

Tilde Theoretical Framework

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Tilde Theoretical Framework:

Process Work And Deep Democracy¹

The following presentation serves as an introduction to some of the main theoretical aspects of Process Work and Deep Democracy. Since we are discussing a paradigm and way of understanding reality and social dynamics that may be new to you, it is important to note that this introduction will not provide a complete understanding of Process Work and Deep Democracy. Instead, our intention is to spark new questions and ignite your curiosity to continue exploring this perspective on life, that, to us at least, is incredible!

¹ This text has been developed by Anna Pujol, partner of TILDE project.

1.1. Process Work:

Continuous development.



The origin of what we currently call Process Work (or as it is now beginning to be called at the Portland institute "awareness practice") lies in the therapeutic practice developed by Arnold Mindell during the 1970s.

Arnold Mindell, a quantum physicist and Jungian psychologist at the time, established that there is a direct relationship between night dreams and body symptoms. This was the beginning of the idea of "Dreambody".

The Dreambody hypothesis states that the same energies that appear in our dreams also appear through body symptoms, we "experience" them both sleeping and "awake".

By deeply exploring our dreams and/or our body symptoms, we gain access to parts of ourselves that we do not identify with and we marginalize in our daily lives.

From this original idea, Mindell and his colleagues developed the paradigm of process-oriented psychology and a whole range of applications. In doing so, Mindell was inspired by Taoism, Zen, Alchemy, Shamanism, Quantum Physics, and Jungian psychology, among other sources.

At a deep level, Process Work follows the wisdom of nature as a teleological principle². Just as the Taoist follows the flow of the TAO, the Process Work follows the flow of the process with the conviction that every nuisance is a gateway to new ways of being in the world, to our most complete "selves".

It is important to emphasize that the same theoretical framework is useful for all levels of relationship. The same bases of analysis are useful for internal conflicts, interpersonal relationships, the dynamics that occur within groups, societies, and the World.

² Teleology is derived from the Greek τέλος (telos), end, and λόγος (logos), discourse, treatise, or science) is the branch of metaphysics that refers to the study of the ends or purposes of some object or some being, or literally, to the philosophical doctrine of the final causes. . See Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teleology>.

1.2. Theoretical bases

a. Levels of reality

From the Process Work paradigm, and with the aim of following the process, we add to our daily reality information of realities that normally are more imperceptible to us.

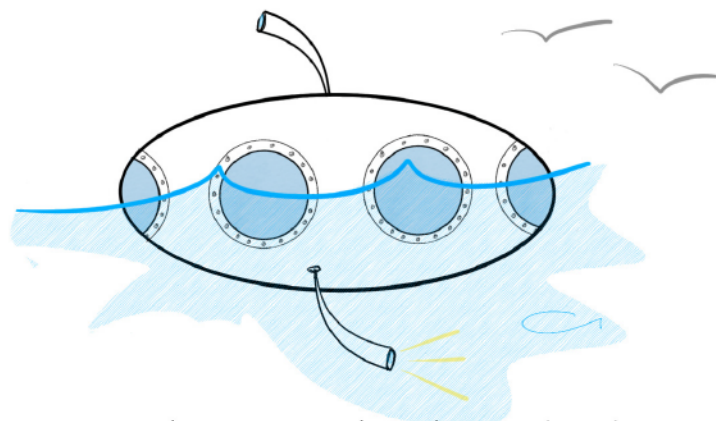
When we enter a group, there is an objective reality that we "know": how many people there are in the room, what age they look like, what color the room is, how long we will be together... It is a "testable" level of reality that we can count or see. But there are realities that are not so visible or are more difficult to establish consensus on. Realities that are part of more "invisible" worlds.

For instance the world of subjective perceptions and roles. Does everyone agree whether there is too much time or too little? Is the right number of people in the room or is someone missing? Do we feel comfortable in the room or not? Experiences are subjective, different for each person.

The same applies to atmospheres in groups. Which atmosphere is there? Does it feel nervous or peaceful?

Process Work puts the **focus on both the visible and invisible levels.**

We navigate in a visible world, as well as an invisible one



both happen and we perceive them simultaneously

Mindell, in his book "The Deep Democracy of Open Forums" (2002) differentiates three dimensions, three levels of consciousness.

- **Consensus Reality:**

"This is the world that people identify as real. (...) is the world of people and events, of numbers and facts. "
Mindell (2002)

In the consensual reality, if we talk about the increase in temperature in the Planet, there are scientific studies that tell us that it has risen 1.5°C on average since the industrial period.

If I suffer a temperature increase, I have a fever, the Consensus Reality is the one that puts degrees to my discomfort. It's also the part that drives me to go to the doctor in case I think it's a concern.

- **Dream Land:**

"This is the world of body signals and ghosts and roles that people almost never see as themselves, and project out of the world as external agents (whether or not they are present). Role-playing is a crucial aspect of the dream world."
Mindell (2002)

In this reality, each person has a subjective experience that comes along with Consensus Reality.

