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Open Space Technology is alive, growing and developing all over Eastern Europe

by Csaba Császár, Bohdan Maslych, Igor Ovchinniko and Jo Toepfer

If there is truth in the old saying that “You can neither teach Open Space, nor learn Open Space – but maybe we all can remember it”, then there should be a training design that is congruent with this idea. By experiencing the method, rather than by “learning” it by consuming presentations, speeches, exercises and lectures, participants will “remember” it and realise that it has been part of their lives all along.

Some practitioners in the worldwide Open Space community have been exploring such an Open Space Technology (OST) Training design for years, and have tested it over 25 times with more than 800 participants all over the world, including Russia, Hun-

gary and Ukraine. This article tells you about this unique training program and its effects, consequences, and follow-up activities in those three countries.

The training design

Working with OST requires radically different approaches than those of traditional consulting and management work. To meet this challenge, completely new ways of “training” had to be designed. Over the years, OST practitioners in Europe and elsewhere have developed a design that takes seriously the old saying: “Open Space can neither be taught nor learned but can possibly be remembered”.

This has led to a radically new approach of training that provides time and space for optimally “remembering” open space by relying on the forces of self-organisation. The training design consists of three consecutive OST events each with a specific focus (experience, reflection and practice) and a number of parallel activities that support self organised learning, spread over six days.



Participants post issues during Moscow training

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Trainees practising the role of the facilitator, during Ukraine training.

Experience as participant

In the first OST event, participants experience themselves in an Open Space event. It consists of a Planning Session in which the whole group arrives at the theme for the first Open Space that they will engage in. The three-hour Planning Session takes place in the first afternoon immediately after a brief introduction to the Training Design.

The evening of day 1 is spent in small reflection groups with assigned tasks. These small groups meet every evening during the course of the training. Day 2 and the morning of day 3 are spent in a full OST event including:

- Opening of the space by the sponsor (one of the participants),
- Introduction of the methodology by the facilitator (one of the trainers),
- Identification of and work on the issues by

the participants,

- Documentation of the results, and
- Planning next steps.

Everybody experiences the role of participant in an OST event, a key prerequisite of “remembering” open space and getting into the spirit of this technology. During this 1.5-day event, participants post their questions on flip chart paper at the “Questions and Answers Wall”.

This creates the first “learning space” while supporting the focus of being a participant, without losing track of questions to be dealt with when participants are reflecting on the methodology.



Playful remembering at the Hungarian training



Ukraine participants browse task cards that help them remember.



Break-out session, during Moscow training

Reflecting on the Methodology

The second OST event is an "Open Space on Open Space" (OSonOS) following immediately the event just experienced. It allows participants to reflect on the methodology and dig into the "nuts and bolts" of OST. This is also an opportunity to deal with the questions gathered during the first OST event. It takes place on the afternoon of day 3 and the morning of day 4.

At this point, a number of "learning spaces" are opened up for participants to delve into everything they are interested in about OST. These "learning spaces" are:

- OST cinema with films of Open Space events and trainings
- OST exhibition with artefacts from Open Space events: posters, photos, documentations, drawings, newspaper clippings etc.
- OST library with books, articles, dissertations, etc.
- OST cyberspace with computers and access to the Internet to investigate websites, mailing lists, blogs, wikis, etc.
- Questions and Answers Wall to reflect the current experience
- Reflection groups with assigned tasks to look at the learning journey during each day.

Focus on the facilitator

The third OST event is an Open Space set up and conducted by the participants themselves with the title "I, Open Space Facilitator". The fo-

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cus is on the role of the facilitator. It is prepared by several small teams that work simultaneously in the morning of day 4. The Open Space takes place in the afternoon of day 4, facilitated by one of the teams selected by lot. The morning of day 5 is used to offer feedback to the facilitation team. In a similar process, Action Planning is prepared by several teams in the morning and carried out in the afternoon of day 5 with feedback for the facilitation team.

After the three OST events and the parallel study in the "learning spaces" and reflection groups, the morning of day 6 is spent in evalua-

tion and planning the participant's ongoing journey towards becoming an OST practitioner. The training concludes at noon of day 6 with a Closing Circle, and passing out the certificates of participation.

To sum it up, the training is about 90% experiential, self-organised learning in the Open Space format, 5% coaching, 5% discussion and dialogue, 0% presentation, 0% speeches and 0% lecture, pretty much 0% boredom and pretty close to 100% fun.

Experience with the OST Training design in Russia, June 2000 (by Igor Ovchinnikov)

My first encounter with OST happened in June 2000 on the outskirts of Moscow where about 50 colleagues of mine and I attended the annual conference of InterTraining (IT), a Moscow-based international network of trainers and consultants. It had been a tradition with IT since the mid-1990's to invite external trainers to each annual conference.

