

Taiwan Society for Organizational Learning – Reflections on a Surprising Conference

Dear Reader,

Something a bit extraordinary occurred in Taipei Taiwan in November 2007. The event was a four day conference sponsored by the Taiwan Society for Organizational Learning with a focus on Human Capital Development and E-Learning. What began as a business conference much like any other that focused on tools, techniques and best practices, somehow shifted into a different type of conversation. One where people spoke deeply about issues of culture and connection. At the conclusion many people reported they saw new possibilities for creating a future filled with beauty for themselves and their grandchildren.

No one is quite sure how this shift occurred for it was, as complexity scientists say, an emergent phenomenon. The World Café hosting team has been in conversation among ourselves to inquire into what we did and what we noticed that created the conditions for this shift to happen. It would be great to be able to pin things down and come up with a formula that can replicate the experience, but that is beyond us at the moment. What we offer here are reflections and glimmers of understanding based on personal recollections of a social process.

Those contributing to the creation of this narrative are: Ulric Rudebeck – our “team leader” whose vision, guidance and listening skill inspired us all. Samantha Tan – whose fearlessness dedication to speaking up about challenging issues in the most disarming manner was a joy to behold. Andri Lehn – our architect who brought out hidden dimensions in the structure of things and grounded us all in a coherent thought field. Morel Fourman – a global visionary who kept connecting our efforts to a larger vision. Ken Homer – our “ancestral connection” who reminded us to draw upon the wisdom of ancestors past, relations here now and ancestors to be into the conversations. And Stephen Meng – our networker par excellence, the man who made it all possible for us to come to Taiwan in order to do such great work together.

While this document is a collaborative effort on the part of six people it must be noted that Ulric Rudebeck is the primary author. He spent many hours drafting his notes and sharing them with us. Ken Homer did most of the editing and formatting. Additional comments by Samantha, Andri, and Ken can be found at the end of the paper.

We invite you to travel along with us now.

Our story begins as all good stories do in time:

Once upon a time... Once within a time... Once in a time very much like the one we are living in... Once in a time not long ago... Once in that time there was a conference on a small island in a vast ocean... Once in that time there was...

**The 2007 International Conference on
Human Capital and e-Learning
November 26 to 29, 2007 Taipei, Taiwan
Sponsored by the Taiwan Society for Organizational Learning, TSOL.**

A four day journey from here...



to



here...

*Observations and commentary from the World Café Hosting Team:
Ulric Rudebeck, Ken Homer, Samantha Tan, Andri Lehn and Morel Fourman*

Opening day of conference:



The conference had a two part structure:

- Traditional keynote speeches for the first two days as shown above
- Third and fourth days hosted as a World Café — illustrations to follow

This documentation will focus on the Cafe part the conference

The Cafes had the initial intention of a deep discussion of questions that matter linked to the issue of “human capital”, but they transformed into something much broader and deeper that really engaged people beyond a strict professional commitment.

Not every participant was there for the whole four days, there was a lot of coming and going, and you could participate in different parts, whether or not you'd been there before. It was like a piazza where you could come in and speak to people and then go out and return again — a very open feeling.

The first two days were attended by 300 - 400 people, while the last two, the café portion fluctuated from 100 -150. There was a variation during each café part, which contributed to the sense of openness — that could be a danger but here it seemed to be an asset.

There is a danger of people coming and going. The movement could make it difficult to maintain the level of commitment and energy in the room. This is true both for the facilitators and for the participants. But in this case, the diversity of the participants helped to keep the interest and focus, rather than disperse it.



The cafe was like a piazza-gallery — you could come in and speak with people and then go out and return again — a very open feeling.

Days 1-2 general assembly and keynote speakers

In the first two days Ulric did the graphic recording of 6 different speakers, which were then used in the cafés - we posted graphics on three of the walls — the fourth was used for presentations. Everyone was free to look at the graphics at any time during the cafe.



The graphic recordings from the six keynote speakers, were used in the cafés to provide continuity for participants

The Café General Settings

The hosting team for the cafés was an international group comprised of experienced World Café hosts. Ulric Rudebeck, who acted as the team leader, hails from Sweden and divides his time between Stockholm and London, Samantha Tan, originally from Singapore and living in Boston, Ken Homer from California, Andri Lehn originally from Norway living in Denmark, and Moral Forman of the UK. Additionally, King Kong Lin of Taiwan SoL and Stephen Meng, a Chinese American, now living in North Carolina, rounded out the larger team overseeing the whole conference. Stephen and Samantha also provided much needed translation for the non-Chinese speakers among us.



Above: Ken, Samantha and Morel, King Kong, Ulric, the Chairman of Taiwan SoL, Andri, Jimmy Yang. Samantha, Stephen, Professor Fu Pei Rong and Daphne Chen, editor of the Chinese translation of the World Café book.

The diversity in the team was very evident. The character of each person was professional, but professional in different ways. There was a deep dialogue going all the time about the purpose, how to interpret it and what to do relative to that purpose. That was more time-consuming than conveying the logistics of where and when, etc. But it was also at the core of the outcome and the form the process took.

We paired our teams with a woman and a man to hold the space and be responsible for the different parts of the café. That was half-deliberate, but also just came out that way. The gender diversity helped, we think, to model the give and take of the café atmosphere.

There were two additional graphic recorders, who were fluent in Mandarin and Chinese so they could do the graphics in their own native language, which helped a lot. We did graphics with two recorders working on the image simultaneously - Ulric in English and Tina in Chinese. From the first day, we had the bi-lingual graphic recording going on so that when people were looking at the graphics on their breaks they could read them in their own language right away. Many took so much time in looking at the graphics - it was very unusual. People were fascinated with the beautiful bilingual recordings which created an artistic atmosphere to the Conference from the very beginning..



Top: interpreters Don and Samantha, graphic recorders Tina and Maggie. Below, participants looking at graphics

In addition to Stephen and Samantha, Don and Vida also supported the team as interpreters. At least half of the participants were not fluent in English. The hosting and the monitoring of the process were conducted in English. One of the official languages for the conference was English. At the same time they were having conversations about things that had deep meaning for them. That must be done in Chinese. The resolution was to minimize the amount of instructions and translation but to follow the process by using the translator to inform us of what was going on. It took a while before we found the right balance of this but in the second half I think we did well in this. So the instructions had to be paced. We tried to give them in small blocks of information. That's an art in itself. It was an experience that we really learned a lot about this time. Doing it like that slows down the pace of everything, which is very good in this context. There was also a cultural dimension to this, in that there was a tendency for the Chinese people in the café to talk a lot - a lot of words each time. So the less we talked the less time was taken from the true conversations around the café tables.

Talks with the organizer: can we set a sail to catch the wind of God?

On the evening before the conference we, the international visitors and the TSoL organisers met to set the tone and prepare the field for the conference and subsequent World Cafe. Our hosts were asking challenging questions like "How can we create a Taiwan where there will be a place for our children and their children to live and work?"

As we went around the circle and shared our vision, we aligned to and named the intention for We had to go to a "highest common denominator". Here "To imagine a beautiful future for Taiwan that we can go forward and build together." "We aligned to this by each placing one hand at a point in the middle of our circle and above our heads - so that together our arms were pointing up and together they made a star. And we aligned on the intention. Following this, we explored how the field would be set for the conference.

