# Hintergrundwissen für FacilitatorInnen:

Fragen zur Struktur des FCE (Treffen der FacilitatorInnen (Roundtables), Ausbildung (Trainings), Facilitator-Ethik,…)

## 1) MONA REAUME (BOARD OF FCE)

Hello Sabine,
Thank you for sharing so much, especially in English!
The **roundtables** happened before I was trained as a facilitator. So they are a thing of the past (and we hope to have them again in the future as well). Roundtables happened twice a year. There would be one-day of community building and the next two days were about learning from one another based on the experiences facilitators were having in workshops. They continued to build community throughout the three days. There would be 70-80 people. The premise was to give facilitators a chance to check in with each other, discuss what was being done, network and share learning. They would make sure the workshop openings and the guidelines were the same. One of the important things they learned was facilitating from emptiness (which means being vulnerable) was key.

At that time, there were **paid staff people** at FCE who would support facilitators and workshop organizers as well.

**Training:** How people were trained evolved overtime. The standard became a five day training, much of it experiential. The last day was spent on a discernment process where those trained would self-assess whether they thought they were ready to facilitate. The trainers would then have individual meetings with each trainee and give their assessment whether the trainee should be a facilitator. Some trainees were told that they should not facilitate. Those that wanted to pursue facilitation and were seen as able would then apprentice with more experienced facilitators. For some they would need to apprentice over many workshops.

When I did the training, we only did a 4 day training and there wasn't time for the discernment process. It was an experiment that didn't work so well. I sought out that discernment process with the trainers to insure I was ready to actually do the work. I also have co-facilitated with all three trainers on one or more occasions since then. At this point, I consider myself a decent facilitator. And I am aware there is always more to learn!

The upcoming facilitator training (march 2013) is back to the 5 day format and will include the discernment process.

A **facilitator** manipulating and seeing oneself as the centre is the antithesis of the model. I was told Scott Peck quite facilitating himself because he discerned his narcissism got in the

way of the process.

I feel flattered that you'd like to facilitate with me. I am curious about facilitating with you as well. I've always appreciated your passion for community building. If it were to happen we would need to spend time building community ourselves (which is the usual practice anyway), and there is an ocean between us!

Smiles and hugs across the miles,
Mona

Hi Mona,
thank you so much for your long answer. I get really a picture of how it worked.

1) We was thinking also of a similar **model to "train"**. Asking us, whom I want to give the knowledge, who is able to do the "letting go´s" that are demanded in that process... And then we had the idea of letting them taking part in the facs circle, while workshops. Means that the trained people would take part with 2 experienced facilitators (FCE model or as you did it, you really facilitated as a young fac with a senior fac, is that right? No facilitating for them with 2 facs?)

> When I spoke of **experienced facilitators**, it wasn't about age or number of groups that someone has facilitated. It is about facilitators who really **embody the process**. It is about the quality of facilitation. My first workshop was in California. Rusty and Bonnie Poindexter were facilitating. I had been in a relationship with Rusty for about a year and he invited me to attend (we met dancing). I was so impressed by what they didn't do! I had experience facilitating groups for post partum depressed women and for training volunteers. Talk about a mind opener. Although they are different groups and different needs, it made me realize how sometimes what is said in any group by any facilitator may be more about the facilitator's personal needs (desire to help, need for attention, to stop someone's pain, to be smart, to feel important, to entertain, to keep control - just to name a few). Clearly Bonnie and Rusty did not do any of that. They hardly spoke, often when one of them would, it would be telling us it was time for a break. And yet, I felt held and supported by them. I had a sense of safety. For me they in that workshop set the bar high in terms of quality facilitation and the depth of community I felt in that workshop.

And there are times when an intervention may be necessary, but it has been my experience as a participant and facilitator, that if the facilitators and participants are following the guidelines and remembering the mission statement; other than a few words after a break, facilitators are often best when they listen deeply and hold the group.

2) "I was told **Scott Peck quite facilitating himself** because he discerned his narcissism got in the way of the process." Can you tell me how he did it. We do our CB work in 2 h CB-Sessions

by telephone each week (5 persons) and meeting minimum 2x the year (last year it was 4-5x) in unguided groups. We produce a lot of chaos.

> As I mentioned before, I never knew Scott Peck myself and that is what I was told by several people who did. It seems, he became self-aware enough to know he liked the limelight too much to facilitate well.

And I think the key question is really about what is happening in your unguided groups? Are you all following the guidelines? Is the group committed to the **mission statement** tenets

- Communicate with authenticity
- Relate with love and respect
- Deal with difficult issues
- Seek, honor and affirm diversity
- Bridge differences with integrity
- Acknowledge our human frailties
- Take responsibility for our actions and make amends where possible
- Practice forgiveness for ourselves and others

**My experience is when groups are stuck going back to the basics is key to movement.** And asking everyone to examine their willingness to do so. A good question is, what is keeping me from being part of this group?

3) Are there topics that belong to a therapeutic session? Do you have experiences about that? I feel, that there should be **room for everything** in the circles, but some say, this is not for the circle (like problems with the loving partner). But as a participant I have always the feeling, that there is something excluded and the space is not wide and open and it makes a part of the chaos... And of course: I have the feeling there are things that should be - parallel - be looked at in therapeutic sessions.

> I think any topic is ok if it is coming from I statements, the person is moved to speak and it really is about emptying. When it comes to discussing relationships and both people are in the group, it can be uncomfortable for group members so they may protest. And then it gives the group members an opportunity to figure out what is going on for him or herself and if moved share that. And I agree that it may be helpful to be working in therapy on issues you also discuss in a CBW.