OST was quite new to almost all of us. Little did we know then how long-lasting the effects of this event would be, eventually changing even the IT tradition itself. While we continued to invite new people with new trainings each year, all the following conferences themselves incorporated the OST format at least to some extent. In my "advocacy" speeches for OST these days, I often use this example to illustrate how "contagious" this technology can be once you are



More issues are posted on the Bulletin Board, Ukraine

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Connections made in open space bridge cultural differences, Hungary

exposed to it.

Like all new (and I dare say revolutionary) things, OST didn't occupy a place in all of our minds and hearts instantly. I clearly recall how I myself went through a fairly painful process of scrutinizing (and finally accepting) this new method, before I could truly call it "mine". However, it was just a month or two later when I made my first attempt (quite cautiously at first) to incorporate OST into my own practice in the Far East of Russia — a first step in a long journey that has already lasted for more than eight years and will continue.

Over the years, I have noticed that one of the intrinsic features of OST — a certain unpredictability of the final outcome (captured by the admonition "Be prepared to be surprised") — has wider implications than just at any given OST

event. Indeed with OST, we can hardly predict how this technology will play out in our own lives in the long term — or even just a year or two from today.

Over the last eight years, my own company (Golubka Training Centre) has facilitated dozens of OST events for various groups both in the NGO and business world. We have shared the technology with many other trainers and facilitators all over Russia and some parts of the ex-USSR. I imagine that many of our colleagues and fellow trainers from that OST event in 2000 have done



Issues are posted driven by passion and responsibility, Russia



The Moscow training group with people from all over the former USSR

the same.

This means the technology lives, grows, develops and keeps surprising people pretty much all over Eastern Europe and beyond. The good news is that this region (let alone the planet) is big enough for OST to remain a “new and revolutionary” catalyst for many more people in our lifetime.

Experience with the OST Training design in Hungary, November 2000 (by Csaba Császár)

We in Hungary conducted a small survey among the participants of the training course eight years after it was actually conducted, asking

about follow-up activities, impact on their professional life, and consequences of the training. Eleven of 34 participants answered our questions, and here is the summary of their responses:

The training had a lasting effect on the approach used by the participants: they rely more comfortably on the group's capacities and they work more consciously with the forces of self-organisation. Participants also gained confidence to work with the process facilitation approach. Even for those who do not work directly with OST, the principles and the “law of two feet” were mentioned in all cases when working with groups or organisations in general, not just regarding OST events.

The 11 respondents reported about 45 OST



Intense conversation in a break-out session, Ukraine

events between 2001 and 2008 with a 60/40 distribution between business and non profit sectors. Some themes: "The school of the future", "How should we implement our plan for this year?", "What should we work on at our planned conference?", "How to reorganise our unit?" and "What are we proud of in our region?"

OST is often a solution when it comes to "classical" difficulties in the work of the facilitator. But managers often resist letting go of control over the outcome even after a proper preparation process and invitation. When the group starts to work in OST format, managers sometimes get nervous about the process and express scepticism towards the facilitator when she/he is no longer in charge of the process.

In 2004, one local OSoS was organised with 22 participants to share experiences from the

field and learn from each other.

Experience with the OST Training design in Ukraine, May 2005 (by Bohdan Maslych)

Stage 1: Excitement About 40 Ukrainian facilitators took part in the training in Ukraine in May 2005. They could not hide their excitement about OST. "Now we know what it's all about... Now we know how to make our business/life/organisation better ..." could be heard on the way back home from the training. In the first OST Learning Exchange in November 2005, the majority of facilitators were still optimistic and excited: "OST will definitely improve life in our country! OST always works! Real life showed – it is true, but not everybody is aware of it..."



Opening by a sponsor during the 3rd OST event of the Ukrainian training

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People negotiate time and place for the issues, Ukraine

Stage 2: Confusion The first real confusion happened during the second Ukrainian OST Learning Exchange in June 2006. Of six participants, only three came from Ukraine! Nevertheless, OST kept — and keeps — spreading across Ukraine. The Ukrainian facilitators faced real challenges to promote OST and many of them were disappointed by those potential clients who were not aware that OST always works. When the Worldwide OSoNOS XV was held in Kiev in May 2007, it was attended by OST facilitators from 17 countries. Thirteen Ukrainians showed up probably the most optimistic ones...

Stage 3: Reality check The good news is that Ukrainian facilitators promote OST in very different areas, and step by step, it is being used more and more. By now we have our own success stories — like the biggest OST event in Ukraine with



Towards becoming OST facilitators, Ukraine.

more than 2,000 participants sponsored by a church in 2007, or an OST event aimed at establishing a corporate university sponsored by the biggest insurance company in Ukraine in 2008. But, even more importantly, OST is being used in small towns or villages to enhance community development and to address social care issues. OST does always work, and more and more people in Ukraine are becoming aware of it!

