

FACTS Meta-model

for Sustainable Co-operative Processes

by Dale Hunter 2003

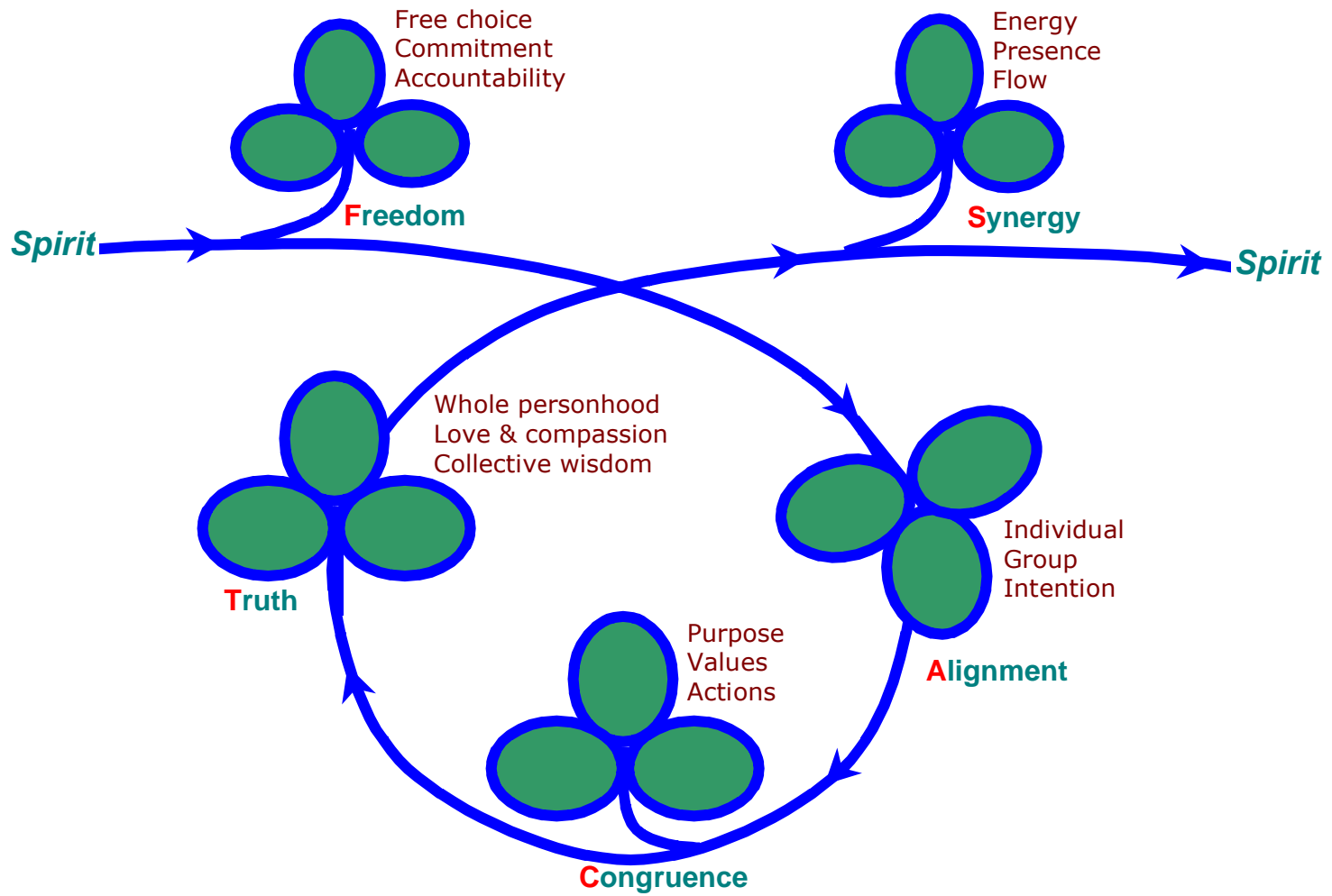
Introduction

The meta-model described in this paper was part of a doctoral research project which explored sustainable facilitated co-operative processes within organisations. The research methods used in the project included a survey of facilitators at an international conference, a two-year Internet dialogue involving 85 people and a co-operative inquiry of 11 facilitators, managers and academics.

The survey and the Internet dialogue explored the roles of the facilitator in determining the ethical introduction of co-operative processes into organisations. The co-operative inquiry identified the difficulties of working at the 'hard edge' between co-operative work and hierarchical structures and identified ways to move forward with integrity.

