

# Facilitation and Multi-leveled Interventions in Community Building

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## Introduction

Community building is an umbrella term for working with a group of people who hold something in common, whether history, geography, a social network, spiritual vision or task. Traditionally, communities have been understood as “communities of the ground,” groups of people sharing land and housing, connected through local family relationships, etc. (see Gumperz 1989; Bott 1957). Today, there is a growing phenomenon of “communities of the mind,” groups held together not necessarily geographically but through ideas, spirituality, ideology or professional activities. For instance, due to migration patterns and advanced telecommunications within the last half century, some ethnic, racial and religious groups consider themselves communities even when they do not share a physical location. Thus, a community of the mind is any group of people bound together by an idea, heritage, goal or belief.

One type of community of the mind is a learning community, a group of people who learn, explore, grow and develop together. In such a group, not only do the individuals within the community identify as learners, but the community itself learns and evolves. Some believe that people involved in Process Work worldwide constitute a learning community.

Although individuals involved in Process Work around the world live in different regions, they are bound together by certain ideas and attitudes, such as a love of learning, a spirit of optimism and the belief that trouble and conflict can lead to growth and creativity. In our experiences working with and living in different communities involved

with Process Work, we have found that while the communities share similar ideas and visions, each expresses a unique flavor, style and nature. Even within one country or state, different process work groups are unique. The politics of the area, the indigenous spirits of the land, the weather, history, geography and resources all contribute to this diversity.

Even the issues we encounter in the process work communities differ. Some groups focus on training issues, others on political issues, and still others on relationships and intimacy. Specific issues vary from place to place. Some groups deal with conflict around money, others with scarcity and competition. Some groups concentrate on issues of confidentiality and gossip, while others grapple with social and political issues. Though the issues or content may differ, from a process-oriented perspective, we find certain structural dynamics that are similar. We discuss these further below.

## What is community building?

A community differs from a group in that a community is a group over time. It is difficult to say at which magical moment a group becomes a community. Sometimes we feel the development of a community begin to happen over the course of a weekend. At other times, we could sit in a particular group for a month and never feel a sense of bonding, common vision or relationship. In defining community, we come across an interesting set of problems. A group rarely expresses a consensus about identity. Each individual or part

of the group has something different to say about the group, about its identity, and about its status as a community. Thus, using a subjective definition, that is, asking the members of a group to identify whether or not that group forms a community, leads to a big discussion of whether or not the members feel their group is a community.

This in itself makes up an aspect of democratic community life: discussion about identity and various competing viewpoints about the nature of the group. Thus, we take a phenomenological approach and assume that a group is a community when discussion about community arises, regardless of the outcome or decision from that discussion.

Community building, a new widely interdisciplinary field, will become increasingly important as communities take a more active role in social and political life. Community building refers to many different aspects of working with groups of people who share a past and/or future. Today, community builders comprise a diverse array of occupations. Some community workers help rural or urban communities acquire resources and funding for planning and developing projects such as parks, new schools and buildings, traffic regulations or bicycle paths.

Community workers also act as social activists to help advocate for non-mainstream communities, such as racial minorities, poor rural areas threatened by illegal toxic waste dumps, high unemployment, alcoholism, illiteracy, etc. Community workers may also involve themselves in helping fight for land rights for indigenous peoples, or in working with the homeless, juveniles or mentally ill people within a city. Community building also refers to people doing organizational development in business, as businesses are forms of community.

Community building can also create strategic interventions into problem areas of diversity and multi-culturalism. For instance, the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) works to reduce prejudice and stereotyping and enhance community by bringing diverse populations together to learn about one another.<sup>1</sup> Speaker and author Scott Peck also promotes community building as the key to creating peace and addressing many societal problems (Peck 1980; 1988).

In Process Work, building community happens through working with a group on whatever issue emerges in the moment. The process work paradigm sees groups as multi-levelled fields which, like

individuals, have a personality, identity, edges, unconscious aspects and directions of growth. Process Work adds to other paradigms the concept of channels, that is, levels of experience through which groups and communities function. These levels of experience include individuals, relationships, subgroups and large groups (Mindell 1985; 1989; 1992). Working with a group, therefore, means identifying which level a group is currently addressing and approaching it through this level. Thus, group work may look at moments like individual therapy, group process, relationship work or subgroup work. This idea of working with a group at different levels comes from Mindell's application of channels to group work.