4) Did you hear about "**excluding**" persons > except that example about alcohol that Scotty desribes in his book? I think a CB circle is a good thing to look on a deeper level for what is there really. I made good experiences with that. As I heard from Bob Roberts is, that borderliners are also not able to take part in the process as they take all the time for them.

> I have no experience with people being excluded from workshops.

4) I am curious. Do you still facilitate? What is your practice? Do you do CB in your community? What else do you do in your community to handle conflicts?

> I facilitate when I'm invited to do so. The last time was in St Louis in October. Outside of the occasional CB that I attend, my formal practice is mostly with the FCE Council. I

personally also try and practice informally with others that are not involved in CB. E.G. I try to follow some of the guidelines with my family, friends and colleagues at work when I think of it and am moved to do so. They wouldn't know I'm doing that though.

Handling conflicts is a tough thing. For me for many years it was either avoid or try and win. And I have no magic answer. I just came back from helping my parents for two weeks (they have health issues). There were times I really wanted to hurt my father I was so angry. One of those times, partly for my mothers´sake I also remembered his humanity and I was able to "relate with love and respect" instead. The conflict dissipated when I just accepted him. He is 80 with some dementia so there are additional limitations, sometimes I just withdrew and got support around my struggles and took care of myself - realistic avoidance I would call that.

There have also been times when I've been in conflict and by following the guidelines, I was able to bridge some differences (yes from the mission statement) with colleagues and family too and that is not within a CB framework.

5) As we do in our group "network-cb.eu" > facilitating mostly by holding the space and doing our work (emptying) before and in the breaks, we have the "problem", that often the group **stuck in long stages of not saying anything** (some hours on Saturday afternoon/evening). Of course often it is needed "to cook the topics" > it is a form of chaos. But I am observing, that a group often stuck in that. It means: They empty their own things but they do not find the way to the other people sitting around them and to empty things BETWEEN them. As I read in the facilitators handout > there are 2 A4 sides about "investment and intimacy". And as I see it now > after maybe 60 workshops > there is missing this investment in other people. It is too hurtful, makes people afraid, I do not know exactly. But I think it is different than in the times with Scott Peck (people coming out of encounter style sessions). Do you know that problem? And what you think about?

> I'm not sure I'm quite understanding all you are saying here. Here are some thoughts though.
I have noticed that there is a unique challenge with small **CB groups especially under 20 people**, silence may predominate or a person or people may just fill the time if allowed. Bigger groups often have more diversity, which means the likelihood of more issues/subjects and there is less time per person because of numbers. Theoretically a two day workshop from 9 to 5 with an hour for lunch and two half hour breaks would give 12 hours to build community. For 4 people it is 3 hours (180 minutes) per person, for 40 people it would be 18 minutes each...  Very different experiences. And if it is an on-going group versus new participants it changes things as well.

When I build **community with a co-facilitator**, and we know each other and have a connection and things are fairly steady in our lives, on occasion not much time is needed.

Shuffle up some factors, I don't know the other person well, and/or one of us has a personal problem at home, it may take a lot longer to empty and build community to prepare for a workshop. I wouldn't put a rule to co-facilitate I must build community with the person for 1 day. I may set aside a day and if all the time isn't needed - great.

For FCE, when we meet as a **Council**, as we know each other we plan 1 day for CB and then plan to continue building community as needed while doing tasks. Sometimes we end up taking most of our time for CB only, other times we need less focused CB time.

The amount of time decided for a workshop is part of a container to hold and support the experience. Depending on the size and intent of the group and what is currently happening in individual participants lives or has happened previously in the group (if on-going) the amount of time needed may change.

In the **Facilitator Training**, the trainers did some acting to give us opportunities to facilitate through some challenging scenarios. Other than that, when it comes to CB I don't know about cooking topics, not something that is part of the model or interventions.

If **facilitators manipulate** they are not following the basic guidelines and mission themselves, and it would be counter to what CB is trying to accomplish and would be a different type of group not CB. A part of CB is not only emptying but also listening deeply to others. Sometimes I may need to empty in order to listen deeply. However, if I truly want to connect with others... I need to be able to listen to them. If I was in a group, and I thought there were people not invested, I may need to empty in the circle my judgement re their investment and the underlying thinking/feelings that it raised in me. That would get me in the circle and present. Trying to fix, change, convert others doesn't work.

And I'm wondering if I really understood what you were saying?
Mona


## 1) BONNIE POINDEXTER (EXPERIENCED FACILITATOR)

Originally, **FCE facilitators were trained** by Scotty and the FCE staff. Facilitators were selected based on their ability to understand the concept of "emptiness" and on their perceived strength of character. (We didn't always get the selection process right. Some facilitators had to be disciplined. Some removed, etc. But, for the most part, the discernment process that the selection committee went through seemed to work well.)  People in "waves" (classes) of about 20 people each.  There were 3 waves. Then we had more facilitators than we had work, so the training stopped.  Since FCE gave away the model and closed its doors, Michael Schmidt, Eve Berry, and a couple of others have led

some training workshops for people who were interested in becoming facilitators.  I think the training lasted for about 4 days. There is a manual for the course - I think.

Your question about how facilitators were chosen is a good.one. To tell the truth I don't know.  I think it was a very subjective process that was done by Scotty and the FCE Executive Director in the early years.  I know that feedback was given to participants in the program that Goetz participated in about an individual's readiness to facilitate.  I will ask the question this weekend about whether there is any objective criteria used to make these judgments and get back to you with a better answer.  I do know that lots of people were hurt/angry when they wanted to be a facilitator but were not "chosen". YIKES!

