

Tova Averbuch

“The Little Engine that Could “¹

How a Four People Unit Engages Stakeholders in Participatory Strategic Planning and Action – the Story and Its Lessons

Key words: engaging stakeholders, participatory process, strategic planning, Dialogic Organizational Development, identity renewal, Jewish identity, dialogic leadership, collective wisdom, Large group intervention

Abstract²

A process of engaging stakeholder in active participation in strategic thinking was held by a small professional unit of nationwide Community Centres Association Organization. The main goal of this process was to help this unit change its mental and operational mode from a survival and reactive one to a planned and initiating one. They were also aiming to re-orient this unit strategically, in a short and affordable process, hoping to gain a clear focus and become a central player in their field of Jewish identity³ and renewal. Their goals were met through direct engagement of a large group of interested stakeholders. Stakeholders were invited to participate voluntarily in a totally transparent process with shared leadership. This work sheds some light on identity renewal and community building processes in general and demonstrates how a small yet committed organizational unit creates the potential to mobilize and revitalize a whole system and field. I will reflect on how a combination of Diagnostic and Dialogic Organisation Development can be used to overcome the fears of people who are not used to sharing leadership. This article may be of interest and inspiration to consultants as well as leaders seeking to move systems to their next level.

¹ This is the title of a famous children book about a little engine that had to take a big train over the mountains and most unlikely to its size – it managed to do so.

² I want to thank Ran Yuhl and Sara Tessler for inviting me to work with them, to all unit members for helping in data collecting and adding their wisdom to this article. I also want to thank Shay Ben Yosef, Avner Haramati, Yuval Dror, Ora Setter and Tonnie Van der Zouwen for their valuable remarks.

³ Jewish identity is not the direct focus of this article, yet it is important to note that in Judaism there is a linkage that does not exist in most religions: there is an overlap between religion and peoplehood. Since the establishment of Israel as a state for the Jewish people, and more so in the last 10 years, there is a vivid dialogue concerning identity and identity renewal.

1. Introduction

This article is best read as a case study of work in progress, started September 2012, now in its initial steps of implementation, in which stakeholder participation and engagement gave way to creation of energy and a sense of possibility to a small unit in a big nationwide organization. This process ignited a turnaround from a reactive to a proactive mode of thinking and doing, and mobilized a wide group of new partners.

This article is constructed as a dialogic story loyal both to time line describing events as they emerged and to multiple perspectives of the players.

- I will start with a description of the players:
 - Client organization, their request, challenge and wider context of stakeholders
 - Theoretical language of recent OD distinction between Diagnostic and Dialogic OD⁴
 - Myself, and my approach to organizational work
- I will proceed with telling the full story of the work, with the client and a large stakeholder system, from strategic questions to strategic focus.
- I will then describe the initial implementations taking place now, half a year later.
- And I will conclude with reflections and learning in this process and in general.

2. Who Is the Client?

“The Israeli Association of Community Centres” (IACC) is a hybrid⁵ organization established in the mid 70's with the mission of being the nationwide leading organization in the field of community building and development aspiring to influence and shape the Israeli society. This organization has a very unique organizational structure: it is jointly owned by three complementary partners: the government, the municipality, and a local NGO. The fact that the locally operating bodies are each separate and have a local entity resulted over the years in their experiencing and practicing a great sense of freedom and responsibility for their geographic domain and community. Each community center (CC) is creating its own resources by selling locally adapted leisure, sport and community services and through municipal funding. Most of the CC managers and professionals act as real clients and partners (not as “subordinates”) of the headquarters units of IACC even though the managers are employed by IACC and not locally.

Like the Local CC, the IACC has the DNA of ‘free entrepreneurial spirit ‘of the community centers leadership, accustomed to figuring out the local needs and independently creating solutions and resources. During the last 10 years with very little governmental funding

⁴ Bushe and Marshak (2009); Marshak (2010)

⁵ This specific structure means that the headquarter operates on a national level and is a government owned company under the support of the ministry of education; yet the operating bodies (the community centers) are separate entities both functionally and legally, each one of them is a local NGO with a directorate of municipality representatives and local leadership.

headquarter units had to look for other resources if they wanted to survive. Now most of the funding for their activities is coming from various Israeli and Jewish philanthropies and NGOs.