After the formal research findings I explored how the research findings could be encapsulated in a readily accessible and practical way particularly for the use of group facilitators and other interested in co-operative processes.

I experimented with different approaches and eventually designed a meta-model that can be used in conjunction with any group development model or co-operative process. This evaluative model may be used to monitor the sustainability of any co-operative processes involving people. It is illustrated below in the form of a repeating cycle or spiral. The first letters of the headings: freedom, alignment, congruence, truth and synergy create the acronym FACTS.



2

FACTS meta-model for maintaining sustainable co-operative processes in organisations.

FACTS Meta-model

This meta-model summarises the optimum environment for co-operative processes under five headings; freedom, alignment, congruence, truth and synergy (FACTS). Each of the FACTS is dynamic and fluid and needs ongoing attention to be maintained. Each of the FACTS is also essential for the development and maintenance of organisational environments within which co-operative processes can flourish. The meta-model can be used both sequentially and as a holograph.

Freedom

- Free and informed choice
- Commitment
- Accountability

People who take part in co-operative processes must do so freely, without coercion or fear of reprisal. Relevant information is needed for participants to make informed choices, and these choices need to be accompanied by an internal commitment by each person. Internal commitment leads to responsibility, and willingness to be accountable for one's actions as a self-expression, rather than as a burden.

Effective facilitation uses processes that enhance free and informed choice, commitment, and accountability.

Alignment

- Individual
- Group
- Organisation/society/world
- Intention / purpose

All those involved need to be aligned with the intention or purpose of the co-operative process and how it fits within the organisation. Organisational intentions may be expressed as a shared vision, mission and goals or statement of intent. For sustainability to be achieved, the aligned intention of the organisation must extend to the environment and the health of the planet. Facilitation seeks and enhances alignment.

Congruence

- Purpose
- Values
- Actions

The intention of the group becomes potent when it is expressed as a clear concise purpose containing one main idea. Congruence is then needed between the purpose and the values or 'culture' of the group, and the actions of the people involved.

Values, beliefs and assumptions are both conscious and unconscious. Key group values may be expressed in ground rules, group agreements, charters, and codes of practice and also as images, such as logos. Actions include spoken and written words as well as other individual and group behaviours (e.g. punctuality).

Decreasing the distance between what we believe or think, what we say and what we do is the domain of ethics, and the arena of the daily fight to be congruent (Freire 1993). Facilitators must seek to be ethical and encourage congruence in others.

Truth

- Embodied whole personhood
- Love and compassion
- Collective wisdom

Personal development methods help to provide access to embodied whole personhood through dissolving and disempowering unhelpful conditioned, patterned behaviour. Access to experiencing our whole selves, including all our emotions, without fragmentation and dissociation, allows us to connect with love and compassion to self, other persons, groups, cultures, other species and the whole transplanetary field (Milbrath 1996). Speaking individual truth and working through the conflicts that ensue, takes the group to a deeper, more potent level. This potency propels the group forward towards synergy and continues the spiral.

Sensitively facilitated co-operative processes can enhance individual access to personal truth and enable the expression of collective wisdom in the group.

Synergy

- Energy
- Presence
- Flow

When a group is aligned, congruent and truthful, more energy will become available. Energy will be released and enhanced. Participants will become more present, attentive and aware and the group will experience a sense of 'flow' - and 'flowing with' as distinct from struggling and striving. Synergy is the experience of collective energy and of the 'sum being greater than the parts'. This energy is readily available to an aligned and congruent group.

Spirit

Form follows spirit. Spirit can be experienced as spiritual, spirited, god or as a 'higher purpose' depending on one's belief system. Co-operative processes are the forms that follow the spirit of co-operative endeavour or 'co-operacy'. Noticing spirit at work requires awareness. Following spirit requires intention and rigour.

Often spirit is most easily perceived through its shadow, which highlights unhelpful, conditioned behaviour, distress from the past and fear of the future. Encountering the individual, group and collective shadow material is the work of everyone who seeks awareness and consciousness. The co-operative spirit moves through co-operative processes and is an expression of the desire to experience ways of being and doing that nourish the value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the group.

If freedom, alignment, congruence, and truth are present, synergy will become available, and spirit will continue to flow. The cycle of sustainability will continue and grow as a spiral. All the FACTS require ongoing attention and rigour. Embodied whole persons speaking their truth with love and compassion, is the prerequisite for the achievement of sustainability. The fear and 'pragmatism' within most organisations must be challenged if we are to generate a sustainable world.

