Mapping Dialogue

Essential Tools for Social Change

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FIRST EDITION
Cover photo by Heiko Roehl

Table of Contents

Foreword

The complexity of global challenges today and our increasing inter-dependence demand of us all to seek solutions through engaging with others. The need for a culture of participation and democracy has never been greater. This is obvious when one scans the state of the world's democracy in addressing its citizens' problems. The many problems affecting society remain unaddressed, either because of failure for the parties involved in the conflict to come together or due to the undermining of democratic institutions and weakening of governance as a result.

Nelson Mandela's life is based on dialogue. It is through his work and those of others that the negotiated peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy was facilitated. South Africa's success in negotiated settlements remains as a beacon for the world. It was driven by the need to free its citizens from the shackles

> 'I have always endeavoured to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion.'
>
> Nelson Mandela

of apartheid and create a just society for all to live and realize their true potential.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation Centre of Memory and Dialogue aims to develop and sustain dialogue around Mr. Mandela's legacy. It is committed to utilizing the history, experience, values, vision and leadership of its Founder to provide a non-partisan platform for public discourse and contributes to the making of a just society by convening dialogue around critical social issues. Achieving participation in decision-making, even at policy levels, is prioritized.

We have convened multi-stakeholder dialogues to address various issues such as access to education, access to HIV/AIDS Antiretroviral Treatment in communities living in poorly resourced areas, the plight of children orphaned and made vulnerable by poverty and HIV/AIDS,

gender inequality, human rights, and the role of the media in reporting critical social issues impacting on society among others.

This valuable resource book on dialogue methodologies comes at the right time when practitioners and others involved in finding solutions for intractable societal problems need broader understanding of the tools available to achieve sustainable social change. We are confident that the reader will derive as much benefit from this book as we have.

Dr Mothomang Diaho

Head of the Dialogue Programme
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Please visit: www.nelsonmandela.org

Introduction

Of course we were excited. When we met in summer 2005 to talk about supporting the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Dialogue work, we all felt that we were involved in a project of great significance. A project that promised to truly contribute and make a difference.

At that time, Mille, Marianne and Colleen were involved in a wide range of engagements as Dialogue Practitioners. Mille was in the midst of launching a multi-stakeholder "Change Lab" addressing the crisis of orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa; Colleen was busy managing an extensive dialogue programme at one of South Africa's leading business schools, and Marianne was running an innovative rural learning village in Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, Heiko spent his last two years as a resident consultant at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa. He was seconded by the German Government to support the Organizational Development of the Foundation through the German Technical Co-Operation (GTZ). In that year, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation had decided to focus a significant part of the Foundation's work on Dialogue, which is regarded as an indispensable part of the Founder's legacy. During and since South Africa's transition to democracy, Nelson Mandela had exhibited a formidable ability to forgive, along with an awareness of the importance of listening to all sides with a genuine recognition that everyone holds a piece of the puzzle of the future, and everyone needs to be involved in moving forward together.

Jointly with the Management Team of the Foundation, we endeavored to draw on our experience of different dialogue methodologies and approaches to create an overview on the various tools for dialogue, their specific attributes, advantages and shortfalls. We wanted to make sure that it would become a practical and usable resource - instead of an academic exercise - and so we looked for illustrative case studies, easy-to-use checklists and a section that would allow an overall assessment of the tools portrayed so the reader would be able to determine potential usefulness for a given situation.
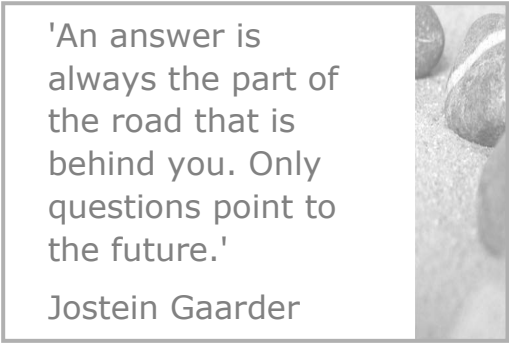
Over and above this immediate mandate to explore ways in which dialogue can be used to address social challenges in South Africa by the Foundation, we were hoping that this material would be useful to

anyone who shares our interest and our desire to improve the quality of human conversations.