I was in the second "wave" - (class). We went to Knoxville, Tennessee where the FCE office was then located. We had a three day CB experience. Then some of us were allowed to work with a mentor in a real CB group to get more training. I worked with a wonderful fellow whom I will always be grateful to for teaching me so much.
We had **ongoing training** at least one, sometimes twice a year until FCE closed. Some facilitators were considered "senior" and could then mentor new folks. Some needed more experience. I became a "senior" facilitator and worked in Taiwan and all over the US. Exhausting but rewarding work.

Hope this is helpful.
Bonnie Poindexter


**In a message dated 9/24/2009 9:27:08 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, bs@cabs.at writes:**

You made 3 days of CB - without exercises, just CB-circles? How many workshops did you visit before? Just about.
**Two days of circle. One day of other kinds of learnings.  Small groups. Explantions by the facilitators, etc.**

When you met once or twice a year: you did cb-circles > guided or nonguided? By whom?

**The meetings were always guided. Sometimes they had a topic like racism or money or boundaries of sexual relationships, etc. The FCE staff would decide about who among the facilitator corp would facilitate the circle and who could do some presentations when the circle was over. Sometimes we used the open space concept to discern what folks wanted to talk about.**

Where the mentors with you in the circle?
**Yes, when I talk about mentors I am just meaning senior facilitators who have more experience than new folks. All of us were in the circle together.**

As you are a "senior" you are able to mentor new folks. That means, that you can found an own wave? And make a 3 days training and then every year with them a CB-circle?

**No, I am a senior FCE facilitator and do not go out on my own. I remain with FCE.**

What was your experience about training the new people? How many stayed?
Did you have an own ongoing group (monthly)? Did your mentor have?
**I actually have never had the responsibility to train new facilitators. You have to ask Eve or Michael or Rusty about that.**

Great to go to Taiwan!

**I loved doing the work in Taiwan. I learned that you almost don't need a translator because we all tell the same stories no matter what country we are from. Its not easy to understand why it don´t work anymore in the states that much than before.**
**When Scotty quit lecturing around the Country, we just couldn't attract enough people. I think Americans are too busy trying to acquire power and money to think it important to build community. (Just my thought.)**

**FCE will be doing workshops again this year. We will do two 2-day workshops, one 3-day workshop and the Summer Gathering.  The calendar for all of this should be ready soon. I'll let you know when it is up on the new website we are constructing.**

Bonnie Poindexter

Sabine:
Indeed **facilitators had guidelines** they were required to adhere to. We also had one of our own facilitators who worked with the FCE staff when a facilitator needed to be "fired" or confronted about inappropriate behavior. Rusty Myers did that job for a good while. You might want to e-mail him about his experiences with facilitators who were not abiding by FCE rules. I will try to find something in my old notebook over the weekend that might help you.
It is **VERY** important that facilitators understand that they are looked up to by participants and they **MUST NOT** prey on someone who is so vulnerable as a community building participant. It is extremely unkind and psychologically dangerous to do so.

Bonnie Poindexter


**3) MICHAEL SCHMIDT (EX: BOARD OF FCE)**

Hi Sabine,
Wow, this is a complicated topic.  There probably isn't a single answer to any of these questions, so I'm certainly open to having a prolonged dialogue as you go.
**Facilitation and Training model**
Overall I would say that we used a mentorship model of training with more experienced facilitators being paired with less experienced ones.  It was in doing the work that people really got trained, although we did have some training in the beginning and at roundtables. The training we give now is really just the bare minimum and cannot replace experience. You should also be familiar with the phrase 'doctors make the worst patients' and I would

say this was true of our facilitators in that they had a hard time being 'trained' and often rebelled.  So you should be aware of that as a possibility.

As a rule the less facilitators say the better.  80% of facilitation is holding the group so that they can do their work.  I would say that this is a rule that has weakened over time, but I do not think it has been helpful. There is a clear difference between facilitation, and say, being an advanced participant.  In many ways I think it is harder to be a participant because as a facilitator our job isn't to react to what is happening but to allow and enable the group to have their own reaction.  Groups need help when transitioning from one stage to another, or after being stuck in something for a long time.  Maybe a push at towards the end.  But that's about it.  I cannot think of a time I regretted 'not doing something' as a facilitator but I can think of several times I regret saying something.  People need to be allowed to have their process and do it the way they are going to do it (and not the way I think they should do it). There is a reason why we say that every group is different, so the more you live by the rule of 'less is more' the better off you'll be.

## Facilitator Selection

As for selection of facilitators I would say that the number one criteria is the capacity to empty of ones own agenda.  This is often paradoxical in that people drawn to facilitation do so out of an agenda, and I should say that we ourselves did not always follow this rule.  I can think of several FCE facilitators that should not have been and did the most harm to groups. It is easy to evaluate someone's skill at assessing a group or intellectualize about community building and believe that this qualifies them to facilitate.  It does not.  I remember that one of our better facilitators often only said to the group, 'go deeper'.

It won't make you popular but I would use this one main criteria to select facilitators.  Assess how much an individual imposes themselves onto the group, whether that is by providing information / learning to the group, directing or telling the group what they need to do, or otherwise injecting their opinions, beliefs, and motives on the group.  I promise you that the more that someone does this the worse the results will be.

…and then fall back on pairing people that are less experienced or confident with more experienced facilitators. It is also useful, when you can, to pair a man and woman together as facilitators.  Always try to do this unless there is a reason not to like the CB is for a women's group for example.

## Facilitator Rules

There were lots of rules for facilitators and most were broken by some.  No having romances with participants and also not having romances with your co-facilitator are two big ones. There are several concerns here.  One is about power and using that advantageously to start romances.  The other is about the vulnerability that CB creates.  When people share authentically with each other it creates a powerful spiritual connection that can be misconstrued or channeled sexually.  What needs to be recognized is that while this energy

is very real it is also artificial to environment and usually goes away after the CB event is over (or the more time people spend with each other).  So what can happen is that people start a romance that fizzles quickly and often leaves one person with hurt feelings.  Sometimes this is innocent but some have used this as a way to take advantage of people either consciously or subconsciously.

