

REFLECTION

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A conversation of the type we have held at Fuschl-am-See is a coming together of a few dozen people to engage in a human communication process of creation over 5 days. This type of conversation, it appears to me, involves five spaces, which, as a collective, forms its conceptual foundation. The five spaces can also be a useful conceptual framework for describing and mapping the structure and process of the conversation.

Given one's theoretical viewpoint, the notion of a space into which one enters, expands, and elaborates is conceptual, experiential, phenomenological, psychosociological, and systemic. In describing the spaces of a conversation, since I perceive others and our conversation through my eyes, I use myself as the meaningful point of reference, as I expect that each participant does from his/her own perceptual viewpoint.

The first space is the physical and cultural context in which the conversation occurs. The atmosphere of this space is generated by the meeting site, physical locality, and cultural ideosyncracies of the participants and residents. The second space is that of the small assigned group of which I am a member. The third space consists of all the informal dyadic, triadic, and small group subconversations that occur during coffee breaks, meals, walks, and non-assigned group encounters over the course of the conversation. The fourth space fills with my own reflections about what is happening around me, when I am with others and alone. The conceptualization described in this "Reflection" statement is one such example. The fifth space is more meta and methodological. It is the space in which persons work together to describe and document what becomes the products of the conversation. Having moved my reflection to public documentation, this statement serves to illustrate this space.

Given these five spaces, imagine the phenomenon of the conversation unfolding. I enter the first space upon my arrival at Fuschl-am-See. As I greet my colleagues and become settled comfortably within the surroundings, bubbles of what will become the third space begin to appear. My assigned group has its initial meeting, the genesis of the second space. My thoughts about the above begin to percolate, the fourth space. As the conversation progresses, the spaces grow and multiply in number, internal complexity, and interconnectivity. The conversation becomes a vivacious and rich broth pressing to evolve as well as involute the frontiers of my imagination. At some point, the fifth space emerges as the task of documenting the conversation imposes itself to invade and pillage the other spaces. I leave Fuschl imbued with experience that continues to resonate for months afterwards. What a miraculous and special human phenomenon the conversation can be!