Nurturing the Fields of Change
An inquiry into the living dynamics of holistic change facilitation
ALEF TRUST
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Slow down.

Attend to Being.
Attune to the calling of Soul
and calibrate your intentions.

Then let the unfolding begin.
Notice what wants to happen...

Attune to others.
Nurture coherence between you.
And witness the deeper intention ripple into our world.
Introduction

You matter — 7
Who we are — 8
Addressing the needs of our time — 12
The story of the Conscious Community Project — 15
A brief outline of our method — 16

The Conscious Community projects

Yoga Therapy for Labour Rights Activists — 20
*Lorraine Clewer*

Sentient — 23
*Owen Fender & Lila Moore*

Inner healing for outer health — 25
*Dr Hennie Geldenhuys*

Integrative practice — 27
*Victor Jivanescu*

Transforming land transforming people — 29
*Paula Staunton*

Integrative yoga — 31
*Laura Harvey-Collins*

Wild refuge — 33
*Martha Sneyd*

Elf-strength of the Earth — 35
*Tabitha Jayne*

Emotional freedom technique in the police force — 37
*Sunita Pattani*

Integrative practice for the heart-centred teacher — 39
*Adrienne Vickers*

Journey to the Self — 41
*Ayesha Iftikhar*

Mend: stitching lives together — 43
*Tania Botoulas Pope*
Inquiry Results
Holistic change and its natural cycles and seasons — 46
Leverage points for change — 48
Integrating energies and dynamics — 52
Structural considerations — 54
Relational considerations — 55
The inner workings of holistic change — 58
Engagement with deeper sources — 61
When we listen to nature we come home to ourselves — 64
The need for self regulation — 65
Challenges and shadows in holistic change facilitation — 66

What it all means — 72
Limitations of the inquiry and report — 74
Recommendations
For practitioners — 75
For policy makers and funders — 76
For educators and trainers — 77
For researchers — 78
Conclusions — 79
References — 82
Connection
Breathe
Observe
Trust
Let go

The less of me there is
the more intimate it becomes

I’m an imposter
I’m going to fail
What do I know?
It feels like the first time
They know each other
Heart beating
I don’t know them
Sitting on the edge of my seat
And I’m alone
I can’t breathe
I’m okay
I’ve done this before
It doesn’t matter what they think
It doesn’t matter if I fail
I’ll get to know them

Step back
Step back
Back into the field
Just watch
Letting go
Let the discomfort come

Wow! They’re lovely
So what?

Adrienne Vickers
Project leader
To all serving as agents of change

You matter.

Given the turmoil of our times, the changes you hope to bring into being—supporting social justice, peace, sustainability, wellbeing, or another deserving cause—may feel out of reach. They may feel unrealistic and utopian. And yes: There is no denying that processes of change are complex and unpredictable, and that they involve many collective and contextual factors.

This said, processes of change also undeniably unfold through each of us, and the changes we dream of become manifest through us and between us.

In this report we explore why and how.

The report draws together insights gained from a two-year inquiry—the Conscious Community project (CCP)—with a group of project facilitators from around the world, working to address concerns in their professions and communities. Together we looked at the living experience of change facilitation, what it means to approach change in holistic ways, what challenges we encounter in our work, and what sustains and supports us in our practices.

Holistic change facilitation can be a long and winding, and a lonely road, presenting many challenges to those who feel called to engage. We may be working on our own and have few allies. Political will may be lacking, social norms may be impinging, financial or other resources may be scarce, and stakeholders may be at odds with each other as to what needs to be done or how it should be done. In this report we explore the values, qualities, and skills that may resource us on our way. We depict the intrepid battlegrounds of change—the shadows in our work which can lead to burnout and despair—and we map what can support and nurture us as we endeavour to be of service in the world.

We hope that this report will serve to resource you and spark a deeper sense of recognition that you are not alone, that your work matters and that you matter—however intractable your project and however invisible your efforts may seem at any time.
Who we are

The Conscious Community project (2020-2022) is an initiative seeded by Alef Trust, a UK-based non-profit organisation active in higher education, research and community development.

All people working on this initiative are connected to the Alef Trust’s global learning community and many are graduates of our MSc. programme in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology.

Tania Botoulas Pope is a speech language therapist who is passionate about making a difference in the lives of the parents and children with whom she works. Her transdisciplinary approach aims to optimise learning, support inclusion, and facilitate understanding, tolerance and growth towards a neuro diverse populace. More recently she has focussed her energy into creating meditative stitching workshops to support grieving mothers and vulnerable women in her community.

Lorraine Clewer integrates dance, yoga, psychotherapy and human rights advocacy into her work with communities impacted by violence. She has lived and worked for 28 years in the Arab World and the Americas. She has an MPhil. in Development Studies and an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology. Her home is in Mexico City.

Owen Fender is a graphic designer, composer and sound artist based in the south west of England. He recently completed a Master’s in Sound Arts, where he experimented with the use of body sensors for music performance, and explored the potential of VR and spatial audio to provide immersive experiences. He is interested in the nature and future possibilities of consciousness.

Dr Hennie Geldenhuys is a medical doctor, certified transpersonal psychology coach, medical researcher, and integrated health practitioner. He has a passion for exploring and teaching the expression of the transpersonal in everyday life, especially health, wellness, and the psychosomatic.
Laura Harvey-Collins is a yoga and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu teacher based in London, UK. She is a recent graduate of the MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology with the Alef Trust and she also holds an MA in Fashion and Textiles.

Ayesha Iftikhar is a clinical psychologist and integrative psychotherapist based in Lahore, Pakistan. She has trained counselling students and facilitated process groups, as well as contributed to and presented research on social narratives on intolerance, otherization and advocacy. Her focus now includes bringing the transpersonal perspective and creative process to change work, especially with other mental health workers, teachers, activists and those who serve the wider community.

Tabitha Jayne is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the Founding Director of Earthself, who helps leaders and teams create resilient life-sustaining organisations. Tabitha has an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology and is the author of The Nature Process and Nature Embodied.

Victor Jivanescu is a recent graduate of the MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology from the Alef Trust. He is passionate about integral theory and practice as well as entheogens and psychedelics, especially how one can beneficially use entheogens to further healing and development and integrate these insights into daily life. To this end, he co-founded Quantum Civilization, an NGO dedicated to promote integral development and bridge the gap between science and spirituality. Victor is also a certified Tantra Yoga teacher and enjoys cold baths and hiking in the mountains.

Dr Lila Moore is an artist, filmmaker, lecturer, and theorist with expertise in screen-dance and Technoetic Arts. Her work explores the spiritual-mystical, psychological and therapeutic aspects of artistic, cultural and technological productions. She holds a practice-based PhD in Dance on Screen from Middlesex University and a postdoc from Planetary Collegium.

Sunita Pattani is a psychotherapist based in the UK. She is particularly interested in how the quantum worldview informs psychotherapeutic practice, and currently specialises in using energy psychology to treat psychological trauma. Sunita obtained her MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology in 2019 and is currently studying a doctorate in psychological trauma.

Martha Sneyd is a mindfulness teacher and regenerative land worker based in Cornwall, UK. She has an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology and a BA in Spanish. She is interested in designing and facilitating spiritually nourishing experiences in nature for groups and individuals who would otherwise not have access to high quality transpersonal immersion.

Paula Staunton is an educator, activist, dancer and events organiser. She is a director of the Earth Moves Cooperative. She has taught psychology and related subjects since 1999. Paula has an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality, and Transpersonal Psychology and a BA in Psychology and Women’s Studies. Paula has run a dance business since 1998.

Adrienne Vickers is a holistic educator with experience in teaching, teacher training, curriculum development and educational leadership in Ireland, Italy, Spain, India and Laos. She co-founded Asana School of English, an arts, nature and awareness based language school for teenagers and adults, in 1993.
The mentor team

Dr Caroline Brett is a registered health psychologist and senior lecturer in health psychology at Liverpool John Moores University. She has a particular interest in factors enhancing wellbeing across the lifecourse, and a passion for environmental sustainability and holistic, salutogenic approaches to health and wellbeing.

Jevon Dängeli is a certified transpersonal psychology coach and he earned the MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology from Alef Trust, where he currently serves as the programme leader for the Transpersonal Coaching Psychology Certificate Programme.

Dr Kendra Diaz-Ford is a transpersonal psychologist, Ayurvedic Wellness Coach and yoga teacher. She serves as Academic Programme Leader for the Alef Trust. Her practice and research focuses on women’s psychospiritual development, Ayurvedic rituals, practices and ways of daily living, integrative theory and the intersections of transpersonal psychology with spiritualized feminism.

Lucy Sam is an event and project manager, transpersonal coach, energy healer and yoga teacher. Lucy holds an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology and a Diploma in Transformative Coaching.

Dagmar Šuissa is a business leader, transformational coach, facilitator and lecturer at Charles University in Prague. She holds a Master’s degree in psychology from Université René Descartes in Paris and an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology.

Dr Kanayo Umeh is a chartered psychologist, researcher, and senior lecturer in the Faculty of Health at Liverpool John Moores University. He has a particular interest in exploring the role of biopsychosocial factors in noncommunicable diseases, and is a strong advocate of a holistic approach to understanding illness and disease.
The project team

Dr Jessica Bockler is the CCP’s director and a co-founding director of Alef Trust. Jessica is an applied theatre artist and transpersonal psychologist. She specialises in practice and research exploring creativity, arts for health, and transpersonal and integrative approaches to individual and social change.

Francesca Hector is the CCP coordinator and community coordinator of Alef Trust. She has an MSc. in Consciousness, Spirituality, and Transpersonal Psychology. She is interested in developing participatory and holistic approaches to personal and social transformation, through multidisciplinary research and embodied living experience.

Alef Trust

Alef Trust is a global learning provider and active in higher education, research and community development. Alef Trust delivers Master’s and PhD programmes in consciousness studies, spirituality and transpersonal psychology which are validated by UK universities. The organisation also offers professional certificate programmes and open learning courses for adults wishing to expand their academic and professional skill sets, as well as work on their personal development.

All of Alef Trust’s work and programmes are underpinned by a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural and holistic philosophy which integrates scientific and spiritual perspectives from across the world. The organisation offers holistic learning journeys, interweaving academic study with experiential work for inner development and growth. The inner work is complemented with applied practice as students take their learning into their professions and bring integrative principles to their practices and projects.

At heart, the Alef Trust’s work is about cultivating balanced ways of being, as well as activating the potential of whole-person learning and inquiry for the betterment of human habits, cultures, and systems. The programmes and courses offered continue to evolve in response to the intensifying complexities, crises and urgent needs for sustainable and ethical human development.
Addressing the needs of our time

In these times of profound societal turmoil and uncertainty, a growing number of us sense that a new paradigm wants to be born, shifting humanity towards more sustainable, equitable, and holistic ways of being that will bring us at once into a deeper relationship with ourselves and our home, Earth. In the words of Anne Baring (2013), we need to cultivate “a consciousness which can grow beyond tribal enmities and can open itself to the awareness that we all belong to a greater life: the life of this planet and beyond that, the life of the Cosmos” (p. xvii).

Many of us have begun to appreciate that purely external, technical solutions are insufficient in addressing the multifaceted problems of our time, because they are bypassing the inner dimensions of the crises we have been experiencing. There is a growing recognition that our global challenges are rooted in dysfunctional mental states and social dynamics (Maiteny, 2012; Wamsler et al., 2021), and that we need to engage in inner work to evolve our capacities and skills in addressing world-wide insecurities and volatilities (e.g., Inner Development Goals (IDG), 2021).

“We know a lot about conditions and causes, and there is also a lot of knowledge and ideas about what could and ought to be done. We have a vision of what needs to happen, but progress along this vision has been disappointing. [...] what has been largely missing is a keen insight into what abilities, qualities or skills we need to foster among those individuals, groups and organizations that play crucial roles in working to fulfill the visions.”

(Inner Development Goals: Background, method and the IDG framework, IDG initiative, 2021, p. 3)
In this report we assume the position that for meaningful and lasting change to occur we need to address our crises in holistic ways, thereby addressing deep-seated forms of fragmentation in our individual and collective lives. We do this by bending the beam of observation, as Scharmer (2019) puts it, back onto the observing self, to pay fuller and deeper attention to our internal states of being that inform our actions and also participate in shaping our collective habits and societal structures and systems. From the vantage point of systems theory (Meadows, 1999), lasting change is seeded when the deepest leverage points are addressed, and these involve inquiring into our mindsets and beliefs. According to quantum social theory (O’Brien, 2021), how we think and feel and how we relate matters, for thinking and feeling and relating are processes of ‘mattering,’ transforming energetic into material patterns and structures. In other words, what we cultivate in thought and emotion finds continual outward manifestation, even though it may not often be obvious to us.