The central concept of community building in the process paradigm is to help the group contact the background dreaming process in whatever channel it appears in the moment. The dreaming process is the new element of growth trying to emerge in a group, typically in the form of disturbance, relationship problems, money difficulties, and social or political conflict. Mindell refers to the new growth as a "dreaming process." Similar to the messages of dreams and body symptoms, a group's new growth often first manifests as an invisible, irrational or somewhat mysterious force.

### History of group paradigms

The pre-World War II individual psychology paradigm considered groups as collections of individuals. For instance, Freud's concept of groups, still found in many of today's therapies, is based on the idea that individuals in a group project their internal psychology and family of origin dynamics onto others and onto the leader (Freud 1921). During the second world war, government funding for research into communications, information exchange and small group dynamics led to the cross-pollination of sociology, communication theory and psychology.

Social psychologists from George Herbert Mead to Erving Goffman (see Mead 1934; Goffman 1959) have shown that our experiences in groups are not just determined by our personal psychology, but also by the roles, interactions and norms of the group. The logical extension of this idea means that groups have a life of their own. They develop, have identities, complexes, rules and issues, just as individuals do. This new paradigm views a group as a whole living organism, not reducible to the sum of its parts.

Process Work follows in the tradition of sociologists and social theorists who have shifted the focus to the largest level of analysis: the group as a whole. However, unlike social theorists, Process Work sees the group as a multi-leveled phenomenon. Process Work includes moments of individual focus, work on abuse, illness and symptoms, and relationship work. It also encompasses the outer world of politics, issues such as racism, classism and sexism. And, borrowing from indigenous religions and beliefs, it includes the spirit world of intangible experience, such as dreams, synchronicities and environmental phenomena.

In this article, we would like to show how this multi-leveled concept of groups and communities can aid community building. We will illustrate this using our work with numerous process work communities around the world. Our goal is to show the uses and flexibility of a multi-leveled approach to community building. The communities we have worked with and lived in consist of loosely connected groups of participants, organizers, students, diplomates and trainers of Process Work, as well as interested people from the general public.

The importance of the multi-leveled approach became clear to us in our travels. We noticed that the large group process forum often took precedence as the primary method of community building, emphasized over other levels of community life. We would like to show that working with the large group alone does not necessarily create community or address all community problems fully. Other levels, such as the individual, relationships, and subgroups, need to be addressed.

### **Community developers as participant facilitators**

Working with a community at many different levels requires various skills and abilities. The facilitator needs to know something about working with individuals, relationships, families and subgroups, as well as with the large group. As we demonstrate below, the approach the facilitator takes to the problems of the community should reflect the level that the group is working on. Thus, we need to look at the concept of facilitator first.

The traditional community developer enters as an outside consultant hired by those within to help the organization with its development. However, our experience indicates that the best

help comes from inside the group. Someone from within can understand the heart and soul of their own community. Ideally, everybody in a community should identify as a facilitator, responsible for long term development, for creating healthy and healing atmospheres, and for furthering individual as well as group growth. Facilitation means not only leading or intervening into group process, but actively working on relationships, on oneself, on one's subgroup, and on political issues of the larger society.

This ideal situation challenges the inside facilitator, because those within a group have biases, prefer their own subgroups, and have interpersonal conflicts with one another. In some situations, the community may lack experience or tools and may therefore ask someone from the outside for help.

We have had the good fortune to act as visiting facilitators in numerous places in the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, in learning communities ranging in size from three to one hundred people. We remain outsiders in the sense that we do not live in those areas, yet we are insiders since we maintain ongoing relationships with the people and we belong to the global process work community.

Traditional concepts of the facilitator, from psychotherapist to organizational developer, are based on the separation of therapist and client roles. To avoid painful and difficult conflicts of interest, the facilitator and client traditionally remain separate. However, we find that facilitation from within is an important form of working with groups. When a facilitator works with a community, she becomes a part of it. She feels its tensions, lives on that particular land, eats its food, picks up its communication styles and labors under its political system. As a facilitator, she also needs to be a participant. How can the group trust her unless she also becomes an insider, someone who suffers, feels, commiserates and understands?

