

**The Art of Hosting
Participatory Leadership Training
25 – 28 June 2009
Istanbul
Turkey**



Self, Team, Community, World

***“If the group is an art form of the future,
then convening groups is an artistry
we must cultivate
to fully harvest the promise of the future.”***

Jacob Needleman, et al Centered on the Edge

Name: _____

Welcome

Welcome to the Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership,
a training and practice retreat for all who aspire to lead by engaging with interactive ways of working with groups and teams.

Welcome leaders—those who want to help—trainers, teachers, consultants, politicians, managers, social workers, entrepreneurs, social innovators, youth workers, community builders, hosts.

The Art of Hosting and Convening Meaningful Conversations has been offered in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and North and South America.

We are a growing community of practitioners, supporting each other to further our ability to facilitate co-creative learning and problem-solving.

About this Workbook

This workbook is intended to help focus and deepen your learning in relation with other participants.

It includes several tools and practices that the Art of Hosting Community of Practice has found simple and helpful. They are for you to use, improve, and share.

It isn't intended to be linear. We will focus on various sections along the way.

Please use it in ways help you most – reflections, insights, outrageous ideas, questions, drawings, musings, contacts, plans for action, collaborations, inspirations – and share them with others in an active web of conversation during your time here.

*You must give birth to your images.
They are the future waiting to be born.
Fear not the strangeness you feel.
The future must enter you
Long before it happens.
Just wait for the birth, for the hour
of new clarity*

Rainer Maria Rilke

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Introduction

Why this training at this time?

The Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership is about the art of leading by convening people in order to create new collective intelligence to take wise actions.

The Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership is a response to a world that is becoming increasingly complex and fragmented, where true solutions and innovation lie not in one leader or one viewpoint, but in the bigger picture of our collective intelligence.

The Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership is a practice ground for all who aspire to bring out the best in others. It is based on the assumption and experience that human beings have enormous untapped wealth and resilience and that the sustainable solutions lie in the wisdom between us .

The leadership approach called the 'Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership - Leading through hosting and harvesting meaningful conversations activates the collective intelligence in a group to find new solutions to the increasing challenges of the world of work today. The traditional command-and-control type of leadership is no longer appropriate. In the current climate, tapping into the potential held in an organisation or community is crucial. Inviting everyone to participate with their diverse perspectives is the key to releasing this potential.

Participatory leadership practice is based on convening strategic dialogue and conversations as drivers for development and change.

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.

Multiple Levels of Focus

Participatory Leadership requires us to operate at four levels at once, because these levels are inter-connected and learning at each of these levels informs learning at the others. We work on these four levels not as a linear path, but rather as characteristics of work.

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.

World Wide

- To integrate the bigger context in all our actions and make it part of ourselves
- To benefit from knowledge and experience of a global network of practitioners and learners in this field

Paradoxes At Work

In hosting strategic conversations and practicing participatory 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 and hold paradoxes:

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

Art of Hosting Fellowship

A growing group of practitioners are adding to the inspiration and evolution of the *Art of Hosting Meaningful Conversations*

A fellowship is more than a community. It is a web of practitioners connected across space and time in a high purpose of serving life, people, and the needs of our communities in the world now. We practice together and in our own lives to co-create and make good work in the wider world, wherever we are called by real need and from the heart. We are inspired by what happens when people meet with the purpose of learning and developing their own competencies together with others.

Basic Assumptions

New solutions are needed

The Art of Participatory Leadership 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 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.

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.

Organisations are living systems

“People are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, and meaning-seeking. Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, meaning-seeking”. - 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. We can never direct a living system. We can only disturb it, nudge it, titillate, or provoke one another into new ways of seeing.

Core Patterns

Organising as Living Systems

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?!