The body reality of fever will be experienced by each person in a different way. On a subjective level, I would define fever as an altered state of "drowsiness and stupefaction", while for another person, their experience may be different, for example the sensation that the pressure in their head is rising and they are going to explode, etc.

Similarly, and in reference to Climate Change, the experience of global temperature increase for each person may be different. Some people may be fearful about it, while another group of people will not worry about the problem.

In groups, subjective experiences are grouped into **roles**: we need the subjective experience of many people to deeply understand each role. With only one subjective experience we cannot understand what the role of fear in the face of climate change is: we need many individual experiences to have a complete idea of what this role means.

In groups we take into account that a role **is more than a person**. And **a person is more than a role**. All of us can play any role in Dreamland. The experience of fear is inherent in human beings and we can all identify with it, just as we all have the ability to neglect some problems at certain times. People have great inner diversity! These experiences (or the roles of a group) are the **gateway to Dreamland**.

One of the objectives of Process Work is to make people aware of what information subjective experiences bring. In order to be able to access this information we must amplify the experience (see below some details on how to do this).

Continuing with the previous example, it is possible to enter further into the experience of having fever in Dreamland. Doing so, I realize that I enter an unusual state in me: I am like a thick fog that slowly advances towards all sides. Once we have access to this information, **the next step is to relate it to my everyday self, to Consensus Reality.**

The information, the state, the way of being in Dreamland is something important in my daily life. I am a person who usually has a high pace. I enjoy having a lot of activity and projects in my life. I like it when I am resolute and focused on a specific aspect. For me, moving slowly and letting myself 'fade' everywhere is a new way of being in the world that I find interesting. Thus, integrating this aspect of the dream world into my daily life, as well as taking care of myself and going to the doctor in Consensus Reality if I feel this is important can help me to have a more wholesome experience of health in my daily life.

These two ways of being in the world: "being fast and focused" and "blurring slowly" are aspects that many people can surely identify with in different areas of their lives. **These roles, or ways of being in the world are shared experiences.**

- **Essence Level:**

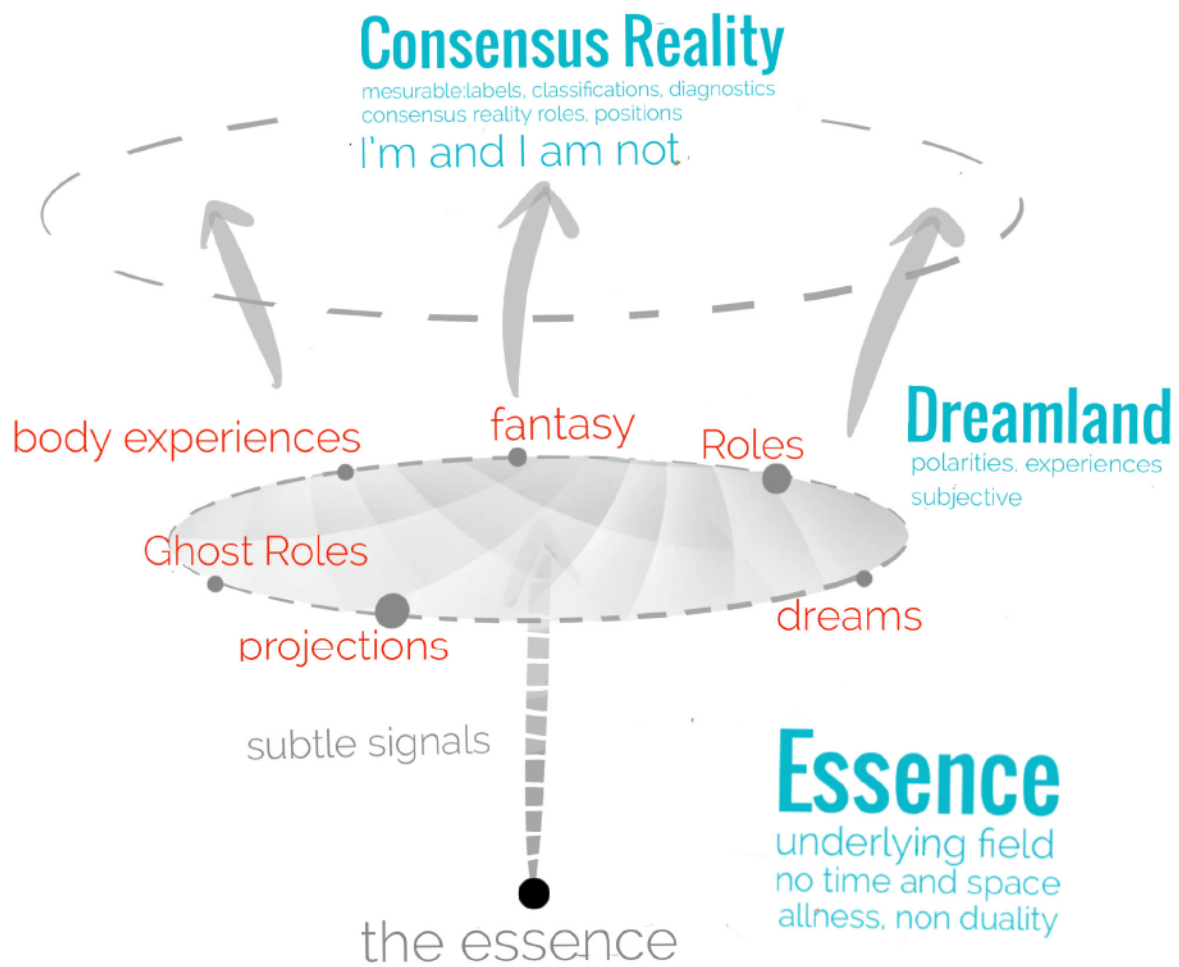
*"It consists of the fundamental energetic tendencies, in universal, common and profound principles and experiences (such as the struggle for survival, death or the quest for immortality).
Mindell, 2002*