Conclusion

As we see from the three cases, the training had a genuine effect on the professional life of the participants and transformed their role, responsibility and approach towards groups and organisations. And, more importantly, those who feel passion and responsibility work together to share experiences and support each other along their journey towards becoming an OST facilitator.

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Although the notion of self-organisation does not fit into the traditional concept of training, people are able to organise the training process by themselves without speeches, presentations and external input, and to have fun doing it. Normally, after a short period of confusion, creativity and learning breaks out and continues to grow over the course of the training week.

What the participants, during the training itself, often describe as a “brainwashing” exercise, turns into a transformative experience in retro-

spect. People who have gone through this process often challenge their own paradigms and assumptions regarding structure, control and performance of groups and organisations.

The question that we all struggle with, in one form or the other, on our journey towards becoming an OST facilitator is: Might it be true that we are part of a self-organising cosmos and control is just an illusion? The answer you have to find for yourself and you are invited to join this journey.

About the Authors



From left to right: Jo Toepfer, Bohdan Maslych, Csaba Császár, Igor Ovchinnikov

Jo Toepfer, born in 1968 in Germany, works as a consultant in organisational transformation, mainly focusing on large group work using Open Space Technology, Future Search and Appreciative Inquiry. He works mainly in Eastern Europe and CIS countries. He is a member of the Russian Association of Management and OD Consultants, the Future Search Network and the Berlin Open Space Cooperative. See www.boscop.org

Bohdan Maslych (1973, Ukraine) works as a project manager and capacity building consultant in Ukraine, CEE and Central Asia since 1995. His clients are businesses, governmental

agencies, international development organizations and NGOs. He is a director of Management Training Promotion Company Ltd., which offers tailored solutions in marketing and organizational development. See: www.mtp.com.ua

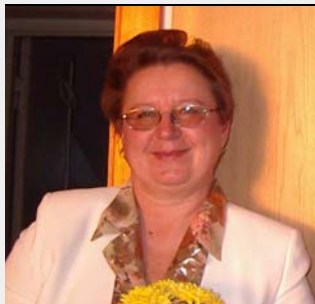
Csaba Császár, 42, works as a consultant in Hungary and in the neighboring countries. His main field of work is organisational transformation and leadership development, his clients come mostly from the business sector. He is one of the founders of OD Partner, a company of likeminded consultants. See www.odpartner.hu

Igor Ovtchinnikov is deputy director of the Golubka Training Center, in Moscow, responsible for designing and facilitating NGO training programs throughout the former Soviet Union. He has been active in civic education for about 20 years, and specializes in training, non-violent conflict resolution, group process and facilitation, democratic leadership, business and NGO organizational development and management, and community participation. See www.golubka.org/

Note: The OST practitioners who worked in the three trainings mentioned here as trainers were Michael M Pannwitz mmpanne@boscop.org and Jo Toepfer jotoepfer@boscop.org. Both conduct OST trainings all over the world.

How the classic Open Space guide was translated into Russian

By Elena Marchuk, Ph.D.



After she first heard about Open Space Technology in 1999, Elena Marchuk waited for someone to translate Harrison's Owen's 'Open Space Technology: User's Guide' into Russian. Then she

decided it was time to do it herself, and the result is the publication of the Russian version of this classic book. Now she is working on translating Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff's book, Future Search, into Russian. Elena lives in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

This is Elena's story of how she first encountered Open Space Technology and then pioneered the use of both methods in the vast expanses of Siberia and eastern Russia.

We have worked with Open Space in Russia since September 1999, when we first heard about it during a Learning Workshop on Future Search Conference in Berlin. It was like this. We came to the moment of 'active planning' and San-

dra (Janoff) said: 'Well, you can make it with the help of Open Space Technology, as everybody here knows what it is...but we will show you another way how we do this...'

When we came back to Siberia, I started to search: "What is Open Space Technology?" And my friend Marina Tyasto and I did use it on one of our first Future Searches in Siberia. After we had organized several Future Searches, "Leaders in Siberia for XXI century" and "Women-Leaders of Siberia", to see how it would work here and to show the method to our people, we were invited to Nijniy Novgorod to lead two more Future Searches, "Education in new era" and "Arsenal of science and art".

The invitation came from colleagues who had attended the Berlin workshop but didn't have experience in facilitating. They used more analytical methods to diagnose the economic situations of enterprises, while we focused on inspiring people to work on their problems by themselves rather than waiting for government to help.

