

## Seeing a Spreading Pattern of Deep Democracy

Image



What's required for this to reach a critical mass?

In Israel in 2011 10,000 people walked away having experienced what's possible when small groups explore what they can do together to create a brighter future.

The effort convened people representing many walks of life, from the Jewish and Muslim faiths, to professionals and those of all kinds of income.

One thousand tables had been set to host 10 people each. At each table, a steward guided the conversation to ensure that each participant had both the opportunity to listen and be curious about the insights and stories of others, as well as to voice their own.

Co-organizer [Danny Gal](#) has anecdotal evidence of the gathering's effect.

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

*The engagement methodology Art of Hosting informed the shape of the Tel Aviv conversations. (Photo: [RoundTablesDialogue.com](#))*

"People called me and wrote me and wrote to our organization afterwards and said it was a life changing experience. Here they were, sitting with nine strangers at a table and after two hours with them they were like very good friends," says Danny, an Israeli resident who cofounded Hub Tel Aviv in 2009 as a space for social innovators and entrepreneurs.

The intimacy and the openness that was created was meaningful much beyond the tables.

Danny says people saw they could recreate this in every situation, even around the most complex and difficult places and issues in the community.

"You can just call everyone and invite them to sit around tables and the only thing you have to do is to keep the conversation safe and moderated and fair and equal," he says.

Danny, now a Harvard Kennedy School graduate student, has received requests from Greece, Brazil and North America to design similar gatherings.

American economist Otto Scharmer has proposed that the essence of society's problems is the disconnection between people and nature, people and people, and people and their spirits.

Creating the space for these possibility-oriented conversations to take place generates close connections between people, which in turn has a ripple effect on the connections between people and nature and people and their spirits.

Through its work with colleagues around the world Axiom News is increasingly encountering people doing this kind of work.

The work could be seen as enlivening deeper democracy. There is an emerging practice that goes beyond voting for a political candidate to each individual taking part in shaping and co-creating their desired future.

There seems to be a growing urgency around moving in this direction as the fundamental forms of how humans organize to get things done change — from hierarchy into more networked-based forms of organizing.

Still, a critical mass has yet to be reached.

One of the concerns is that creating the space for people to self-organize and self-identify their next courses of action will result in chaos.

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*The tables are set for the 2011 conversation in Tel Aviv. (Photo: [RoundTablesDialogue.com](http://RoundTablesDialogue.com))*

Based on her 20 years of experience with deploying group processes that directly involve hundreds, or thousands, of people in achieving breakthroughs, author and consultant Peggy Holman shares why this really isn't a risk.

One convening methodology Peggy works with is Open Space Technology, at the heart of which is the notion of taking responsibility for what you love.

“On the surface that may sound like it could create chaos and invite people to be selfish,” Peggy says.

But over 20 years of working with this practice, Peggy has observed that when people are invited to take responsibility for what they love, the things they choose to pursue draw from the deeper stream of their humanity.

“And because we all draw from that stream, when we actually take responsibility for what we love, it becomes an act of service.

“When the diversity of people who make up a system are brought together around an issue that they care about, you find people naturally gravitate to different parts of taking care of the whole.”

Another barrier to this participative democracy can be leadership that’s still clinging to the hierarchical forms of organizing, including government, though some are taking steps to change. Some local governments, for instance, are exploring the use of technology to have more contact with citizens and garner their input on issues. However, most are still a long way from actually organizing gatherings intended to partner with citizens in co-creating or co-designing change.

Looking ahead, Danny plans to join with others in creating more ways for people to come together and connect over their differences.

Axiom News is also interested in enlivening possibility-oriented conversations, and uncovering how they might become even more powerful. One discussion we’re having as a team and with a growing network of likeminded souls is around how we might create an ecology of ongoing convening and narrating for learning and change.

- More to Come

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