

The last four days I spent my time with some very courageous beautiful people on the English country side at [Wex Lexhame](#), with people who are willing to take risks by walking on the edge, creating new ways of living and working.

I feel like sharing my experience and inspiration with you, so I can distill some of the key learnings and make this learning part of our common learning, so together we can learn and evolve on a larger scale.

I created two versions of how you can read it.

Part 1 is for those that feel like reading fast, some essential themes, quotes and questions that touched me. This serves as a source of inspiration.

Part 2 tells a story of my key learnings with resources.

I wish you an enjoyable ride through this piece,

Love,

Naomi

Connect

Mail: naomiraja@gmail.com

Twitter: [naomiraja](#)

Blog: <http://naomiraja.tumblr.com/>

PART I

An eye glance of the atmosphere & people

Inspiring Questions

Themes that touched me





What is moving in me that calls me here?

Personal Resilience

**What am I willing to let go of
open up to?**

Don't hold back, be yourself



What does it take to form, be part of and host a **CORE** team?

Friendship & Relationship

'Gets shit done' - Tim Merry

JOY

Core Team

A heart beat, starting from a pulse of energy "I have a dream", attracting those around you that resonate, discerning those that don't

Clear Levels of involvement. Based on inviting



Be a friend of what you really value

Space

Nature and Force

Containing energy

[West Lexham](#)

Reclaim old materials for a new purpose



What are our questions about working together?

Those who do not ask for help can not be trusted – Toke Paludan Møller, Art of Hosting, Denmark

Process

Don't fix it,
Feel it,
Best way to feel is to act,
To be IN it

Genuine. What is your burning question?

- Tim Merry

What do we really care about enough that we are willing to act on with others?

Relationship

Sensing the field; asking questions. What possibilities do you see, what are barriers?



A pulse of life going through me,
Breathing in and out,
Becoming we,
Being carried on a wave of Love,
Life is Breathing,

Trust,
Vulnerability,
Courage,
Hope

- Naomi

*Check-in Harvest of the second
day. Written by this plain tree
while swallows are flying around
me accompanied by Paul
Smart.*

Harvest

PART II

Story

Key learnings

Links to resources

Personal Resilience

It all started two weeks ago when I was walking around in Cologne on a conference for sustainable lifestyles and Entrepreneurship where I met with Charlotte, one of the project leaders of an innovative project in the UK 'Tasting the Future'. Me being on a journey learning about our food system and exploring the needs to serve our planet in a sustainable way in the future I was invited to join a capacity building training with Charlotte and her mates of the [Art of Hosting](#) community. In an impulse I decided to go, following my intuition. It has brought me many insights that I try to express in this story with you.

What was the main reason of being with social innovators together in West Lexham? We looked at what it means to practice [collaborative leadership](#) on a personal level, with a team and a bigger scale, systemic change. What it takes to step into things that really matter in your life, things that are needed in the world now. What is this for you?.....

These might be themes of a larger scale. For me it is the food system, how we produce and consume our food nowadays, how we treat our bodies with it, how we come together in relationship and care for the earth. This may sometimes feel simply too big to deal with by yourself, by one organisation or more, it asks to move from all working on islands to collaborate and work together if we want a real change to appear on a larger scale.

We spent the last three days with sharing stories and asking powerful questions. Realizing and exploring this with the projects that are present it becomes very clear and apparent that it really all starts with YOURSELF. I can only expect others to change if I am seriously willing to change and challenge myself and the way I look at the world today. A very powerful question is "What do I need to let go of/open up to to find my place now?" What also inspired me was the question 'How to bring depth into my work?' I listened to a very beautiful story of one of the participants, a life story. Grateful for this I realize creating depth for me means being willing to be afraid, being able to let go of everything I stood for (nothing is permanent), becoming a friend of what I really value in life (what are those things I value and how to be it?) and in in relationship with others speaking out and having the difficult conversations. Also, while not knowing, realizing what you do know. How do you remind people of what they do know? How do you invite people into their blind-spots (a place from which we act and sometimes are blind to see things differently)?

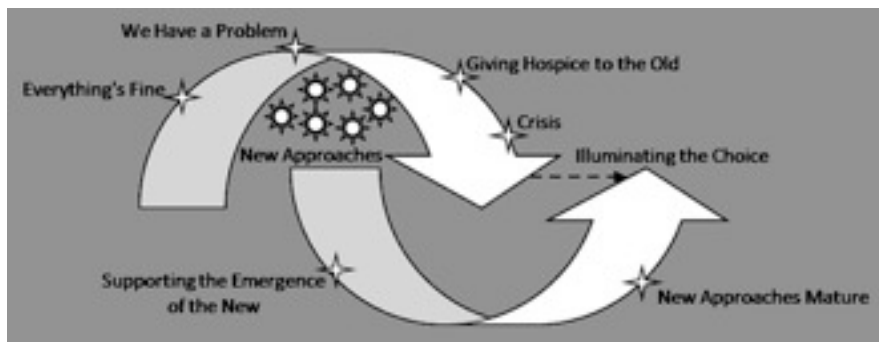
The space we stayed in and the way we were taking care of by the people of [West Lexham](#) was so nice, it created the space for intimacy and relationship to grow between all the participants. Space is therefore such an important factor of how you are and can be together. Not only was it beautiful to be at this old farm as a beautiful piece of nature. West Lexham is a piece of Collaborative Leadership in itself. Edmund shared his life story by the fire the first night and his dream how to create a farm and community that stimulates and illuminates the local and regional community. He does this all by sharing the space with entrepreneurs, through sharing his dream with others, he attracts the right people, ideas and initiatives. What is evolving is a farmers market, one of the participants that was joining the AOCL might even move there with his family and starts his own bakery, a brewery is planned, amazing prototyping tree tents are built in the trees and more. Everything that is built is done by reclaiming old materials and using them for a new purpose. It is a space that breaths innovation and creativity and deep respect for nature.

