

# Emergence as a Process of Co-Creative Co-Becoming

## The Context

What if we shifted our way of being with life that is continually expressing itself? What would occur if we gave ourselves over to the experience of what is emerging as a question rather than an unconscious expectation or habituated knowing? What might we discover in our interiors and exterior if we set the intention to include all of what arises as the supreme invitation of Life? What if the silence that we so often are driven to fill, was the space in which we could discover energies, capacities and creative possibilities greater than we have known in the noise of conditioned thinking? What if, in so doing, we interrupted the unconscious pattern of past experience's projection on the present and a limitation on future possibilities.

## Beginning

We entered into the Intersession Pod Project with an already established foundation of having worked together as a team from module one in Salt Lake City. What that initial coming together began was the process of trust building, collaboration, coordination and perceived success in design/presentation of an improvisational experience.

In one of the first pod meetings we had, we felt unsure about how to move into a certain direction, and as we stumbled through that, one of us invited our group into a more emergent space, feeling into what is possible when we suspend our agendas or facilitative muscles and just leaned into the moment. That invitation began an incredible magic that weaved itself throughout our experience together as a pod. So during these months we've had a laboratory of working from a different way of collective leadership with minimal scaffolding.

## In Process

As we continued to meet, there was a focus on meeting and presencing the here and now. That was the unwritten rule that became our orienting impulse. This invitation allowed so much to emerge- we spent time in silence, just relaxing into our container and into each other's presence. It allowed us to share our struggles and triumphs, our questions and curiosities, in a container where there was both a deep care and an honest engagement. We learned a lot about ourselves and about each other, in ways that we couldn't predict or plan for.

## Collective Leadership

Shared intention, along with trust and mutually regard, allowed us to deepen into an incredible exploration of what collective leadership could look like, when we let go of any agenda or plan and deepen into what is emerging, and what is wanting to emerge. At the level of the individual interior (UL), at different times, all of us encountered our own conditioning. We bumped up against the discomfort of silence, the discomfort of sharing honestly when what was emerging

for us was frustration or anger or sadness. We bumped up against the discomfort of wondering whether we're saying too much, or too little; whether we're letting the group down when we didn't show up to take care of our own needs; whether we're taking up too much of the group's time speaking about something that was important to us; whether others found the focus of our time on a particular topic interesting or important. Many, many questions emerged for us, and the invitation to presencing urged us to name our experiences and then relax into the moment.

As we deepened into this experiment of collective leadership, we encountered some important discoveries of what allows such a deep container to emerge.

### ***Love***

As we deepened into the present moment, so much came up for us. As we shared with each other our authentic experience, the energy that allowed the depth of our exploration was the love, connection, and genuine positive regard we had for each other. We often encountered narrow passages, difficult or vulnerable conversations, but we never really got stuck in those places, even as we shared feedback with each other that was at times a really uncovering of our own individual shadow points. The deep care we experienced, both emanating from each individual, and embedded in the space itself, really allowed for us to explore some raw and imperfect places. Sometimes we may still have felt some trepidation, but even in those times, the space invited us to be with the trepidation in an honest, loving way. The container invited everything, leaving nothing out. It was a love fest, but in the most authentic way. This connection is the deepest magic, and we've each felt deeply held by it.

### ***Trusting the Process***

As we look back over the past few months, we see how tremendous our time together has been, and all the ways in which the little moments added up to a deep and profound magic. There was no way to glimpse this deeper perspective when we were moving through the moment, but the thing that stands out is how much we trusted the process, and trusted each moment as it arose. This was especially apparent when some of us had to take time away from the group. At the individual level, some of us at points experienced the tension of wanting to be there in the group and feeding the collective experience, while simultaneously being pulled by the need to take care of ourselves and honor our own individual need and the edges in our evolutionary purpose. At the collective level, when one or more of us were absent, we missed our pod pal/s, but we also held that with a sense of understanding and deeply honoring ourselves for doing what we needed to take care of ourselves. In an unwritten way, we were honoring the first two principles of Open Space- "whoever comes are the right people" and "whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened".

### ***Attending to our Needs***

Our trust in the process also grounded a trust in ourselves. As we leaned into the container, we learned the importance of attending to our own needs. In the instances when we bypassed our individual needs in the name of the group, we witnessed how that disrupted the flow with

emergence. Fundamentally, this has been a container where we felt deeply met and held individually, and at the same time, felt real coherence in how the needs of the group got met, as well. We learned how attending to our individual needs can benefit the group, including our needs and boundaries as wisdom, too.

