools as well as focusing on application and practice.

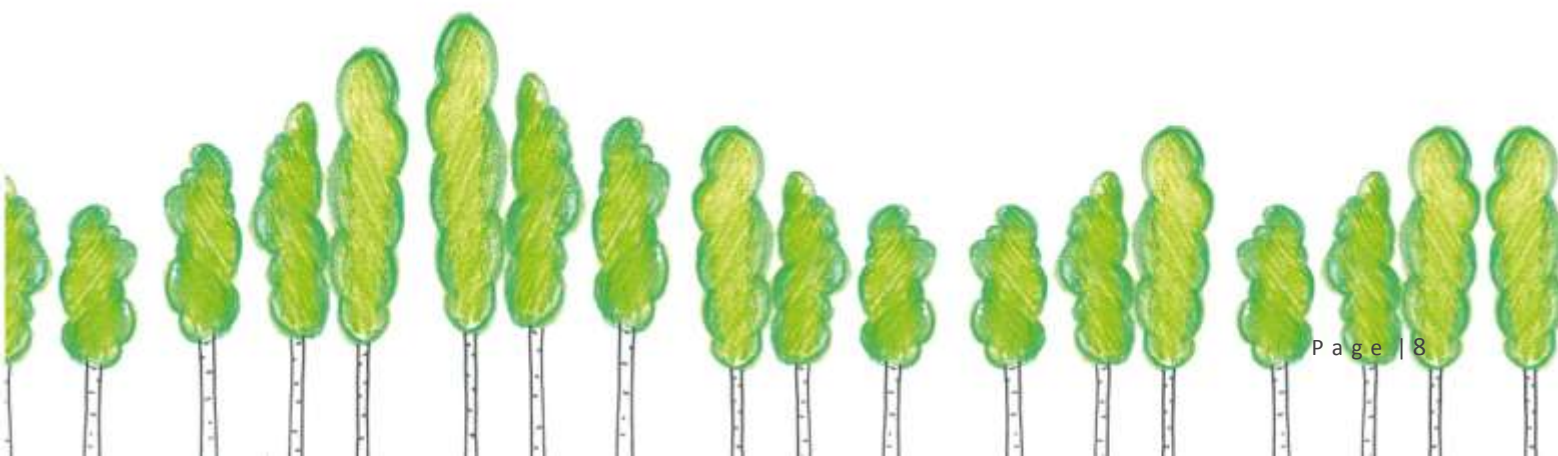
Here is a structured overview of the topics or items, which are presented in this workbook.

We will introduce and experience some of the theories and practices below combined with relevant cases, to illuminate how we can lead transformation through collaborative and hierarchical cultures.



Working Together Through the Levels

2 COMPLIMENTARY WORLD VIEWS Basic assumptions. - How am I making sense of the world around me? - How do I see organisations?	Organisations as Machines? Organisations as living systems – or – Complex adaptive systems?
MENTAL MODELS Patterns or metaphors that help us understand and describe how we see the world	The Four-fold Path The Chaordic Path Divergence & Convergence Organising patterns – organisational paradigms U-process
CORE METHODS & PRACTICES These are some tools that are available for "chaordic" leadership practices. They manifest our worldview in how we act and work together and through which our world view can be experienced	**Practices:** Being present & The Four-fold Practice Dialogue Powerful Questions **Core Methodologies:** Circle World Café Open Space Technology Appreciative Inquiry Collective Mind-mapping Pro Action Cafe Action Learning **Supporting practices & methodologies** The Art of Harvesting Consensus Decision Making
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER Developing and implementing strategies for specific contexts / application.	8 Little Helpers Check-list for design 5 Breaths of Design The Chaordic Design Process / Chaordic Stepping Stones The 5th Organisational Paradigm Cases: application in different contexts



BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND CORE PATTERNS

"There is an emerging group of methodologies for facilitating conversation in groups of all sizes, supported by principles that help maximise collective intelligence, integrate and utilise diversity and minimise or transform conflict.

Processes facilitated in this way tend to result in collective clarity and wise action - sustainable, workable solutions to the most complex problems.

The approach ensures that stakeholders buy into the process (because they participate in the design and the process is by definition transparent) and make ongoing feedback, learning and course correction a natural and efficient part of life."

(source unknown to us)

The following sections in this Workbook will give a short introduction to some basic assumptions of how we view organisations and some of the dynamics that happen when people work together.

We all have a view of the world and some basic assumptions about what is true or right or what works in our world or a given situation. Many times these assumptions are unspoken or even unconscious to us, yet they determine our actions.

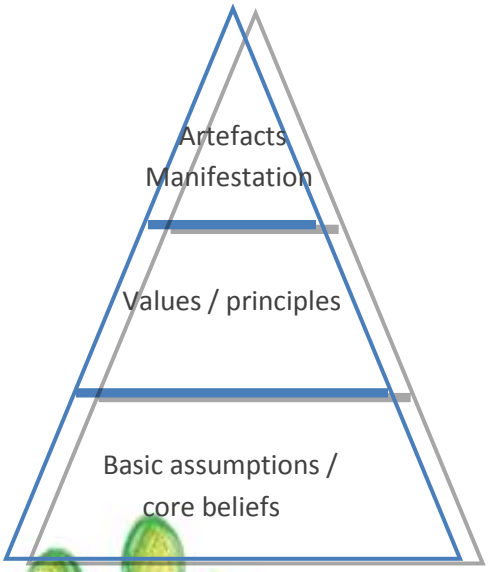
As we communicate or work together we do not always speak from the same "world view" or same assumptions. This usually results in a lack of mutual understanding.

Making these assumptions clear and explicit helps us communicate and bridge our understandings.

To be able to talk about our assumptions or make these world-views explicit we sometimes use metaphors or "mental models". They are like road maps that we can use to orient ourselves. And, of course, the map is not the territory so these models are clearly simplifications of the truth.

Change starts with a change of perspective or in our basic assumptions.

Edgar Schein, a well-known organizational theorist, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), suggests that corporate culture can be considered on at least three distinct levels.



The visible level consists of:

1) "Artefacts" or how our assumptions manifest in the visible world e.g. language, rules and procedures, organisational structures etc.

The invisible level consists of two levels:

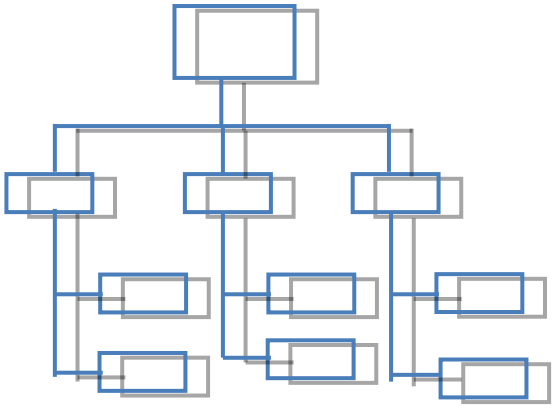
2) **Values** or what we believe is good and right or the principles that guide us in our co-operation and pursuit of our goals.

3) **Basic assumptions** or our core beliefs, whether we are aware of them or not ultimately decide how we act and how we manifest and shape our organisations and our world.

Two Complementary Worldviews

The following sections attempt to give an explanation of how we see the world of organisation and why and when the chosen approach of "Participatory Leadership" makes sense and how it compliments more "traditional" ways of leading.

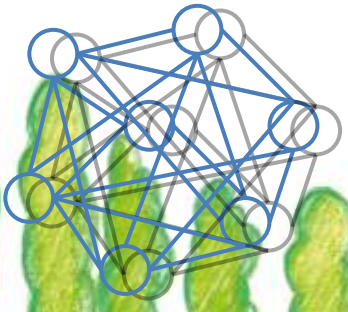
When we are asked to draw our organisations, in any bigger organisation it usually manifests as an organisational chart or "organigramme " with boxes and communication lines.



What are the assumptions and core beliefs we hold about organisations when the picture manifests like this?

This represents a bureaucracy. It also represents a mechanistic view of organisations.

This picture speaks of a belief (basic assumption) that if we can define each part and the relationships between them, the machine will function well. This may also tell us that we believe that leaders are the experts and have the answers, that is why they are at the top of the chart with a bigger office, more responsibility and a bigger pay check. It may also tell us that we believe that people at the bottom of the pyramid do what they are told as long as they are given a good plan and clear instructions or job definitions. It may communicate a sense of order and having things under control. It is a linear system, which makes it streamlined and effective in stable environments.



The assumptions and core beliefs we hold about organisations when the picture manifests like this are based in a "living systems" worldview or viewing organisations as "complex, adaptive systems"?

This picture speaks of a belief (basic assumption) that we can self-organise. There is no clear top or centre and each part seems as important. There are many leaders and leadership can shift. All the parts are interconnected. It may also seem less orderly.

This is a network and a parallel system (as opposed to linear), which makes it resilient, flexible and adaptive in changing environments.

These two paradigms are almost diametrically opposite and often cause a polarisation of views either favouring one or the other. Instead the complexity of our time calls for both. We need to learn how to lead and participate in both contexts and embrace both world-views and know what is needed when.

Seeing an organisation as a living system, or complex adaptive system may seem chaotic to those who are used to working in a hierarchy, which by comparison seems orderly and easier to control.

Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages and are good for different things. Living systems or complex adaptive systems are flexible and resilient, they can embrace diversity and can be innovative. Hierarchies can be stable, effective in action and streamlined. Both are needed.

"Leadership" in these two "systems" requires a different set of skills, as does "followership". We are invited to embrace opposites and hold both worldviews.

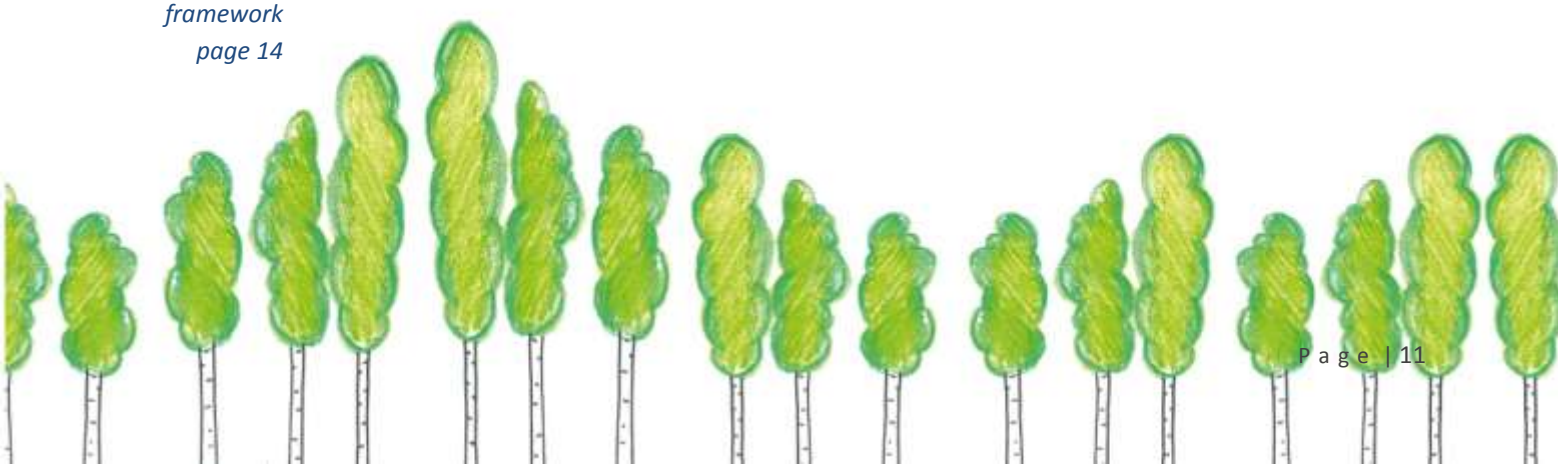
There is a way of thinking and operating in between these two worlds that actually contain and combine elements of both. We call it chaordic leadership. Chaordic leadership is also a highly collaborative form of leadership.

Dee Hock, founder of VISA, addressed this dichotomy in the early 90´s. Based on his VISA experience he both conned the phrase "Chaordic" (containing both chaos and order) and has explored the "Chaordic" organisation. This is the dance we wish to explore in this module.

"By "chaord", I mean any self-organizing, self governing, adaptive, nonlinear, complex organism, organization, community or system, whether physical, biological or social, the behaviour of which harmoniously blends characteristics of both chaos and order. Loosely translated to business, it can be thought of as an organization that harmoniously blends characteristics of competition and cooperation; or from the perspective of education, an organization that seamlessly blends theoretical and experiential learning "

Dee Hock

See also the "Complex adaptive systems" The Cinefin framework page 14



A Few "Chaordic" Assumptions

New Solutions Are Needed

AoH is built on the assumption and experience that an increasing complexity in the problems we face, compel us to find new solutions for the common good, whether in corporations, government, education, non-profits, communities, or families. These solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned if they are co-created by the stakeholders.

New Solutions Grow Between Chaos and Order

If we want to innovate, or work with change, we have to be willing to let go of what we know and step into not knowing. In nature all innovation happens at the edge of chaos, or in the space between chaos and order (the chaordic path). It is in the chaordic space that new connections are created and new possibilities emerge. The way to any major change or transformation will go through chaos into new order.

One of the core beliefs underlying the Art of Hosting Conversations that Matter is based on viewing organisations as living systems or complex adaptive systems, rather than merely machines.

Conversations Matter

It is common sense to bring more people together in conversation. It is the way we have done it in generations past, gathering round fires and sitting in circles.
Conversation is the way we think and make meaning together. It is the way we build strong relationships that invite real collaboration.

Meaningful Conversations Lead To Wise Actions

Human beings that are involved and invited to work together only pay attention to that which is meaningful to them. Conversations that surface a shared clarity on issues of importance foster ownership and responsibility when ideas and solutions must be put into action. Actions that come out of collective clarity are sustainable.

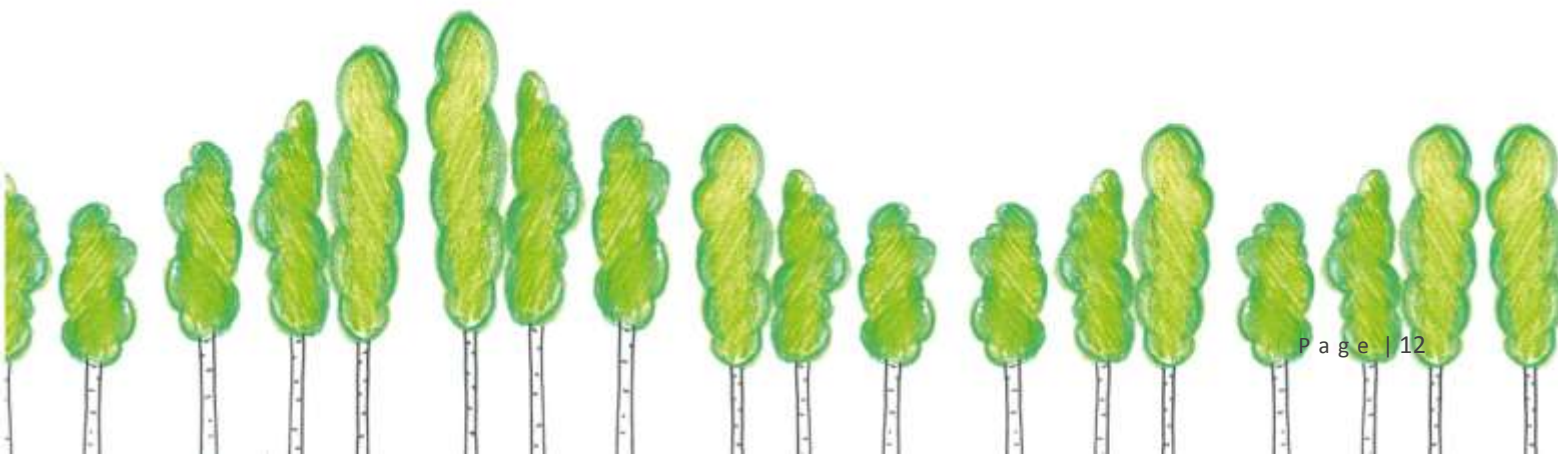
In most, bigger organisations, both exist simultaneously

Organisations Are Living Systems

When human beings join together in an enterprise or organisation they have more in common with a living system than with a machine. Living systems are intelligent and capable of self organising their own and unique solutions. The way you "lead" a living system is radically different from operating a machine.

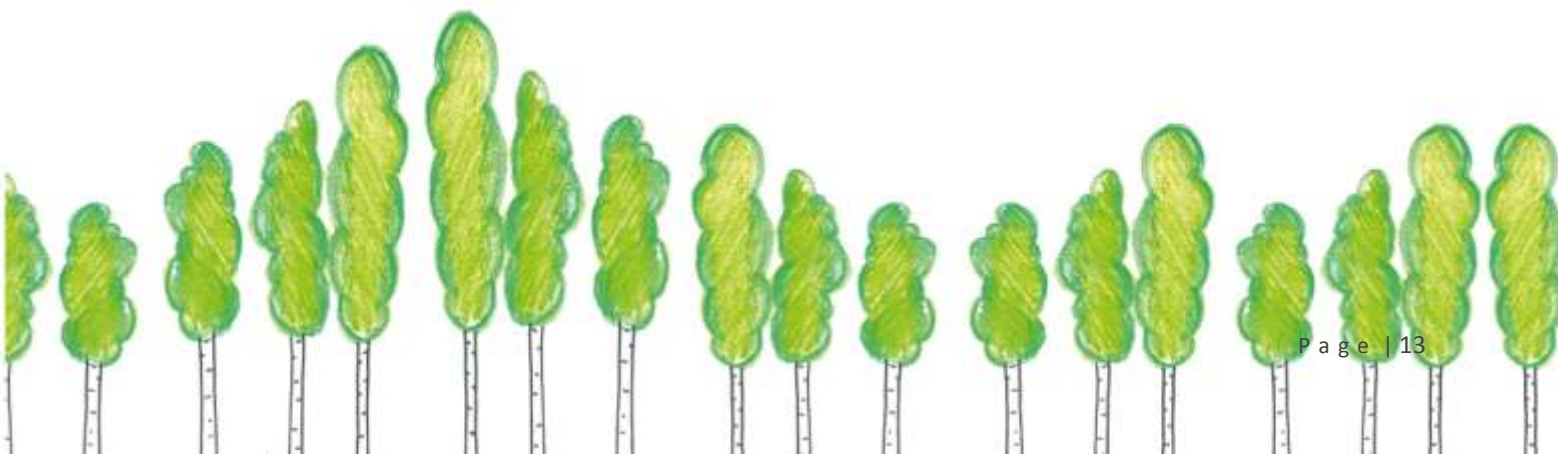
In many organisations the mechanistic view is still the prevailing one obstructing the creativity and collective intelligence of the organisation

When these systems grow big enough they organise in levels. They need structures, containers and boundaries that can facilitate or act as host for the collective resources and intelligence. The structures are there to support what needs to happen rather than impede it.



Chaordic Organisations

- **Are based on clarity of shared purpose and principles.**
- **Are self-organizing and self-governing in whole and in part.**
- **Exist primarily to enable their constituent parts.**
- **Are powered from the periphery, unified from the core.**
- **Are durable in purpose and principle, malleable in form and function.**
- **Equitably distribute power, rights, responsibility and rewards.**
- **Harmoniously combine cooperation and competition.**
- **Learn, adapt and innovate in ever expanding cycles.**
- **Are compatible with the human spirit and the biosphere.**
- **Liberate and amplify ingenuity, initiative and judgment.**
- **Are compatible with and foster diversity, complexity and change.**
- **Constructively utilize and harmonize conflict and paradox.**
- **Restrain and appropriately embed command and control methods.**



Organisations as Living Systems

"In a living system we will need to stop describing tasks and instead facilitate process. We need to become savvy about how to build relationships, how to nurture growing, evolving things. All of us will need better skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating groups, because these are the talents that build strong relationships"

Margaret Wheatley

"People are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, and meaning-seeking. Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, meaning-seeking".

For three hundred years, since Descartes and Newton, our thinking has predominantly been influenced by rationalism. We have been able to figure things out and "be in control". We tend to view our organisations as we view machines—as consisting of clearly defined parts with clearly defined roles and a predictable output.

In a complex world, this mechanistic view may not always be adequate to meet the complex problems and challenges we face. What if organisations should be viewed as living systems as well?

Living systems exist everywhere in nature—bacteria forming colonies or ants coming together to form a system that is capable of creating an anthill. Some termite nests even have air conditioning so the temperature stays the same inside the hill.

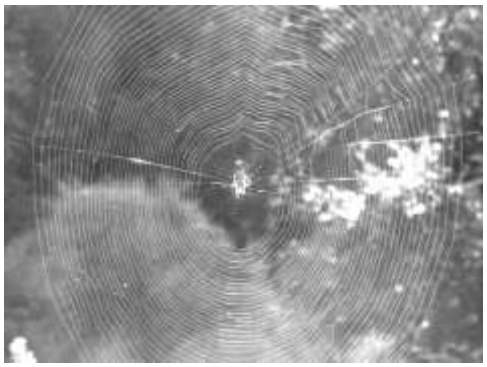
There are two exciting phenomena in nature and living systems:

1) nature has the capability to self-organise

2) self-organisation can lead to emergence = the emergence of totally new properties and qualities = 1+1 = 11 or something totally new and surprising.

What if organisations really are living systems and there could be a simpler way of organising that opens up the possibility for emergence—provided the right conditions are in place?!

What would our organisations and communities look like then?

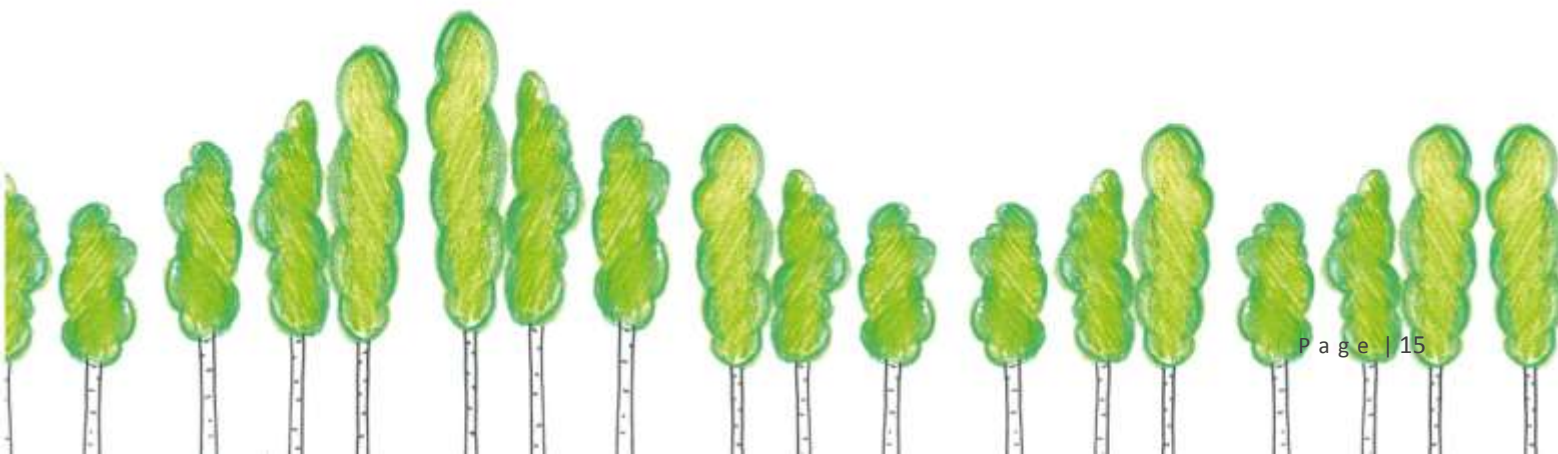


"If organisations are machines, control makes sense. If organisations are process structures, then seeking to impose control through permanent structures is suicide. If we believe that acting responsibly means exerting control by having our hands into everything, then we cannot hope for anything except what we already have….."

Margaret Wheatley – "Leadership and The New Science"

Here are some of the qualities of living systems that studies have discovered:

- A living system accepts only its own solutions—we only support those things we are part of creating
- A living system pays attention only to that which is meaningful to it here and now
- In nature, a living system participates in the development of its neighbour—an isolated system is doomed
- Nature, and all of nature, including ourselves, is in constant change (without 'change management')
- Nature seeks diversity. New relations open up to new possibilities. It is not a question of survival of the fittest—but everything that is fit—as many species as possible. Diversity increases our chance of survival
- Experimentation opens up to what is possible here and now. Nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions, but workable solutions. "Life is intent on finding what works, not what is right"
- All the answers do not exist 'out there'—we must sometimes experiment to find out what works
- A living system cannot be steered or controlled—it can only be teased, nudged, titillated to see things differently
- A system changes when its perception of itself changes
- Who we are together is always different and more than who we are alone. Our range of creative expression increases as we join with others. New relationships create new capacities."
- We (human beings) are capable of self-organising, given the right conditions
- Self-organisation shifts to a higher order

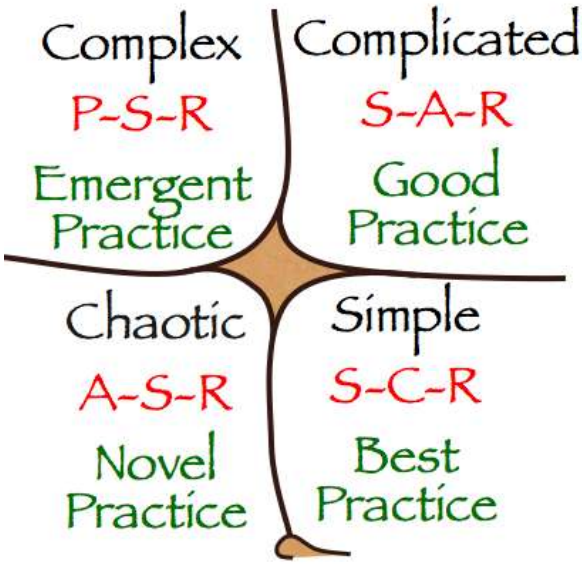


A living system can also be called a complex adaptive system.

Complex Adaptive Systems

The way we lead is very much formed by the way how we perceive reality. Social reality has become an object of systems research and cognitive science, which in turn offers us now a whole range of realities that our actual reality is made of. In what follows we introduce the notion of a system to understand social reality. A system is the whole of its elements and their relationships as well as its rules of behavior or processes. You may wonder where the borders of a system are. If the elements of a system include living beings like humans, or nature then it tends to be dynamic and may move its borders, it actually defines them by its own rules.

