

Communitas Newsletter



The Communitas Project

Leadership Development Events

Working Together Better

Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Looking Ahead - New Developments, New Questions

Launching Phase 2

We are delighted to inform you about our steadily growing project and to involve you in the next phase of our development. Based on our recent events, a circle of interested people has formed, and we invite you to participate in this unusual and evolving innovative community.

If you are interested - for yourself and for your organisation - in the cutting edge of leadership development, in the human and systems dimension of organisations and how to access the full potential of the people who work with you, this is an opportunity not to be missed. We have gathered an exquisite collection of experts and tutors who have the skills, knowledge and experience to help you develop and expand your leadership know-how to the next level and beyond.

New Tutors and Associates

Since our launch a couple of months ago, we have attracted some prominent and renowned new associates, who are well-known innovators in their fields and who will generate exciting new learning opportunities for you, including Professor Susan Weil, Professor Andrew Samuels and top-executive coach and consultant Tom Kelly.

Crisis and opportunity

As the current theme for further events, research and enquiry over the next few months, we have chosen "Hit the Target - Miss the Point", questioning the widespread idea that productivity is a function of linear performance targets.

"Hit the Target - Miss the Point" - the Limitations of Linear Leadership ?

The current economic crisis is the most global and to date most comprehensive, but by no means the only warning sign that our current ways and notions of leadership are problematic.

Arguably, we have come to the end of a particular mode of leader consciousness: too long have we been told that the success of an organisation depends on the leader's vision, strategy and charisma, and that the heroic leader gets these right, and the mediocre leader gets those wrong.

Maybe we are ready to see that individual visions, linear strategies, one-dimensional performance targets do not in some cases make the business, and in other cases break it.

Maybe we are ready to see that these principles themselves are inherently flawed. Good leaders can manage to compensate for these flaws to some extent.

"Unfortunately, we were a little off-target again this quarter!"



But as a mode of consciousness, as a dominant leadership paradigm these principles are dangerously partial and treacherous.

Arguably, a new kind of leadership is needed to take us through the 21st century, in such a way that we're still alive by the end of it.

That kind of leader will need to rely on a new set of principles, a new paradigm of leadership, both personally and professionally.

What are the inherent flaws of linear leadership? What could be the new paradigm and the new set of principles? And what kinds of questions do we need to pursue to find such principles?

The Communitas Project is designed to explore and enquire into these kinds of questions, co-evolving a new leadership theory and practice based on in-depth understanding of human interaction and organisational systems as complex and diverse communities.

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Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Our Associates, Tutors and Experts

New Associates and Tutors

We are delighted to announce that our team of associates is expanding steadily, and now includes Professor Susan Weil and Professor Andrew Samuels, two respected and acclaimed experts in their respective fields.

Professor Susan Weil is known for her unique Centre SOLAR (Social and Organisational Learning as Action Research, first situated at the University of Leicester and Northampton, and later at the University of the West of England). She has 30 years experience in designing and facilitating learning and change in complex systems and situations.



Andrew Samuels is Professor of Analytical Psychology at the University of Essex and holds visiting chairs at other universities. Through his company TELOS he has worked as a consultant for DelMonte, Nokia, Tesco, the cities of Tokyo and St Petersburg, the Labour Party and many other organisations.



We also welcome top-executive coach and consultant **Tom Kelly** who has been working with leaders in both private and public sectors for many years. His highly successful day-to-day consulting work is living proof just how inspirational and practically relevant a leadership perspective based on psychological depth can be.

Further details about these experts, their background and their work can be found on our website. Tom Kelly, Andrew Samuels and Susan Weil are joining our founding team Gaie Houston, Thom Osborn and Michael Soth, alongside associate tutor Lynsey Hotchkies. Together, this team of psychological and organisational practitioners will give you access to leading-edge ideas and practices.