Critically, we posit here that the required work of self-inquiry must not remain purely cognicentric (Ferrer, 2003). The concept of cognicentrism describes a monoculture of rational intelligence at the expense of other ways of knowing, and we see this monoculture as one of the root causes of our contemporary crises. We submit that the over-reliance on our capacity for rational, abstract thinking has led to the neglect and suppression of emotional intelligence, somatic awareness, and spiritual wisdom, leading us to consider our world, ourselves and others in ever more distanced, mechanistic, and reductionist ways (Peat, 2008). We suggest that the problems of our time call for the cultivation of integrative pathways to change, inviting the full participation of embodied, emotional, intuitive, and spiritual ways of knowing to complement and balance our proclivity to want to rationalise, predict and control so much of our lives.

The vantage point we adopt here is informed by integral theory and practice (Wilber et al., 2008), and the Holistic Transformation approach (Albareda & Romero, 2001), advocating for whole-person and whole-system engagement in all processes of change, and for what might be described as integral activism (Patten, 2018; Walsh, 2021), which posits that inner work and outer service for the greater good are truly inseparable. Our position is rooted in our long-term work in the fields of transpersonal psychology and education, incorporating Earth-based wisdom and principles of transpersonal ecopsychology (Maiteny, 2012). We embrace the term ‘transpersonal’ as broadly encompassing three central themes: “beyond ego, pervading personhood, and changing humanity’.
(Hartelius, Caplan & Rardin, 2007, p. 8) – respectively referring to ego transcending states and stages, wholeness and integration; and holistic approaches to human transformation. Through our years of practice and co-inquiry with colleagues in the field, we have seen first hand that holistic, multifaceted inner work plays a central role in facilitating both individual and collective transformation. As we transform the ways we relate to ourselves, our capacity to relate to the world evolves; and we grow in our sense of agency and humility, realising that our own journey of ‘becoming’ is really a gift to the world, serving the unfolding of something greater beyond within.

As yet, the inner dimensions and enablers of holistic change facilitation are under-explored in the research literature. As Wamsler et al. (2021) put it: “relatively little is written about interventions and enabling factors that could support transformative qualities/capacities and go beyond instrumental approaches to behavioural and systems change” (p. 7).

Exploring the idea of subtle activism, Nicol (2015) proposes that although concrete initiatives and actions are needed, underlying and informing all those actions is a shift in consciousness involving a deeper awareness of our essential interconnectedness. In this report we shine a light on the inner living and interconnected dynamics of holistic change facilitation, specifically focusing on the facilitators’ perspectives. By doing so, we hope to resource facilitators in their work, as well as to contribute to the evolving pedagogy in facilitator and leadership training, bringing greater awareness to the inner living dimensions of change, and honouring the whole in the process of change.

**Cognicentric**: Privileging rational intelligence over all other ways of knowing.

**Transpersonal**: Beyond ego, exploring holism, nurturing transformation.

**Integral/Integrative theory & practice**: A meta-theory and body of work, addressing human evolution in a transdisciplinary and holistic way.
In January 2020, with the help of charitable funding, we launched the Conscious Community project (CCP). Funded as a two-year project, the initiative’s aims included supporting a growing community of holistic facilitators associated with Alef Trust, who contribute to individual and collective transformation around the world through their diverse professions and communities of practice. We set up a fund to support pilot projects with grants of up to £5,000; and the criteria for applications were guided by the following principles:

- Project proposals are holistic, honouring the whole person and the wider living context of each individual. Participants are empowered to connect to a deeper sense of life purpose.
- Projects proposals explore expanded ways of knowing, engaging in contemplative, creative, and embodied forms of practice, which enable all involved to shift from egoic identification to a more expansive sense of self, tapping embodied intuition and wisdom.
- Projects aim to adhere to high ethical standards, safe-guarding participants and facilitators, and empowering all by creating spaces in which compassion and empathy can flourish.
- Projects aim to be inclusive and participatory: Participants are enabled to co-create and co-evaluate the project.
- Project facilitators aim to balance inner work and outer application, embodying the practices and vision they espouse, and committing to regular reflective practice as part of the project.

Over the two years we provided 12 grants for pilot projects which ran in Mexico, South Africa, Romania, Pakistan, Ireland, and the UK. We also galvanised an overarching research inquiry with the project leaders, supporting them through a group of mentors and hosting regular reflective meetings to explore their beliefs, their vision for, and their experiences of holistic change facilitation. To support this work, as well as nurture our wider community, we also developed our online infrastructure to enable networking and transdisciplinary practitioner dialogues.
We did not adapt a formal research methodology for our overarching inquiry, as our collaborative investigation was open-ended and emergent. We knew we wanted to shine a deeper light into the living experience of holistic change facilitation, and we were interested in multiple perspectives. Thus, we formed an inquiry group with the 13 project grantees (two working jointly on one project); we enabled 12 projects through grants and mentorship; we nurtured a wider community of practitioners through dialogue and community-building; and we built the infrastructure to support all these endeavours. Our focus was placed on the qualitative interior domains of the “I” and the “we” (respectively the upper and lower left quadrants of the AQAL model [Wilber, 2000]). Our project planning and implementation was informed by heuristic and participatory principles (Sultan, 2019), enabling all—project team, mentors, grantees—to engage in the overarching inquiry as co-researchers. It is for this reason we present the results in this report from a first person perspective. The narrative we have composed is largely written in first person plural.

Holistic change facilitation:
An approach to facilitation that endeavours to approach individual and collective challenges through integrative lenses, considering multiple facets and dimensions of an issue — interior and exterior, individual and collective (e.g., as proposed by the all quadrants all levels [AQAL] model; Wilber, 2000). It often also aligns with the archetypal and metaphorical referents of developmental stages and cycles found in humans and nature at large, such as the four seasons (Albareda & Romero, 2001; Ferrer et al., 2005). It proposes that systemic issues can only be effectively addressed, if change facilitators work on themselves whilst aiming to be of service in the world, thus cultivating a conscious full-spectrum response to a perceived predicament (Sharma, 2017).
Our tapestry of demographics.*

Our gender: 13 of us identify as female, 5 as male, and one of us as gender fluid

Our age range: 28 – 57 years

Where we live: Scotland, England, UK, Italy, Romania, United States, Pakistan, South Africa, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Switzerland, Mexico and Spain

Our ethnicity: ...is of African descent, Irish/mixed, Black British, South Asian, Mixed Ghanaian, English and Turkish Cypriot, European, White (5), White (Scottish/Caucasian/British (3)/European), mixed heritage & world-centric! One of us expressed, “I have Africa in my veins and European DNA...”

Our education: Postgraduate/Masters (13), Doctorate (5)—“privileged...!”

Our religious/spiritual orientation: Unsure, Christian (3), non-dogmatic, mystical, Buddhist (2), interfaith, integral, Pagan, Muslim, Spiritual (not religious, 3), Earth-based (2), Tantric Hindu, inclusive, open, eclectic & green...

* Please note, some of us preferred not to disclose demographic information for personal reasons. We were 21 co-researchers, and the information given above is based on 19 responses.
Our Approach

The project leaders were joined by mentors who acted as critical friends and supported the project leaders in the planning and evaluation of their projects. We also held virtual reflective meetings with the project leaders and mentors which took place on Zoom every two to three months, and which were recorded and transcribed. In the meetings we explored questions such as:

- What is the living experience of holistic change facilitation?
- How are mind, heart, body and spirit engaged in our work?
- What challenges are we experiencing?
- What is the role of Earth and nature in our work?
- What qualities and skills do we feel we need to seed transformative outcomes?
- What do we and our projects need to flourish?
- What role do other stakeholders play in enabling project success?

The meetings enabled sharing of project stories and experiences. They were enriched by art-based research principles (McNiff, 2005) and infused with creative and embodied exercises, allowing for a deepening of awareness and somatic processing via creative writing, sketching, movement, meditation, and visualisation. We encouraged further sharing and reflections in forums on our online community platform “Sutra” and through an online questionnaire which focused specifically on the deeper challenges project facilitators were facing in their work. Lastly, upon project completion each project leader submitted a report sharing their project vision, aims, approach, individual methodology, project impact and personal learnings.

All the data we gathered in this overarching inquiry were analysed by the project team through iterative cycles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), helping us capture the living experience and multifaceted meaning of holistic change facilitation, as well as gain a better understanding of the contextual factors that enable and support or undermine and hinder holistic change facilitation. Results were reviewed by the project leaders and mentors, to ensure fair representation of all experiences and concerns. The project leaders and mentors also actively contributed to this report, adding insights and clarifications throughout.
The initiatives developed their own methodologies and evaluation, which are not directly featured in this report. You can find out more in the CCP section of our multimedia magazine — the Alef Field.
What did we set out to do?

The best laid plans for worker education, organising and advocacy can fall apart when grassroots activists burn out, get sick, and project inner conflicts onto group processes. All too often, activists internalise the model of self-sacrifice that capitalism requires to thrive, even while they are working towards building economies, rooted in human dignity and social justice. I was motivated to challenge this contradiction, and contribute to more effective, sustainable, and transformative social justice movement building, by nurturing a culture of self-care and collective wellbeing within a labour rights organisation. The Border Workers Committee (Comité Fronterizo de Obreras, CFO), a grassroots organisation located on Mexico’s northern border. When I approached CFO, a new free trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico had recently been signed, and CFO was in the sights of international organisations looking for a grassroots ally to conduct new labour rights campaigns. The time was ripe for CFO to ensure that it could provide tools for its labour rights defenders to take care of themselves and each other, as they entered this new phase in their work, and in their organisation’s growth.
What did we do?

Over six months, 15 of CFO’s leaders and activists and 12 factory workers from six Mexican towns participated in 110 individualised and group yoga therapy sessions. During intake, participants discussed their health, diet, sleep, work, and relationship patterns and priorities, and sources of inspiration and support. They also completed a self-evaluation of their physical, physiological, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual energy. I then tailored a yoga therapy practice for each participant, which evolved over the next six months. Practices included dynamic and static postures, breathing exercises, hand gestures, self-touch, chanting, visualisations, and lifestyle recommendations. Group sessions allowed participants to connect with each other once a week, and to practise movement, breathing and attentional focus together. Depending on group needs, practices included energising, calming, or a mixture of techniques, as well as discussion of applied yoga philosophy.

How did we do it?

Regular self-evaluation was an integral component of this project, allowing each participant to get a sense of how yoga therapy was impacting them over time in their personal, collective, and work lives, and informed modifications to each person’s practice. In group sessions, participants shared their physical, mental, and emotional state with the group and how it changed during the practice. I tracked these states and all changes reported. Some participants also provided in-depth interviews after six months, which I transcribed and analysed.
What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

The research results indicate that the project contributed to CfO’s capacity to promote effective, sustainable and transformative social justice movement building. Participants’ individual energy and wellbeing changed as the project progressed, expressed as moving towards increased safety, security, happiness, contentment, peace, acceptance, self-love, and love of others. Group check-ins reflected these shifts, as participants reported increased relaxation, decreased stress, reduced physical pain, more focused minds, and more peaceful hearts.

Three primary themes emerged from the thematic content analysis, summarised as follows:

**Personal transformation**
“I’m a different person now.”

**Organisational strengthening and development**
“We began to listen to each other much more.”
“I helped her come back to her breathing.”

**Continuation**
“We can’t go back to how we were.”

What’s next?

Recommendations from CfO include:

- Publishing participant experience.
- Providing individualised follow-up plans.
- Developing a yoga tool box for specific situations faced by labour rights defenders.
- Preparing a simple training-of-trainers curriculum.

I am discussing with CfO how to initiate conversations with donor organisations around the benefits of self-care and collective wellbeing for activists. CfO is now committed to bringing self-care and collective care into its gender and women’s empowerment programming.
What did we set out to do?

Our motivation for this project was to envision a new and kinder social media environment, called Sentient, that could help nurture a deeper sense of connection with self and others through creative and more embodied forms of expression and exchange online. We wanted to address the widespread concerns over social media technologies leading to feelings of isolation, loneliness and alienation as well as mental illness. The aim of this project was to explore the scope, potential and challenges of designing a more nurturing and holistic social media environment.
What did we do?

We set up a core group of collaborators—artists, designers, wellbeing and health practitioners, teachers, and IT professionals, who all shared our vision. We explored how deeper sharing of experiences can happen online, going beyond words and individual imagery, and reaching more nuanced and meaningful depths of expression. We played with the use of poetic and archetypal forms of expression, such as colour, sound, text, image, and movement. We also explored how to make live online settings and events more conducive to authentic sharing.

What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

Over the course of 18 months, we achieved a high-level concept and prototype for our app design, and we considered what it would mean to build the Minimum Viable Product to test the concept. The full development and deployment of the app itself was beyond the scope of the project as it required more extensive funding for iterative programming, deployment and testing. We learned a lot about the technical complexities of creating authentic and safe online spaces. We also learned that in the process of humanising technology we should ensure that it serves our profoundest longings for caring and compassionate interconnectedness with others. The greatest challenge is not in endlessly upgrading our technologies but in learning how to utilise them to create situations of support through ritual, myth, and compassionate exchange that validate the continuity of human culture and all life on Earth.

