

Envision the Future of Collaboration

Imagination Run Wild Summary Paper

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Abstract

The session began with a brief lecture, followed by dividing the 18 participants into smaller groups. Each group received a handout of our Patterns of Patterns II paper and four cards to spark collaborative creativity. The activity fostered engaging group interactions and provided valuable insights through collaborative learning. A questionnaire was provided to participants following the experience. Those results contribute to our lessons learned from the session and advice we want to share for the future of collaboration.

1 Introduction and Background

We co-facilitated an Imagination Run Wild (IRW) session titled "Envision the Future of Collaboration" on Tuesday, October 15th at 7:30 PM local time at Skamania Lodge in Washington at the 31st Pattern Languages of Programming, Practices, and People (PLoP) Conference. Our description from the conference website was:

"Transform your teamwork! Is your current project collaborating with others stuck at an unproductive point? Share the example and we will help you get unstuck! Are you a collaboration savant with helpful stories to share for others to learn from? Share them at our workshop for others to learn from you! Join us as we will play a fun card game plus blend Causal Layered Analysis and design patterns to create innovative visions for the future of peer production, learning, and collaboration."

We had sixty minutes. There were eighteen participants and three onsite facilitators.

1.1 How the Session Related to Our Other Work

Our IRW session is related to focus groups that we ran in 2024 at EuroPloP [1] and AsianPloP [2]. All of these utilized the PLACARD technique, first introduced in our PLoP 2021 paper, *"Patterns of Patterns"* [3]. The technique was further refined in the PLoP 2023 paper, *"Patterns of Patterns II"* [4]. Additionally, in 2016, we authored the *Peeragogy Handbook* [6], building on work from 2015, during which we developed nine design patterns [5]. PLACARD is a way to combine three approaches to collaboration into a single, cohesive process for collaborating successfully to complete complex projects with peers. The letters correspond to the three approaches: Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), Project Action Review (PAR), and Design Pattern Languages (DPL).

1.2 Goals

Heading into the session, our goal was to achieve three outcomes outlined in our submission proposal: to provide attendees with ideas to enhance their peer learning and peer production skills, to introduce them to PLACARD, and collectively envision the future of collaboration, capturing these ideas in artifacts and documents, including a PAR.

During the session, we successfully introduced PLACARD to the attendees and initiated a collaborative exploration of the future of collaboration. This was achieved through an interactive game in which participants used object cards to create their own stories. Additionally, the activity provided attendees with an opportunity to refine their peer learning and peer production skills. We ran out of time before we got a chance to do a PAR.

2 How the Session Was Conducted and Who Participated

We began the session with a short lecture that explained PLACARD and its three component methods through a slide deck. One of the slides introduced CLA *visually*, via the iceberg metaphor [7]. The first iceberg layer "litany" is above the water and what some humans see most easily. The other three layers are bigger and "hidden" under the water influencing what can be seen above. We asked the participants "What is collaboration?", as we worked together to arrive at a group understanding.

Participants were divided into five groups seated at three round tables. Each group was made up of three to five people and received a few pages from our *Patterns of Patterns II* [4] paper and four cards from The Oracle For Transfeminist Technologies [8] deck. The deck is "designed to help us collectively envision and share ideas for transfeminist technologies from the future" [8]. The cards included a value card, an object card (a guitar, wine, hat, bicycle, trash bin, bread), a territory/body card, and a situation card.

A flip board with the CLA framework four layers, represented in concentric circles, was set up on the wall. Participants used it to post their group ideas on sticky notes at the

end of the workshop. To establish a collaborative atmosphere, we encouraged everyone to remain open-minded about future possibilities and, most importantly, to have fun!

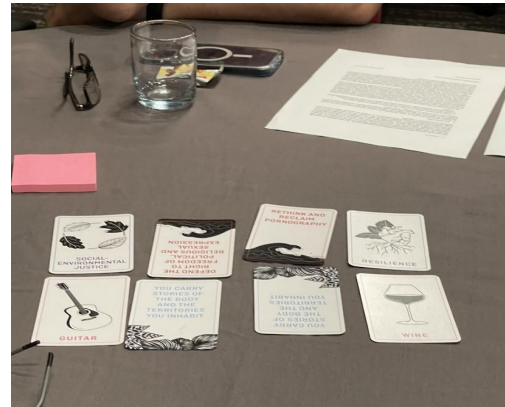
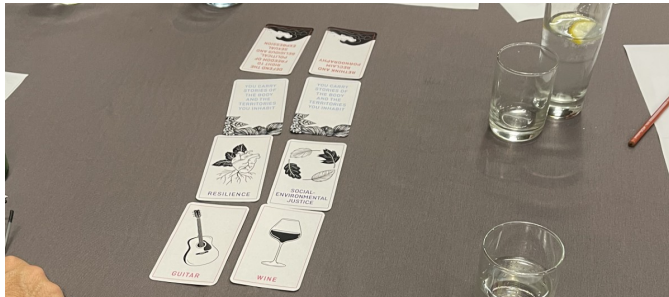


Figure 1 - PloP '24 Workshop - participants working with Transfeminist Oracle cards

3 Lessons Learned

We gained valuable insights thanks to the generosity of the participants who shared their time with us. There were multiple interesting stories that emerged from the groups. One example was the team who received the “hat” object card. They placed the note on the Worldview layer shown Fig 2.