Just having the answer to a community's problem is not a solution; it is an irritation. Communities don't want answers, they want growth. They want to continue as a group and if the facilitator provides all the answers without suffering the problems, she will be regarded as an outsider. Growth needs to emerge from within, not come from without.

Mindell has written extensively about the diverse roles, responsibilities and skills a facilitator needs in order to work with groups (see Mindell 1992; Mindell forthcoming; Summers 1994). The diverse functions of the facilitator revolve around the process-oriented concept of "neutrality." This means that the facilitator remains open to many things at once. She can work with different roles and experiences of the group and its members while remaining detached from the success of any one role or position. This sense of neutrality differs from having to stay neutral by not taking sides or not having an emotional position. Process-oriented neutrality requires fluidity or flexibility, the ability to follow many different experiences without remaining identified with any particular one.

Mindell states that the "leader" of the group is not only the designated or elected official, but the people who bring forward the secondary process, who represent the dreaming process trying to emerge (Mindell 1992; forthcoming). Thus, leadership and direction come from every member of the group, and potentially everyone should take part in this facilitative task of noticing what is happening in the whole group. Ideally, the facilitation role is momentary, shared and floating. It depends on people's interest and ability to notice and represent the whole and not just a part of the group's process.

After analyzing the work we have done in various communities, we came up with five overlapping roles for the community facilitator. We created these artificial categories to study different levels of community work and the skills needed to work with each level. We recognize that in practice facilitators perform all of these tasks simultaneously, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

#### *The therapist*

The therapist facilitates by paying attention to and working on the momentary atmosphere, tensions, conflicts, emotions, moods, relationship or individual troubles of the community. The therapist goes into tense, troubled areas and helps the community with its emotional states. Specifically, the therapist is trained to work with communication, interpersonal dynamics, edges, abuse, symptoms, and altered and extreme states of consciousness. The therapist part of the facilitator identifies the time spirals in the community's polarization or tension and helps bring these spirals into relationship with the community.

#### *The structural and organizational consultant*

The consultant knows organizations, their history, structures, procedures and policies. She can offer practical, immediate ideas to a group. Ideally she has experience with money and running a business. She can suggest structural changes and procedures which make an organization more efficient. A consultant in a process-oriented paradigm does more than just give ideas. She feeds back to the organization those ideas and structures which are already organically happening. Her chief task is to help the organization pick up the organic, natural rhythms, methods and procedures of the community, making them more useful.

In addition to the tasks of the organizational consultant in an organizational development (OD) paradigm, a process-oriented consultant keeps an eye on the mythic, historic and political dimensions of the group. She asks, where is the community going? Where has it been? What are the stories of the group? What parallels in history can help illuminate the community's path? What larger historical process is the group working on: racism, classism, human rights, colonialism? By finding history happening in the moment, the consultant helps the group find its direction for the future.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The activist*

The activist helps the unrepresented voices speak out. The activist knows which voices, both historically and currently, have been squashed. She consciously advocates for these unheard and neglected voices. She also knows about history and privilege and can identify when privilege appears in momentary interactions. The activist helps support and bring out ideas from those with less power in the community.

The activist holds a vision of human rights and global change. She recognizes that change comes from minority groups and the disempowered. Her larger goals are education and social evolution. She actively encourages the community to wake up to social issues and democracy at all levels (Mindell forthcoming).

#### *The networker*

The networker acts as hostess and ambassador, mingling with people and making them feel at home. She draws out people's needs, ideas, experiences and thoughts. She knows that change comes from the grassroots level. The networker knows

that no idea, no matter how brilliant or compelling, can achieve success without backing from the larger community. This backing may have as much to do with friendship, connection and spirit as with the merit of the idea itself.

If the therapist works with tensions and conflicts, the organizational consultant addresses long term structures and myths, and the activist educates, the networker drinks tea with people and brings them together. Her best work comes during the breaks, the “off-duty” moments. The networker gets to know people, not only because she is hired to do so, but because she genuinely likes people. She knows community is built on genuine friendship and intimacy, and that vision alone does not glue people together.

