

## A We Space Process Ecology

Navigating the paradox of injunction and method free process facilitation –a praxis report.

*“One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.” – Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra.*

By Anne Caspari and Mushin Schilling

### Prelude

Due to the controversial material and interpretation we give here we, the authors of this chapter, want to state clearly and up front that everything we say comes from our own action research and numerous in depth conversations with people experimenting in this field. We would even go so far as to say that the nature of what we were and are experimenting with does not lend itself to objectivity without losing what we found to be the most valuable insights our material and interpretation offers: to participate in the birth of dancing stars out of the chaos that lives inside us. Our intuition is that what we offer is synchronous with and may help some of us psychologically process the environmental and societal chaos that besieges humanity.

### *Imagine...*

You find yourself in an ancient forest with islands of ancient trees and patches of younger ones, with clearings and marshes, and everything else that lives in a natural environment untouched by human social life. All beings participate according to their inborn nature. There is elegant complexity, evolved over a long period of time and through adaptive self-organization. There is a thriving diversification with the emergence of new forms, agents and processes.

Now imagine yourself in a circle of people, say 10 or 15, intending to bring forth something similar, inspired by nature and future possibilities. They came to discover what the real nature of participation is and what new types of ideas would emerge naturally among them. Now how would they

go about designing the process? Can it be designed at all? How would they go about creating a supportive process structure that could orchestrate a coherence with multiple flows of understanding in a group of diverse people, substituting for the role of time that makes a grown forest so awe inspiring and generative?

Properties such as self-organization, coherence and structural elegance as it is often found in nature, are at the root of *emergence*<sup>1</sup> and cannot be designed in our view. They evolve over time with the participation of all elements. An ancient jungle can well be described as being in an *authentically chaordic*<sup>2</sup> process in a continually emergent, dynamic whole: everything adds to its life and nothing is wasted. If, following our guiding metaphor, we look at group inquiries in this context then this would mean that some form of “chaos” has to be a necessary and intrinsic part of the process in order to arrive at such a natural and generative way of being.

For reasons that will become clear in the course of this chapter, it seems that in the field of researchers of this process there is little awareness of “chaos” being an intrinsic requirement of a process that aims to reach a truly “natural order.” Rather all facilitators we have seen so far are trying to *make it happen*, trying to maneuver group-members into a natural participation in a chaordic field. This is often painful as we will see also, with little resemblance of the elegance as it unfolds in our forest.

The problem with intrinsic chaos and how to deal with it is not new<sup>3</sup>(Peck 1978). Also, there are quite a few tools and approaches that are designed to harvest the fruits of collective processes (Bohm

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<sup>1</sup> Emergence (latin, emergere for appearing“, arising“ or arising out of“) is the spontaneous coming into being of new characteristics or structures of a system out of the interplay of its elements.

<sup>2</sup> The termchaordicrefers to a *system*of organization that blends characteristics of *chaosandorder*. It was coined by *Dee Hock*, founder and former CEO of the *VISA* credit card association. We use it to describe the way nature is organized, in particular, living *organisms*and the *evolutionary*process by which they arise.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Peck, the grandfather of this process, called this phase chaos in his writings. We have added authentic to it because the chaos only starts to appear after the participants become more authentic.

1996, Senge et al. 2004; Brown 2005, Scharmer 2007, Baeck & Titchen Beeth 2012, etc). In the last few years there has been an increasing interest into the much vaunted ‘we-space’ practices<sup>4</sup>, which could be said to generally aim for what we describe as taking place within the *authentically chaordic phase*.

However, despite the many efforts around such collective processes, when it comes to actual phenomenological research into the more hidden and challenging aspects of the relational dynamics in connection with novelty and real emergence in group life, there remain many unanswered questions.

