

## ADDITIONAL TOOLS

The dialogue universe seems endless. In addition to the ten tools we selected to cover in depth and exemplify by cases, we have, through experience and research, come across a wide variety of other approaches. We've included this section as a brief overview of some of these additional tools which it was beyond the scope of this project to cover in depth but yet deserve mention.

### Bohmian dialogue

*"What is the source of all this trouble? I'm saying that the source is basically in thought. Many people would think that such a statement is crazy, because thought is the one thing we have with which to solve our problems. That's part of our tradition. Yet it looks as if the thing we use to solve our problems with is the source of our problems. It's like going to the doctor and having him make you ill. In fact, in 20% of medical cases we do apparently have that going on. But in the case of thought, it's far over 20%." – David Bohm*

David Bohm (1917-1992) was a well-known quantum physicist, who made significant contributions to theoretical physics, particularly in quantum mechanics and relativity theory. The connection from physics to dialogue may at first seem unclear. However, Bohm's understanding of physics was deeply aligned with his view of the nature of reality, the nature of thought and the meaning of dialogue, and the connections between them. Throughout his life, he was actively involved in politics and philosophy, with one of his key inspirations being the Indian philosopher J. Krishnamurti.

We include David Bohm's approach to dialogue in this collection because it is a method unique in its own right. It's important to recognise however that Bohmian dialogue is far more than a method. It's a philosophy and a worldview, which we can only introduce very briefly here, and Bohm is one of the most quoted people in this field.

Bohm believed that thought shapes our reality, and that dialogue shapes thought and thought processes. He used to emphasise that dialogue comes from the roots "dia" ("through") and logos ("meaning") and so to him the word "dialogue" signified "meaning flowing through us". He saw dialogue as a process of direct face-to-face encounter by which people could participate in a *common* pool of meaning – a kind of "shared mind" or "collective intelligence". It was not a process by which one person would try to convince everyone else of his/her idea, but rather where the participants would engage in *creating* a common understanding. To him, thought was one big process, and it didn't really make sense to break it up into "my thought" and "your thought".

You could say Bohm's approach to dialogue was his form of activism. He observed many of the crises faced by the world, and attributed them to a dominant worldview of fragmentation rather than wholeness. He saw a breakdown of communication and relationships, and he believed that the key problem was an incoherence of thought, and an inability to see how our own thinking behaves, and how the process of thought creates problems even more than it solves them. The overriding intention with his approach to dialogue was thus to understand consciousness, to explore day-to-day relationship and communication, and to overcome fragmentation.

*"Dialogue is really aimed at going into the whole thought process and changing the way the thought process occurs collectively. We haven't really paid much attention to thought as a process. We have engaged in thoughts, put we have only paid attention to the content, not to the process." – David Bohm*

In a Bohmian dialogue, 15-40 people convene in a circle. This range of group size is specified as a number that is not too large for depth and intimacy but large enough to allow

subcultures to form and become visible. The groups generally meet more than once, for about two hours at a time, regularly over an extended period of time.

There is no pre-set agenda. The idea is that the absence of an agenda allows for meaning to flow freely and undirected. The group decides when they meet what they would like to talk about and how they would like to proceed. It's important to emphasise here that the fact that there is no *objective* or intended outcome for the dialogue, does not mean there is no *reason* for it. As the group stays with the process over time, the deeper meanings are revealed. The dialogue leads to increased coherence, creativity, and fellowship.

This process of undirected inquiry often leads to frustration and discomfort. The groups are encouraged to work through the anxiety, and to allow it to draw them creatively into new areas. While emotion is not in focus, it is considered useful. Frustration, chaos, and emotion can all help to create meaning if the group doesn't try to move away from them. Friction among subcultures allows participants to surface their assumptions – to see their own thoughts and those of others.

The most important practice of Bohmian dialogue is *suspension*. Participants try to suspend their assumptions, judgments, reactions, impulses, emotions. Suspension is not the same as repressing them, postponing them, or blindly following them. It means attending to them, noticing them, and observing them without judging them as right/wrong. Your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions are exposed so they can be seen by yourself and others. The group becomes your mirror, mirroring back the content of thought and the underlying structures. The listeners reflect back the assumptions they think are behind what is being said. As the thought process becomes observed, it changes.

