

## Magic Roundtables – Open-Forum Open-Spaces

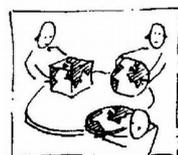
A dialogue and conversation format – a “shrunked” to one hour Open-Space – which helps to “stop the talkers”, empower, encourage and co-create = build community

### Heiner Benking

#### RULES OF THE GAME – The practical exercise:

All participants sit or stand in a circle. Sometimes with an inner and outer ring, and often with spaces left so that people can move into the circle when they have received time credits. Typically a moderator or a volunteer who knows the process will act as a timekeeper and independent guardian of the common interest of the group. Next there is an introductory round of brief proposals of issues or topics (1-2 minutes maximum) that the participants want to expand on if they get "encouragement" tokens.

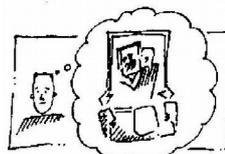
All participants and observers are then invited to give tokens to those whose proposals feel most important or worthy to discuss in the session. The moderator distributes tokens equalling the minutes planned for the roundtable. For example, with 60 minutes sessions and 10 participants, each person receives 6 tokens (if there are 30 people are in the room, each one receives 1 token or 2 tokens if there are 60 people). After this snapshot round of offerings to the group, the moderator invites people to give their interest or empowerment tokens to the person they feel should speak up, possibly accompanied by a certain focus or question. This speaker can speak for as long as there are tokens, which the moderator collects or monitors as “used up” by visualizing the time already used from the visible "budget". The speaker can continue if he/she receives more tokens while speaking. Someone else might then want to add onto the subject until his/her time budget is used up.



Many models, many views



Invite, share, listen, co-create



See who sees & reflect upon it



Global seeing & feeling

Short interventions while someone is speaking are not punished or discouraged because they might clarify the issue. But, they are watched carefully by the moderator as they might interfere with the line of thought or the flow of the topic under discussion. Therefore, they are considered, even when adding only 3 words or one sentence, as a full sentence or one token used. This method can be considered a self-organizing, open, transparent, dynamic, and embodied way of participation and empowerment which cultivates differences and fosters co-creation. Here is a Timeline of [selected events](#) and a forthcoming article in [MOTHER PELICAN – Journal for Solidarity and Sustainability](#).

There is some hype around dialog and conversation formats – when new formats are thriving on how to do an “Art of Hosting”. Presented and exercised is a method with time credits/tokens in meetings which through visualisation makes us aware how much we speak, how “talkers” do not even listen, but steal attention in meetings and “sell” their ego ! instead of learning to balance “sharing and gifting”. Magic Roundtables are just the first step towards deliberations, negotiations, multi-track diplomacy and peace-making. But let’s start with the rules and frames. Maybe this [threat](#) from this week opens the doors for some more food for doing and action.

The unique difference presented is not another “time-credit” methods is that tokens don’t simply represent speaking time as a personal budget or allotment you use up to the very end, but to delegate and focus attention and interest by giving time to encourage and empower individual offerings to the group in a dynamic fashion. Group interest is higher as the value or quality of attention increases by these "floating" embodied tokens, which are given as presents or signs of encouragement during the process. Another field of application is the use in Virtual Conferencing settings, look out for [Stammtisch 2.0 and 3.0](#).

More about: [Sharing Seeds \(hand-out\)](#) and [Seeds of Change](#) and [blog](#)



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PNW e.V. -Open-Forum: [www.open-forum.de](http://www.open-forum.de) - [21stCentury Agora](#) – World Unity Days – [Dialogues and Conversations](#) (2006)  
United Nations Democracy Fund project: UNDEF [Re:Inventing Democracy](#) – [Future Worlds Center](#)