A highly instructive synopsis on the various states of systems is found in the "Cynefin framework" developed by the Welsh researcher Dave Snowden that distinguishes five domains of reality that a given system may represent.



The First Four Domains Are:

Simple, in which the relationship between cause and effect is obvious to all, the approach is to *Sense - Categorise - Respond* and we can apply *best* practice.

This is the area we know from the assembly line factory, work and environment constrain any actor so much, that they are left with few options and perform as the system instructs them to do.

Complicated, in which the relationship between cause and effect requires analysis or some other form of investigation and/or the application of expert knowledge, the approach is to *Sense - Analyze - Respond* and we can apply *good* practice.

This is the area of the "expert" that knows better than the actors how the system's relationships actually fit best together. The experts design the way to follow and sound managers implement this advice. To note that in the "complicated" domain, there are linear

cause-effect relationships, but there are so many and not obvious that some expert insight is necessary to find a good way through.

Complex, in which the relationship between cause and effect can only be perceived in retrospect, but not in advance, the approach is to *Probe - Sense - Respond* and we can sense *emergent* practice.

Here the system's relationships are mutually influenced by the actors' behavior. Thus, it is impossible to discern causal relationships in advance; and experts fail as anyone else in trying so.

Leading in complexity is a game of trial and learning. The art is to launch a number of different possible actions together and see what works better. Those are then amplified, and the less working ones might be stopped or revised. Here we work on the basis that we know that we do not know the best way in advance.

Chaotic, in which there is no relationship between cause and effect at systems level, the approach is to *Act - Sense - Respond* and we can discover *novel* practice.

Leading in Chaos is stressful, as the whole system is in stress mode. Systems tend to be unstable and fall from chaotic into simple. This is a catastrophic collapse, as the simplification brought into the system tends to overdo and to suppress the inherent complexity, the system might re-collapse back into chaos again.

The way to stabilize chaotic situations is by Acting-Sensing, that is acting at large scale at once (there is no time left for trying), until the chaos stabilizes into 'normal' complexity where further actions can be tested.

The fifth domain is **Disorder**, which is the state of not knowing what type of causality exists, in which state people will revert to their own comfort zone in making a decision.

In full use, the Cynefin framework has sub-domains, and the boundary between simple and chaotic is seen as a catastrophic one: complacency leads to failure.

The new perspective gained by this is the view from complexity. Leading in complexity is actually simple – it suffices to maintain a number of high quality learning nodes around constant experiments about what could be a new or improved way of acting in the face of constantly fresh constellations in a world where all actors have some large degree of freedom constrained lightly through boundaries and rules of the system.

References:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynefin

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mqNcs8mp74 *(brief explanation of the Cynefin framework)*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Miwb92eZaJg *(how you organize a birthday party for thirteen year old boys using the various domains of systems)*

ART of HOSTING

Working with Vision and Purpose

Having a clear vision and/or a clear purpose are the first steps in bringing order into complexity or the chaordic space.

VISION: ***Where do we want to go? What is our ideal future?***

Definition: **The act or power of seeing**

A vision statement is sometimes called a picture of your organisation in the future but it's so much more than that. Your vision statement is your inspiration, the framework for all your strategic planning.

A vision statement may apply to an entire company or to a single division of that company. Whether for all or part of an organisation, the vision statement answers the question, "Where do we want to go?"

What you are doing when creating a vision statement is articulating your dreams and hopes for your business.

It reminds you of what you are trying to build.

"It is not what the vision is but what it what it does, that is important"

- Peter Senge

THE PURPOSE OF PURPOSE: ***Why we are all here collectively?***

Discovering purpose is to discover why something exists. Often we hurry to get into action, before we properly understand why we need to take action. Gaining clarity on purpose, and especially gaining collective clarity is setting the right course for taking action. A purpose, therefore, becomes a navigational tool like a compass as it helps us to discover the direction of travel for our efforts so they can be of service.

Purpose can also been described as 'the glue' that brings people's contribution and efforts together. This is because it defines why we are working towards something and why it is worth working on this together. In fact, purpose becomes an invisible leader as it both connects different actions taken and supports everyone to know why their contribution is valuable.

"Collective clarity of purpose is the invisible leader"

Mary Parker Follett

Purpose to be a useful navigational tool in seeking the way forward contains three elements:

Higher Intent – why action is needed for the greater good in service of life, e.g. "We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men" - Jean Monnet (about the European Union)

Statement of Purpose – what effort is needed here and what is being pursued so that direction of action can be set, (does not define the destination, instead it invites and inspires others to participate with clarity).

Intention – The will to be in pursuit of grounding the higher intent through the actions we take regardless of the challenges that might arise.

When these three elements are aligned and collectively understood – the greater good of why we need to take action, the clarity of what we are pursuing in order to ground the higher intent and the will to do this regardless of the conditions – then purpose becomes a powerful attractor that allows people to put their individual efforts to work together on making a difference for all.

In an organisation or a community, many purposes co-exist, and often not enough effort is given to interconnect these purposes so that it can often feel that different and conflicting purposes are at play. It is therefore important to remember that different purposes are at play, for example:

- the purpose of the stakeholders that the organisation serves
- the purpose of the whole community / organisation
- the purpose of the core group
- the purpose of each member of the core team

In the light of this, the following questions may inspire your collective inquiry into your shared purpose:

- What is our collective purpose?
- What is the purpose of our function, team, project?
- How does my purpose and the purpose we are all here to accomplish align?
- What is the purpose that is at the heart of this work and that will align us all to accomplish it?

Putting effort, therefore in gaining clarity and specifically collective clarity on purpose is a key strategic action that if overlooked, usually ends up with entanglements, confusion and even conflicts instead of achieving outcomes that make a difference. Seeking purpose is not something to be done once, either. As action is taken and more is discovered as a result, coming back to check in with purpose – are we still on course or do we have a new one arising is a wise thing to do.

A Statement of Purpose defines, with absolute clarity and deep conviction,
the purpose of the community.
An effective statement of purpose will be a clear, commonly understood statement
of that which identifies and binds the community together as worthy of pursuit.
When properly done it can usually be expressed in a single sentence.
Participants will say about the purpose,

If we could achieve that, my life would have meaning.

Dee Hock

The four-fold practice

There are four basic practices that are key to the Art of Hosting and Participatory Leadership:

1) Being present (pre-sensing)
2) Engaging in conversations (participating)
3) Hosting conversations (contributing)
4) Becoming a community of practice (co-creating)

Being truly present, engaging skilfully in conversations, being a good host of conversations and engaging with others in co-creation, are all practices or skills that are easily understood but it takes a continuous practice to hone these skills.

A practice means actively and regularly doing something to maintain or enhance a skill or ability.

1. Being Present (Pre-Sensing)

...host yourself first—be willing to endure chaos—keep the "space" or possibilities open—stay in the fire of the present...

Being present means showing up, undistracted, prepared, clear about the need and what your personal contribution can be. It allows you to check in with yourself and develop the personal practice of curiosity about the outcomes of any gathering. Presence means making space to devote a dedicated time to working with others.

If you are distracted, called out or otherwise located in many different places, you cannot be present in one. For meetings to have deep results, every person in the room should be fully present.

Being present also means being aware of one's environment, other people and what impacts you and how you impact others.

Collectively, it is good practice to become present together as a meeting begins, be it through a welcome, a good framing, through "checking-in" to the subject matter or task at hand by hearing everyone's' voice in the matter or as simple as taking a moment of silence.

Invite a collective slowing down so that all participants in a meeting can be present together.

2. Participate and Practice Conversations

...be willing to listen fully, respectfully, without judgment and thinking you already know all the answer—practice conversation mindfully...

Conversation is an art, it is not just talk. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in the service of the whole. Curiosity and judgment cannot live together in the same space. If we are judging what we are hearing, we cannot be curious about the outcome, and if we have called a meeting because we are uncertain of the way forward, being open is a key skill and capacity. Only by practicing skilful conversation can we find our best practice together.

If we practice conversation mindfully we might slow down meetings so that wisdom and clarity can work quickly. When we talk mindlessly, we neither hear each other nor do we allow space for the clarity to arise. The art of conversation is the art of slowing down to speed up.

3. Hosting Conversations

...be courageous, inviting and willing to initiate conversations that matter—find and host powerful questions with the stakeholders—and then make sure you harvest the insights, the patterns, learnings and wise actions...

Hosting conversations is both more and less than facilitating. It is an act of leadership and means taking responsibility for creating and holding the "container" in which a group of people can do their best work together.

You can create this container using the seven helpers (page35) as starting points, and although you can also do this in the moment, the better prepared you are the better. The best preparation is being fully present.

The bare minimum to do is to discern the need, get clear on the purpose of the meeting, prepare a good, powerful question to initiate the conversation and know how you will harvest and what will be done with that harvest, to ensure that results are sustainable and the effort was worth it.

Hosting conversations takes courage and it takes a bit of certainty and faith in your people. We sometimes give short shrift to conversational spaces because of the fear we experience in stepping up to host. It is, however, a gift to host a group and it is a gift to be hosted well.

4. Co-creating With Others—Becoming a Community of Practice

...be willing to co create and co-host with others, blending your knowing, experience and practices with theirs, working partnership..

The fourth practice is about showing up in a conversation without being a spectator, and contributing to the collective effort to sustain results. The best conversations arise when we listen for what is in the middle, what is arising out of the centre of our collaboration. It is not about the balancing of individual agendas, it is about finding out what is new. And when that is discovered work unfolds beautifully when everyone is clear about what they can contribute to the work.

In a truly co-creative process it becomes irrelevant who said or contributed what—the gift is in the synergy and inspiration when we each build on each other's knowledge and the whole becomes much bigger than the sum of the parts.

This is how results become sustainable over time—they fall into the network of relationships that arise from a good conversation, from friends working together.

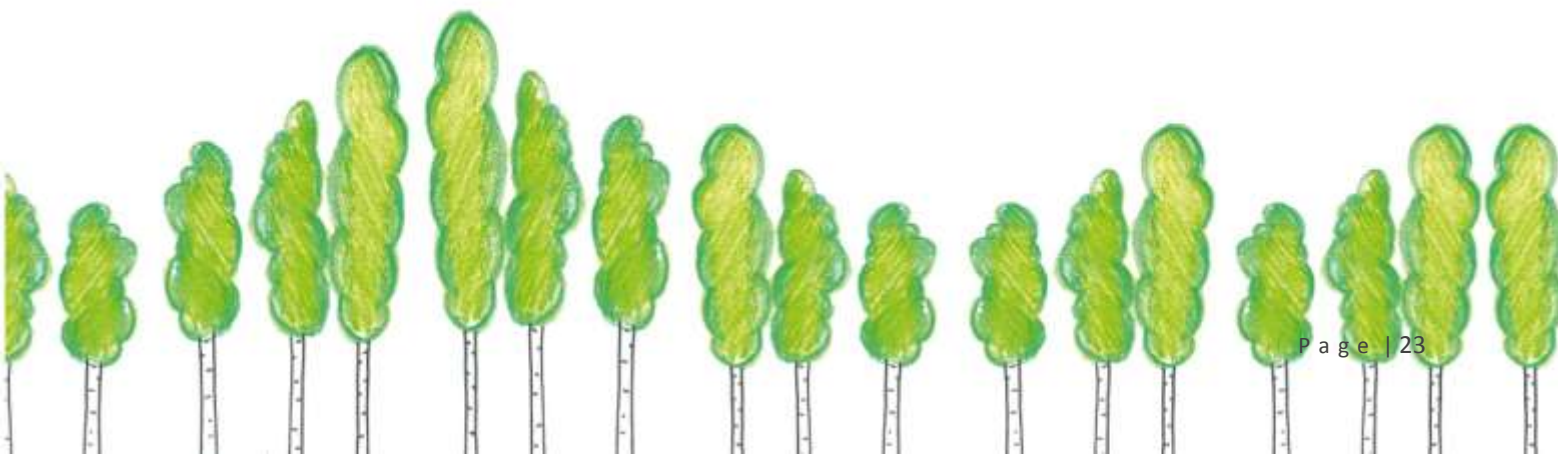
The collaborative field can produce unexpected and surprising results.

From a Learner to a Community That Learns

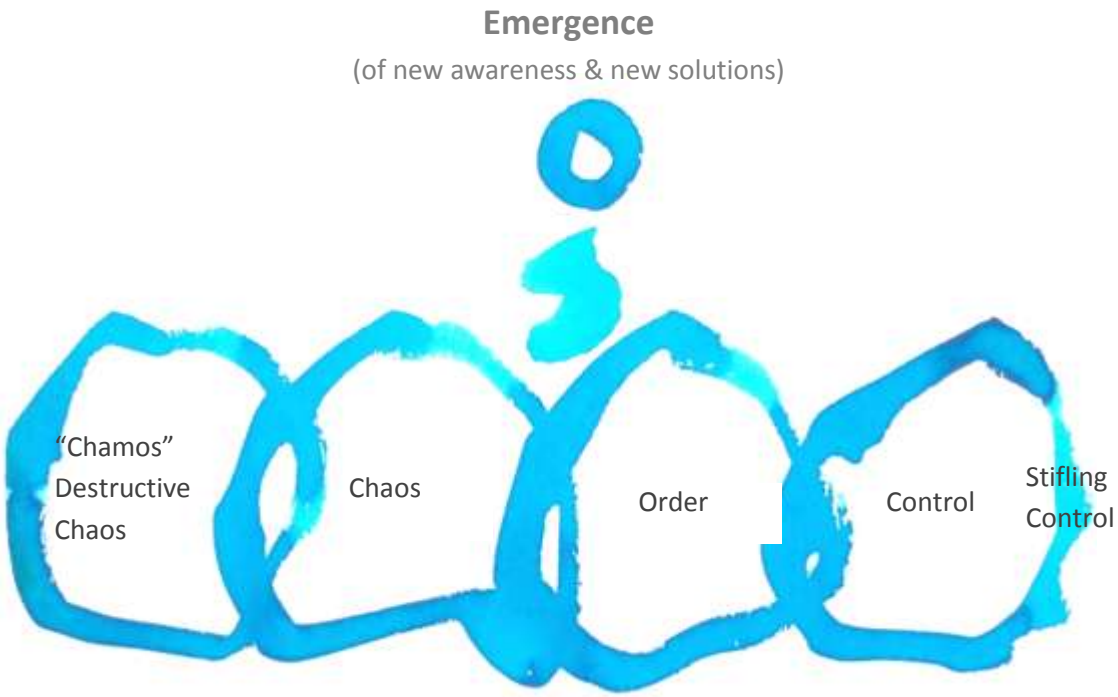
As we learn to be truly present and engage in conversations that really matter we become learners. As learners many doors are open to us.

As we begin to host conversation and connect with other hosts or practitioners we become a community of learners or practitioners. As a community we own a much bigger capacity than as individual learners.

As a community of individual practitioners or learners truly becomes "a community that learns", that is where we really enter the collective intelligence. We multiply our capacity and enter the field of emergence.



The Chaordic Path



Chaos—Order—Control are different states of being and experiencing. We tend to feel safest in the state of order, or for some people, in control. Being out of control is scary if we are looking for predictability. If we have a mechanistic view on organisations, our tendency will be to stay within the realms of order and control, where things are predictable and stable—and where we produce status quo or "more of the same"—which in some cases is exactly what is needed.

The world and times we live in are, however, neither predictable nor stable and call for more flexibility as "more of the same" solutions are not meeting the challenges. If we are looking for innovative, new solutions we will find them in a place between chaos and order—the chaordic path.

The chaordic path is actually the story of our natural world—form arises out of nonlinear, complex, diverse systems. "At the edge of chaos" is where life innovates, where things are not hard wired, but are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos.

As in nature so in organisations the path between Chaos and Order leads us to the new—to collective learning and real-time innovation. Instead of relying on controlling every detail in our organisations or communities from the top down, many leaders today see the need to access the collective intelligence and collective wisdom of everyone, which can be, at times, a "messy" process until we reach new insight and clarity.

To lead our organisation on the chaordic path we need "chaordic confidence", to have the courage to stay in the dance of order and chaos long enough to support a generative emergence that allows the new, collective intelligence and wise action to occur.

As we tread the line between chaos and order, individually and collectively, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. It is in the phase of not knowing, before we reach new clarity, that the temptation to rush for certainty or grab for control is strongest. We are all called to walk this path with open minds and some confidence if we want to reach something wholly new.

In this space of emergence, we leave our collective encounters with something that not one of us individually brought into the room.

The art is to stay in the fine balance between chaos and order. Straying too far to either side is counterproductive. On the far side of chaos is chamos or destructive chaos where everything disintegrates and dies. On the far side of order is stifling control—where there is no movement which eventually means death. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion—the very opposite of chaordic confidence. Staying on the chaordic path is where the balance is and where life thrives.

Chaos/Order is the Place for Leadership

The practice of leadership and particularly participatory leadership resides in the place between chaos and order. When facing new challenges that cannot be met with the same way we are currently working, we need to learn new ways of operating. It is during these times of uncertainty and increased complexity, where results cannot be predicted that leaders need to invite others to share diverse knowledge to discover new purpose and strategy and decide the way forward.

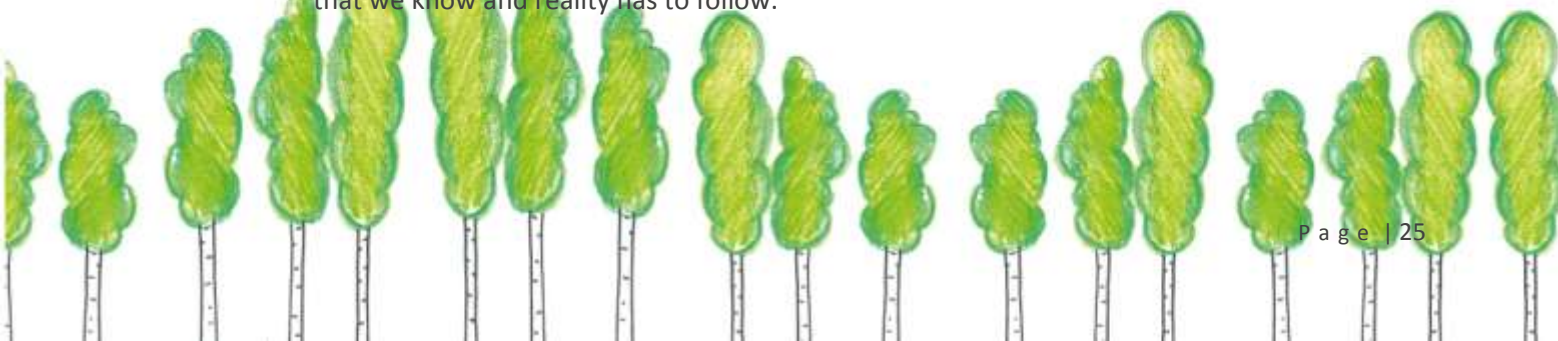
Order/Control is a Place for Management

The practice of management lies between order and control where activities need to be maintained and executed routinely so that a particular standard results. It is the place where 'more of the same' is required, e.g. landing an airplane safely, operating on a patient, etc. Therefore, it is where predictability is called for and where procedures and standards are clearly defined and need to be adhered to.

Link with the Cynefin Framework

The path between **Order and Chaos** is informed by the complexity insights: Order emerges out of Chaos and is stabilized against it. We know that we do not know and we stay in constant learning mode.

The path between **Control and Order** is when we begin declaring and defining best practices or recipes or procedures to follow, that are not emergent and fluid but constrain the whole system. We are then leading like in the simple or complicated domain with the inherent risk of increasing the possible chaos, and to suppress creativity and learning: Here we assume that we know and reality has to follow.



ART of HOSTING

The Chaordic Stepping Stones - A Way to Walk the Path

There are clear strategic steps we can take when walking the Chaordic path. These steps are a way of bringing just enough structure or order into the chaos to keep us moving forward on the chaordic path. These steps allow us to progress gradually giving our project or organisation more form as we progress.

The first step is identifying the real need, followed by formulating a clear purpose, then defining the principles that help guide us towards our goal (as attributes or characteristics describing where we want to be or how we want to get there), gradually proceeding to defining a concept, then giving it more structure and moving into practice. These steps can be used both as a planning tool and to help understand what you are discovering about an organisation, community or initiative.

For a description of the chaordic design process, see page 66

For the VISA story, see page 81

The Chaordic Stepping Stones

The *Chaordic* process is in continual motion, each step integrating and including the previous steps. It is an iterative, non-linear process supported by an ongoing harvest and feedback loop. Once you have defined the principles you check back if they support the purpose etc. The process allows us to be able to remain in both reflection and practice.

Principles of Cooperation

Scientists have discovered that the small, brave act of cooperating with another person, of choosing trust over cynicism, generosity over selfishness, makes the brain light up with quiet joy.

Natalie Angier, Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter, describing a recent study of the effects of behaviour on brain chemistry

Creating a "Container": ..... How are we going to behave together in pursuit of our purpose?

When we enter an inquiry where we do not have ready or easy answers and we cannot see the obvious solution—we also enter "chaos" together.

In walking the chaordic path together it is wise to start by creating the conditions that can help contain that chaos. We call this creating a "container".

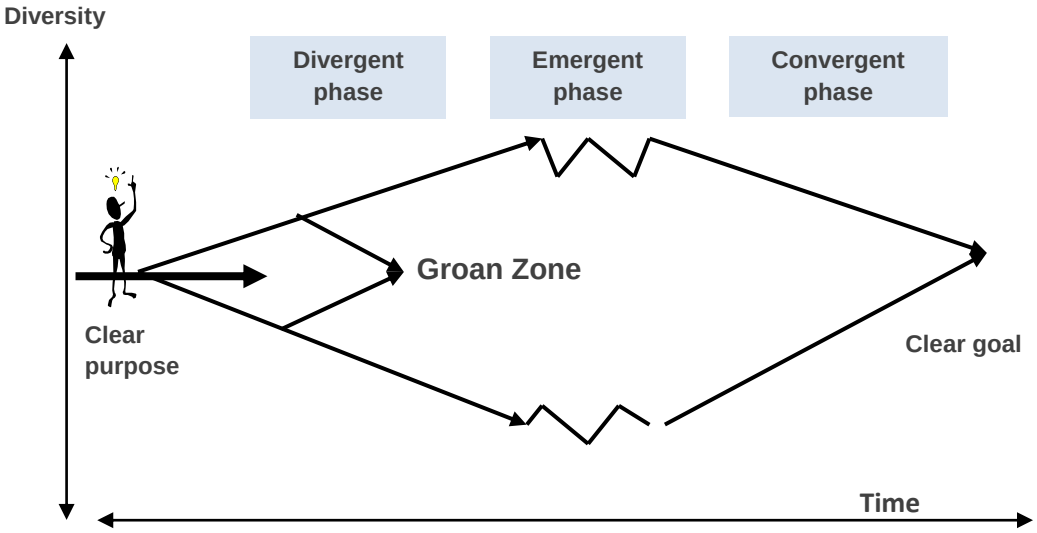
One fundamental way to create a container is to agree on how we want to work or "travel" together in pursuit of our goal. In other words we define some agreements or principles of co-operation.

Principles, when defined with clarity, conviction and common understanding—guide our pursuit of purpose. Principles bind a community together and serve as a touchstone to remind us of how we have agreed to act and decide together around our purpose.

Divergence and Convergence

In entering into an inquiry or multi stakeholder conversation we operate with three different phases in the process—divergent, emergent and convergent. Each of these phases are different and it is important for a host to know where we are in the process and what is needed in each phase.

Divergent and convergent ways of thinking and working are complimentary and different. The 'breath' of divergence and convergence, of breathing in and breathing out, is at the heart of our process design. Every process goes through several such breathing cycles. (See also the section on process design page 32)



In the divergent phase, or "Pre-ject", there is as yet no clear goal. This is a "goal-seeking" phase where a clear shared purpose gives the collective direction. Another driver in this phase is asking the right questions.

If you close the divergent phase too soon, the level of newness or innovation will be less.

Ideally a group will stay in inquiry in the divergent phase until a new shared and agreed solution or goal is seen by everyone.

Divergent Thinking: Typically generates alternatives, has free-for-all open discussion, gathers diverse points of view and unpacks the problem.

The Divergent Phase Is non-linear and needs "chaos time". It is process-oriented and needs prolonged decision time.

Convergent Thinking: Means evaluating alternatives, summarising key points, sorting ideas into categories and arriving at general conclusions.

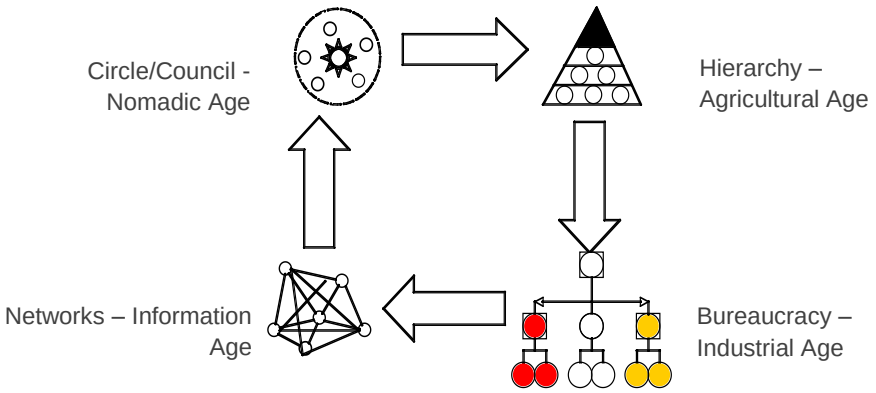
The Convergent Phase Is goal-oriented and focused, linear, structured and usually subject to time constraints. It is focused on getting results and may require quick decisions.

The Emergent Phase

Between the divergent and convergent phase, is fondly known as the 'groan zone'. It is the phase where different ideas and needs are integrated. It may require us to stretch our own understanding to hold and include other points of view. We call it the groan zone because it may feel messy, an uncomfortable stretch, but it is also the phase where the new solution emerges.

Organising Patterns - Four Organizational Paradigms

Over the millennia, human beings have developed many different ways of organising together. Each new age of civilization has its signature form of organization. One of the questions that the Art of Hosting community is continually asking itself is "What are the organisational concepts that we can develop together that are actually good for us, and are good for this time?"



Circle

As nomads we lived in small groups. The circle became the mother of all our organisational forms—humans started sitting in circle as soon as they invented fires to sit around. We told stories, held elder councils and solved problems in this way. This form is very useful for reflection, storytelling, being together. Purpose is in the centre—it is shared.