A facilitator is useful in the beginning of a Bohmian dialogue to hold the group through this process. The facilitator would usually start by talking about dialogue and explaining the meaning of the word, and the principles and practices of this particular approach. The facilitator is however not seen as a neutral outsider, but rather participates in the group as an individual. She should ideally work herself out of a job as soon as possible, once the group has established a dialogue practice.

Bohmian dialogue is clearly very different from how we normally function. We generally pay attention to the content of our thoughts – our ideas, opinions, questions, insights - but not the process of forming them. We usually find it very difficult to let go of judgments or ideas because we identify deeply with them, we hold on to and defend them. If we view thought as a larger system that moves through us and around us, we may be able to take a step back and to see how what is going on within each of us is a reflection of the dialogue group and how what is going on in the dialogue group is a reflection of the larger society.

Bohm, David. *On Dialogue*

Bohm, David, Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett (1991) "Dialogue: A Proposal"

<http://www.laetusinpraesens.org>

## **Citizen Councils**

Citizen Councils are experiments in democracy. Their purpose is to define through dialogue what the People of a community, city, or nation as a whole would *really* want if they were to carefully think about it and talk it over with each other.

There are a variety of different related forms, which we are roughly grouping under the overall header "citizen councils". These include "citizen consensus councils", "citizen deliberation councils", "wisdom councils", "citizen juries", "consensus conferences", "citizen assemblies", and "planning cells". They differ in the number of participants, the selection process, the mandate, the meeting time and frequency, whether they are permanent or temporary, their level of expertise, the media participation, etc.

The common thread of the Citizen Council is the act of collecting a small group of citizens (usually 12-24) who together comprise a “microcosm” of their community or society. These are not elected representatives in the political sense. They speak for themselves as individual citizens, but they embody the diverse perspectives and capacities of their wider group. Because of this composition, their decisions are likely to be similar to the decisions the wider group would have come up with if able to engage in a similar dialogue at a large scale. If their process is made visible to that wider group as it unfolds, they can also be stimulating similar conversations to happen informally across an extended area.

The members of the Citizen Council come together face-to-face to engage in a facilitated dialogue or deliberation around one or more issues concerning the population from which it was selected. The dialogue approach needs to be one that enables diverse members to really hear each other, to open their minds and expand their understanding, and to engage each other in seeking creative solutions. The dialogue may be a few days or may be a longer period of time. It usually results in a final statement released to the larger population and to the authorities. In order to come up with such an agreement, the members have to explore their diversity, go deeper to the point of common ground, and help each other to see the whole picture.

One of the most famous examples of a Citizen Council was the MacLeans experiment in Canada. In 1991, Canada’s leading newsweekly Maclean’s brought together 12 Canadians at a resort north of Toronto. They held firm divergent beliefs, reflecting the main differences in public opinion in the deeply divided country. But they were also all interested in listening to each other’s points of view. For three days they engaged in a facilitated dialogue, all the while being recorded on television. At the end of the process, they published a four-page consensus vision for their country.

<http://co-intelligence.org>

<http://www.wisedemocracy.org>

Atlee, Tom. The Tao of Democracy

## **Communities of Practice**

Communities of Practice are part of life, though they are often not explicitly named. A Community of Practice is an organisational form that assists with knowledge sharing, learning and change. It is generally a self-organising group of people who have come together to share knowledge on a particular field of practice.

The process of explicitly naming and cultivating Communities of Practice is becoming increasingly widespread in both corporate, government, and civil society settings worldwide. This development is a response to increasing complexity and the shift to a knowledge society. The assumption here is that knowledge can no longer be packaged, externalised, and put in databases and remain relevant over time. We need to be able to draw on living, tacit, contextual knowledge, which primarily exists within people and can only be volunteered, not conscripted.

Communities of Practice are designed to be able to transmit knowledge voluntarily on a “pull” basis (as and when needed for a specific problem or situation) rather than on a “push” basis (where the expert decides what others need to know and presents it to them in a one-way communication). This process requires strong and trustful relationships, because it relies on “know-who” in order to transmit “know-how”. Communities of Practice employ a number of different dialogue tools in order to build these relationships and enable learning among their members.