We, the authors of this chapter, have been involved in the application of meta-theories in the field of transformative collective processes and their emergent *action logics*<sup>5</sup> to gain new insight and to finding new types of processes and outcomes - for “prototyping.” Our action research focused mostly on the basic phenomenology of such processes in individuals and groups, including phase and pattern recognition in relation to mapping adaptive pushback, resistances to change and methods for correcting it<sup>6</sup>. With the backdrop of this research and experience<sup>7</sup>, in this chapter we describe the focal points in our research and reflect on this learning. The pervasive generative processes in an un-spoilt Urwald<sup>8</sup> intrigue us; we have been especially interested in working with group processes that involve minimal to no facilitation or priming<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> For instance the works of Andrew Venezia (2013); Dustin DiPerna (2014); Thomas Hübl (2011); Terry Patten (2013)

<sup>5</sup> Cook-Greuter, S. (2002): A detailed description of the development of nine action logics in the leadership development framework: adapted from ego development theory. <http://www.cook-greuter.com/>

<sup>6</sup> see for example: <https://mindshiftintegral.wordpress.com/working-with-resistance/>

<sup>7</sup> We have also incorporated the experience that Mushin has had in his experiments between 2002 and 2005 in his Serenity Center in the Czech Republic.

<sup>8</sup> Urwald: primeval forest. Anne’s 1995 final thesis in environmental planning on natural forest ecology argued for turning German standards for nature conservation on their head by not just protecting small static bits of rare forests, but large woodlands including their natural processes. The thesis project was implemented in 1998 and is now a protected Urwald.

<sup>9</sup> Priming: in this context explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious directing of a process towards a desired result by words, ritual, exercise or other method.

### *Priming - No-Priming*

As part of our action research, we also participated in three experiments at the Alderlore Insight Center (AIC) run by Bonnitta Roy in Torrington, Connecticut. While the first of these experiments at the AIC<sup>10</sup> was both primed and facilitated, the last two of were run deliberately with neither priming nor facilitation, which was an integral part of what we have come to call *minimal elegant process design*. Both no-facilitation and no-priming are concepts that are central in our thinking about this phenomenon. Usually group processes are *directed* by specific practices and methods using specific rules geared to come to particular results. This, for us, differs from the unfolding of a complex process interaction, mediated by a process of *self-organization* (Ashby 1947, Maturana & Varela 1980, Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

Without chaos, in our view there is no real emergence and authentic participation remains elusive. At the very best, in our view, you get domesticated participation. Domesticated in the sense that it is geared towards getting *insights into the known*, whereas we are of the mindset that in authentic participation there is a high probability for an *emergence of what we do not yet know*. Thus, if someone facilitates or mediates a group process by using direct or indirect interventions based on some form of design principles, in our view the outcome is filtered by the priming and procedures used. In a way, it is “landscaped.”

Consequently, it became clear to us why even integral priming coming from the developmental level called Turquoise<sup>11</sup>, which was attempted by some participants during the second AIC experiment,

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<sup>10</sup> One of these experiments, done in November 2013 was explicitly conducted with people who had extensive backgrounds and diverse practises of an integral nature. 16 participants took part in this 5-day exploration.

<sup>11</sup> In Clare W. Graves' Spiral dynamics model; the equivalent in Susan Cook-Greuter's developmental model is construct-aware, and in Bill Torbert's remodelling of Jane Loevinger's developmental model, it is the level of the alchemist. In Robert Kegan's 5 stage developmental model it is the fifth stage.

interfered with authentic emergence (more on the reason for this below). We were curious what novelty and insights we would be able to come up with together, given that there was ample diversity of conviction, expertise and experience in the room. Our implicit assumption was that the absence of any given leading question, any specific facilitation method, or any approved approach to we-space practice would set us free from outcomes that would be then, inevitably, be colored and informed by that approach or method. What came as a surprise for us is that our minimum elegant structures were not welcomed. Some participants actually demanded more structure or even pushed for their respective favorite facilitation methods, tools and ways to get us all through the process. However, a noticeable phenomenon in room was, that as long as these moves came from a space of; trying to fill in gaps ('healing'), avoid what was going on ('escape') or push for a certain method ('power'), they were all rejected by the other people in the room<sup>12</sup>. It led to people refusing to adopt anyone else's conviction, method, or priming. No matter how high the goal, all facilitation attempts simply prolonged the duration of the authentic chaos phase. This includes also other kinds of unintended implicit priming. For example, some people in the larger group had previously worked with each other in other contexts and or shared particular concepts. Simply labeling phases, states and phenomena as, for instance, "the bottom of the U" or "causal", "source", "circle being", created priming, expectations and in some cases even fallacies and traps. In hindsight we observed that it actually activated pushback and shadow and thus created *more chaos*. We found that a good way to avoid turning the naming of phases, states and arising phenomena