Hierarchy (Triangle)

As we stopped our nomadic wandering and settled in one place, we developed agriculture. Our communities grew bigger, and the clergy (for ritual) and the warrior or soldier (for protection) classes emerged. We began to develop hierarchies and organized in "levels" where one person or group of people had power over others. The triangular form of hierarchy is very useful for action, for getting things done. Purpose is held at the top level.

Bureaucracy (Square)

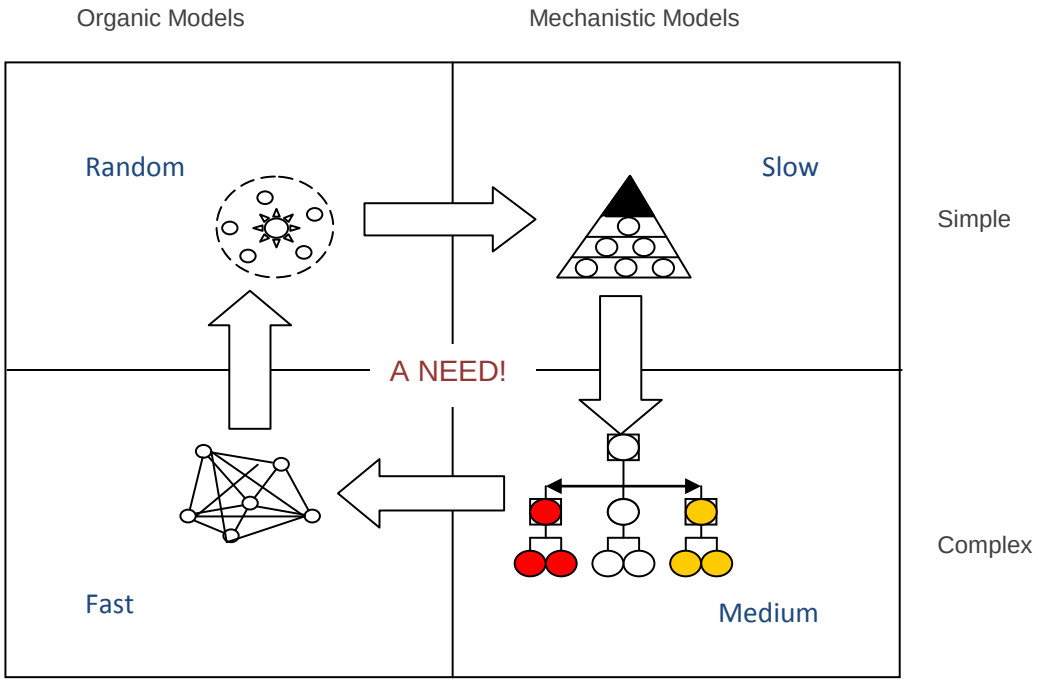
Simple hierarchies are not designed to deal with a high degree of complexity. The industrial age brought change and more complexity. Bureaucracy became the predominant organizational model, specializing horizontally and embracing hierarchy, which controlled vertically. Together they managed much greater complexity than either could do alone..

Bureaucracy is fantastic for stability, optimizing and maintaining the status quo, and for managing complex situations to a certain degree. As complexity and speed grows—the bureaucracy is not agile enough to respond quickly. It typically moves slowly in the face of change. Purpose in the bureaucracy is also at the top.

Networks

A more recent organisational form (first described in the 70's) of networks emerged in the information/communication age, as a response to a need to organize and re-organize quickly and flexibly. Networks are collections of individuals, circles (small groups) or triangles (hierarchies)—nodes that are connected together. Networks can link all types of organisations. Networks also exist inside bureaucracies. Networks usually gather around a shared purpose and are great for relationship, flexibility and innovation, and for getting things done fast. The connection is guided by individual purpose harmonizing with a collective purpose. The different nodes are connected together because their respective purposes need each other. Once the need is no longer there, the network connection will most often lapse.

Pace of Change



Source: Jessica Lipner and Jeffrey Stamps

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When a new organisational form emerges, the older ones do not disappear. Each form has both advantages and shortcomings—each is good for different things.

When we want to start an organisation ourselves or organise something in our lives, which one of these organisational forms do we choose? What we have seen in the Art of Hosting community is that we need to build structures that can use any of these forms at the right time. As need arises, how are we able to respond with the most useful organisational form?

When something needs to get done, then triangle is great. When we need to stop and reflect, circle is useful. When we need stability and deal with some degree of complexity, it is good to have a bureaucracy. When we need to innovate, networks work best. So what is the next level of organisational form that can hold all of these? The Art of Hosting community is observing the emergence of a new pattern…

A Fifth Organisational Paradigm

The fifth organisational pattern is a combination of the circle or council for collective clarity, the triangle or project team (hierarchy) for action and the square or bureaucracy for accountability, structure and stability and the network for rapid sharing of information, Inspiration and linking all the parts together.

At the centre, always, is our purpose. Typically, a core team will gather in a circle around a purpose, which will be based on meeting a need that is felt in our life contexts. As we gather around the core purpose, we begin to form relationships with others in the circle that, as we map the connections, start to show up as a network. But while these relationships can help us all with our individual work, they do not necessarily allow us to manifest our shared purpose in the world, which will typically involve making things happen. The first step might be to develop actions to sustain the core team. So individual members take responsibility for different aspects—like organising meetings or raising funds—other members step up in a support role and this leads to the formation of triangles (e.g. project teams). The triangles will be dictated by the central purpose. Hierarchy forms in response to a collective purpose.

Once the core team is sustainable, the next step is typically to open up the conversation to the wider community that feels the need to be part of the endeavour and that informs the purpose at the centre of our circle. A triangle from the core team might then get together to call a larger-scale assembly, which might become a circle of supporters for the larger project. The inner circle is reaching out to the next level, which will in turn reach out to a wider community, creating concentric circles rippling out into our society, each circle connected to the others by triangles animating action informed by the core purpose.

The pattern of core purpose, circles, triangles and networks repeats again and again. Another typical finding is that as the core team goes out into the community and the conversation expands, the core purpose is informed by a broader perspective and is adjusted accordingly to accommodate the next level of scale and action. It is important to understand that what we are describing here is not a deliberately designed model, but a pattern that has emerged naturally and spontaneously throughout the global hosting community as we have collectively developed our work of hosting in ever-larger and more complex adaptive systems.

CORE METHODS

The following pages will give a short introduction to some of the core methodologies that are good practice in participatory leadership. They are designed to engage a group of people (large or small) in strategic conversations, where our collective wisdom and intelligence can be engaged in service of finding the best solutions for a common purpose.

There are some **basic principles or qualities** that are common to all these methodologies, e.g.

- They offer a **simple structure** that helps to engage small or large groups in conversations that can lead to results.
- They each have their **special advantages and limitations.**
- They are usually **based on dialogue**, with **intentional speaking** (speaking when you really have something to say) and **attentive listening** (listening to understand) as **basic practices**, allowing us to go on an exploration and discovery together, rather than trying to convince each other of our own present truths.
- **Suspending assumptions** is a basic practice. It allows us to listen without bias (or with less bias) and to examine our own present truths.
- **Circle is the basic organisational form**, whether used as the only form (e.g. circle practice) or used as many smaller conversation circles, woven into a bigger conversation, (e.g. World Café, Open Space)
- Meeting in a circle is a **meeting of equals**. Generally all these methodologies inspire peer-to-peer discovery and learning.
- **Inquiry or powerful questions are a driving force**. Answers tend to close a conversation while inquiry keeps the conversation going deeper.
- The purpose of all this is to "think well together, that is to **engage the collective intelligence for better solutions**.
- **Facilitating** these engagements or conversations is more like stewarding or "**hosting**", allowing the solutions to emerge from the wisdom in the middle. Hosting well requires a certain proficiency in the four-fold practice of: being present in the moment to what is happening, engaging in conversations with others, hosting conversations and co-creating or co-hosting with others.
- There are a number of **conditions** that need to be in place for engagement to work well. Any engagement or strategic conversation needs to be based in a **real need**

and has to have a **clear purpose**. Any **"givens" or boundary conditions** need to be clear ahead of time. You may also have defined success-criteria or have an idea of the outcome even if the concrete **solutions will emerge from the conversations** (see also the section on design)

The Circle

Resource:
www.peerspirit.com

This handout is a gift from PeerSpirit, Inc. an educational company devoted to life and leader-ship through Circle, Quest and Story. Founded in 1994, PeerSpirit has taught circle process in the US, Canada, Europe and Africa. It is a consortium consisting of Christina Baldwin, Ann Linnea and teaching colleagues with areas of expertise in health care administration, religious/church administration and congregational health, education, nonprofit boards, environmental and community revisioning.

The circle, or council, is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respectful conversation for thousands of years. The circle has served as the foundation for many cultures.

What transforms a meeting into a circle is the willingness of people to shift from informal socializing or opinionated discussion into a receptive attitude of thoughtful speaking and deep listening and to embody and practice the structures outlined here.

The components of the circle

Intention

- Welcome Start-point
- Centre and Check-in/Greeting
- Agreements
- Three Principles and Three Practices
- Guardian of process
- Check-out and Farewell

INTENTION

Intention shapes the circle and determines who will come, how long the circle will meet, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected. The caller of the circle spends time articulating intention and invitation.

WELCOME OR START-POINT

Once people have gathered, it is helpful for the host, or a volunteer participant, to begin the circle with a gesture that shifts people's attention from social space to council space. This gesture of welcome may be a moment of silence, reading a poem, or listening to a song--whatever invites centering.

ESTABLISHING THE CENTER

The centre of a circle is like the hub of a wheel: all energies pass through it, and it holds the rim together. To help people remember how the hub helps the group, the centre of a circle usually holds objects that represent the intention of the circle. Any symbol that fits this purpose or adds beauty will serve: flowers, a bowl or basket, a candle.

CHECK-IN/GREETING

Check-in helps people into a frame of mind for council and reminds everyone of their commitment to the expressed intention. It insures that people are truly present. Verbal sharing, especially a brief story, weaves the interpersonal net.

Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and proceeds around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken. Sometimes

people place individual objects in the centre as a way of signifying their presence and relationship to the intention.

SETTING CIRCLE AGREEMENTS:

The use of agreements allows all members to have a free and profound exchange, to respect a diversity of views, and to share responsibility for the well-being and direction of the group. Agreements often used include:

- We will hold stories or personal material in confidentiality.
- We listen to each other with compassion and curiosity.
- We ask for what we need and offer what we can.
- We agree to employ a group guardian to watch our need, timing, and energy. We agree to pause at a signal, and to call for that signal when we feel the need to pause.

THREE PRINCIPLES:

The circle is an all leader group.

1. **Leadership rotates** among all circle members.
2. **Responsibility is shared** for the quality of experience.
3. **Reliance is on wholeness**, rather than on any personal agenda.

THREE PRACTICES

1. To speak with intention: noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment.
2. To listen with attention: respectful of the learning process for all members of the group.
3. To tend the well-being of the circle: remaining aware of the impact of our contributions.

FORMS OF COUNCIL:

The circle commonly uses three forms of council: talking piece, conversation and reflection.
Talking piece council is often used as part of check-in, check-out, and whenever there is a desire to slow down the conversation, collect all voices and contributions, and be able to speak without interruption.
Conversation council is often used when reaction, interaction, and an interjection of new ideas, thoughts and opinions are needed.
Reflection, or Silent council gives each member time and space to reflect on what is occurring, or needs to occur, in the course of a meeting. Silence may be called so that each person can consider the role or impact they are having on the group, or to help the group realign with their intention, or to sit with a question until there is clarity.

GUARDIAN

The single most important tool for aiding self-governance and bringing the circle back to intention is the role of the guardian. To provide a guardian, one circle member at a time volunteers to watch and safeguard group energy and observe the circle's process.

The guardian usually employs a gentle noise-maker, such as a chime, bell, or rattle, that signals everyone to stop action, take a breath, rest in a space of silence. Then the guardian makes this signal again and speaks to why he/she called the pause. Any member may call for a pause.

CHECKOUT AND FAREWELL

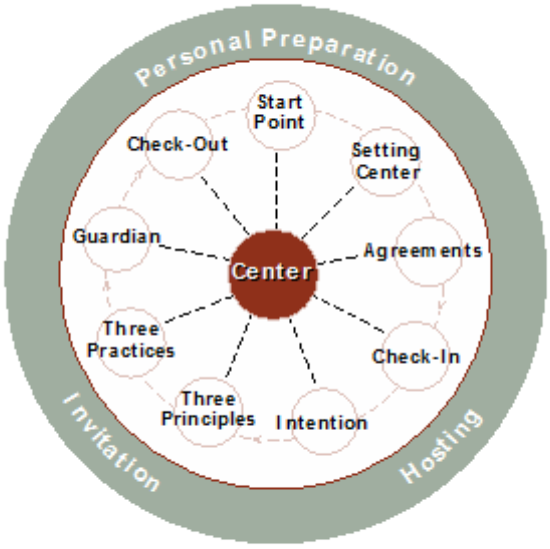
At the close of a circle meeting, it is important to allow a few minutes for each person to comment on what they learned, or what stays in their heart and mind as they leave.

Closing the circle by checking out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on what has transpired, and to pick up objects if they have placed something in the center.

As people shift from council space to social space or private time, they release each other from the intensity of attention being in circle requires. Often after check-out, the host, guardian, or a volunteer will offer a few inspirational words of farewell, or signal a few seconds of silence before the circle is released.

May your circles be great teachers and places to rest on the journey.

The Components of Circle



Appreciative Inquiry

Resource:
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for intentional change that identifies the best of 'what is' to pursue dreams and possibilities of 'what could be'; a cooperative search for strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system and that hold potential for inspired, positive change. (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)

Assumptions

- In every community something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment—there is more than one reality
- The act of asking questions influences the community in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future when they carry forward parts of the past
- If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
"Felt Need" identification of the problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of "what is"
Analysis of causes	Envisioning "what might be"
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing "What should be" Innovating "What will be"
Basic assumption: an organisation is a problem to be solved.	Basic assumption: an organisation is a mystery to be embraced.

General flow of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

Appreciative inquiry can be done as a longer structured process going through phases of:

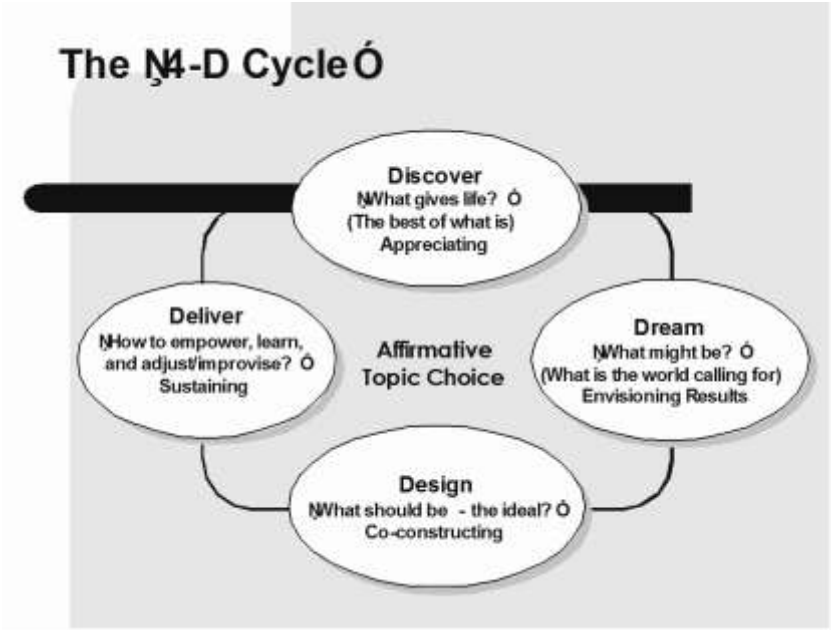
Discovery: Identifying organisational processes that work well.

Dream: Envisioning processes that would work well in the future.

Design: Planning and prioritising those processes.

Delivery: Implementing the proposed design.

The basic idea is to build organisations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.



At the centre is a positive topic choice—how we ask even the first question contains the seeds of change we are looking to enact.

Appreciative Inquiry can also be used as a way of opening a meeting or conversation by identifying what already works. What do you value most about yourself, work and organisation?

What is Appreciative Inquiry Good For?

Appreciative Inquiry is useful when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process from a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in "what is" toward "what could be". Appreciative Inquiry can be used with individuals, partners, small groups, or large organisations.

Materials Needed:

Varies depending on how the methodology is used.

ART of HOSTING

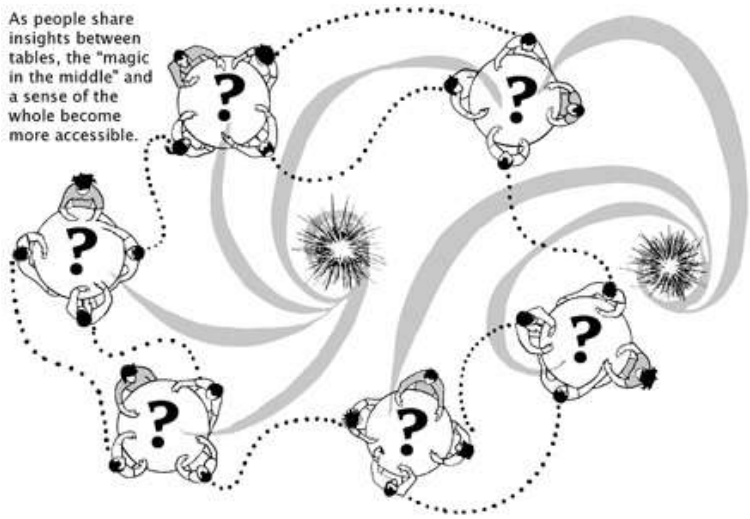
The World Café

Resource:
www.theworldcafe.com

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor...as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among 'table conversations' at the World Café. (From The World Café Resource Guide)

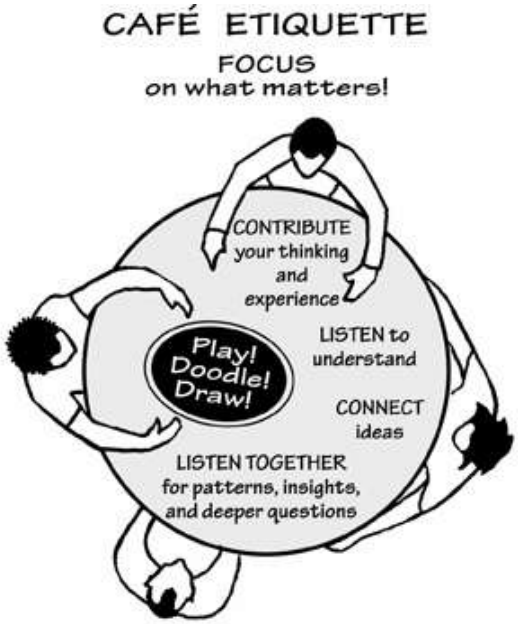
Operating Principles of World Cafe:

- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage each person's contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Make collective knowledge visible



Assumptions of World Cafe:

- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Collective insight evolves from honouring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions.
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways.



General Flow of a World Café:

- Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
- Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually of 20-30 minutes each—have some good questions!
- Ask one person to stay at the table as a "host" and invite the other table members to move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights
- Ask the table host to share key insights, questions, and ideas briefly with new table members, then let folks move through the rounds of questions.
- After you've moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations.

What is World Café Good For?

World Café is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people. The café format is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes—information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection exploration and action planning.

When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for both moving through the rounds of questions (likely to take longer than you think!) and some type of whole-group harvest.

Materials Needed:

- Small tables (36-42"), preferably round
- Chairs for participants and presenters
- Tablecloths
- Flip chart paper or paper placemats for covering the tables
- Markers
- Flip chart or large paper for harvesting collective knowledge or insights
- Posters/table tents showing the Café Etiquette
- Materials for harvesting

This information was adapted from Café to Go at www.theworldcafe.com

Open Space Technology

Resource: *www.openspaceworld.org*

The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through. Typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and to truly invite organisations to thrive in times of swirling change.

Principles of Open Space:

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- When it's over it's over

The Law of Two Feet:

If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere where you can.

PASSION & RESPONSIBILTY

The four principles and the law work to create a powerful event motivated by the passion and bounded by the responsibility of the participants.

Roles in Open Space:

- Host—announce and host a workshop
- Participant—participate in a workshop
- Bumble bee—"shop" between workshops
- Butterfly—take time out to reflect

General Flow of an Open Space Meeting:

The group convenes in a circle and is welcomed by the sponsor.

The facilitator provides an overview of the process and explains how it works. The facilitator invites people with issues of concern to come into the circle, write the issue on a piece of paper and announces it to the group.

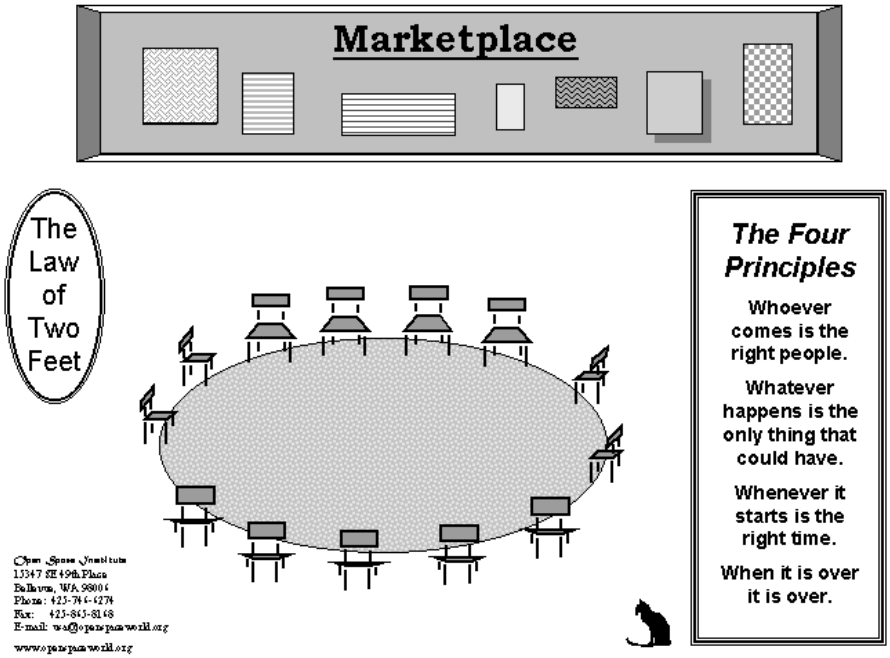
These people are "conveners." Each convener places their paper on the wall and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continues until there are no more agenda items.

The group then breaks up and heads to the agenda wall, by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in.

Dialogue sessions convene for the rest of the meeting. Recorders (determined by each group) capture the important points and post the reports on the news wall. All of these reports will be harvested in some way and returned to the larger group.

Following a closing or a break, the group might move into 'convergence', a process that takes the issues that have been discussed and attaches action plans to them to "get them out of the room."

The group then finishes the meeting with a closing circle where people are invited to share comments, insights and commitments arising from the process.



What is Open Space Good For

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context, including strategic direction-setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

Open Space Technology is an excellent meeting format for any situation in which there is:

- A real issue of concern
- Diversity of players
- Complexity of elements
- Presence of passion (including conflict)
- A need for a quick decision

Open space can be used in groups of 10 to 1,000—and probably larger. It's important to give enough time and space for several sessions to occur. The outcomes can be dramatic when a group is uses its passion and responsibility—and is given the time—to make something happen.

Materials Needed:

- Circle of chairs for participants
- Letters or numbers around the room to indicate meeting locations
- A blank wall that will become the agenda
- A news wall for recording and posting the results of the dialogue sessions
- Breakout spaces for meetings
- Paper on which to write session topics/questions
- Markers/Pencils/Pens
- Posters of the Principles, Law of Two Feet, and Roles (optional)
- Materials for harvest

Collective Mind-map

This process is adapted and inspired by "Future Search"—a social technology developed by Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff

*"A **mind map** is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked to and arranged radially around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, decision making, and writing."*

Wikipedia

A Collective Mind-Map

A collective mind-map is a quick and simple way to create a shared overview of issues and opportunities relevant to a particular subject or challenge. The mind-map always has a clear focus that can be captured in a "burning" question, e.g. *What are the main issues or opportunities you as a team are facing now?*

The mind-map can be done either on a large sheet of paper or electronically, with a mind-map program, projected on a screen.

Ground-Rules for Making a Collective Mind-Map:

- All ideas are valuable! We do not evaluate or discard ideas at this point.
- Whoever presents an idea or issue decides where it goes on the mind-map, and whether it is a major theme or a sub-issue.
- It's OK to have contradicting themes or issues.
- Whenever possible, give concrete examples.

The facilitator explains the procedure and rules of making a collective mind-map Participants present their ideas and suggestions.

Making the Mind-Map

The mind-map process is lead by a facilitator. All participants have access to post-it notes. When anyone has an idea or issue they want to suggest for the mind-map, they write their name on the post-it and hold it up. Runners will collect the post-its and give them to the facilitator, who will then call out the names in the order received. Once a person's name is called, they can present their idea or issue.

If the group is large there will be a need for radio-microphones. These will be provided by the runners when it is the participant's turn to speak.

The actual map is drawn up by two scribes. The central question is at the centre of the mind-map. The major themes and different issues under each theme are recorded on the mind-map radiating out from the central question.

Voting

When all themes and issues have been recorded on the mind-map, the group can decide on the priorities by voting. Everyone gets a number of votes i.e. sticky dots that they can place on the themes or issues they see as most important.

The voting procedure gives a clear indication on which themes or issues have the highest leverage for further action.

Scribes capture what is said and draw the mind-map—either on a big mind-map or on a screen.

In the voting process everyone gets a certain number of votes to place on the themes or issues they believe are most crucial.

http://sites.google.com/a/pro-action.eu/pro-action-caf-/how-to-become-a-host/hosting-kit,

The Pro Action Café

The Pro Action Café is a space for creative and action oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their call - project - ideas - questions or whatever they feel called by and need help to manifest in the world.

The concept of Pro Action Café is a blend of 'World Café' and 'Open Space' technologies. It was first conceived by Rainer von Leoprechting and Ria Baeck in Brussels, Belgium.

What is Pro Action Café Good For?

As a conversational process, the Pro Action Café is a collective, innovative methodology for hosting conversations about calls, questions and projects that matter to the people that attend. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between café tables, cross-pollinate ideas, and offer each other new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, organization or community.

As a process, the Pro Action Café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of good work. Pro Action Café can be used with a network of people and/or as a methodology for a specific group, organization or community to engage in creative and inspirational conversation leading to wiser and more collectively informed actions.

General Flow of a Pro Action Café:

Start with a quick check-in circle to connect to the purpose of the session and with each other. If check- in has already taken place as part of a longer process, go straight to building the agenda.