The paradox of this organisational form is that it often fails if it is over-managed, but does need to be cultivated to be sustained. It needs to be supported, yet be left to create its own

boundaries and identity to be successful. After all, relationships are largely determined by chemistry and by building trust over time.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice*  
<http://www.etiennewenger.com>

## Deep Ecology

Deep Ecology is both a philosophy and a movement. The term was coined by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess to contrast with the kind of environmentalism that is motivated by purely human interests. The Deep Ecology philosophy is premised on the assumption that nonhuman life on Earth has intrinsic worth beyond its usefulness for human purposes, and that the current level of human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive. This philosophy has inspired an array of experiential and dialogic practices, primarily developed by John Seed and Joanna Macy, intended to help “decondition” people from centuries of putting human interests above all others. Joanna calls this work “the Work that Reconnects”.

The Work that Reconnects aims to help people experience their innate connections with each other and the web of life, so that they may become motivated to play their part in creating a sustainable civilization. Participants experience and share their innermost responses to the present condition of our world, reframe their pain for the world as evidence of their interconnectedness, and build relationships of mutual support and collaboration. They also gain concepts, exercises, and methods which help to make visible the power they have to take part in the healing of the world.

This work came mainly out of the 1970’s in North America where it brought together thousands of people - antinuclear and environmental activists, psychologists, artists, and spiritual practitioners. One of the most famous exercises is called “The Council of All Beings”. Here, participants take on the role of different living beings and engage from the perspective of that being in a dialogue on what is happening to their world.

Deep Ecology is really a different worldview. We include it here because it challenges and widens our conception of what dialogue can be, to include dialogue with the non-human world, as well as dialogue with our past and future. We also find that the structured exercises it offers can shift participants out of their comfort zones and into a state of openness, in which further dialogue can then take place.

Macy and Brown’s “*Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect our Lives, Our World,*” provides an up-to-date description of the theory behind the Work that Reconnects, some sixty exercises, both new and old, and guides to designing and facilitating workshops.

<http://www.deepecology.org>  
<http://www.joannamacy.net>

## Dynamic Facilitation and Choice-Creating

*Breakthrough.* The most exciting and uplifting experience a group trying to solve a problem can have, is when a new option becomes available which no one had thought of before. Something that creates synergy between the different options the group has been disagreeing about. Something that overrides or somehow makes previous concerns irrelevant. This is what Dynamic Facilitation tries to make happen by creating a space called “Choice-Creation”.

Choice-Creation brings together the openness and transformative approach of dialogue with the deliberative approach of trying to actually reach specific conclusions to specific problems. The facilitator plays an active role, helping participants to determine an issue they really care about, and to say openly, clearly, and respectfully what is on their minds about it. Throughout

this process the facilitator is working with four flipcharts at the same time – lists of Solutions, Problems, Data and Concerns. As group conclusions emerge, a Decisions flipchart is added. The facilitator is constantly following the natural dynamic flow and spontaneity of the conversation, rather than trying to manage an agenda.

Dynamic facilitation was developed by Jim Rough in the early 1980's. According to Jim, it is particularly valuable in situations where people face important, complex, strategic, or seemingly impossible-to-solve issues, when there is a conflict, or when people seek to build teamwork or community.

<http://www.ToBE.net>

<http://www.SocietysBreakthrough.com>

## Focus Groups

Focus groups are a form of group meeting used primarily in the qualitative research field – in academic and market research. It usually consists of a relatively small group of 6-12 people. Often a focus group is brought together early in an exploratory study, and the conversation can be used to help develop questionnaires or other surveys for more quantitative research. The benefit of a focus group as opposed to a survey is that participants have a chance to interact, bouncing ideas off each other and reacting to each other's comments. This helps to get more conscious answers from participants, creates possibility for new ideas to be generated, and also provides information about the relationships and dynamics of the group. Most importantly, a focus group helps to answer "why..." questions whereas surveys can primarily answer "what..." questions.

