

Open Forum Kit

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Open Forum Kit



The idea behind this Open Forum toolkit is to give you a summary / overview about how to prepare, lead and close an Open Forum.

You can look for the definition of an Open Forum in the [TILDE Theoretical Framework](#).

We highly recommend you to read Arnold Mindell's book "Deep Democracy of Open Forums". His book has inspired us in writing this toolkit, and it contains great details and examples of all the steps of leading an Open Forum. We would not consider this toolkit a substitute for reading this book before leading a forum yourself.

We are presenting this kit as a checklist for three different stages in running an open forum:



Before
the Open Forum

During
the Open Forum

After
the Open Forum

Before the Open Forum

Remember that an Open Forum is governed by the principles of Deep Democracy: 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. In order to be able to facilitate an Open Forum you must be aware of what might bother you about a group in times of conflict. So start by reviewing your own belief systems:

- Are you afraid of tense moments?
- Don't you like it when people get upset?
- Do you believe that dialogue should be orderly and give turns of speech?
- How do you deal with different emotions?
- Is there any emotion that particularly bothers you?
- What kind of person/attitude might intimidate you?

Do **inner work to welcome all these difficult aspects**, so that you can support them during the Forum.

→ **Work on your own rank and rank** issues within your team. Consider practising with some activities we propose in this TILDE TOOLKIT, such as: *Rank in Relationships*, *Rangometre*, *Game of Statues*. And resources such as Arnold Mindell's book "*Sitting in the fire*" and Julie Diamond's "*Power a user's guide*", as well as various blog posts by Julie Diamond at <https://diamondleadership.com/leadership-resources/blog/>



