INTRODUCTION TO "OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY"

The Open Space technology was designed as a format for a whole conference, but we have adapted it slightly, it to fit in with our "Facilitating Ourselves" timetable.

The basic principle is that the participants themselves offer and organise the topics and the sessions - and anyone is free to attend any of the sessions they choose.

At an Open Space conference, there are community circles in the mornings and the evenings - and these circles also serve as a "market place" for individuals to name issues of concern and offer sessions.   Speaking from the circle they must outline what they intend will happen at the session and they must produce a simple poster (materials will be provided) which people can subsequently attach their signatures to, if they want to attend.

A person who convenes a session need not be committed to any formal structure unless they choose to; instead people may simply be invited to join in a session based on the chosen topic; in this case the session will be organised or improvised by the people who attend it.   The one essential is that the proposal for the session comes from a real passion within you.   (If you suggest something that you merely "think" would be a good thing, it probably won't work so well.)

The timetable includes slots for these Open Space sessions, and during the market-place session each morning, those who offer sessions will put their posters on the wall - indicating in which of the time slots their session will take place.   There will be space for individuals to sign up for the sessions they want to attend.   *(This, however, does not commit them to coming to the session - see "The Law of Two Feet", below.)*   The convenor of the session may cancel it, obviously, if no-one else signs up for it.   Convenors offering sessions on similar topics may decide to join forces, and people may ask certain convenors to re-schedule their sessions to make participation possible.

FOUR PRINCIPLES AND ONE LAW OF OPEN SPACE

1. Whoever comes are the right people (participation is voluntary)
2. Whenever it starts is the right time (inspiration doesn't recognise timetables)
3. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen (let go of your expectations)
4. When it's over, it's over (if there's no more to say, move on)

THE LAW OF TWO FEET
"If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing nor learning, move somewhere where you can."

One of the consequences of the law of two feet is that some participants are likely to flit from group to group *(like bumble-bees)* and some others will hover in the public spaces and attract passers by into spontaneous conversations *(like butterflies)*. These people have the function (whether they know it or not) of providing cross fertilisation between the different groups.

The principles and practices of Open Space Technology have been used to facilitate self-organisation in a whole variety of settings in the workplace or the community. It is a very flexible approach which offers the opportunity for many different topics to be explored simultaneously around a central question which is stated in advance. It enables an unlimited number of people to meet, discuss issues of heartfelt concern, pool their knowledge and, where appropriate, develop action plans.

Our question, for the event 12 - 17th August is:-

"How can the main signposts of community building (pseudo-community, chaos, emptiness and community) help us in the navigations of real life?   And what can we do, here, to try out new ways of doing this navigation together?"

The goal of an Open Space meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by people with the energy and desire to see it through, and typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. In the simultaneous sessions people discuss their concerns, explore issues and opportunities and find new ways forward. An Open Space event brings people together to contribute their views, share their ideas and develop plans for creative and collaborative action.

Open Space Technology helps individuals, groups and communities become more effective in environments that are rapidly and constantly changing. It creates the conditions so that the maximum potential of the individual and the group can be realised. Open Space Technology captures the knowledge, experience and innovation in the group that is not captured through less open processes.