The focus group is particularly useful when an organisation wants to start up a new project, and it is unclear how the community will respond. What will their key concerns be? What are the obstacles that might get in the way of the success of this project? What are the forces that might help it succeed? What are the reasons behind people's preferences? This is generally more of a consultative process than a meeting of stakeholders who will actually be involved in acting together to implement the project.

A Focus Group is not necessarily a dialogic process but it can be. The other tools described in this section such as Circle and World Café can be used creatively within a focus group session.

## Flowgame

The flowgame was created in Denmark in the late 1990s by a group of friends and fellow facilitators, who had come together to design a game that would support each of them in furthering their own work and learning. The members of this first group were Toke Moeller, Monica Nissen, Finn Voldtofte, Jan Hein Nielsen and Ouafa Rian. The game has since been through several iterations, and continues to evolve.

The purpose of the Flowgame is to bring "flow" to an area of the lives of the people playing. Each player brings a question or a personal intent to the game, which s/he wishes to develop clarity and insight around. The game is played over a period of one to three days with 4-6 players and a host around a gameboard.

The game draws inspiration from the four directions of the "medicine wheel", a concept drawn from Native American cultures, in which each cardinal direction holds a perspective for personal and authentic leadership. Whichever the question or intent that one brings to the game, it will be viewed from these perspectives during the course of the game. The following description is taken from the Flowgame briefing materials:

**The North** - *The innovative perspective: Your courage to find new paths and break new ground in your life and work, to move ahead when called for.*

**The East** - *The deep vision and perspective, the long view: To clarify your passion, vision, energy - to keep the overview and find coherence and connectivity to the world surrounding you.*

**The South** - *The perspective of the community: To open the good relations, to be in rhythm with others, team spirit, synergy, synchronicity.*

**The West** - *The perspective of action: Getting things done making it happen, being methodical, being practical and doing it in a sustainable way for you and the greater whole.*

A pile of cards lies in each of the four directions on the gameboard. Each card poses a meaningful question, enabling joint reflection and sharing of knowledge and experiences. Depending on the way the die falls, as players are sailing through the four rivers on the gameboard, a player will pick a card, and reflect with fellow players around a question drawn in one of the four perspectives. The end of the game is when someone has sailed through all the four rivers, and thus had his or her question illuminated through shared reflection and inquiry from many different angles. It is quite normal for the time to run out before people have actually sailed through the full scope of the game.

The Flowgame is a fun, interactive way of dealing with deep and meaningful issues and questions as an individual, but also as a team. After the success of the Flowgame focusing more on the personal leadership of individuals, the game has been adapted to be able to deal with more collective questions, of teams or groupings within organizations. Additional questions relating to the organisational sphere will then be added, specific to each particular organization or grouping.

The Flowgame is facilitated by a Flowgame host, and cannot as yet be run by someone who has not been trained for this. For more on the Flowgame, or if you would like to play a game, contact Marianne [[Marianne@kufunda.org](mailto:Marianne@kufunda.org)].

## **Graphic Facilitation and Information Design**

A picture is worth 1000 words. A graphic facilitator is skilled at visualising what people are saying during a dialogue. When a graphic facilitator is present, a wall will be covered with white paper at the beginning of a dialogue process. At the end of the workshop that paper will colorfully tell the whole story of the process, with words, mindmaps, symbols and images. Rich pictures can capture the complexity of the discussions and the meeting in simple overview.

An information designer will listen to what people are saying throughout a process and turn it into diagrams, tables, and models. S/he will continually be reflecting back to participants their own knowledge in a different form for them to react to.

Graphic facilitation and information design are not necessarily dialogue processes in and of themselves, but they are tools that can play a major role in the quality and success of a dialogic process. They help to make the group more aware of itself and of the patterns that are emerging in the conversation.

<http://www.groveconsulting.com>

<http://www.biggerpicture.dk>

## Learning Journeys

John le Carre has said that “the desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world”. Learning journeys are about getting out from behind the desk, out of the comfort of the home, the conference room or the hotel, to explore and experience the world first-hand. Learning journeys are physical journeys from one place to another. They are also mental journeys, challenging participants’ preconceived notions and assumptions about current reality and possibility. Learning journeys as such, once again, are only dialogue methods in the very broadest sense of the word – engaging in a dialogue with reality. But the key distinction between a real learning journey and a typical “field trip” or “study tour” is created by introducing dialogue methods.