What’s next?

We shared our vision and ideas at the Electronic Visualisation and the Arts conference (EVA London 2021). We also published a joint paper on the Sentient concept, conveying the depth and scope of the ideas behind the app, which is accessible here: Sentient: A social media environment as a conscious living system.
What did we set out to do?

The Inner Healing for Outer Health course was an online immersive course in integrative health for healthcare practitioners. Twelve curious practitioners from South Africa and Italy embarked on a 12-week journey that integrated theory, practice, and personal insights, with application in the field. A range of sub-disciplines were represented, including medical doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and social workers.

What did we do?

Together we explored basic concepts of transpersonal medicine, holding the therapeutic space, psychosomatic phenomena, and an integral lifestyle for health. Through curated online resources, interactive forums, case scenarios, and live webinars, we experienced a mindset change, and considered how we could honour that evolution in our daily professional and personal practice.

How did we do it?

We looked at the literature, the science, and the experience. There was emphasis on blending the scientific analytical paradigm with the experiential, on experimentation with processes, meditations, and open awareness. We had much discussion on the role of placebo and nocebo in health, and ritual, and how much of ourselves we project into the therapeutic space. The work starts within, before it manifests outside.

What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

It was evident that these seasoned practitioners in the healthcare field had been having glimpses all along of an integrated and expanded approach to healing and health, but the system in which they find themselves seem to discredit or ignore those experiences. Healers want to heal, and yet we tend...
to fragment more than cultivate until we learn to facilitate spaces for our clients and patients that meld together perceptions of spirit, psychology, and allopathic medicine. This does not happen by accident: hence the study of Integrative Health as a discipline. By the end of the programme, they felt envisioned with new tools and outlooks, and felt confident that the integration of holistic paradigms into their existing practice would cascade into a more humanistic way of conducting their profession.

What’s next?

There is still much to do. It feels as if future courses could be longer or more intensive to dig deeper and engender more examination and growth. We could refine the pedagogical approach, and find better ways of measuring impact. Perhaps through regular cycles of this course we could build a broader base with continued support for practitioners. Yes, there is still much to explore. But then, each course participant is already like a change maker, a ripple-maker. In each of the twelve participants, seeds have been planted, and who knows how many will be touched by them in turn, nourished from the fruits and blossoms that are sure to come.
What did we set out to do?

Our motivation for this project was to be able to share the benefits and ideals of integrative practice that were gained as part of the Alef Trust Learning through Integrative Practice course with a wider audience in Romania. We hoped to create a conscious community of integral practitioners in Romania by inspiring the initial participants, who in turn and over time would inspire other friends and family members, and thus plant the seed for the expansion of integrative practice in our communities in Romania.

What did we do?

We started with an introductory week covering theory, rules and meeting each other. In the five weeks that followed we explored the theoretical and practical considerations of each of the five modalities: physical, interpersonal, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. After week six we collected initial feedback and devised the following week’s schedule in a participative fashion before concluding in week ten with the participant presentations of their chosen integrative practice.
How did we do it?

There was a broad mix of activities to accommodate the holistic nature of this project. We included theoretical elements with powerpoint-backed mini-lectures on everything from integral theory to lucid dreaming, structures and states of consciousness and different modalities of somatic practices. Besides engaging the mind, we also had ample time and sessions of group sharing with circle discussions that engaged the emotional and interpersonal modalities. The vital energies and the body were stimulated by sessions of yoga, breathwork and mobility exercises, whilst the spiritual dimension was served by guided group meditation practices as well as specific thematic discussions. We also stimulated participants by playing games together, drawing and tapping into inner intuition with exercises of automatic writing.

What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

We came together as 20 separate participants and four facilitators and we came out of the project as a conscious community of beings. Here are some of the words of the participants:

“I don’t know exactly how this happened, however as the project progressed I felt more and more connected with every other participant, giving me the sense of belonging to a mature network of conscious beings that supported my own growth...this was amazing.”

“I felt discouraged at first to start all these practices as I felt I was the only one who was a beginner and had difficulties, however as the project unfolded, a sense of community and mutual support started to emerge and I saw that others were in a similar position to me, which encouraged me to open up and take the courage and commitment to practice more.”

The project brought positive change for the community created, for myself and hopefully in a more indirect way for the world at large by enabling more and more people to open up to new levels of practice and being.

What’s next?

In the future we would like to take the idea of integrative practice and conscious communities to the next level and hopefully create new projects and widen the reach to new participants and audiences – with more funding we could either target specific groups that were not addressed or scale up to reach wider audiences with a course on a platform like Sutra, with live group discussions to complement the materials made available online. We would really love to continue taking this initiative further and exposing more and more people to the benefits of integrative practice and conscious communities.
What did we set out to do?

The project had an overarching intention to deepen the participants’ connection to Earth Moves’ four-acre semi-rural base in Wirral, UK. A variety of integral processes including inner work were woven in with gardening and other activities. The project looked at the transpersonal experiences of people involved in the Earth Moves communities. From a depth-psychological perspective, the human psyche is deeply embedded in nature. The project explored this notion and used the framework of the permaculture system. The principles of permaculture illustrate a method of living that is both optimising for people and the planet. Concepts from transpersonal psychology were used as theoretical and research frameworks.

The planning of the study was influenced by the three permaculture principles of:

- **Earth care**
- **People care**
- **Future care**

This project was about connection with self, community, and landscape, and how this type of work has the potential to facilitate global transformation.
What did we do?

We created a programme of activities on the land, including dance, ritual, gardening, collaborative art activities and nature meditation. The synergic combination of activities created deep and profound connections and feelings of joy, celebration, and healing.

Nature is a mirror; connecting with nature outside the self connects us with the nature inside the self. Connecting to the vitality and cycles of the natural world improves the wellbeing of the individual and the collective. Interacting with her in these ways creates a link to our ancestral roots and facilitates transformation and healing. The liminal space between body and land is made manifest through many of the processes we used. The body is the interface with nature and the conduit for the data received from her. The land and the Earth live inside of us.

The activities worked to connect people to the landscape. On many levels, we are the landscape. The Earth loans her materials to us for a time then our bodies go back to her. Nature teaches us about the cyclic and contradictory nature of reality and the joy, beauty and impermanence of the physical world. We transformed the land by adding hundreds of new species, enriching the previously sparse biodiversity, forming a deep, visceral, and spiritual connection to the place.

How did we do it?

I took a multidisciplinary, qualitative approach in documenting and researching the psychological and spiritual impact on participants, as they transformed themselves and the land with permaculture methods and transpersonal, integral approaches. Function and aesthetics were woven together in food-growing, creative projects, psychological and integral processes.

What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

Generally, a lot of positive transformation, joy and transformation occurred as a result of the project. Insights about self, connection to nature and the importance of environmental issues were reported. Rich conversations, dialogues, creative output and mutual support occurred. The restoration of the land influenced the psychological states of participants. The enhanced insights of participants have the potential to act as fractals, influencing other communities. We observed how permaculture principles could inform human movement and creativity, and how we are all intermeshed within the place we are located and its processes.

What's next?

We plan to deepen and develop this research and reach out to other similar organisations to share our findings, form links and learn from others. We hope to develop more stringent research methods to more accurately measure outcomes. We plan to fund future projects that develop and expand the insights from this project.
What did we set out to do?

The Integrative Yoga Programme was designed to foster community wellbeing within a group of yoga practitioners via their participation in a ten week online course. The course was specifically designed to augment the participants’ existing yoga practice with a goal of enhancing the benefits experienced by practising yoga, and creating opportunities for exploration into different aspects of the Self from a holistic perspective.

What did we do?

Inspired by Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory and the Alef Trust’s Learning through Integrative Practice course, 12 participants were encouraged to reflect on their yoga practices and other practices they may have, examining the role they play in their wellbeing. Participants were then coached to add additional practices to bring about a balanced schedule that enhanced wellbeing across the realms of the mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and interpersonal.

How did we do it?

The online course consisted of 13 weeks, split into five stages. Each stage contained a theoretical element and experiential tasks for the participants to complete at their own pace. There were also live sessions hosted via Zoom on weeks two, three and ten, to give the participants an opportunity to connect with one another in real time.
What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

The course was successful insomuch as it had a positive impact on some of the participants, which was reported in a closing questionnaire and in the live sessions.

“Yoga and meditation were steady constants, one or both completed almost daily. What worked well was not having a fixed expectation on how long I would spend on each. This was a helpful approach.”

“Planning time for yourself is important. Well-being is improved when adding additional practices. It would be good to have some group practice.”

Another success was the creation of the online course material which could potentially be reused or updated in another iteration of the course. However, the course was not without certain limitations, for example, the structure of the course placed a large amount of responsibility on the participants to engage with the content and to reflect on their processes individually. Whilst there was good engagement in the live sessions, some participants were reluctant to engage online, especially with each other.

What’s next?

Although I do not currently have plans to continue with this project online, it would be interesting to run the course again with in-person sessions, as I believe that people are keen to connect outside of the virtual space. If there was an opportunity to continue to work with the same group of participants, it would be interesting to understand more deeply what it is that made some choose to keep going with certain practices, whilst others did not.
What did we set out to do?

The Wild Refuge project aimed to explore the bridge between clinically sound interventions with more organic and immersive experiences in nature in the context of addiction and formative trauma. We wanted to understand how being in nature together can facilitate a sense of belonging to Self, with others and to something larger (i.e., the transpersonal).

What did we do?

My partner and I designed and built a therapeutic space in the privately-owned woodland where we were working prior to running the project. Enhancements included a pizza oven made from materials sourced from the land and a yurt. We aimed to imbue the very foundations of the space with inclusivity, kindness and creativity through our state of being as we worked through the physical and emotional challenges of natural building.

We then made links with Chy Rehab and arranged for six residents plus an addiction worker to come for six full days at the woods. I worked with a clinical psychologist to plan and facilitate the sessions, while my partner took care of logistics, food and provided a gentle, informal presence as the third facilitator.
Given the group context of formative trauma and addiction, I was intuitively guided towards the concepts of ‘containment’ and ‘expansion’ as a starting point for the content creation of the programme. In expansion, we honour the need for transpersonal exploration, a connection to the Divine and expanded ways of knowing and being. We also acknowledge the potential of becoming lost in and addicted to this freedom. In containment, we honour the need for safe embodiment, self-connection and a secure base. This too carries potential pitfalls of isolation, separation and feeling trapped. Therefore, flexible movement between containment and expansion and how these are mirrored in nature, was what I aimed to facilitate in planning the themes for each week.

How did we do it?
We incorporated a whole person approach into each day, with activities that honoured and worked on physical, mental, emotional, contemplative and creative dimensions of being. Each activity related in some way to the theme— but we left lots of open spaces for organic evolution and dialogue around what was emerging for everyone present.

What were the experiences like and were there outcomes?
Our results reflect the following experiences amongst the group: increased relaxation; a sense of achievement; relief from stress and psychological suffering; renewed hope/faith; more confidence; a process of transformation; connection to self, others and the divine; an understanding of the value of self-care and self-compassion; improved mood; learning the wisdom of play; a feeling of being grounded and safe, but also ready to explore and expand; the value of not getting lost in expanded states, staying grounded.

The experience of facilitation was rewarding, humbling, fascinating, challenging and exhausting. The attempt to bring together two worlds (the clinical world of formal interventions and the grassroots world of festivals and retreats) was challenging for all three facilitators. The main finding from this was that it is important to have a team of people involved who are comfortable and experienced in both worlds.

What’s next?
The rehab centre has expressed interest in funding similar projects with us in the future including for their staffing team. We also aim to facilitate other groups in our therapeutic woodland space, including activities for children.
Elf-Strength of the Earth: Developing an Earth connected facilitation process

Tabitha Jayne
UK

What did we set out to do?
Elf-Strength of the Earth was an exploration into how to create a sense of connection to Earth online through a multi-generational and collaborative approach. Twelve coaches and facilitators came together to share experience and knowledge that was grounded in an evidence-base on nature and Earth connection.

What did we do?
We created a short film from footage of my Granny talking about her own connection to Earth that was recorded before her death. Then myself, the film editor and my 13-year-old niece came together to create an initial one-hour process to share with the rest of the coaches and facilitators. My niece’s role was to bring in the voice of the youth and of those experiencing mental health issues and learning difficulties to help design a more inclusive process. Once we had refined the process amongst ourselves, we ran a total of 11 pilot sessions with 105 total participants over two weeks.