Gaie Houston, first trained in the US at National Training Laboratories, has a long career in management training and organisational consultancy, ranging from the voluntary sector, through an advertising agency, to a long intervention in the merger of two famous London hospitals. She has taught and practised Gestalt groupwork and therapy since 1975, in the UK and in other countries, and is currently a senior lecturer at The Gestalt Centre, London. She teaches and practices clinical supervision, and mentors chief executives and other staff in a range of organisations. She has written many radio plays and several books on groups.



Michael Soth has been involved with groups, their dynamics, their facilitation and facilitation training since the late 1970's. He has been supervising and mentoring business and OD consultants as well as coaches and facilitators, making available depth psychological principles to leaders and organisations.



Thom Osborn was instrumental in pioneering self-organising learning communities throughout the 1970's and 1980's, on a variety of courses both at the Organisation Change Unit of the Management Department at the Polytechnic of North London as well as on the Counselling courses at South-West London College.

Lynsey Hotchkies is a Gestalt counsellor and group analytic psychotherapist, working in a variety of settings with different types of groups. She is Programme Manager at Westminster Pastoral Foundation managing 15-20 part-time staff. She is particularly interested in group dynamics.





Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Our Main Event for 2009: 5-day Residential in Wales

5-day Residential September 09

Wales, September 6th - 11th

We are building up to what promises to become a unique transformational event - five days of intense personal and social learning at your growing edge.

Gaie Houston, Thom Osborn and Michael Soth, along with other associates and tutors, invite you to join our self-organising learning community. This experiential setting draws on a wide variety of group work traditions and we expect it to provide considerable insight and understanding as well as a wide range of skills, relevant to all kinds of leadership contexts.

In the short space of a few days, it is one of the most substantial investments you can make into your own ongoing development as a leader as well as your overall capacity to make your organisation work together better.

Our events create a live organisation which forms a kind of 'mini-society'. One special feature of such a 'social laboratory' is the time and space to explicitly pay attention to the interpersonal and group dynamics when and as they unfold. We will reflect on and experiment with these dynamics in a way which is not usually possible in the heat and task-orientation of the 'real world' and everyday work. Yet through an emphasis on experiential learning, the work always stays practical, applicable and relevant.

You will experience directly how a group culture gets generated and how it evolves, and what dynamics are conducive and which ones obstructive to the functioning of an organisation.

Key advantages of large group self-organising learning communities in comparison with other training events

Why you are bound to learn more - more deeply, more effectively, more lastingly, more comprehensively, more practically, more directly relevant to you ...

Although the tutors (apart from leading the plenaries) will be available for all kinds of theoretical and practical input as well as modelling and demonstrations in workshops and sub-groups, much of the learning will not only be experiential, but also self-organised and self-directed.

Here's a summary of the key advantages which our self-organising learning community offers in comparison with other didactic, pre-structured leadership training events:

- emphasis on experiential, holistic, relational ways of learning that integrate theory and practice
- unlike any other leadership development event, you will be co-responsible for shaping and co-creating the organisation from the beginning (rather than being led throughout in an artificial training situation which then at best includes some experiential work and simulations)
- through being immersed in a real-life diverse organisation, you will experience directly how your contributions affect and influence the system as a whole; the learning community provides multiple and immediate action-reflection cycles which - often in quick succession - intensify the learning
- you will have influence on tailoring your experience of the event to your specific learning needs and objectives (rather than wading through lots of information that either is irrelevant to you or which you are familiar with already)

- you will be able to join in at a level that is commensurate with your experience (the learning is diverse, individual and specific, and does not treat everybody as if they are a beginner or expert)
- you can stay in your comfort zone if you wish or there is a wide spectrum of possibilities for challenging and stretching yourself
- experiential learning is grounded in reflecting on live experience and collective processes as they occur (whereas much academic knowledge forever remains academic), thus going beyond abstract management models to address messy, real-life situations and dilemmas
- you will be accessing learning resources and models when you need them (rather than a tutor or the training curriculum decide to deliver them)
- multi-dimensional 'here and now' learning is based on giving space to and working in depth with interpersonal and group dynamics
- you will learn about diversity issues in real-life organisations directly and profoundly, through being active and interactive in a group of diverse people from diverse cultures with diverse values, outlooks and identities
- last not least - especially in a recession - there is the financial aspect: considering the depth and variety of learning available, how readily it will translate into your everyday work, and how much value this will add to your organisation, Communitas events are excellent value for money.

