Virtual LS

Building blocks

Copyright

What do we mean by "building blocks"?

When practicing LS in person, there are some foundational interaction patterns upon which we build other LS. For example:
- 1-2-4-all (may be used as sub-structure in many LS)
- Conversation cafe/talking object (may be used as sub-structures in w3)
- Shared physical artefacts like paper and sticky notes (ecocycle; w3; triz; drawing together)
- Movement (25/10; impromptu networking; mad tea)
- Spatial relationships and attention (think turning the back in troika, arrangement of space in fishbowl between fish and observers)

When practicing virtually there are similar foundational patterns, but some things work differently. **This page describes the foundational patterns that are re-used in many different virtual LS.**

We are conscious that much of this section makes heavy reference to how things work in Zoom, since it is the predominant tool used at present for LS. As we gain experience with virtual LS we are keen to describe things in a way that draws out the essence of the practice as well as giving tangible specifics for particular technologies and tools.

1-N-all

One of the foundational building blocks of in-person LS is 1-N-all. In physical spaces we often use 1-2-4-all which provides a progressive easing from silent, introspective reflection; through supportive pairwise conversation; to a wider group. This is a fundamental way to ensure that everyone is heard and hears at least one other person. This helps prepare us to then hear/be heard in a group.

Current limitations in Zoom make the progression from pairs->fours tricky. The only way to do this is to manually move people from 2->4.

So in virtual space we often use 1-4-all or 1-3-all to avoid this clunky step.

Chat to orient everyone

The most basic means to orient everyone what's happening next is chat - it stays within the meeting space, is easy to add to and creates a shared re-collection of the gathering.

What we Notice About Chat

You can only see what was entered from the moment you join - you cannot access the chat history as someone joining later. Consequences:
- Share fractions of chat you used to orient everyone with those joining later
- In larger meetings you can have a chat host who can be approached by late-comers / people who got disconnected to send them the pieces they need to fully participate (as a private chat message)

If you receive or send a private message, Zoom will keep that as the preference until you change it back to "everyone." The consequence is that you think you are chatting to all, and you are accidentally chatting to the last person who sent you a private message!

The chat follows a user's experience throughout the gathering. Consequences:
- Share instructions on next steps & timing when you have everyone in the room. Once in breakout rooms, it's only visible to those staying in the main room
- The only way to send a message to all while breakout-rooms are going on is to use "broadcast" messages which disappear after a couple of seconds; so make sure to share longer instructions in chat before you launch everyone into breakout sessions
- If people are using chat to harvest their work in breakout rooms, they need to re-share with all once back in the main room - as the part created in breakout-rooms is only visible for their breakout-group.

It's not possible to format chat messages with simple formatting (e.g. *...* for bold). Consequences:
- Embrace ascii-style formatting to let instructions and invitations stand out. (I.e. ============= +++++++++++++ or ALL CAPS TO SIGNIFY A TRANSITION
- Find some inspiration here: http://copy.r74n.com/ascii-art

Structure instructions for chat

With a chat-ty group things can become messy quickly. Help orient everyone by some good practices around instructions in chat:

- Stick to one ascii-style.-format for each instruction - e.g. by adding a line of special characters where it starts/ ends.
- Consider using another special character to let invitations stand out (e.g. frame invitations with ++ or **)

We set up a [copy-paste-filling stati*on for structure instructions](#) - please help to make the list of instructions more and more concise & complete!

- Use link shorteners like bit.ly to make long GDoc links more manageable

Virtual talking object/nomination

Many LS build on the conversation-café pattern of having a talking object to promote active, respectful listening. In a virtual setting, a talking object can become a process of nomination.

Say, "Ok shall we just go round one-by-one?"

1. First person speaks, others are listening
2. Host invites them to nominate the next person "are you done, would you like to nominate the next person?"
3. Next person speaks, others listen. They may follow the established behaviour pattern of nominating the next person; if not, the host invites them to nominate the next person.

Chatterfall

Chatterfall is the pattern of using text chat to solicit individual responses from a large group.

The typical pattern is:

1. Host says: "Ok I'd like everyone now to take a moment to think of a response to a prompt. I'd like you to compose your response in chat but don't hit enter until I say "GO"
2. Host pastes the prompt in the chat:
   a. Example #1: "My full name, location and connection to this group is..."
   b. Example #2: "What I find challenging in our current situation is…"
   c. For check-ins or check-outs, more substantial questions could be posed.
   d. It's helpful for the chat prompt to repeat exactly the oral invitation exactly, especially if there are non-native speakers.
   e. Use
3. Host says: "Ok, the prompt is .. What I find challenging in our current situation is… write your response but don't hit enter until I say GO"
4. Wait 20-30 seconds
5. Host says: "Ok GO!"
6. <lots of responses go past>
7. <a trickle of responses keep appearing>