The outcome was a report entitled *Mapping Dialogue. A Research project profiling dialogue tools and processes for social change.* We decided to make the report available to a wider audience on the Pioneers of Change website which proved to be an excellent idea. The report received significant attention, and we got positive and encouraging comments and feedback from all over the world. Many communities involved in social development recommended the study and added the link to their sites.

We have, however, always been conscious about the fact that the internet does not reach everywhere. Also, we knew that we might miss out on practitioners who simply enjoy taking a handbook along when going into the field. As a result, the idea for this book was born in a small café in Melville, Johannesburg in winter 2006.

The modern world loves answers. We like to solve problems quickly. We like to have a clear picture of the way ahead. We like to know what to do. We don't want to "reinvent the wheel" and "waste our time". And when we have the answers or a wheel

'An answer is always the part of the road that is behind you. Only questions point to the future.'

Jostein Gaarder

invented, we are keen on passing the information on to others: Through the media, through training programs where teachers pass on answers to students, or through conferences where experts speak on panels while hundreds listen (or pretend to listen) in the audience. This approach to human conversation may be useful for some situations, but for two reasons, it has become particularly problematic when working on the social challenges of the 21st century.

Firstly, we live in a world of increasing complexity and inter-related-ness, where answers have a short life-span. Not all problems are complex, but most if not all of the major social issues are. Poverty, HIV/AIDS and Crime are perfect examples.

Secondly, it seems that people have an inherent desire to solve their *own* problems. Human beings have a living, deep impetus for freedom and self-determination. We find that given the appropriate circumstances, people are usually more resourceful than expected in terms of finding their own solutions to the problem they face. When formulaic responses are imported or imposed from the outside, they meet resistance and often fail. This is partly because they are not exactly appropriate in the given context, but just as much because there is a lack of ownership from people who haven't participated or been consulted in the decision-making.

Even if only for these two reasons, as agents of change, we need to be adept at asking questions, and at talking and listening to each other. These are age-old competencies. For millennia, people in villages across the world have worked through collective challenges, creating solutions through conversation. But many of us seem to have forgotten how to engage in, and be present to, conversations. In these times of information overload, electronic communication, scientific rationality, and organizational complexity, it sometimes feels like we have forgotten how to talk to each other. The art of conversation appears to be on the decline.

The amount of time and resources globally invested in technological development over the past centuries is inconceivable. The results we observe today are equally incredible. Now, at the beginning of this century, we are able to take a look into the origins of the universe through space-based telescopes, discover what happens if the smallest of the smallest particles, protons, collide in particle physics laboratories and marvel at a myriad of other technological wonders created with tireless effort, over centuries and centuries. It seems ironic that, at the same time, we often still communicate and solve problems the same way we did hundreds of years ago. Or, as said above, worse. Looking at the world in 2008, it seems that the evolution of human conversation still has a long way to go.

Using this book

In navigating the field of conversation and dialogue, it became apparent to us that the term is very broad. In one of the interviews on which this book is based, it was pointed out that dialogue includes dialogue with

oneself, dialogue with nature, dialogue with the past and future, and online dialogue. In order to keep the focus, we decided to narrow down to *dialogue methods applicable to face-to-face gatherings of groups of people meeting to address collective social challenges*.

The approaches (or tools) we selected within this focus are diverse in many ways. Some are designed for small groups of 20 people, while others can accommodate up to 1200 or even 5000 in dialogue at the same time. Some focus on exploring and resolving conflict and differences, while others emphasize looking first to what is working and agreed upon. Some are explicitly dialogues between groups while others require each participant to be there only as themselves, as individuals. However, looking across all of these dialogue methods, some clear, common patterns emerge.

All the tools focus on enabling open communication, honest speaking, and genuine listening. They allow people to take responsibility for their own learning and ideas. They create a safe space or "container" for people to surface their assumptions, to question their previous perceptions, judgments and worldviews, and to change the way they think. They generate new ideas or solutions that go beyond what anyone had thought of before. They create a different level of understanding of people and problems. They allow for more contextual and holistic ways of seeing.