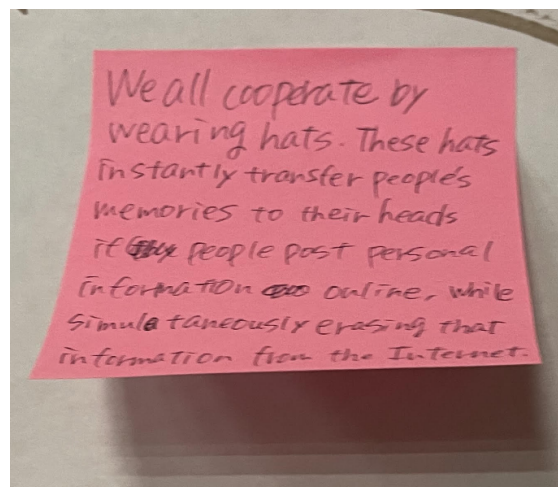


Figure 2 - Group with hat object card

We felt going from the image of the hat to a technological device that could aid with collaboration was very clever. They were considerate of privacy as well by adding that following a collaborative hat experience, collaborators could remove their information from the internet.

All groups were able to map the cards to the CLA four layers. CLA is a way to help others find a way out of current predicaments and we felt the participants embraced this aspect of the framework based on their sticky notes and discussions.

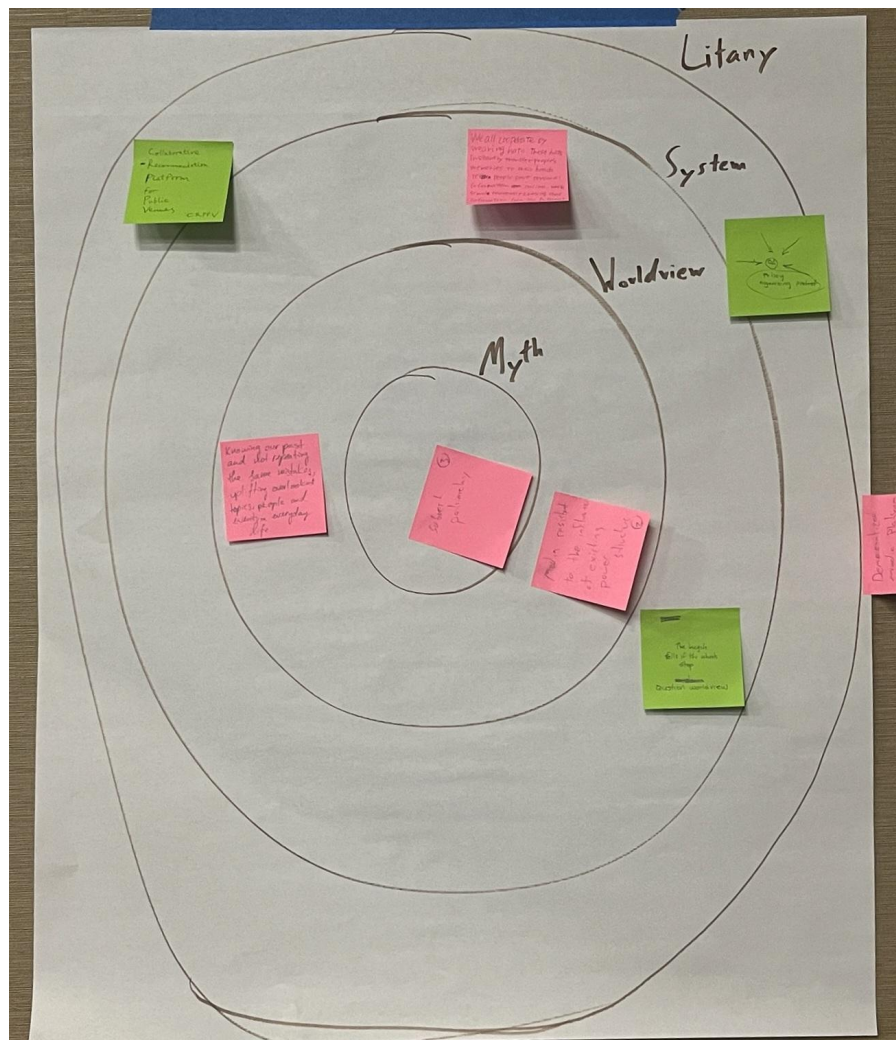


Figure 3 - Flip chart with concentric CLA meaning map Circles and post-it notes

3.1 Survey Results

One of the ways we learned from the experience was with a survey. It was similar to the one we sent to participants following the EuroPLoP workshop. In their comments the survey participants mentioned how the session was confusing at the beginning, but they were having fun by the end. One of the things we found was that participants had a lot of experience attending other PLoP conferences (Figure 6). This deep experience with patterns was helpful for conducting the workshop, as we did not need to explain what they are giving participants a baseline for learning about PLACARD.