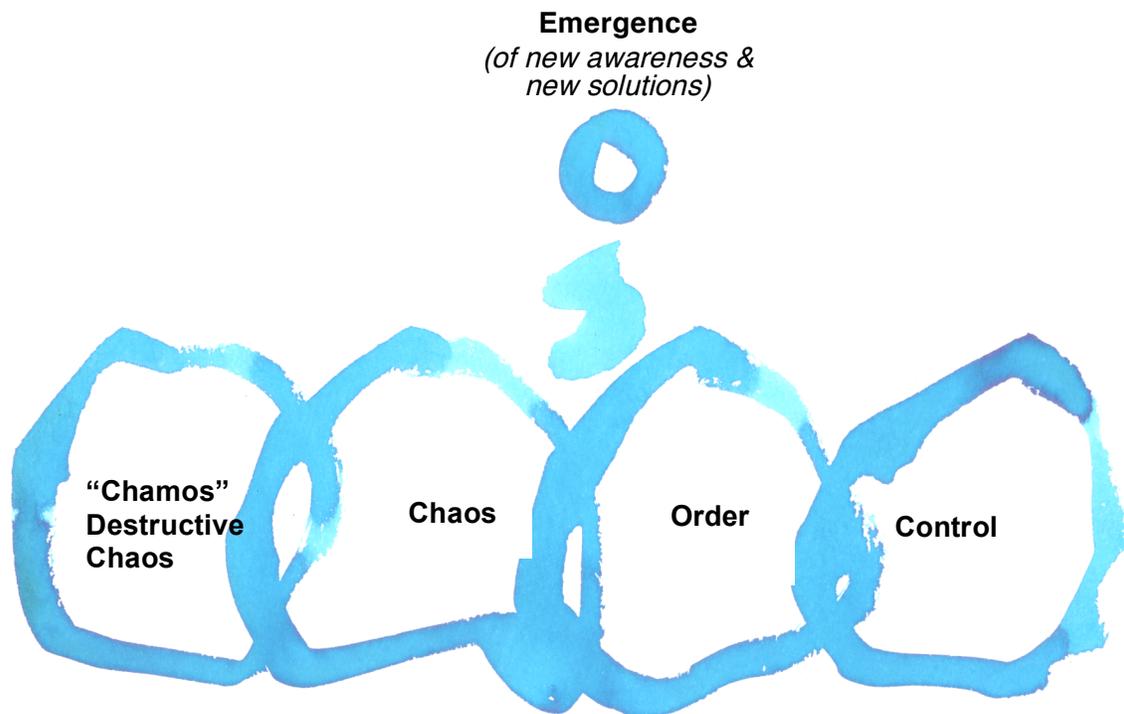
What would our organisations and communities look like then?

Characteristics of a Living System

- A living system only accepts its own solutions (we only support those things we are a part of creating)
- A living system only pays attention 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 (not survival of the fittest)
- ‘Tinkering’ opens up to what is possible here and now – nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions
- A living system cannot be steered or controlled – they can only be teased, nudged, titillated
- A system changes (identity) when its perception of itself changes
- All the answers do not exist ‘out there’ – we must (sometimes) experiment to find out what works
- Who we are together is always different and more than who we are alone (possibility of emergence)

- We (human beings) are capable of self-organising – given the right conditions
- Self-organisation shifts to a higher order

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, are 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 counter productive. - 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.

The Four-Fold Practice

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



1. To Be 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, without distraction, 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 ones 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 everyones 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. Practice conversations –

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

Conversation is an art form, 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 –

Contribute...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 (page) 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. Community of practitioners –

Co-create...*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 others 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.

***“You can have a group of individually intelligent people –
but until that group knows what it knows together –
the group as a group is not intelligent”***

(inspired by Peter Senge)

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.



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 feed back 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.

These steps do not always have a consistent starting point. For example, you might find yourself (or those you are working with) beginning with a concept, lacking clarity of need or purpose, then returning to clarify those before you proceed.

For a description of the chaordic design process and the VISA story, see at the end of this workbook

Principles of Cooperation *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.



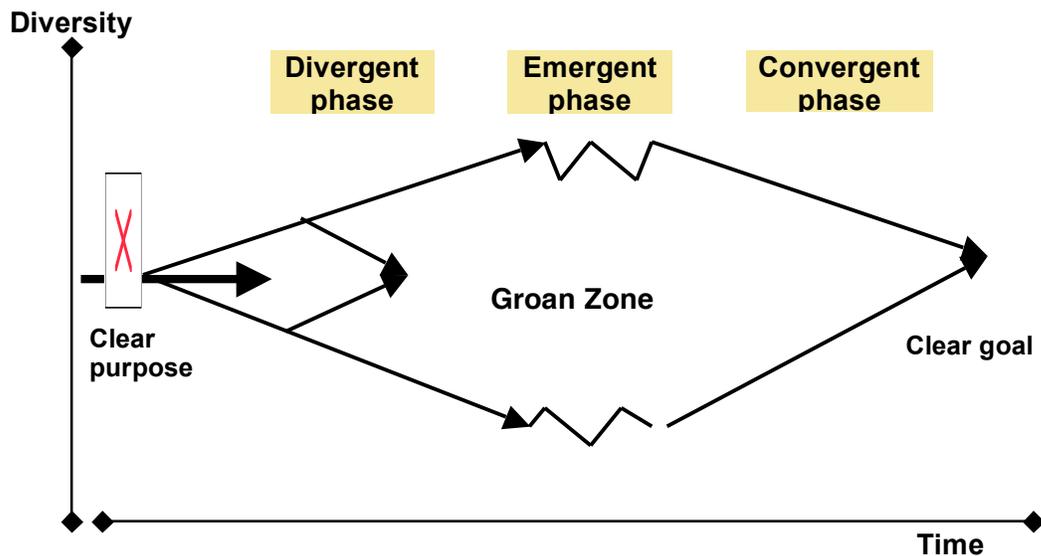
Scientists have discovered that the small, brave act of cooperating with another person, of choosing trust over cynicism, generosity over selfishness, makes the brain light up with quiet joy.

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

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 40)



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.

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.