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<sup>12</sup> For a more comprehensive list of these type of moves see the chapter on 'Relational Dynamics in the Chaordic Phase'

into something negative, we can instead surf the paradoxes created by this naming activity, and stay aware of the priming power of concepts while using labels.

### ***Enter the Unknown***

When we did our second experiment at the AIC, we, the core crew, did not set it up to be chaotic even though we did aim for no facilitation and no priming. As the core group, we found ourselves in the midst of it, which was unexpected to us and most participants, since all of them were highly trained individuals from different schools of thought and therapy. In the beginning of the first day, all of us participants were still quite polite. This did not last long because not having a facilitator, and in the absence of formal priming every utterance, including strategic silences, turned into grist for the mill. When someone suggested for instance, that we do a formal round of introductions, things became chaotic as we were already on the brink of a deeper authenticity, and formal introductions simply did not cut it. So we started the chaotic meandering through the authentic material that every participant brought to bear on the situation. Any attempt to skillfully facilitate it away failed and thus just added to the chaos. The atmosphere became more real as participants dropped polite forms of discourse and aspects of their learnt roles, moving closer to what really moved them. What we observed<sup>13</sup> was, the more painful the chaos felt, the more strategies were sought to get away from it, which only deepened it. Any attempt to give the process a direction was thwarted, sometimes immediately, sometimes after a few minutes of “let’s try this.” At that time, in that space, there appeared<sup>14</sup> to be no way out of the chaos at this point, so we had to stay in what was coming up and sit it out. It was *only in hindsight* that it became clear to us as core

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<sup>13</sup> We wanted to stress the fact that the phenomena we observed in the room in real time came as a surprise for us (authors and core team). Our assumptions were almost in the opposite direction. We did not design this process to lead to chaos nor did we expect it. Nor could we call this out in the process itself: any injunction in the direction of “let’s all be open to chaos, let’s hold this” would have created just more pushback.

<sup>14</sup> This is, again, clearly our interpretation of what we observed in that space and in our own phenomenology. We did also experience a direct correlation between the willingness to stay and sit it out and the amount of “skin in the game”, of a real interest in both process and outcome. We are, of course, open to different interpretations.

group how important this phase of authentic chaos really is, at the time it was simply difficult for us. What also dawned on us was that *any kind of priming and facilitation leads to an outcome of a different nature*, outcomes that are already on the map and possibly much desired for and helpful in particular situations but not new and unmapped, not *chaordic*.

### ***The Presence and Absence of the Social Self***

We have found that a group of human beings can gain food for mind, soul and heart, for their organizations and other social contexts in which they are embedded without any guidance, facilitation, and priming. To better understand why this is so let us introduce the way we use the concept of the “*social self*.”<sup>15</sup> We regard the social self as that realm of our human psyche where our strategies, tactics, roles, social life and culture reside; all the patterns that we learnt symbiotically and explicitly, and which help us survive and thrive in our social contexts. In our view, it is *not* the source of, for instance, creativity, insight, care, play and love, or fear, panic and hate. Rather, it *mediates* all the original emotive material that comes from the deeper reaches of our individual and collective “*psychosphere*”<sup>16</sup>. Thus, to our thinking, all facilitation and priming originates with the social self and its regulatory functions. Authentic chaos, then, is what you get once the social self’s common politeness-filters are absent.

