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[OPEN SPACE – Session 24](#)

**Creating conferencing and strategies for bringing people together**

**PRELIMINARY Issue: 24 (double-pack - merged 2 groups)**

Convener(s): **Fern Smith / Heiner Benking**

Participants:

Kristin Frederickson, Nathalie Vimieux, Fern Smith, Alison Andrews, Iztok Kovac, Monica Frederikson, Karen-Ann Roschild, Anetta Dabs, Fern Smith / Heiner Benking, and others we could not catch “on-the-fly” ... (see pictures below)

**Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations: (Fern)**

We underwent a ‘Live ‘ Experiment in speaking / listening facilitation model followed by free discussion. The ‘experiment’ was troubling / challenging / intriguing... “What is a ‘good’ conference ? Should we come up with ANSWERS, QUESTIONS, ACTIONS or is it just about meeting / listening.... How do we manage ‘conflict’ in conferences... Strategies- Surprises, structure versus freedom, the chance to be ‘stupid, childish, creative’, how to maximize ‘speaking and listening ‘ so all voices are heard / different more embodied ways of listening, issues of co-creation/‘group dynamics’ ‘problematic encounters / people’, difficulties or challenges of co-facilitation – how do we get this right (the dance of co-facilitation)?

Creative conferencing – picnics (importance of space / room), ‘jam’ session to encourage listening / dialogue non-verbally.

NB importance of setting ‘ground rules’ for unusual conference / creative experiments... How do we keep artists creative at conferences and not just turn them into ‘delegates’....

**In a nutshell, some context and findings (by HEiner)**

I just want to add my “blurb” as co-convener of our surprise “merger”, we did by a morphing decision during lunch, while I stole some bits/bytes from Ferns plate...

For me it was a surprise exercise, only possible as Fern was willing to take chances. We unsettled the expectations of who invites and leads (chiefs) and follows (Indians) as we left open who is at the helm, and who is captain and pilot.

First unsettling remarks were about the objectives, and hidden?) agendas, and missions, expectations and assumptions, who's group they were in and who may speak or outline.

More challenging was to break the mold, to do the unexpected, try the un-experiences and even question grids, formats, schema, the need to set agendas for orientation, agree on time and civil-discourse ground-rules .... (and even signs and patterns (my original theme after the first session on democracy and re-inventing democracy – see elsewhere another surprise “merger”). No\*\*\*\*\*

We were ready to immerse into new rules in new terrains, the unexpected as some want to have “measureable” outcomes to take home, and avoid and kind of rules or pressures (as you speak when someone gave as time-present a gift for shared co-creation.

We played the magic round-table while learning the rules, unique as we agreed to play on the fly, even without warming up and including guests and bumble-bees.... Here the play-with-rules “formula”: and a link to the mentioned “school of ignorance?”, a format played in the Bohm Dialogues crowd of enthusiasts about deep listening, authentic dialogue, and keeping the “talkers” “in-check”:

RULES of the GAME and ABOUT attention ecology look here:

to be found here: <http://open-forum.de/re-invent-democracy.html>

<http://sites.google.com/site/magicopenforum/>

Each person is given an equal number of beads, stones, or any tokens representing equal units of time. The total meeting time is divided into units matching the distributed tokens, thus valuing them. Each member then introduces her/himself, and if so desired, offers a topic for dialogue. Members then give tokens to others whose proposal or offer the group wants to enlarge from the selection offered in order to empower voices and joint interests, enlarge the flow in dialogue. This "voting or encouraging" continues as topics generate more or less "empathy" or concern; and as others join in the conversation can receive tokens as encouragement to continue with their line of thought. This open, transparent format can encourage inhibited people to participate and minimize domination by authoritarian types. In case of unexpected changes in meeting duration, the tokens can be re-/de-valued inflated/deflated to match the remaining available time. This method is one approach being highlighted in this paper: <http://www.open-forum.de/time-sharing.html> which might provide some general orientation.

Doing open-forum open-space for some time now, looking into formats, frames, patterns and “rules” and even the “unquestionable”: Time to give, steal, co-create,... our session was great, results and insights plenty and we, as I may say, will try to follow up, even virtually, potentially.

