



ISPSO 34th Annual Meeting, Copenhagen 3rd - 9th July 2017: Dreams always take place: Spaces, Places, Rooms, and Furniture, inside and around us

PARALLEL PAPERS II
FRIDAY 7th JULY 1600-1715
ROOM V- 7.0.28

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*Creative Developmental Space:
Orthodoxy or Experimentation?*

This paper proposes to re-examine the theoretical concepts underlying Bion's take on groups with a focus on its significance for holding spaces, borders, and role boundaries in light of creative development. It will be structured into two main parts: First, it will evaluate whether the well-established group relations tradition is the only possible interpretation for applying Bion's ideas to developing experiential learning for leadership and growth, and second, it will illustrate this conceptual thinking with two real-life examples of practice.

The key argument will concentrate on the establishing of a 'generative space', its boundaries and borders for therapeutic development and community building, whereby unconscious or 'hidden spaces' can be explored in a safe environment for overcoming inner boundaries through inner rearrangements – in other words, growth. By re-examining the long-standing

methodology of group relations from a relatively novel perspective, unexpected new insight will emerge out of the familiar.

The presentation and discussion sets out to scrutinise our psychoanalytic understanding and use of creative space for developing a mode of belonging and giving allegiance that holds within it the notion of healthy adult dependency, and for being able to navigate self-leadership as well as leadership of groups and organisations. There has been a long-standing unquestioned orthodoxy in our field that Bion's work on groups equates with the traditional Group Relations training methodology, as though this is the only way he intended his insights be put into use. But Bion's legacy has also informed other types of experiential learning, such as, for example, therapeutic groups – his ideas can be used immensely creatively. This paper proposes to explore these alternative developments in depth and hence provides a level of scholarship that sets out to be critical and challenging of our unquestioned assumptions.

The paper will illustrate the conceptual ideas put forward with an example of the use of space for a temporary therapeutic community. Its objective is to create a 'boundaried' environment in which the person can experience self and others

within a 360 degree perspective, held together by an overarching perspective within the prism of community. This community is a concept with a focus on the missing dimension of organisations, a concept that has been more or less deleted in management and leadership thinking; it is a mode of belonging and giving allegiance that holds within it the notion of healthy adult dependency, cooperation and developmental growth built upon dedication and commitment to the task of the enterprise.

We see this dedication to the task in the case example of a temporary community as a learning organisation as being one that can be tracked and translated into the spaces and rooms of ordinary organisational life. The paper includes researched examples of ways leaders have used the concept of 'developmental, focused, work space' to create new ways of working in their own national and international organisations and political environments - namely a top robotic research foundation and the Dutch parliament.

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