Leadership creates a field of energy

We encouraged and supported King Kong, - the program coordinator of the conference - to do an introduction to the conference. This was quite a challenge for him. It seemed that he was uncomfortable standing out from the others.

"It is not just me, it is a collective thing."

Yet it felt very important to have leadership and to invite the whole conference into the vision. To support King Kong in releasing his discomfort, we discussed the opening. Andri did some energy work to help him feel more grounded.

When we started this process - setting the aligned intention, developing a welcome for the delegates - the idea of imagining a new future seemed bold. Both taking the highest common denominator - the highest vision and King Kong being prepared to stand up and share his and their vision, are examples of leadership. They go against the cultural concern of being the longest nail who gets hit with the hammer.



We had a profound discussion in the facilitation team at one point around the nature of the title Human Capital.

It is as if, the field, once set, shaped everything that followed. It became completely natural. The entire conference and then World Cafe flowed from and into this intention.

About Human Capital

If you look at the concept of human capital, it is linked to industrial thinking, which is itself linked to hierarchy. The word capital is linked to a balanced spreadsheet with capital as an asset, a 'thing'. This is true in English, but even more so in Mandarin. But we (the conference organizers and facilitators) wanted to have the larger conversation about what it is to be human, not limited to the hierarchical view of human 'capital'. One could see the consequences during the conference. The conference and the conversation took off from the title of Human Capital and e-Learning and went further. The title topic was just a take-off point.

Did the facilitators have a goal?

One could ask if we, as facilitation team, had any agenda besides doing a professional job supporting our principal contractor? We spent time on this the first night. It did not come out as a pre-determined goals that we shared, but during the process it came to circle around our contribution to the world community. Here is how one of the team members stated it:

"As the pace of global change quickens and as old solutions fail in the face of new conditions, our global network is increasingly asking... "What future do I want for my community, for my nation?" A nation or community is a fractal of the global system with challenges and vision driving change. People within communities are asking "what is our future and what is the future for our children?"

We have the opportunity as a global hosting and transformation community to co-emerge a flow and toolset for hosting glocal (global-local) transformation. We can act as a toolset for cities, nations and regions to emerge the vision and energy to create their future."

I think we all experienced this energy in Taiwan. But that also generated question around our role and the ethics inquiry: as a professional facilitator: Are we allowed to have an "agenda"?

We had many such dialogues among the team, and we think that both made us more aware and balanced, as well as more professional in our performance. The energy we

brought to the scene was in one way clear and dedicated but not without our own personal energy. Here are some of the questions we raised:

- ~ This is essential to the lifecycle of emergence - allowing differentiation of the community into roles and functions around specific interests. What we co-created and observed is such an example of emergence. Can we personally support it and its implications?
- ~ This work is in the void between "the stick of pain" — what is the future for our children? Is our country secure?, and "the carrot of vision" — let us imagine a beautiful future. How do we balance this and should we lean to any of this?
- ~ An aligned intention "A beautiful future that we can go forward and build together." We as a team need an alignment, can we work with this one and will this interfere with any personal intentions we have? Do our personal intentions and callings align with the needs of this system
- ~ A conference is about information, but it can also be about, some deep searching questions. Our aim is due to the assignment and to the format chosen clearly to the latter

It also became clear that this assignment generated both energy and a desire for future collaboration between us as a hosting/facilitation team.

On one level there is no action without agenda. On an other, one can also try ones best to comply with the intention of the one Invited you and try to get out of the way and let what emerges to just emerge. That in a way can be seen as the line between an good performer and a professional

[Ken's suggested rewrite of the above...

On one level there is no action without an agenda, and every agenda has unconscious elements to it. On another, we do our best to understand and act on the intention of the client, get our egos out of the way and use good processes to support the emergence of the unexpected such that it delivers results that meet, as well as go above and beyond what the client requested and expected. That in a way can be seen as the line between a good performer and a professional host.]

Day 3 Morning: introducing and opening the café

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A VALUABLE HUMAN BEING?

To be an Universal Dancer

On the morning of the first day, we had something special – An opening speech by Professor Fu, well known in Taiwan for his scholarship in Chinese Philosophy. We brought him in right after my café introduction, and he was talking about deep matters of what it is to be a human being and dance with the universe.



Professor Fu

The conference organizers were very keen on keeping a deep philosophical basis for the talks, and we tried to make our questions relate to Professor Fu's talk, essentially focusing on what it is to be a human being. That is a facet of human capital, although it is not stated explicitly as such.

Introduction of the café

In general I've found that the shorter the introduction, the faster people come to talk about things that matter to them. There is a caution in this, however - very experienced hosts can really extract the elegant minimum steps for each group, but if you don't have the background it would be difficult, so you can't just take this idea as a script for good practice.

We started the café with three simple graphics

We started the first café with three simple graphics, to grasp the principles and etiquette of the café - it only took 6 minutes, with the translator. The images were a mouth, an ear and a eye - a Mouth to speak from the heart, an Ear to listen to the deep pattern and underlying meaning, and an Eye to see the diversity and the beauty of everyone's contribution. We added a few practicalities and then had a short meditation to connect with and honour ancestors and children. The intention is to set the scene with a feeling of both history, now and future and at the same time get going as soon as possible.



We discussed in the team beforehand (the night before) about how we could create a stable container to hold the cafés - we shared several ideas to get across the ideas of past - ancestors, where we come from - and our future - our children - and the present, which is now. In the end I set this context with a few words around this concept using the future on one hand, the past on one hand, and putting ourselves in the middle - now.

I also used metaphor, subtly, to include the directions — by presenting the team members as coming from the different directions with different cultural energies. It was my personal intention to create the space by subtly including the medicine wheel without being explicit about it.

Café on the value of human beings

The intention of the Café was on the big screens: "To imagine a beautiful future for Taiwan, that we can go forward and create together" but we started with what it is to be human drawing on the speech of Professor Fu.

There were three rounds.

- ~ Round 1 Question: What part of Professor Fu's speech most moved you?
- ~ Round 2 Question: When have you felt really valued as human being.
- ~ Round 3 Question: When conditions allowed you to feel valuable as a human being?

Day 3: afternoon

WHAT IS VALUABLE IN THE EXISTING, THE NEW AND THE DIFFERENT

The morning café was about the individual, while the afternoon was about Taiwan. After lunch, we began with a musician who played music from many countries, including traditional Taiwan folk tunes – this helped to emphasize the theme of diversity.



What are the gifts and contributions of cultural diversity?

His theme was cultural diversity. He used the song, his voice and the audience to create an awareness of cultural difference and our different values. It was well done and created a cultural dimension that moved the energy and the depth for the participants. That led in to our afternoon café

The afternoon café - What is the gift of Taiwan?

We had a café with three rounds

- ~ Round 1 Question: What are the gifts of the Taiwan culture?
- ~ Round 2 Question: What are the gifts of other cultures that have become important for Taiwan?