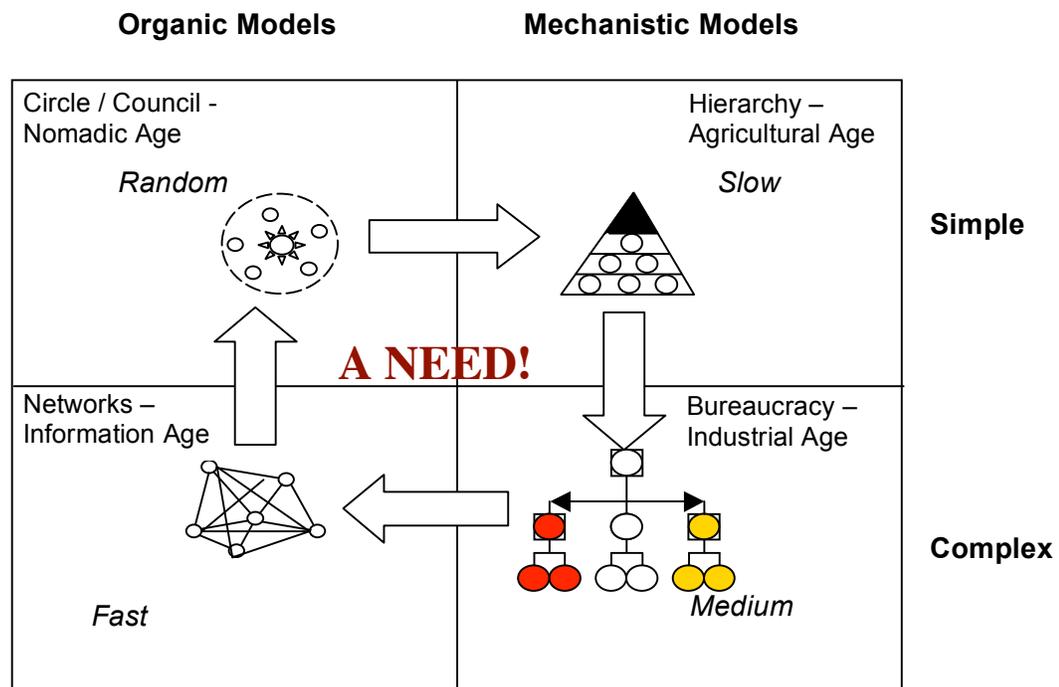
Convergent thinking means evaluating alternatives, summarising key points, sorting

ideas into categories and arriving at general conclusions.

The emergent phase, between the divergent and convergent, 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

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.

Triangle (hierarchy)

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.

Square (bureaucracy)

Simple hierarchies are extremely unstable in the face of the unexpected. 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) 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. We rarely find networked collections of bureaucracies, but networks can and often do spring up *inside* them. Networks 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.

Evolving from one form to another

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...

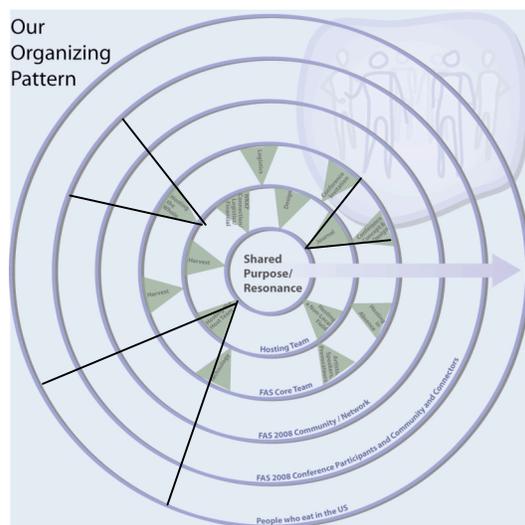
A Fifth Organising Paradigm

The fifth organising 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.

Example of the fifth paradigm: the Food And Society Conference organised by the Kellogg Foundation in the USA

The Art of Hosting Participatory Leadership Toolkit

Core Methods

Circle Practice

The Circle, or council, is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respectful conversations for thousands of years. In some areas of the world this tradition remains intact, but in some societies it has been all but forgotten. PeerSpirit circling is a modern methodology that calls on this tradition and helps people gather in conversations that fulfil their potential for dialogue, replenishment and wisdom-based change.

www.peerspirit.com

Principles of Circle:

- Rotate leadership
- Take responsibility
- Have a higher purpose that you gather around

Practices of Circle:

- **Speak with Intention:** Noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
- **Listen with Attention:** Respectful of the learning process of all members of the group
- **Tend to the Well-being of the Group:** Remaining aware of the impact of our contributions

Four Agreements of Circle:

- Listen without judgment (slow down and listen)
- Whatever is said in circle stays in circle
- Offer what you can and ask for what you need
- Silence is also part of the conversation

General Flow of the Circle

- ⇒ Intention
- ⇒ Welcome/Start-point
- ⇒ Centre and Check-In/Greeting
- ⇒ Agreements
- ⇒ Three Principles and Three Practices
- ⇒ Guardian of the Process
- ⇒ Check-Out and Farewell
- ⇒ Tend to the Well-being of the Group: Remaining aware of the impact of our contributions

Intention shapes the circle and determines who will come, how long the circle will meet, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected. Additionally, the centre of a circle usually holds a focus that can be supported by placing the question in the centre or objects that represent the intention of the circle.