You need 2 ½ to 3 hours for a good Pro Action Café. Invite participants step forward with their call and in that way ask the community for the help you need to move your project into action. People with a call stand up, speak it and write it on the agenda that corresponds to a numbered café table.

Count the amount of participants divide by 4 that gives the amount of callers with projects that can be worked - with f. ex. 40 people you can have maximum 10 callers with each their project. **The principle is first come first serve**. If you have less callers add chairs to café tables but no more than 5 at each table. During this process each contributing participant (those who do not step forward) get to support 3 of the different projects.

When the agenda has been created invite the callers to go to their numbered café tables. There will be 3 rounds of conversation in café style of 20 to 30 minutes - each guided by a few generic questions to help deepen and focus the conversations:

Round 1:

What is the quest behind the call /question/ project? - to deepen the need and purpose of the call.

Round 2:

What is missing? – when the quest has been deepened, explore what could make the project more complete and possible.

Round 3:

What am I learning about myself? – What am I learning about my project? - What next steps will I take? - What help do I still need? *– to help bring it all together for caller and his/ her project.*

This 3rd round is in 2 steps:

First 20-25 minutes for the callers to reflect by themselves on the 4 questions above and harvest their key insights.

Then a last round where 3 new contributors visit the tables to listen to the harvest of the caller, their learning, their steps, help needed – and then offer any insight and any further support …

Between each round create breaks for the contributors to have a drink, relax together and get ready to support another caller in their quest/ project.

Last step is to meet in the circle and invite the callers from each table to share answers to these 2 questions:

- **What am I grateful for?**
- **What are my next steps?**

If there is time the whole group reflects shortly on: **What applications do we see for practicing Pro Action Café in our contexts?**

End the Pro Action Café with a collective gesture to appreciate the work done and the gifts offered and received.

Materials and Set-Up:

Ideally create a large circle in one part of the room and enough café tables with 4 chairs in another part (if the size of the room does not allow this, then participants will move the tables and chairs themselves as soon as the agenda is created).
Dress the tables with flipchart paper, colour pens and markers as basic café set up.
Prepare the matrix for the agenda setting of the session with the right amount of sessions according to the number of participants divided by 4.
Have fun and do good work together.

http://sites.google.com/a/pro-action.eu/pro-action-caf-/how-to-become-a-host/hosting-kit,

Action Learning

The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust

Action learning is a technique which can be used with small groups (maximum eight people) to tackle urgent problems arising in the workplace.

It has a number of astonishing and unexpected advantages:

- team members learn about themselves and each other
- real problems are solved
- effective action is taken
- leadership potential in the team is developed
- trust and teamwork are improved
- the technique implants a learning culture in the team.

How does it work?

Action learning is based on Socratic dialogue. Its power lies in asking questions. One member of the group is the problem presenter or owner of the focus area, and one plays the role of the action learning coach. The other members of the group make statements only in response to a question.

The rapid and profound learning that this approach unlocks has to do with the way our assumptions are constantly challenged and we are required to unlearn beliefs and assumptions that no longer serve us or adequately reflect the facts. The fact that everybody

in the group is similarly challenged makes an action learning group a safe place in which to experience the disorientation which inevitably comes when our worldview is readjusted.

From the perspective of the collective, this kind of reflection and inquiry often leads to a radical reformulation of the problem to reveal a more systemic and holistic understanding.

The following description of the action learning roles can give an impression of what happens in an action learning session.

Guidelines for Action Learning Roles:

Problem presenter/focus area owner

- Take 2-3 minutes to highlight key elements of the problem/challenge/task
- Trust the group to ask for important information/details
- Be brief. Too much detail gets in the way of asking questions that challenge assumptions
- Answer questions concisely
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "I'm not sure"
- Feel free to ask questions of others

Members/participants

- Seek to gain understanding of the problem by asking questions
- Make statements only in response to questions
- Ask questions of other group members
- Build on each others' questions
- Listen to the action learning coach
- Avoid yes/no questions (closed questions)
- Listen, listen, listen

Author of this description: Helen Titchen Beeth

Action learning coach

- Focus on helping the group learn/improve—not on solving the problem
- Do not criticise the group
- State rough agenda for the session up front: questions on the issue, followed by actions to take on the issue and monitor time
- Only ask questions

- Questions to begin action learning session:

  - Could you take a minute or so to tell us the problem or task that you would like the group to help you with?

- Questions at first intervention (8-10 minutes into session)

  - How are we doing as a group so far? OK? Not OK? Great?

  - What are we doing well? Give an example? What was the impact?

  - What could we do better? Can you be specific?

  - Do we have agreement on the problem—yes or no?

  - Why don't we all write it down? Is there agreement?

  - Additional intervention question areas: quality of questions; building on each others' questions; willingness to challenge assumptions; creativity of questions; ask problem presenter which questions have been most helpful; quality of ideas and strategies; learnings thus far about problem context, leadership, teams

- Concluding questions:

  - To problem presenter: What action are you going to take as a result of this session? Were you helped?

  - To entire group: What did we do best as a group? Quality of our questions? Learning or problem-solving? Team formation/development? Demonstrated leadership behaviours? What did we learn that we can apply to our lives/organisations? Transformative learning[1]?

[1] While informative learning concerns changes in *what* we know, transformative learning happens at a higher level and produces changes in *how* we know, generally enabling us to embrace greater complexity.

Practicing Dialogue

The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust

Common to all the above methodologies is that they are based on dialogue. Dialogue is not about being right or wrong but rather of together exploring the question or issue. In dialogue, the following practices are useful and can radically shift the quality of the conversation, whether with one person or practiced in a small or large group.

Suspend judgements, assumptions and certainties - It is not about knowing who is right or wrong. It is about exploring together and surfacing what we do not know or see yet.

Focus on what matters

Accept that divergent opinions are OK - We do not always need to reach a consensus. Innovation and new solutions come from putting different perspectives together.

Speak one at a time and speak with intention

Listen with attention

Be aware of your impact on the group – we each contribute to a good dialogue. We can be aware that we do not monopolise the speaking time an make sure everybody can be heard

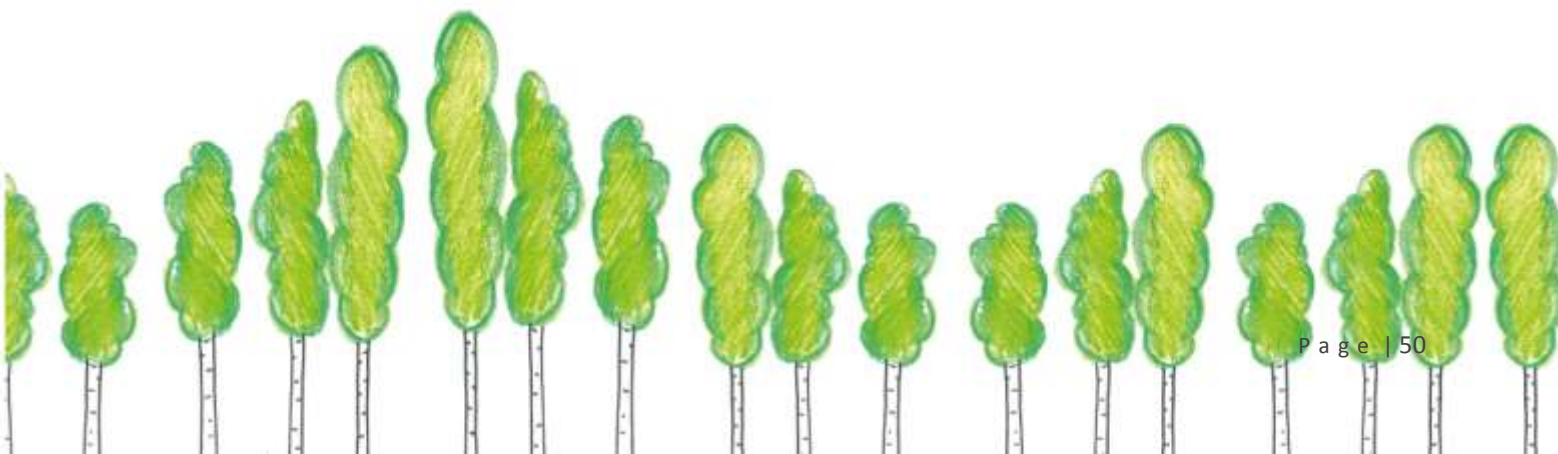
Contribute with your mind and heart - Bring your full self into the room. Allow yourself to be both a professional and a human being.

Listen together for insights and deeper patterns or questions – is an invitation not to remain at the surface of what you already know but to listen to the meaning underneath the meaning.

Link and connect ideas - This is how we can learn and surface what do not know yet, and see the connections and patterns.

Play, doodle & draw – It can be helpful to use a large sheet in the middle of your group as a space to capture the results of your collective reflection.

Have fun!



ESSENTIALS OF PROCESS DESIGN

Seven Little Helpers

In one of the early Art of Hosting Trainings, after having spent three days exploring mental models and conversational tools, one of the participants asked Toke Møller, one of the facilitators, what you need as a minimum to host a strategic conversation. The answer was:

1) Be present!

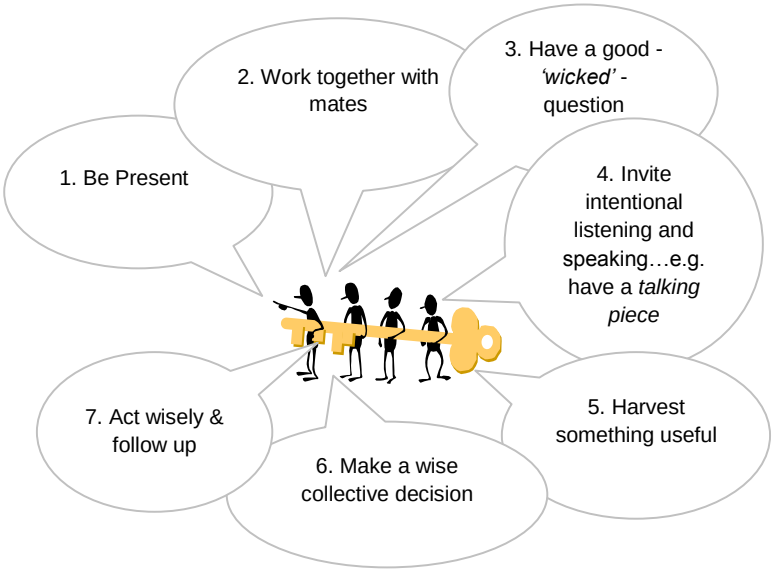
2) Have a good & powerful question?

3) And have a stone—a talking piece, which is the simplest structure or tool that can be used to create intentional speaking and listening—all other conversational tools and methods are just more sophisticated versions of the talking piece.

Over the years, these initial three tools have expanded to include 'seven helpers' that are the source of good conversational design. At the bare minimum, if you use these tools, conversations will grow deeper and work will occur at a more meaningful level.

These seven helpers bring form to fear and uncertainty and help us stay in the chaos of not knowing the answers. They help us to move through uncomfortable places together, like conflict, uncertainty, fear and the groan zone and to arrive at wise action.

- Be present
- Work together
- Have a good question
- Use a talking piece
- Harvest
- Make a wise decision
- Act
- Stay together



Be present

Inviting presence is a core practice of hosting, but it is also a key practice for laying the ground work for a good meeting. There are many ways of bringing a group to presence, including:

- Start with a moment of silence or a prayer, when appropriate, or..
- Check in with a personal question related to the theme of the meeting, or…
- Pass a talking piece and provide space for each voice to be heard, or ..
- Or simply start by hearing everyones needs, concerns or wishes for the topic or meeting you are entering.
- Start well. Start slowly. Check everyone in.

For more information on Powerful questions see page 48

Have a Good Question

A good question is aligned with the need and purpose of the meeting and invites us to go to another level. Good questions are put into the centre of a circle and the group speaks through them. Having a powerful question at the centre keeps the focus on the work and helps a groups stay away from unhelpful behaviours like personal attacks, politics and closed minds.

It is wise to design these questions beforehand and make them essential pieces of the invitation for others to join you. As you dive into these questions, harvest the new questions that are arising. They represent the path you need to take.

Use a Talking Piece

In its simplest form a talking piece is simply an object that passes from hand to hand. When one is holding the piece, one is invited to speak and everyone is invited to listen. Using a talking piece has the powerful effect of ensuring that every voice is heard and it sharpens both speech and listening. It slows down a conversation so that when things are moving too fast, or people begin speaking over one another and the listening stops, a talking piece restores calm and smoothness. Conducting the opening round of a conversation with a talking piece sets the tone for the meeting and helps people to remember the power of this simple tool.

Of course a talking piece is really a minimal form of structure. Every meeting should have some form of structure that helps to work with the chaos and order that is needed to co-discover new ideas. There are many forms and processes to choose from but it is important to align them with the nature of living systems if innovation and wisdom is to arise from chaos and uncertainty.

At more sophisticated levels, when you need to do more work, you can use more formal processes that work with these kinds of context. Each of these processes has a sweet spot, its own best use that you can think about as you plan meetings. Blend as necessary.

Harvest

For more information see page 39 or consult The Art of Harvesting booklet available from Monica Nissén or Chris Corrigan

Never meet unless you plan to harvest your learnings. The basic rule of thumb here is to remember that you are not planning a meeting. You are instead planning a harvest. Know what is needed and plan the process accordingly. Harvests don't always have to be visible;

sometimes you plan to meet just to create learning. But support that personal learning with good questions and practice personal harvesting.

To harvest well, be aware of four things:

1) Create an artefact. Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Make a mind map, draw pictures, take notes, but whatever you do create a record of your conversation.

2) Have a feedback loop. Artefacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how you will use your harvest before you begin your meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.

3) Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest. Harvest answers to the specific questions you are asking, but also make sure you are paying attention to the cool stuff that is emerging in good conversations. There is real value in what's coming up that none could anticipate. Harvest it.

4) The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned. Don't just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out post it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Use your creative spirit to find ways to have the group host their own harvest.

For more, refer to The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

Make a Wise Decision

If your meeting needs to come to a decision, make it a wise one. Wise decisions emerge from conversation, not voting. The simplest way to arrive at a wise decision is to use the three thumbs consensus process. It works like this:

First, clarify a proposal. A proposal is a suggestion for how something might be done. Have it worded and written and placed in the centre of the circle. Poll the group asking each person to offer their thumb in three positions. UP means “I'm good with it.” SIDEWAYS means “I need more clarity before I give the thumbs up” DOWN means “this proposal violates my integrity...I mean seriously.”

As each person indicates their level of support for the proposal, note the down and sideways thumbs. Go to the down thumbs first and ask: “what would it take for you to be able to support this proposal.” Collectively help the participant word another proposal, or a change to the current one. If the process is truly a consensus building one, people are allowed to vote thumbs down only if they are willing to participate in making a proposal that works. Hijacking a group gets rewarded with a vote. Majority rules.

Once you have dealt with the down thumbs, do the same with the sideways thumbs. Sideways doesn't mean “no” but rather “I need clarity.” Answer the questions or clarify the concerns. If you have had a good conversation leading to the proposal, you should not be surprised by any down thumbs. If you are, reflect on that experience and think about what you could have done differently.

Act

Once you have decided what to do, act. There isn't much more to say about that except that wise action is action that doesn't over-extend or under-extend the resources of a group. Action arises from the personal choice to responsibility for what you love. Commit to the work and do it.

Stay Together

Relationships create sustainability. If you stay together as friends, mates or family, you become accountable to one another and you can face challenges better. When you feel your relationship to your closest mates slipping, call it out and host a conversation about it. Trust is a group's most precious resource. Use it well.

Powerful Questions

While answers tend to bring us to closure, questions open up to exploration.

If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes to formulate the right question because as soon as I have identified the right question I can solve the problem in less than five minutes.

Albert Einstein

Asking the Right Question

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers our curiosity and invites us to explore further.

When inviting people into a conversation that matters, it is helpful to have an overall question—one that itself embodies the purpose of the meeting. This is the key question or the calling question for the conversation. The calling question is best formulated together with key stakeholders.

The conversation may include other questions than the calling question. The questions you choose—or that people discover during conversation—are critical to its success.

Some guidelines for choosing questions

- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Experienced hosts recommend asking open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer.
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately.
- You'll know a good question when it continues to surface good ideas and possibilities.
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?

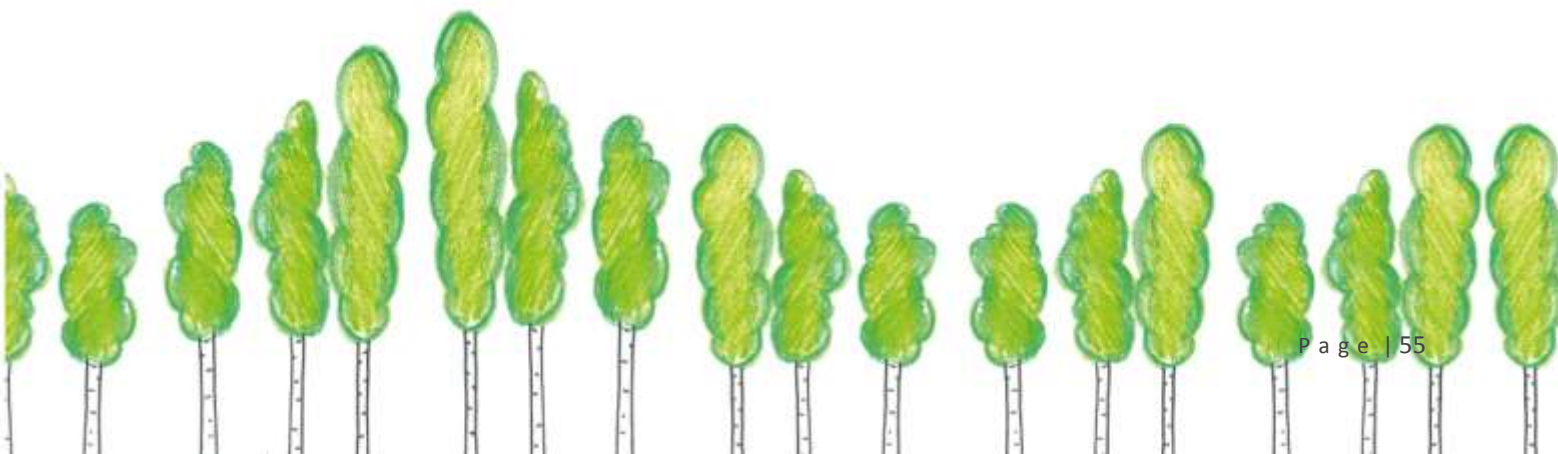
A powerful question:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking

- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

See page 81 for the story on powerful questions.

A powerful question focuses **Attention**, **Intention** and **Energy**



The Art of Harvesting

How many good conversations and crashing insights are lost because they are never recorded, shared or acted on?

What if we were planning not a meeting but a harvest? When we understand the process of meaningful conversations as a series of connected phases ("breaths"), we see that each must somehow feed into the next, and the oxygenation of the greater system requires the fruits of the conversation to leech out into the wider world. When approaching any meeting in this spirit, we must become clear about why we are initiating the process. The Art of Hosting and the Art of Harvesting dance together as two halves of the same thing.

Harvesting is more than just taking notes. To get a sense of the complexity of this art, let's begin by picturing a field in which someone has planted wheat. How can that field of wheat be harvested?

We first imagine the harvest from that field as a farmer using equipment to cut down the wheat, thresh it, and separate the seeds from the stalks. The farmer might store the grain, further refine it, sell it quickly or wait for the price to increase. Now imagine a geologist, a biologist and a painter harvesting from the same field. The geologist picks through the rocks and soil gathering data about the land itself. The biologist might collect insects and worms, bits of plants and organic matter. The painter sees the patterns in the landscape and chooses a palette and a perspective for work of art.

They all harvest differently from the field. The results of their work go to different places and are put to different uses. But they all have a few things in common; they have a purpose for being in the field and a set of questions about that purpose, they have a pre-determined place to use the results of the harvest, and they have specific tools to use in doing their work. Despite the field being the same, the tools and results are specific to the need, purpose and inquiry.

There are eight stages of harvesting, elucidated in the companion book to this one. Briefly they are:

Stage 1: Sensing the Need

Sensing the need may at first be intuitive or very basic—like sensing hunger, but once the sensed need becomes conscious one can act on it.

We sense that we are hungry and from there we plant a garden, knowing that the work of planting, cultivating and harvesting lies before us but that the end result meets the need for sustenance.

The need is not complicated; it is real and clear and it speaks deeply and inspires invitation and action. Everything begins from this need, and the way we respond to it and invite others to do so will contribute to the harvest that we take away at the end of the day

Stage 2: Preparing the Field

In some cases the person taking the initiative to work on a given issue (the "caller") makes the field ready by creating awareness of the need. Others with a similar need will recognise the call.

In preparing the field—sending out the call, giving the context, inviting etc.—we set the tone of the whole process. The seriousness and quality of the call will determine the quality of what we reap. The work of readying a field for planting can take a whole year during which we condition the soil, clear the rocks and prepare things. What we are doing here is actually harvesting a field so that the seeds can be planted. - In other words: *start thinking about the harvest from the very beginning—not as an afterthought!*

Stage 3: Planning the Harvest

Planning the harvest starts with and accompanies the design process. A clear purpose and some success criteria for the process of the harvest itself will add clarity and direction. - What would be useful and add value, and in which form would it serve best?

Translated into a simple check-list, it becomes:

- What is your intention?
- Who is going to benefit?
- How can you add most value to the work at hand—how will the harvest serve best?
- What form or what media will be most effective?
- Who should host or do the harvesting?
- What is the right timing?

Stage 4: Planting the Seeds

The questions around which we structure the hosting become the seeds for harvesting. All gardeners and farmers know that planting seeds depends on the season and the conditions. You can't just plant whenever you want to. You plant once the conditions are right to maximise the yield. In hosting practice, this means being sensitive to timing when asking questions.

In sowing the seeds that will drive the inquiry—identifying and asking the strategic and meaningful questions—you determine the output. So in planning the harvest, ask yourself,

"What is it that this process needs to yield? What information, ideas, output or outcome will benefit us here and now, and what might take us to the next level of inquiry?"

The process itself is an on-going one. With each part of the process, you harvest something. Some of it you need to use right away, to help lead you into the next process. Some of the harvest you will need later. So part of planning the harvest is also knowing for whom, when and how you need to use it. Another part of the planning is asking yourself in which format the harvest will serve you best.

Stage 5: Tending the Crop

Protect the integrity of the crop. Nurture it as it grows, weed it and thin it to keep the strong plants growing and get rid of all that will not nourish or serve. This involves a combination of feeding the field and letting it grow. But it also involves just sitting in the field. Holding space for what is emerging and enjoying it.

During the process, enjoy seeing your work unfold in all its complexity. The more you can welcome the growth you are witnessing, the higher the quality of the harvest. Now you are in the pulse of noticing both the quality of the field and the quality of the crops. This is where we engage in conversation and exploration—where the richness of the harvest is born. The richer the conversation or exchange, the richer the harvest!

Stage 6: Picking the Fruits

The simplest way to harvest is to record what is being said and done, the output of the conversations, etc. This creates a record or collective memory.

Recording can be done in words:

- your notes, which will be subjective
- or transcripts of output from conversations recorded on tapes, etc., which will be objective.

Recording can also be done with pictures/photographs/video/film:

- Pictures evoke and recall feelings, atmospheres, situations.
- Or you can video the conversation—record both verbally and visually

It is helpful to give some thought in the planning phase to how you want to harvest. What kind of records, templates etc. will help you gather the relevant information or knowledge?

Stage 7: Preparing and Processing the Fruits

Creating a memory is the first step. As we pick the fruits or seeds for processing, some will be used right away, some will be used for further processing and some will be used as seed for the next season.

The second step is making collective sense and meaning. This is where we add value and make the data useful. There are many ways of doing this. The general idea is to take the

many bits of information and transform them into "holons"—wholes that are also parts of greater wholes.

Things that can help in this process:

- Harvest in a systemic way. Ask collectively: What did you notice? What gave sense and meaning to you? Notice the patterns—they indicate what is emerging
- Use metaphors, mental models and stories to make complex issues simple
- Use drawings and graphics to make complex issues manageable and visible

Summary of The Art of Harvesting version 2.6.; written by Monica Nissen and Chris Corrigan with input from the Art of Hosting Community of Practice. The full article can be downloaded from the Art of Hosting website: www.artofhosting.org

Stage 8: Planning the Next Harvest—Feeding Forward

Most harvesting is done to bring closure to a process or bring us to the next level of understanding. More importantly, it helps us to know collectively, to see the same picture and share the same understanding together.

A few comments:

- The above reflections mainly concern collective harvesting.
- Individual reflection and harvest will raise the level of the collective harvest. During learning processes, individual harvesting can be done intentionally, by using a journal as a learning tool.
- Web-based tools open up a whole world of possibilities that are not dealt with here.
- Harvesting the "soft" is much more subtle and subjective than dealing with the "cognitive" or more objective, tangible parts. A qualitative inquiry into what we have noticed, what has shifted or changed in our relationships, in the culture or atmosphere may give us some information about the softer part of the harvest.
- For the most effective harvest, these eight steps should be planned beforehand, as part of designing the whole process.

Group Harvesting of AoH Practice Stories

Draw your chair up close to the edge of the precipice and I'll tell you a story.

F. Scott Fitzgerald - Notebooks

Storytelling is one of the most powerful knowledge management tools of the Art of Hosting community. Contained in our stories is both the experience and learning that will grow our capacities to use the Art of Hosting practice in ever more complex spaces. As the depth and scale of our work increases, our practice stories offer us guideposts for innovation, process development and how to create robust containers for conversations that really matter.

During August and September 2010 we began to experiment in Art of Hosting trainings with combining storytelling and harvesting to build our capacity in both these mediums; we were *hosting the harvest*. Group harvesting enables us to track many arcs of a single story simultaneously, meaning we can practice targeted listening and group learning, while offering a gift to the story holders, as well as the group as a whole in the form of collective meaning making. Group harvesting is an ideal way to surface the many insights, innovations

and a-ha's that exist beneath the surface of our stories and to take learning around our practice to a deeper level.

How does group harvesting of practice stories work?

First, you need a good story about a change process that was run using Art of Hosting principles and practice – ideally one that has enough complexity, scale and duration to make it interesting. In our Art of Hosting community, we have the stories of the European Commission, healthcare projects in Columbus , Ohio and Nova Scotia, the UK FinanceLab and Annecto in Melbourne, Australia as some key examples of this type of story, but any systemic story will do.