Sometimes we can find in these experiences deeper tendencies and essential elements of being human. If I give more space to this fog that slowly advances and fades, if I go deep into allowing myself to fade I may be able to dissolve completely. The fog becomes mist and it becomes less and less dense... nothing! I'm nothing and I'm part of the Whole.

Nothing... the Whole... cease to exist to be everything... death and immortality...

It is an experience that has fascinated and concerned humanity since the dawn of time.

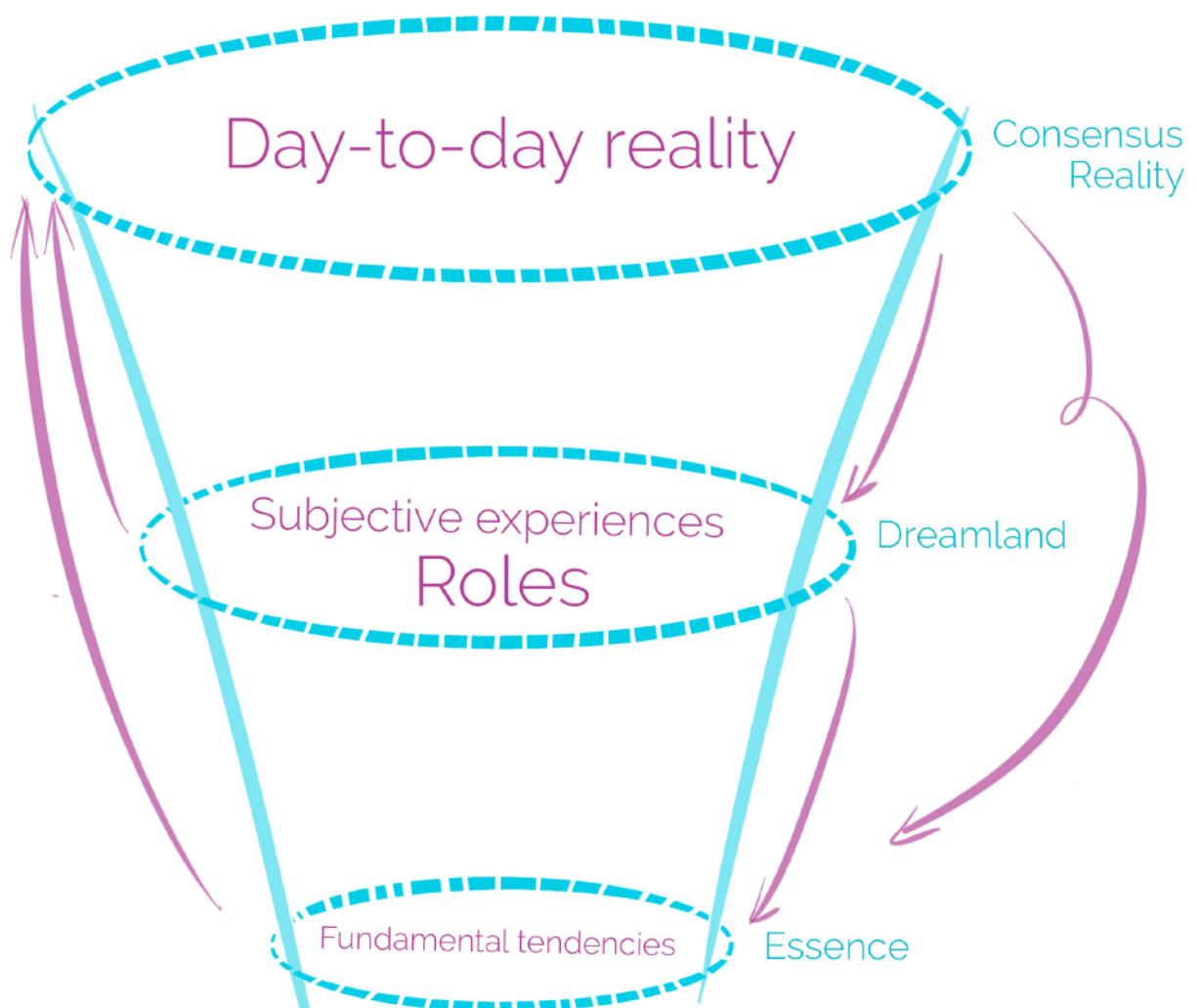
And, as with the information coming from Dreamland, we must strengthen as facilitators its relation to Consensus Reality.