How did we do it?
We use a variation of the Inclusion of Nature in Self Scale developed by Schultz (2001). This scale offers seven different images that help people identify how interconnected they feel with nature. We changed nature to Earth as my previous research on Earth connection showed that many people, even when connected to nature, view humans as separate from nature but part of Earth. The scale was shown at the start of the process and again at the end of the process and participants selected the image that best represented how they felt in that moment.
What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

I personally found managing the complexities of this project to be a rewarding and overwhelming experience. The majority of participants stated that the process helped create a sense of connection and community with others and enabled them to identify ways they could continue to deepen their connection with Earth. All the facilitators who took part found it an extremely rewarding experience, with a number of them wishing they could run more. My niece went from being too shy to turn the camera on to co-facilitating the pilot session debrief with me! When we analysed the before and after scores, we received an extremely statistically significant result which means that the changes in the scores were likely to be caused by people’s participation in the process.

What’s next?

We have created a “living” facilitator guide as a legacy piece from this project which shares the model we developed behind the Earth Connected Process and the process itself for others to freely use. Our intention is to launch a global conversation on how coaches, facilitators and trainers can work with nature and Earth in virtual spaces so that together we can harvest our collective natural wisdom and create best practice around this area in holistic change. We don’t know what to expect but are looking forward to seeing what emerges! You can read the guide by creating a free account on Sutra, and then accessing it here: https://naturevirtualspace.sutra.co
What did we set out to do?

In recent months, the Frontline Assistance for Stress and Trauma (FAST) team has started to work with a UK police constabulary, delivering EFT sessions to the officers exposed to trauma, with the aim being to reduce the severity of their post-traumatic stress symptoms. EFT is a relatively new self-help technique that involves either tapping lightly on, or touching specific acupressure points on the body, whilst focussing on an event or an emotion (Adams & Davidson, 2011).

The intention of this project was to devise and test a Recurrent-Trauma EFT Protocol, which aimed to reduce the severity of post-traumatic stress symptoms in police officers exposed to trauma.

What did we do?

The project was conducted in three parts. The first part of the project sought to answer the question, how are the EFT practitioners applying EFT within sessions with officers experiencing recurrent trauma? The data extracted was used to devise a protocol. The second part of the research involved testing the protocol with six officers, during which time the FAST practitioners were also asked to keep a reflective journal to track their experiences of the protocol. The final part involved exploring practitioner reflections and how they might be used to inform the protocol moving forward.

How did we do it?

All the interviews and sessions were conducted online via Zoom.
What was the outcome?

The project produced several findings:

The first part of the project sought to answer the question, how are the EFT practitioners applying EFT within sessions with officers experiencing recurrent trauma? The data extracted was used to devise a protocol. The feedback from the practitioners regarding the protocol itself was positive. In particular, the structure of the protocol, the tools repository and peer supervision were reported as being particularly useful.

In terms of the protocol outcome:

The officers reported that they had made good progress. For example, officer six reported that they felt “more chilled out about everything” and that they “have a different mindset.” Officer four stated that they had “made very good progress,” and that they “cleared the traumatic memories quickly.”

Several of the officers reported that they would recommend the service. Officer five for example, stated that she would definitely recommend FAST, adding that she felt it made a difference that she got the help straight away.

The practitioners also highlighted that the FAST EFT protocol worked well and that a broader measurement tool was needed.

Additionally, the study found that rather than using post-traumatic stress symptoms, continuous traumatic stress responses (CTSR) may be a better term to describe the trauma experienced by the police.

Moving forward, I aim to:

- Get this study published.
- Explore CTSR in more detail.
- Work on developing a measurement tool that can accurately measure symptoms of CTSR.
What did we set out to do?

The aims of this project were:

• To acknowledge, honour and nurture teachers by offering integrative practice as a way of bringing wholeness to Self through the integration of five different domains: mental, physical, emotional, relational and spiritual.

• To explore the potential of an individual educator’s inner process work, and subsequent wholeness, as a catalyst for collective change in the ‘outer’ educational setting.

What did we do?

Preparation for designing and delivering the integrative practice programme for heart-centred teachers included a revisiting of my own journey with Alef Trust’s highly experiential *Learning through Integrative Practice* course (2018-2019) and my more recent participation in Alef Trust’s Integrative Practice Research Project (2021).

Participants were recruited from a democratic school in Ireland. Although Covid restrictions meant that the programme had to be delivered online instead of at Asana (the school I co-direct), I had already done some research on the role of teacher presence in transformative online teaching as part of my MSc and had created a toolkit for teaching online which meant that I had some kind of template to draw upon.

The programme was delivered between July and October 2021 and had both synchronous and asynchronous components. It included eight experiential live sessions, forum engagement and optional reading.
How did we do it?

The initial part of the process, between the first two live sessions, involved creating a timetable for five integrative practices and a pledge to engage in these practices for the duration of the programme. This was done individually offline and then posted on the Sutra platform for all the group to see. During the live sessions, exploration of five different domains (mental, physical, emotional, relational and spiritual) took place. This was effected through individual and group activities, such as grounded meditation, embodied listening, drawing, writing, group sharing (written and verbal) and dancing. Our meetings took place on a mostly fortnightly basis.

Participant and facilitator experiences and outcomes of project:

- An increase in self awareness, focus and intentionality
- Awareness of imbalances
- Somatic awareness
- Acknowledging and overcoming resistance
- The value of peer support
- Programme being perceived in therapeutic terms
- The importance of intentionality
- Challenge with group engagement between live sessions
- Awareness of integrative practice being counter culture and the reason why
- Bringing integrative practice into schools

My experience as facilitator of the programme was very positive. One initial challenge was the obligation to deliver the programme online but this turned out to be ultimately rewarding. Another new experience for me was trusting myself and the participants enough to be able to stay in the awareness and relational realms, and let go of my role as the teacher who provides a lot of content.

What’s next?

I hope to iterate this programme with different groups of teachers and young adult students in-person and online in 2022. I plan to do further research on a wider scale, looking to see how integrative practice could be applied to secondary schools.
Journey to the Self: Taking Care of the Care-takers

Ayesha Iftikhar
Pakistan

What did we set out to do?
Driven by the idea that it is of vital importance to provide support to those that bolster and support the wider community, my project focused on running transpersonal and expressive arts-based process groups for teachers, activists and mental health practitioners in order to facilitate their connection to Self, their personal healing and resilience, and to empower them to more creatively and consciously give back to the people they serve.

What did we do?
Over three months, in Lahore, Pakistan, 20 participants met weekly, in groups of ten each, to engage in a deeply reflective process of inner-awareness work through a curated programme of creative exploration through writing, poetry, drawing, painting, clay work, psychodrama and breathwork.

How did we do it?
We gathered weekly to share our stories, bear witness to each other, read poetry, draw memories of childhood play. We also dipped into the personal trauma we had been carrying, and celebrated portraits of the darkness and the light within us. We created personal mandalas of generational healing, immersed ourselves in shadow work, accessed our inner child through play, grew plants and worked with clay, to mark our resilience. We explored cultural and personal archetypes, journeyed through the tarot, in symbols, and grounded ourselves in mind and body.

Some unexpected trauma resulting from events unfolding at the time in the country sparked a core sense of unsafety for the women in the group, and this group found itself expanding to become the holding space for the fear, demoralisation, challenge and frustration experienced by these women, many of whom are deeply committed to serving their communities. In this way, the lived reality of our experience came to the fore in an undeniable way, and it was essential to connect and work through that, and alongside it, in order to grow as we did.
What was the experience like and were there some outcomes?

The qualitative and quantitative data both illustrate that participants benefited from the programme in terms of their self-awareness, presence, optimism, appreciation of the world and others, amongst other things. They were key gains in several domains of the Inner Development Goals (idG) framework. They also reported experiencing a deep contact and connection with the self, as well as catharsis, grounding, acceptance and creative vitality.

A few of their own words:

“...It feels like a piece of me has been restored. Like a tile that had fallen off, or was maybe sitting awry, is now welcomed back.”

“I feel we are all more unashamedly owning ourselves, our strengths, limitations, needs, and laughter.”

“We are all in this together, and we are okay as we are, where we are. Hope is contagious.”

Facilitator qualities were also studied, and the facilitator’s sense of vulnerability and self-disclosure was highlighted as a key element of creating connection, resonance and safety in the group.

For me, personally, the deeper I attuned myself to being free and vulnerable as a facilitator, to lean in, really lean in, trusting and sharing myself even in the face of the unknown, I learned that whatever emerged could be faced, could be stripped bare, and companioned. We, as a group, reached a point where we were more fully able to look, not just all around us, but within us, and hold our fears, vulnerabilities, and wounded bits in the palms of our hands. It felt like we were tending to a flower garden growing around the edges of these scars, not hiding them, not centred on them, but enveloping them, as the soul spreads and envelopes an experience. And vice versa. This gave us some of the most precious gifts — hope, and courage.

What’s next?

I plan on expanding links and connections to other facilitators to build an inner work model, of sorts, that leads to development along the idG framework, but also includes a more thorough grounding in cultural contexts and the spiritual dimension of healing, growth and transformation.
What did we set out to do?

Based on the premise that creativity facilitates mental health and wellbeing, the project set out to create meditative stitching workshops. Needle and thread were used not only to create textile art, but also to link hands to heart, a contemplative embodied process which created space for unconscious thought patterns to emerge, be noticed and witnessed. Secondary aims included supporting local fabric manufacturers, upcycling previously used cottons and creating functional items that could be donated to charitable causes or utilised to raise funds.

What did we do & how?

Two workshops were designed, one online and the other in a studio setting. The online workshop consisted of eight participants who each received a gift bag containing fabrics, iron-on applique hearts and embroidery thread. Zoom meetings were held weekly for six weeks. The hour-long meetings began with a meditation, inspirational ideas and reflective time. Participants shared their daily stitching and reflections in a WhatsApp group. During this time the participants decided to pool their stitchings in order to create a communal project. Their blocks were sewn into “little quilts of love”. These five quilts were made and donated to a local maternity ward where they were used to present stillborn babies to their mothers. Two participants stitched 100 hearts — each sufficient for a single bed-size quilt. These quilts have been

"Mend": stitching lives together

Tania Botoulas Pope
South Africa

Mend: stitching lives together

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South Africa

The Conscious Community Projects
sewn up and will be raffled to create funds—which will be utilised to purchase more fabric, as participants spoke highly of the experience and have requested ongoing workshops.

The second workshop took place in a studio setting. Participants spent three hours over six consecutive Friday mornings exploring their inner responses to shapes based on the book *Signs of Life* by Angeles Arrien. Each session followed a basic pattern consisting of a guided meditation/visualisation, followed by journaling, stitching (in silence), tea-break, sharing of experience, stitching with discussion on shape symbol, closing. Using their weekly stitchings, each woman created a quilt which reflected herself, her beliefs and her experience.

**How did participants sum up their experiences?**

“The connection with others and the reminder to self-care. The materials were beautiful, and I so loved the invitation to be fully present with the task. Holding the precious moms and babies in my thoughts made it extra special.”

“The sense of gratitude and thankfulness of being offered this experience of spending this time together and learning even more about myself with other special ladies. Realising how much being creative, in whatever project I do, means to me, as part of my mental health, which in turn contributes to my overall balance of life. I continually feel so fortunate to be given the time and be able to use it so constructively in creating beautiful works to the best of my ability.”

“It gave me time for myself, I liked the challenge and not having pressure to be perfect and just to enjoy the moment and enjoyed challenging myself to do different things. I also liked getting to know the other participants better.”

**What’s next?**

I found the experience to be personally enriching and enjoyed every aspect of it! Each participant has requested ongoing projects with the result that I am currently planning three new workshops. The primary and secondary aims of the project were met successfully and have generated a larger group of interested participants.
Inquiry Results

How we experienced holistic change facilitation.
Holistic change processes follow natural rhythms and archetypal cycles. There is a time to prepare the soil, to seed an idea, to let it take root and to let it grow, then to see it blossom and bear fruit, and to harvest. Holistic change agency requires us to attune to the context of a project, its ecosystem and its inhabitants, and to let the project gestate and grow in the most conducive way. This requires a deepening of awareness, a calibration of pacing, and the building of feedback loops into project planning and delivery. It also entails participatory engagement with all stakeholders, meeting people on their terms, appreciating their perspectives and understanding their ways of being and doing. All aspects of a project require consideration: inner and outer, individual and collective. A holistic approach also means awakening and engaging a multiplicity of human faculties in all aspects of a project—invoking cognitive, embodied, emotional, spiritual intelligences.

**Permaculture:** “Consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature, while yielding an abundance of food, fibre and energy for provision of local needs” (Holmgren, 2020, p. 1).

Often holistic change processes are seen as complementary to mainstream practice, but this is only because they include what has been marginalised in prevailing and dominant frameworks and discourses. We may describe them as radical in the original sense of the word—“from the roots”. They offer a return to natural rhythms, to roots, to Earth—to the Source of life. These natural rhythms include a deeper listening that needs to take place to let more subtle information come to the fore and guide our actions.

Holistic change facilitation is a cyclical, iterative process. Its creative unfolding aligns with the principles of permaculture (Holmgren, 2017). It can readily be mapped onto the four seasons of the integral holistic cycle identified by Ferrer et al. (2005), also acknowledging the non-linear undercurrents and cycles-within-cycles at each stage.
Autumn: Harvest and plan.

