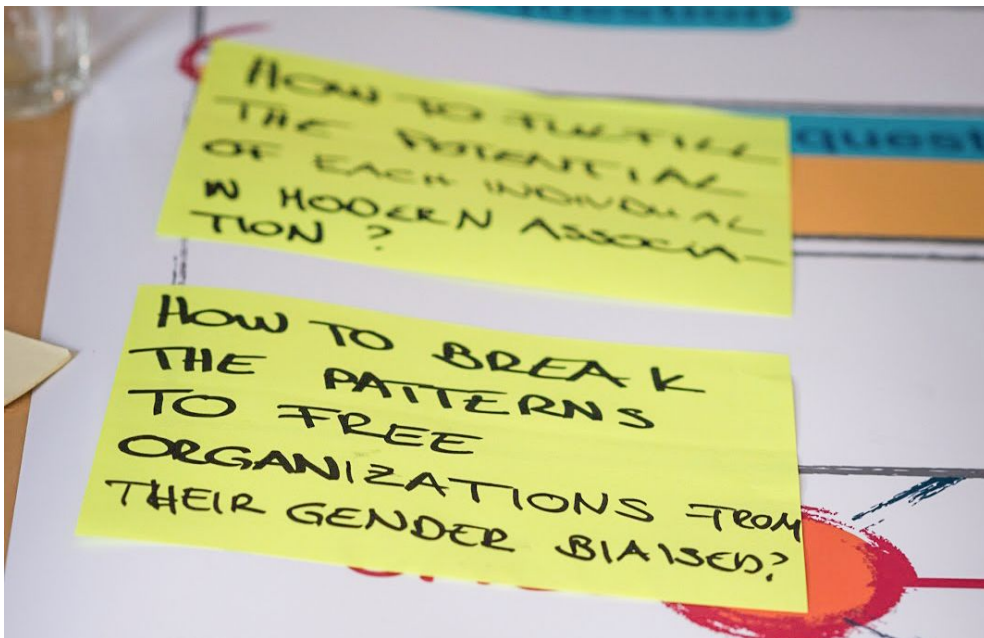

Toolbox

Methods for collaboration, teamwork and facilitation

Holding the Question

For how long might we allow ourselves to hold a question, and what could it create?



What is this method?

"As we enter an era in which systemic issues often lie at the root of critical challenges, in which diverse perspectives are required for sustainable solutions, and in which cause-and-effect relationships are not immediately apparent, the capacity to raise penetrating questions that challenge current operating assumptions will be key to creating positive futures."

- [the art of powerful questions.](#)

In our lives today questions and answers does not have the same weight or value. This partly has to do with the influence of our educational environments. Since the beginning of our educational entry point, we learn that when there is a question it means that there is an answer, and that your success as a student is tied to with which speed and accuracy you can find this answer. We do not get educated in asking questions but in answering questions.

In our everyday life we all know the experience of having a question and the assiduous tickling need of wanting (so badly) to find the answer or the solution. The mechanism is as natural and familiar as making coffee after waking up is for many. The bigger and more important the question in front of us seems to be, the more energy we put into finding the answer and the solution as fast as possible. Unless you function as a researcher, you will most likely go about this answer-finding-process by occupying your own mind. Potentially you might bring your question(s) to some friend or family members whom you feel familiar with and close, too. Or you might not even have to because right at our fingertips, google might already offer us all the answers you need. This is an completely normative process of how to deal with questions, that we all know about and use.

Holding the question is about bringing the focus away from the answer and back to the question. It is about putting as much thought into the question as we have traditionally given to answers. **Holding the question is a method of opening the mind and asking life to respond.**

HOW DOES THE PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

1. **First becoming aware of the present condition** (of yourself or your group), to sit with the needs that are surfaced, and from there it is about crafting a powerful question. Without giving in to any creeping urge to answer it right away, it is instead about appreciating the quality of the question in itself and to notice all the new possibilities it brings.
 1. a. powerful questions are usually made with Why, How, or What prepositions, they possibility-focused and not problem-oriented, they are open and they often evokes more questions. A powerful question invites and challenges you to reflect on a deeper level – to find the knowledge or wisdom that’s already there beneath the surface. Using a powerful question usually adds more value to the process than one that is not.

2. When the question is there and presents itself to you, you want to **decide for how long you are going to hold it.**
3. Then you will go about your life as usual, but you will be holding a question, and you **will ask life to respond to give you clues and signals.** Being aware of the question and not trying to consciously answer it, but rather inviting a state of mind that allows a natural flow, thoughts, ideas and images related to the question will flow into the mind. It is especially helpful to take a walk in nature when holding a question.
4. Do not expect to find any answer before the time of the holding is coming to an end, **just collect undeterred what comes and trust that it will make sense later.** (Use the metaphor of a basket that you fill up with clues)
5. **When the time of holding the question is over, you sit with your question again, and you might wanna try to conduct and define an answer.** However what is most likely to happen is that the entire process of holding the question long enough dismantles or changes the reason for holding the question. The process often allows the arrival of a non-dual state and meaning creation, which resolve tensions we had and helps us shift the thinking we had when we made the question. **This allows us to understand the question we asked from a new depth, to find more profound answers and to penetrate and rejuvenate our assumptions. Holding the question opens the door to dialogue and discovery.**

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."

—Albert Einstein

TOOLS, MATERIALS, TIME, ROLES

Holding the question can last from hours, days, weeks and even months. It depends on the question and the context. A person might hold a question that pops up over the lunch-break, a couple might hold a question for some weeks about where they would like to travel to in summer, a team or a group might hold a question together for a longer period about which direction their project or work should take.

The question(s) that are held need(s) to be put somewhere into writing, and there needs to be an agreement with the self or with the people, on the timeframe of how long the question will be hold and when it needs to be re-visited.

Although groups can easily use this method, we recommend to use it mostly as an individual practice.

Source:

- <http://www.dancehammers.com/index.php>

Further literature to the topic:

- Peter Block (2008): Community.