b. Process

Process is “*the flow of experience*” (Mindell, 2002, p. 50). Following the flow of what is happening moment-to-moment, giving space to these three levels of reality and enhancing the relationship between them is what we call following the process.

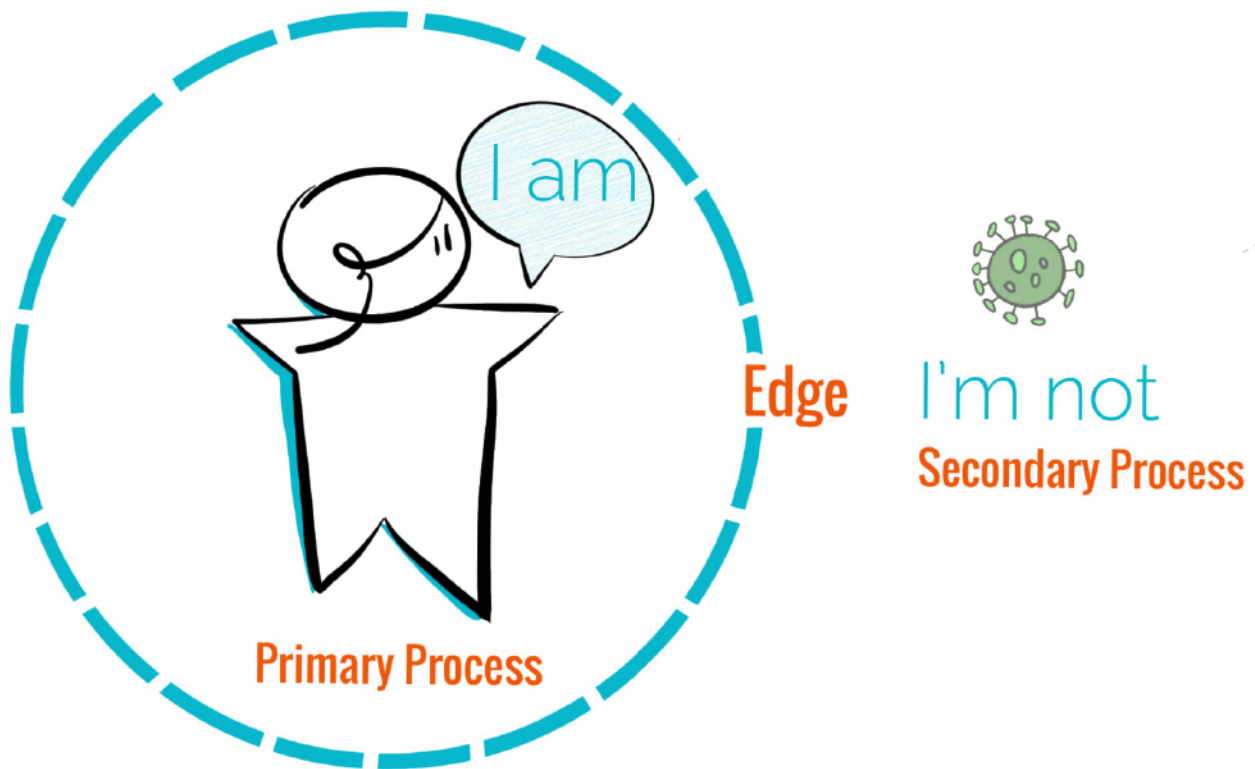
At a graphical leve



we can describe these experiences at any given time, like taking a “photo” - knowing that this “photo” will vary in the next moment as processes evolve and change.

The arrows in this graph represent the flow of information between the different levels of reality.

c. Primary and secondary process/ U & X/ Ghost roles and roles



At each specific moment (as individuals, couples, collectives, societies...) we tend to identify more with some experiences of our reality than with others. We speak of **Primary Process** when we refer to the experiences with which **we are identifying** with at a given moment. Being experiences close to our identity, we also call them *U energy*³.

At this very moment there are experiences that **we are marginalizing**, that are farther from our identity. Experiences with which **we find it difficult to identify**. These experiences are part of our **Secondary Process**. And we also talk about *X energies*⁴.