The first workshop was organized in a way that was totally opposite to the 'conditions of suc-

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cess' for Future Search conferences. Most of the organizing, as you know, should be done ahead of time, to make sure the "right" people have been invited to the conference. Getting a cross-section of the society means inviting 64 people (optimal) made up of eight people from eight different stakeholder groups, who will sometimes work in their 'own' groups and sometimes in mixed groups to look at the problem from different points of view.

But in Nijniy Novgorod, our colleagues had just posted the invitation on the Educational Fair, a market place for all new books and innovations in educational materials and equipment. We were shocked, as our colleagues had attended the Berlin workshop and we had corresponded about forming the groups and inviting people – but you know, this is a completely Russian way of doing things (or not doing them), actually.

The participants stayed...

So Marina and I posted our flipcharts on the wall and organized the room, a big hall with windows that was one of the best facilities we have ever had for Future Search. We were able to divide it into two parts - one with eight tables and eight chairs around each table, and one with the big circle of more than 60 chairs - so we didn't need to move chairs when we needed a circle or other format for working. When we needed to organize group work, we just gave the table a number or the name of the stakeholder group.

About 60 people came to the conference, from different areas of the education system -

schools, colleges, universities, business, individual consulting firms and so on. There were some professors of the universities and we were told that these participants never stayed at any conference more than half an hour, but they worked with us for all three days of the conference!



It was interesting for us and the participants, as they told us in the closing circle...but we only have our memories and a few pictures that Marina took, because our colleagues did not send us the typed notes. That was our first time experience to rely on somebody, so now we always do everything ourselves and we do have a lot of detailed reports of our conferences.

A day later, there was another Future Search, which looked 'more prepared'. A non-profit organization wanted to turn an old, deteriorating armory into a museum for art and science that would be called the Arsenal of Science and Art but they weren't sure how to do this. As well as participants from museums and the Department of Culture, the organizers had invited some artists from Moscow who were completely opposed to "being organized".

We did manage to finish a Mind Map of current trends influencing science and art museum, which looked great, but the artists kept ar-

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guing, at every step, that they didn't need to be organized. Next day, just before lunch, they decided they would prefer to go for an excursion, and it was hard work for the organizers to persuade the artists to work on a Future vision.

Hearts, emotions turned on

We wrote the task on the flip chart - to prepare a Future Scenario for Arsenal, presentations to start at 14:30 - posted it on the wall, and left the room to go for a walk. Marina looked at her Tarot Cards, which said that we were going the right way and that everything would end well, and that helped us and give us moral support.

We were certain of the method, as we had tried it several times already and saw its advantages, because it switched on emotions and hearts while the analytical method only switched on brains. While I am also fond of the analytical method because I am an economist-



Elena introduced Open Space to a Russian-Canadian women's conference held in Siberia in 2001.

mathematician by training, we were looking for methods of real participation and constructive dialogue that 'led people into doing something'.

When we came back from our walk, we heard that a respected Moscow consultant had arrived and that participants had decided to write their motivations for work but they wouldn't do any 'foolish' common grounds.

We said "OK", but persuaded them first to start with their scenarios of the Future of Arsenal.

But when we asked them to prepare lists of common ground from the presentations and points of view they liked the best, again, they said that rather than work on a "foolish" exercise, they would work on the topics they wanted to discuss that had brought them to Ninjiy Novgorod - their motivation. So they began working. As they presented their work and their lists and drawings, we could see 'the best scenarios and the best common ground features' for the future of the Arsenal.

Our colleagues, who were somewhere between "hosts" and "facilitators", didn't know what to do next, but in the "motivations", we saw interests from which they could build common ground'. And we knew what to do with that - just follow the design of Future Search and work on common ground and action planning. So we did proceed.

Finding common ground

The next morning, we thanked the participants for their presentations of motivations and said, these are their genuine interests and why don't we explore what is held in common by eve-

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ryone. We asked them to cut up each 'motivation' item from the list, and post it on the wall. But they wanted to keep the "whole" thing together and not cut up the list.

So we said, "Ok, you can leave these lists for yourselves, but make another one with each feature separated from the others so we can cut them in strips and place them on the wall". Then they worked on identifying common ground and did some action planning during a two-hour Open Space session. Then we had a closing circle with feedback, insights, satisfactions and dissatisfactions that looked like satisfactions.

Translation is "heart work"

For nearly 10 years now, as we have held Open Space meetings, participants ask us where they can read about OST. For many years, we gave them Thomas Herman's two page guide or Harrison's Short "User's Guide" (10 pages), which I translated.

But I waited for somebody else to translate the book, as I am not a 'professional' translator.