#### *The elder*

The elder is the keeper of the spirits. She cares for the whole, whatever level is being addressed. She asks not whether the group or individuals are happy, but whether the spirits agree with what the group is doing. The elder supports conflict and honors difference. She does not put the group or individuals down for conflict, but creates a vessel to address conflict.

The elder seeks to give back leadership to the group. She likes to stay in the background and support the natural wisdom of the group. She offers perennial wisdom and experience, and is like the grandmother who tells stories around the fire, helping people understand their part of a larger dream (Mindell forthcoming).

These facilitator roles overlap and interconnect. For instance, in the case of the organizational consultant who helps a group implement structural changes, she knows that changes have an emotional impact that will need processing. In fact, even before implementing structural change, she needs to network with the various subgroups who will be affected by it.

The different levels of the group demand different aspects of the facilitator. Each moment in a group may require a different set of skills from the facilitator or facilitation team. A relationship conflict in a group may require a therapist, while a large group process may require an elder. A social activist could help with subgroup conflicts concerning social inequality within the large group. Administrative and financial issues may resolve more quickly if the structural consultant role presides. The next section applies these ideas

of facilitation skills to the multi-levelled approach to community building.

#### **Multi-levelled interventions of community building**

Community consists of individuals, the relationships between them, the subgroups that individuals belong to, and the whole group, the collection of all individuals. No one of these elements alone creates community. Community is the experience of the group through all of these different levels. If we neglect any one of these levels, the general health of the community may suffer.

#### *The individual*

Although we see community life and collective experience as increasingly important to global change, individual focus also plays a very important part in community life. A one-sided focus on collective life at the expense of the individual can lead to individuals protesting, withdrawing or even leaving the community. Recent developments in worldwork<sup>3</sup> show that individuals in groups need support, and that groups can only go as far as individuals have gone (see Heizer, *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology* Vol. 5 No. 2; Amy Mindell, *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology* Vol. 5 No. 2). Democratic community life relies upon individuals' abilities to speak out, to participate in debate and discussion, and to represent different roles and positions within a group. Without support, focus and therapeutic assistance, individuals' participation may reach limits. The idea that abuse plays a role in curtailing democracy and participation in groups has been discussed extensively by Mindell (see Mindell forthcoming; Summers 1994).

Individual focus is important for other reasons. People won't stay in a community for shared vision or relationship alone. Individuals need support and freedom for their unique paths and processes. When people feel that community life demands that they conform to group norms, stop pursuing their own projects, or spend less time on their inner life, they will want to leave the community.

#### *Relationships*

Though many sociologists and organizational developers stress that shared vision creates community, visions require people to carry them out, people who can work together, conflict together and love together. Therefore sustainable relationships which endure ups and downs,

conflicts and changes, can turn a group into a community. Where there is room for intimacy, conflict and love, there is a solid community. Visions and great ideas are forfeited when people cannot get along. Relationships weave the net of the community by bringing together separate threads.

### *Subgroups*

Subgroups make up the energetic and creative hubs of a community. They need time, space and support to grow. People have different interests, hobbies, social roles and goals. They naturally gravitate towards others who share some of these features, so mini-communities or subgroups naturally form. For instance, in a community with teachers and students, both groups look to others in the same role for support, shared experiences, learning and comfort. Likewise, artists may seek other artists, people from certain regions may seek the company of one another, etc.

Socio-political subgroups, such as women, men, teachers, students, people of color, gays and lesbians, younger and older people, may not explicitly identify themselves in the community, but it remains important to acknowledge their existence and concerns. The existence of social minorities and the problem of human rights always creates a central issue, whether consciously acknowledged or not. Even when group members say, "Oh, that's not really an issue in our community," sooner or later the issue will come forward.

The administrative group is another type of community subgroup which needs emotional and financial support. With the exception of organizational developers, community builders sometimes neglect the administration, especially in non-business communities. Yet neglecting financial and structural needs can undermine the stability of a community. Furthermore, emotional and social issues within a community will often show up in the form of fiscal problems, personnel issues and management troubles. The administration reflects the emotional and social well being of the community at large.