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Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Our Events - inspirational, transformational, co-created

Recent Events

Following on from our recent launch events, we have had some very positive and encouraging feedback (see some of the testimonials on our website).

Notes for one of the Open Evenings have been written up in our Forum, and they will give you some impression of the sense of excitement that can derive from as simple an exercise as participants exchanging their learning needs and resources within a self-organising group format.

Such a 2-hour event can, of course, only give the merest indication of the potential of this way of working which fundamentally depends on the degree of openness, safety and intensity that can be generated within the group. In this regard the evening was very successful, although participants were left intrigued at the end of the event as to the kind of group, organisational and systemic expertise that Communitas tutors would typically provide.

As a result, the second Open Evening in Oxford was oriented more towards demonstrating the kind of experiential work we favour over theoretical instruction. A good chunk of the evening was focussed on a particular real-life example, in this case the preparation for a special board meeting.

Although the participative roleplay format we evolved together was somewhat beyond the comfort zone of standard coaching, the added benefit was very apparent, resulting in deeper insights, greater relief of anticipatory anxiety and substantial increase in confidence and empowerment.

Events Planned for May-July '09

Communitas events are unique in their synergy of two features: they combine leading-edge psychosocial, organisational and systemic expertise with an Open Space learning community format: transformations of consciousness in a collective context of co-inquiry.

In order to do justice to both of these features in a short event, we have recognised that we will need a minimum of three hours for our Open Taster Sessions: this gives time for a participative group atmosphere to emerge, as well as some space for the demonstration of experiential learning and the practical application of our way of working.



But for those who already have attended an Open Taster Session, we will move on to theme- and topic-based short events. That's where your own development initiative comes in: you are invited to shape these events according to your priorities, development needs and current preoccupations as a leader.

We will use the forum on our website to generate those questions that hold shared significance, urgency, interest and energy.

We look forward to your input and contributions.

Open Taster Sessions

Possible dates and times:

Tue. June 9th, 6.30 - 9.30pm
Mon. June 15th, 6.30 - 9.30pm
Mon. June 29th, 6.30 - 9.30pm
Tue. June 30th, 6.30 - 9.30pm
Mon. July 6th, 6.30 - 9.30pm

**Venue: London,
Tooley Street
nr London Bridge**

Moving between a participative, co-created style on the one hand and in-depth, experiential work on the other, these events are immediately relevant to all kinds of organisational work, pushing beyond the confines of established leadership development. If you are wondering whether the 5-day Residential is of interest to you, these events are *one* opportunity to meet some of our tutors and form an impression of the kind of groups we are creating.

These events are in no way required as preparation for the Residential nor do they pre-empt it, but are designed to stand on their own. We will work with the particular group which attends each session, aiming to bring out its unique qualities and features. Because of the changed 3-hour format and the new group composition, they are suitable even if you have attended a previous Open Evening.

We have set several possible dates and times for Open Taster Sessions over the next couple of months, and will aim to eventually amalgamate them into two events, depending on responses and interest.

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Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Shape Our Programmes and Spread the Word

Theme- and Topic-Based Short Events

We are proposing that over the next few months we will use the Communitas online forum to organise some focussed events on specific themes and topics.

As starting points, we are suggesting the following two themes, as addressed in this newsletter, and hope that these will gather sufficient interest and participants to make some short and sharp 2-hour events feasible.

- **The links between inner and outer reality**

How do leaders' 'inner' realities influence and impact on external outcomes ?

- **The end of 'linear' leadership**

How the underlying linear paradigm creates ever-more problems and unforeseen, unintended consequences; integrating target-driven visions with 'white-water-rafting'; how to develop alternative leadership practices

Some of the themes which people expressed interest for at recent events were:

- **How can the notion of 'transference at work' become useful in your organisational context ?**

What is transference? How do you recognise it? How do you work with it? How do you learn more about it?