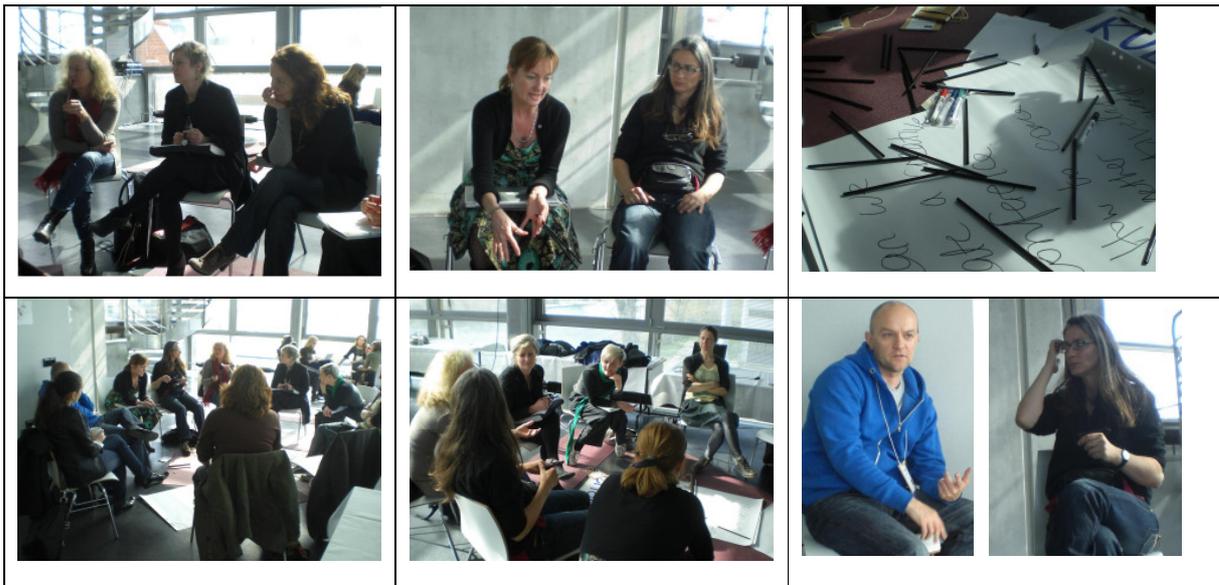
Please catch the “flair” by seeing the pictures below on how we questioned, subsumed and resonated as we have nothing comparable to pictures worth 10 000 words... If in doubt, or curious about the mentioned AGORA, formats like STAMMTISCH, or willing to dig deeper maybe some backgrounds help to dig deeper:

<http://open-forum.de>, <http://21centuryagora.org>, <http://open-forum.de/time-credits.html#dialog-time-credit-note-2008>, <http://gov20.cpmg.eu/?s=benking>, [http://open-forum.de/OF\\_Backgroundpapers](http://open-forum.de/OF_Backgroundpapers)

**finally:** 1) my topic was on going beyond the listening and the need to agree: how do we share meanings, different contexts and cultural expressions, which actually lead to the next session in the RUBIC\*\*\* on: the terms we use and the \*\*\*\*\*  
“grammatology”!\*\*\*\* DICTIONARY – BUZZ WORD GROUP \*\*\*\*  
2) more general: I strongly miss the connection between the issues and sessions, links between themes and agreed follow-up. Maybe we can do it virtually in a STAMMTISCH 3.0 ?  
3) the central concern of ownership came up again and again, do we identify, subsume and resonate only when we “own” ? are there more option than the “ego vs. eco” perspective?. Are there more than 3 options we can “hold” in out mind? – win-win-win+ ??  
?

Our attempt to connect the unexpected in an OPEN FORUM SPACE FORMAT tried to merge and morph sessions and side-events for the benefit of surprise-guests, drivers, stakeholders, risk-takers,.... Anyone curious and daring.

Enjoy some “impressions” – only in color for the observers not present:



There is a addiction/habit to record such impressions, maybe visit: <http://open-forum.de/re-invent-democracy.html> as we this time could only allow ourseleves to warm-up, learn the frames and the rules and the co-creative listening and empowering in less than one hour (including irritations and introductions).