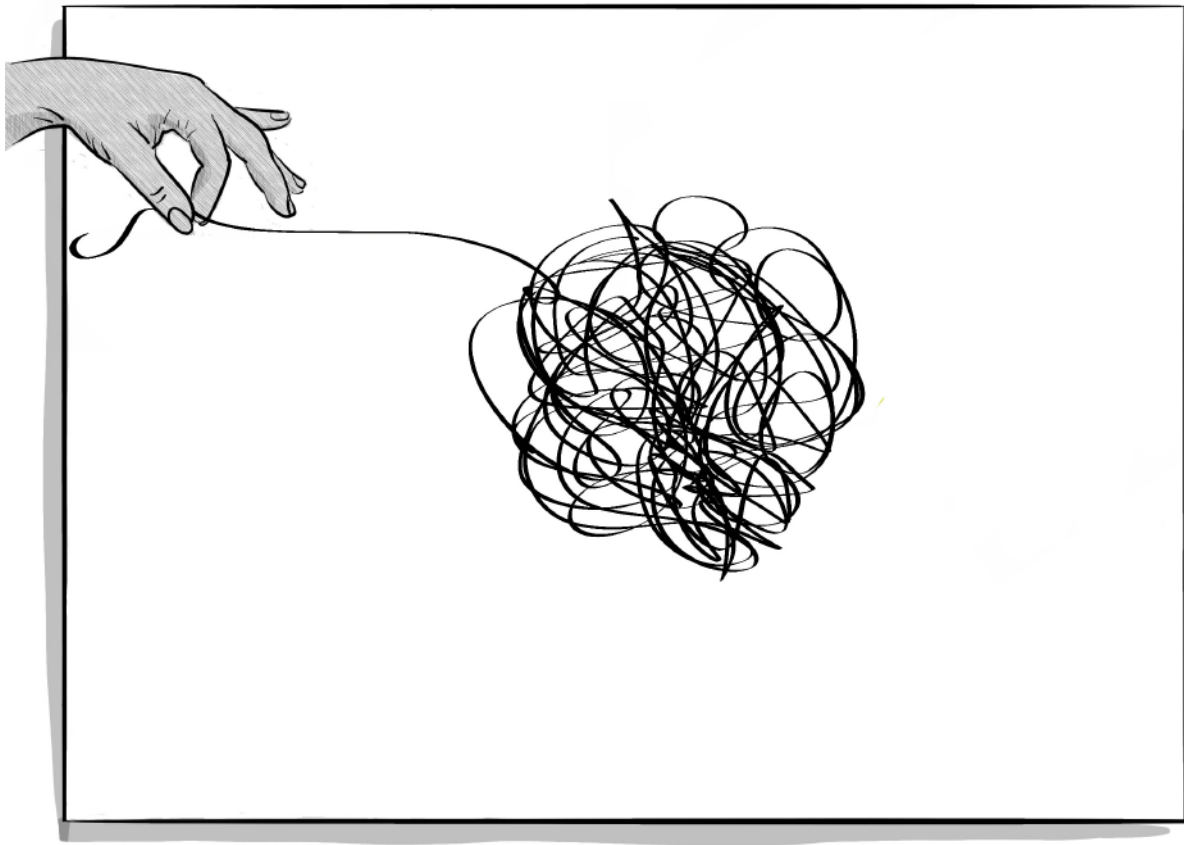
Awareness of my own rank

makes a difference!!!

→ Research **how the migration issue is in your community** right now. Do a *role mapping* (some clues are given below to do that). This will give you an idea of the roles that may come up in the process.

- Think about **who you want to participate in the Forum**. From here you will design the invitation and look for speakers. Formulate a title and invitation text, and ask yourself who is likely to be interested in the title, and who will react to it in what ways. Certain ways of formulating an invitation may give rise to ghost roles that hijack the entire event. On the other hand, a particular focus or wording may cause individuals or roles that would be helpful for the process to feel unwelcome or uninterested.
- **Choose speakers** who represent the extreme positions in the Forum, this will help to welcome all voices in the debate. In doing so, consider who might be speakers to represent these extreme positions clearly and authentically, regardless of what your own opinion is of these positions.
- **Do Mock Forums:** Practice with the roles by holding Open Forums on the topic among the facilitation team. Preparing as a group can help a facilitation team to mobilise the strengths of its individuals in the facilitation team, for instance in credibly bringing in certain roles and giving voice to ghost roles.
- Think about the issue of **languages and translation**. Advise the people who will be translating the Forum that at times they will feel compelled to give their own opinion. Help them during the forum by framing when the translator steps out of their role. Be aware that language, translation, multilingualism etc. are all roles in the field and not just neutral communication aides.

During the Open Forum



- Start by briefly **introducing the team of facilitation**.
- **Acknowledge and thank the diversity** that has come. Be aware that in the context of the forum, roles that are usually 'mainstream' may feel intimidated because they are less well-represented than they are used to.
- **Introduce the speakers** and remind them that they have about 5 minutes to bring their vision.
- **Open the space to all participants** and remind them to keep their interventions short, less than 2 minutes.

- **Frame what is happening** as if it were a weather report, especially moments of tension (Hot spots) and moments of understanding between apparently opposing voices (Cool spots). You can say, for example: "Tension is rising in the dialogue" or "These two roles seem to have moved closer together".
- Be aware that **you are part of the group**, of the field: use whatever is happening to you to facilitate. For example: If you are scared in a moment, use your fear as a role in the process.
- As a facilitator, there will inevitably be moments, when one gets **polarised** and takes sides, or gets so involved in the topic that one loses the overview of the process. Good preparation can help facilitators keep an awareness of what is going on, and e.g. notice when and how one is getting polarised. This makes it possible to decide how best to use that experience for the benefit of the process - rather than just being carried away.
- **If you are attacked** during the Forum, try to understand as clearly as possible what you are being attacked for, don't merely apologise or defend yourself. Establish a dialogue with the person who did it. Often attacks carry important role information for the process.
- **Frame moments of hope**. Open Forums, in part, are an attempt to solve the problem of hopelessness and cynicism and the stagnation they cause in challenging situations. While hope is not an aim in itself, it empowers people to find paths that didn't seem to exist.
- Ten minutes **before the end, warn that time is running out**. You can also say that there are still many more things to explore and give space for aspects that have not yet come out to be expressed. Sometimes time pressure is a helpful catalyst you can work with.
- **Close with a summary of the knowledge and learning gained**, making clear that this is your own current view of what happened, and that there may be other views as well.