Relationship

The world changes by a dint of small groups of dedicated people.

This is a famous sentence ones said by Margaret Meads witch leads me into what we explored the second day, working together and collaborating on scale. We started to explore working with complexity, going from the me to the we. How do we work together as a (core) team?

The model being used to look at old systems and the emerging of self organising new communities of people that form new systems is co-developed by the [Berkana institute](#). I share with you the [movie](#) that was shown to us if you want to learn more about this model. I like it because it makes for me a complex map more tangible on a larger scale as well you can place yourself in it on an individual level. It helps me to understand why some people might feel resistance to change and pain to let go of existing patterns thinking in terms of “power over..” success meaning setting up for stability and status quo VERSUS pioneers & alternatives, not knowing the answers upfront, action emerges out of relationship, success equals LEARNING, having a choice on how to organise.



(source image: [the Future of Education blog](#))

Pioneering is a delicate practice, that often is not recognized, you can feel alone on this road of trying new things doing things differently. We did a lot of storytelling last days as you might have noticed, this is very enjoyable and powerful. For me stories allow to share life wisdom, create intimacy and relationship between those who are present. From the stories of the two pioneering projects [Tasting the Future](#) and the [Finance Innovation Lab](#) I realized again that to hold yourself in this situation of pioneering, with a core team, an organisation, or/and with multiple stakeholders you can only learn when you stay together and disagree in the same time!! This is when learning takes place! Working together under these circumstances asks therefore more than task and function oriented meetings, it means being in relationship with each other. Friendship and relationship is KEY, 'It gets shit done' I hear Tim Merry say. This makes me also realize again that what I have been experiencing at [Knowmads](#), was all about the process of creating the space for relationship to grow and to stay together also when you don't know where to go or when you disagree and sit in a circle to explore this. Most of us are so tend to wanting to DO things that this is sometimes the hardest part when you work together, agreeing you all don't know, standing still, appreciating differences and being together in relationship instead of only focusing on heading for numbers in results. Also friendship is there to bring joy to it, when things are tuff you know whom to count on and who will support you. Imagine your colleagues you spent your time with at each single work you do are these friends, how does live than look like?

Greece

Also very present was the situation of what is happening in Greece and Spain at the moment. One of the hosts Maria lives in Greece and told us about the [situation](#), her friend Odeseus called in on the second day to tell his story of what is happening in Greece now and how 500 000 thousand people are gathering peacefully, respectfully each day in Athens to stand up for new democracy, being in conversation, making music together, camping this all through self organising teams.

What touched Odeseus is how people are starting to believe again in each other and taking care of each other. This movement arose out of three friends deciding to camp on a main square in Athens, asking friends to join, going from 3 to 10 to 50 to 500.000 and a core team of 200 people organising itself and the crowd. This is still very alive what is happening, you can follow it through several media. My thoughts are with the people there and my hope is that it will be a peaceful process, the coming days will be crucial.



Harvesting

Collaborative leadership on systemic level asks for working with uncertainty, with process, with friendship and relationship, with courage, clarity and boldness (Don't hold back, be yourself, everybody else is taken' - Tim Merry), working from and in [emergence](#).

The following picture shows a mind map of what came out of a harvest cafe the last day. A harvest cafe is a cosy cafe setting (coming from the [World Cafe Practice](#)), very informal. You go in conversation around one or two questions, switching tables and people after an x amount of time, one person staying at the table to take the new ones arriving into the flow of the conversation that already took place. Then grasping this all together is a form of gathering the wisdom of all the people that are there at that moment, capture the collective intelligence. There are different ways you can gather this, here it has taken shape in a mind map you can see in the following pictures.

Asking the question:

“What do we now know about collaborative leadership and hosting systemic transformation?”

You can see a pattern of several themes coming back over the last days. Some of the elements I included more extensively in this story, like friendship and relationship and personal resilience. Frauke Godat wrote two posts one about [core team](#) practice and the other on the [first day](#). Also a document is being created that includes the learnings from different perspectives.

Friendship and Relationship, Practice, Personal Resilience, Core Team, Communication , Learning, Power