Following the example of the rise in temperature, internally I identify myself with being the one who suffers from this rise in temperature and the fever feels farther away from my identity. Language helps us realize what is more primary and more secondary for a person at a given time. We usually say "I have a fever", implying that

³ U stands for "You". Who you are at any given moment.

⁴ X refers to "ex-", something you've separated from. Ex-partner.

my daily "I", which I identify with, is "without a fever". So the fever is something "that is happening to me", it is far from my daily life, it is secondary.

The same happens at a group and social level: there are some ways of being in the world, communicative styles, experiences with which it is easier for us to identify. These roles that we most easily welcome as a society are the most primary.

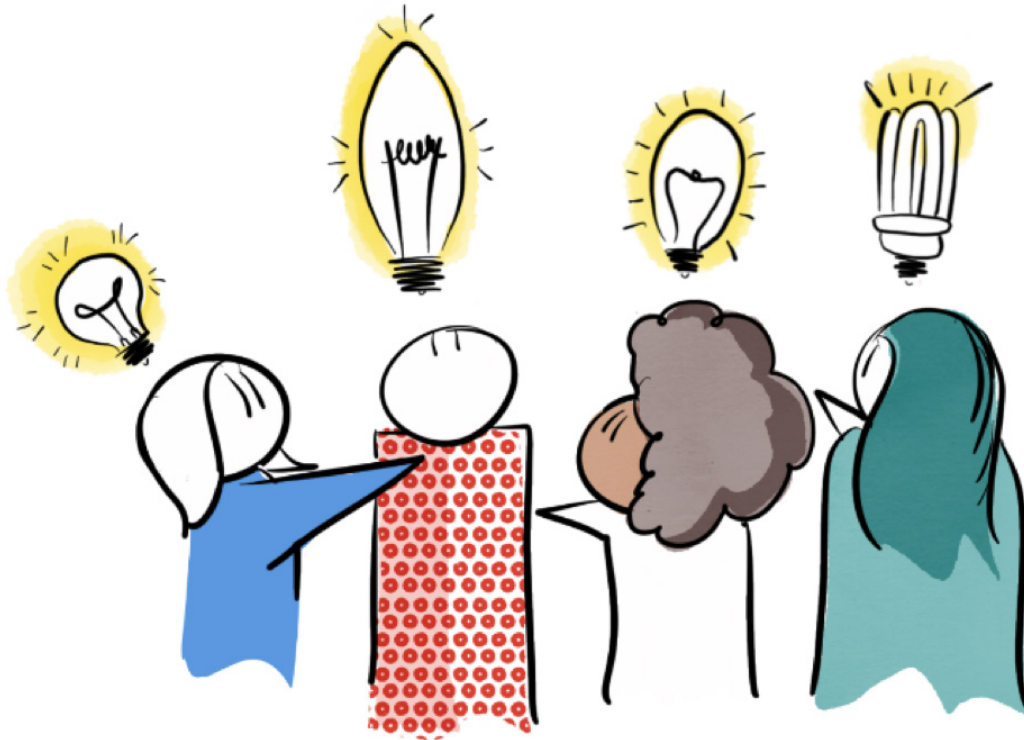
There are other roles in the groups that are more "secondary", that are more difficult to accept. They are those roles or attitudes that are sometimes criticized or mentioned in gossip on the corridor.

And we even talk about **ghost roles**. They are those roles with which nobody in a group or a society identifies, and that we usually describe **as if they were outside the group**, as if it were something that happens to us.

Taking climate change as an example again, many of us find it easier to identify with a role that "suffers" from climate change, rather than identifying with the role of the "creator" of the global temperature increase. On a social level, it is easier for us to welcome the first role, it is more primary. Identifying with being the polluting role causing climate change is more secondary. And pollution, the fumes or the death they cause, are even farther from our identities. Smoke and death are ghost roles in this process.

Ghost roles are a very important part of the processes and must **be brought consciously to the debates** (identify with them, inhabit them) because if we don't, they remain as a shadow hanging over the group and we can't relate to them or learn from them. Thus, entering deeply into the experience of death and dialoguing with this role is one of the important steps in this process.