It is definitely something to watch out for since its basic ingredient – spiritual connection – is inherent to the process.  Scotty wrote and lectured about the sexual nature of spiritual connections, so that is worth reading if you want more about that.  When we were doing a lot of workshops Rusty headed up an ethics committee of sorts and dealt with a lot of these issues.  It came up more often than one would think.  This happens amongst participants as well but for obvious reasons we had less control over that and certainly did not have rules about it.

Now having said all that, sometimes two people really do genuinely connect and will want to pursue a relationship of some kind. The rule of thumb  (and others might have different opinions as to how much time should pass), is that if say 3-6 months pass and they still want to pursue something then there is a green light.

I would say that the other big issue we had was around money – people doing facilitation for a living versus FCE and who's was what.  I don't know if I have any great advice on how to handle that topic but it was significant for us.

This seems like a reasonable start and hopefully you find it helpful.  As I said I'm happy to go back and forth.
Michael

Hi Sabine!
1) Thank you VERY much. It is so interesting and until now it is about my understanding of facilitation. Our network ist working like this (against the field of Götz, who is saying (I heard him just yesterday) "I know how to bring a group to authenticity". I am convinced by facilitation out of "BEING" rather than of "DOING".

> Yes, absolutely!  It is entirely based on who you are 'being' rather than what you are 'doing'.  Don't let anyone talk you out of that.  There are people who do different things. It reminds me a lot of Kaz G., who was a long time FCE trainer/facilitator.  Kaz is brilliant in many ways, but also deeply wounded and terrified of his own vulnerability.  Some would call his way of being, narcissism.  He would 'do' a lot with groups but in the process would manipulate them, keep himself in control, and often these things lead to harm.  Rusty worked a lot with Kaz, often trying to undo what he was doing with varying levels of success.  You should definitely talk to Rusty about Kaz and you can see for yourself if you see similarities.

So for instance authenticity and deep connection (community) are not the same thing. Authenticity is an essential ingredient to community, but it in itself is not the goal. I can have an argument with my daughter's mom (Alice), and while we are authentically expressing our anger, the goal is to move through that to the other side. If authenticity is the goal one could say that as long as we what we are really expressing what we are feeling then we are doing what we are supposed to do, no matter how hurtful and destructive our words are. But community is about letting go of anger, agendas, etc that are barriers to connection. Yes, in the process of letting them go there is often need to express them authentically, but this in itself is not the goal.

Just this week I had a blowout with Alice. I felt like I was being taken advantage of and I expressed it, not so gracefully but definitely authentically to her. Now if I hold onto my anger, resentment, and opinion of the situation, what can ever transform that? Alice could completely abdicate to my version of the truth but that would not be good for her personally - to abdicate her own power. Most people though just hold onto their own version of the truth and become deadlocked in conflict. This is how the world usually operates. Instead I started to recognize in myself that what I was really feeling is that I can never seem to do enough for someone to love me. That is about me, not her. I told her this and apologized and that shifted things forward. This is not to say that I didn't have valid points, but I can only control myself, my own process, and my own barriers to connection.

Perhaps this is more than I needed to say about it, but **authenticity in itself isn't the goal**. I worry that like Kaz, some would like to avoid the vulnerability that comes with deep connection – to let go of the protections we all have to keep ourselves safe. Authenticity is certainly better than the pseudo-community that most people live in, but there is so much more.

2) I wondered about the sentence > I think I did not understand well:
"80% of facilitation is holding the group so that they can do their work. I would say that this is a rule that has weakened over time, but I do not think it has been helpful." The weakening was not helpful or the 80% holding? We think 80% of holding and doing OUR work (emptying) before and in the breaks is the most important.

Yes, sorry, 80% of the work (maybe more) is about holding and doing our own work (emptying). The rule that has weakened over time is facilitators saying things in group. We used to say a lot less and I don't think that saying more has been helpful. There are a lot of reasons for this, some being subtle. Thematically (and paradoxically) the less you say as a facilitator the more weight what you do say has on the group. When you say something you want it shift the group and the more you say, the less power you will have to make those kind of interventions that shift the group.

3) How the roundtables worked? How oftenly, how many persons? Did you have to take part > how oftenly? Did you have to be participant in an own ongoing group (I think that this is important). How many facilitators you have been, when Scott Peck died? Just write me everything that you know. It is interesting for us! Who were the persons, who decided who can facilitate?

We had a roundtable at least annually. There were years where we had more than one but that is when we were at our height of activity. At that time we had maybe 80 facilitators and perhaps 40-50 people would make it to any particular roundtable. Usually someone on staff would decide who facilitated what workshops. Robert Reusing was probably the best person at this job. He had a good relationship with the facilitator body and was good at knowing who would work well together. I wouldn't say that we had any hard and fast rules about having to attend roundtables in order to facilitate. Certainly the people facilitating the most attended roundtables consistently, but I think this was more a function of being engaged in the work then say meeting some requirement.

Roundtables did serve as our 'ongoing group' and it is important. If we ourselves are unwilling to be vulnerable then how can we hold a space that allows others to do that. Groups will often take on the characteristics and weaknesses of their facilitators. I know for me that when I felt closed off that groups had a harder time 'going deeper' - mind you this is without me saying anything. To your point it was about who I was 'being' and not what I was doing. There were many times that I needed to share something deeply on the 2nd day in order to 'give permission' to group to go there. I've become really conscious about how open I am when facilitating and I've gotten better with it over the years.

4) Where there people who lived from the workshops (earned enough money)?