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.

To aid self-governance and bring the circle back to intention, having a circle member volunteer to take the role of **guardian** is helpful. This group member watches and safeguards the group's energy and observes the groups process.

Closing the circle by checking out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on what has transpired.

(The above was adapted from a handout which was generously provided by Peer Spirit to the Art of Hosting community)

What is Circle good for?

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for "checking in" and "checking out" or a way of making decisions together, particularly decisions based on consensus. Be creative with circle and be ready for the deep wisdom it can unearth!

Materials Needed:

- Chairs arranged in a circle – folks should be able to view each other without impediments (i.e. tables or desks)
- Object for the centre – this is to bring focus. It can be flowers, a poster stating the intention or purpose of the gathering, or any other object that has meaning.
- Talking piece
- Chime, bell, or other instrument call everyone to attention
- Materials for harvesting conversation

For further information see: <http://www.peerspirit.com/downloadable-gifts.html>

Appreciative Inquiry

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*)

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

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

<i>Problem Solving</i>	<i>Appreciative Inquiry</i>
"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.

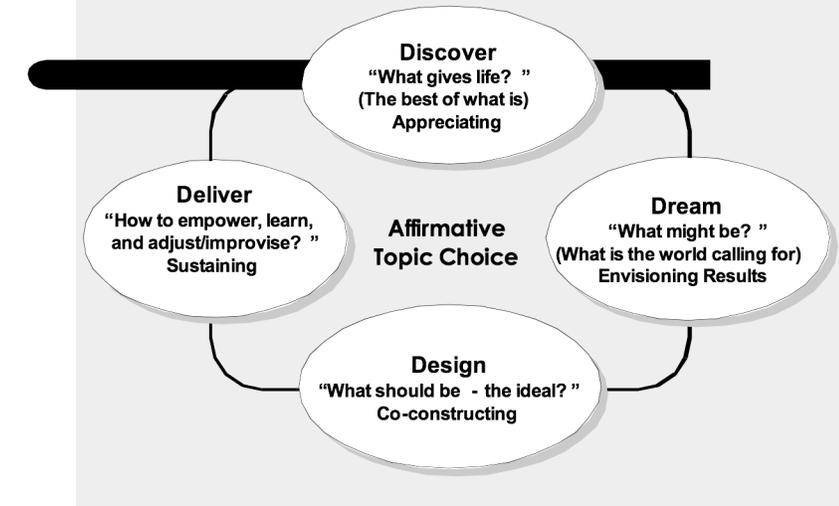
General Flow of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

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.

The “4-D Cycle”



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 your self/work/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 use

The World Café

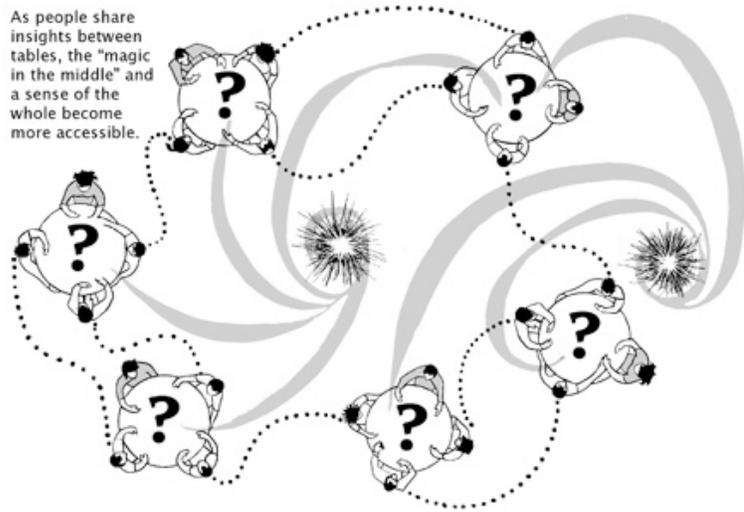
The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor...as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among 'table conversations' at the World Café.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

www.theworldcafe.com

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

As people share insights between tables, the "magic in the middle" and a sense of the whole become more accessible.

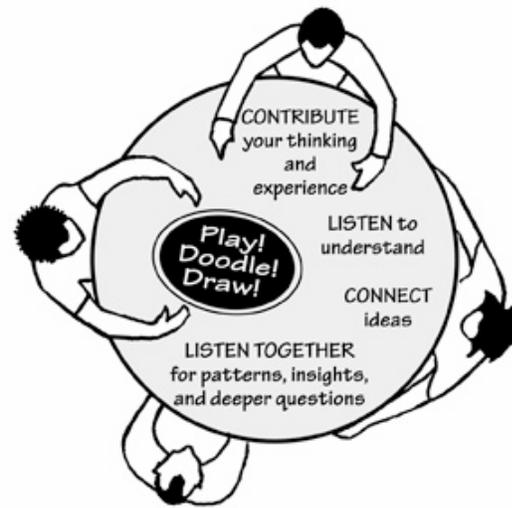


Assumptions of World Cafe:

- 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.