It is best to have those directly connected to the story on hand to tell it, and it can be more interesting to hear from more than one person involved in the story. More voices add depth and richness, as well as a variety of points of view.

The story does not need to be an often-told one, or polished in any form. In fact, this process can be used to help polish a story and give the storytellers input on how to focus and refine the story to be told to different audiences.

We've found that group harvesting takes time – at least 90 minutes is the minimum time needed. If you are working with a group of harvesters during a training, or with people who haven't done this type of process before, then keeping the storytelling to around 30 minutes is advisable, otherwise it is easy for listeners to become overloaded. If you are working with a practice team or your purpose is to create maximum learning around a story, then you may want to work on the interplay between story, harvest and learning for a half day, a day or even longer.

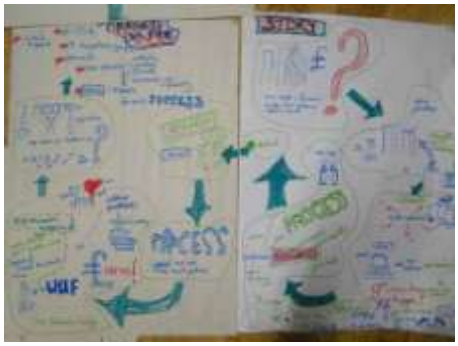
Preparing for group harvesting:

First check with your storytellers and make them an invitation. Stories respond to invitation and when a heartfelt invitation is present, often a story will come out in a whole new way and offer new learning to those telling it. A group harvest is a gift to those telling *and* those harvesting, and should be offered as such.

Next, decide on the arcs you would like to harvest. Ideally this could be agreed with the storyholders and the listeners, depending on where they want to focus their learning. As in any Art of Hosting process, you are planning for the harvest. Take as much time as you need to discuss exactly what you want to get out of this process and what will happen to the harvest afterwards. You'll need at least one person harvesting each arch you've chosen and more than one can harvest the same arch simultaneously. Here are some to choose from:

- **Narrative Arc***: The thread of the story – people, events, stages. You might also harvest facts, emotions and values that are part of the story, etc.
- **Process Arc***: What interventions, processes, applications, discoveries happened?
- **Pivotal Points***: When did breakthroughs occur, what did we learn?
- **Application**: What can we learn from this story for application in our own or other systems?

- **Taking Change to Scale**: What can we learn from this story about taking change to scale?
- **Questions**: What questions arise from this story that we could ask of any system?
- **Synchronicity & Magic**: What happened during this story that pointed to synchronicity and the magic in the middle?
- **Specific theme**: Harvest the story using a specific theme, like collaborative leadership, the art of participation, etc, and see what it tells you
- **Art of Hosting pattern arc**: *The 6 Breaths:* Where did each breath occur during the story? *The 5th organisational paradigm:* Where did new forms of governance and working occur? *Core team/calling team:* What did we learn about holding the centre of this work? There may be others as well.
- **Principles**: What principles of working can be gleaned from this story? What did we learn about participatory practices? What principles of complex living systems were reflected in this work?
- **The StoryField***: How did the field of the system's story change? Can you name the story or metaphor the system started with and what it moved to?



Narrative Arc

The 6 Breaths

We are suggesting that the arcs marked with * might be foundational to any harvesting process.

If you have other talents in your group around graphic facilitation/visuals, poetry, music, mindmapping, art, etc. you may also want to invite a harvest in this form. Each of these will add a greater richness, diversity and enjoyment to the harvest.

Suggested process:

Framing & Introduction: *Welcome people to the session. Make the invitation publically to the storytellers. Explain the arcs and ask for volunteers.*

Storytelling: *Ask the storytellers to tell the story and the group to harvest. Be clear about the time allocated for the storytelling.*

Pivotal Points

Questions

Group harvest: *Give the storytellers materials to do their harvest of the harvest. Ask each of the harvesters to report in on what they found. Take at least as long for this as for the storytelling. Each of the harvests will have more depth than can be told during a first round. It might be helpful to have more than one round of harvest, or for the rest of the group to question each harvester to draw out additional insights.*

Response from the tellers: *What were the gifts to you from this group harvest? What are you taking away from this session?*

Response from the group: *What were the gifts to you from this group harvest? What are you taking away from this session?*

Closing the session: *Thank the storytellers and the harvesters. Any final remarks about what will happen to the harvest now that it has been heard. Is there enough here to return to it again and see what else surfaces? Do you want to come back as a group and hear the next version of the story?*

Materials and set-up:

Ideally create a large circle with tellers as part of the circle. You may need some small tables for those harvesting onto flipchart, or they may be fine harvesting onto the floor. You'll need plenty of coloured pens and other art supplies may also be helpful.

You may want to have recording equipment on hand if you'd like to video the story and the results. It's also helpful to photograph graphic harvest.

What else can be done with a group harvest?

For the StoryHolders

Group harvesting is an ideal input both for taking stock of the learning so far in a project and for polishing a story so that it can be told to another audience. Having external ears listen to your story can help to surface things you haven't seen or haven't taken notice of during the time you were living in the experience. Often an experience is so complex and moves forward with such speed that it is almost impossible to see how it all fits together from the inside.

We suggest using a group harvest to take stock at regular intervals during a project's life. Being well witnessed can be both a blessing and a relief to people who've done the hard yards holding the space for something to happen. Good witnessing enables insights about the key pivotal points in a story to surface, as well as helping other emotions to be heard and released. Deep listening can help a story to identify its protagonists' strengths and gifts, as well as the supports and barriers they faced in contributing those gifts. It can also support a story to rise above the personal to reveal insights about the local context it happened in and even the wider systemic context.

Graphic harvesting

Just as external eyes can help us see something we know well in a new light, external listeners can help story participants to see their own experiences in a new light, often revealing what has not been seen from inside the story. Even such a simple thing as naming what has not been named before adds immensely to the learning.

If you have harvesters who are expert in body-based knowing or intuition systems, such as constellation work, these can also add a rich understanding to the harvest. Those who are story or narrative practitioners can add a reflection using mythology, metaphor and other story forms.

Specific feedback can also help a team to know what to focus on in polishing their story. Often there are so many details held by the team, that a listener can be overwhelmed. Harvesting can help to bring what's important into sharp relief, supporting a story to become more focused and more potent.

For the Listeners and Harvesters

If storytelling is a skill that is both inherent to humans and one that can be polished with practice, then so is listening. Listening is the companion skill to storytelling, indeed the story arises in the space between the teller and the listener. In essence, a story *needs* a listener to become what it can be. We don't often get the opportunity to listen well, especially with a specific purpose, and to provide a necessary feedback loop to those within a committed project. Group story harvesting can provide such a practice and feedback loop, strengthening the community around a project shared in this way.

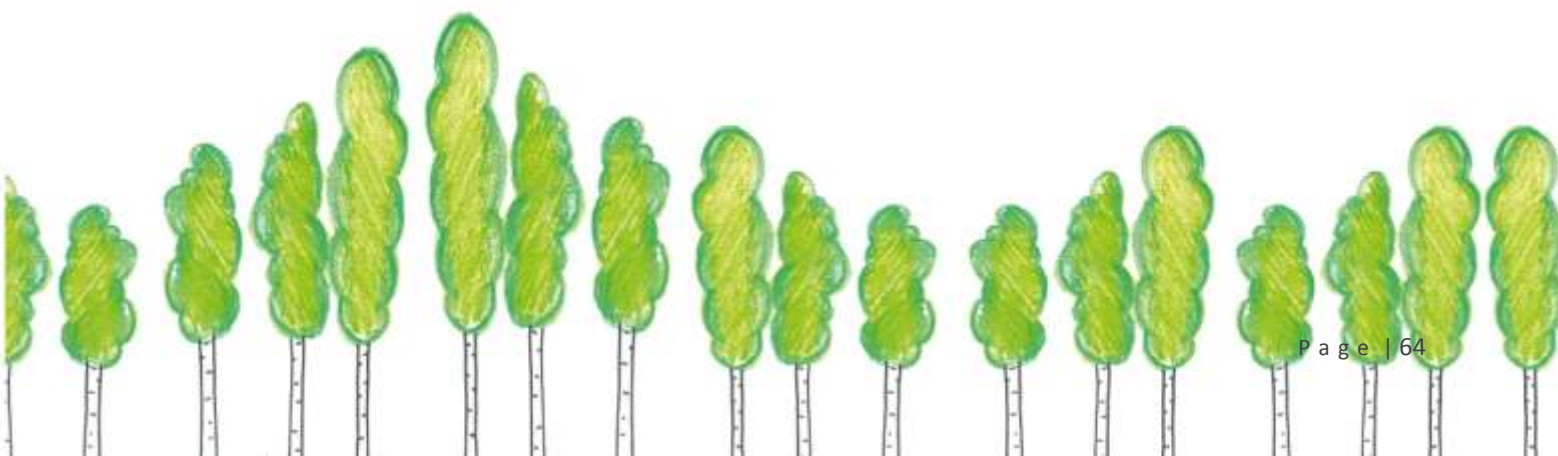
Harvesting is also a skill that needs practice, and it is important to experience the wide variety of ways a story or an experience can be harvested, each bringing its own richness, much as another facet brings sparkle to a gemstone. Purposeful harvesting is both a good experience and an excellent way to practice. Story listeners and harvesters may want to debrief afterwards on their experience, surfacing their challenges and learning as a way for the group to become more skilful in the future.

Beyond – for the AoH community and wider

Harvests of projects that have gone to scale, as well as those that have faced many challenges, are a valuable contribution to the wider AoH community and beyond, helping us to increase the learning within our network. Sharing practice stories is one of the quickest ways for the principles and practices of AoH to be understood and integrated. Please share your group story harvests on the AoH Ning site.

Music harvest

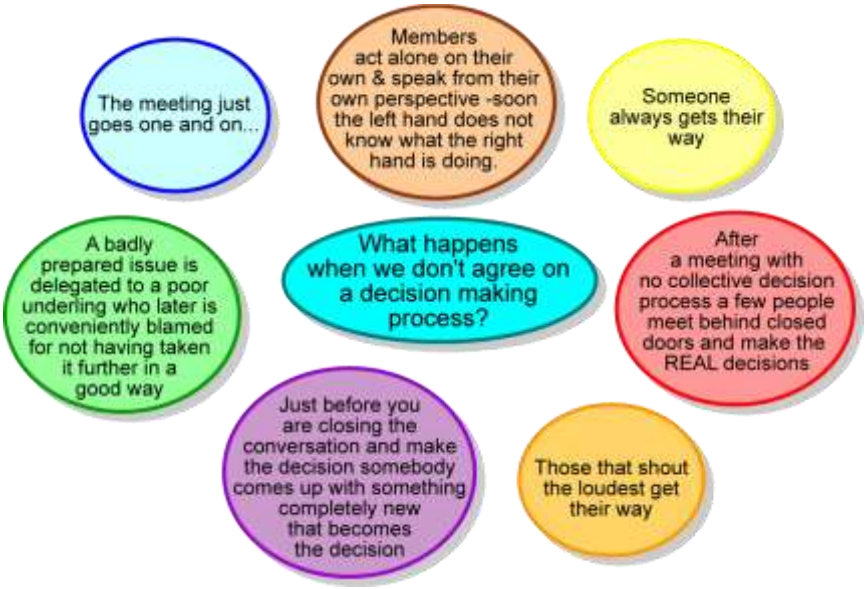
Contributed by Mary Alice Arthur, Monica Nissén & Ria Baeck, October 2010



Decision-Making

In working with participatory processes the important thing is to agree on the decision-making process ahead of time. Consensus usually ensures that everyone is on board and ready to act once the decision has been taken. Other agreements can be to settle for 75% consensus, or have a democratic decision-making process, or simply collect in-put and let a chosen group make the decision—whatever serves the purpose best.

What Happens When You Don't Agree on a Decision-Making Process?



Sometimes a group will move forward on their path and begin making decisions before agreeing on how such decisions will be made. This may work—or appear to work—at the outset of a process, but the difficulties described above can occur.

Consensus Decision-making

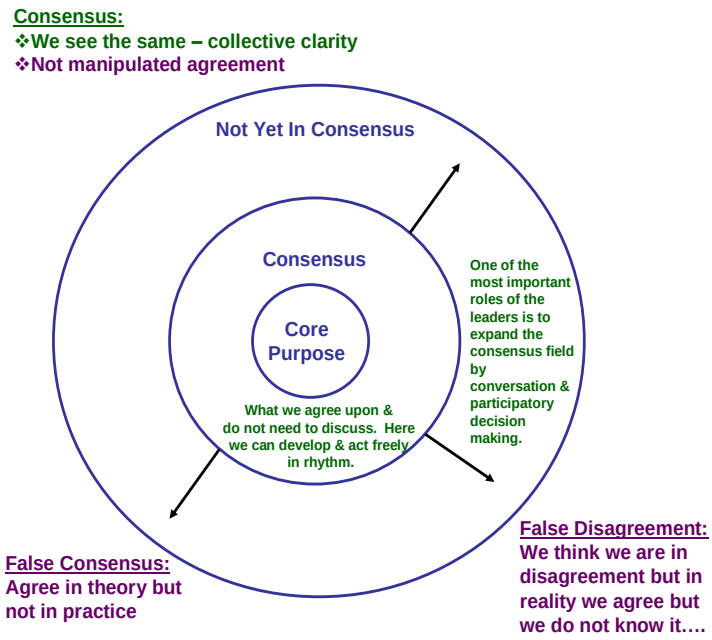
Consensus can be a very powerful model of participatory decision-making when it is to be a "win-win" process and held as integral to the purpose of the group. Although it is sometimes abandoned as being overly complex and time consuming, consensus decision-making in itself opens the process to careful consideration, listening, and negotiation.

In this context, decisions must be fully understood and agreed to by all members of the group, and the group holds the process of making a decision, which is in the best interests of everyone.

Consensus should not be seen as giving power to a small group to veto a decision. Opposing a suggestion or decision also means being willing to take responsibility for moving the process forward.

Consensus does not mean going for the lowest common denominator, but truly finding the most sustainable solution for all, in other words; looking for the highest possible agreement!

The work of a leader is to expand the field of consensus.



DEEPER PROCESS DESIGN

The following pages will give a short introduction to how you combine and apply some of the Core Methodologies in exercising Participatory leadership in a strategic organisational context.

The following qualities or conditions support a successful implementation.

- Participatory leadership and the approach described in this workbook are particularly useful when **working with complexity** (complex problems and situations), where there are no clear, unambiguous, fixed solutions, but where the context is constantly changing and you have to work flexibly with what is **emerging**.

- To create a successful intervention **you have to plan a process not an event.** This means that there is a preparatory phase or process, the actual engagement process (one event or a series of events), and a follow-up process, each with some steps that need to be clarified before proceeding to the next phase or "breath". (see 6 breaths of design)

- Planning and designing an **emergent process or strategy** (rather than a prescriptive one) means operating in the **"chaordic space."** (see "The Chaordic path" in the "Basic Assumptions and Core Patterns Section" section).

- Designing a process in this context means creating a framework or light structure (process design) within which one can operate and produce results in an environment of self-organising order rather than control.

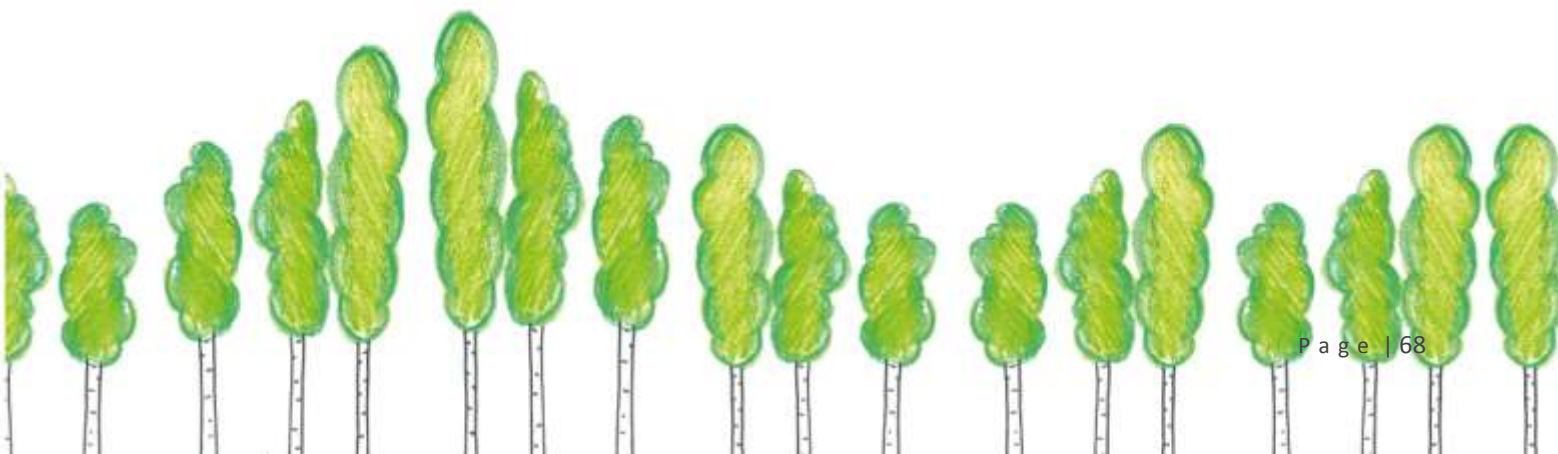
- The "Chaordic stepping stones" and "Chaordic design process" offer a step-to-step approach to structuring and creating progress in this space.

- A good knowledge of the methods and means available will allow you to choose **the right means for the right situation**.

- A good process design is **responding to the need in the moment**, allowing yourself to be well prepared but flexible and able to respond to what is actually happening.

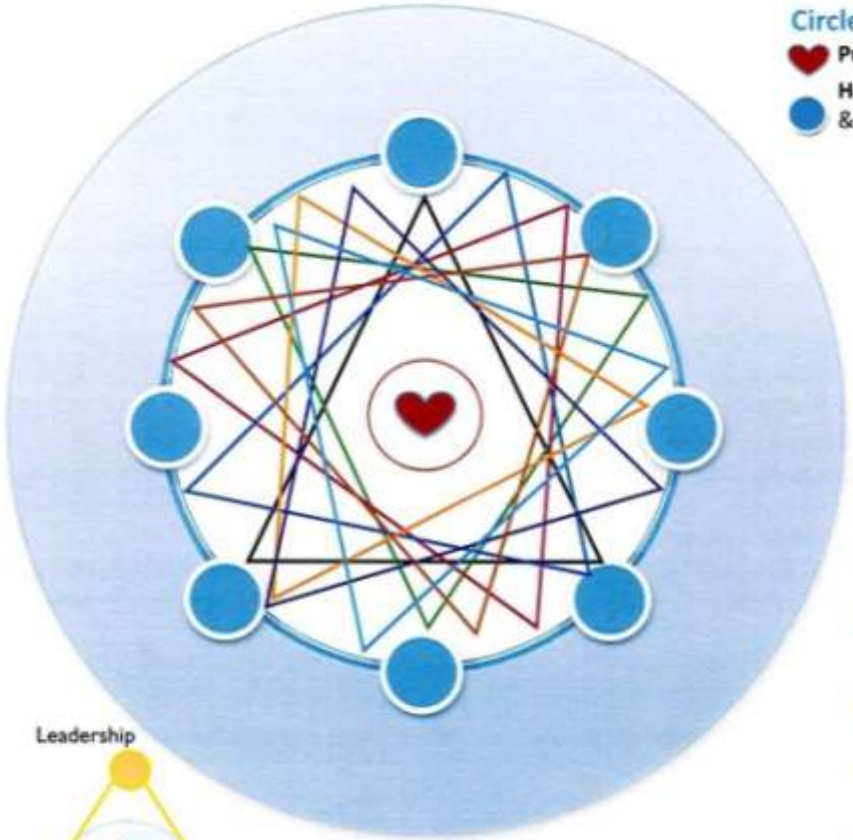
- **Fully combining and integrating content with process, each in support of the other is crucial for creating good results.** (A good content combined with a poor process or a good process without some real content, both fall short of the mark.)

- To be able to operate well in this environment one needs to **embrace both the ability to work in a highly structured way as well as in a "chaordic" way. The 5th paradigm** shows a way of organising that combines both. (see the 5th organisational paradigm in the "Basic Assumptions and Core Patterns" section).



Patterns behind the Art of Hosting & Harvesting practice

While appearing simple on the surface, an Art of Hosting training carries many levels of deep patterns operating simultaneously. This diagram harvests some of the complexity of layers at work. Within this diagram, the *circle* holds the flow of communication, reflection and stewardship, while the *triangles* hold the pattern of leadership and action. One purpose of AoH practice is to heal fragmentation and create the container for skillful, heartfelt, wise working with what is and what is needed now.



Circle

Purpose is at the centre, the invisible leader

Hosting Team: hosting the whole; holds the field; holds the clarity of purpose & clarity of harvesting; meeting in a circle and demonstrating circle in action

Triangles

Day Hosting: Two from the Hosting Team act as Day Hosts, holding the clarity of purpose/theme for the day; framing the opening & closing of the day; keeping track of time & agenda. Day Hosts are empowered to make executive decisions about the timing and fit of activities for the day, calling in the rest of the team when absolutely needed.

Hosting sessions: The Hosting Team hosts sessions to model the methodologies

Participants host sessions: The Hosting Team becomes client and coach, supporting participants to step in & step up

Hosting the Meta Harvest Team: The Meta Harvest Team harvests on the meta level, reinforcing what we are learning day by day

Teaching: The Hosting Team brings appropriate teaching and background during the training, looking at patterns relevant to the group and introducing methodologies

Participating: Members of the Hosting Team become participants at various times during the training

Space & Beauty team: Cares for the physical space so that it positively impacts the inner space and learning of the participants

Logistics & Admin team: Supports the training by taking care of all the venue logistics and the pre- and post administration of the event

Overarching Pattern

Leadership: Supporting & working with the mandate from the system, encouraging clarity of direction and purpose. **Engaging Stakeholders**: Creating the container for wise & effective engagement. **Capacity Building**: Building the skills to engage.

24 March 2010

The 6 'Breaths' of Design

Over the years many hosts have seen their work with different (larger scale) initiatives as a sequence of different 'breaths', different phases of divergence and convergence. This iterative flow has become known among practitioners as the 'Six Breaths'. As we learn through reflecting on our work, this pattern will no doubt become clearer.

First Breath: The CALL

Name the issue: calling the core question—birth of the callers

We have notice that there is always 'a caller', a person who deeply holds a question, a problem, a challenge. Sometimes there are several callers. The callers are the ones who invite the host(s) to help them.

Wise action: Focus the chaos of holding the collective uncertainty and fear—step into the centre of the disturbance

Don't move too fast

Question: What is really at stake here? What if some of us worked together to surface the real question and need that matters to the community?

When the caller has committed to call the process, we go to the next phase.

Second Breath: CLARIFY

Creating the ground: The callers and hosts work to create collective clarity of purpose and the first articulation of principles

Wise action: engagement

Don't make assumptions

Question: How to get from need to purpose? What is our purpose? How to see and feed the group value?

This phase is over once the core of clarity has emerged.

Third Breath: INVITE

Giving form and structure: design and invitation process

Wise action: keep checking to be sure your design and invitation serve the purpose

Don't make your design too complex (match it to the purpose)

Question: How do we invite people to participate in a way that moves them to show up? How do we let go of our expectations that certain people need to be there?

The meeting has been designed, a larger group of stakeholders has been invited, a good meeting space has been found: it's time to meet!

Fourth Breath: MEET …

Meeting: Conversation

Wise Action: our role is to host the group, the purpose, and the questions

Don't go alone.

Question: How can I best serve as the instrument/container to allow the collective wisdom to emerge?

.. and make meaning together

When the meeting is done, the group of stakeholders find collective meaning and start to co-create. This is where the harvest is important—to capture key messages and insights and make sense of them

Fifth Breath: ACT

Practice: Perform the wise actions decided on during the conversation. Follow-up—continued learning and leading from the field

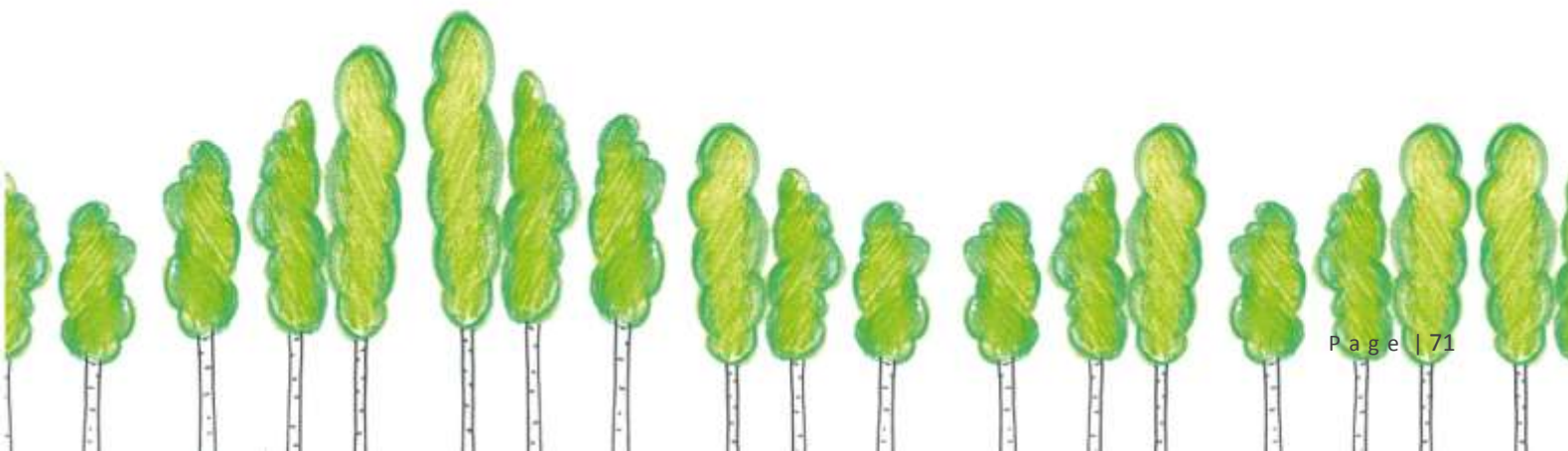
Wise Action: Always come back to purpose

Don't lose sight of the purpose or it won't be embodied

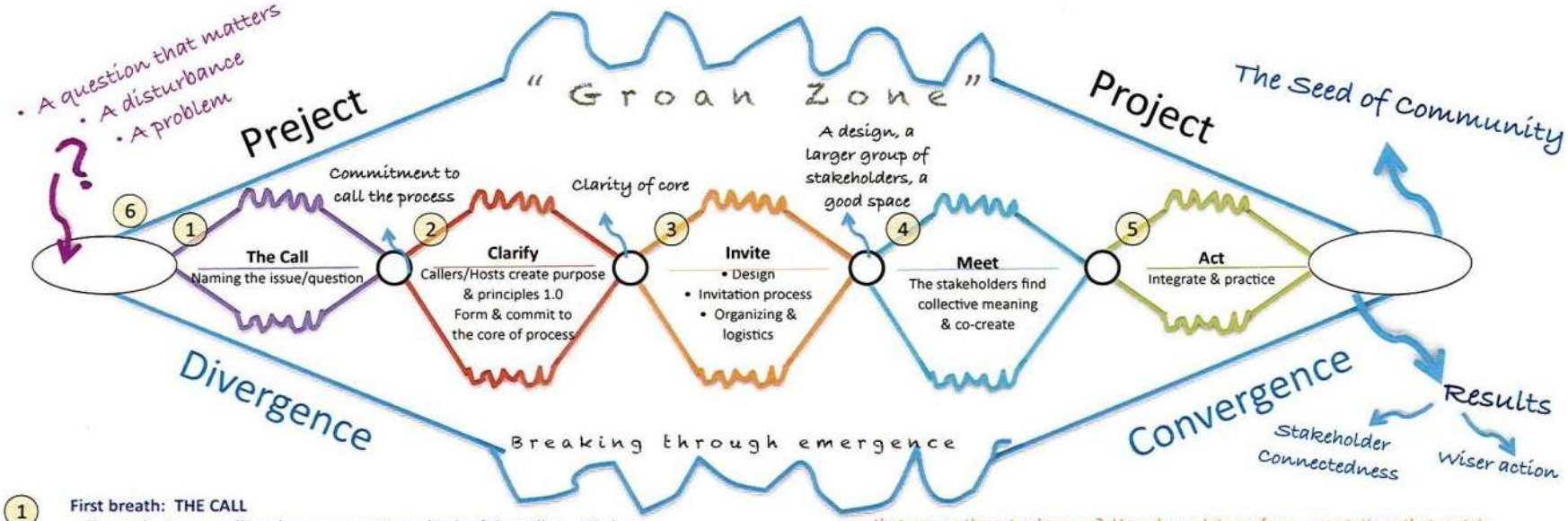
Question: How do we sustain the self-organisation?