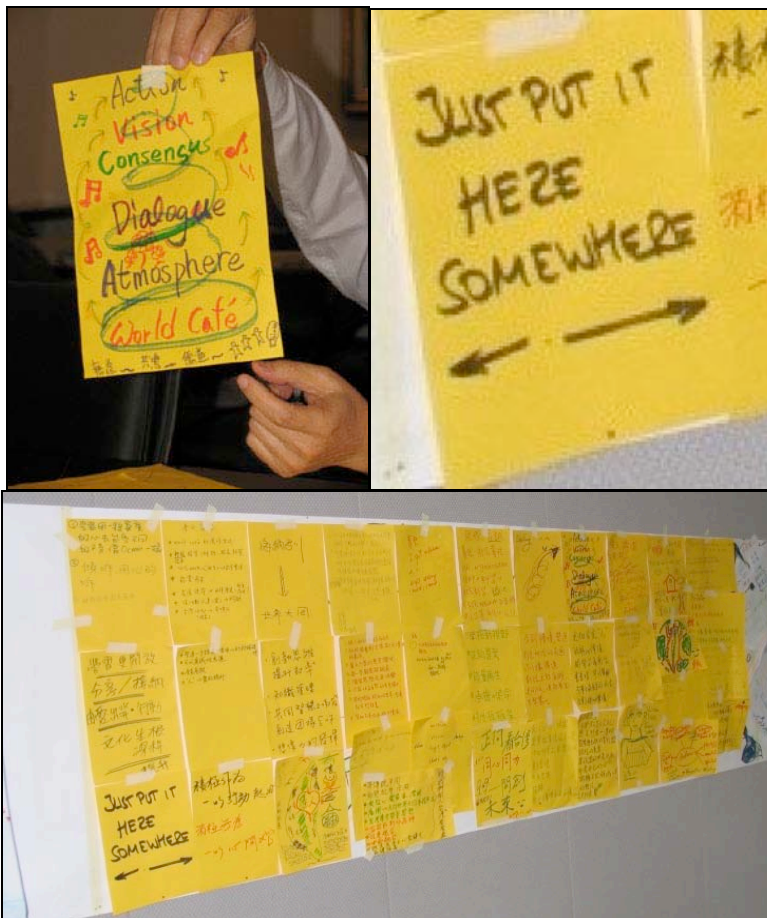
There was a harvest on Graphics through picking up comments and thoughts from the tables.



Then we went for a new round

- ~ Round 3 Question: What have you learned for these conversations that you want to take forward for yourself, your organization and for the future of this country?

At the end of this process, everyone wrote down and posted their ideas on the wall.



We also had a learning session around: "What is one value that you think is most important for Taiwan to have in the future, but with the special instruction to...



Please communicate this to others at your table without words"



That really encouraged the participants to loosen up. Several groups eventually acted out their values up on the stage.

Day 3: Evening talks

In the evening the facilitation team had a long conversation with the core of the organizational team, to talk about how they thought things were going. They were very positive so far, but clearly indicated they wanted us now to focus on Taiwan's future.

The organizers and the participants were all very happy with the results so far. We as a hosting team moved from the intellectual understanding of the purpose of the conference - i.e. human capital - to the emotional and intuitive understanding of what question the participants are interested in, which was the future of Taiwan, with which they were all very concerned.

They had several metaphors they in the beginning wanted to incorporate. But in the end it all came down to the essential purpose of the event, which again was about Taiwan's future.

"To imagine a beautiful future for Taiwan which we can go forward and build together."

For the individual, we stated the desired outcome as: "To leave the café with a vision of the role they and their organization could play in alignment with that future"

The last part was then never showed to the participants, but the whole conversation linked very well with the discussion the first day and the intention we then heard. However now they wanted us to really go for it. So by that point in the proceedings it was clear that Taiwan's future was the core focus. We as a hosting team had no difficulty to aligned to that purpose.

In retrospective I have a personal "aha feeling" After landing in Taipei, it took only a short while before it came up again and again. How can we break the curve, the trend in Taiwan that has gone up and then flattened? And the answer was to work with mainland China in some way, in collaboration. In a way I was given the question at its core level after only half an hour in a taxi ride. I was not aware of this then but saw it later.

When we discussed, as hosting team, what we should do next, we decided to use the group's energy - their main focus of concern and to tap into that energy. Out of that came the idea of a Passion Café which was a blend between World Café and Open Space in the morning. In the afternoon we choose a Vision Café which is a mixture of a Strategic Visioning Process and a Café

My reflection on this was that there was a lot of energy in these Passion Cafes which worked in two ways. It spread the energy deeper, into more profound personal levels, and it spread the energy higher, into global concerns. We didn't give them any questions – they themselves generated their own questions, a la Open Space.

Day 4: Morning — introducing the Passion Café

MORNING THEME: WHAT KEY ISSUES ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO US IN TAIWAN TODAY?

We led off the day by asking those who had been with us on day three to stand and be recognized, and, after they were seated, for the newcomers to stand and remain standing. We asked everyone else to notice who the newcomers were, and to do their best to ensure that they felt welcome and taken care of during the day. Then we did a ten minute "Gallery Walk" in silence. We let them know that they were about to begin hosting their own café conversations and to prepare we instructed them to walk around the room and look at both the graphics from the day before as well as all the tablecloth images that King Kong and his team had posted. that is, those items, issues and concerns that held the most meaning for them. Then to please return to their seats and take a few moments in silence to develop a question that they would like to explore with others in the room around that topic.

Then we introduced the Passion Café which is a blend of World Café and Open Space.



Participants lined up around the room as we moved into the Passion Cafe

We then asked everyone to stand up and move to the periphery of the room. People were invited up to the front of the room and given a microphone. They were asked to use the following format: “The question I would like to host a conversation on is: _____”. Once they had read their question they were to take a seat and anyone from the edge of the room who wanted to be in that conversation was asked to go to that table and join them.

We had a slightly rocky start, particularly as people would take a very long time to pose their questions. But before too long we ended up with about 15 tables of people who really wanted to explore the questions that has been raised. We told them that they would have 60 minutes. 45 minutes to talk about the question they had gathered to explore, followed by 15 minutes to prepare an exciting and creative presentation to summarize where they arrived in that conversation. We stressed that they had to keep us all entertained in their presentations to the group.

We gave them their time and when they did their report outs it was amazing the range of talent showing up in the room. We witnessed being sharing drawings, skits, some mime, and a huge amount of pride, ownership and happiness. Faces were beaming and it was clear everyone in the whole room was captivated and excited. There was a tremendous feeling of aliveness, hope and possibility in the room.



Announcing questions to explore in the Passion Cafe

This gave a platform both intellectually and in energy for the Vision Café in the afternoon.

The rest of the facilitating team, besides Samantha and Ulric, had to leave here during the process so they were not able to be with the last part. The team was very aligned in their thinking and was able to function very well professionally, but it was not ideal personally to have some of us miss the ending.

Day 4: Afternoon — A Vision Café

AFTERNOON THEME: VISION OF A FUTURE TAIWAN AND MY ROLE IN IT

When we in the facilitation team talked about our purpose for this session, wanted to go deeply into what they wanted to talk about, the concern for Taiwan, and then engage them imaginatively into creating the future they wanted to see.

We used the Strategic Visioning Process™ (based on David Sibbet's work) as a mental model for the design of the afternoon. We "walked them into" the energy of 2020, and charged the group with that energy and the image of a very successful Taiwan. We mentally painted that picture and added some feelings to it to charge it.

