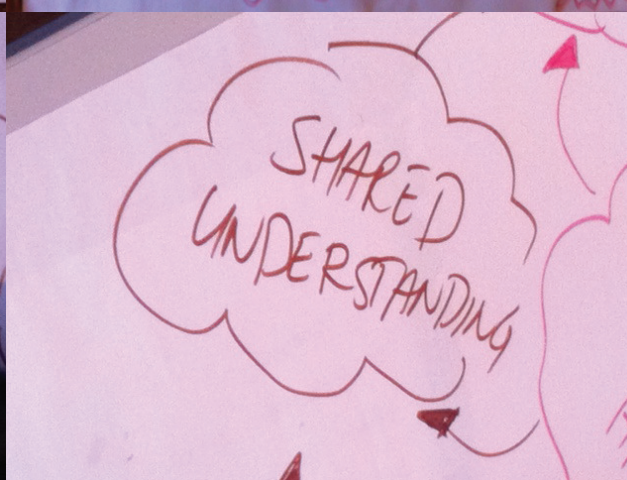
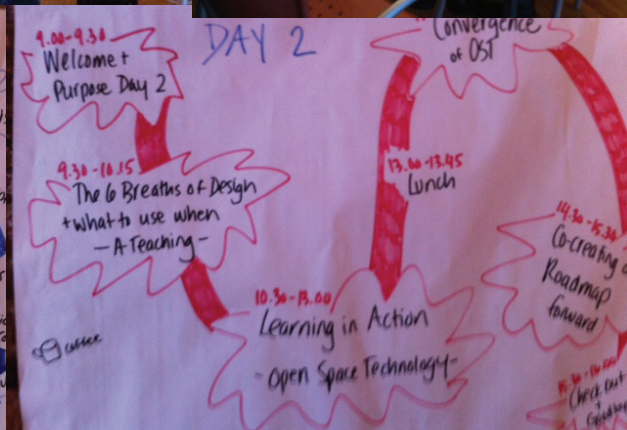
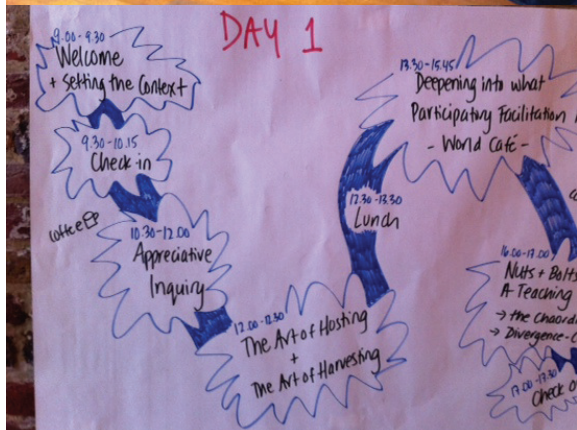
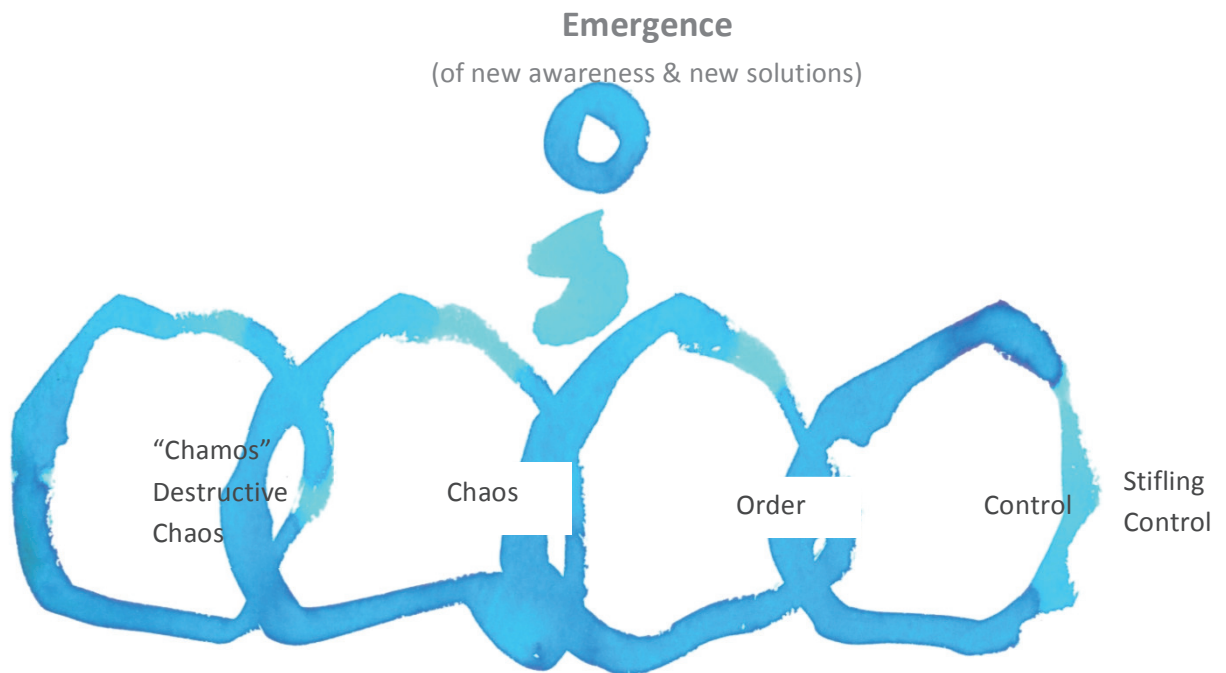