FACTS meta-model and relationship with other models

The use of the image in the meta-model of a repeating circle/spiral as an organic form is linked to Ritter (2001), Wheatley (1992), and Beck and Cowan (1995). Ritter

explains the spiral as the basic universal tendency to attract, fuse and liberate. This can be life positive or life negative (p. 1).

There are links between the FACTS meta-model and the ancient mythic heroic journey explored by Campbell (1988) and Houston (1993). The meta-model does not duplicate the sequence of events that are associated with the description of these mythic cycles, though there are resonances, which can be noted such as a development of consciousness or developing maturity. Houston also refers to larger spiral starting with a 'second maturity' through which we enter 'a new phase in human evolution and a new era of human consciousness, one that could be termed that of the post-individual or the era of ecological humanity' (p. 215).

The FACTS meta-model is also compatible with most group development models (Smith 2001). For example the Tuckman (1963) forming, norming, storming, performing, adjourning, model could correlate with the FACTS meta-model. The Peck (1987) model for community building (pseudo-community, conflict and chaos, emptiness and authentic community) can be also be used in conjunction with the FACTS meta-model. The FACTS meta-model (unlike group development models) is value laden and inclusive. It focuses on the co-operative process both within the group and within the larger context of a sustainable society and world.

Facilitators validation of the meta-model

Validating the meta-model involved checking it with some other facilitators, in particular the participants in the co-operative inquiry. Some of these facilitators provided illuminating comments as they related the meta-model to their own practice.

A co-operative inquiry participant, Hamish Brown described using the meta-model in an organizational workshop to assist the forty participants to understand their conflicted organizational context. He considered that the model assisted the participants to identify their own areas of weakness. The aspects of the FACTS model identified as missing or weak in the organization were *freedom* and *alignment*. In relation to *freedom*, 'people were not able to choose given that they did not have the correct information about the management stance' regarding the issue in conflict (Brown 2002, p. 1). He also commented on finding the meta-model useful to both as a sequential cycle and as a means of identifying how to maintain synergy once

achieved. 'Any particular issue may raise deeper issues regarding any of the elements on the FACTS model' (Brown 2002, p. 4).

Hazel Hodgkin (2003), also a co-operative inquiry participant, noticed while facilitating a policy meeting for a political party that there was not full *alignment* with the purpose of the day. Two people expressed early on their unhappiness with the pre-agreed group purpose and one of them became involved in a direct conflict with another participant later in the day. Hodgkin believed the two participants lack of alignment influenced their ability to participate fully and co-operatively in the meeting discussions (p. 1).

Hodgkin reflected that she could have worked more with *alignment* of the participants, particularly at the beginning of the day. She also believed that she might have usefully watched for opportunities to increase the level of honesty and emotions where appropriate. However, she believed that there was sufficient *freedom, alignment* and *congruence* for significant synergy to emerge at the end of the meeting. Reflecting on *synergy*, Hodgkin saw this as something for which she strived.

If it happens, it is almost always an indication of a successful facilitation. However, if it does not happen, it does not necessarily mean a lack of success. Lack of synergy may just mean that some other work was done by the group that still needs more processing before being fully worked through (Hodgkin 2003, p. 2).

Sarah McGhee (2003), a co-operative inquiry participant, facilitated a women's collective involved in health issues and noted that the key issues here were around *alignment* and *congruence*, particularly congruence between values and behaviours. McGhee's approach to moving the group forward included naming the incongruent behaviors and invoking the *spirit* of the organisation'.

I stood for them being a collective of women with values (such as equity, empowerment, advocacy, love and safety) who were working on behalf of a multi-cultural community.

I confronted them when I saw their behaviours didn't match what they were up to' (p. 1).

The group was able to move into speaking their own *truth*, as there was plenty of trust built up prior to the confrontation and faith in the facilitator.

By the afternoon we had named the 'elephant' of unfinished business as issues around power, old systems that didn't work and history of personal attacks...

The relationship between *alignment* and *congruence* (what you say and what you do) is critical if you are serious about having integrity in the world...(p. 2).

Reflecting on the meta-model, McGhee supposes that there is a skill base involved in using it in terms of when to intervene and on what basis. She wondered how one learnt to listen for the key issues rather than the 'ten little issues'. She then went on to answer her own question by adding:

Once I tapped into the *spirit* of the organization as a community based service then I was able to see what really mattered and needed to be attended to. I have learnt this from being around Maori, Pacific Island, African and Maltese cultures. If the spirit is missing then there is always a potential danger of the facilitator becoming oppressive (p. 2).