d. Belief systems



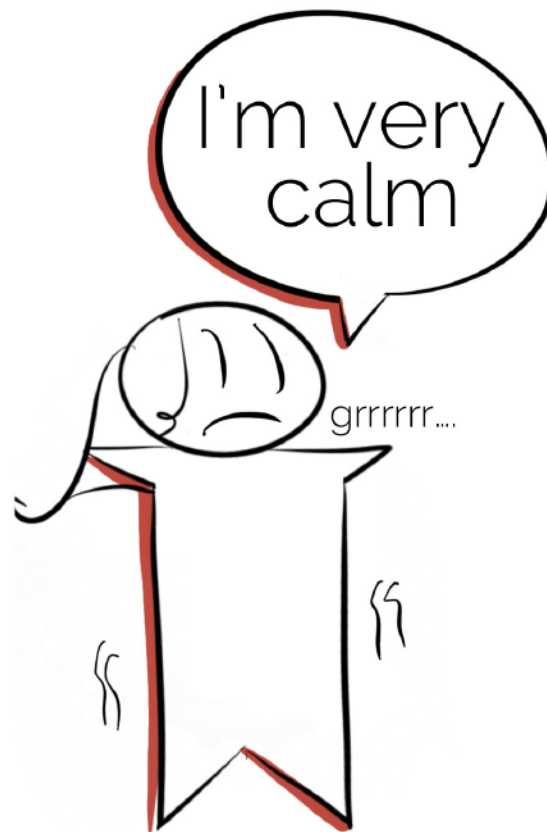
Our internal belief systems make us **catalogue some parts of ourselves** as part of our identity and others as "aspects that do not belong to us". This causes us to **marginalize the parts that we do not consider opportune**. Our belief systems are the basis of the structure of our primary processes, our secondary processes and the "edges" (see section f, below) we experience between primary and secondary processes.

Joe Goodbread explains in his book "Radical intercourse" (1997) how, in many cases, *"the experience of ourselves is formed largely by the conflict between our first dream figures. Understanding dream figures as a figure (coming from our night dreams or our waking dreaming) that personifies an aspect of our personality."* (P. xxx)

So, partially, our personality is structured by conflicts between different kinds of energies coming from our first experiences, our family or our cultures.

Our belief systems have served us to survive, adapt to our environment and generate important changes, and, at the same time, they cause us a limitation to access to our parts that, **brought with consciousness can be very useful in our daily lives, making us freer and more complete.**

e. Signals and Double Signals



Expressions of these experiences which we do not identify with become part of our unintentional communication. When communicating, in a given moment we may be more aware of our verbal messages than of our posture, tone of voice, looks.... We can be paying more attention to the words we use than to the tone of voice.

This more unconscious communication can be reflected by emitting **Double Signals that do not go according to what we express consciously.**

In the same way, we can detect the most marginalized roles by a group or a society through their ghost roles (roles that are named and nobody identifies with them) and through the double signals of their components and the group itself.

In my daily life I do not welcome the experience of being "feverish", of feeling slow and unfocused. This fact generates that this state, at certain moments, comes out through my double signals. These days, while identifying with being focused on the work of writing, it is common for me to get up from the chair and I "catch" myself circling without knowing exactly why I got up... This is a double signal wanting to be explored.

f. Edges/ Hot Spots



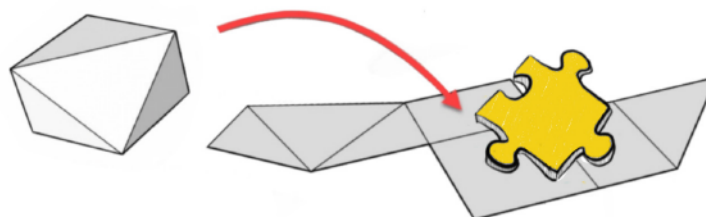
We call the **edge** the "shock point" between our primary and secondary identities.

These edges manifest themselves in many different ways by **raising the energy** in the system.

When the most unfamiliar processes of a group are perceived, the group reacts: energy increases and becomes perceivable through laughter, uncomfortable silences, a lot of movement, etc. This is a signal that the secondary processes are nearby.

g. Unfolding energies

We unfold experiences, energies...



In order to access information from Dreamland we need a "gateway", **some aspect of Consensus Reality that disturbs us. This disturbance is a dream-door.** By amplifying it, exaggerating it, etc. **we can access the qualities behind this disturbance and bring them consciously into our daily life.**

There are many **techniques** for accessing this information, and, in the case of working with **groups**, we use **conflicting roles** in Consensus Reality as a gateway. At a group level, when different people occupy a role and express it, it is amplified and we can access what essential part we need to welcome in order to make a given conflict evolve.

h. Rank dynamics

A very important aspect of relational dynamics has to do with rank. In his 'Sitting in the Fire', Arnold Mindell writes that rank *"is the sum of privileges of a person or a role at a given time"*. (Mindell, 1995). This sum of privileges also means the **capacity of impact** that we have.

Being aware of these privileges and of our power is the first step in using them consciously.

How we "impact" our relationships can take many different forms⁵:

Being aware of our privileges or the lack of them **on a social level** is a basic aspect: gender, social class, state of health, age, nationality, sexual orientation... These are examples of aspects that will give us more or less status.

Equally important are the privileges, often less considered, that come from your **internal psychology**: the ability to communicate, to adapt to the environment where you are, the facility to establish relationships...

And the privileges of having access to the **spiritual world**: connection to something greater, being connected to who you are, following your own path...

Rank dynamics are highly complex: the different types of range affect relationships intersectionally, all of these dynamics occur at the same time.