Consider the harvest of previous cycles of your work that have brought you to the present moment. Notice the existing structures and processes in which you are situated. Notice what resources and collaborations are available to you. Prepare the soil for your next project: Researching what is needed, reaching out to collaborators, considering funding and other forms of support. Create your project plan. Calibrate your intentions.

Winter: Pause and incubate.

Before beginning to enact your project... pause and listen. Listen deeply to what is stirring within. Allow the seeds to gestate. Trust organic unfolding. If seeds are not taking to the soil, don’t try to force their growth. Recalibrate your ideas. Attune deeply to the intentions, values and principles that inform your work. Humbly release what is not serving your project. Go inwards with self-care and listen to limitations. Acknowledge what is yours to cultivate and grow and what is not – know your niche and appreciate its boundaries! Open to what is arising from within and beyond...

Summer: Appreciate what is flourishing and flowering, and honour what has not taken root and grown.

Celebrate your project outcomes with participants, stakeholders and the wider world. And as late summer becomes harvest, we gather the fruits and share the yield. Contemplate whether to bring the fruits and their seeds into the next cycle of your work.

Spring: Notice what grows.

Trust that roots are forming in the ground. Appreciate their delicacy. Notice what inner impulses and outer actions begin to emerge. Pay attention to the edges and margins. One moment growth may be small and delicate — the next it may be abundant and vigorous. Attend to all growth with nurturing awareness, giving support as needed. Challenges may arise in forms of unexpected growth, or shadows and ailments. Attend to them with care. Notice what is needed for organic regulation and containment, keeping efforts within the bounds of your available resources.
We have chosen to convey the results of our explorations in first person plural, to emphasise the participatory stance which informed our inquiry into holistic change facilitation. All quotes are anonymised – to protect individuals and to speak for us all.

In our inquiry community we root holistic change in humanistic and transpersonal values and beliefs. They are like the fertile soil which nourishes the seeds of all projects, and from which all projects emerge. They are continually form-giving, in that we aspire to give them embodied expression through our daily living and practices. We also recognise that we have individual needs that must be met, as well as biases and blindspots, which, if unrecognised or under-addressed, can create imbalances and unconscious undercurrents in our projects.

In holistic change facilitation we embrace our humanity with all our potential and flaws.

**Leverage points for change:**

**Our visions, values, beliefs, attitudes and needs**
Our visions: Building oases of practice.

Our practices in holistic change facilitation are driven by our visions and passion for ways of life aligned with the deeper patterns and rhythms of Earth and cosmos. We co-create spaces for inquiry, nurturing humanity’s deeper sense of being and belonging. We aim to model and embody the attitudes, values and capacities we champion, as we believe that change is seeded within and that those seeds can engender profound resonance and ripple effects. We are discovering that inner work is essential for any leader and facilitator and that it is a life-long commitment, an unending practice, to which we must commit with humility, self-compassion and discernment. Nature teaches us that deep change requires patience. We are gardeners, sowing seeds, cultivating the soil and tending to what is emerging.

“As a project leader, I sought to embody confidence in holistic transformation, compassion to myself and the other participants and the struggles of such transformation as well as allowing myself to be vulnerable. Vulnerable in the sense of sharing my mistakes along the path and opening up to difficult moments. This helped the other stakeholders to do so as well. I also sought to embody a joyous attitude, a sort of joie de vivre, and at times tried to take steam off when things got too heady or difficult, as I believe holistic transformation is a lifelong endeavour that is best served not under performance anxiety but rather in a welcoming, joyous and supportive atmosphere.”

A fundamental value we share is a deep recognition of our interconnectedness with all that is. We embrace ubuntu (Zulu), meaning that:

“We are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others” (Mandela, in Stengel, 2009, p. xi).

We tend to focus on enabling potential rather than attempting to fix what seems broken. We endeavour to approach problems with curiosity and appreciation for complexity. In our experience, the ‘problem’ is often not the problem – but myopic awareness is!

“At the outset, it seems that this project addresses symptoms of post-traumatic stress (PTS) — which it does. But underneath the clinical definitions and boxes lie deep feelings of shame, confusion, isolation, feelings of brokenness, armours and masks. This project goes deeper than just PTS, it opens doors to the inner universe, allows space, creates conditions to come face to face with the deepest, darkest parts of our experience — and release. Collectively, when we begin to better understand that we’re not broken, that in fact the question isn’t what is wrong with us, but rather what’s happened to us. Perceptions begin to change, and shame begins to transform into curiosity. We become gentler with ourselves and with others.”
Our values and beliefs

We aim to cultivate compassionate and caring approaches to our work, which are guided by attending to the larger whole within which we as humans are embedded.
Reflective Practice: Pause for a moment and consider: How much time do you take to pause in your life and work, to reflect and let things gestate? How much do you encourage others—colleagues, clients, participants—to pause? Pausing is an essential part of any creative process, fulfilling a need for relinquishing and dissolving established patterns and structures, creating space for new life. Pause for pause—not for anything to emerge. In other words, release the desire for immediate insight and deliverables. Pause to grow comfortable in the gap, in uncertainty. Dwell in the unknown without expectation. Pause there and notice what happens...

Our attitudes and our needs

We endeavour to approach our work with attitudes that reflect our commitment to holism—attending to the whole with love and care. We value curiosity, open-mindedness, patience, flexibility, acceptance, trust, compassion, kindness, sincerity, and persistence. We aim to foster our response-ability through attending to our inner developmental needs alongside the multi-faceted needs of our projects and stakeholders.

“Holistic change facilitation to me is moving beyond the conceptual into manifestation, but without losing the intuitive. It’s about service and action, but also about patience, flexibility, and an acceptance that whatever we think is the manifestation, it’s probably something different. We channel the intent, and trust that good will come out of it at some level. When we fix endpoints, we limit transformation. But don’t forget about the action part, either. If we wait until we think everything is perfect, we’ll always be waiting.”

We are called to projects and initiatives that serve the needs of our time. To serve well, we need to attend to our own being and balance, nurturing inner sustainability. In mastery, doing and being become effortless action—where action is guided by awareness, enabling one to blend with the unfolding energetic flow. Mastery calls for a lifetime of practice... we need to make a conscious effort to pause, incubate, process and reflect before we enter into another cycle of action.

We understand that we need to listen to the deeper rhythms of life that animate us and our work, and we value supportive practice companions and communities in which we can let our visions take seed without immediate external pressures for manifestation. This kind of deep meaning-making, attending to our shared imaginal ground, enables a kind of restorative justice within us and with others. As we embody what we envision, there is healing and new narratives are kindled between us.
Holistic change requires awakening to and integrating energies and dynamics emerging from different spheres of life.

“I am pulled to embody what is a deep calling and purpose. I don’t always know how to verbalise this calling, but it has to do with healing, and integration, and the bringing together of threads from different disciplines and spheres of life. There is something about respecting lineage, too, as if I have a duty to bring about change that has been emerging and gaining momentum over many generations.”

We are driven by a sense of calling. Some of us feel we are serving a lineage. Some of us feel we are calling attention to something or someone who has been marginalised by dominant cultures and social spheres. Some of us lend our voices to honouring and protecting nature and land. We recognise the need for sensitivity in our approach, aiming to accompany the marginal without imposition and superiority. We also endeavour to bring awareness to patterns of trauma, offering opportunities for re-storying. We sense that diversity is a route to creating flourishing systems and communities. We do our work with a sense of service, supporting the unfolding of what we sense is calling to be born. Our change facilitation is a form of servant leadership.
As change facilitators we attune to all aspects of practice: interior and exterior, individual and collective. A holistic approach also means awakening and engaging a multiplicity of human faculties in all aspects of a project — involving cognitive, embodied, emotional and spiritual intelligences. Taking a holistic approach means engaging, as fully as we can, with the multi-dimensionality of our present moment experience where inner and outer and individual and collective spheres blend in many varied ways.

Some examples

- Slowing down, tempering urgency and giving time for ongoing communal reflection. Taking account of our relational rhythms. That means feeling into the rhythm of a conversation, a project timetable, a consultation process, noticing where the pacing is conducive and where not.

- Attending to our inner pace, pausing and recalibrating as needed.

- Paying attention to the qualities of the places and spaces in which we work, consciously choosing them where we can, bearing in mind the needs of our work, and preparing spaces for practice. Noticing the sensory qualities and limitations of spaces and how they may impact our participants’ experiences.

- Engaging with the metaphorical dimensions of our working spaces, noticing what spaces evoke within us, letting the inner and outer synergise in intentional ways.

- Welcoming and empowering diversity of views and voices, transdisciplinary dialogue and inquiry, and intergenerational collaboration.

- Listening to our inner diversity of voices, noticing what is whispering at the margins of our awareness.

- Holding tensions and polarisations with patience and curiosity, and noticing the value of complementary perspectives and practising perspective-taking.
We value clear methods, models, strategies and frameworks that can be communicated with ease and enacted. But we also know that we need to take the time to be present and take a place-based and person-centred approach – to listen and to witness what works and what does not. Our methods and frameworks are scaffolding structures that we appraise and revise in response to the living experience of a project. We bring our intentions and ideas and tools... and then blend and refine (or even let go) in the moment of encounter. If we can be present and fluid in our responses, we can meet the needs of our stakeholders in a co-creative and participatory way.

Accessibility
When planning our work, we need to consider how people prefer to engage with us. Some will thrive in action and in embodied learning. Some will appreciate more intellectual framing and explanation. All tools and processes can bring fun and ease to some whilst intimidating or alienating others. Holistic change facilitation invites needs analysis at the start of each journey and as the journey unfolds. Technological tools can be valuable but may not fit certain contexts or ways of working or relating. Tools of any kind should support a process, and not get in its way. We also need to consider how project activities can be interwoven with existing routines and structures, so as to achieve the greatest likelihood of follow-through. New practices may be integrated into existing ways of doing, they can be timetabled, so that they can become routine. We sense that big change often starts in small ways.

The role of technology
Technology becomes soulful through human agency. Yet, we can become infatuated with technology and begin to believe in it as a replacement of the deeper intelligence that operates in processes of transformation. Whilst technology may offer powerful tools and pathways, the tools are a means... not an end in themselves. Technology can overwhelm and stymy relational processes... equally, it can help us to communicate and be more aware of each other, locally and globally. We believe that we need to act as custodians of technological tools and online platforms, to ensure those are wisely used and are safe and supportive of integrative development.
We need supportive people and community. We find that holistic change agency thrives through collaboration and supportive community. Holistic change also needs advocacy to bring the message from the edges to the centre of human activities. Community building and connection are at the core of enabling sustainable and lasting change. The work begins with a small group of resonant people who resource each other and act as accountability partners and co-inquirers. Projects start small and go through iterations. Once a certain threshold of integrity and viability is reached, the work may begin to ripple out in ever larger circles of reach through global information distribution and thought leadership, as well as morphic field effects (Sheldrake, 2012) and non-local entanglement (O’Brien, 2021).

As facilitators of change processes, we thrive in our work when we receive acknowledgement and validation from peer circles which support us in our practice. A big step for us is the release of egoic grasp and control to channel deeper wisdom and intelligence. Peer communities help us in our practices and enable us to engage with the unknown in more courageous ways. And there is also a sense of validation that we derive from the alignment with a higher purpose—but this can feel fleeting. We value being guided by deeper sources of wisdom, but we also need the support and encouragement of our peers, to feel accompanied in more grounded and relational ways.
We dream, build bridges, and serve as translators.

We see holistic change agency as a form of bridge-building. We often work in niches unrecognised by the mainstream, and there we pay attention to emerging potentials—something calling us, we let the calling fill our imagination, and we begin to form plans, building relationships between what is and what wants to be. We can get carried away with that, dreaming big and then hitting walls when we reach out to mainstream actors. And we can be too much in our imagination and overestimate what will work in any given context. In enactment, we will likely draw from practices as yet regarded by many as novel or esoteric. Therefore, project development requires us to be skilled relational translators, understanding those whom we hope to engage and speaking their language—from funding bodies and sponsors, to governmental and community stakeholders. How we language and share ideas and concepts in specific contexts is vital—much can be lost in the gaps between us, and misunderstandings and preconceptions can cause fissures in the relational architectures of our projects. There is value in providing simple yet evocative framing and scaffolding for ideas and processes (e.g., by drawing from nature metaphors as we are doing in this report), which then enable people to make sense of something on their own terms.

We sit with questions of how we “measure” and “demonstrate” emergent, nuanced, qualitative experiences and their effects and significance. We believe that evaluation needs to be context-informed and person-centred. The meaning and results of holistic change projects are best communicated through diverse approaches, blending artful, poetic and story-driven narrative (giving a felt sense of the whole) with quantitative measurements, nourishing mind and heart. All aspects of the work need to be integrative; proposals, plans and reports need to be accessible and inclusive—not coded in specialist or esoteric language.