The OST book was my first attempt to translate a book in a way that would be readable for Russian readers and still keep the sense and mood of the book. With the help of my friends who encouraged me, and gave me their feedback, we tried to make the book as close to the original as possible. The publisher said she could publish the book because, although there were some 'Americanisms', the text was readable.

But my American friend and editor, Raffi



Elena introduced Open Space to a Russian-Canadian women's conference held in Siberia in 2001.

Aftandelyan, and I decided that because language is so important, we would ask an editor who knew about Open Space to edit the text. So Ludmila Ivanova took on this task, which took another six months, and then the publication took another six months. But here we are, the book is published!

Translation really is interesting, creative, and hard work but it does not pay well (at least in Russia), so you cannot live on it. This is "heart work".

Many words which I use in this story need 10 words of explanation to be understandable in Russian. For example, I explain the words 'facilitate, facilitator or facilitation' as "help for participants to discover their own goals, own strategy and own plans for actions...in a collaborative way". So what is collaborative way or collaboration? I explain that as 'co-operation with taking into account the interests of all stakeholders'.... so what is a stakeholder? Well, you see, I'd better stop here....

IN PRINT

How proverbs are building organisational capacity in Africa: old values, new approach

by Dr. Chiku Malunga

The rich and diverse African heritage can make a considerable contribution towards addressing many political, economic and socio-cultural challenges that the continent, and even the world, faces today. African cultural heritage, passed on from generation to generation, has been a source of guidance for African communities in times of peace, uncertainty, birth, life and death. It has been a basis of their self-identity, self-respect and self-confidence. It has enabled them to live in harmony with their physical, social and spiritual environments.

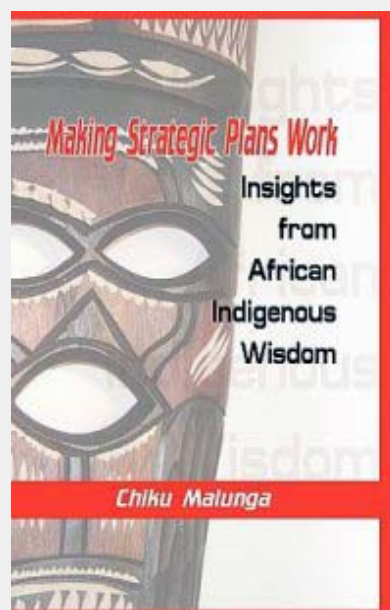
This heritage provides a foundation for leadership, guidance, problem solving, decision-making, self-reliance and development. It helps people to be balanced and focused. Strength drawn from past lessons guides them to the unknown

future with confidence.

The rediscovery of the under-appreciated and under-utilised heritage has significant implications for development and capacity building. The failure of so many development interventions over the past half-century can be partly attributed to their lack of rootedness in the society they were designed to change. Development has been perceived as synonymous with taking on a Western-world identity.

For development interventions to catalyse fundamental change, they have to engage with people's identity and values, whether they be individuals, communities, organisations or indeed nations. Such identity-based development is needed to elicit the required understanding, motivation and passion to change. Capac-

ity building needs to be grafted onto pre-existing foundational values, not simply importing an-



other's value base.

Guidelines for behaviour

Proverbs are an integral part of African culture. They are simple statements with deep meaning. Proverbs can be understood where literacy is low, and appreciated by the most educated. They are guidelines for individual, family, village and community behaviour, built upon repeated real life experiences and observations over a long period of time. Proverbs play different roles in traditional African society. Some of these roles are:

- Identifying and dignifying a culture. Proverbs express the collective wisdom of the people, reflecting their thinking, values and behaviours. Using proverbs to communicate and understand organisational issues is therefore a very powerful tool in the quest for a genuine African identity.
- Unlocking 'stuckness', clarifying vision and unifying different perspectives. Proverbs add humor and diffuse tension around otherwise very sensitive issues. Every African society has used proverbs for centuries to ease uncomfortable situations, confront issues and build institutions and relationships.
- Proverbs are metaphors and they explain complex issues in simple statements. For example two villages in conflict may be less likely to fight after reflecting on the proverb *when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers*. The meaning behind the simple statement about elephants is a powerful message about the negative effects that a disagreement be-



'When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion'
(Photo: Rosemary Cairns)

tween two chiefs can have on innocent villagers. The proverb *when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion* communicates the importance of unity and collaboration in tackling problems and inspires people with faith that they can address problems together, no matter how big.

- By being metaphorical, proverbs create strong mental pictures. This is a powerful way for motivating people into action.
- Proverbs are like seeds. They become 'alive' when they are 'sown'. They are simple statements until applied to real life situations, which then bring them to life and expand their meaning.