In a learning journey, when a group visits an organisation or community, they are invited to sit down one on one or in small groups in empathetic dialogue with local stakeholders to understand their reality. Before a visit, they clarify their own intention and questions, and they often receive training in how to “suspend judgment” and listen not only with an open mind, but also with an open heart and open will. After a visit they hear each other’s perspectives and through conversation come to a deeper understanding and a more whole picture of what they have experienced together. They become aware of what others saw that they themselves may have been blind to, and discover the value of broadening our understanding of what it means to see.

## Listening Projects and Dialogue Interviewing

Many of us are actually not used to being genuinely listened to. The most common form of listening is the kind where we are constantly judging what the speaker is saying, or waiting for an opportunity to say what we ourselves want to say. When you create an opportunity for really just asking questions, listening with an open mind, and connecting to what another person is saying, you can actually help that person to uncover a knowledge they didn’t even know they had. Through an open-ended conversation delving deeply into the interviewee’s life experience, knowledge, needs and concerns, the issues are brought to life in their mind and heart. They themselves realise things they hadn’t seen before, about how they feel and what they can do about it.



This kind of interviewing and listening can be relevant in many situations. It may be a way to mobilise people to participate in a particular project, to develop a network, or simply to awaken them to act as individuals. As an example, “Listening Projects” are a specific form of community organising, used since the early 1980s, in which trained interviewers go door-to-door asking citizens powerful questions about local issues. The interviews will usually last about one

hour. Once the interviewees become convinced that the intentions of the interviewer are genuine, that this person is sincerely there to listen to them and not to judge them, they will open up and share their perspectives. The Project generates change not by telling people what to do, but really just by asking questions and listening.

<http://www.listeningproject.info>  
<http://www.ottoscharmer.com>

## Quaker Meetings

The Quakers are a Christian group, more formally known as the "Society of Friends". The group was founded in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England, when many were challenging established beliefs and the institutionalisation of the Church. Friends emphasise the personal relationship with God and believe that if they wait silently, there will be times when God speaks to them directly in the heart. They hold regular "business meetings", quite unlike any other business meetings you might have experienced, and their model has inspired many secular groups as well.

The meeting is an exercise in attentiveness, and in listening to the promptings of the Spirit. Whatever the topic, the overriding intention is to discern the will of God, and the entire meeting is seen as worship. The Quakers prepare to come to the meeting in an open state of mind and willingness to listen attentively. They strive to open themselves to what others are saying, suspend their prejudices, and always consider the possibility that their own strong convictions may be wrong.

People who attend their first Quaker meeting are always struck by the silences. The meeting begins and ends with silence. They observe silence in between individual contributions. The silence allows for reflection, and act as a brake to avoid any one individual seizing control or dominating. Each person normally only speaks once on a subject unless responding to questions with factual information. Having spoken once to the issue, they trust that if further valid points occur to them, someone else will raise them.

They speak honestly and frankly, but do not have arguments or debates. When there are differences they are resolved through conversation. The facilitator continually identifies areas of agreement and disagreement to push the dialogue further.

Quakers also work by consensus rather than majority decisions. Their perspective is that a prophetic voice is often lonely, and so if a deeply felt concern or dissenting perspective continues to come back, they will listen to it. All the ideas and solutions belong to the group, not to individuals. The names of the people who speak ideas are not reported. The goal is "unity, not unanimity."

<http://www.quaker.org>

## Socratic Dialogue

A Socratic Dialogue is a search for truth. This approach of course draws its origins and name from the life of Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher. It usually takes place in quite a small group, for example 6 people.

The most important rule in a Socratic Dialogue is to "think for yourself". The dialogue usually starts with a philosophical question, that is, a fundamental question that can be answered by thinking about it. Participants are invited to suspend their judgments, approaching this question with an open mind. They strive for consensus, not because it is necessarily achievable but because the desire for consensus helps to deepen the investigation and to listen deeply to all points of view. They allow their underlying assumptions to surface, unravel, and be examined.