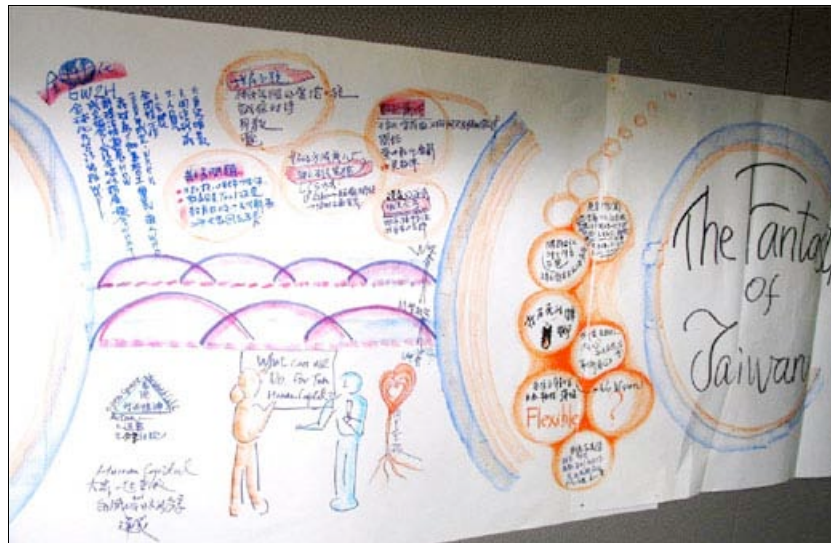
Having done that, we gave them an assignment.

“Design a storyboard for The TIME magazine with Taiwan on the cover and articles with pictures inside”.



The instructions were very simple. We gave them pre drawn templates to fill in, at nine tables (between 7 & 12 people in each). We gave them 45 minutes to do that, and then they came up in groups and shared what they had created.

The templates were an absolute minimum. The whole process rested on the energy of the participants and the group. It worked because there was so much live force in the room. It could not have been done in that way with a less committed group.



You can't make the future of Taiwan in 45 minutes...



... but you can start a process, and that's what they did.

That was the finale, so much energy, so much creativity, so much fun. The whole room buzzed and they were much very into giving the picture and the story to the rest of the audience and to the world.

We completed the café with a guided Reflection of 2-day journey, where we asked for their personal commitment. "Close your eyes and walk through our two days together... What is my role in creating a beautiful future Taiwan. Please share at your tables... and then with the whole group if anyone wants.

The Closing

Then we moved into the closing with the whole group. Mr Wu the chairman, King Kong and I shared our reflections about how the Café together had worked.



The cake symbolizing our harmony and celebrating our success!

The facilitation and the flow of energy in the SOL Café in Taiwan 2007 It is a living being - personal reflections on the nature of a café.

Ulric's reflections



The Café is a living being

I consider a cafe a living being - an actual living, breathing, feeling, moving, delivering and doing organism. If you see it that way you know you have to feed it, contain it, play with it, and attend to it. If you care for it like a family member, it wants to support and help you too. You treat it with respect and care because it is your being, like a family member.



It brings its compassion to you to harvest.

If you look at it this way, you want to be attentive to the specific conditions under which this being can be at its best, perform at its best potential. If you have that image and metaphor of the cafe, then you can facilitate at a level far beyond a method or a format.

Taken a step further I see any gathering of humans, in itself as a creation of a being. A meeting is then an expression of the purpose of the participants, of you as facilitator and your life.

In the cultural context of China to me it is obvious that the idea of Feng Shui links to this. What we do in the cafe is to align energies so that they can cooperate to produce the best results. At the essence of Feng Shui or as some call it Geomancy, is the attempt to align physical matters, mass, form, shape, color, positions and motions, to produce the best possible space for the support of concerned being. A café is such a creation. This is directly applied to the Cafe - we do exactly that with the elements on the physical, the structural and intellectual, the relational level and on the level of purpose - we align them.



To facilitate is to write a score and orchestra a rhythm aligning the energies that will give each instrument to play at best in solo and in support to the common parts of the play.

The following describes four energies to consider in facilitation. These were applied to our work in the cafe in Taiwan

The Energy of the Physical Space

The room was large, it had no windows, but three of the walls could be used for graphics. Outside were restrooms, coffee and other arrangements for the convenience of the participants. This was very well organized.



The room (left) was large but a bit low in the ceiling. It was good but not excellent but that is also difficult to find. The ultimate physical condition of such a process would be a room with more open space upwards to enhance the expanded thinking and feeling. Still it should not be outside because it needs the feeling of a container. Just as a contrast one can look at the room (right) at the Dresden conf for The world Café Europe. A very different feeling. On the other hand the Dresden Ballroom lacked the total enclosure that made the graphic possible.

We encouraged people to go in and out of the room at their convenience, so they would be completely comfortable in the situation. That is contrary to how you would normally want the situation in the room - moving around could break up the energy. In this case, we knew in advance there would be a lot of people coming and going. To try to hold it by a firm structure and work consciously on a monitoring of those changes could have been an alternative, but very demanding. Here we used it to our advantage and let the flow created energy instead.

We used very little technology - very few power point pictures, no slide shows and only microphones, used in a simple way. We basically, besides the set up of tables that was perfect, leaned on auditory information and the graphics to communicate. That influenced the physical energy and had consequences on the relation level.

In my opinion, using the power point very often draws energy to the front of the room, while the focus on audio kept the energy moving freely within the group. That in it self adds to creating the hospitable space and the container for the energy of the Cafe. The challenge is to keep the container and the focus and that is done through the rhythm of the interventions through the audio.



A minimum of technology was used

There is a other danger with this method too. You want them to discuss a question that matters not only to them but also to the organizer. If you don't have those visible in front of the room, you can't be certain they're discussing what you want them to discuss. That might hazard the expected outcome and the harvesting. If you are very specific in the expectation this is a concern. On the other hand, they will interpret the question in their own way in any case, and keep the focus on what matters to them. So if the outcome is a little more general the danger is not so large, after all.

There were small round tables with flowers and crayons. They used them extensively – more than I am used to.



There are 100s of small pictures in the harvest from the café.

This group really used the opportunity for individual graphic recording. On the last day, - the organizers of the whole conference (King Kong and his team) cut pieces from the graphics on the tablecloths and put them together on the wall in a huge collage - 15 meters at least. It was amazing how much they got out of that amount of material. That

was their own initiative - their own idea. As they were exposed on the walls people really took the opportunity to look on them and so get inspired for the next step.

I could also see another energy consequence from this in two ways. One is the confirmation of the individual. There is a reinforcement of personal identity, when they saw their own contribution together with all the others. That becomes a personal energy booster and confirmation of individual importance. That raises the energy of the relation and opens up.

If you look closely at the picture above you see a woman in pink, patting her head, a man covering his face (to really understand things?), a man standing in the back to get better power in arguing, a woman to the left laughing out loud and a man with white hair looking the other straight in the eye. There is a lot of energy in there which we know who where wandering around in this see of relations.

It also shaped an image, on a subtle but very important level. It gives the creation of the collective intelligence of the group in the process a physical representation. This supports all the harvesting. That is difficult to get normally. It is not only by physical space and its energy, but in this case this was a support for that formation and thus support of the purpose energy. In fact it is a rhythm factor. Each table is a fractal of the universal rhythm of the being created and will mirror the whole in all its facets. So when people really get into it and make drawings on the table they are adding that energy dimension to the creating and frees that energy else dormant in the subconscious.

