

PERSONAL COSMOLOGIES

A CONVERSATIONAL FRAMEWORK
TO ADVANCE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND NEW THINKING



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Concept and implementation: Michael Kliën
Duration: varied / Sessions last between 1 and 3 hours

BACKGROUND

Personal Cosmologies was originally conceived by choreographer Michael Kliën during Daghdha's Mentoring Programme in 2007 as an experimental format for structured conversations, exploring possibilities of early notions of Social Choreography. The system was first publically applied in a village square during Rosazza Art Festival 2009 and has since been practiced around Europe.

SET-UP

A blackboard/whiteboard stands in front of any group or gathering of five to 50 people. The environment should be informal and comfortable (tea, coffee, relaxed seating-arrangement, mixed seating if possible: floor space, sofas, chairs etc.). A facilitator is amongst the group to introduce the framework as well as to enable and guide the overall process throughout *Personal Cosmologies*.

DURATION

The duration of each individual session is completely dependent on the situation and might last between ten and 50 minutes.

THE PREMISE

On a volunteering basis individuals step up to the blackboard and offers to reply to questions from the audience as honestly, diligently and thoughtful as possible (the one who 'Stands Answer'). The individual can support his/her spoken answers with gestures, drawings or any other form that supports the communicative process. The questioning parties primary aim is to gather a 'zoomed out', encompassing view and understanding of the answering parties deep understanding and sensing of the world. The key-objective of *Personal Cosmologies* is to understand someone else's personal belief system, how it might function and how it creates an 'inhabitable reality'. The intent is not to criticize, discuss or comment on someone's answers. The sessions are always 'about' the one who 'Stands Answer', not the ones asking questions. Members in the audience can seek clarifications of any given answer by asking the individual to expand on their explanation at any time (i.e. 'I don't quite understand, please could you expand?').

QUESTIONS

The questions are formulated as to gain an understanding of an individual's world-view and should be formulated in an open manner and generally avoid an overly direct request to define (i.e. 'What is ...?'). Questions that focus on personal issues (such as 'How do you feel about the Internet?') are not permitted. They should be formulated in a generic and not individually tailored manner. As an indicator, fields of questions can circle around following topics: Freedom, Nature, Parallel Universe, Good/Bad, God/Sacred, Humans/Animals, Meaning of Life, Evolution, History, Power, Paradox, War, Consciousness/Unconsciousness, Energies/Dynamics, Mind/Body, Mortality, Soul, Hierarchies, Life.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

If you are changing your views throughout life what ensures you the validity of current views? How do you know? Could you describe the phenomena of art/dance/music? What binds it all together? What is the direction of evolution, love etc? Who runs the world? How and when does a nation act as an individual? What form of cultural development is worth fighting for? How real are numbers? How do you explain the existence of god(s)?