“I suppose that sort of diversity in my group was a challenge to me, and I was sort of surprised by that and one of the things that I had to sort of do on the fly was to switch between different sets of words, and different sets of ways of describing this...I suppose that we need to teach ourselves...to accommodate the entire spectrum of people who have different sensory and conceptual ways of processing things.”

**Morphic fields:** Form-giving fields which operate in habitual as well as probabilistic ways, shaping the patterns and habits of systems.

**Entanglement:** A concept from quantum physics, describing non-local correlations (not causations).
We need to be skilful story-tellers.

Transformative change may be enabled and catalysed through inspirational stories, joint practice and inquiry, and communities of change makers empowering and motivating each other. As a South African saying goes, *bietjie bietjie maak baie* (Afrikaans): A little bit, a little bit, makes a lot of bits.

Amongst our group there is the belief that we need to cultivate noetic gardens of practice—examples of the ways of being we want to see in the world—and this will enable change to manifest. How we communicate the changes we wish to see also matters: We need to share the stories of our work and its results in compelling ways. Calm and heart-centred advocates who walk the talk and can engage empathically with sceptics are more likely to be heard. We also need to engage skilfully with social norms and conditioning, understanding that those invisible conditions need to inform the ways we communicate with any given audience.

“So, for example, one woman was telling me when she knocks on doors in worker communities, she often feels nervous about how she’s going to be received. Because these are communities where there is a lot of violence and mistrust, being a woman walking around and knocking on doors to chat to people, often you’re not quite sure what might happen. She now uses a touch and breathing exercise to reduce anxiety where she presses the tips of a finger and thumb together, exhales, and slowly traces a line down her finger with her thumb, and then inhales, moving to the next finger, and so on until she has traced all of her fingers (a yogic practice called *niyasam*). She does it before she knocks on the door to get into a calmer state before she talks to whoever opens the door. She said that it’s really helping her feel calmer in her approach to her labour rights activism. And she is getting a better response from the workers now. People are relating less defensively, more openly.”
The inner workings of holistic change

Facilitation traditionally seems to be that the facilitator stays separate from the experience. Yet in a whole or a holistic approach... I am transformed through the experience and something greater emerges. The facilitator then becomes almost like conduit for the experience coming through and the more that you as a facilitator and the more that I, as a facilitator am able to ground and embody the practices and the intention, the more that then ripples out into the entire structure and framework.

Alchemical Co-creation

Holistic change feels like a process of alchemical co-creation, in which we aim to foster a sense of solidarity and shared purpose—a unifying intent. This shared vision and passion is not fixed but emergent and we follow its unfolding. We accompany people, joining them in inquiry and providing holding spaces or giving enabling guidance where needed. We listen, analyse needs and motivations, and provide scaffolding that enables stakeholders to process and work things out themselves. As facilitators, we are also in the same alchemical cauldron, open to receiving guidance and holding, changing ourselves in the process.

I’m coming more from a position of surrender, just allowing what needs to happen to happen. Not trying to control it. ... Before all of this I would have been, you know, planning, planning. ... What I’ve learnt over the past six months is that it doesn’t need to be content-rich. It needs to be connection-rich.

We put a lot of energy in our projects, and the dynamic rapport with our colleagues and participants can be profoundly energising. Conversely though, if we struggle to be present and connect with each other, we can become entangled in energetic tensions and blockages, which can exhaust and deplete us. Furthermore, we are aware that whilst our sense of togetherness can feel empowering and validating, it can also serve to reinforce our biases and group think. We can get carried away by our enthusiasm and develop blindspots.
First, second, third perspective – and fourth!

We value perspective-taking. Multiple perspectives enable us to see more of the whole. We practise switching between 1st, 2nd and 3rd person to make sense of the larger context and to remain in congruent relationship with all stakeholders. The space (inbetween) can also offer a fourth perspective (Dängeli, 2021). Fresh vantage points can expand our awareness of biases and blind spots. We also recognise that people have different ways of processing and perceiving. We value collective sense-making between us to help us appreciate more of the whole landscape in which we work.

“I had a picture of, at one stage I thought, maybe each one of us in a different country’s like a different organ in the body, and one person’s working on the heart, and one person’s working on the liver, and one person’s working — you know all of us, and that together we’re working on holistic change facilitation, because we all need to work on it [...] in our own homes, in our own families, in our culture. In our community, our countries and in the world.”
Safe spaces for transformation

We aim to build compassionate spaces for self-expression and co-inquiry. We believe that open-mindedness, open-heartedness and vulnerability are crucial in that. We hold in awareness that people will engage in different ways, some preferring group spaces, others finding comfort in one-to-one support or valuing the immediacy and steadily streaming support of an active social media group. We also navigate the deeper cultural and social streams informing our projects, knowing that ‘outside’ events, as well as norms and customs, will shape what happens in our work. Compassionate, safe spaces require a high degree of cultural fluency and responsivity from us. Lastly, we appreciate that project places and spaces modulate participant experiences, and we thus try to curate our working spaces, designing and preparing them in ways that enable our deeper intentions to manifest.

“The space and the environment is the fourth facilitator here. The beautifully prepared yurt space and woodland makes me feel like I don’t have to carry everything on my shoulders… There is something bigger that is holding us, and that allows me to relax. It allows me to connect to that sense of the sacred, too.”

Enabling attitudes and modelling ways of being

We endeavour to embody our work and approaches. If we strike the right note, we may enable others to resonate. It’s a fine balance between adapting to participants and providing direction. We give ourselves permission to be vulnerable and open and real and we try to suspend judgement of self and others.

“It’s been an incredibly beautiful experience, to just give them permission you know. We use words like you know we’re going to be actively shameless in this space. And some people were hesitant to, like, there’s a word for it in Urdu, and it’s a very judgemental word. And I was like, “Let’s say that, let’s embody it and feel what it’s like to wear that label”’, you know, it was like owning a scarlet letter and being okay with that.”

These enabling attitudes and qualities we seek to embody emerge from our attunement to the unfolding moment. It’s a simple but hard-won practice, which involves a kind of active receptivity. We aim to be receptive in awareness and take this receptivity into action. Positive changes may unfold when we permit ourselves to be fully with what is emerging in any given moment.

Reflective Practice

Try viewing a project or scenario through different lenses – for example, by listening to what emerges in the heart or the belly. Or try role-reversing with a stakeholder. Set quiet time aside. Make sure you are undisturbed. Have pens, paper and other arts media at the ready to capture your experience.

Then take time to connect to a different point of view. Notice where you feel it in the body. Notice how it shapes your body. Let the different perspectives speak to you…through movement and creative expression.

Then begin to put words to that perspective. Notice how your own position relates to this “other” view. You can let the two positions speak to each other. Try writing a dialogue!
Engagement with deeper sources

Our practice entails engaging with deeper sources of knowing and wisdom, practising expansion of awareness and learning to trust emergence.

“A water wheel came to me... driven by black water...a river... leading into a black ocean... there was nothing daunting... First I tried to animate the water wheel, then I realised the water was doing that job! I just needed to be present with the wheel...”

Working with archetypal dynamics

Holistic change agency engages the archetypal dimensions of our being. We listen to the mycelium below ground, we follow the song lines and murmurations of our groups and communities. Where the deeper levels are not consciously engaged, processes and people tend to stagnate and/or certain prevailing archetypes find unconscious expression. For example, we find that the martyr archetype is dominant amongst many change facilitators, invoking a drive to self-sacrifice and to neglect self-care, and eventually causing burnout. We believe that archetypal levels are always engaged—unconsciously or consciously—and it is our responsibility to notice what is active, for good or bad, and what has been marginalised and needs to come to the fore in the service of our projects. Coincidences or synchronicities accompany a deeper level of noticing.
Beginning our work in the shadows

All our projects have a deep personal motivation, and many have grown from personal experiences of suffering and adversity. Some of us witnessed family members or friends or colleagues as they were overcome by challenges, and we carry forward their torch. Our work sometimes serves the transformation of those personal experiences for the benefit of others. Yet in this there is also the danger of premature action, in that we may not always have sufficiently processed our own experiences and stories.

We may also lack sufficient support to facilitate processes for others and yet feel compelled to push ahead nonetheless, overcome by our enthusiasm for service and healing and potentially projecting our needs onto others. We can become overly zealous, wanting to “push the elixir that worked for us onto others.” Therefore, attending to our inner maturation and development is an essential part of our work.

Controlling and releasing, opening to the unknown

As we have detailed above, holistic change facilitation requires an emergent form of working, setting intentions and framing objectives as well as surrendering to the unfolding dynamics of a project. Planning and fluidity go hand in hand. We believe that planning is valuable…and yet that creation happens beyond the edge of the knowable. We set an intention, then we let it go…and surrender to not knowing. It’s a balance between controlling and yielding, and listening to promptings which guide our choices along the way. When we are attuned, we enter into a flow of being, events unfold synchronistically, opportunities arise, there is a kind of magic infusing our endeavour. For this to happen we need to make space and time for reflection and deep processing, allowing the subtle layers of our experiences to emerge of their own accord and speak to us.

“I suppose the skill is to sort of know when to engineer and when to sort of just sit back, and not try and make things happen all the time. But that’s not easy, is it, because if you don’t put energy into something and actually make the stuff happen, then nothing happens. There’s that continuous tension that we all need to deal with.”

Being truly open to the unknown and in service to what wants to emerge can mean that projects go in a different direction to what was planned. What wants to emerge is not necessarily what our minds intended, but as we walk unforeseen pathways, new vistas may open. Yet, being the voice for a new pathway or perspective can be daunting. Who will believe us or value what we have to say, particularly if it all sounds a little poetic, unusual and intangible? The point is that...
Channelling vitality and inspiration

Holistic change facilitation involves embodied and playful engagement with deeper levels of consciousness that take us beyond words and intellect. We make an effort to awaken the full spectrum of our senses, to open our awareness and listen, and to explore new ways of sense-making to give the emerging impulses and insights their fullest expression. We value intellectual discernment—but we know that we must at times release intellectual ways of knowing in order to achieve a greater depth of subliminal immersion.

When we practise in these whole-hearted, embodied, and playful ways, we can get infused with joie de vivre, an embodied vitality and enthusiasm that can be infectious and compelling. Opening to the full spectrum of our experience can lead to a sense of wonder, inspiration and awe. Vitality and joy can help us release into the unknown, the mystery of being... and channelling what is emerging from the mystery can increase our sense of vitality and purpose. There is a kind of re-enchanting, affirmative feedback loop! As change facilitators we often endeavour to create dream spaces and give permission for engagement with the liminal, helping bring this sense of mystery, awe and beauty into more people’s lives.

“So what’s coming up is a lot of, almost that connection with the inner child. And I think we’re realising culturally how little of that we get to do. One of our participants is an 82-year old academic. And when he did his painting, he said that it’s the first time in like 70-something years he’s picked up a paintbrush and painted something. Because artistic pursuits, and we began to realise this collectively as a group, that, even for me, it’s been something that is considered a waste of time, or an afterthought. There’s a lot of pressure on, you know, so-called practical academics, and things like that. So for everybody to just connect to that inner free child was quite liberating. It was like a shame detoxification process.”
Most modern humans have forgotten the true holistic nature of reality. We are not really separate from our environment. We are the landscape. The Earth loans her materials to us for a time then our bodies go back to her. Nature can teach us about the cyclic and contradictory nature of reality and the joy and impermanence of life.

We experience nature as our guide and teacher. Returning to nature as the source for our practices is a homecoming. Immersion in nature reminds us of the fractal nature of reality, appreciating that we are embedded in ever increasing systemic wholes which resonate across scales like fractals. We know that we belong to the world at large and when we can let our projects unfold in accordance with natural rhythms, there can be organic unfolding and flourishing.

By gently being in tune with natural cycles – energetic, circadian, seasonal, etc., the space will take on an almost Taoist quality of Wu Wei or effortless effort. The interface lies beneath the surface; there is no demand to project the perfect you, or to rail against artifice, just a soft suggestion that it’s okay to be your true self.”

Often this way of working stands in stark contrast to the artificial, top-down rhythms imposed by many funding bodies and other organisational or political structures. And often political or social conditions are not conducive or supportive. They lack organicity. They are fixed, rigid and focused on short-term goals. These rigidities can strangle projects, deforming their aims and restraining their growth and flourishing.

“Having worked under such conditions previously, and finding myself having to somehow fit the prepared template presented to us, I found, in contrast, this project’s open, co-evolving approach beautifully motivating, and allowing space for what matters most to go as deep as it needs to, and contribute to organic shifts.”

As holistic change facilitators we need to pay attention to the entire ecosystem within which our projects are embedded, calibrating our work according to the boundaries and constraints that exist. We realise that in nature there is the interplay of cooperation and competition. Environments can be harsh and we need to find ways to adapt to thrive.
The emotional and energetic demands of our work, and the need for self-regulation.