### *Large group forum*

What role does the large group forum play in community building? Large group forums act like town hall meetings or village gatherings where everyone can be seen and heard and the collective can experience itself. In addition, large group forums provide an excellent diagnostic tool. By noticing what happens in the large group one can

sense which issues and polarities the group is grappling with, and at which level these issues manifest. How does the community look when they all meet? Can everyone speak? Does competition for the floor arise? Do individuals look depressed, tired or in need of personal focus? Do people act friendly, warm and related to one another or do they seem fearful and hesitant to speak and make physical contact? Do subgroups look neglected or disempowered? Do some vocal subgroups dominate? Are there minority members in the group? Do they look empowered? Comfortable? Included?

Thus, when working with a community, it's important to be aware of the different levels. Where does the problem show up? What level needs attention and focus? Do people's relationships need work? Are individuals overly burdened by collectivity, not getting enough time and attention for their personal growth? Are subgroups allowed to form? Are they stuck in conflict with other subgroups? Do political divisions surface between minority groups and those with more power? What is the overall vision for the entire community? Is there a forum for airing and expressing what happens in the community as a whole?

### **Examples from the field**

In our work with different communities, we found that each community differed in the problems they encountered and the support they required. Though issues and needs differed, we found a similar tendency. Many groups attempt to solve their community problems through working on them in the large group forum.

In one group, the belief that the group needed to work in the large group forum became a block. This belief undermined community development because the group members felt demoralized about their ability to work through issues at the large group level. Specifically, this community suffered from organizational difficulties. For years they had troubles keeping the group active between visits from process work trainers. They also had trouble networking among themselves and with other groups in the area. They suffered over what they felt was a personal failure to create a functioning group. After four years of involvement, they still felt isolated from each other and experienced difficulty working together.

Unfortunately, these individuals took on an identity as a dysfunctional group, hopeless at organizing, destined to never quite succeed. Yet, when

we sat with individuals, we discovered enthusiasm, dedication, great ideas, leadership and spirit. They impressed us with their level of skills. But what was happening at the group level?

Some members blamed the city itself, saying that it was conventional and formal and did not embrace new ideas readily. Others accused themselves, feeling inadequate about their group facilitation skills. Others put down their organizational skills. Some blamed the global process work community for neglecting them, and some blamed others within the community for holding up progress.

We asked the members what happened at the very beginning. How did they get involved? Did they know each other? Were they friends? Did they belong to the same network? We discovered that except for some couples within the group, the only thing these people held in common was a love of Process Work and a desire to bring it to their city. They had no relationship with one another at the beginning. In effect, they were strangers trying to build an organization.

Trying to work at the group level only made them feel more estranged and separate. The remedy for their problem came out of their dreams, individual processes and what happened organically when we sat together with people. One member who had been trying to perform organizational work for the group had dreamed of baking cakes for the others. This dream reflected a disavowed background tendency to hang out, gossip, tell jokes and get to know one another. The individuals in the group needed help to form close relationships and to be more personal and intimate with one another.

Instead of baking and eating cakes, the group had been engaged in serious large group processes to sort out their issues. That sorting was nearly impossible without a spirit of friendship and closeness. The continual failure to solve problems at the group level led them to doubt their abilities, question their own leadership, and to lose faith in being able to sustain their learning.

In this example, the community's focus on the large group forum level created a sense of failure and hopelessness. The issues involved concerned relationship. Thus, we attempted to match our methods of intervention with the nature of the problem. We spent more time as networkers, helping people hang out and build friendships. Here facilitation roles and group levels come

together. Both the methods and the facilitator's role need to reflect the level of the problem. Once the impasse is resolved, other levels of community life come into play.

In another community, we attended a meeting where the air felt thick with tension. No one wanted to speak. We tried working directly on the atmosphere, because it seemed so palpable. We imagined a critic in the background, ready to judge or criticize people for speaking. We even played the role of critic for the group and encouraged others to help fill this role or to react against it. But it didn't work. The sense of criticism was so strong that people were too afraid to stand up and speak!