### ***Unstructured***

Looking back at our collective meetings as an object, we recognized our minimal structure contributed to a deep and active listening. We had not formally established guiding principles or rules beyond those we had accepted in SLC and we stepped into a focus on the emergence of here and now. This freedom became our structure. The minimized structure brought forward an unspoken shared commitment to be present and listen closely to what and how the group said with elasticity, both in the ability to stretch and also to re-center. In this way, values led structure as the organizing principle. Roles were also not established, assumed, or taken, and the pod's collective leadership, communication and process did not presence any absence of roles. The closest we came to roles was that one of us was assigned to coordinate our first meeting time. She continued this role throughout, generously offered her private video conference channel for our meetings and wrote our group check-in email to faculty. The closer we got to the second module and the deadline of the paper, more collective guided action for an outcome took place, in a manner that didn't come off as stressful, yet adding more flex in the flow. Both the paper and design of the facilitation exercise took on the emergent and co-creative process and leadership that the group formed. The experience of facilitated project (and paper) was one that was enlivening and energizing, creative and playful. We were adults accessing the inner child and, dare we say, integral leadership!

Some principles that guided us:

- Agreement to be here
- Shared commitment to program
- Share commitment to each other
- Intention to develop and be developed
- Call Frequency
- Scheduling
- Conversation and coordination to arrive at shared intention for assigned project
- Freedom as a structure
- Values based structure
- Intersectionality of varied past experiences and interpretations, meeting shared higher order and values as an organizing principle

### **Moving and the Lone Ranger**

Each one of us in the course of the past months has experienced some kind of physical move-whether it was moving, or moving back, remodeling, or renting out. Perhaps the shared transitioning in our lives made becoming in our pod more accessible. Interestingly, a theme that

emerged was our tendency to try to do things by ourselves. We all seem to be lone rangers on the move, yet here coming together in collaboration.

Part of our pod's parallel experiences over the months leaning into our individuality, tendency to try to do things by ourselves, and lone ranger-ness may have contributed to what seemed an activation and elevation of holding multiple perspectives both within our own individual interiors, exteriors and in collective interior and exterior. The pod was a safe space to strongly presence the UL and LL quadrants while observing and discussing UR and LR.

## **Group dynamics**

Starting off our pod had five members, Alexandra Schiller among us. It's always interesting to feel into the space on Zoom regarding who is present on the call, and Alex's joyful nature is surely missed, while we totally respect her choice of discontinuing the program. Experience of loss of a member, and a completion giving way to a new configuration was important to name and give space to speak about. Important to note that although Alex won't be with us for Session 2, her Alex-ness left an imprint on each and the whole of how we came together. Onwards and upwards, for all of us.

In a call with a staff facilitator, the structure of the call provoked an unspoken contraction when faced with a facilitated experience we had not anticipated. We were so used to collectively steering, that having someone exclusively in the driving seat activated mixed emotion. Following the call, in processing the raw emotion and metabolizing it, we were able to uncover the hidden elements that supported our structure, and move toward greater complexity.

## **Developmental Maturity**

An interesting conversation on developmental maturity emerged in one of our last meetings leading to our second module in Salt Lake City - an inquiry into how we oscillate between different levels based on varying communities or interpersonal skillsets. We discussed that we might categorize ourselves as more green in one community or orange or red in another. We also may be more ethnocentric in one environment and moving toward cosmic-centric in another. How does this define our developmental maturity and what does it say about its linearity or spiral form?

Moreover, the kind of unstructured format of collaboration in our pod would probably not work with everyone, so we acknowledged how blessed we are to be able to experiment with this, using this pod as our lab. In this conversation, we also presenced the integral shadow, of boxing people in different levels of consciousness and bypassing our own shadow in the name of development. We recognized how as we continue to develop across the spiral, our egos become clever, and consequently the importance of having containers like our pod where we have others who can honestly and compassionately reflect back to us our own shadow.

