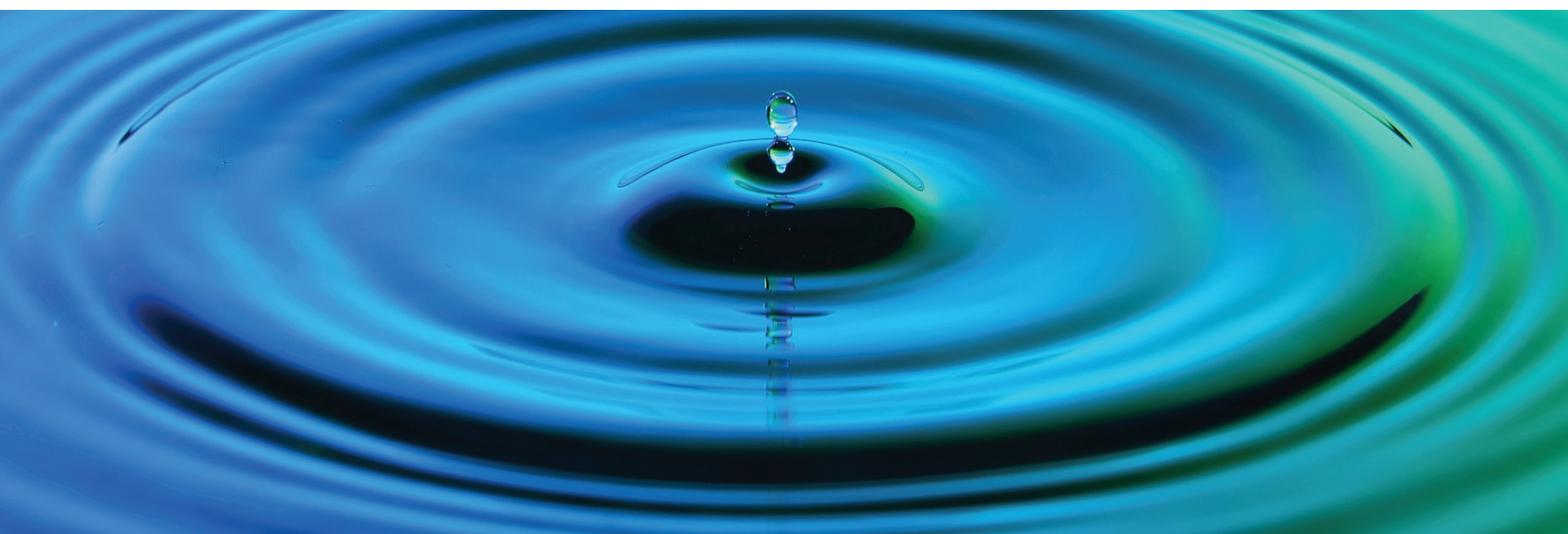


2016 World Café Online Community Community Cafés Harvest Report



Context: The online community space that we created 20 years ago served the needs we had then very well, and ... it is not necessarily able to support the needs of today in the same way. Three Community Cafés were hosted in September 2016 (one in Spanish) to give us a collective opportunity to bring fresh eyes to what it is we DO need now. This document shares what was harvested from these Cafés.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

We Need Each Other

It's clear we need each other, both within the World Café community and beyond it - in our sister communities in Art of Hosting, the Presencing Institute, Open Space, Circle Way, etc. We need access to the collective wisdom and experience, the stories, and the bounty of knowledge that exists between us. We also need connection within the relational field that nurtures and holds us.

The World Café Community Foundation is not funded - the costs of the online spaces we have now are a gift to the community from the Foundation, but there is no paid staff to “handle” or manage the ongoing work of supporting it. Like any other emergent, self-organizing system, the motivation and implementation for whatever needs to be done will come from within our community. So we need each other in that way, too.