When we asked the group why they felt it was so hard to speak, some people finally spoke of past relationship conflicts but dared not name them directly. We realized that the silence involved hurt, mistrust and fear. An important prerequisite for speaking in a group is not just one's skills or personal development, but having an ally in the room. Having even one enemy present can silence someone, especially if the enemy maintains a higher social rank within the community.

Seeing that perhaps many relationship conflicts remained unresolved, we acted as therapists and encouraged the group to work on relationship conflicts. The group broke up into many dyads. Some people travelled around the room, from one to another, working on different conflicts. Others made themselves available as helpers. We gave the group thirty minutes to do this, but they stayed in dyads for close to an hour. When they finally did come together, they managed to implement a decision about regularly scheduled community meetings and thus ended a six month stalemate about whether or not to continue as a group.

In this case, the difficulty of the large group was a symptom of numerous relationship conflicts that had grown rigid over time. Our role as therapist for the community meant working with the immediate communication problems and strong emotions between people. In both instances above, the community needed help with the relationship level, but the role demanded of the facilitators was different. In the first example, the process demanded that we be networkers, encouraging people to hang out. In the second instance, the community needed the facilitators to be more directive, helping people to confront difficult issues in relationship.

Every community struggles with the social and political issues of the world at large. The facilitator as social activist needs to address social issues such as human rights, money, class, ranking and privilege. A community's growth is ultimately tied to its ability to broach the socio-political issues in their group. Resentment breeds when social problems are left to individuals to solve. A social activist facilitator raises these issues on behalf of those who cannot bring them up because of their lack of power. In doing so, the social activist may momentarily incur the ire of the group because she questions the status quo. The activist facilitator does this because she is interested in social action, education and global change.

In one community, the organizers and facilitators of a conference were approached by a small subgroup of participants, comprised of single parents who wanted child care provided at the seminar. The parents offered to pay for it themselves, but the facilitators and organizers wanted to consider other options. Who should take responsibility for this subgroup's problem? Who should pay for child care at a seminar? Should it be included in the tuition costs of the seminar? Should it be an organizational expense, deducted from the income of the seminar leaders and organizers? Are parents responsible for daycare costs? Perhaps it should be a little of each?

Like most minority issues, this was not identified as a problem by the majority of group members. By raising the issue publicly, the organizers and facilitators took the role of social activist. They prompted the group to gain awareness as a collective of child care, families and single parenting. They spoke up for a minority, background issue that otherwise would not have come forward.

In this particular example, as in many issues of social activism, the momentary outcome is secondary to the raising of public awareness. However, concrete action needs to follow this raising of consciousness, or else the same issue or set of issues will continue to push forward for resolution. Awareness needs to result in visible, social change.

### **Emotions, administration and policies**

The large group process ideally provides a forum for expressing tensions, emotions and issues which would not otherwise come to the attention of the whole community. Different

parts get to connect, know each other and interact. But in large groups, policies and business matters are rarely accomplished. That's to be expected. Twenty-five people can hardly come up with a date for the next meeting, let alone decide on a format for a conference. One of the few times large groups are able to take specific action is during crises or emergencies when they agree to follow the direction of an individual or subgroup for a short period of time. Large group work helps facilitate administration by creating greater trust among members, greater understanding and empathy, clarity of vision, and acceptance of diversity and conflict. Once the group has processed emotional issues, it often lets a subgroup develop ideas to bring back for further discussion or ratification. Not everybody wants to get involved in every decision. It only seems that way when mistrust, jealousy, competition and conflict need attention. For example, in a working task group, sometimes all the members volunteer to do every project. Behind this may be a sense of competition and jealousy, a desire to be recognized.

Lack of approval for ideas and policies doesn't necessarily reflect on their validity or effectiveness. It often indicates conflict and a lack of trust in the community. Good ideas will not be followed if they do not match the organic movement of the group. In fact, they may not even be noticed. Groups, like individuals, give positive feedback to those ideas and interventions which they are already following in some manner. For example, a group in which individuals are trying to develop their own projects will probably not give good feedback to an intervention which requires them to meet together to work on one joint project. This group would probably respond better to a format in which individuals present the projects they are developing.