Facilitators work on the energy flow that is embedded in the structure.

The structural design is very often the container for the facilitator to hold the process. It monitors the direction in which he or she guides the group. It is also one of the cornerstones on which the facilitator leans when the process takes its own independent course, which it always does.

It is also one of the elements which the facilitator can prepare in advance, trying to anticipate the actions to be taken and the challenges that might be encountered. Thus the energy of the structure is of importance, beyond the written agenda. Depending on the purpose and desired outcome the design should be upbeat, focusing, expanding, going deeper, clarifying etc., in its structure. The very design should not only lead forward, its very energy flow should be set according to the energy flow one wants to create to get to the delivery point. Normally the very design gives the experienced reader a direct indication to what kind of assembly this is. Just to have said that, very few conferences or meetings live up to that standard which also have direct consequences on the efficiency of the meeting. Here the issue was different.

One of the specifics in Taiwan was that to a larger extent than usual the structure altered. This was influenced by the continuous discussions around purpose (see that part). Actually the purpose dialogues come around to be the very container of the structure. Not the other way around which very often is the case. As a team leader, I had to live with very short preplanning and a constant awareness that the structure would change according to the process and the ideas from the team to implement new things accord-

ing to changing demands. Those came from both the participants expressed through the process and through the organizing team.

We could not have done this with a less experienced team. All team members were professionals, so they knew the ins and outs of doing things like this, so there was no hesitation about whether or not we could implement the ideas we came up with. This was enormous help to me as a team leader. And because of the professionalism of each person on the team, we were able to delegate responsibility for the different parts, and know it would be handled with integrity.

But it also created a relation challenge. As the team was professional and very sensitive to the energy levels of both the organizer and the participants they were open for the adjustments that would be appropriate. At the same time they were very open to try to go beyond the present limits and say yes to the challenge from the organizer to really go for the ultimate.

That gave a flood of ideas and initiatives that should be contained in the facilitation team. So the changes in the structure did not come only from the indications from the participants but from the organizer and from the team itself. That energy level demanded a very firm container, but could only energy wise be established on a much expanded level anchored in the purpose.

In the facilitation team there was a very high degree of flexibility, and at the same time we were very focused on concrete action and implementation. Without that flexibility and the professional focus again the process would not have been possible on the level it comes out.

Having said all the things above, I still had made a detailed plan or minute-to-minute agenda ahead of time. The benefit of this was that I had a clear sense of the time and what slots were available. So the pre-planning was essential to our ability to monitor the process even though we didn't follow the original agenda, I knew what our timing was and knew how we could fit it all together and make it work.

Personally, my role was very much as holder of the space at that general level. I spent a lot of time walking around and holding that energy - for the whole group - hosts, facilitators and participants. To be successful you need to have someone who is always consciously aware of the energy on all four levels of the room, all the time, to serve as the "container of the whole".

To keep the structure and the focus we also had a clear connection to the organizational team - King Kong, Stephen Meng, David and Mr. Wu - and we checked back and forth all the time to see if we were on target or not.

Harvest as a part of creation of structure

There was a focus on harvest, all the time, both from us as the facilitating team and from the organizational team.

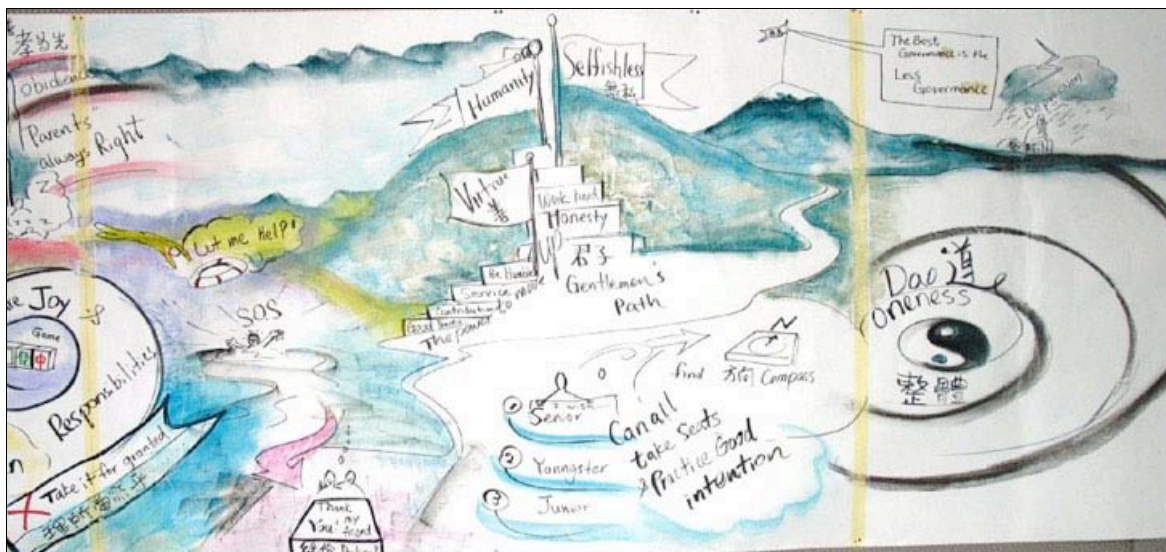


The organizer also took full responsibility for harvest and, supported the participants to really go for it

They were interested in results, not as a side show but as a core element of what was going on. That contributed to a continuous building of the structure energy. It was not a pre-determined architecture, but a structure that represented the very process and its outcome. The structure arises from the collective understanding of the task the group fulfills. And that happened as the group changes its task in the process of conceptually deeper understanding of the questions that matters to them. This not normal, but not unusual either. What was different here was that the change included the very purpose of the gathering.



The graphic recorder as well as the organizers took initiatives around the documentation that supported holding the space and moving to more profound aspects of the being.



Things come up on the walls continuously during the whole meeting and they endured all the way to the end, which sometimes is not the case.

How the facilitation worked on the relational energy of the café

The relational energy in a meeting is the flows that create a rapport between the participants and how they relate to each other. That in itself is the foundation for trust, creativity, willingness to listen, and degree of sharing on a deeper level. This is the fundament of the principles of a café.

There were several things that made this café uncommon. My experience of the atmosphere created by the participants and the facilitation team as well as the organizing team was unusual. It was clearly beyond the normal in warmth, openness and willingness to share even on personal levels after such a short time. One could easily “read” the relation energy. It varied but on a high level through out the conference.

In a way it made it easy for us facilitators. We could “ride” on that and supports its peaks at the right moments. We only once had to boost the level, at the vision café, but it was due to a lack in the core structure and design. At the same time it demanded a never slacking focus to not let the energy drifts away. My personal reflection is that that could not have been done by a single facilitator. If it needed five persons attention is questionable, but as we were all there we used the opportunity and could create something extra.

First of all I felt that the participants came with a warm committed energy to the conference. It was not a courteous presence and it also went beyond professional interest in the topic of Human Capital. They came because they wanted to be there and they had an intention to make a difference. That made it possible for the facilitation team to build from a more advanced level of relation energy than usual.

That can be linked to the fact that the organizers spent a lot of time ensuring people it was important that they were there. Even during the conference they constantly circled in the assembly, checking with the participants and made sure they knew it was an important event and that they were grateful that they were there. The welcome and encouragement didn't stop at the registration desk. They were keeping track of people and were aware all the time of how people were doing and how they were participating.