Figure 4 - International participants working with the Transfeminist Oracle cards

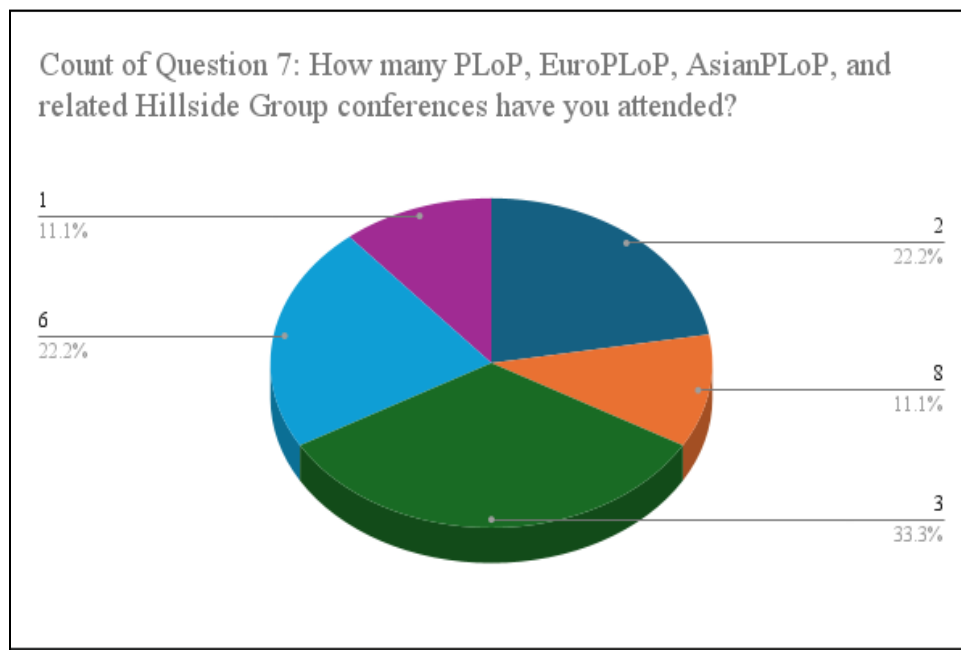


Figure 5 - Pie chart showing the number of PLoP events they have attended

3.2 Collaboration Pattern Mining

As part of writing this paper and learning from our session. We began some new collaboration patterns that other organizers may be able to use in the future, such as “Have Multiple Leaders On Site”. During our sessions at AsianPLoP and EuroPLoP we only had one organizer in the room and it presented challenges, even though we had co-facilitators who joined remotely. Having three of us in the room in Washington led to a much richer participatory experience.

Context:

- You are leading an interactive session at an in-person conference

Problem:

- It is difficult to handle groups alone to ensure they all are comprehending the content and able to participate

Solution

- Have multiple people in the room to help co-facilitate

3.3 Conclusion

In retrospect the session itself drifted away from what we advertised. We expected to specify the future of collaboration. The cards were supposed to be tools to help open up participants' imaginations. Some groups were comfortable but another group was overwhelmed by the cards. For that group we had to simplify the game in the interest of time. We did not explain the rules of the game to the groups before the game began, perhaps we should do that more in the future. Additionally the PLACARD as whole was difficult for participants to access after only a few slides. There was also not enough time for them to read and absorb the handout we provided. We used the iceberg slide [7] that helped people use an image to access a complex idea. Perhaps in the future we could use a Futures Triangle [9] "A tool to map the future through the three dimensions that are shaping it: the pull of the future, the push of the present, and the weight of history. It is a simple and quick instrument for understanding plausible futures based on the interactions and movements of the three forces." and/or a Futures Wheel [10].

The PAR is a helpful way to conclude a meeting by collectively describing what was accomplished. It was supposed to give participants clarity about what we all learned. Not having this closing ritual left some participants confused about what was accomplished. Specifically we did not connect the session back to imagining the future of collaboration. In future workshops we also hope to spend more concentrating on the patterns themselves from the PLACARD papers themselves, which may help participants relate to the content better. Despite these challenges, based on the survey responses we saw participants did enjoy themselves and we all heard some interesting stories during the hour.

Acknowledgements

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