Sometimes ideas and policies appear brilliant, but emotional issues prevent the community from utilizing them. This is when the organizational consultant needs to become a therapist and dive into the tensions and conflicts in the group. For example, groups may say "no" to a new idea, even if the timing is right, just because they haven't been included in developing the idea. The bottom line is that people don't like to be told what to do! Individuals may resist new ideas presented by someone else. We all need to feel that we're creating change, not being changed by others. No matter how much a group trusts an individual or



subgroup, it will feel excluded, even threatened, when left out of the creative process. It may become paranoid, feeling that power lies behind the scenes.

This paranoia is wise because we all know deep down that the best ideas are those which are generated out of the entire group. An idea will just remain an idea if no one follows it. Thus, the facilitator needs to be a networker, to solicit input, feedback and individuals' creative leadership.

On the other hand, emotional processing can hinder structural change, or be insufficient to implement the next step in the group's development. Sometimes an over concern with individuals' emotions and needs may cause us to miss the moment to take action and make structural changes. If no outer change follows emotional processing, it can generate a sense of hopelessness, leading to frustration, sabotage or resignation. Emotional processing needs to be backed by a path of concrete action.

This is a tricky point. If emotional issues are not sufficiently addressed, the new structures will generate the same emotional problems and conflicts that the old structures generated. Balancing emotional processing and structural change is the process-oriented component of community building. This means exercising flexibility and awareness to shift levels as the community's process demands.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we find that a multi-leveled approach to communities necessitates multi-faceted roles in a facilitating team. The multi-leveled approach is not new in Process Work; we find it in channel theory, relationship work and group work. We have attempted here to convey how this multi-leveled view works in community development, what it means for working on a community's tensions, and the types of interventions a facilitator needs to make.

The unstructured, large group forum remains an important contribution to the field of psychotherapy and community building. It has been traditionally neglected, primarily because it is so difficult to facilitate, and because issues of diversity and justice press forward in the lack of structured activity. However, we would like to show that in work with communities over time, the large group forum is only one way to work with the group. Other components of the community,

including individuals, relationship units, subgroups, administrative core and socio-political subgroups need addressing. Otherwise, the overall development of the community may be held up, and individuals may feel a sense of failure and despair.

We also have attempted to show the inter-relatedness between the method and level of intervention. The method of intervention includes the facilitator's role: is she an activist, therapist, elder, organizational consultant or networker? If the community needs focus on socio-political issues, but the facilitator works therapeutically, only addressing the issues at a psychological level, the problems will persevere. Conversely, trying to solve organizational issues in a group that needs relationship and intimacy will result in a feeling of failure and avoidance of group life.

A process-oriented community developer is equally at home working with couples, working with individuals on their personal troubles, hanging out with subgroups, developing policies and strategies, advocating for social change, and working with the large group forum. Through it all, the community developer is an elder. She nourishes and cares for the whole, and fosters a sense of awe and meaning towards the troubles, tensions and difficulties a community experiences in its quest for wholeness.

In our introduction we defined a community as a group over time. Thus, community building resembles, in some ways, long term therapy. It is a long term growth project. Problem solving and working with the momentary issues and tensions is only one piece of community building. Community building, like long term therapy, requires more than just working with an identified problem. Its larger task involves supporting the overall health and evolution of a group and nourishing all its different parts. The community builder, like a long term therapist, becomes less enchanted by the momentary issues and struggles of a group and more concerned with the eternal aspects of community. Does the way the group deals with problems change over time? Is the group growing increasingly open to tension and diversity? Are the group's boundaries flexible, allowing members to come and go without reprisals? Is love present? Are altered states of consciousness and emotions permitted and welcomed in the group? Above all, is learning and growth taking place?

## Notes

1. The National Coalition Building Institute, headquarters in Washington D.C., offers prejudice reduction workshops and facilitation training around the world.
2. See Mindell, *The Leader as Martial Artist*, for a discussion of groups and historical processes.
3. Worldwork seminars, held internationally by Amy and Arny Mindell and staff, are large group forums on issues of diversity, racism, sexism, homophobia and other global concerns.

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