I don't think that anyone made a living from doing workshops that FCE or others put together. Many people, however, used community building in their consulting work. What did happen is that people facilitating workshops for FCE would then dovetail that into consulting work for themselves. This is primarily when issues around money and who's work was who's would come up. There were valid points on both sides and I don't think we ever effectively resolved those tensions.

5) Did all participants come out from the lectures that Scott Peck gave? Or were there other ways? We do not have a Scott Peck and is a hard struggle to get people in the room. Mostly we facilitate groups that are asking us (we talk to them before, we search them)... This is very interesting, because there could be ideas com out of that.
6) I heard, there were Workshop-Organisators. How they were payed? Did it work? How many persons. They did it as a full-time job? How did they work > advertisement? Or just gathering the output of Scott Pecks lectures?

A lot did come out of people reading Scotty's books or attending his lectures, yes. There are a few very people gifted at sponsoring workshops (i.e., getting people into the room). I can think of 3 of these people off the top of my head, but there may have been 1 or 2 more. If we had 70-80 of these people instead of 5 FCE would probably be in a different state. I think that Sarah Martin might have received some support from FCE when she would host the Community Continuity Conference but I can't think of anyone else that has. FCE has supported events financially to some extent, but certainly not to the level where someone could make a living from it. I don't think anyone on staff was ever particularly effective at sponsoring workshops, but were effective at supporting other that wanted to sponsor them. Rusty or Eve might have a better memory of the different pathways that workshops came into being.

To you point though, what we ourselves have never solved is how to maintain an organization that supports CB in the absence of Scotty touring the country promoting it. We have been having that conversation for at least 15 years and we still don't have a great answer for it. We will probably have that conversation again next week when we meet in CA for a board meeting. So yes it is difficult and really a grassroots kind of job of talking to people over and over to get them into the room.

I really like to hear all that > and to involve your enormous knowlegde about the process and FCE.

Thank you a lot, it is very helpful for the preparation for the four day "roundtable". We proposed 48 hours of process > and then task/process with topics, that we have (like training, ethics, spreading CB, who wants to help in the network,....)

You are most welcome. That's great that you are able to get people together for 4 days. I would love to hear all about it!
Best, Michael


**4) JOHN DEVENDORF (FACILITATOR, UNEXPERIENCED)**

Dear Sabine,   hello! It is good to hear from you.
So, in order to CLARIFY how I can be helpful - it sounds like you are having a 4-day gathering of already- trained facilitators. My guess is that there will be time for CB process and then something else - perhaps planning, etc. I believe I have never been at this type of event. But I have been at CB where a large %, perhaps one third, were trained facilitators and almost everyone had the CB experienced previously.

1.  Of course, there used to be **regular meetings of the FCE Board of Directors.**

2.  I think there was something called a **Leadership Council**, perhaps they met yearly - I think it included Board members, large donors, and many trained facilitators.

***   It sounds to me like your upcoming group is most similar to this Leadership Council - or maybe the Board meeting - but I am not sure.

I believe Dr. Peck wrote that some of these gatherings were "unrelieved chaos". I don't know if he was describing a Board meeting or the Leadership Council perhaps the Board, but I'm not sure

In other words, the transition from the "process" - with the task of building a sense of community - to "task" (some other task besides building a sense of community) was often very difficult and sometimes not successful.

I never attended either of these types of events. My first CB was in 1995.

3.  And then there were several, large "**trainings of facilitators**" in the early days - late 1980's. There were other smaller trainings later. I attended a small training in 2003. I have never facilitated a CB event.

4.  And then there was a yearly **"Community Continuity Conference" (CCC)** - which was like a large (perhaps 100 plus), extended (four day) community-building event, where many trained facilitators attended, but also many regular participants and even many individuals who were "first time". The large group would meet several times a day, with music, singing, entertainment, announcements, organizing. There would be various, optional events, activities, lectures, etc available in the "free time". And there would be maybe four, distinct sub-groups which built community in two sessions per day throughout.
I attended these CCC four times (two big ones in '95 and '96 and two much smaller ones in '03 and '04). I do have some thoughts and reflections based on my experience in these, including issues of: purpose, ethics, atmosphere, exclusivity, and co-facilitation.

5. And there are the **smaller CB type event**, where sometimes a majority of attendees are new to the process - their first time. I have been at about five of these. That is my favorite type of CB event.

Good luck and thank you!

John D.

### 5) EVE BERRY (PRESIDENT)

Hi Sabine,
this is actually part of a chapter in a book I'm writing called *Community Is Where You Build It*, so forgive the length.

It starts out by contrasting group facilitation with community building facilitation:

### Group Facilitation:

Facilitation of the community building process is unlike any other sort of group facilitation. Although a rare phenomenon when I first was exposed to facilitation in the late 1960s, over the last decades organizations and businesses frequently use facilitators for planning, team building, problem solving, product/or project development or other purposes.  Many of the principles of community building facilitation are similar to group facilitation, but there are also some distinct differences.  As a facilitator of a group process, my role is to be a neutral party, establish a level playing field for the participants and provide guidance and structure for the process so that the group can accomplish its task.  Guidelines that encourage open and constructive communication are usually presented as a way of establishing some healthy norms for the group.  As a group facilitator, an important part of the role is to keep the group moving through the agenda, focus the discussion on the task at hand and manage the time.  Depending on the situation and the group, I provide more or less structure and direction.  The fundamental premise of group facilitation is the group, not the facilitator, has the answers.  The facilitator's job is to ask the right questions and to create conditions that allow participants to discover their own shared solutions.  When a group gets bogged down in too many irrelevant details or goes off track too far (I call it going down the rabbit hole ala Alice in Wonderland), I will intervene in order to redirect the group back to the topic or task.  In many cases while facilitating I also record the information generated by the group on large sheets of paper so that a sort of "group memory" is visible.  In most settings, the group size is relatively small—from five to twenty or so. Although there are exceptions, most groups use a single facilitator.