The community of participants changed constantly. Those that were there in the beginning did not all come to the end and some come and went in different sessions. Less than half of the ones attending the first two days attended the 3:ed and 4:th e.g. the café, but new ones came in their place. All this coming and going, which was a bit unusual, normally would create tension and lack of dedication because you don't follow the whole structure but see only bits of the whole. Here it helped to create a good relationship because no one was forced to be there, but they were able to come and go as they pleased. So they were completely dedicated when they were there.

It in itself created a challenge for the facilitation team. We could not build on the assumption that we hold the key for facilitation through our structure. We had to let go of the control and depend on the participants and their energy in the activities and their interest do talk about things that matter to them. Normally is there an element of binding forces in the structural design (se above). People are expected to be “lead through a flow of activities” that has a sequence that is meaningful to the purpose and that the design is done to support that journey for a participant.



We focus the energy through the questions directed. By choosing to give up one form and perform in response to the very core of the participant's interest we moved to deeper levels of the being.

The binding force is then here more related to the deeper purpose than usual. A constant awareness of the relation energy is then of paramount importance to the facilitation team. A constant measuring of where is the energy flowing so that the next step is in accordance with that. That could not have been done to this level without the professionalism of the team

A group of this kind where the energy is not all linked to an intellectual structure needs other means to keep its focus and level of energy. Here the organizing team and the facilitators managed those thorough small interventions during the first days and through the café. There were many different activities - there was song, small movements, energizing exercises, graphics and a lot of movements between groups so that it was a constant input of new impulses.

A major contribution here was that King Kong came forward as a true leader, direct from the start. He took unusual initiatives and showed that one must not only rely on the intellectual input. He and encouraged people to stand up, clap their hands, wave, do energizing movements, share without words etc. So not only intellectual but physical

energy sharing was part of his leadership style. As he was a high status person in the community and one of the key organizers it becomes natural to do things like this. The relation energy becomes a focus in itself without talking of it as a separate entity. That helped us in the facilitation team to do our job and be creative in the design of the next step.



A leader shows his hands. In motions he set in motion the energy field of relations. The very rhythm of his performance is the role model.

A cafe in itself is an energizer for relationships - the very structure of a cafe is designed to create relationship. In this cafe we used a lot of images and metaphors and questions that not only have an intellectual aspect, but also an emotional component. One of this was the very fact that the graphics were all around the room. To the participant this is a signal and a confirmation that you are seen and heard and represented up on the walls all around the room. Thus you are constantly reminded that you are important and make a difference. This is important and increases the energy of relationship.



The graphics were all around the room containing the motion of the energy and the knowledge in its physical and structural representation



To the participant the graphics are a signal and a confirmation that you are seen and heard and represented up on the walls. In that way the individual is included in the "We".

A personal reflection is that I think the people in Taiwan used a language that is based on images, much more than the western language. They seemed to be trained in a different way than most Westerners from a very young age - to "Think/Feel" in images, to perceive the world in images. So when they come into a context where this is asked for and enhanced, then they become very creative. When we asked them to create together with others in small groups it very easily made a feeling of joy, commitment, and presence around the tables. That in itself increases the energy of relationship as well as a higher quality of the result and outcome.

The organizational team saw and understood that we were sensitive to their needs, in our constant adjustment of the content and form in every next step. That created a feeling of high trust in us as facilitators and café hosts, and this spread to the whole group - the sense of trust in us. It also leads to a general atmosphere of trust that spread to a sense of trust in each other and in themselves. This is relation building and creates energy for the high performance and high degree of sharing.

When we designed the structure, it was created so that it would focus energy on the relational level. Not just to support the content, but to create the relations. We continued to make adjustments throughout the process based on that. One of those was our long discussions about the purpose and philosophy during the event increased the organizer's trust in us, and our trust in them. This was a reminder for me and the team that it is important not always to be so literally results oriented. The process orientation is extremely valuable and creates an efficiency of its own. That is then the prerequisite of result.

One more thing about the relational energy - the organizational team integrated their families into the situation - we had dinners together, etc. So the understanding of the need for a closer relationship was illustrated in that direct connection with actual family members. I personally have no experience of being treated that "Royal" as facilitator for an event. He organizing hosts really made sure that we as facilitators could be part of a larger family. At the same time we as family members were expected to perform

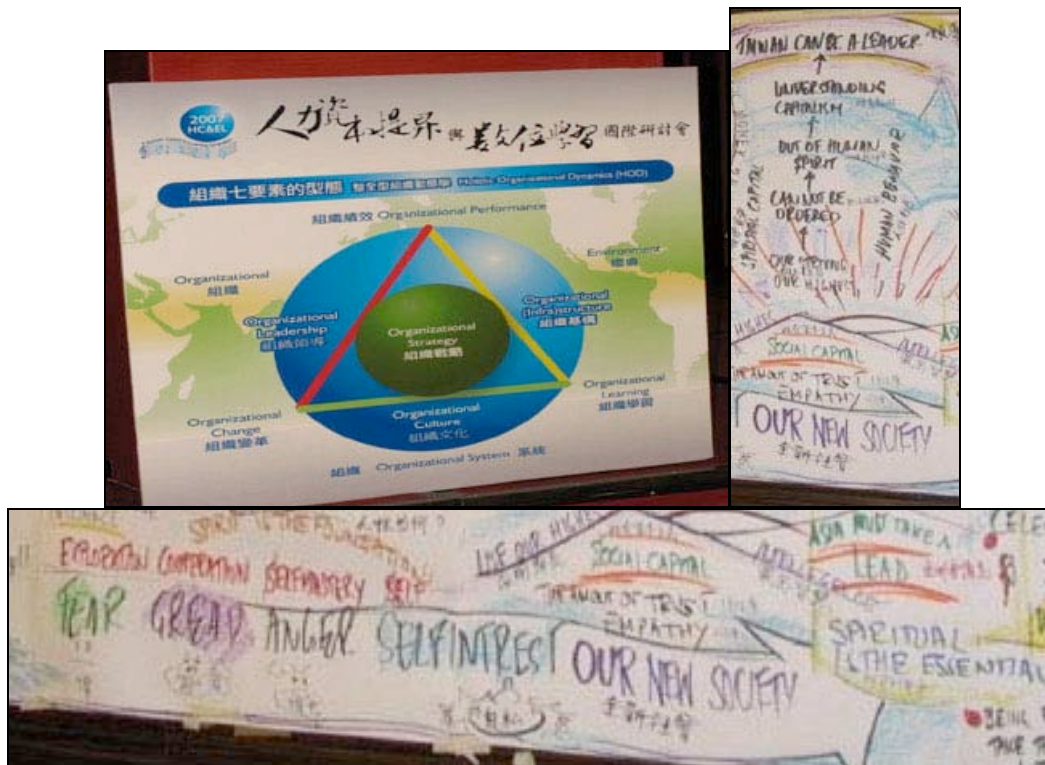
according to family standards e.g. with high quality and commitment. I personally liked this form of integration when one has to do something out of the extraordinary.

There is an idea level with a flow of energy of purpose

Firstly this was created by our long discussions with the organizers. These conversations were both before and during, and to some degree even after the conference. To spend time, energy and focus on the idea create the flow of purpose. When we take the time for this the reward is huge, both for the outcome of the event and for the conditions for the rest of the café work e.g. the other three levels of energy.