Collaboration Across Communities

The importance of what to do with the online community is an open question in the Open Space and Art of Hosting communities, and others as well, so our exploration is a shared one. There is a need to think bigger - not just about feeding the World Café, but to think with others and respond to our shared needs. How can we build something that supports ALL those who believe that conversations that matter are key to creating better futures?

Multiple Platforms

We are already interacting with each other (as a community and across communities) in a variety of online ways - besides the World Café and Art of Hosting online community spaces on Ning, there are groups on FaceBook and LinkedIn, Twitter feeds, blogs and listservs where we connect and share information, questions and insights. Is there a way to connect and move between these multiple platforms gracefully & productively?

Expansion & Growth

There is a feeling among many practitioners that we would like to extend and grow the World Café community of practice, both regionally and globally. Some referred to the idea of organic growth, and others to the desire to engage with more and more people across a wider diversity of geography &/or perspective now (especially in relation to topics and areas of conflict).

Shared Stories is our Lifeblood

Our shared stories give us practical tips and tricks, inspiration and examples. They help us by showing what works and what doesn't work, and they complete the process of harvesting World Café. By sharing our collective knowledge of what is being learned, we develop our practice individually and collectively and are able to do our work in the world better. We want to be able to access and build a living library of these shared stories.

The Need to Support New Practitioners

New practitioners are an important part of the community, and need to be welcomed in and supported as they grow and develop their practices. They may have unique needs that more experienced practitioners no longer have. We are recognizing the value - for all of us - of mentoring/supportive relationships between new and experienced hosts.

Creating Space/Calling the Question

When we create space / opportunities to meet & exchange, each of us asks for what we need and we offer what we can. Relationships are built and we can move forward, together.

The metaphor of “blowing on the fire”... acknowledging the importance of having a call(er) so the community can respond - when someone calls, many people respond.

Embodying World Café Design Principles

It's as important to integrate World Café Design Principles into our online community spaces as it is to embody them in World Cafés. What does it look like to create “hospitable space” online, have a clear context, cross-pollinate our insights, share our collective discoveries, etc.?

Clients / Sponsors / Funders

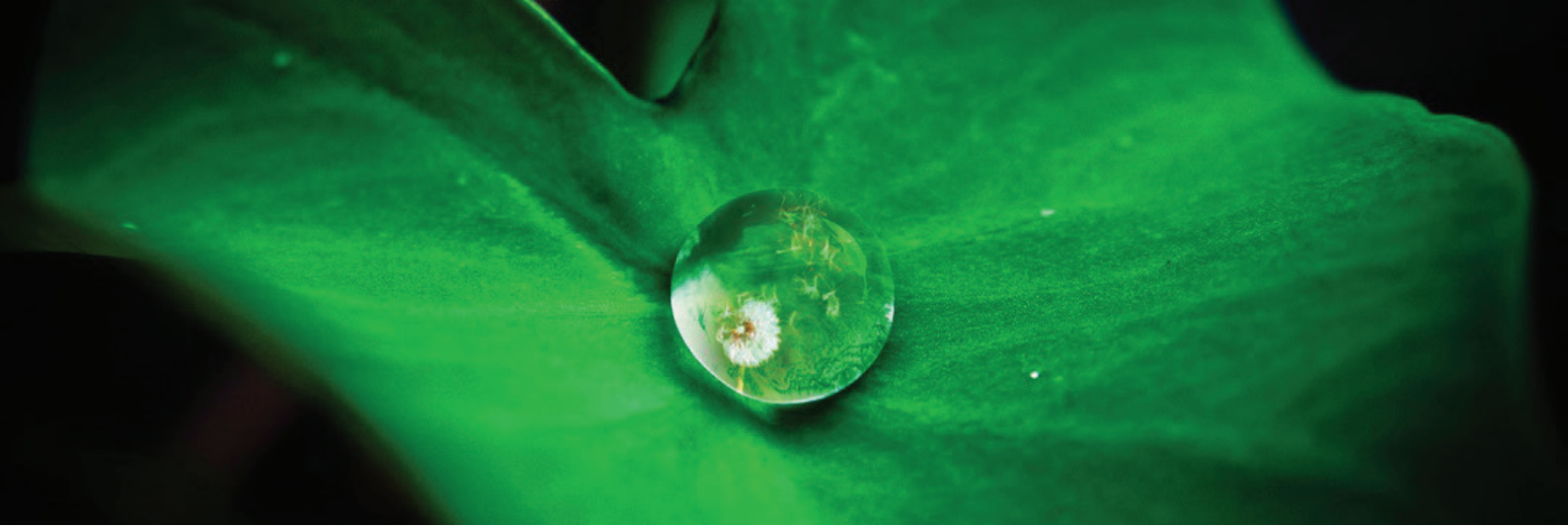
Wondering how (and if) to include the people that contract practitioners in these conversations. What do they need? What helps organizations have confidence in World Café?