## Community building facilitation:

Community building facilitation shares some similarities with group facilitation in the use of guidelines, in being a neural party and in the assumption that the group has the answers. The major differences involve the use of two facilitators, only a minimal amount of structure and the absence of a set agenda.  From the outside, it looks like the facilitators are not doing very much, which is a frequent source of criticism by participants.  At the beginning of a workshop, the facilitators describe the guidelines, read the story and suggest offer that it is the most the group will hear from them.  The facilitators call for breaks around mid-morning and mid-afternoon, at lunch time and at the end of the day.  At the outset, it appears that the facilitators are simply timekeepers.  Depending on what is going on in the group, one of the facilitators will offer an observation about the group process during the previous session when the group returns from a break.  Occasionally a suggestion, or hint is given about how to move forward.  But usually, the facilitators have no comments to make, no advice, no wisdom, no direction and no comfort or praise for a job well done.

During my training as a community building facilitator over many years, my primary work has been to *unlearn* and, paradoxically, my learning about the community building process has deepened.  I had to unlearn, or refrain from being "a star" and performing for the group.  I have had to unlearn my inclination to squelch conflict when it arises.  As a person who gets things done and is very productive, I have to sit with the realization that I cannot make

community happen through my leadership and skill sets. Instead of always knowing what to do and say, I have learned to sit patiently with my own and the group's discomfort until an answer or path emerges.  Among the most difficult unlearnings is sizing up people as they first present themselves, because it is rarely who they really are.  Despite the fact that I have a lifetime of personal and professional experiences to rely on, as a community building facilitator, all this knowledge and skill is pretty worthless when I am facilitating community building.  In fact, the very things that seem to make me valuable in the world are an impediment to doing my job of holding the group from an empty place.  So emptying, once again, is also at the heart of being a community building facilitator.

**When we train people in community building facilitation, to determine a person's readiness to facilitate, discernment centers on a person's capacity to empty and be empty.**

If it sounds a bit like an absolute, it is also true that no matter how empty I become, there will always be something else to empty.  I am, after all, human.  Just when I start to feel proud about being empty, I am full again. And so it is:  full, empty, emptiness, fill up, full and on and on.

Stages of community as expressed in organizations:

<u>**Facilitation practices throughout the stages:**</u>
Community building facilitation is both counterintuitive and countercultural.  This form of leadership is most akin to Robert Greenleaf's concept "servant leadership," the philosophy of Lao-Tzu and the "Level 5 leader," as described by Jim Collins, who "blend a paradoxical mix of extreme personal humility with intense professional will."  The attributes of the "servant leader" include the ability to listen, to rely on one's inner voice, to have empathy, to be a healer, to be self-aware, to think beyond day-to-day realities and to embrace the concept of stewardship.  In one of the most famous passages from the Tao Te Ching, attributed to Lao-Tzu, the author provides guidance for leaders:   "Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you; but of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aims fulfilled, they will all say, 'We did this ourselves.'"  Jim Collins' level 5 leaders are able to simultaneously hold both the "brutal facts" of the current reality with "faith that they would prevail in the end."
The primary job of community building facilitators is to "hold" the group as it does its work.  Holding is a spiritual action, which may seem like an oxymoron.  In contrast to most models of leadership, the leadership provided by facilitators involves minimal direction, little dialogue with participants and no attempt to control the group.  The primary guidance— leadership—that facilitators are taught to provide is to model being self-aware as a group and to lead the group into emptiness--not into community.  In one of my early attempts to explain facilitation to a friend who had not experienced community building, the difficulty of

grasping the concept became apparent. "Why that sounds like all you so is to herd lemmings to jump off the cliff. What kind of facilitation is that?!"

### *The basics.*

Building community with the co-facilitator. The importance of building community with the other facilitator or facilitators (on occasion, the facilitation involves a trio) cannot be overemphasized. To accomplish this task, facilitators have to take the time in advance to build community. This is not simply a check-in with "how are you doing," but a deliberate commitment to sit with each other and empty, since the most fundamental characteristic of a community building facilitator is the ability to facilitate from emptiness. So we start with our co-facilitator.

### *Building community in advance.*

I have co-facilitated with people I have never met before and with individuals I have known well for years. In both instances, spending the time to be together in an authentic way is equally important. When I don't know someone, the community building provides us with an opportunity to connect deeply, in a relatively fast way. My co-facilitator needs to know about what is going on in my life outside the circle, including any past or current "hot-button" issues that may trigger an emotional response in me that takes me out of my role and into being a participant. We each need to clear out any worries, anxieties or expectations about working with the community building group. In cases where I have a history with my co-facilitator, we need to be sure that neither one of us is holding onto or withholding any judgments, hurts, criticisms or disagreements. Although none of this pre-work is visible to participants, it plants the seed of community from the beginning. Failing to build a sense of community in this way means that the co-facilitators themselves are somewhere between pseudo-community and chaos.

Although not a requirement, facilitators often let the broader network of "community builders" know that they are facilitating a workshop so that others will also help support the work energetically from afar.

### *Workshop startup.*

The next task of the facilitators is to seat themselves across from each other in the circle. This placement allows the facilitators to make eye contact with each other throughout the process. Then facilitators open the community building session by introducing themselves – very briefly—asking for volunteers to read the mission statement and the founding dream, reviewing the guidelines, describing logistics of the site, e.g. restrooms, saying a bit about the community building process and the role of the facilitators, reading a story and calling the group in and out of silence. The two facilitators divide up these tasks in advance.