“There’s always another priority to serve”

As facilitators we need to make self-regulation a core practice. It is from this core practice that we can support the self-regulation of others and the wider ecosystem. We may find ourselves called to be caregivers for carers, holding diverse and energetically complex processes and dynamics, supporting the healing of others. Doing so, we have a tendency to sacrifice our own needs. The self-sacrifice archetype is prevalent amongst us. Self-neglect and self-objectification loom large. We tend to put ourselves last. Levels of exhaustion amongst us can be extraordinary. We give and serve relentlessly. Yet, for us to be flourishing in our work and for our work to flourish, we need to attend to our own wellbeing, systemic balance and needs. We can only bear witness, sense subtle dynamics, and be receptive to subliminal intelligence, when we are well resourced. We need to attend and give to ourselves before we can support others, whilst also recognising that attending to others is supportive for ourselves, in a dance of polarities that remains constantly oriented towards a self-regulatory equilibrium.

“You come to use yourself as an object and forget some very simple, human dimensions of yourself, right? So this came up for me in a couple of ways where I cancelled a couple of sessions because I was not feeling well that day, and it wasn’t just feeling well...I recognised that if I was a participant I could have gone there that day. But I was not well enough to be a facilitator which requires a whole different type of energy. So, I recognised that energetic difference even in my tone, in my posture, in what I bring into the room. I recognise that there’s such a difference there, you know, so it’s not just about being present for this many hours, it’s about really being able to carry somebody, the whole group.”

“As participants struggled to build time into their days and weeks for self-care and collective-wellbeing, I realised that I too needed to do this. I resisted adding my own self-care into my schedule for quite some time, until I started to experience well-known feelings of coming ‘out of balance.’ One week I mentioned this to participants in a group meeting, and said that I would have to reduce the number of sessions I could offer for the next week, until I felt recharged and ready to serve again. We all took this as an opportunity to reflect on the nature of self-care, and the need to carve out space for it, even when it means potentially disappointing others or not living up to your own expectations of yourself at work.”
Challenges and shadows in holistic change facilitation

Clashes with systems and prevailing mindsets:

As we do our work, we can find ourselves at odds with overbearing systems, rigid structures, and prevailing mentalities which can act like mobs, stamping out new possibilities and squashing the seeds of deeper collective intelligence. What is calling within us is often subtle and delicate, like a seedling. It can be oppressed by powerful patterns of systematised processes, and repressed by our own inner critical voices. Without appropriate supportive conditions, the resistance and backlash we can meet in our work, both beyond and within us, can be truly menacing, traumatising and soul destroying.

“There’s a lot of stigma, there’s a lot of backlash. And it’s also on an issue that’s entirely out of my control. So there’s that personal sense of, I am swept along in a wave that is much bigger than me. And I have, I’ve got this little boat that I have to still lead through a sea that has suddenly become quite stormy.”

“Women in Mexico’s labour rights movement are particularly susceptible to this vicious cycle, as they face multiple layers of discrimination within their work environments, grapple with patriarchal archetypes of what it means to be revolutionary, heroic and successful in their movements, performing endless hours of invisible labour in their households, and are exposed to egregious gender-based violence in their communities and society at large.”

“Pierre was expressing what I suspect other healers in the modern western healthcare system experience. We need to apply and express the healing energy stirring inside us, but that clashes with a sterile and structured approach forced down upon us, that reduces healing to an artificial algorithm. Pierre was in conflict between his calling and the application of that calling in the system he found himself.”

Resistances are often subtle. When we operate outside of established social norms, we can evoke unconscious vulnerabilities and deep-seated, emotional insecurities in our stakeholders that require additional attention and support. The spectre of judgement and other shadow elements loom even when we engage with those who may be allies.

We experience clashes between what feels like an old paradigm (sustaining established structures and processes in service of vested interests) and an emerging paradigm (envisioning and pioneering new structures and processes in service of the greater whole). We believe in defending human rights and freedoms in ways that are coherent with our values and the needs of the moment. However, our orientation is not to engage in patterns of reactionary activism—because we appreciate that holistic change agency entails navigating and holding these clashes within and finding ways to begin to transform them without engaging in violence that may only add fuel to burning fires. We know that the seeds of deep transformation are found in mindfulness, compassion and care.
Shadows of privilege, manipulation, coercion and extractivism

Shadows of privilege and manipulation can be present in our work. Some of us may unintentionally bring colonialist power dynamics into project planning and enactment, particularly if we were born into and educated in a country belonging to a former or current colonial power structure. We may not always be aware of the lenses that our privileges instil within us. We know that we need to develop our embodied competencies in holistic change facilitation, so as to increase our capacity to offer sensitised holding spaces. Our stakeholders do not need us to step in as saviours, imposing our knowledge and ways of doing. We also need to understand and respect that some participants may not want to engage with us, because they may not feel safe with a privileged facilitator or a facilitator coming from another culture, however friendly and respectful we endeavour to be. As change facilitators we need to enter into relationships with cultural and ethical awareness and sensitivity. We also need to be aware that our impulse to action and resolving a problem can itself be an expression of our cognicentric action-oriented cultural paradigm, and that a more appropriate holistic response may be simply to support the holding of spaces for other voices and the wider ecosystem to rebalance according to developmental intelligences that are beyond ours.

“I’m very passionate about wanting to share my privilege and rebalance power differentials but I am also very aware of what I implicitly take into this space as a white middle-class privileged woman when I am trying to offer something to people who have had a very different upbringing and live in very different conditions to me.”
I think we need to be careful that we don’t make these assumptions that in joining our group they might benefit because in their worldview, in their world experience, it might be safer not to open experiences, doors, feelings that they possibly have no way of coping or dealing with because our experience, our worldview of this is so different to what theirs is. In my experience, one of my participants, I can just feel that she sees me as the white master and when I invite her, she feels obligated.”

The shadow of intellectual extractivism also looms. We always need to be wary not to parachute into cultural contexts, experiment with practice and thereby mine for new knowledge, imposing our own ideas of wisdom while accruing intellectual capital. We assert that research processes in our field should be co-creative and participatory, empowering all participants through co-ownership.

Cognicentrism and other inner systemic imbalances

Amongst us, a deep-seated cognicentrism can prevail in subtle ways, which can dominate and coerce our other sensory capacities and intelligences. It means that the intellect may make attempts to take charge of change facilitation processes, overruling more subtle intuitive insights and impulses. As a result, we may overplan our project and activities. We may make assumptions and cultivate expectations that get in the way of stakeholder relationships. We may also experience other forms of inner imbalance, finding ourselves overly emotionally engaged, for example, or overly willful and prescriptive.

It is vital for us to be engaged in practices of somatic experiencing and mindfulness, as they can alleviate any over-investment and visionary myopia, by widening our awareness of the multiple intelligences that are meant to inform our lives and work. This can be as simple as a short mindfulness practice before a meeting, noticing how we are feeling that day, what is present in the heart and what we are noticing at the edges of our awareness. This said, work with embodied awareness takes practice and deepens over time, so commitment to a regular embodiment practice is a must for any holistic change facilitator.
Effects of disruptions, escalating crises and uncertainty

Many of our projects unfold in circumstances involving complexity and volatility. We plan but are then overtaken by unforeseen events and developments. Some of us have to work with escalating crises and navigate situations of active trauma. The levels of complexity can be overwhelming. We recognise the need for containment, creating safe and secure relational spaces, in which participants can process and express their grief and fears. We also recognise the fundamental need for our self-care which enables us to hold those spaces in more resourceful ways.

“That feeling of unsafety that has been triggered on so many levels. I mean I thought this was about play and creativity and resilience. Right now it’s become about containing the trauma, the collective trauma, the trauma of that wounded, scared woman, that everyone is connected to within ourselves.”

Working in volatile and uncertain times, we need to be equipped to address the deeper complexes that inform our projects, sometimes in subtle and invisible and sometimes in abrupt and monumental ways. At the same time, we need to humbly recognise that many complexities are and will remain beyond the capacity of our limited mind to understand and resolve, and to sustain this awareness with both compassionate self-care and receptive participation.

We need time to arrive into contexts and build relationships. We know that short-term funding and pressurised timeframes are generally counter-productive. Yet often we find ourselves under-resourced and under-paid and under pressure to deliver outcomes that were created without sufficient sensitivity to context. Of critical importance here is the development of relationships with all stakeholders, building bridges between funders/sponsors on the one hand and project partners and participants on the other.

Most of our work has been carried out since the arrival of Covid-19, and the pandemic has delayed and caused disruption to many of our projects. We had to find ways to adapt our work, mostly using online technologies. These created unforeseen forms of social exclusion as participants from less affluent backgrounds across the world were unable to transition to online spaces due to limited access to digital technologies at home or in their communities. Encountering variations of digital poverty, we navigated questions of boundaries as participants asked for our help beyond the scope of our projects. We also navigated individual insecurities with technologies, screen fatigue, and resistance to using online platforms.

“So by virtue of the fact that I ran my sessions through Zoom I eliminated a huge number of people who in South Africa work on the fringes of society, who don’t have access to technology or the funds to pay for Wi-Fi, and you know electronic connectivity. So the women who attended the workshops were not so diverse in their cultural background, because in South Africa the cultural and economic variables often go hand-in-hand.”

Working in complex and volatile circumstances, little can be taken for granted. In some countries, access to nature is restricted, because green spaces may not be safe spaces, and/or because extreme weather events make it less possible for people to be outside. Thus, we do well to make no assumptions about the conditions under which we are tasked to carry out our work. Project needs analyses must include systemic and infrastructure assessments, to illuminate the wider conditions under which activities will take place.
Levels and limits of engagement

We may find ourselves navigating many levels and limitations when it comes to participant and other stakeholder engagement. Online projects, for example, need to consider the accessibility of chosen platforms and engagement tools and the level of digital skills they require. Pacing of content is another aspect requiring careful consideration, as are relational aspects of engagement. Those amongst us working in online spaces spent much time reflecting on what nurtures trust and a sense of connection and continuity online.

From a holistic perspective, besides taking care of foundational concerns over access and skill, we found it helpful to:

- Make time for being together in silence, slowing down and pausing with each other.
- Focus on building trust and connections between participants.
- Slow down the delivery of content.
- Offer plenty of opportunities for live interactions.
- Use platforms that bring greater immediacy to interaction.
- Manage expectations around online engagement, setting examples.
- Remember the body and the breath, particularly when working online.
- Offer a structured schedule of engagement to create stability and predictability.
- Remain flexible in your planning. Stay alive and attuned to the evolving dynamics.
- Be proactive and consistent in communication with participants.
- Find ways to incentivise and award participation to give a sense of achievement.

Many projects were left with the question of how to scale their work, given that work involving inner exploration and growth requires intimate spaces, in which we can feel safe and seen.

We also recognise limitations for what they enable, providing clear boundaries and containment. As facilitators we act like a semi-permeable membrane, regulating project coherence and integrity in relationship with the wider eco-systemic circumstances. Holistic change facilitation works organically with limitations, just as a plant will spread its roots where it can.

As facilitators we also navigate our own limitations of engagement. We often juggle many roles and demands on our time and energy. There may be conflicting tensions between our work and our family and social life, as well as our health. We elaborate on the challenges of overstretch and burnout below.
Loneliness, fragmentation, isolation and self-doubt

Working at the edges of communities and embracing innovative ways of practice, we need our own community of support, so to help us navigate feelings of loneliness and isolation. We sometimes struggle with the invisibility or visibility (!) of our roles and can feel misperceived, overlooked and under-valued. Not rarely do we question our sense of self-worth as we try to make sense in the shadows. Our work can take us to the darkest places of humanity!

For some of us, self-doubt and feelings of inferiority are a constant companion. As we serve our sense of calling, we can feel that we are not good enough to step up to the demands of the path before us. Insecurities and lack of confidence can cripple our action potential. For others ego gratification can get in the way. As we overly self-sacrifice, we can end up lapping up any adulation we can get to help us feel affirmed in our choices. Either way, we may bring too much or too little ego into the work—limiting our capacity to serve the bigger purpose that wants to unfold through our work.

Even though we embrace holistic ways of being and working, we can fall into imbalances and fragmentation in our lives and working practices. We’re not infallible. Like all human beings we can work too hard, forget about our bodies, sideline our personal practices to meet deadlines, or approach our practices in self-undermining ways, by rushing or not paying attention. It’s a slippery slope.

We know that as soon as we become aware of how and where we are undermining ourselves, we need to let that awareness guide us back to what is needed for us to feel aligned and well resourced. It also helps us to have practice communities and accountability partners, who will support us in recognising these ingrained patterns and help us back on the path to inner sustainability.

Reflective Practice: Pause for a moment and consider, if and how sustainability is a value in your work. Consider what sustains you, and how much attention you pay to that day to day. Try a bit of journaling! Reflecting on your work, you might ask yourself:

“What can I do... with the resources I have and given who I am in this moment?”