The **unit of “Jewish renewal and Identity”**, the client unit in this article, is part of the department for community development and belongs to the headquarter units in IACC. This unit was founded in 2002 to address two major issues:

1. Identity (in a local context): To develop and implement processes that address the growing need to create individual and collective identities which correspond with one another in diverse geographic communities⁶. It is important to note that this purpose was defined at foundation but had very little attention and was not part of the unit’s work in the last 5 years or more.

2. Jewish Identity Renewal – Judaism as peoplehood (in a local and global context): To explore processes of Jewish identity renewal in a changing interconnected world. This meant addressing the growing needs of secular Jews in Israel to connect, reconnect and explore their Jewish cultural heritage without the need to address it religiously. These needs correspond with the needs of secular Jews outside of Israel

The field of Jewish identity renewal is a vivid and growing field in the last 10 years in which this unit is one of the recognized players. The unit serves as a small professional body of three to five professionals who create products and projects, develop materials and conduct trainings, which support processes of Jewish renewal in interested community centers.

3. What Was the Client’s Request?

R., the manager of the department of community development in IACC who is in charge of “Jewish renewal and Identity unit”, was looking for a process “that will take this unit from defensive-survival mode to an initiating and planned one”. Based on some acquaintance with me and my work he invited me to help him and the unit’s team to create a viable strategic process and focus for the unit. He asked me for a kickoff to a process which he described as a “breathing long-term effort which I hope will be an engine to community development for the Israeli society”. Until then this department has been doing its strategic thinking and planning as an internal 3-4 people decision-making process based on their knowledge from working in the field and with the field, occasionally inviting a few complementary colleagues from the community centers. This time, hoping for an “out of the box process” they decided to use an external consultant to help them design and facilitate it.

Before I was invited, in July 2012 the unit created a steering comity composed of stakeholders from the field to proactively gain public support, better position themselves in the

⁶ In Israel it translates into identities such as: Jew and Arabs, new emigrants and natively born, ultra religious and secular sharing the same municipality or neighbourhood etc.

IACC and get access to fundraising. In September 2012, I first met the entire unit's staff (3 professionals and their department manager) and later on I met with the steering comity. The staff told me its goals were to answer the following questions on their own identity and renewal:

- "What is our added value, unique contribution, outstanding ability in the field"?
- "What is the purpose and mission of our unit's work in Israel and in the world"?
- "What should be the unit's main focus in the next 5 years"?

And at the same time

- Wish to strengthen the dialogue and alignment with partners in IACC and in the field
- Look for and create alliances and new initiatives with stakeholders

The time frame they had in mind for accomplishing this goal was two to three months.

4. How?: The Challenge

The goals were clear. The answer to 'how' seemed also clear to me:

- Invite a diverse group of people who share the care and interest in the field of Jewish identity and renewal and work together in a large gathering (whole system in the room⁷).
- The gathering should be designed to release information, direction and energy and through that build trust and enthusiastic hope for the emergent direction of the unit.
- It should not take more than two to three months and be affordable concerning time and money.

Three Fears as Guides for the Design Process

The challenge was to use massive stakeholder participation with a team that is very small and quite sceptical regarding somewhat chaotic, self-organizing and emerging processes done in a large group, while the department manager was enthusiastic about bottom up processes. There were three fears that became important sources of information while crafting the detail of the design: The fact that they were such a small team hosting many stakeholders brought up a "fear of drowning" in the process, "we can be wiped out by the waves" of a self initiated process. The second fear, rising of the emergent and self organizing nature of the suggested process, was a "fear of alienation", of getting results they will feel alienated to "results that are not what we are interested in or know how to handle". Both of these fears were very informative and had to be addressed in the design and framing of the work. As a result of this information we decided to have two working days with the stakeholders that will take place six weeks apart: the first one for data collection and creation and the second one for strategy formulation and future initiatives. We thought this pace will give some necessary time

⁷ For those who want to learn more see Weisbord, M. and Janoff, S. (2010).

and space for the department team to digest and realign the process after the first day so they can handle the process and stay open to what emerges.

The third fear was a “fear of remaining alone”, team members were sure “they (stakeholders) will not come, and if they do, they will never be staying the whole day”. I thought they will be happy to come but how could I be so sure... Team members were ready for a leap of faith: they will do personal invitation if we design a very interesting and rewarding day for all engaged. Since we wanted the stakeholders to experience freedom of movement and choice, team members insisted that the day has to have a very rapid pace and should be interesting and uplifting if we want most of the people to stick with the tasks at hand. Of course there also was the extra pressure of feeling “we must make it right” after prolonged personal and organizational state of stress and uncertainty and due to a survival modus operandi. These also were taken into consideration for the design, resulting in multiple methodologies and rapid pace especially on the first day of data collection and creation.