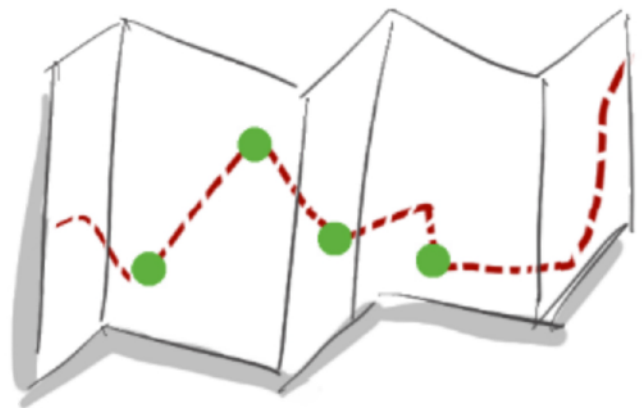
After the Open Forum

- **Thank the speakers** personally for coming.
- Become a student: Meet with your team to analyse what has happened and **deepen your learning** individually and as a team.

Remember that a Forum always works in terms of raising social awareness. Already the announcement of a Forum generates discussions in the community - this is a success.

- **Start thinking about the next Open Forum!**

Mapping the field



Introduction

Just as a magnet creates a magnetic field and organises metallic elements inside it, any given topic creates a polarity and organises the people who become aware of it. Whereby a magnet creates two roles, 'Global South' and 'Global North', a conversation topic usually gives rise to various polarities and their associated roles that appear and interact at the same time, making social fields more complex and less predictable than a magnetic field.

Creating a field map for an open forum means **creating a list of potential topics and associated roles and ghost roles that might appear** during the open forum, and to a certain extent creating a visual representation of their various relationships with each other. This can be done alone, or even better as a 'mock forum' in a small group, e.g. the group of facilitators. The process benefits from being carried out in a team whose members are diverse with regard to relevant rank dimensions.

Below we suggest two ways of visualising the role structure of a topic.

- **A list / table of polarities**
- **Mapping three levels of reality**

Some questions that may help to discover roles

The following questions will help you brainstorm and discover **which roles are present in the field**:

- Which roles are powerful / perceived as powerful?
- Which roles are usually not heard / marginalised?
- Which roles may appear from current public discussions or events in the news regarding this topic?

Questions to help **anticipate hot spots and controversial topics**:

- What relationships are there between the roles? (closeness, support, dominance, conflict...)
- Who will feel invited to the forum? Who will feel interested or welcomed?

- Who will not feel interested or welcomed?
- Who is likely to have personal experiences regarding the topic? Who won't?
- Who is likely to have spent time thinking about the topic? Who won't?
- Who will feel encouraged to speak in the setting of the open forum?

Listing polarities

Consider a role, e.g. 'A person who had to leave their home'. Then write down what you consider the opposite of that role. Think of other roles that also constitute the other end of the spectrum:

A person who had to leave their home and suffers from that	A person who did not have to leave their Home
	A person who made another person leave their home
	A person who had to leave their home but didn't mind