“What can I not do? What are my limits, and what are the limits of my circumstances?”

“Could something within me (like a sense of urgency or a sense of perfectionism, for example) become an obstacle in my work, pushing others or myself too hard?”

“Where do I need support?”

“Who can help me and resource me—physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, spiritually?”

nurturing the fields of change
What it all means

The individual and collective dimensions of holistic change are deeply interrelated. We recognise a fractal-like quality in change processes, with self-similar patterns and characteristics repeating across varying project contexts and dimensions. The initial guiding principles for the grants attracted resonant project leaders and collaborating partners. This resonance extended to the practice contexts and participants who joined each initiative. The facilitators’ states of being created ripple effects in participants and vice versa. Practice spaces also shaped the experiences of all involved, as did the wider cultural contexts of each project. The fractal nature of these interrelationships can serve to amplify or disrupt project aims. Critically, holistic change facilitation entails a conscious attending to these fractal dynamics, noticing and calibrating their interplay. As we have found, this requires active receptivity, paying moment-to-moment attention to the dynamics at play in every dimension — interior and exterior, individual and collective — to nurture project coherence and tap collective intelligence. Scharmer and Käufer (2013) refer to this as generative listening — and as elaborated elsewhere (Bockler, 2021), we sense that it entails a fine attunement to every sensory and extra-sensory channel available to human experience, working skilfully and artfully with expanded states of consciousness. This requires practice and training. Most humans have dominant sensory capacities through which they receive information, whilst other channels are under-utilised or even unoccupied (Mindell, 2002); and change facilitators rarely consider how individual and collective states of consciousness may influence their work. Aspirations and visions for change may be readily expressed — yet systemic imbalances, blindspots, and sabotaging patterns tend to run deep, in our projects and ourselves. The follow-through and the inner work required to support holistic change, within and beyond, is often demanding. If we feel called to the responsibilities of facilitation, we must accept that we will need to cultivate integrative competencies and capacities, so that we are able to skilfully navigate our work. This will entail a commitment to reflective practice and depth-psychological work (Bockler, 2021), supporting ongoing self-inquiry and stakeholder needs analysis, and letting projects evolve in compassionate and caring ways, considering original aspirations and vision but also honouring pragmatic boundaries and limitations.

Integrative competencies and attitudes that support and enable an ongoing commitment to inner work have been explored by a number of integral and transpersonal practitioners and scholars (Ferrer, 2003; Leonard & Murphy, 1995; Schlitz, Vieten & Amorok, 2007; Wilber et al., 2008); and they have also been considered in transpersonal approaches to research (Anderson & Braud, 2011) and awareness-based social change (Bockler, 2021).
We consider the following among the most important for holistic change facilitation:

- **Working skilfully with intention and attention:** Deliberately framing intention as well as knowing what to attend to and when and how to trust emergence.

- **Cultivating curiosity and open awareness:** Expanding awareness to perceive more of the whole through multiple sensory and extra-sensory channels (e.g., cultivating intuition). Suspending judgement, and paying deep attention to the margins/edges of awareness.

- **Appreciating silence and slowing down:** Allowing for more nuanced and subtle experiences to enter awareness.

- **Cultivating empathy and compassion:** Sensing more of the whole with an attitude of care and love, creating safe spaces for vulnerable and authentic inquiry.

Holistic change processes place high energetic and emotional demands on facilitators, and our inquiry showed that facilitator commitment is often passionate, potentially leading to compromises in self care. We suggest that there is a direct link between inner and outer sustainability: Facilitators need to make self-care a priority to ensure that projects model compassion and are sustainable in every dimension. This commitment to care must also be supported by commissioners, policy makers and funders, so as to ensure that practical follow-through is encouraged in a systematic and intentional way.

Increasingly, holistic change projects take place under uncertain and volatile circumstances, and facilitators can feel isolated in their work and harbour fears and self-doubt that can go unseen and under-acknowledged in project reports. Concerted efforts to support holistic change facilitation must include a serious ongoing commitment to building practitioner communities. Just as facilitators endeavour to provide safe spaces for their participants, they need a supportive peer environment in which they can raise questions, express doubts and concerns, receive validation, and explore shadows and edges of their own ongoing development. In short, they need safe and well calibrated support, which can resource their ongoing commitment to self-inquiry and integrative practice in holistic change.
Limitations of the inquiry and report

This was the first time that Alef Trust engaged in a grant-giving process, to support the development of projects by members of our global learning community. We built many of the enabling frameworks from scratch, largely emulating existing best practice in UK-based grant-giving. Our overarching project schedule was tied to a two-year timeframe. As a result, most projects were delivered over relatively short periods of time (three months to one year), and in some cases the tight schedules somewhat stymied the natural unfolding of the work and was not in line with the aspirations and vision expressed in this report.

We built the overarching research inquiry alongside launching the projects; and in some cases the insights emerging from our explorations of holistic change agency did not fully correlate with intentions and practice on the ground. Perspectives on the meaning and enactment of holistic change facilitation varied, and time for in-depth dialogue and discussion of these variances was short. Going forward, we are considering building a more substantial container for peer-to-peer engagement that can support holistic change facilitators in more comprehensive ways. We want to acknowledge that the results from the inquiry presented in this report have a circular quality, given the sample and grant-selection process. We also recognise the limits in the scale and geographical reach of this work.

All this said, we hope that we have given a deeper insight into what it takes to engage in processes of holistic change facilitation. This report is especially intended for people immersed in facilitation practice; and we appreciate that an academic report, or a report for policy makers, would require a different tone, to resonate more fully with their respective contexts. In this report we wanted to honour the immense personal and heart-felt investment that many change facilitators make, and we wanted to shine a deeper light into the multifaceted complexities of their work—honouring dimensions that are often under-acknowledged. We consider it likely that the enactment of holistic change facilitation will find idiosyncratic forms of expression, varying according to the contexts of enactment. Our sense is that future research exploring holistic change should focus on in-depth case studies, to make the intersections and correlations of psychological, socio-political, and structural dimensions more visible. Lastly, we sense that longitudinal studies should be undertaken, so as to enable a longer-term exploration of holistic change processes and their wider ripple effects.
Recommendations

...for practitioners:

- Begin with being. Stop and listen deeply. Ask what wants to happen.
- Clarify your intentions.
- Ask yourself: Whom am I intending to serve and why?
- Consider in which way this work is about you and your personal needs...
- Attend to all your intelligences, allow them to have a say in your daily actions and decision-making processes. Listen to mind, heart and belly intelligence.
- Start small, prototype, and iterate.
- Prioritise self-care, build it into your project plan.
- Practice active receptivity, noticing what wants to happen and following through.
- Witness the whole of your project - in all its levels and dimensions: personal-transpersonal, social, political, cultural, ecological...
- Notice the potent acupuncture points in your project’s ecosystem. Where do you have the greatest leverage? What are the most strategic choices you can make?
- Pause in the gaps and fissures and tensions. They have something to tell you.
- Notice what has been/is being marginalised, allow the marginalised to speak.
- Notice the limitations and befriend them. Consider what you can and cannot change. Limits may be necessary for your health and sanity! Try to learn from what is working and what is not working. Be receptive to feedback on all levels and be willing to integrate the feedback – reinvent as necessary.
- Make sure you have the support and community you need to be well resourced in your work.
...for policy makers and funders:

- Consider what a change facilitation team for any given project or initiative may look like.
- Consider the roles and resources needed to sustain the team.
- Undertake a holistic needs and readiness assessment with project teams.
- Enable projects to unfold organically. Focus less on adherence to timetables and more on the discovery of new insights and perspectives.
- Expect and welcome unforeseen outcomes.
- Allow projects to revisit and revise intended aims and associated budgets.
- Encourage nuanced reporting on adversity and what might be perceived as ‘failure’, as unexpected developments may present opportunities for profound learning.
- Support pilot projects over several iterations.
- Cultivate flexibility in the measurement of project outcomes and impact, allow changes in evaluation. Set targets but be prepared to amend them.
- Place emphasis on practitioner wellbeing and self-care. Allow practitioners to budget for reflective practice and self-care, so that they are well resourced in their work.
- Let evaluation be led by practitioners and their stakeholders.
Support the development of compassionate inquiry communities. Inner capacity building is not solely or even primarily dependent on content-driven training programmes. To grow we all need supportive spaces in which we can be fully seen without fearing judgement or reprisal.

Encourage a balance of self-authorship and accountability.

Encourage a dialectic of discernment and immersive exploration.

Remember that you are in a reciprocal relationship. Educators and trainers are also always learning, developing and transforming in their work.

Embrace and live integrative practice, if you are teaching it!
Follow the recommendations outlined for practitioners! Researching this work will likely require your full participation. Holistic change projects can generate many subtle, intangible dynamics which require new research skills, for example as outlined by Anderson & Braud (2011). If you are involved in evaluating change processes and dynamics, consider training in transpersonal research skills.

Above all, welcome and engage in multiple ways of knowing to let the deeper nuances of change become visible to you. Balance rational analysis with other forms of knowing and discernment, and do not leave holistic forms of sense-making to the end. Let them partake in the planning and delivery of a project – from beginning to end. Stay process-oriented and learn from the unfolding dynamics. Be prepared to change your plans...
Conclusions

As we have highlighted in the introduction, there is a growing recognition for the need of inner work in change facilitation, and inner development is becoming a global priority for those seeking to address humanity’s unsustainable trajectory on Earth (see, for example, the Inner Development Goals initiative, 2021). We believe that transpersonal social engagement—as a form of inquiry and action that connects our psychological, social and spiritual dimensions—has a significant role to play (Rothberg & Coder, 2013). Yet the holistic and interconnected nature of human self-development is as yet under-illuminated; and in many circumstances inner work may be overly reliant on cognicentric framing, meaning that embodied, relational and intuitive intelligences are under-valued, even suppressed (Ferrer, 2003). Whilst mindsets and values are now recognised as vital leverage points for change, we need to pay attention to our multifaceted existential needs and potentials, attending to all our human dimensions and nurturing balanced development. Moreover, our lives are embedded and unfold within a deeper reality which is rarely recognised and captured by theories and models of change. Holistic change facilitation is not merely a pathway to achieving greater efficacy in practices addressing social and systemic challenges. It is also not merely an opportunity to scale the impact of our actions. It is a portal to the sacred realisation of what the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and activist Thich Nhat Hanh called *interbeing*, the realisation that human nature is embedded in Nature at large. As Schlitz, Vieten and Amorok (2007) put it, the realisation that everything is sacred leads:

> “to the unavoidable conclusion that the sustainability of our lives and the lives of those we love dearly is inextricably linked with the sustainability of all lives, of all life” (p. 188).
Right at this moment, we are witnessing the culmination of a deep-seated meta-narrative which we might describe as a story of separation (Eisenstein, 2019). Seeded in the technological advances of Western civilisation in the late Middle Ages, which lay the foundation for the modern sciences as well as the Newtonian clockwork universe, the story of separation has led to the repression of embodied, intuitive and indigenous wisdom. It has also incubated the othering and denigration of nature, Earth, and people, leading to wide-spread acceptance of materialism, colonialism and ecological extractivism (Peat, 2008). As we witness the global, complex ramifications, we sense that a new story wants to be told—a story of interconnectedness, reminding us of the wholeness from which we are born and to which we belong. To enact this new story we need to learn the art and science of interdependence, recognising that our ways of being and doing generate rhizomatic ripple effects, shaping the fabric and patterns of the whole. Quantum physics has shown us that the world cannot be broken into independent analysable parts, and that we “need to combine our own intelligence and sensitivity with the innate intelligence and sensitivity of the natural world” (Peat, 2008, p. 31). Now is the time to act with the sense of belonging and interdependence, acknowledging that we each matter and that our beliefs, imagination, and stories influence the unfolding of our reality. Moreover, now is the time to recognise that the changes we wish to see in the world are not brought about by a myriad of individual hero’s journeys—but are initiated through our alignment with the deepest vital energies that animate and enliven us, one and all. The birthing of this new paradigm has been described as a planetary initiation (Kelly, 2021) and as the unfolding of evolutionary archetypal forces within the cosmos, in which we also participate (Tarnas, 1993). Throughout our exploration of holistic change facilitation it has been described by project leaders and participants as a deep calling and a service of a Source beyond the self. Holistic change facilitation is thus not simply a personal journey, but a collective and cosmic quest, awakening us to the deeper unfolding of our world and the ecosystems within which we are embedded.

“When we begin to participate in the subtle field, an enormous range of potential opens up. We discover that we are conducting a whole symphony of animating poetic energies through our bodies and psyches. We can become lightning rods to the greater energies of the anima mundi or World Soul” (Patten, 2018, p. 191).  

80
Safe and vulnerable spaces and skilful attitudes and embodiment holding intentions with fluidity and openness create resonances of intention giving rise to a shift from doing to being from “I” to “we” which strengthen the field between us and enable us to attune to our collective unfolding just as Nature intended us to...
References


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