

July 2020

Summary Report

Co-inquiry meetings



The Murmuration Project

Co-inquiry explorations

The Murmuration Project recently brought together around 20 people who are interested in the question “How can we as leaders of organisations and networks working to expand human consciousness in the UK be more effective as individuals and as a collective field of influence and inspiration?”*

Over the course of six weeks we hosted three small co-inquiry sessions to explore with participants:

- What are the current challenges in your work?
- What are you doing to adapt and evolve in your organisation/network?
- What do you think is needed in the field now?

Our intention in these meetings was to connect and shine a light on the emerging field and to continue to build collective intelligence for systemic action.

Thank you to those who participated! We hope you enjoy reading this summary of our time together and we look forward to seeing you again soon.

With love,

Jen and Liz



The Field

It was a joy to create a space that allowed people to simply connect. Connecting people who had never met before and connecting people who hadn't seen each other for over 25 years.

One hypothesis in The Murmuration Project is that the scale of the human challenges we face are so substantial that we need to find new ways to work together for change – as a field of influence and inspiration.

During the co-inquiry meetings we pondered: What is a field? If we are a part of a field – what field are we part of? What do we have in common?

Through the conversations there seemed to be three key things that we share in common:

- We are working with humans and helping them to develop and grow
- We are helping people grow through relationship – to themselves and to each other
- We are working to support the good of the whole

As we learnt from one of the participants who did his PhD on murmurations, in a field there are differentiated parts too. Part of the richness of these co-inquiry sessions was to shine a light on the 'differentiated parts of the field'. The individuals who joined the co-inquiries included:

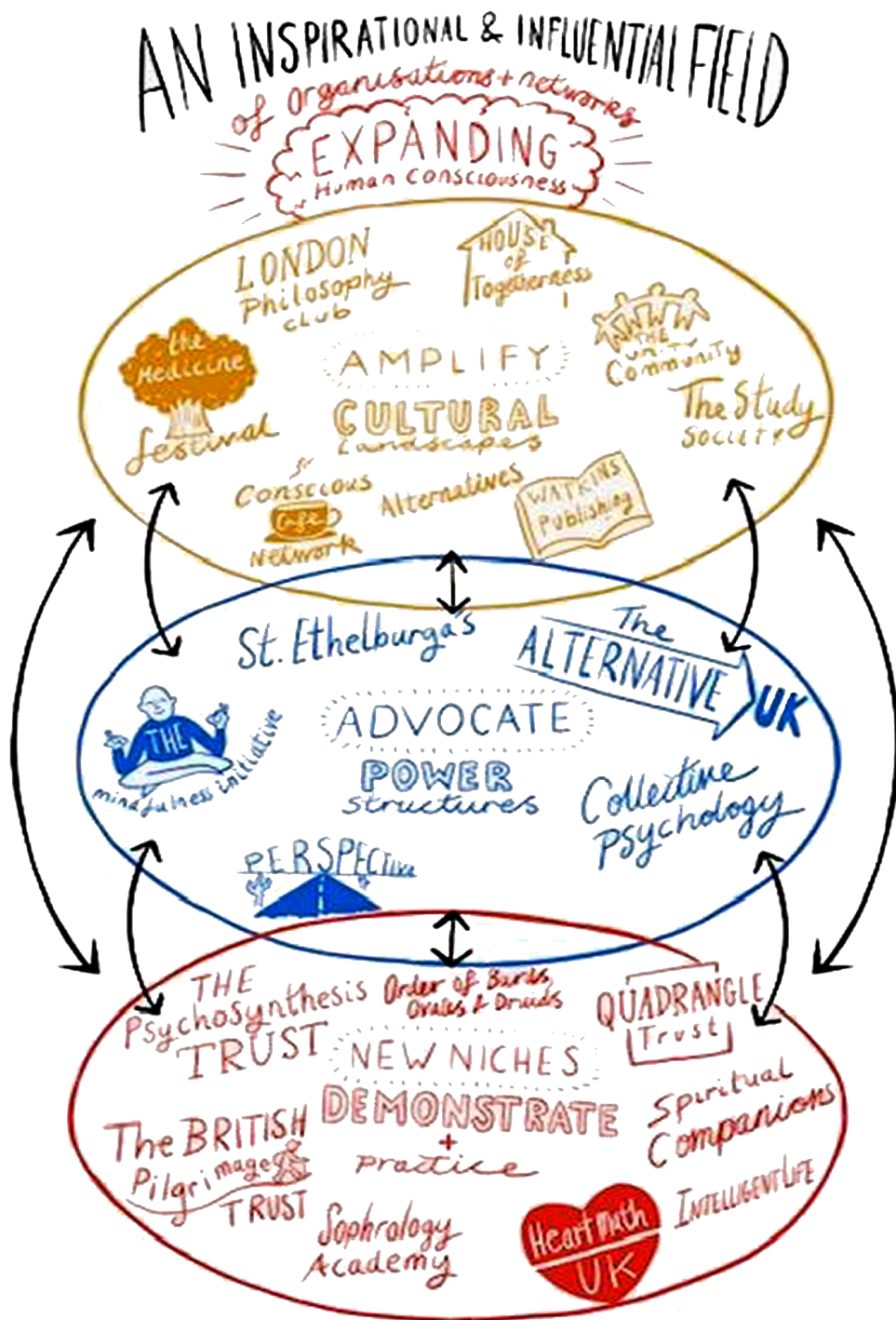
- Pattern spotters and unravellers
- Cultural explorers
- Wisdom sharers
- Lovers of writing and books
- Bridgers of the intellect and the mystic
- Historians of the unfolding future
- Participants of the mainstream and the new streams
- Teachers and facilitators of coherence and wholeness
- Amplifiers of ideas and important questions
- Thinkers and practitioners
- Translators of universal principles and natural intelligence