The variety of dialogue methods available to us today have emerged in different situations but in response to quite similar needs and discoveries. They are part of a wider shift that is happening as complexity and diversity increase and people become more aware of their interdependence, and hence their need to hear each other, to understand, and to collaborate.

This collection profiles ten Dialogue methods in depth and a number of others more superficially. The book is organized in three parts:

- The first, *Foundations*, offers explanations on the generic foundations for a good dialogue process. These are aspects that are overarching; they represent the basis for the actual toolkit and should be read beforehand.

- The second part is the actual *Toolkit*. This is where you find the in-depth explanation of 10 methods as well as brief descrip-

tions of additional tools. Each of the 10 methods contains a method fingerprint displaying the specific characteristics of the tool, a review of applications, a case example, and our subjective commentary. The methods have simply been ordered alphabetically.

- Finally, our *Epilogue* honors the African tradition of conversation, going to the deep roots and heritage of many of these processes.

Each of the profiled dialogue tools has a life story behind it. Many of these stories begin with someone posing a question.

- Given that the coffee breaks seem to be the most useful part of the conference anyway, what if the whole conference was designed similar to a coffee break?

- What is being lost when we just take majority decisions and don't hear what the minority has to say?

- How do the questions we ask shape our reality?

- How do we create a networked conversation, modeled on how people naturally communicate?

- Why are we re-creating the same conference rituals when they are passifying us and limiting our creativity?

- Why are we not managing to bring in the collective intelligence of hundreds of people but rather choosing over and over to just listen to a few expert voices?

A Dialogue Dictionary

The most common dictionary definition of a dialogue is simply *a conversation between two or more people*. In the field of dialogue practitioners, however, it is given a much deeper and more distinct meaning. David Bohm went back to the source of the word, deriving from the Greek root of "dia" which means "through" and "logos" which is "the word" or "meaning", and therefore saw dialogue as meaning flowing through us. Elements of this deeper understanding of the word include an emphasis on questions, inquiry, co-creation, and listening, the uncovering of one's own assumptions and those of others, a suspension of judgment and a collective search for truth. Bill Isaacs calls dialogue a conversation "with a center, not sides".

What is Dialogue Not?

Advocacy. Advocacy is the act of pleading or arguing strongly in favor of a certain cause, idea or policy.

Conference. A conference is a formal meeting for consultation or discussion.

Consultation. In a consultation, a party with the power to act consults another person or group for advice or input to a decision. The decision-maker generally retains the power to take the advice or not.

Debate. A debate is a discussion usually focused around two opposing sides, and held with the objective of one side winning. The winner is the one with the best articulations, ideas and arguments.

Discussion. As opposed to dialogue, Bohm points out that the root of the word discussion, "cuss", is the same as the root of "percussion" and "concussion", meaning to break apart. A discussion is generally a rational and analytical consideration of a topic in a group, breaking a topic down into its constituent parts in order to understand it.

Negotiation. A negotiation is a discussion intended to produce an agreement. Different sides bring their interests to the table, and the negotiation has a transactional and bargaining character to it.

Salon. A salon is a periodic social, unstructured, and informal gathering involving conversation with no particular objective.

Acknowledgements

Inviting your input

In the spirit of dialogue, we are interested in receiving feedback on this book and its usefulness to dialogue practitioners. We would like to continue collecting material on Dialogue Tools. Any reading material, books, or articles, feedback, reflections, and input to the content of this book from your experience will be greatly appreciated. We look forward to hearing from you on mappingdialogue@mail.com .

We have greatly enjoyed this process, and are left deeply impressed with all the work we have found going on in this field. We look forward to continuing the journey, and to experimenting with the new knowledge we have gained.