CAFÉ ETIQUETTE

FOCUS
on what matters!



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

(The above info adapted from *Café to Go* at www.theworldcafe.com)

Open Space

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.

www.openspaceworld.org

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 its over its 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 & RESPONSIBILITY

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.

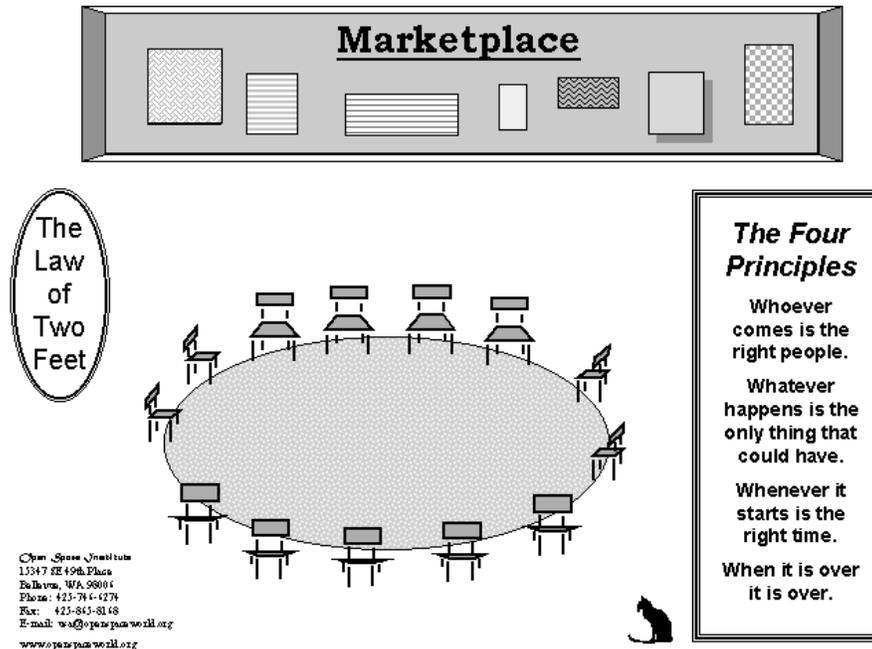
These people are "**conveners**." Each convener places their paper on the wall and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continues until there are no more agenda items.

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 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

*“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, i.e.

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 screen, electronically with a mind-map program projected on a screen.

Ground-rules for making a collective mind-map:

- 1. All ideas are valuable! We do not evaluate or discard ideas at this point.**
- 2. 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.**
- 3. It's OK to have contradicting themes or issues.**
- 4. Whenever possible, give concrete examples.**

Creating 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.

(The above process is adapted and inspired by “Future Search” – a social technology developed by Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff)

What makes a Powerful Question?

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

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.

*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

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:

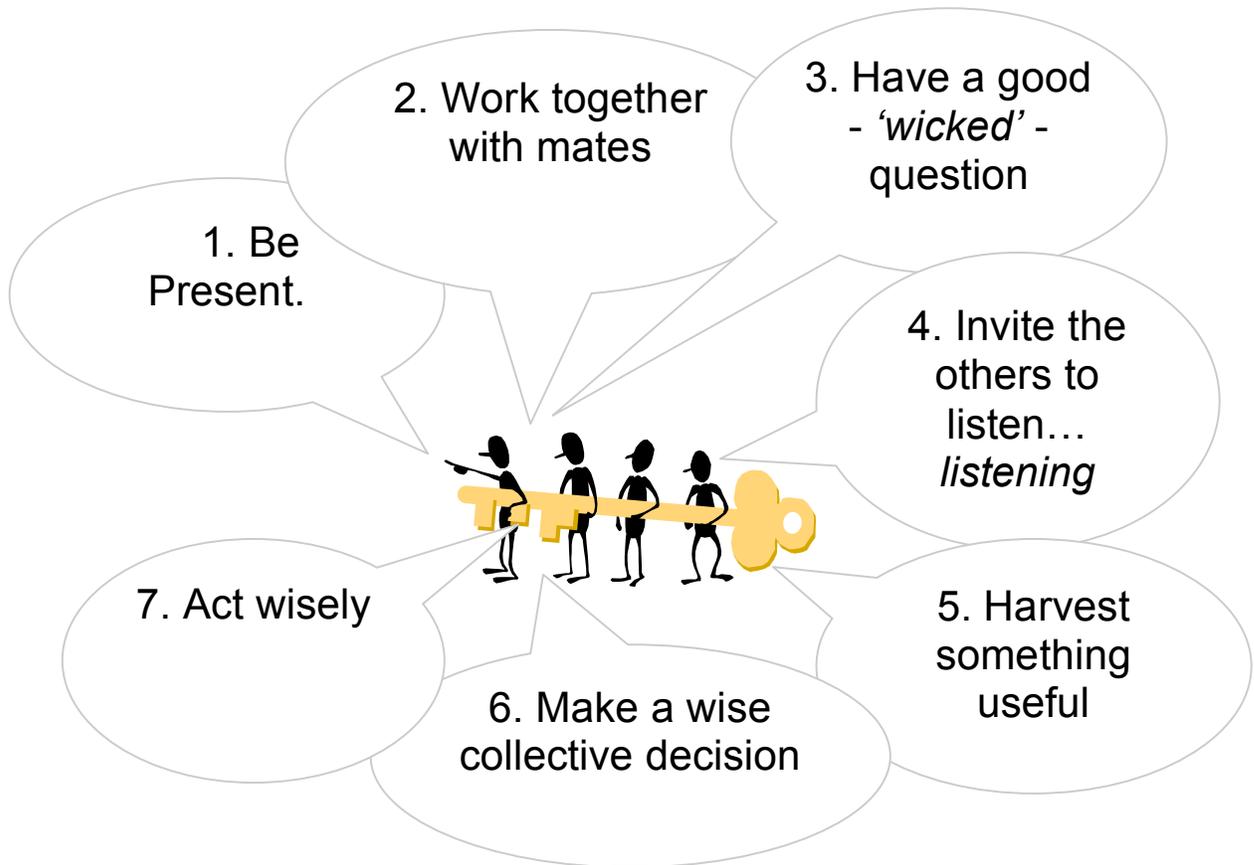
- A well-crafted question attracts *energy* and focuses *attention* on what matters. Experienced hosts recommend asking open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer.
- Good questions invite *inquiry* and *curiosity*. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately.
- 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

A powerful question focuses Attention, Intention and Energy

Essentials of Meaningful Conversation “Seven Little Helpers”



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

1. 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 prayer
- Start with a moment of silence
- Check in with a personal question related to the theme of the meeting
- Pass a talking piece and provide space for each voice to be heard

Start well. Start slowly. Check everyone in.

2. 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.

A good question has the following characteristics:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

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.

3. Use a talking piece

In it's 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, it's own best use, that you can think about as you plan meetings. Blend as necessary.

4. Harvest

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:

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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 information and inspiration, consult The Art of Harvesting booklet available from Monica Nissén or Chris Corrigan.

5. 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.

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

6. 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 not 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.

7. 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.

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.

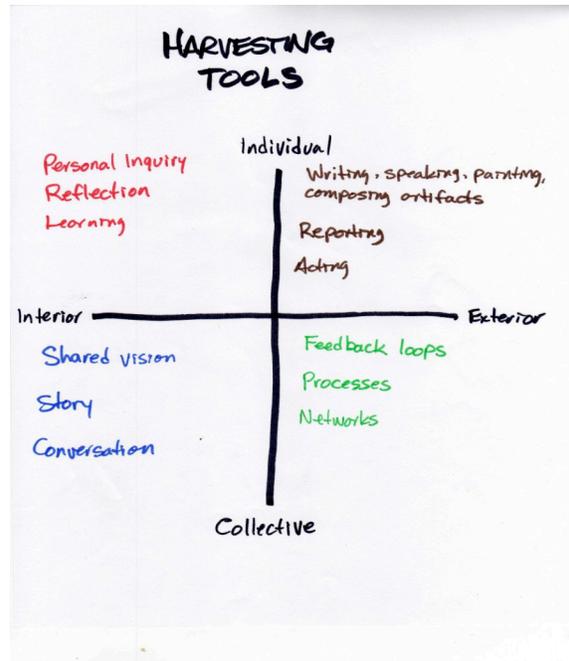
The need is not complicated; it is real and clear and it speaks deeply and inspires invitation and action. Everything begins from this need, and the way we respond to it and invite others to do so will contribute to the harvest that we take away at the end of the day

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

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.