5. Theoretical Frame: Dialogic and Diagnostic Organizational Development

In recent years, Bushe and Marshak⁸ made an interesting and important distinction between two premises of Organizational Development (OD) work: Diagnostic OD and Dialogic OD. Diagnostic OD is basically described as holding the belief that there is “a single objective reality impacting people”⁹ the underlining theory to this are Humanistic Psychology and Open Systems. Change is viewed as an episodic, hierarchically planned process and work is basically done with small groups through action research and process consultation. Dialogic OD has a different premise in every aspect. It holds the belief that “there is no single objective reality per se and a multiplicity of diverse voices and actors needs to be recognized”, the underlining theory is Discursive Studies and Meaning making systems. Change is a continuous complex phenomenon and emerges through self-organization. Work is basically done with large groups as system events through participatory action research and inquiry. They also suggest that both OD forms are rooted in Humanistic and democratic values and can be combined in practice.

6. Who Am I?

I have been working as an organizational consultant for more than 30 years, and have been an active part and a witness in many occasions of organizations and systems trying to recreate themselves. For the first 15 years I have been operating under the classical Diagnostic OD paradigm resembling the medical model of problem solving and cure. In the last 15 years I have incorporated dialogic and emergent life stance and professional practice. I hold the view that there is no one objective truth and that change is continuous and of emerging nature. I

⁸ Bushe and Marshak (2009, 2010)

⁹ Marshak (2010)

work with large groups and whole systems directly, inviting stakeholders to engage in creating collective wisdom and making meaning together until the change emerges.^{10 11}

Moreover, in the last 13 years I experienced major shifts in my personal and professional identity due to lowering walls. I experience lowering the walls between my local and global identities: I belong very intensely to professional groups and colleagues both in Israel and in Global community. I also experienced the lowering of walls between my professional, my citizenship and my human identities. I find myself using very similar belief- and value-systems to all, resulting in a same basic intention and pursuit of “a way of conduct” that is characterized by being “open, inviting, collaborative with all stakeholders on any important issue, welcoming differences, using transparent, eye level communication with all, co-creating and deliberately listening for emerging patterns”. This description is very close to what is described by Bushe and Marshak as Dialogic OD stance.

7. The Story of Our Work

September 2012, after considering working with small and large groups, all team members were willing to collectively share the participatory process of engaging stakeholders in the process of strategy making. This, in spite of apprehension due to methodology that they were not familiar with. We also met with the steering comity to present the design and get approval. They approved, some of them very enthusiastically. For me it was the first time ever to use a combination of Diagnostic and Dialogic OD: a highly structured eclectic design with rapid task change that required intense management, alongside letting go and inviting engagement with the spirit of self organization and emergence¹². I was both excited and very curious.

7 November 2012 morning, the first day with the stakeholders took place at a lovely place near Jerusalem. The day was designed to collect and create data together. The team and I arrived early. The team members kept looking who was coming, praying enough people will show up. 35 people showed up on time and 15 others came throughout the day, 50 stakeholders were from various roles in IACC and from 8 other organizations in the field. The opening and framing of the day was done by the department manger and blessings were made by two other IACC managers. I was facilitating and the three unit members were active participants. We started with “time line¹³” activity where each person was invited to put events on a time line on the wall according to three categories: “events in your personal history that shaped your identity as a Jew” was one column, “events in Israel that shaped your identity as a Jew” was the second column and “events in the world that shaped your identity as a Jew” was

¹⁰ Tova Averbuch in Bunker, B. and Alban, B. (2006)

¹¹ To learn more about these shifts and its origins and dynamics see Tova Averbuch “opening space for collective wisdom”, TedX talk (2011)

¹² To learn more about self organization and emergence see Holman, P. (2010)

¹³ To learn more about “time line “ see Weisbord and Janoff (2010)

the third. People kept writing and putting more and more post-its notes with respective colours on the proper place on the wall. When they were all done, three groups were formed: personal, local and global formative trends. Each group was trying to find patterns of events and processes that are “identity makers” by nature. In less than an hour of work, by self-selected groups, a clear beautiful picture as to what are formative events of identity was generated. Laughter and a sense of accomplishment also emerged.