Making terms clear

While it might be argued that organisation and management principles are universal to an

extent, they are not as easy to communicate in many African languages as they are in English. In English, for example, we can use a word like 'strategy' with minimum explanation for it to be immediately understood. But many African languages do not have any direct translation of the word, thus diluting its meaning and increasing the risk of misunderstandings. The power of language cannot be over-emphasised. This may explain why a lot of literature on development and management, mostly written in the North, is without much corresponding translation into action on the ground in the South.

At CADECO, an organisational change consultancy in Malawi, we therefore embarked on formulating our own more relevant and effective tools to address these problems. We came up with the proverbs-based tools, which would enhance the communication of organisational issues in a language which people from all types of organisa-

tions and educational backgrounds would easily understand and use

Since proverbs are a language of communication and many organisational problems are caused by or compounded by communication problems, proverbs are invaluable for understanding and addressing organisational issues. Although there may be no direct translation for the word *strategy*, proverbs like *a monkey who tried to get three mangoes from three different branches in a tree at the same time fell on its back* or *a mother of twins must sleep on her back* can immediately unlock many insights about strategy. CADECO has developed a tool that covers six key areas:

- Leadership and vision
- Strategy
- Roles and responsibilities
- Policies, systems and procedures
- Organisational culture
- Sustainability



'A monkey who tried to get three mangoes from three different branches in a tree at the same time fell on its back'. (Photo: Rosemary Cairns)

Some lessons from our practice

CADECO has used African proverbs in OA processes, but also in strategic planning, team building, leadership development, board development and self-development interventions. We have also used African proverbs in working with a range of organisations including: community-based organisations (CBOs); professional NGOs; churches; and government departments. From this experience we have learnt a number of lessons.

1) In the proverbs-based self-assessment tools, the proverbs act as a communication aid or amplifier. The participants discuss their under-

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standing of the proverbs. They then apply this understanding when answering the question and determining the assessment rate and its explanation. We have learnt that it is often necessary to use an external facilitator to moderate the discussions and the self-assessment process.

2) It is necessary to use the most fitting proverb to the intervention or situation at hand. Using 'loose' proverbs without a clear link to the intervention or the situation may confuse people and disrupt the process. The practitioner must always ask himself or herself the question, 'what is the most effective proverb that I can use in this situation?' In a roles and responsibilities clarification intervention, for example, proverbs like *if the sun says it is more powerful than the moon, then let it come and shine at night* and *the cat in his house has the teeth of a lion* may be very appropriate. In communicating the importance of learning from practice – indeed praxis itself, a proverb like *a person is taller than any mountain they have climbed* would be appropriate.

3) In training workshops it is important to use only a few proverbs, to maximise their impact. Too many proverbs may lead to loss of interest in the proverbs. This also applies to carrying out assessments using the proverbs-based tools. In a three-day team building workshop for example, we use about three proverbs to bring issues and insights to the surface for discussion at the beginning. In the proverbs-based assessment tool this may mean that not all categories may need proverbs – only those where proverbs will add significant value. In other words, proverbs are



When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers
(Photo: Rosemary Cairns)

more useful where a direct question may not raise all the issues, because people do not completely understand the question.

4) It is important to use reflective questions in order to bring out insights from the proverbs. Since proverbs may mean different things to different people at different times and in different contexts, the questions must be properly phrased and focused to enable them to solicit only those insights related to the issue at hand.

In a self-development session for example, we use a question like: 'What insights can we learn from the following proverb: *a changed place cannot transform an individual but a transformed individual can change a place*?' When we used this question and proverb with a rural CBO, a chief explained his total agreement with the proverb by telling the group a story of someone in his village who migrated to a neighboring country hoping to be 'transformed' by its better economy, and some-

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body else who came from that country to reside in his village. The person who came to reside in his village was very productive and within a short time became very wealthy. The person who migrated to the other country came back after a few years frustrated and poorer as the 'transformed nation' failed to transform him.

5) Proverbs can be used as reflective case studies. To do this most effectively it is important to know and use the story upon which the prov-

erbs are based. Using a story is especially useful when there are complicated issues which are difficult to communicate. For example, it is extremely difficult to teach and communicate organisational identity issues. But using 'proverbs case studies' easily transcends such a barrier.

6) Finally, proverbs must be used naturally and flexibly, not mechanically. If used mechanically, the proverbs may actually become a hindrance to the process. The power of proverbs

Example

One of the proverbs we have used in 'identity interventions' is the story behind the proverb *an eaglet that does not know that it is an eagle may live like a chicken*:

'A farmer picked an egg from an eagle's nest and placed it among the eggs a chicken was sitting on. When the eggs hatched, among the chicks was an eaglet from the eagle's egg. The eaglet and chicks moved and grew together. Because of its socialisation, the eaglet took the personality of a chick and was growing into a chicken until one day when an eagle was flying over the chicken and the chicks and noticed the eaglet. 'The eagle descended and hovered over the chicken and the chicks, screaming and apparently trying to call the eaglet. The chicken and the chicks became restless and afraid and ran for cover. The eaglet also became restless and afraid and was running for cover. In

the process however the eaglet looked up and was immediately struck by its resemblance to the eagle.