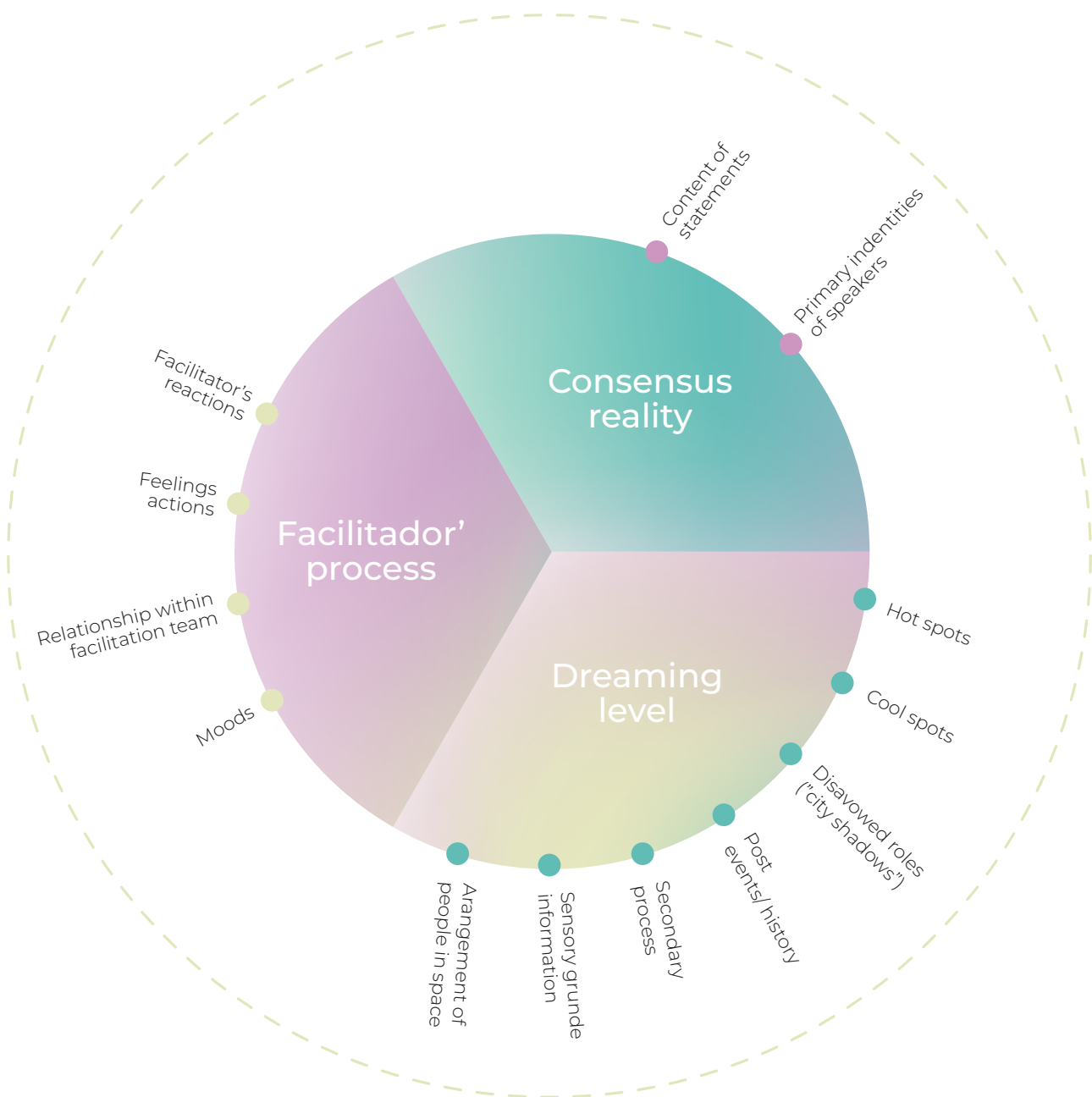
This process can lead you to further polarities and roles, e.g.:

A person who welcomes a migrant	A person who does not welcome a migrant
A person who welcomes a migrant	A migrant
Etc.	

Mapping Process Structure

This way of mapping is inspired by Amy Mindell's *"Intake Chart"* that she describes in her book *"Alternative to Therapy - a creative lecture series on Process Work"*.

