The Art of Building Power & Self-Organisation

In October 2019 a group of around 50 activists, practitioners and professionals came together in North London to learn and explore tools & methodologies for building power & self-organisation. This document is a reminder of the various tools, techniques and approaches that were explored over the few days, together with photos and harvests from the various sessions. Links to resources that explain the processes and tools in more detail are embedded in the electronic version of this document, and listed at the end for print format. Enjoy...


Our flow for the 3 day training

Welcome & Connection

Our time together began with a Diversity Welcome, inviting and welcoming all of our identities and backgrounds, into the room. We then delved straight into our first experience of Circle together through a Talking Pictures Check-In. As we arrived we had been invited to wander around a gallery of pictures in the centre of the room and pick one that spoke to us of where we were in our life at present. In Circle we were then invited to share something of why we picked that picture with the rest of the group.
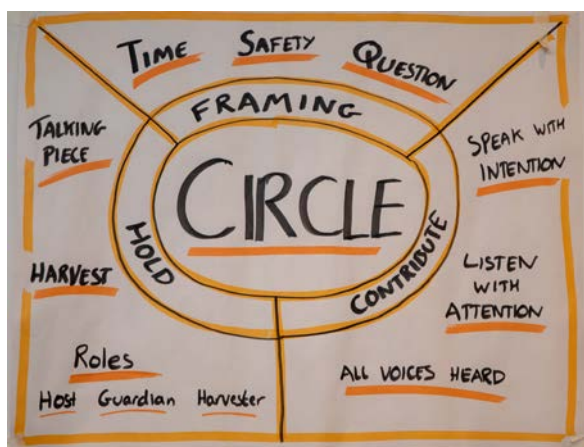
Circle enables all voices to be brought into the room and involves a host, guardian, a question and a talking piece. Boundaries of time are set (we had about 50 minutes for all 50 people), and the group are invited to self-regulate their contributions. Each person takes their turn and speaks only when holding the talking piece. We also harvested the introductions on 'flower petals' to display for later. Circle is helpful to ensure all are heard and to build a sense of connection.

Levels of Listening

After our first break we looked at **Levels of Listening** - how to move beyond downloading, factual or even empathic listening to a generative level where new possibilities can emerge.
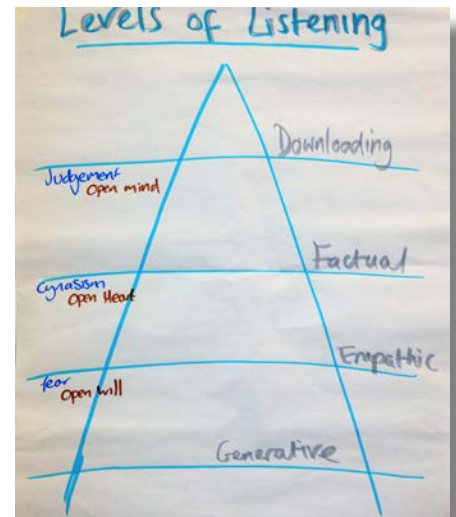
World Cafe Conversation

We then moved into a World Cafe conversation to enable us to explore the type of space we wanted to create together. Starting with the question *'Think of a time when you have felt safe and able to participate, what made that possible.'* World Cafe is a methodology that enables a group of nearly any size to have a conversation and work with the collective wisdom of the room. Groups of 4 or 5 people talk and listen together around a table (while doodling ideas and making connections), the room is then mixed up and the conversation continues before participants are invited to begin to summarise their key nuggets of learning into a form to feedback. In our World Cafe we were looking for the elements that make a good, safe and generative learning space.

Brave Spaces

Rather than 'safe spaces' our World Cafe conversation led us to the idea of Brave Spaces, and Tatiana read the Brave Spaces statement for the group to hear.

Powerful Questions

Towards the end of day 1, we explored the art of asking **Powerful Questions**. Following a short teach about questions we played the **Wicked Question Game** where each person writes their current quest as a question, shares with 2 others, who then have 5 minutes to ask questions about the question without response from the person with the question. This person then reformulates their question at the end of the 5 minutes.

Harvesting

Harvesting is a metaphor used to communicate the attention needed to be given to the taking in and collection of visible and invisible information/results, and sense-making of that information both individually and collectively. The harvest is planned from the first sensing of need, to the sowing forward of seeds to the future.

Check-out/ Check-in

An important element of Art of Hosting practice is the **Check-in** and **Check-out**. On our first morning we used Circle to Check-in, to arrive and presence ourselves together. Checking-in is a way to hear from everyone before getting to 'business', and an opportunity to share anything people are 'bringing into the space from outside'. If Checking in is about arriving well, Checking-out is done to leave well. Our Check-out from day 1 asked the simple question *'How are you leaving the day and what do you need for the next 2 days?'* Each person was invited to share a sentence or two.

Day TWO

Feed Forward & Check-in

Following coaching from the hosting team on the evening of day 1, day 2 began with a beautifully creative participant led feed forward, helping to remind us of the previous day and giving an opportunity to process and make sense of the day together. We were then led in a reflective and centring check-in to start our day exploring power.