The social self *develops* more or less adequately in social settings by continually adapting to the sociosphere in which it lives, while the generative self *emerges* and *evolves* (Roy & Trudel, 2011)<sup>17</sup>. We

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<sup>15</sup> We prefer this much above the more popular term “ego” with all its psychological and social baggage. However, as far as we are concerned there is much similarity to that term and what it means in a more practical sense. The more traditional use of the term was coined by George Herbert Mead in 1901; see: <https://goo.gl/oU9e8u>

<sup>16</sup> Psychosphere (aka Noosphere); the sphere of human consciousness. Akin to its sister the biosphere, full of images, audible ‘objects’ aka thoughts, ideas, dreams, symbols, fantasies and so on. We didn’t want to use the term collective (un-)consciousness because the associations with this term are psychological and the psychosphere encompasses everything touched by human views however (un-)conscious they may be.

<sup>17</sup> Roy & Trudel (2011) give a helpful and detailed disambiguation of the different properties of generative processes, such as development, evolution, emergence and autopoiesis

take the generative self to be the self that naturally springs to life in a human being. The mediation by the social self of what comes from our generative self has become highly complex due to the steadily increasing complexity of most societies on earth. In the last century the rate of complexification has only been accelerating – so much so that in the near future we may actually *need* artificial intelligence to stay abreast the now exponentially rising wave (Turchin et al. (2006). The participatory process we are talking about, once it has become authentically chaordic, brings great elegance into this complexity, and allows individuals a lucid way of interaction that seems to be in touch with a “simplicity beyond complexity”.

### ***Relational Dynamics in the Chaordic Phase***

We have analyzed the phenomena that happened in the three most prominent group experiments at the Alderlore Insight Center, and a few others in between. They appear to follow certain recognizable patterns indicative for the different cycles of the process. For example, participants learn to recognize their own coping and escape mechanisms, which occur and feed into the authentic chaos phase – learning not to take themselves too seriously when in that phase. Alternatively, they might distinguish between coherence and cohesion<sup>18</sup>, which have distinctly different outcomes and learn to harvest these depending on the purpose of the group process. In addition, taking a closer look at the shadow side of these patterns has revealed some potent traps even for the more experienced facilitator. For these reasons, we portray the different phases of the process in more detail.

In our experiments, and from what we learnt from earlier group processes, groups cycled through four phases and several patterns within these phases. An initial inventory is as follows:

#### **1. Politeness: Entry phase**

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<sup>18</sup> The way we use these two words here needs some elucidation: By coherence cycles we mean people, matters, ideas, ways of thinking organically and in a self-organized fashion “stick together”; by cohesion we mean the group practices that keep people within social confines of a group where naturally there is a “with us” and a “not part of us” or even “against us.”



2. **Authentic chaos:** often starting with rebellion against the limits of politeness
  - a. Rebellion
  - b. Rally around my flag
  - c. Organize it
  - d. Philosophy
  - e. Q&A games
  - f. Politics
  - g. Self-realization games
3. **Silence**
4. **Authentic Chaord:** The Clarities
5. **Emergence**

***Endothermic Process<sup>19</sup>: Burning out relational dynamics***

From polite beginnings, where every difference is equalized and anything that could cause conflict is immediately down-regulated, warded off, neutered, stereotyped, or corrected, to name but a few of the tactics used to keep everyone in a civil space, the participatory process moves into chaos relatively quickly, certainly once participants in a group with diverse backgrounds start to express themselves more authentically, often at first as a kind of rebellion against polite statements.

In the beginning of the chaos phase, resulting from un-facilitated authenticity, (hence *authentic chaos*), people often try to regain the polite status quo by; an introduction round, by making commonplace remarks by pointing out that “that is not such a big difference”, by offering good advice, by trying to “heal” or “fix” things, and similar interventions. These only deepen the chaos because by now, as people are trying out more authentic views and utterances, they resist being told that this is “not a big difference” or by “I can really understand how that hurt you.” Consequently, there might be a call for

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<sup>19</sup> Endothermia is Greek for “inner heat”; endo- “inner” and thermia, “heat”.

authority to come fix the situation, which becomes more and more uncomfortable, or alternatively by someone trying to take the lead. We have come to call this cycle, Rally around my flag! A few variants of this cycle are patterned around alliances, “let’s get together” under my or your leadership, demanding the organizers of the gathering to “take the lead!” and so forth. Sometimes people try to get together to organize it. You may see a bigger circle fall apart for periods, some participants trying to find a form in which to help or coerce others to “do it our way.” This breaks down when, again, it meets rebellion or other forms of refusal to let someone or a group within the group take control of the process.

