

## Expanded Harvest from

### San Francisco Dynamic Facilitation workshop, January 2020

On Fri Jan 17 and Sat Jan 18, we offered a two-day Dynamic Facilitation workshop in San Francisco. It was hosted by [Civic Makers](#) and Rahmin Sarabi, and taught by Rosa Zubizarreta with support from Bruce Nayowith.

Dynamic Facilitation is a highly [relational facilitation approach](#) that has shown itself to be quite useful in a variety of contexts. One highly successful application has been as the “operating system” for [Civic Councils](#), a deliberative democracy format that has been growing in Austria and Germany. Civic Councils are smaller than Citizen’s Assemblies, and somewhat similar to Citizen Juries, yet more cost-effective.

Here are some of the highlights from our recent workshop:

#### Day One

1) We started with an extended community-building intro. Participants shared [what brought them](#) to the workshop, [what tools they were already bringing](#), and what their [burning questions](#) were.

2) Given that active listening and empathy are key elements of Dynamic Facilitation, we included an Empathy Circle experience in the morning of Day One. While most participants were already somewhat familiar with active listening, they still found it a valuable practice, and we had a good [debrief afterward](#). We were able to draw on this experience in Day Two, when we were doing the small DF practice groups in which reflective listening is key..

2) In the afternoon of Day One, we [brainstormed some possible topics for the demo](#). After choosing a topic, we had a facilitated one-hour demo on “wealth inequality and homelessness in SF”. Given the scale of the topic, we of course did not experience a “breakthrough” in just one hour! Also, this work takes place in a creative, non-linear way; so while the various perspectives and info offered by participants were reflected and recorded on our charts, they were not sorted until later on that evening. That came afterward...

3) Hence, there was a significant amount of frustration at the end of Day One, which is normal for this process. The group had [many questions](#), which we recorded. At the time, we were only able to address a few of those questions; the responses included in the above link, were written afterwards, some time after the conclusion of the workshop.

Nonetheless, participants had a taste of Dynamic Facilitation in action on Day One – including the experience of witnessing how we welcome divergent perspectives while protecting participants’ creativity.

## Day Two

- 1) On Day Two, things got much better... (again, this is par for the course in our learning journeys :-). We started the day off with a check-in circle, where participants could reflect on their experience of Day One, how they were feeling presently, and their hopes for Day Two.
- 2) One comment that was mentioned during the opening circle, was how grateful some participants were feeling, that the previous day's demo had NOT been "neat and tidy", as this gave them the opportunity to see how the facilitator handles tension and difficulties.
- 3) We then shared the notes from the demo, the "[lightly sorted](#)" harvest. This is a typical part of DF – the work itself takes place in a non-linear way designed to promote creativity, and then afterward the harvest is sorted into a more linear fashion.
- 4) This was followed by some Q&A about the process, in preparation for working in smaller practice groups. We then formed three groups of five people each, and spent about 3 hours in small practice groups. This meant that each participant had a 30-min turn as facilitator, followed by a round of appreciative feedback.
- 5) The topics that each practice group chose, remained the same for the duration of day two, so that participants could do a "deep dive" on the topic of their choice. The outcomes of each group were stellar!
- 5) One group chose the topic of "**re-inventing democracy**". By the end of the day, they felt they'd had a significant breakthrough, and were fulfilled and excited by all the work they had done. During our whole-group debrief, this small group also shared some insights about their process insights during their work together, which were very helpful to others.
- 6) The second practice group had chosen the topic of "**responding to oppressive behavior in an effective yet compassionate way**". In their small group, they had shared their personal stories, harvested a great deal of wisdom from those experiences, and arrived at significant insights. They also mentioned that they had experienced much personal healing in the process, and were very moved by their practice-group experience.
- 7) The third group chose the very practical topic of "**re-designing libraries to enhance their community-building aspects**"; they did some very solid work in this area. In the whole-group debrief, they also shared some very humorous insights about the ups and downs of their process, generated a tremendous amount of laughter as well as deep learning for all of us.
- 8) In each group, someone took home the extensive harvest from that day's work. If folks are willing to share, we will be glad to post that here afterward.

One exciting aspect of the workshop was the high level of facilitation experience, consciousness, AND commitment to social change that was present in the room. Folks really enjoyed the opportunity to connect with one another; there were lots of comments about the

value of the "facilitator tribe" that was being created; and much enthusiasm was expressed for continuing to meet and connect.

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For those who want to learn more about Dynamic Facilitation, here is one good starting point: [this page on the Diapraxis website](#) offers a variety of writings.

And [here is a page](#) for those wanting to learn more about workshops, including some harvests from past workshops and demos.

For additional inquiries, you can [contact us through the DiaPraxis website](#).