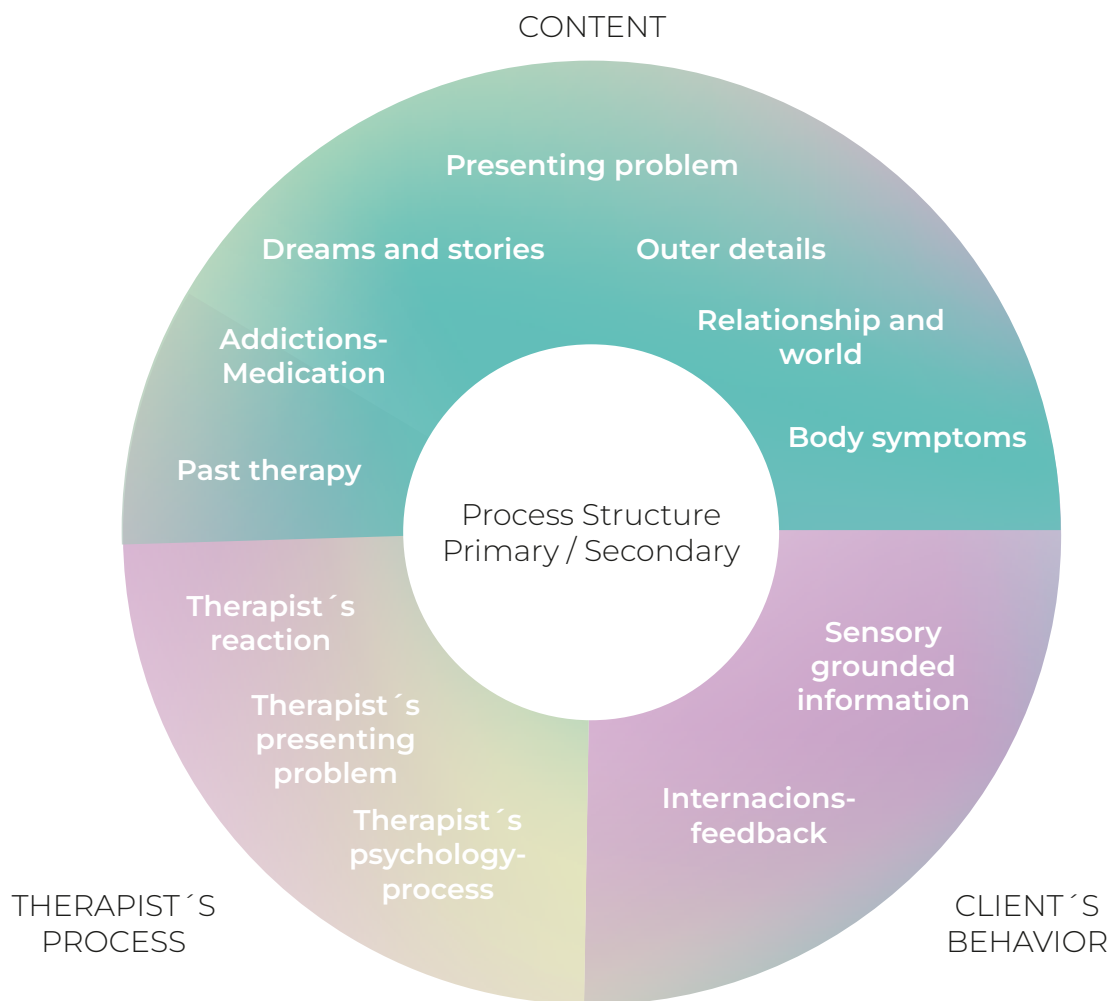
This method can be used very well to map the process of a mock forum and an open forum itself. It distinguishes between roles and events at consensus reality, roles and events at dreaming level, and at essence level.



Reflection questions:

- Which roles are you familiar with? Which ones are new? Is there anything that irritates you?...

Amy's intake chart (just for reference)



TILDE

Transformative and
Inclusive Leadership from
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