- **Engaging with systemic dynamics in your organisation**

How do we perceive and establish what the influential systemic dynamics are? How do we engage with them to enhance organisational development?

- **How can depth-psychology inform coaching?**

What are the limitations of established coaching practice? What kind of situations call for greater depth and a wider range of interventions? Which different levels or depths can be addressed through various types of coaching interventions?

- **Enhancing key relationship through attending to non-verbal messages and communication**

Based on modern neuroscience, we can understand more deeply how brains interact whenever people communicate. By giving greater attention to subtle non-verbal messages (which are usually considered subliminal), we can enhance rapport and connection and address miscommunications more effectively.

Some people requested events focussed on specific cutting-edge approaches, for example:

- **Organisational Constellations**

Constellations, developed by Bert Hellinger over the last 20 years, is an innovative technique, designed to bring out into the open and work with the dynamics of any human system. This is increasingly being applied to organisations and business. We suggest a taster workshop on theory, methods and application, including a demonstration with real-life scenarios from your work.

These suggestions are meant to get the process started of gathering ideas and interests from across the evolving Communitas community. We invite other suggestions you may have.

Our SpoRe Programme

SpoRe is an acronym for our brand-new "Sponsorship & Recommendation Programme". We offer substantial benefits to you for sponsoring our events and recommending them. As an incentive for spreading the word about the Communitas Project we will:

- a) Pay you 10% of any enrolment fees arising from your recommendations
- b) Give you 10% discount on all 2009 events (if at least two other people you recommend enrol for any event)
- c) Give you free access to all hand-outs as well as video and audio material we produce
- d) Give you free access to our online members' section
- e) Organisational SpoRe partners may qualify for an arrangement by which they can send a free delegate to some events



To join the SpoRe Programme, and help us reach out into your professional networks as well as social circles, complete the online form or send an email to: Michael@communitas.co.uk



Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Discussing a Selection of Communitas Project Principles

1: The links between inner and outer reality

One of the shared themes throughout all our Communitas work is a particular interest in the question how people's inner and outer realities mutually influence each other and impact on organisational effectiveness.

What 'inner' realities are we referring to ?

Do people's 'inner' thoughts, beliefs and feelings, their attitudes and and motivations affect business outcomes ?

Aren't performance and outcomes mainly a question of behaviour and concrete action ?

Does it matter to the organisation's purpose how staff *think* as they work ?

Will how they *feel at work* make an inch of difference to how much value they add ?

Who gives a hoot *how they relate to you and to each other*, as long as they work well and perform ?

Why should these things matter in the hard-and-fast nitty-gritty of everyday business reality ?

It's in times of crisis that we get a clearer view of what the underlying drivers and organisational principles actually are. How people tick and what really matters and what works when it works, becomes more apparent when the chips are down.

Thoughts, emotions, imagination, intuition - how people think, feel, experience, how they interact and what goes on in their 'heads' as they work - this is a vastly underdeveloped area of current business and HR practice, as well as a neglected lynch-pin of leadership development.

Overwhelming evidence is gathering not just that these things are important, but *crucial* to the sustainable success of any collective enterprise.

Getting results is linked not to mission statements, not to what leaders say or proclaim, nor to the instructions they give, not even to what they do, but it's directly linked to **how they actually relate** - to their colleagues, their staff, their associates, across all levels of organisation.

Business productivity is a function of the culture which leaders create not consciously, deliberately, but mainly unconsciously, through their style of interaction.

To get people on board the trajectory of your organisation, to 'win their hearts and minds' and orient them towards a shared purpose requires a new mind-set, new attitudes and skills on the part of leaders.

In the emerging economic order, and on the basis of the painfully obvious lessons of the current crisis, the issues of integrity, congruence and communicative depth will have unprecedented relevance for future leaders.