Sometimes we observed debates over the right philosophy to apply to the process. Part of these exchanges may be comments and meta-comments about the process or stages of the process. They are rarely self-reflective in the sense of “what I’m trying to do here is...”; but even that, when it happens, is grist for the authentically chaotic mill because essentially all these endeavors are geared to *stop the chaos* from running its course<sup>20</sup>. Another pattern may appear here when two or three people keep up a Q&A game by tossing each other the communicative ball by asking questions that have obvious answers or keep the conversation between them going for longer periods of time. Sooner or later someone will try to get in a word or two, calling this little “elite” on their content or form, or use any of the numerous social politics humans have developed to “get something done” or to “arrive at something that makes sense” or to stop us all from “turning in circles” so that finally we can “get somewhere.”

In groups where participants are involved in some kind of work on themselves the self-realization game may appear. Someone may say, “I’m so thankful for this group as I came to learn...” or “listening to some of you I come to realize that...” This can also take some more funny forms where people try to

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<sup>20</sup> If we are allowed a socio-psychological comment here: there is a conviction in civilized humanity, it seems, that if we’re really authentic than “nothing good can come of this!” It seems to belong to a deep-seated collective fear of the “wild”.

make fun of themselves and or others. Attempts to ‘heal and fix’ can also be observed in the context of this when someone offers a deep authentic hurt or pain and it is immediately placed in a spiritual, therapeutic or philosophical context.

As our readers may imagine going through authentic chaos hurts, sometimes deeply, regardless of a participant’s developmental stage<sup>21</sup>. Within this chaos, all ways to “come to grips with the situation” and lead to a desired result surface and are unmasked as just another social strategy or tactic to down-regulate socially uncomfortable feelings (Panksepp, 2005). Eventually every such maneuver only leads the group deeper into authentic chaos. At some point all attempts at priming, facilitating or directing the process have “burnt out.” It becomes obvious that one cannot make emergence happen.

We found that the minimal elegant design of this process is simply resisting all temptations to intervene in order to balance, lead, integrate or catalyze. Interventions do happen, but they are self-organized and self-organizing, arising from the process itself. Anything else can only lead to a paradox à la Watzlawick<sup>22</sup>, “Be spontaneous! Be authentic! Come from source! Stay in the causal! Find deeper meaning!” In our process, none of the above ways and means sketched work, which becomes obvious, and finally all participants gave up trying to direct the process. One could say that a sense of “capitulation” settles upon all. Emptiness. Silence, which may at first feel gloomy and has the taste of failure. Then the surprise: tangible clarity sets in.

### *All Clear*

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<sup>21</sup> The capacity of participants to handle painful situations like this, as with all aspects of this process, is dependent on the developmental stage of the individual; nevertheless, these capacities must be trained and practiced, regardless of one’s level of development.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Watzlawick:(1921- 2007) Austrian-American philosopher and psychoanalyst has done extensive research into human communication, especially paradoxes. See for example: *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies and Paradoxes* (2011).

We call the internal state that participants now fall into *sensory clarity*. It does not obliterate unique individuality in any sense, but the social self has certainly stepped back. Nevertheless, one's boundaries are no longer experienced as limits: we-being, we-fullness, we-space - this experience has led to a number of terms centered around "we."