Local Engagement

There is an ongoing need for people in the World Café community to connect with each other locally, as well as globally. What is needed to help people step up and offer the questions and opportunities for engagement that can best serve their local and regional communities?

We Can Always Decide to Stop

The online community space takes work/energy/attention to thrive. If that isn't happening, one option is that we can simply close it down - the online community space can be complete, and our past learning composted for the future. Another option is that we can leave what we have in hibernation, wait, and trust that people will find the way to follow up with what is useful for them.



WHAT IS NEEDED/WANTED NOW?

Call More Online and Hybrid World Cafes

We are interested in using online World Cafés to evolve the community practice field, keep us connected to each other, and let us think together about topics and issues that are important to us as a whole.

- Host regular online World Cafés and/or World Café Design or Orientation sessions that are free and open to all
- Access to hosting online World Cafés: many hosts would like to learn more about online and hybrid World Cafes and put them on regularly to get practice.

Welcome to the Online Space

How people are welcomed in their first days of joining the World Cafe online community makes a real difference in how they will participate.

- Create a “welcoming” group to reach out personally to each new member (in whatever way works best – telephone, email, local meet-ups, etc.)
- Encourage more people in the community to reach out and welcome new members
- Regular short online welcome sessions to help new users get oriented
- A simple “orientation” integrated in the site layout
- Clarify ¿what is this community for? How does it work? Who are the people who can be resources in various ways?

Better Notification Systems

One of the things that makes FaceBook so easy to use is their notification system. How can the community access updates on recent activity with the same ease in our Ning site?

- Provide easy “how to create your settings” instruction so people get the notifications they want
- A regular “community highlights” message that goes out to the whole community

Connections / Stories / Resources

A World Cafe community space brings together new and experienced hosts, to give us a place to share stories, resources and best practices.

- Shared stories and resources that help us learn about the other participatory methods
- Provide a way for people to connect locally - self-organized, local groups can explore this rich Community of Practice “on the ground” (e.g. through a Meet-up calendar)
- Clarify the process for self-organization - how to “call” gatherings/questions/etc. & let people know about them
- Offer other participatory online tools for the community (e.g. Zoom)
- Create space for the legacy / history of World Café: a dedicated space for stories and conversations that can be used as a “living library”.