I must say I am impressed by the persistence and deep understanding the organizer showed in their focus on the purpose level. I am also deeply grateful to the facilitation team for their willingness to hold the natural ambiguity that is a natural part of discussions in this field both before and during the café

Secondly, the organizers brought a deep understanding of their own purpose to the table. It also had a clear relation to the philosophic aspect of what it is to be a human. You could for instance see that in the choice of speakers. It was also solidly grounded in an understanding of their own human nature and of the situation in Taiwan. Interestingly enough their expectations of the café started on lower ambition than what actually was delivered. So those were actually increased during the process itself. I think that they were inspired by the facilitation teams ability to deliver beyond expectation and “the appetite grows while eating”. So the intensity, the depth and the speed of the energy rose during the process.



Development of focus is shown in the change of its representations

This is clearly visible in the development of focus in the representations in the graphics above. The first is the invitation image of the focus of the discussions around human capital and the second and third is from one of the speakers stating that we have to go from fear into a new society and then an image where Taiwan can and perhaps must take a lead in this process.

Having said that and being “confronted” by the complexity of the organizers expectation, we learned it was important to simplify everything we did. It would not have been possible to maintain focus in the café otherwise. We started with those very complex discussions, but bit by bit simplified the questions and the process. It was fundamental and it helped keep the purpose energy focused.

For example, we left behind the idea of tying together the 4 metaphors we started with, “The iceberg”, “The U”, “The seven elements of organizational development” that was in the logo of the conference and the idea that the café should also in its structure mirror “the seven principles of the café”. That were in the start a points of departure for creation of the flow of questions. Instead we focused on the deepest question before us, which was the future of Taiwan. This could not have been done without the deeper understanding of the organizing group and our ongoing dialogue between the two teams. So the energy on the idea level of the purpose was very up front for us because of our continuous discussions with the organizational team.



Graphics the participants did on the tables in the afternoon are expanded.

You can see in the graphics they are both expanded and detailed and would not have been so if the simplicity had not held the energy of the purpose in a graspable form

This deeper question is also deeply rooted in Chinese culture and situation - so it is not just a conference question, it is an issue for the whole region. Seen from the point of energy my personal understanding is that this conference and the café could not have gone to the level of purpose it did, if it had not been in alignment with a deeper need in the Chinese culture. I can naturally not prove this but it is my hypothesis.

Why Are The Energies Above Important In Facilitation?

On a personal level it comes down to a need to know, feel and integrate in me the most fundamental principles. The more I as a facilitator understand and feel where I am coming from and my relation to the context e.g. the universe, the more can I be my full potential, which is to create what I am.

So far my understanding of the context is that there are in principle only two "things". Energy and Form, movement and structure yin and yang, they have many names. Giving it a name is to not having got it. If I got it I don't need a name for it. In the meantime the language and its images is the best compromise. But for the sake of our dialogue lets call it energy and field.

So what are the fundamentals of facilitation? From a facilitators perspective my job is to create fields that include and direct energies. The universe is in practice limitless of energies. There is no lack of them. It is through my understanding and feeling of those energies and how they interact in fields, in the arena I as a professional work, I can do a good enough job.

So what we, the facilitation team did in Taiwan is nothing unusual. We do it every time we work as professionals or at other levels, in every breath we take, in every moment, in every universe that is and we do it simultaneously. We create fields for energies and set them in motion. In fact they are already in motion but through our own motion we influence them and in that we influence the collective field. That influence is done through our conscious and unconscious awareness. What is a bit unusual is that we are able to talk about it while we are doing it.

It might sound as if we can control and monitor it. We can't. The flow is just too big to handle within the field of a concept of a conscious controlling mind. Don't get me wrong, we influence it all the time and we do from a point of intention. That's clear. The only way to handle this on the ultimate We-level is to let go in the moment and either become an enlightened being or go crazy. Few of us do that. So in the meantime we struggle as best as we can. And that is good enough. What we can do is to let what is there to be born get a pair of good midwives. Being those midwives and at the same time know that there is a larger context that we only partly can grasp gives a platform for doing what we do in as professional way as we can. This is as I see it what took place in Taiwan.

On one level this is the field of that being we have been part of creating her in this moment of this universe. But on a larger level it can also be seen as part of that larger whole. Then it becomes a representation of the We. We are in that sense co creator of the representation of the universe



The universes are fields of knowledge and energies having fun

All the different “We’s” of the collective, of the being in that meeting, are then coming to life. That is, aligned in the field that we as facilitators are part of, partly creating and thereby moving. We set into action the “We field” that wants to take form in that universe. All of this is naturally having as its basic value that there is a We that in some incomprehensible form wants to be present. If that not is true then we just dance in an illusion and that might also be true. Who knows?

The four levels or forms of energy above and corresponding fields have helped me so far. When I find something even more profound I will tell you.

Ulric Rudebeck

Andri's reflections:

The teamwork and the whole situation around the World Café we hosted for Taiwan Sol stands out as an event of unique quality, high energy and profound human experience. It was one of those situations where time, place, issues and people seem to be aligned, as if by some higher purpose. And the purpose; tapping in to a way of approaching the future for a nation - and in relation to the world - is indeed high, and thus infinitely bigger than perhaps both personal wishes or even politics. This could very well be part of creating the special atmosphere. It seemed as if the dynamics of both the planning and Café discussions clicked, and some very real possibilities happened and were brought fourth. Can we describe fully what made this situation so special? It's worth a try.

A part of a Creation

It was a joy to be put into a team and situation where we fitted in a way that opened up our capacities and engagement. I saw that happening among the participants, our team, in relation with our hosts. I knew just two people there, whom I had met rather recently. I realize that the bringing together of people, situation, theme and place was a very major part of the event. We as team were 'created'. Very soon after we met as a team, there was an openness, connectedness, a familiar approach this kind of work, an energy of acceptance, trust and thus boldness.

Freedom

As hosting team, were given genuine creative freedom. I did not experience limitations or restrictions, neither specific expectations of outcome. What we did was very much up to us. Our colleagues were attentive to the process and what we were doing. In a meeting we had the first evening, they seemed to inquire and tune in to what we were doing and where we were heading, inquiring around possibilities, rather than instructing us. Was our team leader part of creating this sense of freedom? Was he carrying a weight of responsibility? If that was the case, he was holding it lightly. But it was clear that he did perform a major part of tuning in, including and involving a large number of people with very different roles.

Vitality

I believe the vivid and lively energy present in the World Café of Taiwan Sol shows that the process was able to let visions and ideas penetrate deeper into the hearts and realities of the people present. Something came into being.

Our planning process continued as the process of the café unfolded. Inspired by Danah Zohar's lectures, we called it 'quantum' planning. Inspired by what evolved, and the input from themes in the lecture and small concert that were part of the café, we kept developing schemes and questions, enabling the process in quite an unusual way to adapt to the flow. It was very organic and alive. We reinvented a couple of varieties of format, suiting it to what we felt the process needed in order to make the outcome as concrete as possible.

As we met in Taiwan, our visions of the process expanded in all directions, as to go for the highest possible outcome. We were inspired both by the lectures (and lecturers) as

well as the tremendous hospitality and open atmosphere we were surrounded with. As we went on developing the process, our layout and questions became simpler and deeper, more relating to the hearts and lived experiences of the participants. In this way, visions were connected with or touching reality.