'For the first time the eaglet saw that it was different from the chicken and the chicks. Instead of producing more fear, the screams of the eagle started to produce a magnetic attraction for the eaglet. The eaglet felt like getting close to the eagle. At that moment, the eaglet knew that it did not belong to the chickens any more. The eaglet had never flown before. It tried to jump and the moment it did it flew away with mother eagle.'

Discussion questions

- What does the story of the eaglet teach us as an organisation?
- How similar or different are we to the eaglet?
- What are we going to do in order to improve?

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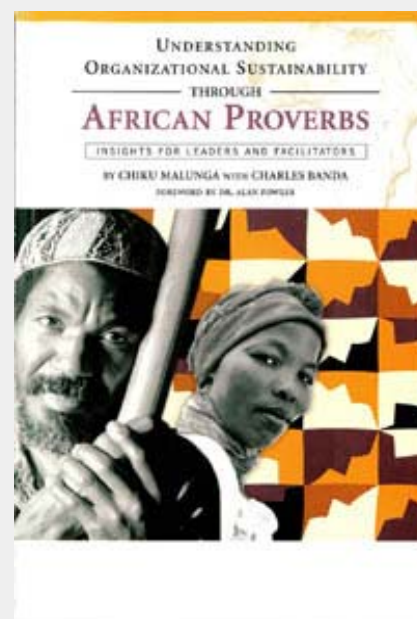
when used properly is their 'invisibility' as they serve to facilitate the process rather than draw attention to themselves. This means that proverbs must be used only when their use will add value to the process. Development practitioners must not get too excited with the use of proverbs to the extent of *using crutches when they can walk on their own feet*.

This article is excerpted, with permission, from PraxisNote 6: Using African Proverbs in Organisational Capacity Building, by Chiku Malunga with Rick James, published in 2004 by INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre), Oxbridge Court, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES (www.intrac.org). The document is available in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Russian at <http://www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisNote6.html>.

Dr. Malunga works with Capacity Development Consultants (CADECO), P.O Box 1884, Blantyre, Malawi (www.cadeco.mw), and is the author of *Making Strategic Plans Work: Insights from African Indigenous Wisdom* (Adonis & Abbey Publishers Ltd., January 2009), and with Charles Banda, of *Understanding Organizational Sustainability through African Proverbs: Insights for Leaders and Facilitators*, published in 2008 by Practical Action Publishing, UK. You can read his article, *The Beehive Model for Team Building*, at <http://tiny.cc/gJ4Uf>. You can reach him by email at [cadeco AT sdnp DOT org DOT mw](mailto:cadeco@sdnp DOT org DOT mw).



More than 50 people attended the launch of Dr. Malunga's first book in Washington D.C., including representatives of USAID, the Malawian Embassy, and many peer NGOs. (Photo: Pact)



Bulletin Board

Join us in cyber-space!

We are very happy to let you know that IAF Europe is back on the internet, at our new site <http://www.iaf-europe.eu>. Please come and visit us.

Our regional website links you to a variety of resources:

- our 2009 conference website (<http://www.iaf-europe-conference.org>)
- our latest IAF Europe Regional Newsletter
- our regional forum, on which you can post announcements for other European facilitators at Workshops and Meeting Announce-



ments, and talk about facilitation in a variety of languages in our Language Cafe

- a link to the IAF page on Facebook
- back issues of the IAF Europe Newsletter and other resources

and of course,

- to the IAF global site, on which you can find out about IAF's activities around the world, including all the CPF certification events that are planned.

The website responds to a number of the points you raised when we held a visioning session at the 2008 European conference at Groningen, and we hope you will be happy with our response. We will be adding more features gradu-



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ally over the next few months.

We would like to extend our thanks for excellent website design (for our regional and conference sites) to Christian Grambow, who also designs our IAF Europe Regional Newsletter.

Welcome new and returning members, February 2009

We are delighted to welcome the following new members who joined IAF during February.