Key to a Socratic Dialogue is that, while the question is philosophical, it is always applied to shared concrete experience, and the group remains in contact with this experience throughout. Participants bring in specific examples, against which what is being said can be tested. General insights are drawn out from this in-depth understanding of concrete examples.

## Story Dialogue

As with the circle, it is clear that human beings have always used stories to communicate. Before we had writing, stories were used to convey information and wisdom across generations because they are easier to remember than isolated facts or concepts. We are in a sense, “hardwired” for stories. Yet, we increasingly tend to disassociate the concepts we are trying to convey from personal stories that illustrate them.

The “Story Dialogue” technique was developed by Ron Labonte and Joan Featherstone when working in community development and health in Canada. They saw it as a way to bridge the gulf between practice and theory, and to recognise the expertise that people have in their own lives, and which is best communicated through stories. It uses stories to draw out important themes and issues for a community, moving from personalised experience to generalised knowledge.

In Story Dialogue, individuals are invited to write and tell their stories around a generative theme – a theme that holds energy and possibility for the group. As a person shares their story, others listen intently, sometimes taking notes. The storytelling is followed by a reflection circle where each person shares how the storyteller’s story is also their story, and how it is different. A structured dialogue ensues guided by the questions: “what” (what was the story), “why” (why did events in the story happen as they did), “now what” (what are our insights) and “so what” (what are we going to do about it). The group closes by creating “insight cards”, writing down each insight on a colored card and grouping these into themes.

<http://www.evaluationtrust.org/tools/story.html>

## Theatre of the Oppressed

During the 1950’s in Brazil, theatre director Augusto Boal started asking questions about why theatre had to be in the form of “monologue”. Why did the audience have to always be passively consuming the performance? He started experimenting with interactive theatre, creating instead a “dialogue” between the audience and the stage. His assumption was that dialogue is the common, healthy dynamic between all humans, and that oppression is the result of the absence of dialogue and the dominance of monologue.

Over the past 50 years, the “Theatre of the Oppressed” (TO) has developed into a large system of diverse games and interactive theatre techniques, being used in communities across the world. TO is primarily created as an instrument to enable the “oppressed” to concretely transform their society, by transforming monologue into dialogue. All the TO techniques pose dilemmas and challenges to participants, related to the core social problems and power structures of their particular communities and society at large. The techniques help to move out of the head, and more into the body. This enables people to meet across diversity of cultures and levels of education, and it also allows to access more unconscious dynamics. The TO workshops, now run not only by Boal but by hundreds of facilitators, are a training ground for action not only in theatre but in life.

The most well-known form of TO is called “Forum Theatre”. In Forum Theatre a dilemma is posed to the group in the form of a theatrical scene, which usually has a negative outcome. Participants are asked to step into the play and take on the role of one of the actors to try to change the outcome. They are invited to imagine new possibilities and solutions, and to actively try to make them happen in the moment. As a result of the group problem solving, highly interactive imagining, physical involvement, trust, fun, and vigorous interpersonal dynamics, the participants learn how they are a part of perpetuating their own problems and how they can be the source of their own liberation.

Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*  
<http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org>

## The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meeting

How do you engage 5000 citizens actively in one town meeting, and enable them each to give substantive input to public decision-makers? This is what happens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings of *AmericaSpeaks*. Updating the traditional New England town meeting to address the needs of today's democracy, *AmericaSpeaks* restores the citizen's voice. At the gatherings, facilitated deliberations happen at tables of 10-12 participants. Technology then transforms these discussions into synthesized recommendations. Each table submits their ideas through wireless computers, and the entire group votes on final recommendations. Results are compiled into a report in real-time for participants to take home at the end of the meeting, immediately identifying priorities and recommendations. Since the organization's founding in 1995, *AmericaSpeaks* methodologies have engaged over 65,000 people in over 50 large-scale forums in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Meetings have addressed local, state and national decisions on issues ranging from Social Security reform to the development of municipal budgets and regional plans.

<http://www.americaspeaks.org>