As day 2 had a focus on 'power' we began with

Thinking about harm

a participant led **Harm exercise** to explore our experiences of harm/hurt. In groups we had conversations around -
- How would you like to be treated if you have been harmed?
- How would you like to be treated if you caused harm?
- How would you like to treat someone you know has been harmed?

The Great Game of Power

The Great Game of Power is a playful and powerful way to explore how difficult it is to shift power within systems. In this exercise the group were presented with some furniture and a bottle within a bounded area. Individuals were then invite to rearrange the items to represent power. The whole group's favourite was picked, the 'designer' took the seat of power, then individuals were invited to try to remove power from that person. A full description and guide is available in the resource list, but this game is designed to create the opportunity for an exploration of 'codes' and systemic power
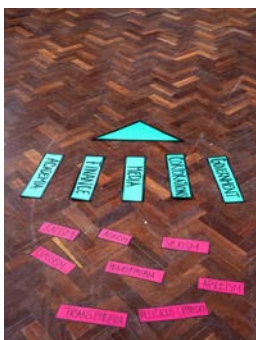
Pillars of Power

Following a thorough debrief of the Great Game of Power, Tatiana introduced the pillars of power using the metaphor of of a house and it's foundations to think about our institutions of power upheld on foundations of discrimination and prejudice. From this we created our own hopes, desires and actions for a different society using the metaphor of a tree and it's rooted values.

Before checking-out for the day, we had a time of noticings, an opportunity for transparency and questions of the hosting team. People were invited to share what they had noticed and what they were curious about in regard to decisions taken by the hosting team to run with particular exercises and processes.

Day THREE

Chaos & Order

After our day three check-in and feed forward from day two we began our final day with a game of football, or rather a number of games with a football experiencing the feeling of being in an environment with no rules/boundaries, and in an environment with so much control very little was possible. These games gave us some insight to be able to look at the Chaordic Path, the dance between chaos and order that has enough boundary, (but not too much) and enough wildness (but not too much) to allow what needs to emerge in a self-organising way.
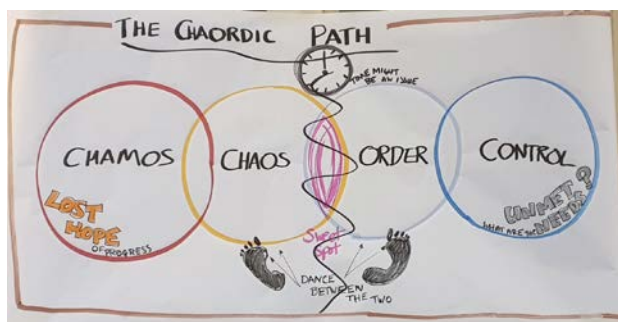
Open Space

With an appreciation of self-organisation through the chaordic approach, we headed into our **Open Space** session brilliantly hosted by our coached team of hosts, who explained the roles and principles; framing the overarching question for the sessions, and led us through the process smoothly.

Open Space is a tool to allow the emergence of the conversations that those in the room want and need to have. There are 4 principles (pictured) and one Law - The Law of mobility (take yourself where you want to be). The question we were asked was *'What conversations do we need now to take us into action and practice beyond this training?'.* The conversations that emerged included…

- What techniques help to encourage the powerful to let go of control?
- How to host/organise communities in the safest way when the threat of violence is imminent.
- How do we host spaces where people with very different forms of power can collaborate?
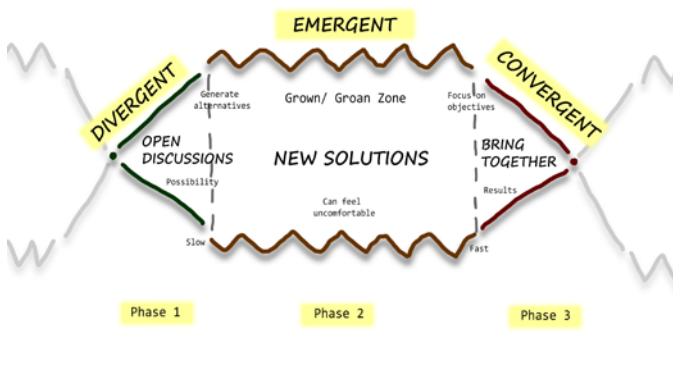- Does soul work cultivate good work?

Following two rounds of conversations, hosts were invited to share 30 seconds of feedback using the pro-forma sheets filled out during the sessions.

Diamond of Participation

After another delicious lunch we looked at the concept of the Diamond of participation. This model of the natural breath of a process helps us to orientate ourselves in the divergent, emergent, and convergent phases. We explored how some people are more comfortable in different the phases, and how holding the space of the emergent allows new possibilities to come through.