- Maurice Alberts, Netherlands
- Renate Franke, Germany
- Robert Krzysnik, Slovenia
- Marjeta Novak, Slovenia
- Veronica Ramsay, UK
- Barbara Zuber, Germany

We are equally delighted to welcome back IAF members who renewed their memberships during February:

- Sirin Bernshausen, Germany
- Nathalie Berthier-Ortmann, Germany
- Federico Bussi, Italy
- David Butter, UK
- Nancy Chapple, Germany
- Paul Cummings, UK
- Karin Delin, Sweden
- Carolina de Monchy, Netherlands
- Trevor Durnford, UK
- Karen Foong, UK
- Martin Gilbraith, UK
- Sylvie Gelin, Switzerland
- Bertil Hansson, Sweden
- Jan Haverkamp, Czech Republic



- Paul Kerr, Netherlands
- Liam Kirwan, Ireland
- Mary O'Broin, Ireland
- Christine Partridge, UK
- Felicity Pettifer, Belgium
- Gary Purser, UK
- Christian Rieckmann, Germany
- Annette Rotstein, Sweden
- Hilde Rydning, Norway
- Holger Scholz, Germany
- B.M.J. Spronck, Netherlands
- Katherine Stoessel, UK
- Suzanne van Langen, Netherlands
- Sarah Willis, UK

CALENDAR

Do you have an event coming up that you would like to let other facilitators in Europe know about? Please post it on Workshop and Meeting Announcements folder on the IAF Europe regional website (www.iaf-europe.eu.)

Each month, we will provide a listing of the

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events we've heard about here, in calendar format. Visit our site to see the details.

To submit announcements for the Newsletter, please send them to rosemary.cairns@iaf-europe.eu.

MARCH

Three weekends in March: European Citizens Consultation, EU-wide. See <http://www.european-citizens-consultations.eu/>

March 20, 2009, 9:30 - 1600: UK Facilitators Network meeting, at Pinpoint Facilitation Centre <http://www.pinpointfacilitationcentre.co.uk>. For information, email Gary Austin gary DOT austin AT circleindigo DOT com

APRIL

April 27-May 2, 2009, Sturovo, Slovakia: Europe Matters Forum organized by CFOR (Force for Change), London. For more information, see http://www.cfor.info/europe_matters.html, or email admin AT cfor DOT info.

MAY

May 12, 2009, London, UK, Leading beyond boundaries. For details, visit <http://www.livingleadership.uk.com> or contact John Watters at john-watters AT livingleadership DOT uk DOT com.

May 14, 2009: Certified Professional Facilitator, certification event in Dutch, Rossum, Netherlands. Contact Peggy Bushee at certify AT iaf-world.org.

world.org.

JUNE

June 17, 2009: Deadline for submitting first documents and fee for IAF Europe September certification event.

June 24, 2009, London, UK. Narrative techniques for business (story listening). Organized by Anecdote (www.anecdote.com.au); for more information email info AT anecdote DOT com DOT au.

June 25, 2009, London, UK Storytelling for business leaders (storytelling). Organized by Anecdote (www.anecdote.com.au); for more information email info AT anecdote DOT com DOT au

JULY

July 16, 2009. Deadline for submitting remaining documents for IAF Europe September certification event.

AUGUST

August 17, 2009: invitations to stage 2 of the IAF Europe September certification event are extended.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 16-17, 2009, **IAF Europe Certification Event**, Oxford England.

This certification event will be held in conjunction with the IAF-Europe Facilitators Conference, September 18-20, 2009. Candidates attend only one of

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the two assessment days. For details, contact Peggy Bushee at certify AT iaf-world DOT org, or see <http://www.iaf-world.org/i4a/calendar/details.cfm?id=532>.

Sept. 18-20, 2009 IAF European Conference, being held at Oxford University in the UK. For more details, see <http://www.iaf-europe-conference.org/> or email conference@iaf-europe.eu. For program details, contact Gary Purser, Conference Chair at gary DOT purser AT iaf-europe DOT eu

OCTOBER

Oct. 19-23, 2009, Trainer certification for the Organization Workshop offered by Power+ Systems, Inc. in the UK at the Matara Centre, near Stroud (see <http://www.matara.co.uk>).

For more details, visit <http://www.livingleadership.uk.com> or contact John Watters at john.watters@livingleadership.uk.com

NOVEMBER

Nov. 2, 2009: Netherlands Certification Event, in Dutch, at Rossum, Netherlands. For details, contact Peggy Bushee at certify AT iaf-world DOT org

2010

March 21-26, The Power Lab, a unique total immersion leadership program developed by Barry Oshry, delivered in England for the first time. For details, For more details, visit <http://www.livingleadership.uk.com>



ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The IAF Europe Newsletter is published monthly by the IAF Europe Regional Team for members of the International Association of Facilitators living within Europe.

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Cover picture: Conversation in the circle during morning announcements, Ukraine.

Please send your contributions to your Newsletter to rosemary.cairns@iaf-europe.eu