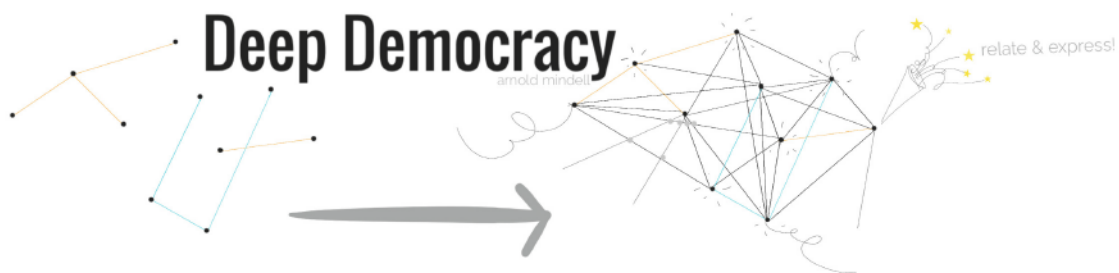
"We all have some kind of rank" (Mindell, 1995, P.xxx). Complexity is often given by the **tendency we have to identify more easily with powerlessness (low rank), alienating from our consciousness how we impact relationships (high rank).**

Facilitating power dynamics is basic in Process Work. Bringing awareness to rank differences usually supports the different actors in a conflict, usually de-escalating conflicts.

⁵ See the RANK Infographic in the TILDE TOOLKIT

1.3 Deep Democracy

"Deep Democracy is a new procedure of consciousness that respects all people, parties and states of consciousness" (Mindell, 2002)



Deep Democracy is the basic principle of Process Work. Moving from democracy to Deep Democracy is the **art of welcoming all parties with whom we do not identify**. Especially the ones that bother us. Deep Democracy **welcomes and encourages** dialogue between all parties and addresses all dimensions of our experience (levels of awareness)

Finding the power inside any aspect of ourselves and our communities - especially in those parts that disturb us and that we marginalize - we call deep democracy.

1.4 Phases of the conflict

“Each level of deep democracy (Consensus Reality. Dreamland and essence) is associated with one or more phases”.

“Deep Democracy has evolved to include not only LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS, also System phases for all community processes”.
(Mindell, 2017)

In Consensus Reality conflicts tend to be uncomfortable, to hurt, to make us feel bad.... A lot of us want to run when there's a conflict.

Parallel to this experience, conflicts are our X energies, those ways of being in the world that are **showing us how to be more complete**.

But conflicts are not only this: **they play an extremely important role**. There are no corners of the world without conflict. Conflict, **understood as polarization between different forces and the tension between them**, is something inherent to our universe. We find it in the forces that sustain the dance of the planets, in the relationships within nature, in and between societies and within each of us.

The Universe needs conflict to advance, these tensions are the basis of the next step, of change.

The Earth and the rest of the planets dance with the Sun as a consequence of gravitational forces that hold the Sun in the center of our solar system and the planets dancing around it. According to the scientific world, this is evolving: the distance between celestial bodies is increasing, the Universe is expanding. **This echo brings change: change is the essence of evolution**.

It is of utmost importance that this same evolution comes to our way of understanding and relating to tensions. **We cannot avoid conflicts, but we can change the way we relate to them**, understand how they are part of this cosmic dance and walk through them in a less painful way.

In order to broaden our view of the conflict, the three levels of reality help us:

“Deep Democracy has evolved to include not only levels of awareness but also System Phases” (Mindell, 2017)

Mindell refers to four phases in the development of conflicts, which correspond to three levels of reality:

Phase I and Phase II: Consensus Reality or the day to day

Phase I in a conflict is that moment when we are identified in not paying attention to polarized forces at a given time. We're **not interested in the conflict**. At this level of reality we are focused on ourselves and the conflicts are in phase I.

We enter **Phase II when tension appears, conflict becomes visible and escalates**. In phase II the voices get louder, they get extreme, we scream. We call these moments **Hot Spots**. Here **we identify with one part of what is happening and try to marginalize or eliminate the other parts**.

It is such moments we become accustomed to fearing conflicts, as we lose consciousness and control and may be damaged or harmed by whoever is in front of us. But this phase is vitally important. If we observe in a more detached way what is going on, we realize that when we shout more or become more extreme in our posture, we do so in order for our voice to be more understood. And this is what we must do more consciously: **to understand more deeply what precisely in each voice needs to be taken into account and understood better**. The more we learn to deepen the voices "downwards" (towards the essence of this opinion) rather than "upwards" (shouting or using violence) the less pain is generated and the more we learn from the conflict.

In most of us, the edges of conflict cause us to oppose conflict itself, and when we notice the first signs that it is emerging, we tend to marginalize it. However, we can decide whether or not to enter it at this moment, the problem lies in deciding unconsciously what to do. And then it becomes likely that the conflict will "possess us" and we enter Phase II without consciousness. This might result in us moving away from a relationship or group without consciousness (for example, we stop seeing each other with a person "because we are busy", the groups "cease to interest us", etc.) or attack the other side (or ourselves!).