We acknowledged that it was “rather difficult to point to what it is that we are actually doing”. And we valued exploring our shared connection “as well as the space between our separate organisations and networks”.

There was an image of Indira's net – where everyone has their place. "What would it be like to map everyone so that they can find their place in the whole?"

"How can you connect from your place in the field with compassion? How do we explore difference?"

Since the co-inquiry meetings, we were inspired to create a little map of our emerging field and how we might co-create change at a systems level of amplifying, advocating and practicing for greater collective impact – as unique individuals and as a whole.



What is consciousness?

Another hypothesis of The Murmuration Project is that at the root of humanity's greatest challenges lies need to 'expand consciousness'.

All of the inquiries had energised dialogue around "What is this thing called consciousness?" "When we speak of consciousness what form of consciousness are we speaking- human, inter-species, planetary?" "What is this thing that we tune into? What are the conditions that support this?" There was certainly a tension between the desire to bring definition for greater clarity whilst at the same time it is likely something that is non-definable.

One participant shared "the idea of expanding human consciousness makes sense - in your heart you know it. It is what is it that draws us together here".

Some other thoughts about understanding consciousness included it is about:

- Exploring the question of what it means to be human
- Having different ways of perceiving and sensing
- Being and including more of experience
- Embracing complexity and getting out of the way of what wants to emerge

- Resonating with the oneness of all life
- Bringing science and mysticism to the same place
- Believing in unconditional love seeking to incarnate- love is the gateway to consciousness
- Consciousness just is - it is about expanding our relationship with it

There was also a strand of conversation in the groups around "What does it mean to actually expand human consciousness?"

"If human consciousness is evolving, and I believe it is, what does it mean to be intentional about it? We've had 1000 years without intentionality, so maybe there is an opportunity to shape something practically."

Wider contextual landscape

Coming together, even through these short meetings, people valued taking time to reflect on what is emerging in the wider context.

The Big Halt

There were some reflections on the coronavirus and how the lock-down “feels like we are going through a mass initiation. It is like a huge ‘stop sign’ has been put up. We are being summoned as the Council of Beings - maybe this is the least harmful way of bringing things to a halt?” “There seems to be a slowing down and a re-looking at what is important”.