Beauty taken seriously

Some words capture a totality better than others. We were using the word beauty. Not just to describe the engagement of the people and the creativity of the flow, it became part of a main question: How can we imagine a beautiful future for Taiwan, that we can go forward and create together?

Why ask for beauty? What difference does it make, as compared to asking for wealth, or a modern and innovative society? Beauty is beyond the factual, could even seem flower-power-like. But if taken seriously, the concept of beautiful is not contradictory to health, wealth, technology, creativity, rather it is likely to include all thinkable qualities and still point at something more, something sublime or special, however each individual perceives this. It is subjective, but still evokes common experiences, some references that can be shared. Beauty also implies that a deeper level is touched, the person is *involved* in the experience. The factual will not be sufficient to describe it. We are heading at something that is beyond or more than the practical parts of a situation. As this happened to be a situation where the concept of beauty could be used, every situation must find its own suitable words and concepts.

If you look at the pictures, the faces are beaming with joy. And I would say people are not just enjoying themselves, there is a spark that is lit behind those eyes. They are contributing from a deeper contact with themselves and collective creativity. This is a possibility of the genuinely creative process of the World Café. It is not just a wonderful way of communicating with people. It can involve people in a deep way, allowing them to be touched at their core. And thus our theme of human capital deepened into a level touching the beauty of human *being*.

Patterns

Holographic: We were hosting a process, and at the same time being excellently hosted as team. Our hosts were so friendly and fun to be with, as well as literally spoiling us in every possible way. They showed us such a special hospitality, we immediately felt at home. This of course greatly inspired our well being and work, in the few and intense days we were there. We were attending and nourishing the process of the Café while it evolved, and at the same time was inspired and nourished in our planning of it.

Geometric: As a pattern for managing and balancing the collective unconscious energy field (C.G. Jung), a geometric structure was used in the intentional design of the room, as well as team members briefly presented as representing different qualities as reference points in such a structure (mandala).

The container: The rather formal conference room without windows, in which the cafe was held, worked well for listening to the speakers, but was a bit of a challenge to imagine as the hospitable space for a World Café. After the first two days it was greatly energized and beautified by Ulric's graphic recordings from the six lectures. When ta-

bles and chairs were changed from auditorium to café, the process seemed already to have started.

Past and future relation: The mindful approach to the situation introduced by Ken, relating it to meaningful representation of the past and future, greatly contributed to the focus and importance of the here and now, made explicit by this much wider reference.

Dynamics

In a situation like this there are many dynamics happening on different levels. There is a dynamic in every speaker's approach in his or her lecture, as well as in the overall assembly of the program. There are certain dynamics between us as team-members, and there is the dynamic of the process that we were hosting and listening to. There are dynamics in a conversation. Basically you could say the dynamic is going on between the being and the doing. For instance the development of a conversation depends on the dynamics between speaking and listening. It also depends on the quality of the speaking and listening, which increase by the ability to listen to the dynamic as it unfolds.

There are also inherent dynamics in the culture (or as represented by the people present), which I experienced as having a different and deeper balance than what I am used to from my own culture. Experiencing this was perhaps the most profound learning for me in Taiwan, and a reason why I believe this country has very special potential.

When the team was split into pairs, the dynamics were focused between and in the pairs. It has been a learning for me reflecting on the dynamics in this mini-team, as what we did happened in an intuitive way as we went along, and at the same time displaying some of my personal dynamics that I learn from by observing and examining more closely.

Personal enjoyables

In trying to describe the process in a certain objective way, I miss the personal touch and characters that were such a joy to experience. So briefly mentioning 'personal' features:

A visionary with words and wings able to capture and describe our very highest potentials, in constant alignment with the response from his body.

A lively and energetically sparkling being with a clarity and boldness to cut through any side tracks or loops, gently keeping us on track and tuned in to the energy.

A deeply devoted and enthusiastic, playful and very professional processist, giving space for and inspiring the deepening of the process.

An intuitive and including, appreciative, listening and reliable process manager, open and curious attending to all levels and nuances of the process.

A deeply listening and understanding intuitive facilitator and creator, holding and bringing forth the wisdom and possibilities in the meetings and dynamics of east and west.

And all around with team and hosts and participants; playfulness, respect, joy, ease, dignity, enthusiasm, sincerity, humour, naivety, boldness, friendliness, devotion, fun.

Taiwan Sol World Café was an experience deeply meaningful beyond a personal level. Yet on a personal level there was also so much fun! Unforgettable moments, as for instance a late evening with one karaoke-duo after the other. Truly wonderful.

With gratitude,

Andri

Samantha's reflections:

What shepherds and births transformation, evolution and the movement toward wholeness, is the collective resonance and intention of a community that cares for something together and cares for each other.

I felt that each of us entered the Taiwan space from a heightened sense of purpose - whether it was for service, for learning, for fulfilling on a responsibility, a calling or for surrender. Whatever it was, it was heightened, we were peaking and building on each others' peaks - resonance I believe it is called. We also happened to be a group of people who believe that other human beings are the source of transformation, wholeness and healing and not simply instruments to attain some goal. Hence the idea of caring for each other, each others' feelings, health, lives, ideas and needs. And in that process our own needs were deeply fulfilled - the need for laughter, support, acceptance, forgiveness, honesty, presence and love. So there is something about the deeply personal, deeply relational, connected with full integrity to the deeply global, that made Taiwan so special for me.

Ken's reflections:

After being part of dozens of cafes I must say this was one of the most interesting and one of the most productive in terms of creating a shift in identity and possibility for the participants and organizers alike. Some of the things that struck me:

- ~ The amazing willingness of the participants to fully trust and engage with the process.
- ~ The willingness on the part of King Kong, David and other organizers to dance with what was emerging, to set a really high bar and give us as hosts and designers their feedback on what was happening, what they felt was missing or in need of attention and then to trust the process to allow things to unfold.
- ~ The inclusion of ancient Chinese philosophy along with contemporary models and processes in service to a larger good – the creation of a future filled with beauty for not only Taiwan, but the world and exploring what Taiwan's role in creating that future might be.
- ~ The wonderful art found on every table. I have never seen a café where so many people were drawing on the tablecloths!

- ~ The innovative use that King Kong and his team made of those graphics when they cut them up and pasted them on the walls along side the graphic recordings done by the artists. This allowed people to do a gallery walk, see their own ideas reflected and to look for “what beats your heart.”
- ~ The warmth and inclusion on the part of the our hosts in making us feel welcomed. We were treated like royalty and by the end of the trip I felt as if I had made deep and lasting friendships with many people.
- ~ The ease with which my fellow café hosts worked, played and danced together in the design and delivery of what was without a doubt the most demanding and challenging design I participated in to date.
- ~ The way that everyone involved rose to the challenge of moving the edge of our comfort and skill just a little further along in each moment without ever going too far beyond our skill.
- ~ The palpable sense on the part of many that we were merely instruments of grace, allowing a large intelligence to flow through us, grow and take shape in creating conversations of meaning an relationships of purpose.

I am very grateful to our conference hosts for their hospitality, to my colleagues for their skill and brilliance and to Stephen Meng for all of his behind the scene organizing that brought us all together.

Ken