Sao Paulo/Frankfurt/Harare/Johannesburg

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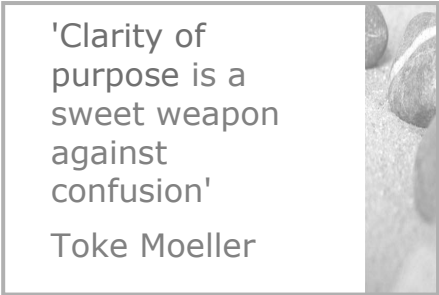
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I. Foundations

The dialogue methods portrayed in this book appear as if they are separate, independent tools, each one with its own history, purpose and attributes. With this section, we intend to dispel this notion by presenting some of the underlying principles of successful dialogue processes. These principles provide a sense of how the tools are connected, and what is required to design integral processes of change and learning, be it for small groups of a few people, or gatherings and processes of several hundreds.

This section is meant to guide your reflection process as you work through your design, making choices about process, flow, and which of the many tools for dialogue and interaction are those most suitable for your specific situation.

Clarity of Purpose

Before deciding on which tools to make use of, we need to be crystal clear on our intention: Why are we bringing this group of people together? What purpose lies behind this specific process of change? What is this whole thing about? Sometimes we may find ourselves having begun something without quite knowing why, or for reasons that are inappropriate or outside of the particular context and the needs of the people involved. Within most, if not all of the tools we are presenting, lies the essential principle of the clarity of purpose.

Before clarifying a purpose, it can be necessary to connect with the need to which the process is responding. What are the specific needs that have brought us together? What do we hope to achieve as we respond to it? From a truthful, genuine need, clear purpose can

> 'Clarity of purpose is a sweet weapon against confusion'
>
> Toke Moeller

be derived. It's also important to be conscious on whether the investment of time and attention we are demanding from the participants is within reasonable balance with their perception of the process' ability to meet their needs.

The purpose needs to be attractive for all participants. It is very important not to formulate it in too specific, structured terms, such as quantifiable goals. Overly explicit objectives and specified expectations towards the outcome have the tendency to become quite dominant in the process, which can deter openness and dialogue. Some proponents and practitioners of dialogue emphasize that on the one hand, it needs to be completely open-ended and not attached to specific outcomes, on the other there needs to be clarity on why the group is coming together.

Good Questions

The power of a good question cannot be underestimated. Good questions are catalytic. They open up the learning field. They stimulate thought processes, curiosity, and the desire to engage with a group, and they are central to what defines and distinguishes dialogue.

Often we arrive to meetings with answers and expertise, statements to be discussed, or positions to be advocated or negotiated. But in dialogue, questions are in many ways more powerful than answers. Questions pull people towards the future, while answers refer to the past. A question that has meaning to the people involved can ignite the whole process of learning and change. It opens up the field and fosters engagement with meaningful issues. Bill Isaacs describes dialogue as a "conversation with a center, not sides", that "center" is often created by one or more good questions.

It is an art to identify powerful questions that provide meaning to a group of people, a community, or a nation. These are questions that can come alive inside of us, as we seek to work with them. The greatest questions come directly from the field (the hearts and minds) of the people involved. Good questions have the ability to give dialogues on complex issues a frame without containing them. For example, there might be one or more overriding question/s guiding an entire process. Or, an initial question can be questioned, refined and be used as a mirror for joint reflection. Questions are an integral part of most of the tools we present in this book.

Participation and participants

Our dialogue work originates from a belief in the intelligence and wisdom that is accessible to us in each person, with whom we connect and engage. Depending on the purpose, different forms and levels of participation are required to achieve a successful dialogue. Many dialogue methods support the work of going from fragmentation to wholeness through *inclusiveness*. As we find ways of connecting and including different voices and parts of a system, surprising and new discoveries can be made.

> **These questions can help clarifying dialogue participation and participants:**
>
> ▪ Based on our purpose, who needs to be involved?
>
> ▪ What do we hope to do and achieve with them?
>
> ▪ What will each of them be bringing and what will they be wanting to gain?
>
> ▪ Do we trust that they each hold an invaluable part of the puzzle we are trying to solve?
>
> ▪ How do we best involve and engage them?