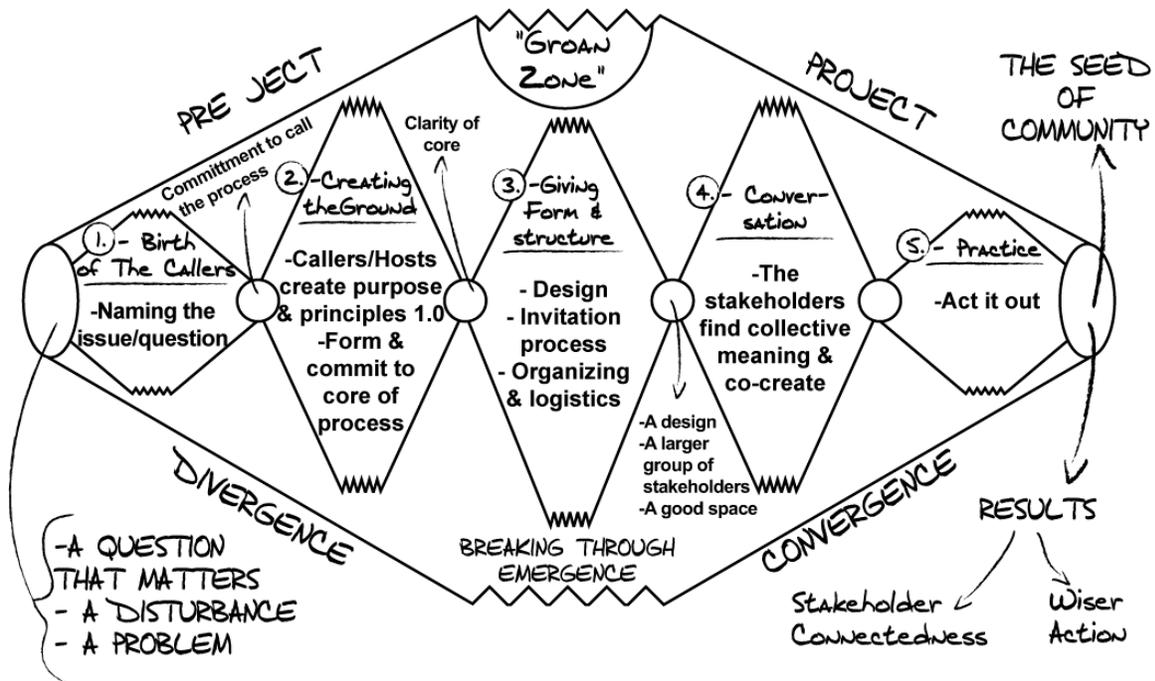
(Summary of *The Art of Harvesting* version 2.6.; written by Monica Nissen and Chris Corrigan with input from the Art of Hosting Community of Practice. The full article can be downloaded from the Art of Hosting website: www.artofhosting.org)

Deeper Process Design

The 5 '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 'Five Breaths'. As we learn through reflecting on our work, this pattern will no doubt become clearer...

5 Breaths of Process Architecture



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

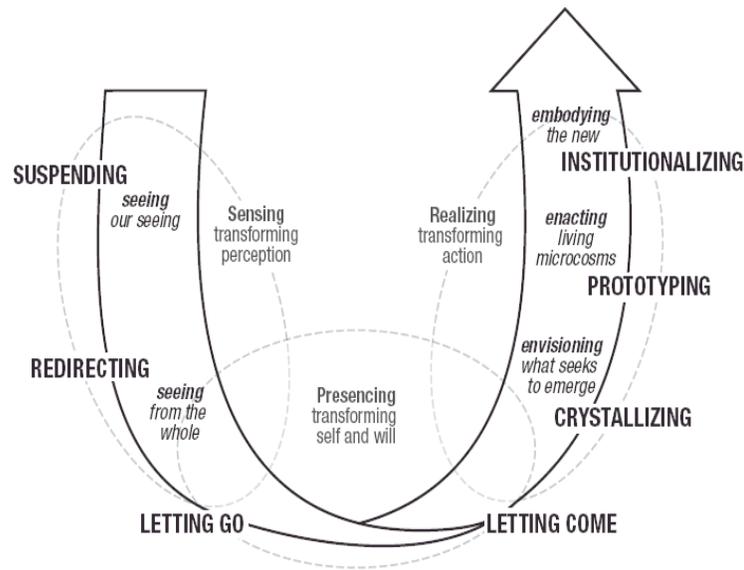
- **Practice:** Perform the wise actions decided on during the conversation. Follow-up—continued learning and leading from the field
- **Wise Action:** Always come back to purpose
- **Don't** lose sight of the purpose or it won't be embodied
- **Question:** How do we sustain the self-organisation?

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

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 prototyping enables enacting living microcosms – but only as all seven capacities are developed is the movement through the entire process possible.



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www.ottoscharmer.com

www.presencing.org

www.theoryu.com

Additional Resources

Glossary

Art of Hosting vocabulary	Explanation	Alternative language	Comments
Hosting		A more 'hand off' way of facilitating	Facilitating focuses more on the techniques, hosting entails the consciousness with which you are doing it: consciousness of yourself, the others and what is common to all and beyond everyone
Entering the field		Starting the process	
Methodologies kiosk	Session dedicated to presenting different methodologies at the request of participants		
Circle Practice	A method where participants sit in a circle and use a 'talking piece' to speak to their perspective on a given question		This is particularly helpful when every perspective needs to be heard
Check-in	Opening moment of a meeting, gathering, seminar... which aims at creating a transition with the previous contexts of the participants and at enabling everyone to settle down, connect with and get to know each other and to focus everyone's attention on the topic of the discussion	Opening of the meeting	
Check-out	Closing of a meeting, gathering, seminar... which aims at capitalising on individual and collective learnings and at creating a transition towards the next contexts of the participants	Closing of the meeting	
Hold potential		Have the potential of ...	