A short break and we were sitting in pairs, collecting peak experiences and learning “what it is that we already know about the best performance of the department”?¹⁴. Galloping from there we generated eight “learning trips”¹⁵ of interested people to learn about each one of the 8 stakeholders’ organizations that were present in the room. The learning was done by group interview, exploring who is this organization, what role does it play in the field, what is its present perspective and what are future expectations from IACC and the department. Time was flying, the data collected was very rich and the spirit was that of a ‘field trip to unknown places’. After the learning trips presentations in the plenary ended we sat at round tables for lunch digesting the food and the food for thought, drawing the questions that arose and needed to be addressed in this process.¹⁶

Back in the plenary we started a SWOT analysis of the department. Four diverse groups worked simultaneously each one starting from a different end: Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – **Threats**. Each group visited the four poles. It was like deep water diving to see every group read the analysis done by the groups who visited this pole before them, to discuss it and add its new layer of depth. The end analysis was rich and we all read it together.

About 30 people were present in the closing circle eight hours later, exhausted yet satisfied from what they had produced, learned and gained from jointly mapping “what we already collectively know” and making new meaning together. Some illustrating quotes of stakeholders:

- *“This is a kind of reuniting the field. So many people came, this is amazing! it indicates there is a need, I am certain there will be fruitful continuation to this beginning”* (CC manager)
- *“I felt I came back home and it is pleasant. I believe in the social power of the organization and of this department and unit”* (CC Jewish identity Renewal coordinator)
- *“It is an exciting and courageous act and for me it came right on time”* (external stakeholder)
- *“It was a day of: friends, necessity and apprehension. This is an historical and unusual event. There is a change now in the Israeli public indicating that society and economy are not less important than security. We are lacking the leadership for that yet”* (external stakeholder).

¹⁴ To learn more about appreciative inquiry see Whitney and Bloom (2003)

¹⁵ To learn more about learning trips go to change lab see Kahane (2010)

¹⁶ This part and all the intervention can be seen as following the U theory process, see Scharmer (2007)

November-December 2012 was used to realign the process. The team left the first day with new information, insights, questions and high spirit; pleasantly surprised by the richness of the process and empowered by the positive feedback they received from stakeholders. Proceedings of the first day were typed and sent to all participating stakeholders as part of our commitment to a transparent and co-creative process. During this 6 weeks period, and between the first and second day of the stakeholders' gatherings, the unit's team worked very hard. They collected necessary information from 11 additional organizations and key players in the field through more "learning trips" that they conducted as planned phone interviews, and created a summary of all data collected. As a form of preparing for the second day they also talked about their own aspirations for the unit and for themselves, kept inviting people they saw fit, and jointly planned the process and their presentations for the second day.

25 December 2012 morning, the second day with the stakeholders took place in the same location as the first one. This day was dedicated to moving from information to a strategic focus and future initiatives. The day was structured to be led by unit members and to take place mainly in plenary. On the agenda were: presenting a summary of the data, offering a conceptual model to elicit deeper questions, a plenary open discussion and meaning making, and lunch. After lunch we intended to have an Open Space¹⁷ for the question: "from all we know now - what do we want to create together in the future?" as a form of enabling the emergence of initiatives and alliances with stakeholders. This day was actually led by the department team and I took 'the back seat'. 45 people showed up, most of them were present at the previous November gathering. There was a diversity of stakeholders most of them from IACC and from six other organizations in the field.

The day started very well but there was a dramatic twist in the process when the presentation of the conceptual model of the department's purpose and work was finished and the floor was opened for discussion. As the process of plenary meaning making was going on, four different strategic directions emerged very clearly. Each direction was strongly lived and represented by a stakeholder in the room who was passionate and convinced he knows 'the right way to go'. Jointly, redesigning on the fly, we decided to offer a shift in the design creating four scenario-envisioning groups led by the respective stakeholders. Each group was asked to work separately and then present an answer to the question: "What will the department and the field look like three years from now assuming they chose the strategic venue suggested by your group"? Energy and engagement were exploding. Leadership went back from department team members to all that were interested. They co-created four clear pictures of the future each having a different focus and led spontaneously by a stakeholder that had a clear vision, they were:

1. Focus on exploring and developing Jewish identity as peoplehood (locally and worldwide)
2. Focus on exploring all identities in the Israeli society, and how they are part of a Jewish state

¹⁷ More on Open Space Technology see Owen, H. (1997)

3. Focus on bottom up community processes, community building: “We should always work **like this process**. Community building is by definition a bottom up process of inquiry and empowerment.”
4. Combining all of the above

The clarity brought forth by these 4 pictures resulted in a much deeper and richer understanding of what is possible, and making it available for the decision-making. As the scenario envisioning groups finished their presentations no one wanted to move from this collective process of meaning making to Open Space. It became clear to me that it was their self-organized way of opening space and co-creating the future together. They used passion and responsibility of members in the stakeholder community to move the process forward both on the decision making level and on the naturally emerging working alliances and initiatives. This scenario envisioning process enabled a complex choice to become probable and possible.

8. What Happened Next?

Reported Results and Next Steps

This is a brief summary of the emerging action in January-May 2013 collected by written and oral interviews with the department manager and the three team members. Some highlights from the interviews:

1. **Expansion and deepening of inquiry in the field of identity processes and renewal:** *“The two thematic strategic focuses that emerged during the process with stakeholders are certainly taking a lot of volume in our internal and external dialogues”* (one team member), some illustrations are: *“We are visiting community centers to learn about their work; we are in the process of establishing an ‘identity leaning group’ in a multi-religious Arab village and we are creating, with other partners, a parliament of Jews and Arabs in the Galilee that is intended to lead social processes having to do with identity issues and will hopefully take a stand in crisis situations deriving from identity issues.”* (all four)
2. **Transition from survival-defensive modus operandi to proactive wide and deep planning and action:** *“During the last few months the unit was engaged with planning a nationwide three year program with particular planning for each region and with widening the scope of identity processes in the community. 3-4 pilot projects in Arab villages and Arab-Jewish shared regions are in the making.”*
3. **Transition is the teams attitude towards partnerships and collaborations, adopting a self-image of an “initiating platform” and initiating partnerships:** *“Last week team members presented the unit and its strategy to the deputy of the minister of education talking about themselves as ‘a nationwide process leader and conduit’ in the fields of identity processes*

and identity renewal; set with potential donors from NY (as already mentioned) they are exploring, with others, a process of creating a Judeo-Arab parliament in the Galili."

4. **The department manager initiated** a plea and initiative in which he calls for an **organization wide "journey"** to create a dialogue between committed and interested members of the organization to re-centre itself again in its core of gravity: community building and development processes and long-term planning in the Israeli society, without being intimidated by difficult issues, this is taking place right now, many are joining this move.
"The process described in this article helped to ignite a company wide bottom up process of identity renewal and revitalization of the spirit of IACC. That is successfully happening during this summer with leadership of the department manager."
5. **New energy:** "This process gave us back wind and pushed us forward, I feel we are on the right track but we still need to align our knowledge in some fields that we are lacking in and in the methodologies, to do the planning with the field."
6. **Formal support:** "Now as all the management of the organization and the ministry of education changed we are working to show direction and gain support. We have some independent resources but we need to be recognized and supported by the government as well."

It seems that the process is taking the unit members and the department managers to what they initially aspired and, potentially, much more.

9. Reflections on Our Work

I will discuss choices in different stages of the process and how they influenced our work:

Working from Dialogic Organizational Development

In our work the department team and I formulated six basic design and conduct principles:

1. We will invite many and diverse stakeholders to fully engage in the process
2. We will use participatory methods with open boundaries (people can come and leave as they choose), transparent processes and information and emergent directions.
3. We shall conduct a paced process: two full days with stakeholders, six weeks apart, to leave time for collecting and digesting information and for redesigning the second day.
4. The first day of gathering with stakeholders will be dedicated to generate information from many diverse actors; to construct together "what we already collectively know" about the field, its key trends and players and the part played by IACC and the department.

5. The second day will be dedicated to the emergence of new strategic direction and productive energy: “from information into strategic focus and new initiatives” for the department in the next five years.
6. Joint ‘All team’ ownership of the process: all planning, preparing and analysis of information throughout the life of this project will be done by the entire department team.