The ingenuity of human consciousness offers incredible potential, but as we have learnt: human consciousness is also capable of incredible contortion and self-deception.

Leaders need to both model and proactively engage the wholesome development of human consciousness - their own and that of their people.

From a BBC interview with business guru CK Prahalad (available at BBC iPlayer):

"It is interesting to me that if you look at books about corporate strategy, which is your academic subject, quite often the personalities are all taken out of it - it looks quite full of graphs, equations, economic models etc, but in both examples you have given me, the work you are having to do is about personality and human beings ?"

"If you sanitize business and think of it only as mathematics and economics, you miss the whole point about strategy and business. Leadership is about *people* - emotionally engaging them, intellectually engaging them. I'm a great believer that if you want to get things done, you have to put people squarely at the centre, not the periphery."

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Launching Phase 2 of the Communitas Project:

Opportunities for You - Participate and Contribute

Learning Leadership - Leadership Learning

Whilst some principles of the 'Learning Organisation' (Peter Senghe) are increasingly well understood and applied, most of this learning is still considered exclusively informational, analytic and left-brain and therefore largely acquirable via the PowerPoint 'funnel method' or via e-learning.

Multiple Intelligences = Multi-Dimensional Learning

This (over-)emphasis on rational, linear consciousness means that other crucial learning processes - arguably much more significant for functional organisations and survival in a volatile crisis climate - are neglected or underestimated.

A much larger and more comprehensive view of learning involving multiple intelligences is possible and urgently needed: social, relational and organisational learning requires attention to interpersonal, emotional and psychological intelligence, applicable to one-to-one situations as well group dynamics and larger systemic processes.

How does such multi-dimensional learning occur?
What kinds of contexts are best suited to maximise and facilitate such learning?

Find out more by visiting our website

Your Development - What Next ?

What are your own development objectives as a leader ?

How can you access holistic, experiential, integral, systemic, whole-person, integrative leadership learning that is tailored to your particular needs and organisational context ?

Where can you find learning opportunities that are practical and relevant rather than academic and theoretical ?

When you consider these questions, it becomes apparent quite quickly that established training programmes with a fixed curriculum are unlikely to serve you well.

What you need is a learning context that can be influenced and shaped according to your needs and priorities. What you need is an environment that provides expertise in organisational and personal-professional development, without dictating the questions and answers, the content and the solutions. A learning situation that allows maximum process without pre-determining the content and restricting the focus of enquiry.

At Communitas we have made it our aim to provide real-life group contexts that are responsive to the learning needs and agendas of the group members (rather than the tutors' teaching agenda). Organisational and group processes occur just as they do in meetings and negotiations at work, and become the basis for profound, experiential learning.

For our programme of events, see our website or have your say in shaping our future programme via our forum.

Communitas Blogs

Over the last months, we have mainly focussed on writing what we call the Introduction to Communitas, providing - in a blog format - background material to the Project and more substantial discussion of the theories, models and concepts which our work draws from. These have been popular and helped to clarify in people's mind the wide spectrum of perspectives we integrate and how they might benefit from that.

These posts have been mixed with more typical blog posts which address current issues, often in casual or polemical style. We are in the process of differentiating these two kinds of blog posts and separating them out into two different sections on the website.

Join the Forum

Although we have managed to set up the Communitas Forum, to provide a vehicle of communication for what we hope will become a thriving online community, we have as yet not had the time to stimulate much activity. We welcome questions, feedback, responses to the material on our website, as well as discussion of themes relevant to leadership development and organisations. We also intend to use the forum for networking and the organising of theme-based Communitas events.

"This series of cutting-edge 'social laboratory' Open Space Learning events is quite unlike anything ever offered in the UK before and at ridiculously low introductory prices for training courses of this calibre."

Clare Jones, Marketing Consultant

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**For a 3-minute
introduction to
Communitas, see
our quick tour:**



email:

**Michael@
communitas.co.uk**

website:

communitas.co.uk

click the image to browse to the online tour