Here the seed of community gets born, and the results are a connectedness between the stakeholders and wiser actions.

From here the next calling question arises…



The 6 Breaths of Process Architecture



1 **First breath: THE CALL**

- Name the issue: calling the core question -- birth of the callers. We have noticed that there is always a 'caller', a person who deeply holds a question, a problem, a challenge. Sometimes there are several callers. The callers are the ones who invite the host(s) to help them.
- Wise action: Focus the chaos of holding the collective uncertainty and fear -- step into the centre of the disturbance
- Don't move too fast
- Question: What is really at stake here? What if some of us worked together to surface the real question and need that matters to the community?

When the caller has committed to call the process, we go to the next phase.

2 **Second breath: CLARIFY**

- Creating the ground: The callers and hosts work to create collective clarity of purpose and the first articulation of principles
- Wise action: engagement
- Don't make assumptions
- Question: How to get from need to purpose? What is our purpose? How to see and feed the group value?

This phase is over once the core of clarity has emerged.

3 **Third breath: INVITE**

- Giving form and structure: design and invitation process
- Wise action: keep checking to be sure your design and invitation serve the purpose
- Don't make your design too complex (match it to the purpose)
- Question: Who are the stakeholders? How do we invite people to participate in a way that moves them to show up? How do we let go of our expectations that certain people need to be there?

The meeting has been designed, a larger group of stakeholders has been invited, a good meeting space has been found: it's time to meet!

4 **Fourth breath: MEET ...**

- Meeting: Conversation
- Wise action: our role is to host the group, the purpose, the questions
- Don't go alone
- Question: How can I best serve as the instrument/container to allow collective wisdom to emerge?

...and make meaning together. *When the meeting is done, the group of stakeholders find collective meaning and start to co-create. This is where the harvest is important -- to capture key messages and insights and make sense of them.*

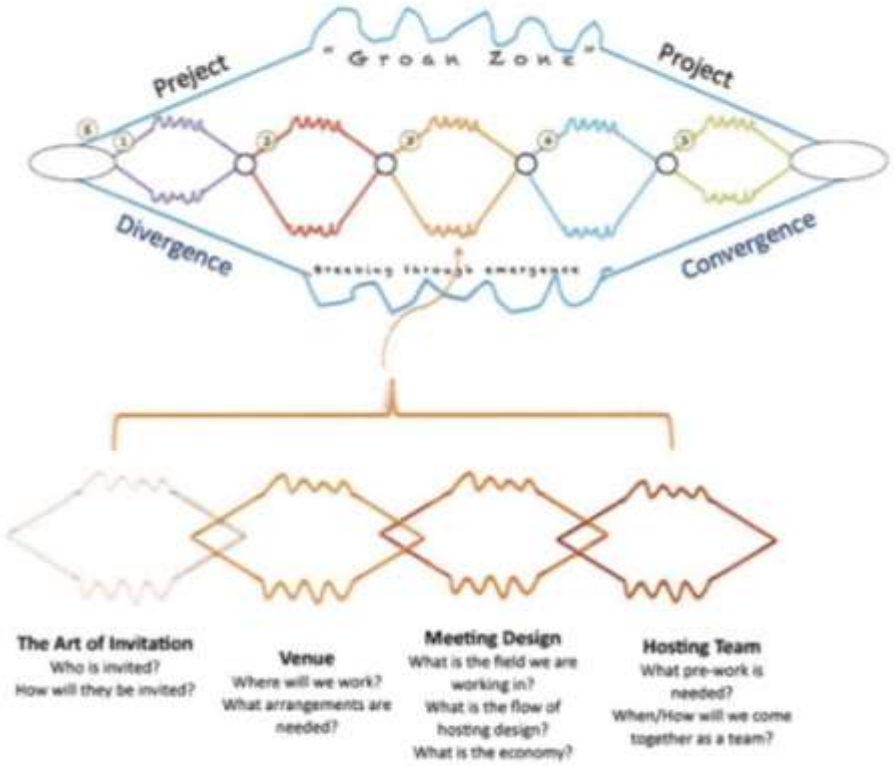
5 **Fifth breath: ACT**

- Practice: Perform the wise actions decided on during the conversation. Follow up, continue learning and leading from the field
- Wise action: always come back to purpose
- Don't lose sight of the purpose of it won't be embodied
- Question: How do we sustain the self-organisation?

Here the seed of community is born, and the results are a connectedness between the stakeholders and wiser actions. From here the next calling question arises...

6 Sixth breath: **HOLDING THE WHOLE:** holding the story of the unfolding progress, tending to the core team and the heartbeat of the sacred purpose underneath all the activities

3rd Breath: Preparation behind the scenes



The Art of Invitation
Who is invited?
How will they be invited?

Venue
Where will we work?
What arrangements are needed?

Meeting Design
What is the field we are working in?
What is the flow of hosting design?
What is the economy?

Hosting Team
What pre-work is needed?
When/How will we come together as a team?

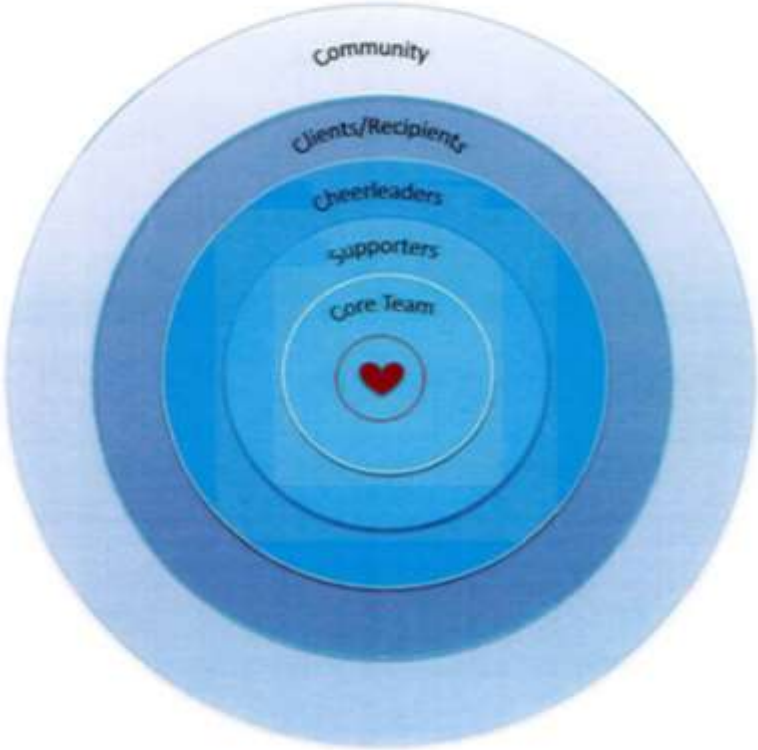
Basic Rhythm for a 3 day training

- Ground and unfold the map. Introduce the basics, open the base. Model the four basic methodologies at least once.
- Explore practice, delve deeper. Offer people an opportunity to practice. Participants host and harvest to a new level of practice.
- Get ready to apply. What will we take out of the room? Support people to work with their own project/context.
- *We are working at the levels of individual, team, community and the meta-level. We are all apprentices at different levels – a practice must be practiced or you are no longer a practitioner; training is a doorway.*

Within the AoH practice, these three elements are working together for resonant learning.

Architecture of "The Fellowship"

A strategic operation tool to awaken a system to its highest potential. Purpose is the silent leader at the centre. Core teams need to have a strong practice to travel together. A project is a dojo for us to learn to be more human.

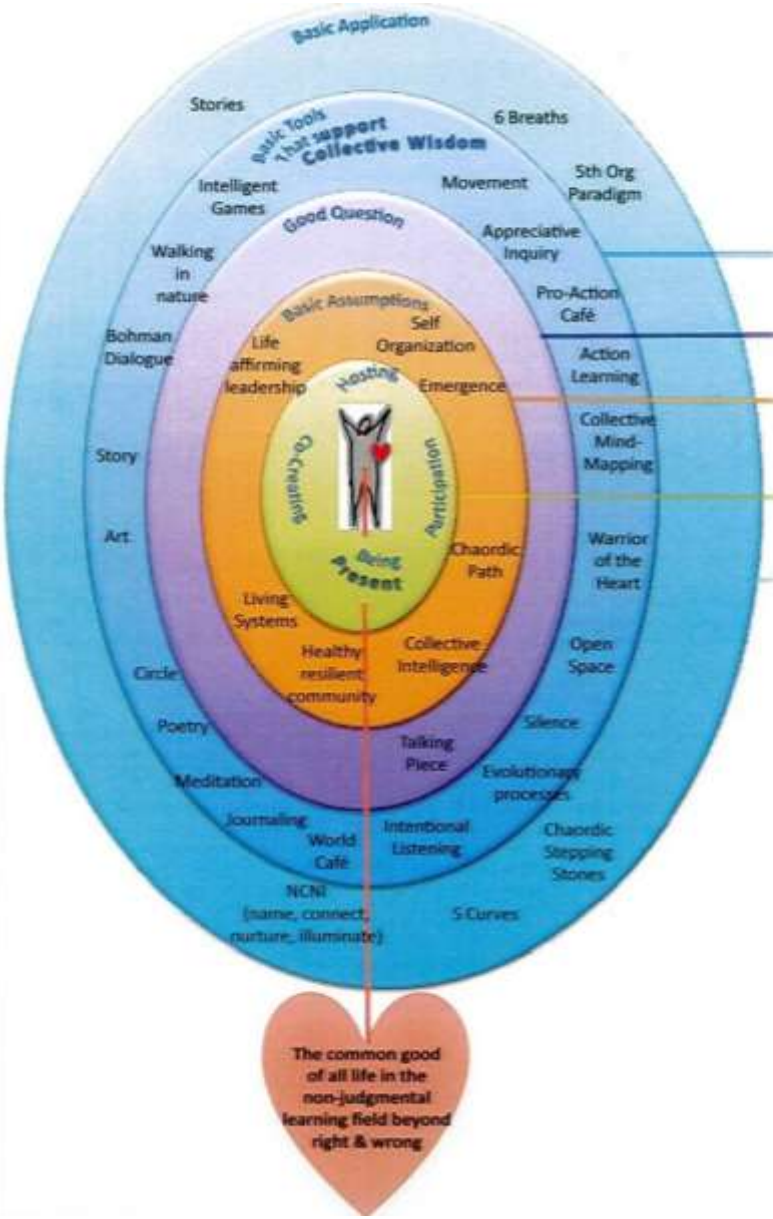


People & Teams within the Process Architecture

The overlap: Each breath is two harvests – an intentional harvest at the right end of the diamond and an overlapping emergent harvest as the next breath begins, often just after the Groan Zone. Important to commit to close & harvest the intention, while working with emergence.

Threshold of Longing: Following the sense of longing to a spark of insight, which, over time and sensing in becomes clarity about a deep calling. Crossing the threshold initiates the birth of the call.

Threshold of Memory: The work becomes a legacy passed on to others. It is time to let go and allow the influence to ripple out and do what it will. When we and our acts are forgotten, the threshold of memory has been crossed.



Art of Hosting practice

Stewarding the Basic Methodologies: Solidly practicing the basics of core practice and the methodologies

Practicing the Basics: At a minimum, holding a good question, the first technology might be a talking piece

Basic Assumptions: Keeping the basic assumptions at the heart of the work

AoH Basic Practice: Integrating the Four-Fold Practice

Basic Application: Practicing an awareness and application that hosts the whole

This is the pattern that holds the work within the resonant field of the group.

Within the AoH practice, these three elements are working simultaneously.

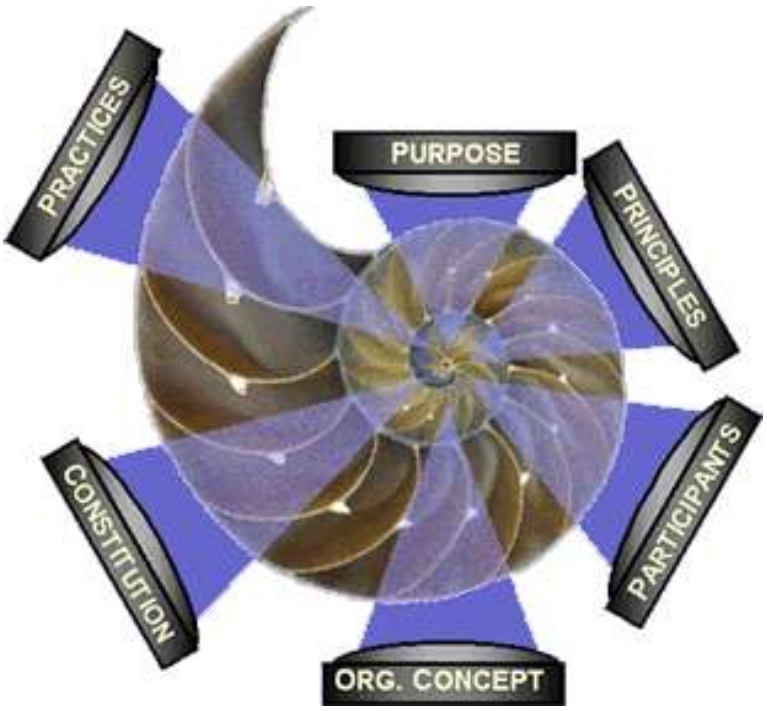
Who's involved?

Core team = people practicing together, creating/holding the field for the practice to happen, holding the basic pattern; coeur is 'heart' in French, the team at the heart of a piece of work

Apprentices = practicing naturally with other practitioners

Steward = a consistent practitioner, one with the practice, stewarding growth and hosting others to become deeper practitioners

The Chaordic Design Process



The Chaordic Design Process has six dimensions, beginning with purpose and ending with practice. Each of the six dimensions can be thought of as a lens through which participants can examine the circumstances giving rise to the need for a new organisation or to re-conceive an existing one.

Developing a self-organising, self-governing organisation worthy of the trust of all participants usually requires intensive effort. To maximise their chances of success, most groups take a year or more to go through the process. During that time, a representative group of individuals (sometimes called a drafting team) from all parts of the engaged organisation or community meet regularly and to work through the chaordic design process.

The steps involved in conceiving and creating a more chaordic organisation are:

Develop a Statement of Purpose

The first step is to define—with absolute clarity and deep conviction—the purpose of the community. An effective statement of purpose will be a clear, commonly understood statement of what identifies and binds the community together as worthy of pursuit. When properly done, it can usually be expressed in a single sentence. Participants will say about the purpose: "If we could achieve that, my life/job would have meaning."

Define a Set of Principles

Once the purpose has been clearly stated, the next step is to define—with the same clarity, conviction and common understanding—the principles by which those involved will be guided in pursuit of that purpose. Principles typically have high ethical and moral content, and developing them requires engaging the whole person, not just the intellect. The best principles will be descriptive, not prescriptive, and each principle will illuminate the others. Taken as a whole, together with the purpose, the principles constitute the body of belief that will bind the community together and against which all decisions and acts will be judged.

Identify All Participants

With clarity about purpose and principles, the next step is to identify all relevant and affected parties—the stakeholders whose needs, interests and perspectives must be considered in conceiving (or reconceiving) the organisation. As the drafting team members pursue their work, their perceptions of who constitutes a stakeholder will typically expand. They now have an opportunity to ensure that all concerned individuals and groups are considered when a new organisational concept is sought.

Create a New Organisational Concept

When all relevant and affected parties have been identified, drafting team members creatively search for and develop a general concept for the organisation. In the light of purpose and principles, they seek innovative organisational structures that can be trusted to be just, equitable and effective with respect to all participants, in relation to all the practices in which they may engage. They often discover that no existing form of organisation can do so and that something new must be conceived.

Write a Constitution

Once the organisational concept is clear, the details of organisational structure and functioning are expressed in the form of a written constitution and by-laws. These documents will incorporate, with precision, the substance of the previous steps. They will embody purpose, principles and concept, specify rights, obligations and relationships of all participants, and establish the organisation as a legal entity under appropriate jurisdiction.

Foster Innovative Practices

With clarity of shared purpose and principles, the right participants, an effective concept and a clear constitution, practices will naturally evolve in highly focused and effective ways. They will harmoniously blend cooperation and competition within a transcendent organisation trusted by all. Purpose is then realised far beyond original expectations, in a self-organising, self-governing system capable of constant learning and evolution.

Drawing the Pieces into a Whole

The process is iterative. Each step sheds new light on all of the preceding steps and highlights where modifications or refinements need to be made. In effect, the process continually folds back on itself, more fully clarifying the previous steps even as each new dimension is explored. Over time, the elements become deeply integrated. None is truly finished until all are finished.

Two difficulties are frequently encountered, moving onto the next stage too quickly and allowing the striving for perfection to bog down the process. The first difficulty is common when working on purpose and principles, where agreement on "platitudes" can often be reached even when underlying differences persist. In these situations, finding an easy answer that pleases everyone is not enough; digging deeper to find richer and more meaningful understanding and agreement is essential. This can be taken to an extreme, of course, which leads to the second risk. Perfection is not required and will never be attained. Getting a very good answer that is "good enough" to move on to the next step is the goal. Keep in mind that what is done at each stage will be subsequently refined.

The most difficult parts of the process are releasing preconceived notions about the nature and structure of organisations and understanding their origins in our own minds. We often catalyze this process by asking the question: "If anything imaginable were possible, if there were no constraints whatever, what would be the nature of an ideal institution to accomplish our purpose?"

There is no right or wrong way to undertake and proceed through the chaordic design process, but we typically observe the following pattern in our work with organisations:

- **One or two sessions exploring the core chaordic concepts** with a leadership or initiating group. We urge groups and organisations to take time to assess the relevance and "fit" of chaordic concepts and processes for their circumstances. Having key participants consider and endorse a major change initiative is essential if the effort is to have a serious chance of success.

- **One or two sessions identifying participants, developing resources and devising a strategy for working through the chaordic design process.** One or more months of work are typically required to organise the resources and support that an organisational development effort will need. This includes the development of several dedicated teams with responsibility for project management and staffing, outreach and communications, and organisational concept and design.

- **A series of in-depth meetings, each several days in length, to work through each of the six elements.** Some elements, such as principles and organisational concept, often take more than a single meeting. It is not uncommon for this series of meetings to take at least a year, sometimes two, especially when dealing with large, complex organisations or industries.

- **Ongoing analytic and educational support for participants in the process.** Issues invariably arise that require more detailed research or attention by a special team. Research on industry-specific matters, or mapping potential participants and their current relationships to each other, are examples. Legal analysis is often required.

- **Chartering and implementation.** The aim is to create a dynamic, evolving organisation. Yet implementation of the new concept can take several months. In the case of existing organisations seeking to transform themselves, a careful strategy for the transition from one structure to another must be created. When a new organisation is being formed, it may take some months for individuals and other institutions to elect to join and participate.

Resources: Dee Hock, Birth of the Chaordic Age, read the Visa story on page 82

Hosting and Designing Participatory Processes as a Team

A Core Hosting Team Holds a Field

Hosting really is a co-creative effort. In engaging in larger scale conversations or change processes the **Core team** or **Core hosting team** together with the **Caller** are central to designing, hosting and holding the process and whatever emerges from it.

This is central function in the fifth organisational pattern described earlier in this workbook.

This team is also where **content** and **process** can merge if the **Core Hosting Team** holds all the necessary roles and represents the diversity of the system.

Who Makes Up a Core Hosting Team?

An ideal hosting team consists of:

- The caller who has sensed the need to convene this process (actually owns the process and is both deeply committed ad responsible for the process)
- Members of his/her team who have an in-depth understanding of the content
- Internal process hosts / consultants who understand the culture of the organisation and how change can be led and accompanied successfully in this context.
- External process hosts / consultants who bring their experience and practices from outside and help the team to take some distance from the context in which they are absorbed in order to gain some fresh perspectives.

The size of this team will vary depending on the scale of the process.

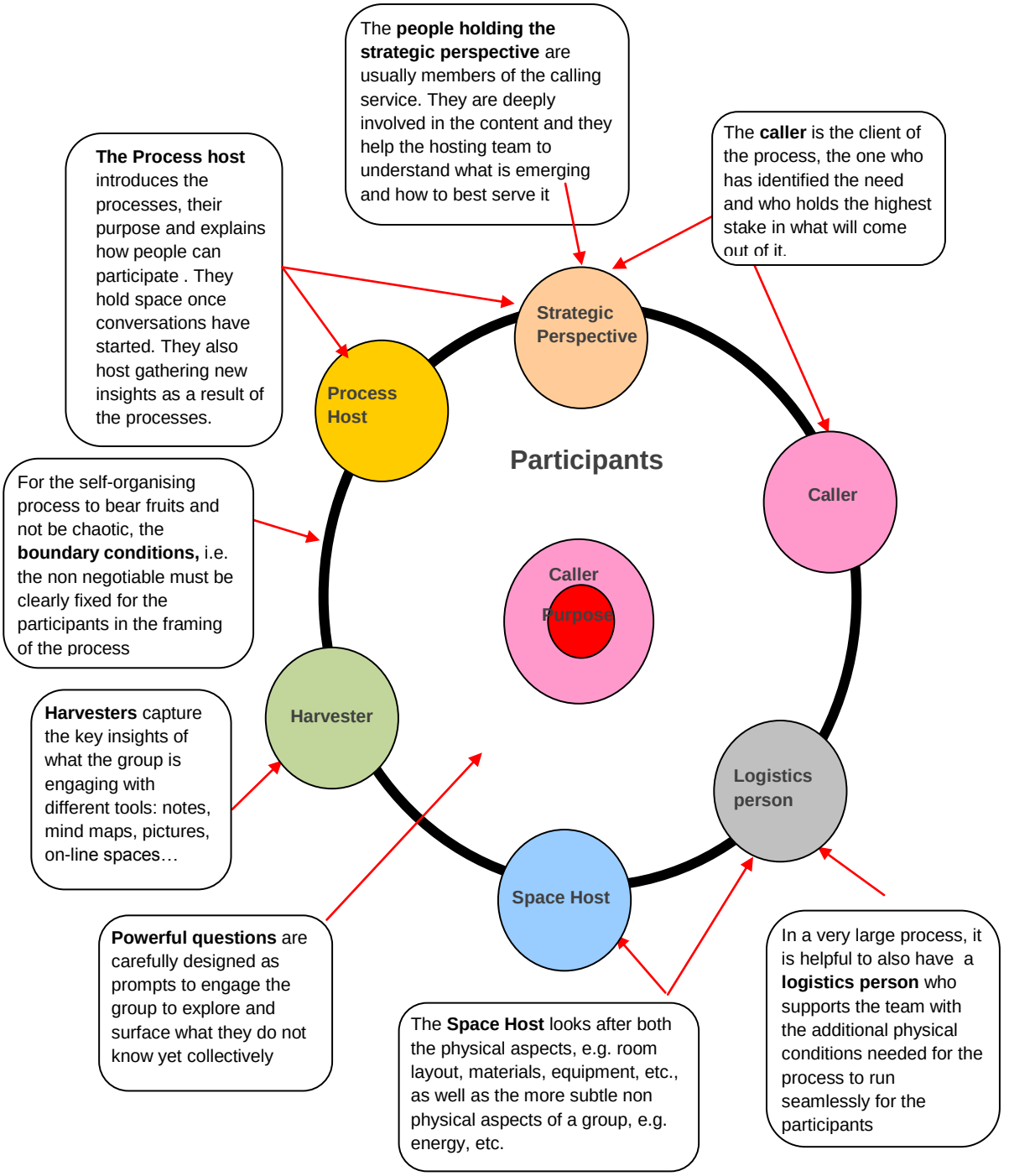
Forming the Team

In forming the team you create the "container" that can hold the process.

This takes time and meeting face to face to form a good team that is engaged and committed to the process and each other.