If time and resources allow, it can make a big difference to interview all or some of the participants in advance of a workshop. This has many benefits: It lays the foundation for planning, it indicates to the participants that their voice is appreciated, and it gets everyone involved in thinking about the topic in advance.

The ultimate level of inclusion is when the participants step into a role of co-hosts. In this role, the group's leadership and facilitation is completely shared. This is of course not possible with hundreds of participants. However, imagining what a maximum of involvement and engagement would look like can help us make the most of the participants' time and resources.

Underlying Process Structure

There is an underlying rhythm to most successful change processes. Some of the tools and processes we portray here have integrated their

own understanding of deep-rooted change into their proposed workshop designs. For many of the tools though, we need to design an overall workshop flow of activities and a daily rhythm that supports our intentions. There are several models that can help us think through the most appropriate underlying structure of a process. One simple version is the model of divergence and convergence. The divergent phase of a process is a time of opening up possibilities, issues, or themes. It is about generating alternatives, gathering diverse points of view, allowing disagreement in and suspending judgment. We are often afraid of opening up to allow for real divergence to occur, because we are uncomfortable or even fearful of the messiness of too many new and divergent ideas and perspectives. Yet the greater the divergence, the freedom of voicing wild ideas, at the beginning of a process, the greater the possibility of surprising and innovative outcomes.

The Flow of Divergence

Divergence   Convergence
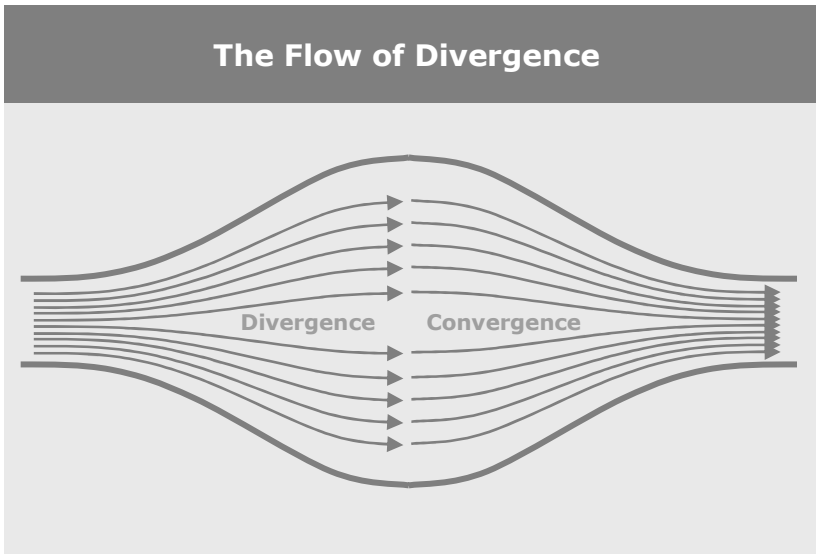
If divergence is all that occurs, however, we risk facing frustration and the process will not render positive results. Convergence is therefore as important to plan for and build into the process. It is about arriving at, and making explicit, the conclusions, insights, and next steps of the process, and perhaps what the newly developed, shared questions are. The two movements of divergence and convergence can take place multiple times during a process, and they can also occur as one pattern. Some tools are better suited for supporting divergence, others for convergence.

Transformative dialogue processes that truly allow for divergence often include a "groan zone" or "grey fog" situation in the middle. The groan zone is that somewhat painful place, where everything is a little too chaotic, unclear and unstructured. Sometimes this is a time of conflict and "storming"; sometimes it's characterized more by confusion and feeling overwhelmed by complexity or even despairing. This phase is an indispensable part of any process of certain depth. It is here that innovation and breakthrough have a real chance of occurring. When the group manages to stay with the messiness for a little while, and then enters into a process of convergence, they can experience major changes. On the other hand, if divergence is less, and convergence is premature, the potential is lower for major shifts to occur.

In their underlying architectures, different tools emphasize different process structures. Some of the tools have a distinct architecture and a flow associated with them. They have a storyline or a set of specified phases they move participants through. For example, the Change Lab process works with a very specific structure, in broad strokes following the general principle of allowing initial divergence followed by very clear convergence, with a phase of "emergence" in between. Future Search moves through looking at the past, then the present, and finally the future. Other methods like World Café or Circle are less focused on flow and can easily be incorporated as a tool into a variety of processes.