As the group begins its work, the task of facilitators is to stay out of the way allow the group to struggle with what to do. The beginning stage is full of traps for facilitators. Someone will

ask a question about the process that is directed overtly or covertly to the facilitators. "So what are we supposed to do?" or "Why aren't the leaders giving us any direction?" are examples. Indeed, it is countercultural, in fact, downright impolite, to not respond to a question. From the participants' point of view, it can appear that the facilitators are ignoring the request or deliberately withholding information. From the facilitators' perspective, it takes some self-discipline to operate with a different norm. Most group play out chaos, in part, by directing criticism at the facilitators for failing to lead the group adequately. The information provided at the beginning, that community is a group of all leaders, still is cryptic to the group. It wants to have structure, direction, a pathway to "success." More seeds of community are planted, since all these things have to go for a group to be empty.

### *Calling for a break.*

At about the mid-point of the first session, facilitators signal each other that it is time for a break. The decision is accomplished silently, usually with a combination of eye contact and perhaps a gesture to indicate which facilitator will speak. Depending on what is happening in the group, the facilitator might say, "It's probably a good time for a break," especially if there are still long periods of silence. The group may have already entered chaos and the action in the group may be hot and heavy, with people piling up on top of each other to get a word in. When there is a pause, the facilitator will step in, saying something like, "sometimes there is no good time for a break, but we need to take one now."

### *The "huddle."*

Breaks during the process play an important role for both the participants and for the facilitators. Aside from the dealing with the obvious bio needs, breaks offer an often welcome relief from the unfamiliar kind of communication going on in the group. For a few minutes, people can get back to "normal." It is hard to go on a break with people in the circle and not talk about what is happening, so it is the first chance for participants to voice displeasure or frustration with the process, albeit outside the circle. My way of describing our human tendency as I explain the guidelines is to observe that in most groups, community building or other, more truth is told in the bathrooms on a break than sitting together in the meeting or session.

During the break, the facilitators huddle together, apart from the group, and share their observations about the group. The discussion between facilitators focuses on identifying the behaviors, themes and patterns that are starting to develop. Typically the group is still deep in pseudo-community during the first break, so there is still politeness, little expression of any differences, lots of comments and interpretations of the story. In addition, the break provides the facilitators another time to empty with each other as needed, which is particularly necessary if the group has confronted one or both of the facilitators or if a "hot button" topic has surfaced. Finally—and the fifteen minutes or so does fly by—facilitators decide whether or not to make any process comments at the opening of the next session. At this stage, it is common to return to the group with the comment, "we have no comments to

make, and we will begin the next session with three minutes of silence." For those participants that still expect to get some real help from the facilitators, the "no comment" comment fuels more spoken or unspoken dissatisfaction with the group leadership. If individuals in the group repeated generalized or made "we statements," without anyone pointing it out or if a number of people did not say their name before speaking, facilitators may simply remind the group of one or more of the guidelines, without additional commentary.

### *Stimulating chaos.*

Every once in a while a group will present a new challenge, never encountered. I once co-facilitated a large group from an international Christian organization. It should have been a bit of a signal to us that we were in for a rough ride when we first entered the room and one of the boxes of tissues scattered throughout the room had been placed on a stool in the center of the circle. We presented our opening and called for three minutes of silence. No one was moved to speak, but lots of people were moved to write in their journals. Some participants appeared to be moved to pray. 55 minutes later, we decided to call a break. It was the longest and most difficult silence I have ever experienced. When we met during the break, we were admittedly befuddled. We both had experienced long periods of silence, usually a few minutes, but 55 minutes? As facilitators, the guidance we follow is to "stimulate" chaos if the group remains in pseudo-community for a sustained period. A simply comment such as "we met during the group and observed that the group is being very polite" is usually sufficient to invite chaos. An intervention seemed to be in order with the atypical silence.

When we returned from the break, the comment offered was "Eve and I discussed the process during the break and concluded that either you have a very rich inner life or you are a very resistant group." Within a minute, chaos erupted at full force. Apparently, participants had been ordered to attend the workshop and people were angry about it, which was only the tip of the iceberg. At first glance it might appear that the group had skipped the stage of pseudo-community. Not so. Rather, it was just very pure form of the stage in which this group avoided differences completely, surfaces were all we could see and even politeness was subverted.

### *Interventions during chaos.*

Once the group enters chaos, an additional set of facilitator practices may be needed. In case, the pace quickens and sparks fly. Emotions run high and low as individuals struggle with how to deal with all this unruliness and conflict. For those who are uncomfortable with conflict, a new level of discomfort sets in. Now the guideline to "hang in there" during the difficult periods makes more sense. As the group tries, through experimentation, how to do the work of community building on their own, some individuals in the group may call out others on not using the guidelines. Others might make comments about the process.

- Language that oppresses, labels or disrespects others

## Discernible

For most people it is difficult to accept that the others in the group don't want their advice, help, reassurance, knowledge or attempts to fix. This is particularly disconcerting for people in the helping professions whose identity is closely aligned with their competence in giving advice, helping, reassuring, knowing and fixing. Usually some people in the group start posing questions to individuals or to the group as a whole to answer. More individuals speak and as differences continue to surface and complexity of relationships in the circle deepens, group patterns characteristic of chaos emerge.

During this period, facilitators pay attention to these patterns and how the group handles them.

Although the group can become very contentious on occasion, facilitators do not usually intervene even at this point unless the group fails to act. For example, when someone shares something very personal and authentic, and another member of the group speaks up immediately, one of the facilitators may gently interrupt and ask the person to hold their comments for a bit in order to allow some space and for the group to take in what the person has said. If a person gets up and approaches another in anger or with the potential of violence, one, or both of the facilitators will stand up and approach the person. Occasionally, a facilitator might call for a moment or two of silence. But in most instances, chaos is allowed unfold without facilitator comment or intervention until after the next break.