ENRD Team Training on Participatory Processes

16 & 17 February 2012, Brussels



The Chaordic Path



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

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

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

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

To lead our organisation on the chaordic path we need “chaordic confidence”, to have the courage to stay in the dance of order and chaos long enough to

support a generative emergence that allows the new, collective intelligence and wise action to occur.

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

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

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

Chaos/Order is the Place for Leadership

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

Order/Control is a Place for Management

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

Link with the Cynefin Framework

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

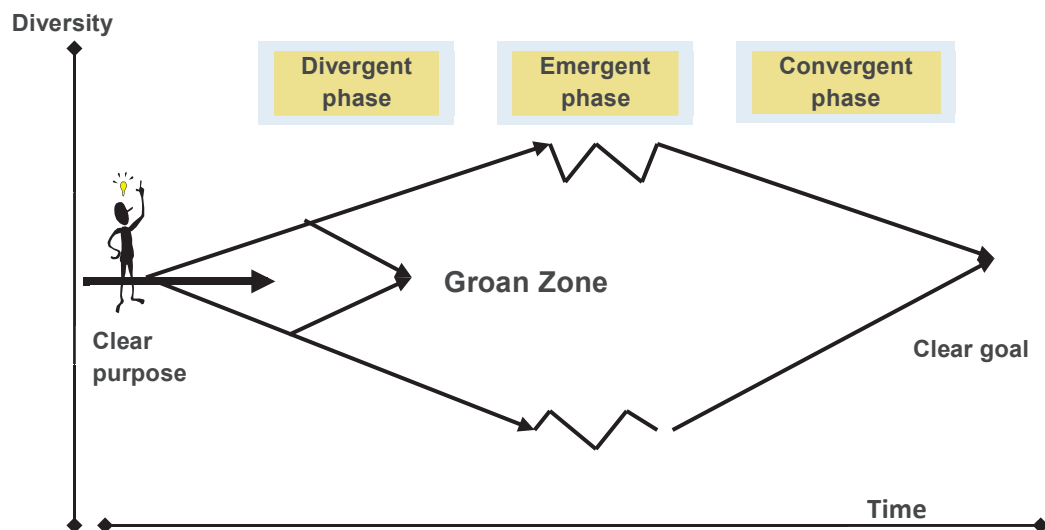
The path between **Control and Order** is when we begin declaring and defining best practices or recipes or procedures to follow, that are not emergent and fluid but constrain the whole system. We are then leading like in the simple or

complicated domain with the inherent risk of increasing the possible chaos, and to suppress creativity and learning: Here we assume that we know and reality has to follow.

Divergence and Convergence

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 6 'Breaths' of Design

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

First Breath: The CALL

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

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

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

Don't move too fast

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

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

Second Breath: CLARIFY

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

Wise action: engagement

Don't make assumptions

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

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

Third Breath: INVITE

Giving form and structure: design and invitation process

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

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

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

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

Fourth Breath: MEET ...

Meeting: Conversation

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

Don't go alone.

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

.. and make meaning together

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

Fifth Breath: ACT

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

Wise Action: Always come back to purpose

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

Question: How do we sustain the self-organisation?

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

From here the next calling question arises...

The 6 Breaths of Process Architecture



CORE METHODS

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

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

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

Resource:

www.peerspirit.com

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

The Circle

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

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

The components of the circle

Intention

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

INTENTION

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

WELCOME OR START-POINT

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

ESTABLISHING THE CENTER

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

CHECK-IN/GREETING

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

Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and proceeds around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken. Sometimes people place individual objects in the centre as a way of signifying their presence and relationship to the intention.

SETTING CIRCLE AGREEMENTS:

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

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

THREE PRINCIPLES:

The circle is an all leader group.

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

THREE PRACTICES

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

FORMS OF COUNCIL:

The circle commonly uses three forms of council: talking piece, conversation and reflection.