Looking at these principles it becomes clear that in this work we designed a strategy making process based on the Dialogic OD premise as presented very well in principles no. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. Yet it was co-led by people who hold Diagnostic and Dialogic beliefs that were not accustomed to Dialogic OD work that led to the following adjustment: Adding principles no.3 and no. 6 of paced and jointly led and owned processes addressed the first fear of “drowning” and being carried away as a small team hosting a big event.  Adding no. 3, paced process, we addressed the fear of "drowning". It enabled slowing down and digesting by the team. By adding no. 6, joint leadership, the fear of being overridden by results they feel alienated from was addresses since them and their passions played a leading role, and as we see now also inspired the organization at large. It also addressed the second fear of being overridden by results they feel alienated from.

From Fragmentation to Integration

The unit was working (at least for the last 5 years) in a fragmented way: mainly with Jews in Israel on their Jewish identity. The original intention to work with identity processes as part of community building and of working more explicitly on Judaism as peoplehood was abandoned. I believe that using emergent processes with the whole system in the room enabled reaching a wider and more solid integration on issues that were split before. This was reflected in the scenario-imagining process on day two of the gathering with stakeholders: One dimension of integration was between global and local: Judaism as peoplehood in Israel and in the world. The second dimension of integration was multiple identities in Israel Jews (of many sorts) and Arabs (of many sorts). The third dimension of integration was ‘walking the talk’ using bottom up participatory methodologies for community building and looking at identity processes in the context of community development.

Fractal at Work: Mirroring and Parallel Processes of Identity-Dialogues and Renewal

One of the external stakeholders reiterated on the concluding session of the first day: *“This is an historical and unusual event. There is a change now in the Israeli public indicating that society and economy are not less important than security. We are lacking of the leadership for that yet”*. Throughout this work process we witnessed parallel processes between the Israeli society and the dynamics of the IACC organization. When we are doing work that is inclusive and self-organizing by its nature, we can very clearly see the emerging similarities of the unit we are working with and the large society in which it is embedded. The mirroring images pop up when

we are interconnected. In this case the national way of defensive-survival modus operandi, the lack of strategic planning and commitment and long breath needed for long-term processes, the thriving for dialogic leadership that would call for nationwide, inclusive and deep inquires on strategic issues, creating collective wisdom and acting accordingly leaving behind personal and sartorial preferences – were all present in our work with the unit and were indicative of the way the organization and the field operate as well. I believe this clarity contributed to the manager’s embarking on the organization wide “journey” as described before.

I also realized how Important the dialogic nature was of the leadership offered by the department manager and the fact that the whole team was co leading the process from the early stage of design. These both enabled an experience and demonstrated a continuous preparatory process. The parallel reality of the unit’s team going through a participatory emerging process of co-creating the design and events with me prepared their heart and opened their mind to believe it is possible with large numbers of people as well. Each step of the process was a more solid stepping stone for the rest of it until it gathered enough trust and momentum for the emergence of the new.

10. What Did I Learn, What Can We Learn?

This is a work in progress so it is too early to know the longitudinal effects of our work. Yet, tentative suggestions can be made.

Engaging Stakeholders in Strategy Making

Engaging stakeholders in strategy making has many advantages to client and stakeholders in the field:

- The interest and respect stakeholders got from the fact they were invited resulted in sympathy and respect to the department management for their willingness to listen openly and for their courage to call forth an emergent and co-creative process.
- Transparent and eye level communication style built trust in the field of actors who are at the same time partners and competitors, competing over clients and budgets.
- Generating information, mapping the field and making meaning together is an extremely valuable process for all stakeholders in the field and this is one of the major reasons they are passionate to take part in such a process and express gratitude to organizers for being invited and partaking.
- The gathering enabled networking and set the time and space ideal for self organizing initiatives – this is also valued and appreciated as an opportunity for stakeholders.
- Last but not least – many of the participants use it as ‘management training process’ learning to create an abstract picture of their field, its trends and major process and at the same time experience first hand new processes and methodologies.

A Little Engine Can!

The concept and way of work demonstrated here show that a small unit in a large organization that engages itself in self-preservation in an interconnected way can serve its interest while creating a field of potential for the whole organization/community. This small unit found a creative way to be an accelerator for the whole organization by anchoring itself in the wider field of practice. By holding to their task with commitment they may have tapped into wider wisdom, gained a sense of direction and a spirit of courage to offer leadership and dialogue with other players in the organization and the field. This could lead to a much wider impact than we are able to see now. In the last month, as described earlier, they lead an initiative, which intended to generate a shift on the organization level and to present ideas to the new ministry.