Principles

Principles define how we would like to be together as we pursue our purpose. Principles can be used to design and guide the process and the involvement of participants. Even if we just come together as an informal group for a conversation of a few hours, making a simple set of agreements for how we want to be together is important. The longer and larger an initiative the more critical working through principles together becomes. Most of the tools here have a set of principles attached to them, and this is a significant part of what makes them work. Some examples include: "Rotate leadership" (Circle), "Access the wisdom of the minority" (Deep Democracy), "Explore questions that matter" (World Café) and "Whoever comes are the right people" (Open Space).

Often a convener will share (or co-create) the purpose and principles with participants both before and at the beginning of an event or proc-

ess, and where possible allow for its evolution during the process with the broader group of participants. The group, not just the convener, should "own" the purpose and principles. Taken as a whole, a clear purpose together with the principles provides a compass helping us to navigate and make decisions about how to move forward.

Tool Selection

All tools have a tendency to strongly guide and inform the behavior of those who use them. Tool-specific expertise can quickly lead into tool-related dependence. The tools we portray here have their own histories, philosophies and worldviews. They invite the user to identify with the tool and to share the way the tool looks at the world, defines problems and offers solutions. If we have gained enough expertise to use the tool, it makes us feel comfortable and safe. We are able to explain what is going on through the interpretations the tool is offering us. Many dialogue tools claim to have universal applicability across cultures, group sizes, and situations.

This process unfolds whenever tool-related expertise is developed, and it bears a great risk that is best expressed by the proverb: "With a hammer in your hand, the whole world looks like a nail". The ideal way to deal with this problem is to consciously select and use tools in a way that puts the purpose of the dialogue at hand first. In order to benefit from the potential a tool is offering it is very important to be aware of its limitations. Continuously discovering new methods and drawing on a broad repertoire in a "mix-and-match" type of approach helps.

The Facilitator

The tools, the design, the process: It is easy to let concerns around these issues preoccupy us, and yet the most important tool that we have at our disposal as facilitators is ourselves and our presence. That is of course not to say that the others don't count. It is simply to state that the importance of the preparation, presence, and state of mind of the facilitator is crucial.

As a convener and host of groups, the facilitator influences the space and the group in many visible and invisible ways.

Although much can be planned in advance, a highly skilled facilitator will stay present to what shows up in the moment. For the dialogue to work, the facilitator should not be caught up in a pre-determined structure and timetable that has to be followed at all cost. The rule of thumb: *over-prepared, under-structured*, speaks to the criticality of preparation, coupled with the flexibility to respond creatively as the process unfolds in real time. This may sound like *laissez-faire*, but actually requires great clarity, and the ability to listen to the group and the process. This is where the value of purpose and principles are strongly illustrated: A clear purpose and set of principles that are alive and embodied in the facilitator will enable him or her to improvise and respond with freedom that is rooted in clear direction.

The ability to hold the intentions and principles of a gathering or process clearly and firmly is directly related to how fully present the facilitator is capable of being. Some of the most successful facilitators we know take time for a meditative practice, and time to tune into an intention to serve the group before stepping into the facilitator role. To perform well a facilitator needs to develop humility, but also courage to go with the flow. If the facilitator has this kind of confidence and groundedness, he or she will also gain more legitimacy and trust from the participants.

General qualities of the Dialogue Facilitator:

- *Strong listening skills.* Facilitators need to be able to listen closely during all phases of the process. This enables the facilitator to design an appropriate process, to mirror to participants what is going on and to help the group become more aware. Strong listening skills depend partly on the ability of facilitators to let go of their own agendas.

- *Personal awareness and authenticity.* As much as paying attention to what is going on in the group, good dialogue facilitators need to be able to understand what is going on within themselves when in the group. This is quite a profound meta-skill of facilitation, which is particularly important in less structured, more open-ended processes, and more psychologically oriented processes. Facilitators are essentially holding the group, and need to avoid projecting their own issues and insecurities onto the group while they

also deal with projections of the group toward them. Personal awareness relates to the ability to be honest about one's own limitations (what one is and isn't capable of), and the willingness to hand over a process to participants when they are ready.