Talking piece council is often used as part of check-in, check-out, and whenever there is a desire to slow down the conversation, collect all voices and contributions, and be able to speak without interruption.

Conversation council is often used when reaction, interaction, and an interjection of new ideas, thoughts and opinions are needed.

Reflection, or Silent council gives each member time and space to reflect on what is occurring, or needs to occur, in the course of a meeting. Silence may be called so that each person can consider the role or impact they are having on the group, or to help the group realign with their intention, or to sit with a question until there is clarity.

GUARDIAN

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

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

CHECKOUT AND FAREWELL

At the close of a circle meeting, it is important to allow a few minutes for each person to comment on what they learned, or what stays in their heart and mind as they leave. Closing the circle by checking out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on what has transpired, and to pick up objects if they have placed something in the center.

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



Appreciative Inquiry

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

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

Assumptions

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

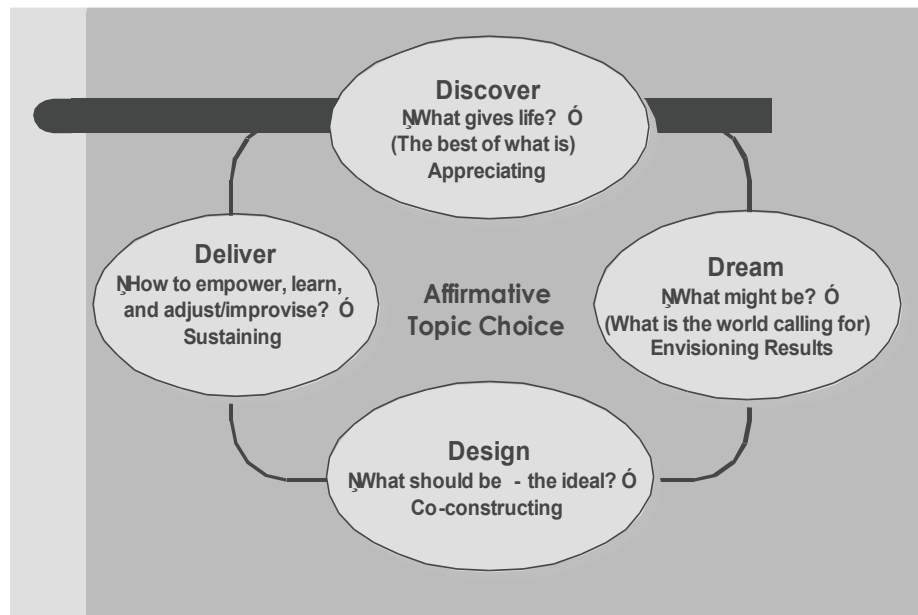
Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
"Felt Need" identification of the problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of "what is"
Analysis of causes	Envisioning "what might be"
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing "What should be"
	Innovating "What will be"
Basic assumption: an organisation is a problem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

General flow of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

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

Discovery:	Identifying organisational processes that work well.
Dream:	Envisioning processes that would work well in the future.
Design:	Planning and prioritising those processes.
Delivery:	Implementing the proposed design.

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



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

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

What is Appreciative Inquiry Good For?

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

Materials Needed:

Varies depending on how the methodology is used.



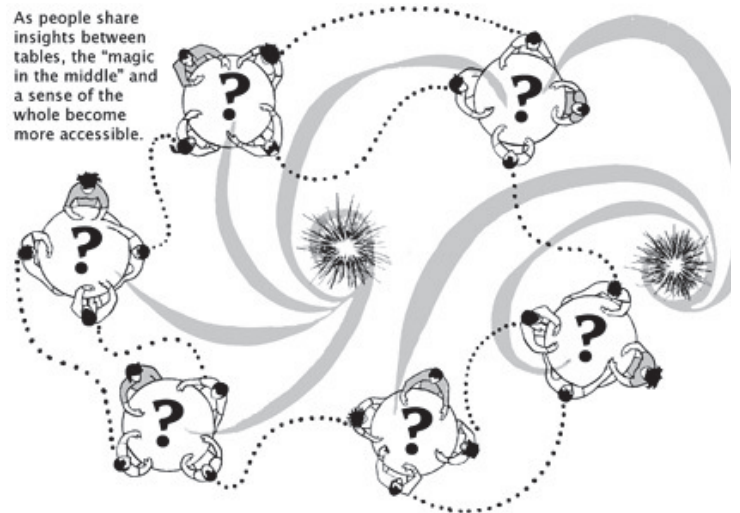
The World Café

Resource:
www.theworldcafe.com

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

Operating Principles of World Cafe:

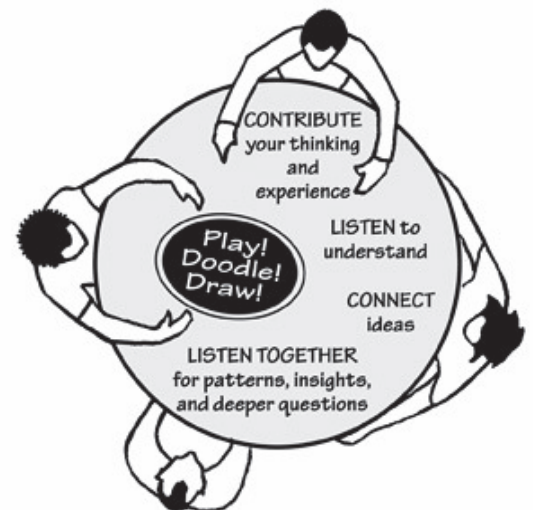
- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage each person's contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Make collective knowledge visible



Assumptions of World Cafe:

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

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

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



Open Space Technology

Resource:
[www.openspace
world.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org)

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

Principles of Open Space:

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



The Law of Two Feet:

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

PASSION & 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.

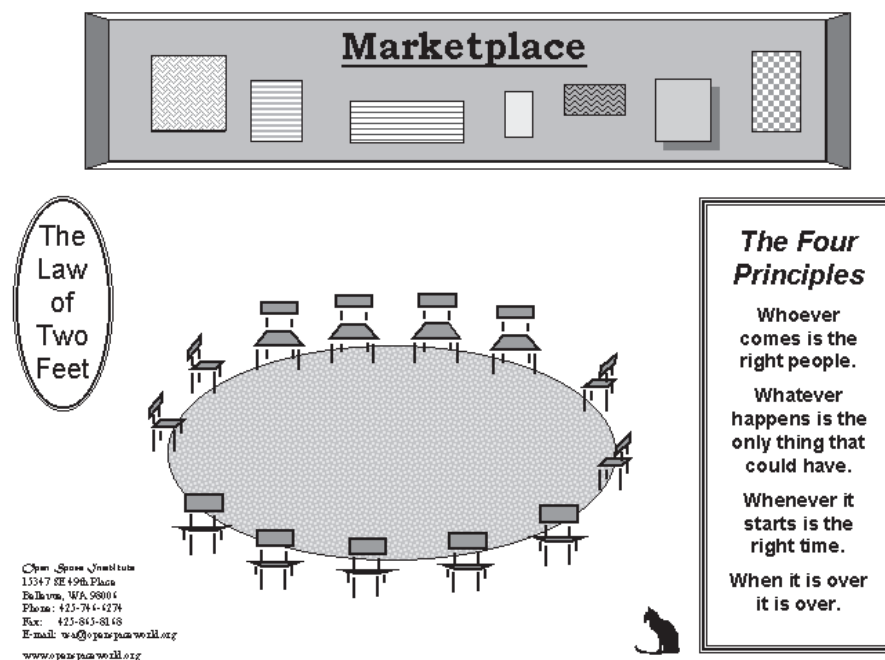
These people are "conveners." Each convener places their paper on the wall and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continues until there are no more agenda items.

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



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.

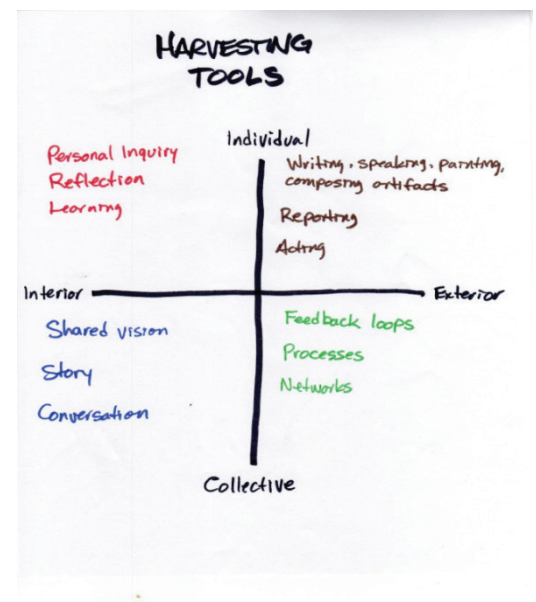
Harvesting is more than just taking notes. To get a sense of the complexity of this art, let's begin by picturing a field in which someone has planted wheat. How can that field of wheat be harvested?

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:



Summary of The Art of Harvesting version 2.6.;
written by Monica Nissen and Chris Corrigan with input from the Art of Hosting Community of Practice.

The full article can be downloaded from the Art of Hosting website:
www.artofhosting.org

Stage 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.