Design

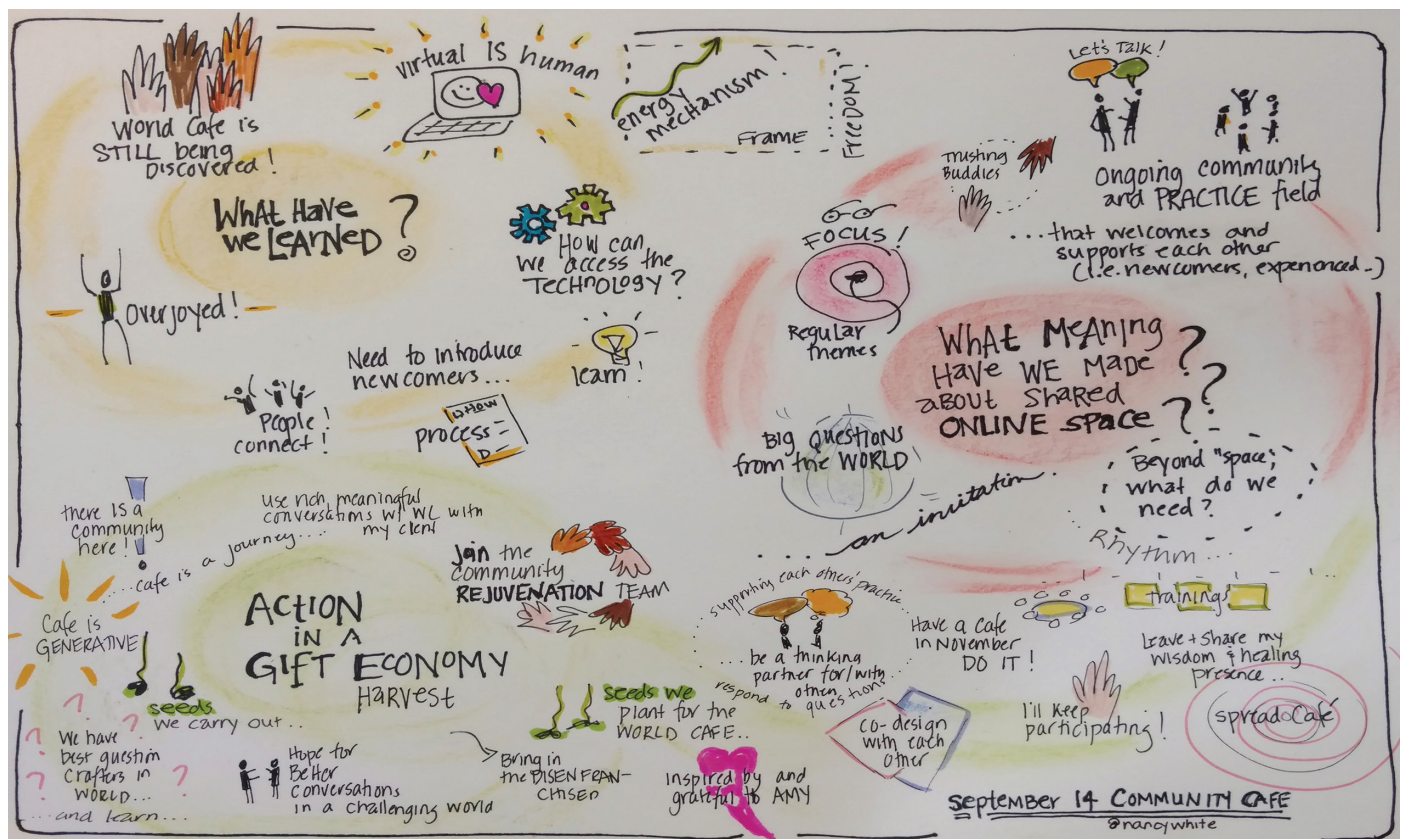
Create a design for the online community space that is simple, clear, easy to use, and beautiful.

- Make it clear right on the front page what is most important in order to participate in the online community space, including more screencasts and simpler directions.
- More synergies between the different places we can connect (i.e. World Café groups on FaceBook & LinkedIn) - make it simple & easy to use (and able to adapt to the needs of different communities)

Interweaving of the Communities of Practice

We are stronger together.

- Provide ways for World Café practitioners to exchange stories and perspectives with other practitioners; to learn about and access resources on how to practice other methodologies
- Continue having conversations that explore opportunities to serve the needs of our larger network of communities.



Graphic Harvest of September 14th Community Café, by [Nancy White](#)