The phenomenon we call sensory clarity does *not* correspond to the "causal" state of consciousness that Ken Wilber described as awaiting us all at the bottom of the U (Scharmer 2003)<sup>23</sup>. We take this to be a simple confusion of state-qualities. When authentic chaos has removed all filters, masks and maneuvers, what remains is simple and feels utterly natural: sensory clarity. Erroneously labeling this to be causal consciousness arguably makes real emergence at this stage all but impossible, robbing the process of possibilities that would be *really* new, in the sense that they have never before been possible. The causal is, after all, defined as that what according to Wilber, Aurobindo et al., "has always been there," and realizing it is regarded as a great step towards the ultimate goal in that tradition, timeless and changeless non-dual consciousness. Due to all the Integral literature on gross, subtle and causal phenomena, this interpretation focuses the attention on state-qualities and their numinosity, whereas interpreting it as *sensory clarity* directs it towards what comes up first and foremost via the five or six senses without filters.

### ***The Authentic Chaord***

Our action research has revealed sensory clarity to be the first phase in a larger unfolding that we have been and continue to explore, and whose minimal elegant interpretation we are working on in an ongoing dialogue with the AIC and other pioneers of the process.

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<sup>23</sup> For another description of the states at the bottom of the U see: Jaworski, J. (2013): Source.

If the group or the action researchers can remain in sensory clarity and let possible contradictions, apparent paradoxes, strangeness, etc. “be whatever they are,” a next phase of clarity can unfold which we call *subtle energy/emotional clarity*. This alludes to the participants’ capacity or willingness to remain clear in these sometimes quite strong emotional dimensions. If, moreover, the group is diverse enough - meaning that it encompasses more than just one mindset or culture - then a *cultural/identity/intersubjective clarity* can unfold. In this clarity, finally, it is also possible for what we call *conceptual clarity* to become a shared reality. The basic content of this chapter originally emerged from the latter clarity after having sought to understand and model this process into a process view that would not prime further action research but would, rather, provide a minimal elegant structure that could foster further investigation and collaboration among the pioneers of this process (Roy 2015<sup>24</sup>, Murray, forthcoming).

### ***Emergence***

Imagine eight people sitting on the grass of a huge garden. They have passed through all the stages of authentic chaos. They have learnt that the chaordic phase of the process is both individual as well as collective; individual in the sense that they have dropped all social self-strategies of choice, of trying to gain any control over what is going to happen next. All of them are effortlessly present, senses and emotions are *clear*. One of the eight mentions something important to him. A few minutes later, another adds something seemingly disjunctive, not fitting from the point of view of a social self, that is; but because the eight aren’t responding on that level anymore, what has been said is just another audible object in participatory space, just like the “important issue” before. And as participants utter things

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<sup>24</sup> Roy, B.(2015): Open to Participate. <http://alderloreinsightcenter.com/portfolio/cppej/>; CPPEI collective participatory process for emergent insight

significant enough to them it *seems*<sup>25</sup> like a larger intelligence is at work constellating or orchestrating the utterances which half an hour later leads to an important insight for the one that started up this particular cycle within the larger chaord. But not only to him, for now someone else has a seemingly unrelated but important enough insight for her to say, “Holy fuck!” as she’s unwrapping some of the communicable part of this insight even more related and unrelated matters fall into place for some participants and a whole series of significant insights ensue. Then silence, a rich space where nobody feels a need to say anything; maybe because the insights all of a sudden create clarity where before things were obscure or because it is a joy to sit with people in the grass, simply present without social selves interfering. In the course of the further afternoon, a few more insights tumble out of the participatory space but also laughing and some larger conceptual clarifications.

The ancient forest, our guiding metaphor, is a good analogy to what happens in a participatory process in its authentically chaordic phase. Nobody is doing anything in particular other than what really moves him or her to “put an audible object in the participatory space,” coming, so it seems to us, directly from the generative self. We hold that one cannot thus access the generative self without having gone through authentic chaos. It is not required to have that happen in one long process if people have enough experience with going through it; but our experience is that even then, a certain amount of authentic chaos is bound to happen as social habits are amazingly strong.