Another co-operative inquiry member, who chose to remain anonymous, critiqued a daylong organisational retreat she had attended as a participant. She considered it an example of an event that was not able to achieve synergy and on reflection saw that none of the FACTS were well represented. Her vignette included the following (slightly amended to disguise the type of organisation):

1. *Freedom*. Most people did not want to be there. Commitment to achieve co-operative processes and collective outcomes were drastically lacking in some cases and lukewarm in others – at least partly because of a history of failed meetings of this kind.

2. *Alignment*. No alignment existed before the meeting and none was achieved. The group decided to proceed directly to the task that the two (leaders) perceived had to be done. The facilitator was explicitly prevented from doing anything in the way of a warm up or check in because these are 'touchy feely' and not appropriate (for this profession). Also the past history of tears, tantrums, and terrorizing do not allow these people to want to expose themselves to each other.

3. *Congruence*. Each individual at the meeting had their own purposes, values, and desires. In general each perceived that achieving their own goals and establishing themselves as the most important person there could only be done by thwarting everyone else, embarrassing, and even humiliating them if necessary in the process. It

might even be said that there was an active will present to prevent congruence. Tears, accusations, complaints, dragging up past histories all contributed to the atmosphere of isolated and frustrated human entities. People claimed what they wanted. One person walked out. As the loudest complainers got what they wanted others subsided into resentful silence. The facilitator's attempts to reframe problems and processes were simply firmly opposed and suppressed by those who had not wanted to have her there in the first place.

4. *Truth*. Was the victim on the day. In fact some people's truths were spoken very loudly indeed but no collective or sustainable truth was allowed to emerge. Whole personhood, love and compassion, collective wisdom? Wash your mouth out.

5. *Synergy*. Well, no. Energy, presence, flow? Inertia, absence, lumpy resentment and fear. A list of who would be doing what (more or less unwillingly) in the year to come. And dread that it will have to happen all over again next January. This is the very particular hell of non-co-operative processes in a large organization (Anon 2003, pp. 3-4).

The above critique illustrates, perhaps even more graphically than the positive previous critiques, the importance of attending to the FACTS for effective co-operative processes.

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Checklist for use with the FACTS Meta-model

Here is a checklist that may help you to access the aspects of the meta-model. It can be used for monitoring and evaluation of co-operative group processes and also to inform 'in the moment' intervention by group facilitators.

Freedom

Are people involved through free choice?

Are people involved because they want to be?

Are people sufficiently informed before they make that choice?

Do people understand what *being their word* means?

Are people willing to be clear about the extent of their involvement, declare this and stick to it?

Are people sufficiently motivated to see the project through to completion?

Is each person willing to be the only person left to finish the project and do that?

Alignment

Is each person clear about their intention in participating?

Is there a clear group purpose?

Are the individual intents and the group purpose aligned?

Does the group purpose fit with the purpose/mission/vision of the organisation?

Will the group purpose contribute to the community/society?

Is the group purpose aligned with a sustainable world?

Congruence

Do the group and organisational values and culture support the purpose?

Are the planned actions of the group aligned with the purpose and values of the group?

Are individuals clear about the group values and the behaviours that support them?

Is individual behaviour congruent with the values and culture of the group?

Are people willing to reflect on, and change their behaviour if needed?

Are people willing to explore decreasing the distance between what they believe or think, and what they say and what they do?

Truth

Are individuals willing to speak honestly and tell their truth?

Is position status, alliances (such as family) or *face* considered as or more important than the truth?

Are individuals willing to share what they like and dislike, what motivates and upsets them, what they find hard and easy?

Are people willing to listen with generosity to one another sharing their truth?

Are people willing to share withholds and speak the unspoken?

Are people willing to stay engaged while conflict is worked through and seek help with this from group facilitators and mediators when needed?

Do people have emotional competence skills and methods to work through personal upsets? (own your own stuff)

Is there sufficient self awareness and awareness of others?

Are people willing to stay connected and embodied?

Is love and compassion present?

Is the group aware of and listening to collective wisdom?

Are people comfortable with silence and *emptiness*?

Synergy

Is the energy freed-up to move around the group?

Are there some stuck places?

Is the energy flowing and moving?

Are new possibilities emerging?

Are people able to stay present to self and others?

Are people producing extra-ordinary results beyond their expectations and dreams?

Is expanded time (Kairos) and deep listening present?

Are people in the now?