In this slowing down, individuals in these co-inquiries as well as in their wider networks are “asking important questions about meaning – why am I doing what I’m doing?” “Why am I doing a job I don’t like? What is the meaning of life?”

One participant shared that in his work with large organisations the executive leadership teams are having a hard time with emotions. And this feels like a very different opportunity to help them.

Death and birth

Other participants commented that “leaders who have felt stuck in the old system are fearful of destroying the old things”. And “there will be a reckoning - maybe some organisations need to die. There is no shame in dying.” One person “hoped that the themes of death and fear would be discussed more in society”.

‘Death of the old’ was a significant theme as was ‘birth of the new’ as was a sense that we are in between paradigms. An example of this was shared by a participant who said, “more and more people are engaged with exploring consciousness including discussions in orthodox places such as the New Scientist where the pan-psychic is being adopted by some scientists.”

We are bridges

The metaphor of a ‘bridge’ and ‘bridging’ was a theme that surfaced in the conversations. “We need to create a bridge between this paradigm and the next - and we need to have faith in our bridging efforts”.

And taking a different look at bridging changing cultures one person reflected “We talk about culture shifts. I am asking myself the question where does culture exist – in a physical place or more transpersonally?”

And how do we bridge and hold the paradoxes of our time and what is stirring within us – “how do we hold the both/and of this time – including the pain and excitement?”

Who do we serve?

Continuing along the theme of bridging, there seemed to be a consistent theme of wanting to include new people in this work.

Beyond the current choir

Some participants reflected that “we’re mainly preaching to the choir – how do we bridge so the next circle out can hear and find a way in?” “What is our role – do we continue to speak with the audiences that we have and trust that will expand or do we make efforts to reach out and bridge further into the existing paradigm?”

One person commented, “this seems to be an engagement and marketing challenge - how do we pull in the young men?” And another reflected “our current demographics are 80% women, over the age of 50, with a Masters degree”.

A participant shared how his courses have intentionally built in accessibility through offering a diploma at level 3 to ensure it was open to the widest possible group of individuals.

Another person felt “called to support groups of people who are most impacted by the virus rather than the normal change agents.”

Swarm of souls

Some participants, having worked in the area of human development for decades, reflected on the changing nature of ‘seekers’. One person reflected, “I am distressed by the fact that there are 30,000 meditations on Headspace. This seems to be part of a ‘swarm of souls’ - however I question if they are really surrendering to love. I think the current manifestation of consciousness has been hijacked by capitalism”.

“There are many young idealists who are into eco and social justice. They don’t often go into spirituality but may make a sideways jump into self-soothing of yoga and meditation. Historically there was much more of a deeper calling to a spiritual path. Now it feels like there is a disconnect from what we explicitly represent around love and consciousness.”

Despite this, there was also hope from some participants in “that this is a much more spiritual time and we are seeing new generations of leaders who are much less material and are living life in the flow”.

Throughout the conversations there was a general sense of confidence that “there is a big need for what we do and this will continue to grow”.

Strategy - Evolve and adapt

As these co-inquiries took place in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, many participants had the chance to share how this global pandemic was significantly impacting their work.

Crises

Several organisations have had to cancel events and courses, are struggling with sales and cash flow and have had to put their staff on furlough. One participant commented that “cash flow is an issue. We need to think about the whole money thing differently. I am asking myself why are we set up the way we are set up?”

The crisis has called some of us to ask questions like “What does this mean for our work which is embodied?” or our work that “has been built up in physical places of many years of scents and sounds which in itself creates a feeling of unity”.

Opportunities

Amongst this crisis, many participants have found new opportunities. “This is a chance to stop and think and reflect about opportunities, spark innovation and open up to synchronicity.” “We are ready to take risks that we normally wouldn’t have taken”.

Some examples included:

“We have hosted webinars we never even dreamed about – and this would never have happened without this coronavirus situation.”

