

Tuned in: Listening and Thinking-Out-Loud Together

How to create a community of feeling?

How do we connect ideas and actions through our practices?

How do these practices relate to the ways we feel about the world, other people and ourselves?

The aim of this exercise is to know what are at stake when we speak out loud what we are thinking, to listen as we speak up, to observe as we participate, to position oneself, be reflexive and experiment in various modes of listening and thinking-out-loud together.

If there is ever any outcome anticipated from this exercise, it is to habituate the boundaries and openings of being in tune, about moments of aligning with and derailing from common rhythms; and engaging in experiences of moving in and out of focus.

Practicalities:

Participants: ideally max. 6-10 people.

Tools: A3/A4 size papers, A5 color papers, color markers, a talking stick (wood or other material easy to grab)

Duration: The number of people will decide the duration of the session.

Setting: sitting in a circle on the floor in a quiet cosy room.

Methods:

A facilitator prepares cards containing keywords. These cards function as conversation starters. The words written in the cards can be any words that are related to the topic and/or the overall aim of the get-together. These words can be gathered (by the facilitator) from a preliminary interaction (can be through reading group, interview, lecture, texts distributed prior to the meeting, film screening, or discussion on different but focused topics).

There will be 5 roles within the circle:

Presenter: holding a talking stick, the presenter is expected to share views, opinions, to reflect on practices, life etc. for max. 5 min. using keywords that the presenter selects from the existing keyword cards. The presenter can add more keywords.

Host(s): ask(s) questions, provoke discussion in 5 min. time. There can be more than one host per round (depending on the total number of participants).

Harvester: takes notes of ongoing conversation (and give names/markers to the notes to help identifying who was the presenter doing the talk).

Visualizer: uses existing tools (paper and color markers), to try organize the emerging discussion in visual forms (2 or 3 dimensional).

Guardian of process: makes sure everyone is engaged and feels included in the discussion and in charge of time-keeping. (be strict with time keeping so

that everyone gets their share of time equally).

The role of the facilitator is to act as the game keeper (guardian of intention): and make sure that the discussion does not digress too much from the main theme and the aim of the discussion. Other than that, the task of the facilitator/game keeper should be limited to the beginning of the whole exercise. He or she may be need to explain the game rules, elaborate about the different roles available, and point out that someone should grab the talking stick in order to start the round—no further instruction is needed).

All the roles, except for the game keeper, are to be rotated as soon as someone from the group holds a talking stick. Be aware that the shift of roles can be quite confusing in the first to the second round. That said the first two rounds can perhaps be used as a rehearsal, before the actual exercise started.

How to rotate the roles needs to be self-organized. Again the game keeper's task is only to point out that the talking stick is available for anyone who has not yet take the role of presenter to talk.

Once the talking stick is held by the presenter, a new round will star the rest of the participants should express which roles that they want to take during the ongoing round: As host? Harvester? Visualizer? Or guardian of process?

Everyone ultimately has to speak up and out. Everyone can ultimately take the different roles and experience different ways of listening/paying attention. Everyone in the group (including those whose tasks is to take note, visualize and guard the process) is basically required to engage to the unfolding discussion. No exemption.

Provide minimum 15 min in the last phase of the whole session to reflect together what had actually taken place. (Game keeper can lead the reflective session, but this is optional).