### *Paradoxical territory*

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<sup>25</sup> “Seems”: because we are not suggesting such an intelligence as a separate entity, a somewhat independent entity as an agent that does the orchestration. Nevertheless some people relate to this intelligence as if it were an other. When Mushin was experimenting with this process calling it “Circles of the Heart”, he actually related to this as the “Circle Being”. We know of several people pioneering this type of work that use similar terminology, and where they are influenced by New Age like spiritual narratives this work relates to getting to a space where this Being is deified to quite an extent. This comes as no surprise as the phase we call authentically chaordic allows for almost any spiritualized interpretation to be held as “really, really true.” See also Murray, T (forthcoming): *Contemplative Dialogue Practices: An embodied inquiry into deep interiority, shadow work, and insight.*

We have found repeatedly that any attempt to lower the ‘internal heat’ during the chaos phase takes transformative energy out of group processes, and constitutes a trap that seasoned facilitators frequently find themselves in. The application of theoretical frameworks, like, for example, Scharmer’s U-Theory has complemented and enriched the landscape of transformational processes and added the much needed process element to some more static frameworks, such as Wilber’s AQAL map. In this, the warning (Korzybski 1958) to not confuse the map with the territory has been heard. However, the next fallacy is just around the corner, taking the experience of an authentic chaos process and turning it into a recipe and program with certain stages and steps for it complete with a facilitator’s manual and toolbox.

Following a specific method and set of instructions, that, like an educational trail in an ancient forest, intends to help participants to navigate through collective processes will get certain predictable results. While these might be good outcomes, they are typically reduced and filtered through the given structures. This confusion is easy to fall into, and avoiding it invites practitioners to a constant dance in paradoxical territory. If our view is correct, then to get to the magnificent phase of sensory clarity and its potential emergences, participants have to stumble through a chaordic process, a process that cannot be prescribed in an orderly program with eight neat steps to follow in order to get there. What you get if nevertheless you try are flatland versions of hitherto valid processes that are neither transformative nor authentic.

Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer and Flowers have done a wonderful job of describing such collective chaordic change processes in their own group and in other groups of different composition, size, and topical direction in their book “Presence” (2004). But when it comes to practice, the authors of this chapter have in many instances encountered processes that reduced the U-Process to a shallow *prescriptive* set of instructions (“Step 4: feel the field; be authentic. Step 5. Find deeper meaning and

purpose” etc.) which render such attempts mere caricatures of what led to the original findings as portrayed in the Presence book, leaving participants perplexed and in resistance.

We are aware that we are operating in a field where what we describe is a highly complex process experience hoping to make it possible for new explorers to repeat the experience. We explicitly want to make it a point to stay aware of the “description- prescription – fallacy.” And we position ourselves as promoters, maybe even as guardians, but not as facilitators of natural chaordic generative processes. In addition, since there is no outside to this process once started, we fully participate in the dance.

### *Dancing with paradox*

In closing, we believe that what emerges in a participatory process of the kind we have been describing *includes* authentic chaos and cannot be predicted or foreseen. Any attempt to do so is priming or facilitating it in directions that steer it away from real emergence. Being *authentically chaordic* is experienced as wholesome. It seems that we humans are very able to recognize this way of being regardless of our level of development, just as we can recognize light or darkness however much we have further developed the intricacies of what is visible. Conversely, the *interpretation* of what emerges in the collectively experienced lucidity and how individuals use in their life, does depend on their personal and collective development. Since, in our view, the capacity to allow for authentic chaos grows with every developmental stage, it may be that in earlier stages priming and facilitation are inevitable; further action research is needed to determine if this is actually so. This leads us to venture that several other interpretations of this process have been much too quick to develop means and methods to constrain and restrict authentic chaos, even if done to reliably create a predictable and wonderful we-feeling of some spiritual depth, however beneficial this may otherwise be.

Finally, we hold the intention of supporting participatory collectives to experience the clarities



described above, and find or create something really novel to move towards, as a real next step. Being aware of the paradoxical nature of this statement, we are convinced that, with enough maturity to allow this process to unfold in its entirety, this is a next evolutionary stage of self-organization in a collective, group or organization and its emergent action logics.

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