Design Lab

The afternoon of day 3 was taken up with our **Design Lab**, a tool to help some people in the room benefit from the wisdom of others and hone their ideas into more a more refined quest or plan. We had 7 people with project ideas and 4 people joined each of them on a table. Design lab involves a number of rounds of help to map out and question the callers project with help from the others in the room and the use of a proforma that helps to focus in on the vision, stakeholders, project plan and next steps for the project. Our design lab included projects such as 'developing a retreat space for inner work to engage individual agency', 'Homicide community organising', 'Neurodiversity champions action', and 'The London International Development Network'. At the end of the session, each project caller had an action plan to take away and use in their project's development.

Ecocycle Labyrinth & Check-out

Our final activity to reflect on our learning together and lead us into our check-out was the Ecocycle Labyrinth. This exercise was an invitation to walk a path through the natural cycle of possibility to birth to maturity to death and return to possibility. Everyone was invited to walk the path of the ecocycle and reflect on what from the training and in their lives was emerging, what was growing, what needed to die, and what was knitting together under the surface.
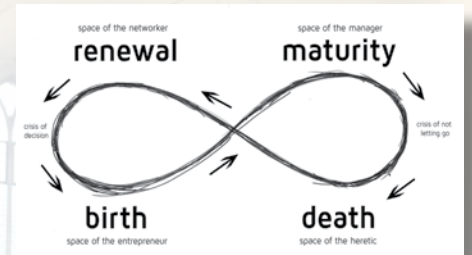
From the Ecocycle we entered our final check-out circle, with each person invited to share 3 words of how they were leaving, these are some of the responses...

renewal
space of the networker

maturity
space of the manager

crisis of decision

crisis of not letting go

birth
space of the entrepreneur

death
space of the heretic

Whole and hugged

Strength in numbers

Ideas and connections

Solidarity, Hopeful, Shift

Rich, Growth, Transformation

Thank-you, Soulful, Becoming

Up-skilled, inclusive, Grateful

Community of practice

Courage let go

New World Open

Trust, Gratitude, Connection

RESOURCES...

Over the following two pages are listed a variety of places you can go to get more information and support on the various tools, methodologies, teach pieces, and processes explored during the 3 day training. Throughout this Harvest Document any tools mentioned will be highlighted, clicking on these links will take you to more info - alternatively the list below has links to further info in alphabetical order...

Tool/ Methodology/ Teach	Main connected Practice	Resource link
Brave Space	N/A	https://bepresentsocialjustice.wordpress.com/2017/04/30/poem-an-invitation-to-brave-space/
Chaordic Path	Art of Hosting	http://www.artofhosting.org/the-chaordic-path/
Check-in/ Check-out	Art of Hosting	http://www.thecircleway.net/articles/2016/12/27/questions-for-check-ins
Circle	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UdyxOvuueQYEgVg-2VO-JAmmsUKj4XSpl
Design Lab	Art of Hosting	http://aohcorrymeela.weebly.com/design-for-wiser-action.html
Diamond of Participation	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hW3eZbgsIWwzylpNi-yV77yn3PJYZV2tv
Diversity Welcome	N/A	https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/diversity-welcome/
The Ecocycle Labyrinth	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Po_lqDcZ_TqqL-8C6I_5DQGF9C0iVGG1W?usp=sharing
The Great Game of Power	Community Organising	https://drive.google.com/open?id=19N2suPEKGnAWriR-gl49Dr8lPise2-4qP
Harm Exercise	N/A	N/A
Levels of Listening	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1HsGTmLPo8e9d98MDKmy-W5Lzya8APbh5v
Open Space	Art of Hosting	https://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/
Open Space ethos	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1E7lFmp92gMwop-kQ-HTCsuLLy38rBVJ-V
Pillars of Power	N/A	https://turningtide.org.uk/toolkit/pillars-of-power/
Powerful Questions	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=12u8Suo2FZ-0bu2B4UQ-2pn2GHpkc6XGtx
Sources of Power	Community Organising	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4V2FlNR_h4&feature=youtu.be
Triads	Art of Hosting	N/A
Wicked Question Game	Art of Hosting	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1V4kxMP0ZH3HC9ltLBG-zzQb_emQW5ewoD
World Cafe	Art of Hosting	http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/

General resources

As well as the specific resources listed on the last page, these links offer more information on practices that may be helpful...

General Art of Hosting Webpages...
- http://www.artofhosting.org
- http://artofhosting.ning.com/

General Community Organising info...
https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1VLNEs7s0Uebd1sINjJfurpv9cU6zELx9

Photos and Documents from this training
- This link will take you to a Google drive with photos, resources and harvest documents from this training
- https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1tmuzDbMkuFS24fl0w1qksZ4y3U-qgHjG

Other General resources...
- A Guide to Harvesting - http://aoplslovenia.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/5/26152526/_____art_of_harvesting_3.1.mn_2_1.1_mb.pdf
- Training for Change (a N. American grassroots movement and capaicty building organisation that the Diversity Welcome idea came from - https://www.trainingforchange.org/tools/

...and of course you can contact Community CoLab or The Social Change Agency for more information, further training or for any queries regarding further support we can give...

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