Open Space technology	Method where the agenda is created by the participants with their passion and responsibility. Those who want call sessions on the basis of questions, issues, opportunity they wish to explore with others. They become the hosts of their sessions. The other participants decide with their feet where they feel called to participate.	Open Space format	It is a specific process with a specific name. I do not see any need here for an alternative.
Engage deeply and creatively		Get intensely and creatively involved	
Transformative experiences		Important development steps	
Raising to one's next level of...		Going through an important development step	
Catalyze effective working conversations		Maximise the benefits of conversations at work	
Truly invite organisations/people		Invite organisations/people to focus on what really matters to them rather than to formal meetings	
Invite organisations to thrive in times of swirling change		Support organisations to do well what they really should be doing in times of ever faster changes	
Sense the need	Sensing the need with all your senses, your whole being and consciousness rather than 'understanding' with your mind only	Understand/Analyse the need	The alternatives are somehow limiting
Prepare the field	Prepare a conversation in all its dimensions: understanding the needs, inviting people, designing the conversational process with facilitation questions, preparing the recording	Prepare the event	
The "breath" of divergence and	Phases of opening up (diverging) and closing down	The phases of divergence and convergence	

convergence - of breathing in and breathing out	(converging) in brainstorming and creative reflection processes		
Every process goes through several such breathing cycles	Succession of cyclic phases of opening up (diverging) and closing down (converging) in every process	Every process goes through several such phases	
The four fold way of hosting		4 aspects/dimensions of hosting	
Hosting yourself	Be aware of and maintain one's energy level in order to be capable of achieving one's objectives	Take care of yourself	
Be willing to sit in the chaos		Be comfortable with chaos, in particular not knowing for a time, trusting that order and new ideas and opportunities can emerge from it	
Sit in the fire of the present		Focus on what is here and now and learn from it	
Practice conversation mindfully		When discussing, attend to what is happening in yourself, in the others and between everyone	
Hold space	Be open and attend to everything that emerges from a situation	Attend to what is emerging	
Social technologies	Facilitation processes aiming at connecting people together around what matters to them	Facilitation processes/formats	
Harvesting		Record, collection The act of recording what is discussed and reporting on it	Again here, the alternatives do not completely reflect what harvesting is all about

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.

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

www.artofhosting.org (co-created by many art of hosting stewards)

ArtofHostingTV.net provides videos about several AoH topics

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

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.
The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: a Practical Guide to Positive Change.

Etienne Wenger,
Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity.

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.

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 organization based on biological organizing 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.

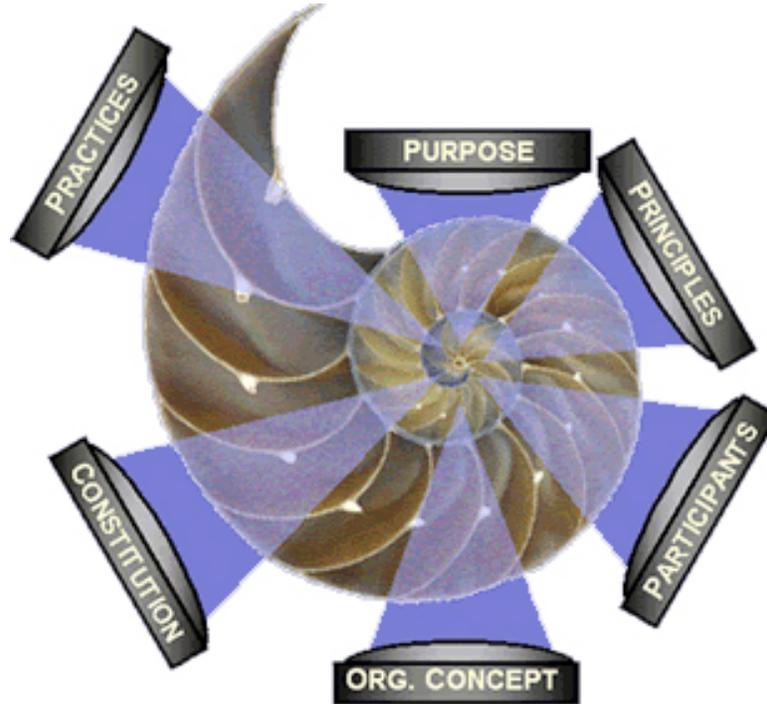
It has gone through a number of wars and revolutions, the belligerents continuing to share common ownership and never ceasing reciprocal acceptance of cards.

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 of its affiliates and some of its members do not know how it functions or how it is structured.

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.*** Our 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.

Dee Hock, Birth of the Chaordic Age, Read the Visa story under Resources!

Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale

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 analyzing 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 catalyzes 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

This is a brief and shortened version of an introduction to communities of practice
By Etienne Wenger

This brief and general introduction 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.

What are communities of practice?

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.

3. The practice:

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.