“We are experimenting with starting to give some stuff away. This in itself is opening up new opportunities and it is changing the way we deliver things.”

“We are connecting wider communities that we hadn’t in the past – including connecting our alumni”.

“The impact of the crisis has forced us to be more entrepreneurial, collaborative and self-organising – and this is a positive change for our culture”.

Some participants reflected on the new strategic context and asked the question “How do we evolve constantly” and “adapt to the rapidity of change?” And how do we adapt in an “increasing complex world that we can’t control - we will need more practices to support this.”

Leadership - Inner and Outer

Skilled leadership is required to evolve and adapt our organisations and networks and this was another thread in the conversations.

Capacity issues

Some organisations were facing leadership capacity challenges including “transitioning leadership within the organisation from the original founder”.

Another participant was finding it “difficult to find someone to lead especially with limited finances so she needed to find a way to do it herself”. And another commented that “our growth is limited because we have not invested in developing the capacity of our training team.”

Progressive leadership

“Progressive leadership is needed” and “our role seems to be to get better at what we do”. The “challenge is to lead and inspire confidence.” “We need new leadership and I am sure those people are in this field.”

And how does our work require us to develop our own inner leadership. “The biggest challenge is myself – how can I not get in the way of the path of the unfolding?” and “I am often asking myself the question who am I taking myself to be?”

There was also a question of how can we cultivate leadership and capacity in others “our Board of Trustees are getting more involved as a result of the crisis - this has been a helpful change”.

Communication and amplification

An important aspect for our organisations and networks is to consider our leadership role as it relates to communication and amplification of our work.

A vision for the future

Part of the leadership conversation included the need to take a role in “creating and holding a vision – as in the Book of Isaiah – as without a vision people perish”.

In one of the conversations, a person wondered “could be some kind of meta framework within which there can still be individuality and within which no-one is wrong? A sort of universal language with natural laws, givens and principles. A meta framework within which people can identify for a greater sense of orientation”. “Although we need to be aware that as soon as we start to define a container - it begins to dissolve.”

Amplifying the message

One participant asked herself “how would we take our work to the world? ”Another person wondered about “how do we raise our head above the parapet?” There was a reflection that our work has a message whose time has come.

“But what is that message?” And then “there is a question of how to spread the message? Do we try to intentionally spread it or trust in morphogenic resonance?” I think it is a matter of doing both.

Some challenges for our work relate to the fact “we don’t have language for the ideas of a spiritual life that we want to express”. And “many of our initiatives touch the heart but they rarely speak to the heart”. “How we can bring an understanding of the difference that our work can make?”

Cultural landscape

Additionally, one systemic challenge is that the “ideals of consciousness are alienated in media and academia due to the strong beliefs of a materialist worldview”. So how can we create a spiritual culture in society?”

There was a comment that “we don’t have a body for spiritual organisations like other professional bodies do” so how does this impact awareness for our work?

This is political

There were also some reflections that our work is also now becoming political. How can we see wider aspects of expanding human consciousness which includes ensuring the basics of safety, food and housing.

One of the participants who studies the history of the New Age culture shared that "Aldous Huxley's work suffered from institutional weakness. In comparison, his grandfather Thomas Huxley was much canner in dealing with power structures."

"So how might we play a role in "blending love and social politics" - and this "includes seeing our spiritual practice manifesting in spiritual activism." A participant offered a framework for a new emerging role in shaping the political landscape which has a basis of love and consciousness.



Framework by William Bloom

How could we enable greater change?

In thinking about what is emerging now, some people referred to the importance of “knowing ourselves and standing true to ourselves. If we do that, our resonance will attract the band of people who we need to talk to”.

Slow down to the present

One person commented that “the feeling that it’s all got to happen now is a form of dissociation and creates psychic anxiety”. There was recognition across the conversations that “with everything going on, a rush to know is unhelpful”. “How can we encourage less knowing and more presence, including to be present with life as it is?”