### *Naming the patterns.*

It is possible to go through an entire workshop, have the group empty itself fully and experience the gift of community without the facilitators ever making any comments or observations following breaks. I have participated in and facilitated workshops when the group did all the work. In the end, participants became fully aware and appreciative of the fact that the near invisibility of the facilitators had a great deal to do with achieving the sense of community. In most experiences facilitators must take a more active role in offering observations about the process so that the group can advance and become more self-aware. To do this effectively, facilitators must be able to recognize and articulate the patterns that signal that the group is in chaos in a descriptive and non-judgmental way. This requires more skill that reminding the group about the guidelines.

## Observable
- Group is fixed on a person or topic
- Attempts to fix, heal, convert others
- Prolonged ideological exposition
- Formation of alliances and subgroups
- Individuals withdraw
- Some individuals dominate
- Little space between contributions
- People are easily offended
- Leadership and guidance is ignored
- Frustration is expressed
- Attempts organize the group

- Projection on others
- Comparison with other experiences
- "This isn't it"
- Listening is difficult
- Unpleasant emotions
- Judging others
- Feeling excluded
- Reluctance to risk
- Categorizing others
- Holding grudges
- Polarities-good/bad, right/wrong etc.

### *Inviting emptying.*

Sometimes chaos is sustained for what seems like a very long time.  Even an hour of full out chaos feels infinite because it requires so much energy to let it be.  Typically individuals try to stop it or try to contain it.  Mostly it is a wrestling match with one force attempting to overpower another.  Nothing seems to work.  Some groups carry chaos into the second day.  A few groups cannot get beyond this stage, although it is rare.  Regardless of the number of experiences, at this point in the process I always wonder why I am doing community building at all.  This sense of despair and hopelessness seems to accompany chaos, so I have learned to recognize it as confirmation of the stage.  But the worse it gets, the closer the group is to emptying.

At this point, interventions by the facilitators are rarely needed or even helpful.  What is helpful is to encourage individuals to see what barriers they may have to experiencing a sense of community with the individuals sitting together in the circle.  Barriers are often communication barriers regarding something that occurred during the course of the time together, but that seemed unspeakable.  Barriers are also those things we try to keep hidden—often even from ourselves—that get in the way of really connecting with others authentically.  When the necessity to empty comes, I stop thinking about what I am going to say and how I am going to say it and it simply comes out however it does. It can be messy, imperfect, unadulterated and raw.  As I listen to others as they are moved to empty I find myself touched deeply by their courage and honesty.  The more present and authentic a person is as they share, the more I cry whether they express emotion or not.  My tear ducts seem to be wired to some kind of a authenticity meter.

When all other avenues are exhausted, someone will finally speak directly and personally about the struggle and its impact on him or her.  As the first few people share from a deep place of vulnerability and realness, speaking only of their own pain, or realizations, or regrets, or stories the group may retreat back into chaos, or even pseudo-community, briefly, unable to take in what is being expressed.  But slowly and surely the group marches forward, bravely, into and through emptying and emptiness.  A natural and graceful rhythm

replaces the awkwardness of pseudo-community and the disconnectedness of chaos.  When others touch and reveal these human frailties and brokenness, I am compelled to do the same and to peer into crevices in my soul, long forgotten. Inside are memories, of old hurts, of residual grief that cries to be released, finally.  I may or may not be moved to speak, but I have no choice but to empty myself at this point.  It is cathartic.  It is healing.  It can be agonizing. It is freeing.  How could something that is ultimately so simple seem so difficult?

Years ago I attended a six-day personal-development course near the San Francisco bay area, up in the mountains. About mid-week the day's activities included a high ropes course. The week before, someone had died on the course.  I was terrified and certain that I would be the one to die that week.  After prolonged instructions on how to tie the knot on our safety belts, I went to at least ten people to have them check my knot to make sure I had tied it correctly.  The last event, the zip line, involved a line connected from a cliff to an evergreen 400 feet below.  When my turn came to jump, the line behind me stalled as I desperately tried to bargain with the supervising staff person.  "When you are ready, just lift your legs and let go," he instructed.  "How will I know if I'm ready?" I asked.  He repeated the instruction.  My reply, "I'm not sure I know how to lift my legs."  Again, the instruction.  Finally, I ran out of useless questions and I proceeded to my certain death.  I lifted my legs.

As I was being disconnected from the safety gear, still alive, I experienced one of the most profoundly exhilarating moments of my life.  I felt acutely, radically alive.  On the other side of my fear and inability to let go of my perceived control, I found a new kind of freedom. "When you are ready, just let go."  Good advice.

### *Emergence of community.*

I cannot recall a group in which I have seen a clear demarcation between emptiness and community.  As the people in the group empty and the group is able to attend to each and every member in the group naturally, without direction, but out of instinctual knowing how to be together as human beings, community is presents and palpable.  People that I have disagreed with, been critical of, been frustrated by, and in some cases, wished to banish from the group have  miraculously become lovable.  I don't believe that they have changed that much during the course of the workshop.  Rather, my perception has altered and, and as Scotty described in *The Different Drum*, in chaos I see people with hard eyes.  In community I see the same people with soft eyes.  There are fleeting moments in the midst of community that I wonder if this is how God sees human beings—with compassion, love, acceptance and appreciation of free will.  The experience resembles the delight at a child taking its first step or uttering its first intelligible words.  It is utterly miraculous.

For what it's worth, still in draft form.....
Best wishes with your work in Europe!
**Eve Berry**