“Little engines” that are using wide stakeholder participation, could serve as a sustainable strategy in organizations that enable bottom up leadership processes and could be accelerators and movers of their fields.

Participatory Processes for Identity Creation and Renewal

Participatory and emergent processes with stakeholders are very suitable for community building, identity formation and renewal. While working with communities on issues of identity creation and renewal processes we need to combine three strategic directions:

- Use bottom up and emergent processes
- Work with all identities in the community in inclusive, co-creative, transparent ways
- Work both globally and locally. Identities may have both local and global representation and they enable and enrich one another in our interconnected world.

In this case participatory and emergent processes with stakeholders’ engagement has been found very suitable for identity exploration and creation processes. This may be stating the obvious since it is in the social construction that identity is created, carried and renewed. In this work, there were multiple processes mirroring, reflecting and enhancing one another: the processes of the Department as a unit creating and renewing its identity; the department’s work with the communities on issues of identity creation and renewal; me as a consultant exploring new frontiers and refreshing my identity through the work and through writing this article; and maybe many stakeholders as individuals or as organizations doing exactly the same. There is an echo much stronger than meets the ear, a ripple effect in every multi-truth, dialogic, work.

Working with Fear as a Welcome Disturbance

There is something that must be said about working with fear as a welcome disturbance. We know that when we are afraid our senses are much sharper than usually; we are more tuned and collect more information. Yes, sometimes fear makes us distort information, but if we are fearful and yet willing we are in a very rich field of possibilities as described in this work: By listening to all voices the three fears became valuable for gathering

information and not “resistant to change”. We let the fears guide us to a much more complex and wiser process that was a combination of highly managed and structured ways of data gathering (DOD 1.0) and the creation of a loosely managed process of meaning making (DOD 2.0). Structuring the process in such a way makes it more inclusive and suitable for people holding both Diagnostic and Dialogic belief systems.

Dialogic OD Premises Providing Opportunities for a **New Economy and More Sustainable Economy, Changing the Role of Consultants**

In this work we designed a strategy by making processes based on the Dialogic OD premise that was co-led by people who hold Diagnostic and Dialogic beliefs. This seems to be impossible because these two hold polar beliefs and practices. Yet, I found it was both possible and enjoyable. How is this possible? I suggest that Dialogic OD (DOD 2.0) is a version that can be inclusive of Diagnostic OD (DOD 1.0) as a valid and legitimate voice in the multiplicity of diverse voices and actors. If the consultant works from a Dialogic premise the participatory co-creation with the client can be enough to prepare the interested client for working dialogically with the larger stakeholder community.

We were witnessing more than 50 people working two full days as a team to create a strategic direction for a department that is not their own. That is a huge task force and this force saved a lot of money for the mere reason that this process was held beneficial to all who took part in it. This may open a way to a new economy of shared efforts replacing batteries of consultants as data collectors and interpreters. Consultants as data collectors and interpreters cost much more money, and sometimes serve as unnecessary filters of valuable information. When consultants step back, direct learning and authentic relationships are created as the client is doing the data collection, summarizing and interpreting and meaning-making in large groups. The work done directly is cheaper, faster and more sustainable because the direct meeting and friction gives way to long lasting relationships and joint initiatives. Maybe a major role of consultants will become co-creating and co-facilitating participatory processes structured and designed for the clients’ goals and at the same time bears valuable fruits for every stakeholder engaged in the process.

Concluding Note on the OD Field as Enabler of Collective Wisdom

In the 21st century westernized world we experience diffusion of boundaries and lowering of walls in many instances: lowering of structural walls in organizations; lowering of local and global walls due to globalization processes and lowering of walls between home and work working 24/7. To add to this complexity, in many places each person has the choice to fully experience multiple identities (i.e. a human, a woman, a mother, a Jew, an OD consultant, an animal lover etc.), some of them local and others global, some complementary and others conflicting. OD is a context-oriented platform for human development, it has always been. Now

with the Dialogic premise it can more fully and directly serve direct democratic processes (as we already see and experience in recent protest and occupy movements) and may be instrumental not only in the context of organizations and community building but also in the context of making and mending of life in general for individuals who are trying to make meaning of their lives and for large collectives creating wise action together.

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