Different ways of knowing – and not knowing!

Another person shared that she had “been calling for systems change for years! However to actually feel it (coronavirus crisis) is a different story. How can we have a greater sense of bewilderment and listen to the non-human voices? We really don’t know what is going to happen. “

“We are all sensitised to offer a solution when we see a problem. And often we offer support in a way that is about ‘me having the answer’. How can we be more like holding a beacon of hope and inspiration at a simple level?”

Collaboration and co-creation

In thinking about enabling change, there was a reflection that often in trying to effect change “a lack of connection and lack of seeing each other means change makers collude.” And “when I think about collaboration and co-creating -I don’t see a lot of this in our sector. It seems that people want to protect IP however we must realise that in the future things will be more open.”

I am interested in genuine collaboration – not the fake kind! – I want to go where there is authenticity.” “Is there a way we could come together with rigour?”

“I have an instinct that we could be more networked and synergised in a better way. But can it be institutionalised or is it just serendipitous? I think it could be networked and synthesised - but we don’t know how to do it! But there must be a way to put structure to it”.

Technology connecting the field

There was a thread of conversation about “how do we use technology as a platform? There seems to be a belief in the spiritual world that ‘digital is bad’, however maybe it is the very thing that will connect and open us up?” Is there a way we could create ‘one marketplace for sharing skills’ or a “group slack channel” for collaboration?

Our experience together

Some final reflections on the experience that the participants had in taking part in the co-inquiries.

Love and connection

- This was enriching for my heart
- I am grateful
- I have a sense of spaciousness and connection
- I feel excitement, appreciation and love
- I have been working on my own for years and this feels like I have been in good company. The etymology of 'company' is about breaking bread together
- It is good to be in the presence of like minded people
- I was able to talk at a really deep level which is rarely experienced
- I go for projects where I resonate with people I trust the resonance here

Potential

- I am feeling energised with some new impetus and I want to contribute more to this space.
- I am interested in what might appear
- There is lots of potential here
- I would like to stay involved

Learning and understanding

- I am appreciative as this is a topic that is often reified and we succeeded in bringing it down to earth with good structure
- I have a feeling of greater clarity as well as more not knowing
- I feel engaged and tired and it has been great to have the opportunity to hear from others
- There is great value in leaving my silo and exploring what is important without rushing. Good to peep into your silos.
- To fly together in a murmuration you need to observe others – this is what we have done today
- I want to learn and share and I am looking for thinking partners
- Articulating my thoughts helps me to understand better – it has been enriching

Participants of the Co-inquiry meetings

Thank you to those who participated, we look forward to connecting again soon.

- Gavin Andrews, Managing Director, HeartmathUK
 - Judy Piatkus, Founder, Conscious Cafes
 - Jessie Teggin, Director, Quadrangle Trust
 - Philip Carr-Gomm, Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids and Sophrology Institute
 - Matt Shephard, Systemic Coach and Director of Likewise
 - Etan Ifled, Owner/Managing Director, Watkins Publishing
 - Jeddah Mali, Founder and Executive Director, IntelligentLife
 - Janice Dolley, Executive Director of the Wrekin Trust, Co-Convener of Unity Community UK
 - William Bloom, Director, Spiritual Companions
 - Sarah Rozenhuler, Founder Bridgework Consulting
 - Margaret O'Keeffe, Trustee, The Study Society
 - Jules Evans, Well-Being Project, History of Emotions Queen Mary University and Co-organiser London Philosophy Club
 - Josh Dugale, Medicine Festival, owner Wasing Estate
 - Malcolm Stern, London One Year Group, Co-Founder Alternatives
 - Guy Hayward, Co -Founder, The British Pilgrimage Trust
 - Simon Lamb, Director and Owner, Purposeful Change
 - Liz Murphy, Executive Director Sophrology Academy, Co-Founder The Murmuration Project
 - Jen Morgan, Executive Director, The Psychosynthesis Trust, Co-Founder The Murmuration Project
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