The diagram on the next page sets out the different roles that we have found useful in forming a Core Hosting Team. Some of the functions can merge e.g. stage-managing and logistics depending on the size and complexity of the process

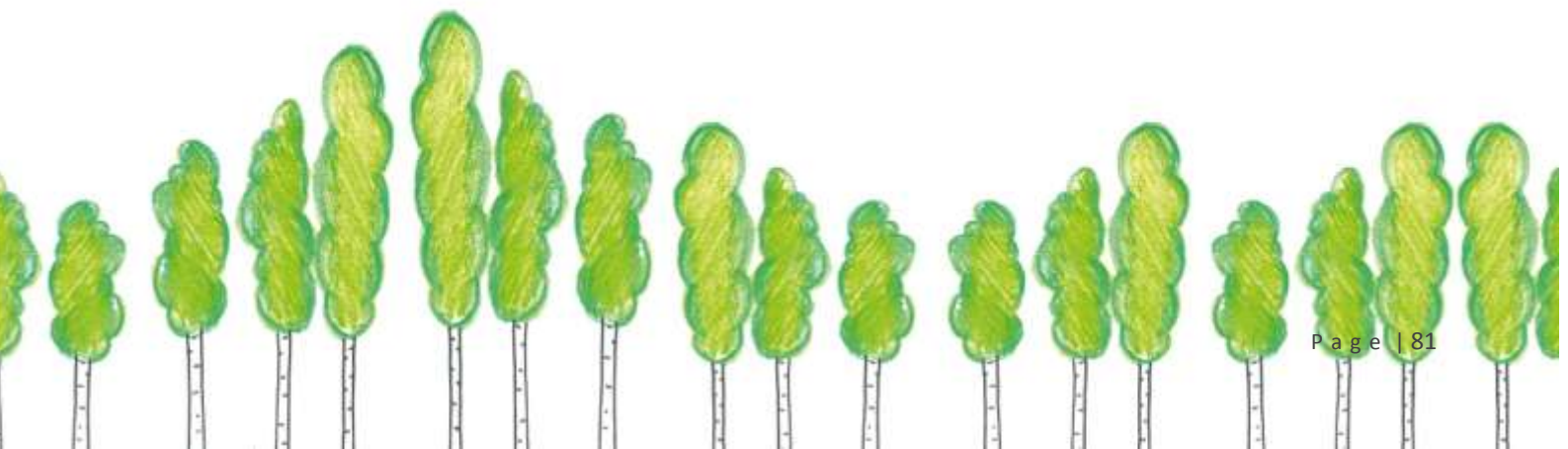
Core Hosting Team



A Core Hosting Team is About Learning Together

In a Core Hosting Team, **everybody is learning**. Being clear about what you can contribute and what you can expect to learn will help the team to work consciously together in service of the people invited and the purpose. It is highly recommended to have seasoned people in the team who can help less experienced practitioners to deepen their understanding of this way of working

through practicing. Sometimes, these seasoned practitioners will even not be visible to the participants. They act then as coaches of the team.



Detailed Roles in a Core Hosting Team

Caller

The caller is the client of the process. They have sensed the need for it and have invited the hosting team to help them initiate a process where others are invited in order to produce outcomes from sharing their knowledge together. The caller is part of the process and:

- Co-drafts and send the invitation
- Welcomes people
- Frames the context and the purpose
- Listens to what is coming out of the conversations
- Helps the hosting team to adapt the process if necessary
- Commits to follow-up on the outcomes

Strategic Perspective Holders

The people who hold the strategic perspective include the caller and other people who have a key stake in the outcomes of the event. These people specifically:

- Liaise with speakers to help them see where their interventions fit
- Liaise with guests to help them catch up when they arrive and make sense of the outcomes of the seminar
- Listen intentionally for horizontal questions
- Capture the key aspects learned by the group
- Liaise with the hosts to keep the event on tracks

Process Hosts

Before an event Process Hosts offer their skills of designing so that an architecture, or "red thread" for the process can be created. This is created taking into account the context and purpose of the process, as well as the desired outcomes. During an event, the focus of the process hosts is on facilitating the processes. This includes framing in each method, explaining how people will participate, offering stillness whilst people are in conversations, i.e. holding space, and supporting the gathering of insights as a result of the conversations. The process hosts are the most visible part of the team, but they cannot do their role without the support of the other members of the team.

Speakers

At different points during an event e.g. welcome, framing a process or closing, a speaker offers in perspective. The purpose for doing this is to inspire and catalyse the subsequent

conversations that the participants will engage in. It can be offering in the key challenge that needs to be faced, a perspective that would make a difference or a new way of looking at issues. This role of speaker is different to more traditional speakers in that they do not take the stance of an expert with the preferred approach or option. Instead they offer their knowledge and perspective to invite in more diversity of views and collective intelligence.

Harvesters

During the design phase of a process, thinking ahead to what we wish to collect as a result of the conversation, i.e. the harvest is very important and shapes what the Harvesters will be gathering and looking out for during an event. Specifically, during an event their role includes:

- Being of service to the strategic group and speakers at anytime
- Collecting the results of the conversations depending on the level required, e.g. detailed notes of what was spoken, worksheets participants have filled in, graphic recording, meta level, etc.
- Collecting all pieces of harvesting throughout the event, e.g. worksheet, flipcharts, etc.
- Recording real time visually, e.g. mind maps, photographing, videoing, creating a visual landscape
- Producing the artefacts of what the process produced, e.g. landscape, newsletter/live minutes, full record, strategic report, etc.

Space Hosts

The purpose of space hosting is to contribute to creating the optimal learning conditions by tending the physical and non-physical (energetic / subtle) levels. It consists of multiple levels which depending on the context, includes:

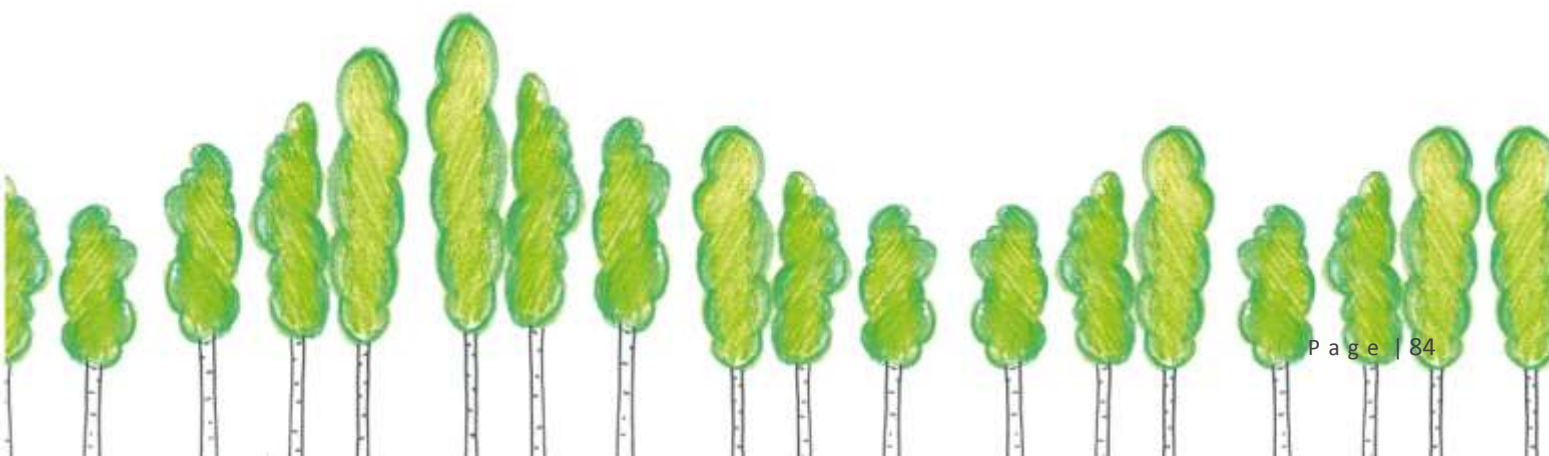
Physical Hosting

- Location of venue, proximity to access to nature, transport links, etc.
- Venue standard and style of facility, e.g., main group room, break out rooms, accommodation, catering, etc.
- Main Group Room – Spacious, light, adaptable, wall space for harvesting
- Setting the optimal learning space when in location e.g., comfort and access for participants,
- learning space for optimal flow, which includes ample space for harvesting, location of food/drinks, amenities, e.g., restrooms, cloakrooms, etc

Energetic Hosting

Sometimes known as *holding space*

- Connecting to the authentic higher purpose that serves the common good
- Working intentionally with the more subtle levels of emotional, subliminal (unconscious) and thought-based aspects of human interaction that can distract or negatively disturb the creation of a generative learning field
- Noticing the 'unspoken', the shadow, and if in service, giving voice to them, either by asking a question, naming the energy or emotion in the field, or ground it intentionally



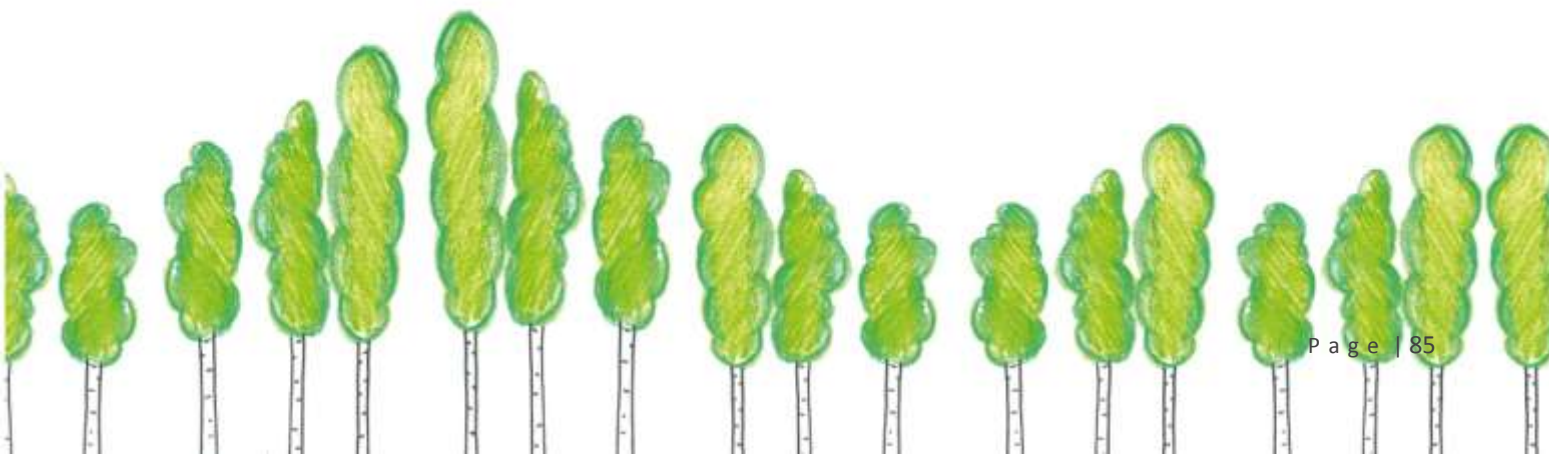
Logistics Team

When hosting a very large event, then it is applicable to have a logistics person or even team as tending to the practical details becomes even more important when working with large number. Specifically, this role includes:

- Liaise with people in charge of the venue on any issue
- Ensure proper set-up of the space
- Handle laptops & USB sticks whenever used
- Handle requests coming from all other teams
- Test all equipments: microphones, PC, beamer...

Follow-up / Strategic continuity

After an event, it is good practice to gather as an entire Core Hosting Team and to harvest out both the key content insights that will move the work forward as well as the key process insights that will help to shape the next process steps. This allows the wisest next steps in service of the development of individuals, the organisation and the common good to be identified.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books and Websites

Many resources are available—books, articles, websites, blogs, communities. We have included links to websites in the relevant section of this workbook.

Art of Hosting online presence:

- Art of Hosting: www.artofhosting.org

Basic information and list of upcoming trainings; co-created by many Art of Hosting stewards.

- Art of Hosting online community: artofhosting.ning.com

Site with over 1000 global practitioners; lots of resources (videos and documents); possibility to from and join groups (local or thematic); possibility to announce your AoH-related events and start and contribute conversations.

- Art of Hosting emaillist (listserve) where a lot of questions and announcements are made.

You can join the list by going to www.artofhosting.org/home/stayconnected/

As starting points or hubs for more extensive lists of resources, we suggest:

http://www.evolutionarynexus.org/community/art_hosting
http://www.vimeo.com/groups/hosting
www.chriscorrigan.com (Chris is a master harvester)
www.evolutionarynexus.org An online conversation and knowledge space, with a separate Art of Hosting section.

Here are a few books and links with which to start or perhaps, like old friends, return to:

Baldwin, Christina:
Calling the Circle—The First and Future Culture
Storycatcher—Making sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story
The Circle Way—A Leader in Every Chair—Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea,
www.peerspirit.com

Brown, Juanita with David Isaacs & the World Café Community
The World Café—Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter
www.theworldcafe.com

Cooperrider, David and Srivastva (2000)
Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change
www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf

Whitney, Dianna and Trosten-Bloom, A.
The power of appreciative inquiry: a practical guide to positive change

Owen, Harrison
Open Space Technology—A Users Guide
Expanding our now—The Story of Open Space Technology
The Spirit of Leadership—Liberating the Leader in Each of Us
www.openspaceworld.org

Corrigan, Chris
The Tao of Holding Space
Open Space Technology—A User's Non-Guide (with Michael Herman)
www.chriscorrigan.com

Holman, Peggy (Editor), Tom Devane (Editor)
The Change Handbook (Second Edition Available this Fall)

Isaacs, William.
Dialogue and the art of thinking together.

Kaner, Sam et. al.
The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making

Scharmer C. Otto (2007) Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges, The Social Technology of Presencing, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA,

Senge, Peter
The Fifth Discipline
The Fifth Discipline Field Book (with Ross, Smith, Roberts, and Kleiner)
The Art and Practise of The Learning Organization
The Dance of Change (with Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts)

Wheatley, Margaret J.
Leadership and the New Science:
Turning to One Another
Finding Our Now
A Simpler Way (with Myron Kellner-Rogers)

Whitney, Dianna and Trosten-Bloom, A.
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Etienne Wenger
Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity.

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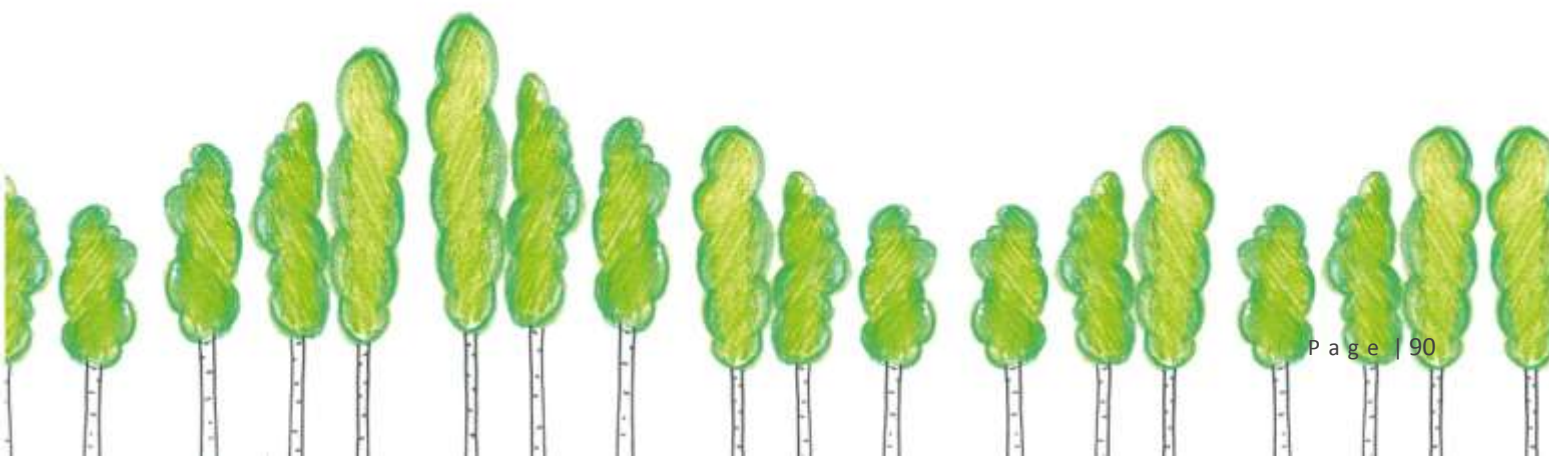


ART of HOSTING

Stories and Articles

The Art of Hosting Story

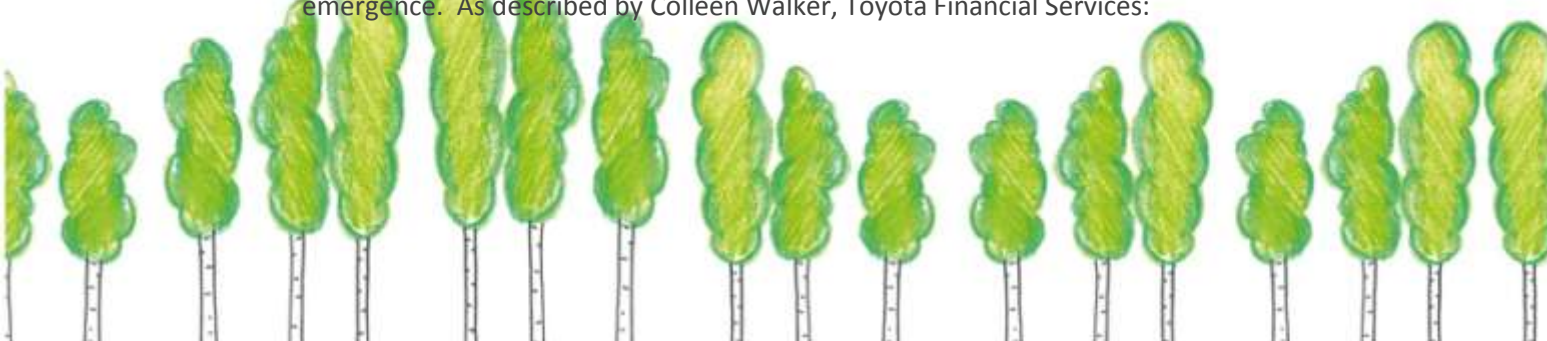
The first generation of whole-systems practitioners broke new ground by "getting the whole system in the room" in previously unheard of numbers to participate in creating their own answers. Methodologies emerged that could support the creation of containers where diverse perspectives could lead to new collective intelligence.

The current generation is learning to mix and match these practices in creative and effective ways as seasoned practitioners from different traditions meet and learn from each other and their work in the world.

One expression of this next generation is the Art of Hosting Meaningful Conversations (www.artofhosting.org), discovered within a field of practitioners, friends talking, sharing stories, learning and listening together, wanting to contribute, and asking meaningful questions. This has resulted in a community of people who are called to be hosts, and are called to bring a suite of conversational technologies, (Circle, Open Space, World Café, etc) into play in powerful ways in organizations, communities, families and all their relations. Teams of practitioners taking collective responsibility for designing practices and creating fields that open the space for imagination, inspiration, love, creativity, learning, etc. have come together in many different parts of the world. This inquiry from within a field has begun to surface the deeper patterns that live beneath the methodologies, as well as the gift of fundamental architecture for collaborative and transformative human meetings. It is engaging in questions like: Where is it that all methods meet? What is the wellspring of design? and; What are the non-negotiables in an ever-changing world?

As a result of this creative foray into emergent practice, the discipline known as the Art of Hosting serves the opening and holding of fields of collective intelligence and community consciousness for the common good in any context. It is a practice for creating generative spaces in which powerful conversations can take place. These generative spaces have qualities that allow learning, wisdom, responsibility, co-creation and heart to flow. The hosts of these spaces work with this generative field—the field that emerges between the practitioners and participants—while at the same time being fully present in his/her own hosting to what is needed in the moment.

The Art of Hosting consciousness engages multiple practices, bringing the insight that to host/teach a practice, you must embrace the deeper pattern of the practice yourself (knowing methods), sense the learning edge or 'crack' in any given situation to invite the shift wanting to happen, (know the situation) and embrace the practice of being present in the moment so as to serve best (know yourself). Others are invited to learn and practice this consciousness through a transformative three-day learning experience, which invites individuals and teams to co-create a journey of discovery into the practices of hosting and creating space for emergence. As described by Colleen Walker, Toyota Financial Services:



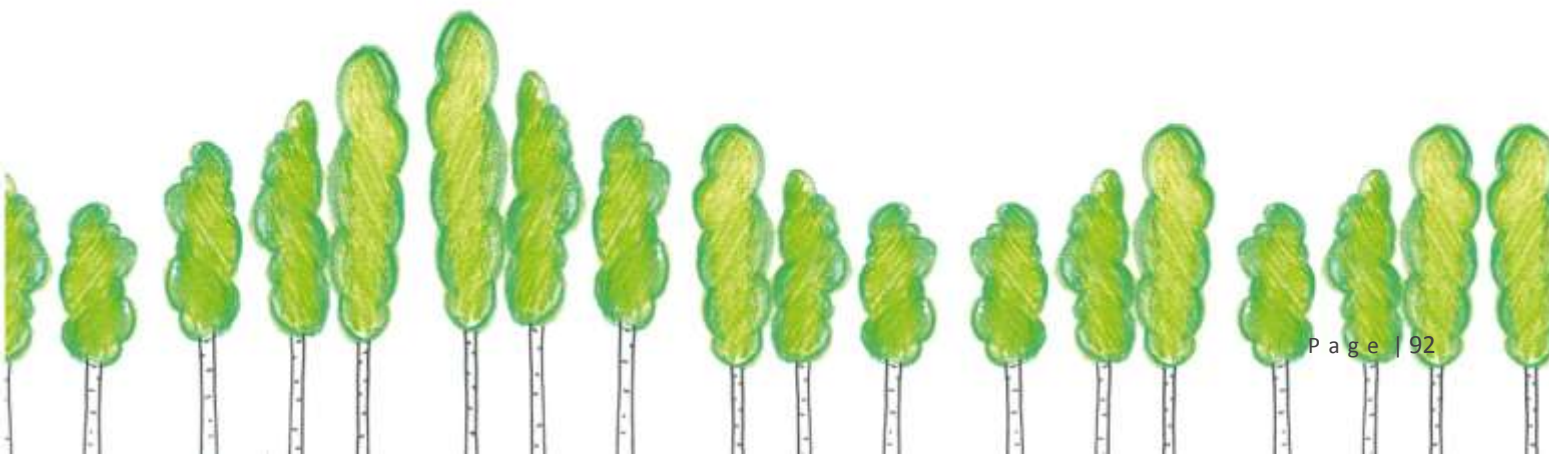
Few professional development opportunities have the true potential to go beyond superficialities. The Art of Hosting does by delivering clear methodologies and building skills to enable positive, sustainable change in business, government, communities and schools. For people wanting an immersion in the dynamics of systemic change, the Art of Hosting has much to contribute.

Originally written by Peggy Holman for the "Change Handbook"

For more resources and information on Art of Hosting please visit:

http://interchange.dk/resources/

http://www.artofhosting.org/home/



I KEEP six honest
serving-men
They taught me all I
knew;
Their names are What
and Why and When
And How and Where
and Who.

I send them over land
and sea,
I send them east and
west;
But after they have
worked for me,
I give them all a rest.

I let them rest from
nine till five,
For I am busy then,
As well as breakfast,
lunch, and tea,
For they are hungry
men.

But different folk have
different views;
I know a person
small—
She keeps ten million
serving-men,
Who get no rest at all!
She sends'em abroad
on her own affairs,
From the second she
opens her eyes—
One million Hows, two
million Wheres,
And seven million
Whys!

Rudyard Kipling

A Story about the Power of Questions

"*You can eat an apple,"* I said and gave him the green fruit.

It was as if he had seen an apple for the first time. First he just held it there and smelled it, but then he took a little bite.

"Mmmm," he said and took a bigger bite.
"Did it taste good?" I asked.

He bowed deeply. I wanted to know how an apple tastes the very first time you taste it, so I asked again, *"How did it taste?"*

He bowed and bowed.

"Why do you bow?" I asked. Mika bowed again. It made me feel so confused, that I hurried to ask the question again. - *"Why do you bow?"*

Now it was him who became confused. I think he did not know if he should bow again or just answer. *"Where I come from we always bow, when someone asks an interesting question,"* he explained, "*and the deeper the question, the deeper we bow*."

That was the strangest thing I had heard in a long time. I could not understand that a question was something to bow for. *"What do you do when you greet each other?"*

"We always try to find something wise to ask?" he said.

"Why?"

First he bowed quickly, because I had asked another question and then he said: "*We try to ask a wise question to get the other person to bow".*

I was so impressed by the answer that I bowed as deeply as I could. - When I looked up Mika had put his finger in his mouth. After a long time he took it out.

"Why did you bow?" he asked and looked insulted.

"*Because you answered my question so wisely*," I said.

Now he said very loudly and clearly something that has followed me in my life ever since. - *"An answer is nothing to bow for. Even if an answer can sound ever so right, still you should not bow to it."*

I nodded briefly. But I regretted it at once, because now Mika may think that I bowed to the answer he had just given.

"*The one who bows shows respect*", Mika continued, "*You should never show respect for an answer."*

"*Why not?"*

"*An answer is always the part of the road that is behind you. Only questions point to the future.*"

Those words were so wise, I thought, that I had to press my hands against my chin not to bow again...-

Jostein Gaarder, 1996 in Norway

The Visa Story

Visa is often cited as an early prototype of chaordic organization. Despite Dee Hock's caution that the design is "at best a third right", the story is both inspiring and instructive. What follows is an abbreviated rendition. For complete history, please read Birth of the Chaordic Age, by Dee Hock.

A Troubled Industry

In 1958, Bank of America issued sixty thousand credit cards to the residents of Fresno, California. After years of losses, the program became profitable and the bank blanketed the state with cards. In 1966, several California banks countered by launching Mastercharge. In turn, Bank of America began franchising BankAmericard.

Other large banks launched proprietary cards and offered franchises. Action and reaction exploded. Banks dropped tens of millions of unsolicited cards on an unsuspecting public with little regard for qualifications. Within two years, the infant industry was in chaos. Issuing banks were thought to be losing hundreds of millions of dollars, politicians were alarmed, the public was exasperated and the media was criticizing everyone involved

An Intractable Problem—And Incredible Opportunity

In 1968, as a vice president of a small bank in Seattle franchised to offer BankAmericard, Dee Hock became involved in the formation of a complex of licensee committees to look into the situation. The problems were far worse than imagined—far beyond any possibility of correction by the existing system.

It was necessary to reconceive, in the most fundamental sense, the concepts of bank, money and credit card, and to understand how those elements might evolve in a micro-electronic environment.

Three bank managers joined Hock to begin the process of re-conceptualization. There followed days and nights of intense discussion. They could agree on nothing and were most conflicted by two questions: What is it that we want to accomplish? How will we organise it? Their deliberations led nowhere. The group was ready to throw in the towel when one of them said, "I'm beginning to think I don't know what an organization is." Blank looks all around. They then began to explore what they considered to be the nature of organization. As the discussions continued, several conclusions emerged.