Phase III

When voices “escalate” deeply enough, the moment comes when we discover the deepest feelings and most essential needs giving rise to them, and what is useful about them. At this point, most of us can recognize the role before us as part of our own nature. Organically, there's a role switch. We call it *Cool Spot*. Through these role switches, we re-introduce fluidity to the system: we increase the enantiodromia, meaning the ability of system parts to switch organically into the other role, the opposite even, and feel into, sense, see the experience on the other side.

Phase IV: Reality of the essence. Detachment

To connect with this level of essence is detachment, through which we can notice how the deepest relationships take place. It is at this level that we experience the polarized energies of conflict as part of the whole.

Consider nature as a model: observing in nature how roles in tension with each other relate with one another, can inspire new ways of relating. Few of us are bothered by the flexibility and the swaying of the waves crashing against the uprightness and solidity on a cliff. But if we identify with being "upright" people, then we can be bothered by what seems too "flexible" to us. Let us be the landscape and notice how flexibility and rectitude create each other in Nature serves as a model for our day to day.

The detachment that this phase gives us allows us to realize **how roles in conflicts dance with each other. As both are indispensable to each other and move the world.**

And even more: We can develop the capacity to be aware of how conflicts go through the 4 phases, and at which point we find ourselves in a particular moment.

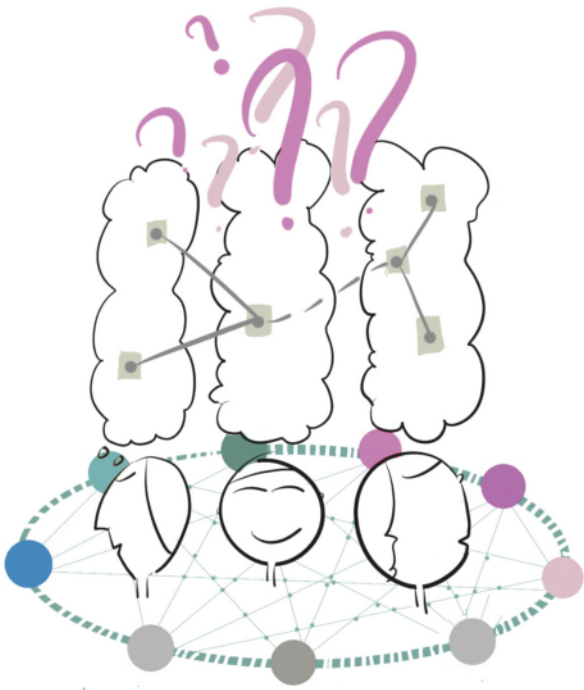
Facilitating a conflict requires looking at it from this perspective in order to **support and go deeper into the phase we are** currently in. This allows to **change the phase the conflict is in when such change is needed.**

Facilitation is about bringing awareness and deeply supporting the phase which we are in at a given moment, as well as following the signals that are showing the beginnings of a new phase arising.

Perspectives on Conflict:

- *Consensus Reality*: Conflicts hurt and we want to put an end to the pain they generate worldwide.
- *Dreamland*: Conflicts allow us to understand more about who we are, give us the opportunity to be more complete, more free. There is a role to which I have edges, and understanding it and knowing how to bring consciousness to the world is the next step to being.
- *Essence level*: From detachment I can experience the deep relationship between roles, their dance, as one energy cannot exist without the other.

1.5 Open Forums



Open Forums are a Process Work tool that is used to raise awareness of the three levels of reality and to support communication between them in a community-oriented way.

“Process-oriented group work is Worldwork, and the Open Forum is part of Wordlwork’s spectrum.

Worldwork is the broad term for community-making and conflict-resolving approaches to small and large groups (up to about one thousand people) based on the deep democracy approach”. (Mindell, 2002)

The polarization of citizenship with respect to controversial issues is due, in part, to a lack of public spaces where communication takes place between the most confronted parties.

This lack of space generates strong social reactions.

Open forums are a tool that brings together people with divergent opinions.

It is often difficult to express our opinion in public, we believe that if we show ourselves we will be criticized or laughed at. But once **people really feel heard and our deepest feelings are valued, we are closer to being able to change sides. At this point, fluidity increases and the relationship begins to happen,** giving people a little sense of community.

From this point of view, **problems are a great opportunity to create community.**

At the level of methodology, one begins with a small group of speakers who each have about five minutes to present their points of view. These positions are Consensus Reality roles that will allow us to enter Dreamland.

The fact that the most polarized voices are brought in by external speakers allows facilitators to create an open space where all voices are represented, both those that are more socially accepted and those that are less so.

After the presentations, the floor is open to the public and the task of facilitation is to raise awareness of the level changes and enhance communication between roles at different levels.

TILDE

Transformative and
Inclusive Leadership from
Deep Democracy