- *Asking good questions*. As mentioned earlier, in our field, asking good questions is a form of art. Effective questions will wake participants up, link into what they care deeply about, and make visible their interdependence in finding the answers. They will surface new insights participants hadn't thought of before in understanding the issue in focus. A simple phrasing of a question can determine whether people feel hopeless and despairing or curious, energized, strong and excited.

- *A holistic approach*. Being able to assess which method to use in a given situation, or whether one's preferred method is applicable, requires a facilitator to understand the particular context. Taking a holistic approach is also about being able to see patterns, helping the group make connections as they work, and recognizing that multiple intelligences are at work. The more the whole person can be invited in to a dialogue, the more equitably people will be able to engage.

Choosing the right facilitator is crucial. As with the methods, however, your choice of facilitator will depend on the situation. In the following, we have developed four major criteria for assessing facilitators.

| **Focus on Content Knowledge** | ←——→ | **Focus on Process Knowledge** |

A common debate among facilitators is around the question how much a facilitator needs to know about the content the group is discussing. For example, if a facilitator is hired to support a dialogue around HIV/AIDS, does he or she need to know anything about the statistics, who the players in this field are, what the key inter-related issues are or what the politics around the issue are? More broadly, do they need to have a background in the corporate sector or in the development field, if this is the context of the dialogue? Or should it be sufficient that they know how to facilitate a process that enables the participants to process their own information and come to their own answers?

Some facilitators like to know something about the content they are working with so they can help the group find patterns and draw out conclusions, while others believe neutrality and objectivity on the part of the facilitator are fundamental and that deliberate lack of knowledge of the issue in fact helps in this regard. Which type of facilitator you prefer for a specific process will largely depend on whether you feel the group needs support in processing information, or whether they just need their conversations to be supported. This would speak towards a facilitator that does not get too involved with the content.

| Directive and structured | ← → | Going with the flow |

Some facilitators will co-design an agenda, usually with the client or group coordinator, and then guide the participants through that process. Future Search or Scenario Processes are examples of methods that are quite structured. The group moves from one phase and exercise to the next, and there is a time limit on each step. The facilitator has to be able to support the group's movement through this process in a specific order.

Other methods require facilitators to literally go with the flow and allow the process to unfold. The idea here is that no one knows in advance what exactly needs to happen for a certain group (least of all the external facilitator). Such a facilitator will come in and will respond to the group's needs, offering methods and approaches that are relevant to the group in the moment. The Sustained Dialogue for example, needs a facilitator who supports the direction in which groups tend to go. Sometimes, the facilitator is drawing on a variety of approaches and helps the group to uncover what it needs to uncover. Again, this approach may be the most appropriate because it is the most adapted to the group's specific needs, but it requires a high degree of trust in the facilitator, and a willingness on the part of participants to engage in an open-ended process.

| No Psychological Expertise | ←——————→ | Strong Psychological Expertise |

The issues at the center of a dialogue can be located at different levels. Some are deeply psychological issues, deriving from the relationships within a group that may be related to participants' past traumas or current insecurities. Sometimes facilitators may find themselves in situations that border on therapy. Some facilitators define a clear boundary for themselves emphasizing that facilitation is not counseling or therapy. They will attempt to direct the conversation back to the more content-related issues the group is dealing with. Others see these psychological factors as deeply intertwined with the group's ability to solve everyday problems, and will go into them to try and resolve them.

These are two very different sets of skills. What kind of facilitator you choose depends on whether you feel this group needs to go into its "group unconscious" or whether it needs to focus on more conscious, rational, or practical issues outside of the participants themselves. If a facilitator with a deep psychological expertise comes in, the group is likely to go into that space - sometimes even if they don't want to. If a facilitator is lacking these skills, the group will be restricted from going into it even if they do want to.