Money had become nothing but alphanumeric data recorded on valueless paper and metal. It would become data in the form of arranged electrons and photons that would move around the world at the speed of light, at minuscule cost, by infinitely diverse paths, throughout the entire electromagnetic spectrum. The concept of "credit card" was inadequate. Credit cards had to be reconceived as a device for the exchange of monetary value in the form of arranged electronic particles. Demand for that exchange would be lifelong and global, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, wherever the customer happened to be. Perceptions swiftly changed.

Embedded in what had seemed a hopeless problem was an incredible opportunity. Any organization that could globally guarantee and clear monetary information in the form of arranged electronic particles in every monetary value in the world would have the market—every exchange of monetary value in the world —that staggered the imagination. But a major problem remained.

No bank could do it. No stock corporation could do it. No nation-state could do it. In fact, no existing form of organization could do it. It would require a transcendental organization linking together in wholly new ways an unimaginable complex of diverse financial institutions, individual customers, merchants, communication companies, suppliers and government entities. It was beyond the power of reason or the reach of the imagination to design such an organization or to anticipate the problems and opportunities it would face.

Yet, Hock refused to give up. He noted that evolution routinely created much more complex organizational patterns—rain forests, marine systems, body, brain, immune system—with seeming ease. The group simply hadn't "peeled back the onion" far enough.

A Powerful Purpose and Set of Principles

With that perspective in mind, they decided to reverse the normal process of immediately asking what the practices of the organization would be. Instead, they began to ask themselves what would be the purpose and principles—its institutional genetic code—which would allow a new kind of institution to emerge and, in effect, to create and develop itself.

They focused on a single question:

If anything imaginable were possible, if there were no constraints whatever, what would be the nature of an ideal organisation based on biological organising principles to create the world's premier system for the exchange of monetary value?

Slowly, a dozen or so principles emerged. For example:

Power and function must be distributive to the maximum degree. No function should be performed by any part of the whole that could reasonably be done by any more peripheral part, and no power vested in any part that might reasonably be exercised by any lesser part.

It must be self-organising. All participants must have the right to organise for self-governance at any time, for any reason, at any scale, with irrevocable rights of participation in governance at any greater scale.

Governance must be distributive. No individual, institution, or combination of either or both, particularly management, should be able to dominate deliberations or control decisions at any scale.

It must seamlessly blend both cooperation and competition. All parts must be free to compete in unique, independent ways, yet be linked so as to sense the demands of other parts, yield self-interest and cooperate when necessary to the inseparable good of the whole.

It must be infinitely malleable, yet extremely durable. It should be capable of constant, self-generated, modification of form or function, without sacrificing its essential purpose, nature or embodied principle, thus releasing human ingenuity and spirit.

It must be cooperatively and equitably owned. All relevant and affected parties must be eligible to participate in functions, governance and ownership.

After drafting the principles, none of the four believed such an organization could possibly be brought into being. A concentrated, two-year effort involving people throughout the industry and at all levels within individual banks proved them wrong. In June 1970, the organization that would come to be known as VISA came into being.

A Remarkable Organizational Concept

In the legal sense, Visa is a non-stock, for-profit, membership corporation. In another sense, it is an inside-out holding company in that it does not hold but is held by its functioning parts. The institutions that create its products are, at one and the same time, its owners, its members, its customers, its subjects and its superiors. It exists as an integral part of the most highly regulated of industries, yet is not subject to any regulatory authority in the world.

If converted to a stock company, Visa would have an astronomical market value, excluding its thousands of affiliated entities. But it cannot be bought, raided, traded or sold, since ownership is in the form of non-transferable rights of participation. However, that portion of the business created by each member is owned solely by them, is reflected in their stock prices and can be sold to any other member or entity eligible for membership.

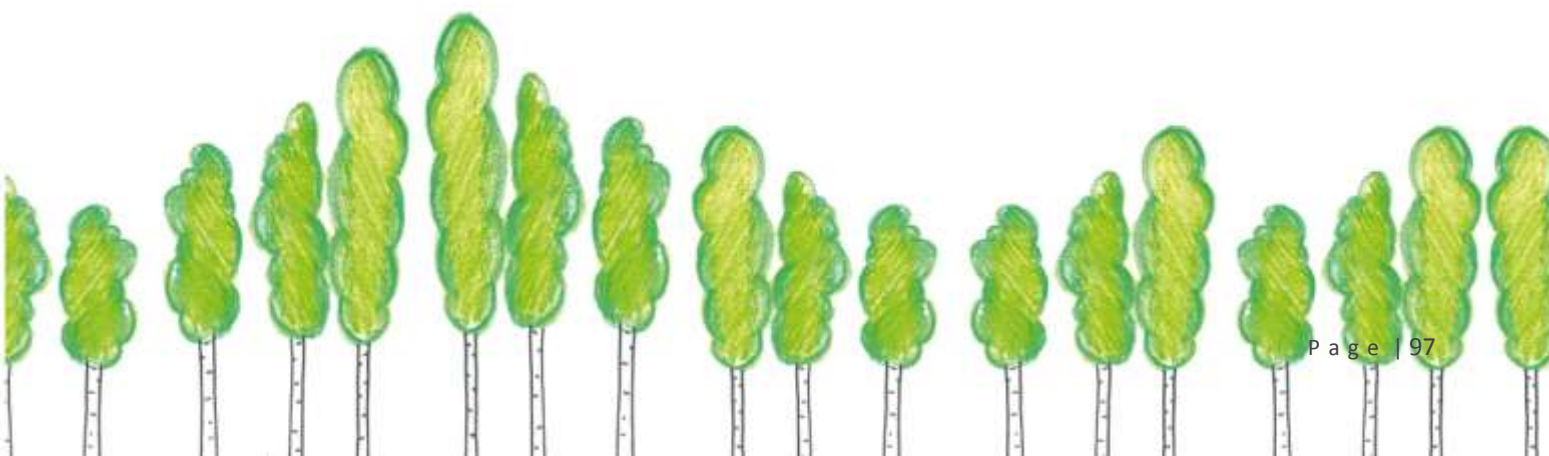
It espouses no political, economic, social or legal theory, thus transcending language, custom, politics and culture to successfully connect a bewildering variety of more than 21,000 financial institutions, 16 million merchants and 800 million people in 300 countries and territories. Annual volume of $1.4 trillion continues to grow in excess of twenty-percent compounded annually. A staff of about three thousand scattered in twenty-one offices in thirteen countries on four continents provides product and systems development, global advertising, and around-the-clock operation of two global electronic communication systems with thousands of data centres communicating through nine million miles of fibre-optic cable. Its electronic systems clear more transactions in one week than the Federal Reserve system does in a year.

It has gone through a number of wars and revolutions, the belligerents continuing to share common ownership and never ceasing reciprocal acceptance of cards.

It has multiple boards of directors within a single legal entity, none of which are inferior or superior, as each has jurisdiction over certain areas or activities. No part knows the whole, the whole doesn't know all the parts and none had any need to. The entirety is largely self-regulating.

In less than five years, Visa transformed a troubled product with a minority market share into a dominant market share and the single most profitable consumer service in the financial services industry. Visa returns as much as 100% on its member's invested capital, while at the same time reducing by more than 50% the cost of unsecured credit to individuals and

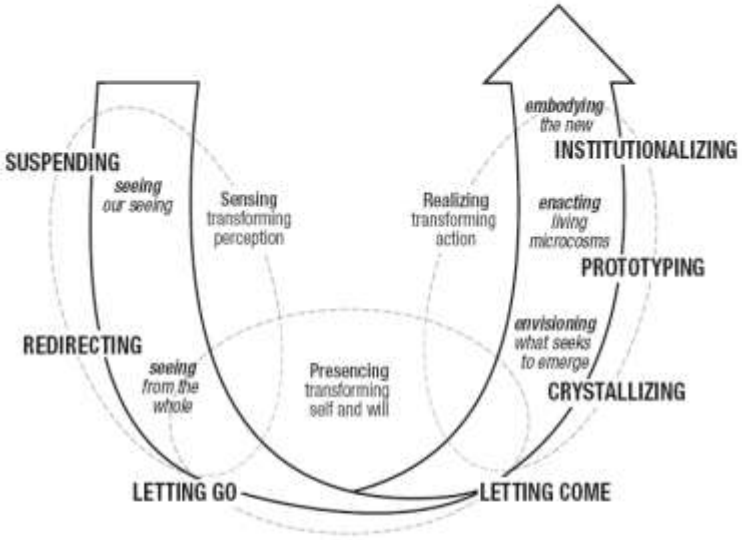
merchant cost of handling payment instruments. - Its products are the most universally used and recognised in the world, yet the organization is so transparent its ultimate customers, most if its affiliates and some of its members do not know how it functions or how it is structured.



U Model

"Presencing" is bringing into presence, and into the present, your highest potential and the future that is seeking to emerge. Your highest future possibility is related to your own highest intention…it's being an instrument of life itself, to accomplish, in a sense, what life wishes for me to accomplish.

Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future



Seven Capacities of the U Movement

The entire U movement arises from seven core capacities and the activities they enable. Each capacity is a gateway to the next activity – the capacity for suspending enables seeing our seeing, and the capacity for protyping enables enacting living microcosms – but only as all seven capacities are developed is the the movement through the entire process possible.

society for SoL organizational learning

© Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers. *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*. Cambridge, Mass.: SoL, Society for Organizational Learning, 2004. Page 225.

www.ottoscharmer.com
www.presencing.org
www.theoryu.com

Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale

Article available at: http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html

Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze ©2006

Despite current ads and slogans, the world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes when networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what's possible. This is good news for those of us intent on creating a positive future. Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections. We don't need to convince large numbers of people to change; instead, we need to connect with kindred spirits. Through these relationships, we will develop the new knowledge, practices, courage and commitment that lead to broad-based change.

But networks aren't the whole story. As networks grow and transform into active, collaborative communities, we discover how Life truly changes, which is through emergence. When separate, local efforts connect with each other as networks, then strengthen as communities of practice, suddenly and surprisingly a new system emerges at a greater level of scale. This system of influence possesses qualities and capacities that were unknown in the individuals. It isn't that they were hidden; they simply don't exist until the system emerges. They are properties of the system, not the individual, but once there, individuals possess them. And the system that emerges always possesses greater power and influence than is possible through planned, incremental change. Emergence is how Life creates radical change and takes things to scale.

Since its inception in 1992, The Berkana Institute has been experimenting with the lifecycle of emergence: how living systems begin as networks, shift to intentional communities of practice, and evolve into powerful systems capable of global influence. Two years ago, we created the Berkana Exchange to learn how local social innovation can be taken to scale and provide solutions to many of the world's most intractable issues—such as community health, ecological sustainability and economic self-reliance. The Exchange connects leadership learning centres around the globe, in such places as Brazil, Canada, India, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, the United States and Zimbabwe. A learning centre is a local initiative committed to strengthening a community's leadership capacity and self-reliance by working with the wisdom and wealth already present in its people, traditions and environment. The purpose of the Berkana Exchange is to support and sustain a vibrant "trans-local" learning community—a network that connects local action so that global influence can emerge. By applying the lessons of living systems and working intentionally with emergence and its lifecycle, we are learning how to create the conditions for networks of all kinds to evolve into systems of influence that spread social innovation throughout the world.

Why We Need to Understand Networks

Researchers and social activists are beginning to discover the power of networks and networking. And there is a growing recognition that networks are the new form of organising. Evidence of self-organised networks is everywhere: social activists, web-based interest groups, terrorist groups, street gangs.

Yet much of the current work on networks displays old paradigm bias. We repeat our habitual pattern of looking for hierarchy and control mechanisms in the belief that organisation only happens through human will and intervention. We see this in social network analysis, when physical representations of the network are created by mapping relationships—thereby depicting the form that has emerged, but saying nothing about why it formed. Other network analysts identify roles played by network members, such as "expert" and "lurker," or make distinctions between different parts of the network, such as "core" and "periphery." Most of these distinctions hark back to our mechanical understanding of organization—its shape, roles and physical manifestation. Although It may not be the intent of these researchers, their work is often used by leaders to find ways to manipulate the network, to use it in a traditional and controlling way.

What's missing in these analyses is an exploration of the dynamics of networks. As the only form of organisation used by living systems on this planet, networks result from self-organization, where individuals or species recognise their interdependence and organise in ways that support the diversity and viability of all. Because networks are the first stage in emergence, it is essential that we understand their dynamics by exploring such questions as:

- Why do networks form? What are the conditions that support their creation?
- What keeps a network alive and growing? What keeps members connected?
- What type of leadership is required? Why do people become leaders?
- What type of leadership interferes with or destroys the network?
- What happens after a healthy network forms? What's next?
- If we understand these dynamics and the lifecycle of emergence, what can we do as leaders, activists and social entrepreneurs to intentionally foster emergence?

What is Emergence?

Emergence violates so many of our Western assumptions of how change happens that it often takes quite a while to understand it. In nature, change never happens as a result of top-down, pre-conceived strategic plans, or from the mandate of any single individual or boss. Change begins as local actions spring up simultaneously in many different areas. If these changes remain disconnected, nothing happens beyond each locale. However, when they become connected, local actions can emerge as a powerful system with influence at a more global or comprehensive level. (Global here means a larger scale, not necessarily the entire planet.)

These powerful emergent phenomena appear suddenly and surprisingly. Think about how the Berlin Wall suddenly came down, how the Soviet Union ended, how corporate power quickly came to dominate globally. In each case, there were many local actions and decisions, most of which were invisible and unknown to each other, and none of which was powerful enough by itself to create change. But when these local changes coalesced, new power emerged. What could not be accomplished by diplomacy, politics, protests, or strategy suddenly happened. And when each materialised, most were surprised. Emergent phenomena always have these

characteristics: They exert much more power than the sum of their parts; they always possess new capacities different than the local actions that engendered them; they always surprise us by their appearance.

It is important to note that emergence always results in a powerful system that has many more capacities than could ever be predicted by analysing the individual parts. We see this in the behaviour of hive insects such as bees and termites. Individual ants possess none of the intelligence or skills that are in the hive. No matter how intently scientists study the behaviour of individual ants, they can never see the behaviour of the hive. Yet once the hive forms, each ant acts with the intelligence and skilfulness of the whole. And over time, even though the individual ants die off, the hive develops greater intelligence.

This aspect of emergence has profound implications for social entrepreneurs. Instead of developing them individually as leaders and skilful practitioners, we would do better to connect them to like-minded others and create the conditions for emergence. The skills and capacities needed by them will be found in the system that emerges, not in better training programs.

Because emergence only happens through connections, Berkana has developed a four stage model that catalyses connections as the means to achieve global level change. Our philosophy is to "Act locally, connect regionally, learn globally." We focus on discovering pioneering efforts and naming them as such. We then connect these efforts to other similar work globally. We nourish this network in many ways, but most essentially through creating opportunities for learning and sharing of experiences and shifting into communities of practice. We also illuminate the work of these pioneering efforts so that many more people will learn from them. We are attempting to work intentionally with emergence so that small, local efforts can become a global force for change.

The Life-Cycle of Emergence

Stage One: Networks. We live in a time when coalitions, alliances and networks are forming as the means to create societal change. There are ever more networks and now, networks of networks. These networks are essential for people finding like-minded others, the first stage in the life-cycle of emergence. It's important to note that networks are only the beginning. They are based on self-interest--people usually network together for their own benefit and to develop their own work. Networks tend to have fluid membership; people move in and out of them based on how much they personally benefit from participating.

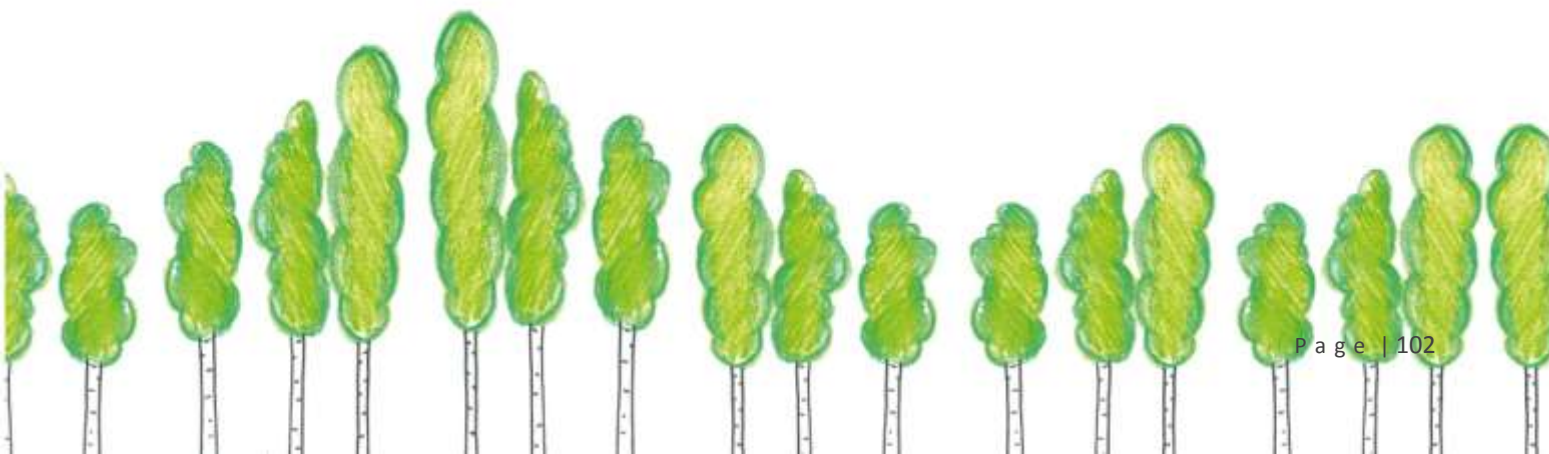
Stage Two: Communities of Practice. Networks make it possible for people to find others engaged in similar work. The second stage of emergence is the development of communities of practice (CoPs). Many such smaller, individuated communities can spring from a robust network. CoPs are a self-organised. People share a common work and realise there is great benefit to being in relationship. They use this community to share what they know, to support one another, and to intentionally create new knowledge for their field of practice. These CoPs differ from networks in significant ways. They are communities, which means that people make a commitment to be there for each other; they participate not only for their own needs, but to serve the needs of others.

In a community of practice, the focus extends beyond the needs of the group. There is an intentional commitment to advance the field of practice, and to share those discoveries with a wider audience. They make their resources and knowledge available to anyone, especially those doing related work.

The speed with which people learn and grow in a community of practice is noteworthy. Good ideas move rapidly amongst members. New knowledge and practices are implemented quickly. The speed at which knowledge development and exchange happens is crucial, because local regions and the world need this knowledge and wisdom now.

Stage Three: Systems of Influence. The third stage in emergence can never be predicted. It is the sudden appearance of a system that has real power and influence. Pioneering efforts that hovered at the periphery suddenly become the norm. The practices developed by courageous communities become the accepted standard. People no longer hesitate about adopting these approaches and methods and they learn them easily. Policy and funding debates now include the perspectives and experiences of these pioneers. They become leaders in the field and are acknowledged as the wisdom keepers for a particular issue. And critics who said it could never be done suddenly become chief supporters (often saying they knew all along.)

Emergence is the fundamental changes can materialise as globe offers methods and practices to accomplish system-wide changes so needed at this time. As leaders need to intentionally work with emergence so that our efforts will result in a truly hopeful future. No matter what other change strategies we have learned or favoured, emergence is the only way change really happens on the planet. And that is very good news.



Communities of Practice

What are Communities of Practice?

This is a brief and shortened version of an introduction to communities of practice By Etienne Wenger. It examines what communities of practice are and why researchers and practitioners in so many different contexts find them useful as an approach to knowing and learning.

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell:

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Note that this definition allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions. Not everything called a community is a community of practice. A neighbourhood for instance, is often called a community, but is usually not a community of practice. Three characteristics are crucial:

1. The Domain:

A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. (You could belong to the same network as someone and never know it.) The domain is not necessarily something recognised as "expertise" outside the community. A youth gang may have developed all sorts of ways of dealing with their domain: surviving on the street and maintaining some kind of identity they can live with. They value their collective competence and learn from each other, even though few people outside the group may value or even recognise their expertise.

2. The Community:

In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. A website in itself is not a community of practice. Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together. The claims processors in a large insurance company or students in American high schools may have much in common, yet unless they interact and learn together, they do not form a community of practice. But members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together on a daily basis. The Impressionists, for instance, used to meet in cafes and studios to discuss the style of painting they were inventing together. These interactions were essential to making them a community of practice even though they often painted alone.

A community of practice is not merely a community of interested people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They

develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction. A good conversation with a stranger on an airplane may give you all sorts of interesting insights, but it does not in itself make for a community of practice. The development of a shared practice may be more or less self-conscious. The "windshield wipers" engineers at an auto manufacturer make a concerted effort to collect and document the tricks and lessons they have learned into a knowledge base. By contrast, nurses who meet regularly for lunch in a hospital cafeteria may not realise that their lunch discussions are one of their main sources of knowledge about how to care for patients. Still, in the course of all these conversations, they have developed a set of stories and cases that have become a shared repertoire for their practice.

It is the combination of these three elements that constitutes a community of practice. And it is by developing these three elements in parallel that one cultivates such a community.

Communities of practice are not called that in all organisations. They are known under various names, such as learning networks, thematic groups, or tech clubs.

While they all have the three elements of a domain, a community, and a practice, they come in a variety of forms. Some are quite small; some are very large, often with a core group and many peripheral members. Some are local and some cover the globe. Some meet mainly face-to-face, some mostly online. Some are within an organization and some include members from various organizations. Some are formally recognised, often supported with a budget; and some are completely informal and even invisible.

Communities of practice have been around for as long as human beings have learned together. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies, we all belong to communities of practice, a number of them usually. In some we are core members. In many we are merely peripheral. And we travel through numerous communities over the course of our lives.

In fact, communities of practice are everywhere. They are a familiar experience, so familiar perhaps that it often escapes our attention. Yet when it is given a name and brought into focus, it becomes a perspective that can help us understand our world better. In particular, it allows us to see past more obvious formal structures such as organizations, classrooms, or nations, and perceive the structures defined by engagement in practice and the informal learning that comes with it.

Where is the Concept Being Applied?

The concept of community of practice has found a number of practical applications in business, organisational design, government, education, professional associations, development projects, and civic life.

Organisations: The concept has been adopted most readily by people in business because of the recognition that knowledge is a critical asset that needs to be managed strategically. Initial efforts at managing knowledge had focused on information systems with disappointing results. Communities of practice provided a new approach, which focused on people and on the social structures that enable them to learn with and from each other. Today, there is

hardly any organisation of a reasonable size that does not have some form communities-of-practice initiative. A number of characteristics explain this rush of interest in communities of practice as a vehicle for developing strategic capabilities in organisations:

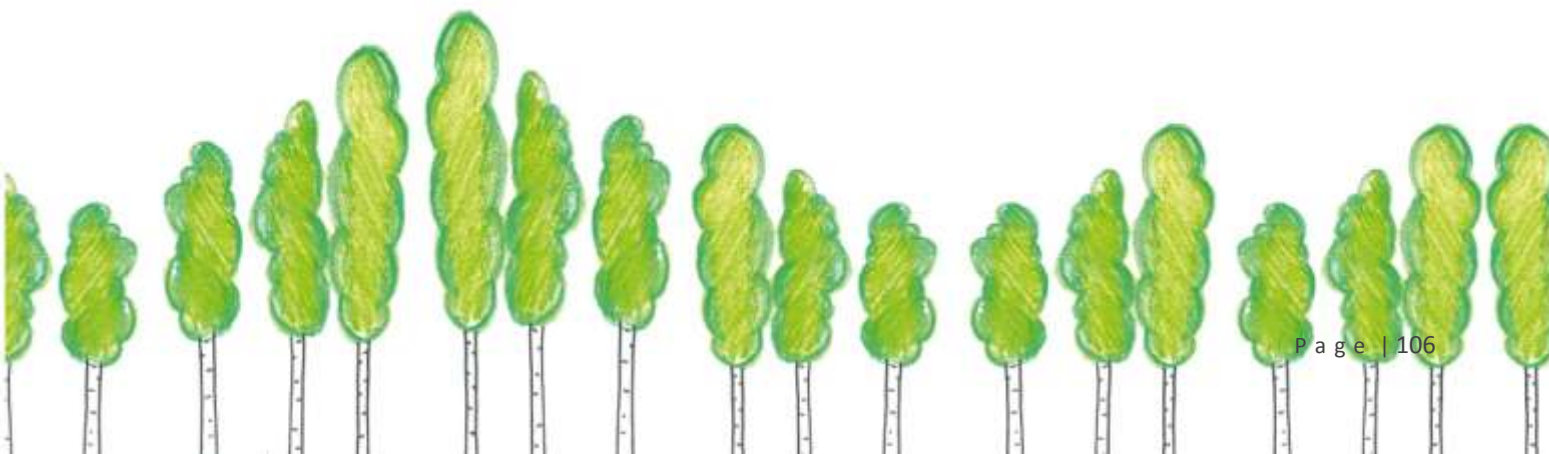
- Communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognising that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this.
- Communities among practitioners create a direct link between learning and performance, because the same people participate in communities of practice and in teams and business units.
- Practitioners can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as the more explicit aspects.
- Communities are not limited by formal structures: they create connections among people across organisational and geographic boundaries.

From this perspective, the knowledge of an organisation lives in a constellation of communities of practice each taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organisation needs. However, the very characteristics that make communities of practice a good fit for stewarding knowledge—autonomy, practitioner-orientation, informality, crossing boundaries—are also characteristics that make them a challenge for traditional hierarchical organisations. How this challenge is going to affect these organisations remains to be seen.

The web: New technologies such as the Internet have extended the reach of our interactions beyond the geographical limitations of traditional communities, but the increase in flow of information does not obviate the need for community. In fact, it expands the possibilities for community and calls for new kinds of communities based on shared practice.

The concept of community of practice is influencing theory and practice in many domains. From humble beginnings in apprenticeship studies, the concept was grabbed by businesses interested in knowledge management and has progressively found its way into other sectors. It has now become the foundation of a perspective on knowing and learning that informs efforts to create learning systems in various sectors and at various levels of scale, from local communities, to single organizations, partnerships, cities, regions, and the entire world.

There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.
Ask "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" Keep asking.
Notice what you care about. Assume that many others share your dreams.
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.
Talk to people you know. Talk to people you don't know.
Talk to people you never talk to. Be intrigued by the differences you hear.
Expect to be surprised. Treasure curiosity more than certainty.
Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible.
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert in something.
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.
Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know.
Real listening always brings people closer together.
Trust that meaningful conversations change your world.

Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

Margaret Wheatley – "Turning to one another"