## **Silence**

*Before speaking, consider whether it is an improvement upon silence - Swami Kripalvanadaji*

We often try to create moments of silence because we recognize their preciousness. The values we draw from silence range from reflection to deep listening, awakening our senses, creating pause, forming distinction, shifting perspectives, capturing attention. The intense realities of contemporary daily life force us to actively announce silence, bring it to our presence, even in its smallest doses between sentences, when we want it. Can the practice and values of silence be achieved by its opposite, in the way the first notes a symphony plays can presence the silence of the moments just before? How can the experiences of silence and communication work at the same time and at times reflect off one another?

Sitting in silence with others can feel uncomfortable and raise anxiety between the people involved. This anxiety could be born of and coupled with trust related concerns, uncertainty, or confidence with yourself and others.

The old saying silence is golden, has found claims in modern neuroscience where studies on rats shows that [silence regenerates the brain](#) (Kirste et al, 2013) where they found that that two hours of silence daily led to the development of new cells in the hippocampus, a key brain region associated with learning, memory and emotion.

## Personal Reflections

### ***Aithan -***

*The pod experience has been both a deepening and widening experience of becoming that has emerged through many forms, from silence, shared growth, generosity, gratitude and welcoming. Our group settled into and then decided early on to welcome a practice of being and becoming together that would enable our task of creating the facilitation exercise for the broader group emerge from our sessions. Living with silence surfaced strongly for our group once it was presenced by a member as a personal edge. We very naturally adopted this into a joint practice in following meetings. Art also took a prominent role as our time together and backgrounds morphed into planning the facilitation. Using art and inviting a shared experience of silence evolved into an Escape the Room experience that would encompass elements of our months of growing together through meaningful conversations about our shared lone-ranger character traits, relationship to roles in work and family settings, and acceptance of love and gratitude.*

*The group, collectively and individually, enabled a space and platform that welcomed internal learning, with a rich environment where others were actively learning, and group learning where we took on shared edges as a community 'becoming with others'. What particularly struck me was moments where the culture of love that the group had naturally adopted surfaced. Three instances where different members had shifted or missed a call or felt badly about their contribution in some way were met with love and understanding in ways that surfaced the overwhelming nature of the feminine. I personally cherish my teammates in this group. I have never quite felt such a strong sense of community and welcoming and joy in sharing and learning together. There is something very special that arises within a group that is working side*

*by side with a shared higher intention of challenging themselves to hold more, be more, and bring more to others.*

**Maria -**

*The pod experience has been a wonderful practise of being lost together in the unknown, and through supporting each other in community, something of value comes out of it, especially since we gather through a theme of integral facilitation, those things that we share through this experience just naturally bubbles up.*

*What is it that is emerging? Do we try to steer and manage it from the beginning or let the flow within us individually and as a group navigate its course?*

*We followed flow and it brought up themes on silence, art, death, landing in a collaborative play to reach a goal, with the concept of the team building game Escape Room as a setting for working on integral riddles.*

**Usha -**

*Being a part of this pod has been a deep blessing for me. I've cherished the depth of our container and care immensely. It's allowed me to learn a lot about myself. My pod pals have supported me through a time of immense change and turmoil in my work life. I've learned to attend to my needs, and give myself permission to be held by others. This has allowed me to lean into a deeper vulnerability that I've seldom experienced. This has also been an experience of learning to trust the process, and trust my own instincts and leadership as it emerged. This has been a real experience of what it means to be in an 'Integral' container where the needs of the individual and the collective are organically met, where messiness is honored as part of the process, and where the flex and flow of the individual and the collective yields a deep magic.*

**Tara -**

*Freedom to be and become – the best description I have for what occurred through my/our pod's developing relationship and collaboration. The human longing for freedom and love found its way and expression in how we took shape, individually and as a collective. From the start, we aligned in a vision of attuning to what wants to come to life – and, as much as our individual and collective capacities allowed, to move with/as that impulse.*

*Seemingly, we began to collaborate and develop this thing called a pod project, with specific criteria for an outcome to deliver. It was the shared vision, not on the thing itself, but on the Life inside which the thing was being co-created that allowed us to breathe, feel, think and move in alignment; even, and maybe most significantly, when one or all were moved off center/out of sync/off balance. The Center of We was repeatedly there to support the resilience back to balance. The willingness to be with each other – welcoming whatever occurred, offering attuned presence, and suspending a need to know the specifics of how or where we would land – was an experience that is beyond what can be defined, but not beyond what can be described, and definitely not beyond what we the people can facilitate as a peaceful and generative way forward. I feel us cultivating the capacity to be what IFC invites.*