Because of the nature of dialogue, all the processes can lead to people going through a fundamental questioning of their core beliefs, which can be unsettling. Deep Democracy is the most psychologically oriented approach described in this book, but the School for Peace approach also benefits from facilitators with psychological awareness. The Circle and Sustained Dialogue can also be processes in which participants open up to a point of significant vulnerability, but in these and the other approaches, therapeutic skill is not necessarily required.

Team Worker	⟷	**Solo Worker**

Some facilitators prefer to work "Solo" because this provides the freedom to improvise and follow their intuition without having to check with partners. Solo facilitators sometimes describe their work as a form of art; they focus on the interplay between them as persons and the group as opposed to wanting to work with a facilitation team.

At the other end of this spectrum are facilitators who prefer to build a team with other facilitators in order to complement each other. The teamwork approach to facilitation can provide a balance between some of the other criteria mentioned in this section. It makes sense, for example, to combine a facilitation team where one is more knowledgeable on process, the other on content, where one is more knowledgeable on societal issues and the other on psychological dynamics, or where one is good at seeing the overall flow of where things are going and the other brings in an expertise in a particular technique. Among Sustained Dialogue practitioners, the prevailing wisdom is that the best moderating teams are "insider/outsider" teams. The insider would be familiar with the content, culture, and personality dynamics of the group, while the outsider brings in process knowledge, and the ability to be objective and ask 'stupid' questions.

Physical Space

Many typical conference-room setups are not conducive to dialogue, but we continue to use them out of habit. We worry more about the agenda, and less about the set-up of the rooms or halls. Meanwhile, the physical space exerts an invisible but incredibly strong influence on what can happen in a process. When people step into a room that is appealing to the senses, something happens to them. It is as if more of the person has been invited in. Before the conversation has even begun, before the intention has been introduced something has already shifted.
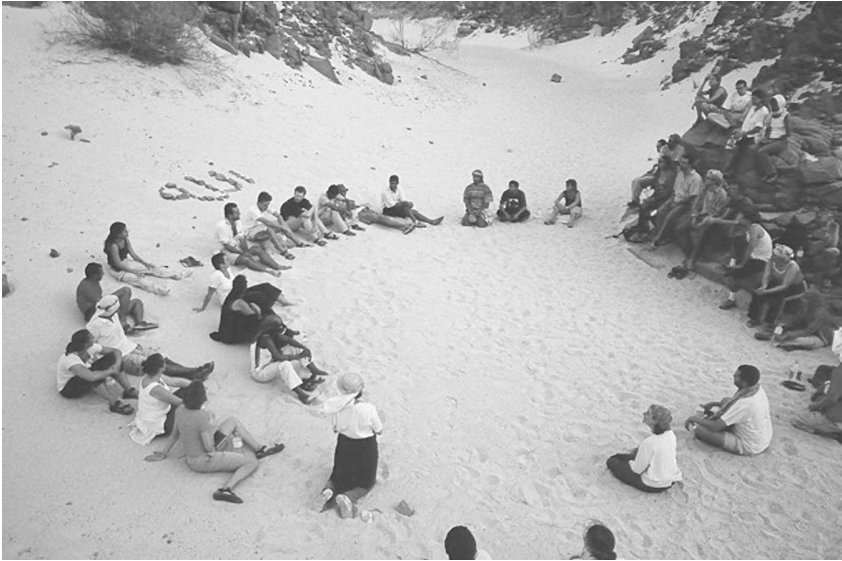
The physical space can also hold the collective intelligence of the group as it evolves. It is important to attempt to create these kinds of settings in every single conversation or dialogue process that we initiate.

These questions can help you find the right space:

- Does the space allow for true interaction and participation?

- Is the space a good size for the number of participants?

- Will participants feel comfortable in the space?

- Will the space make us feel relaxed, yet alert and awake?

- Will people meet in this space – in circles, in theater style, board-room style, or around small tables?

- Would it be best to meet in nature, in a coffee-shop, in someone's home?

- Will there be music playing? Refreshments served? How much sound or quiet do we want?

- Are there distractions we might want to eliminate?