8. Host says: "Ok now take a few minutes to read back over other people's responses"

If you have a sequence of prompts such as with Virtual Mad tea, then you may work through all of the prompts before inviting people to read back.
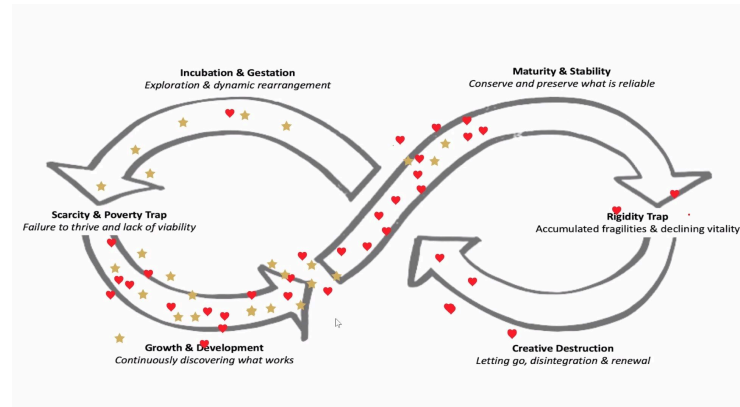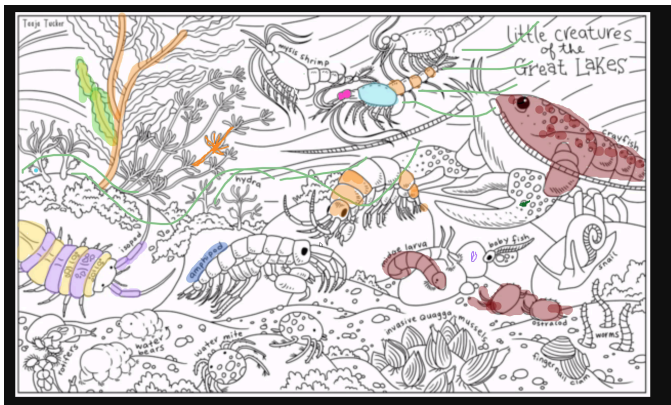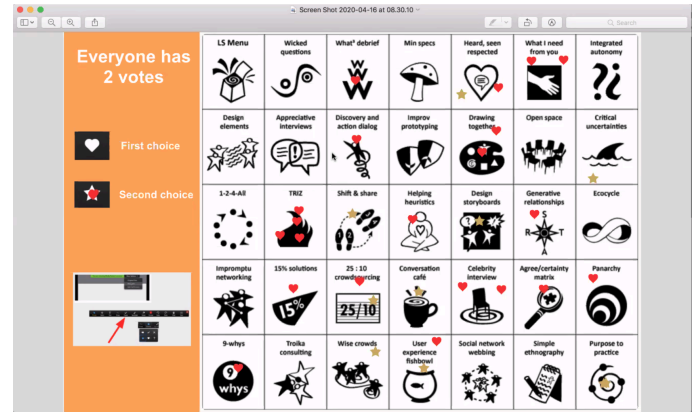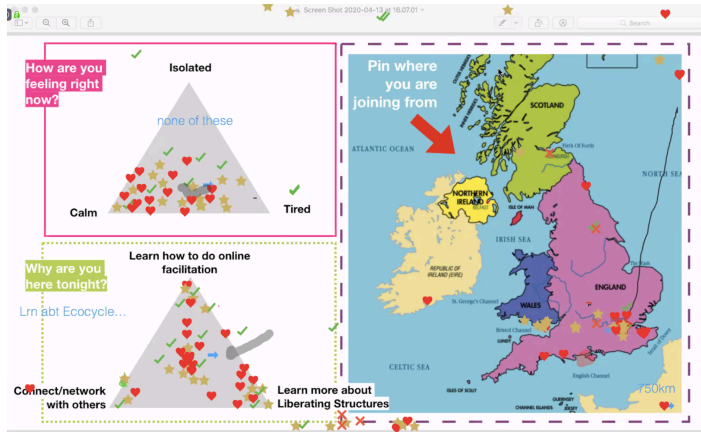
Uses:
- Invite people to introduce themselves when they arrive "Post in chat your name, interests, where you're from, what prompted you to join this session today"
- As Virtual Mad tea
- As a debrief or playback in the "all" part of a 1-2-4-all

Tips/traps:
- Be mindful that some people may find text a difficult medium; make sure you give people enough time to compose and process responses, and vary interaction styles
- To help see when people are done chatting, ask them to hold up their hands on screen (if video is being used)
- Reading some notable contributions out loud can give the chat sequence a sense of closure.
- Save the chat at the end & consider the many possible uses here and here. Note.
- You may wish to tidy up your chat transcript of reprocess it to make it easy share or digest.
-

Visual annotation [maybe this section doesn't belong in building blocks?]

By combining screenshare and annotation functions in Zoom you can invite participants to rapidly and anonymously rate themselves against a visual prompt.

Uses:

- **Spectrograms:** A punctuation to sense ranges of experience, agreement, etc. A line is put on a whiteboard/screen, people pick up digital "markers" and place themselves along the continuum. (I.e. I love chocolate←-> I hate chocolate) The continuums aren't necessarily right/wrong, good/bad.
- **Trigrams:** rather than a linear scale, choose three desirable properties (or three undesirable properties) and ask participants to respond visually by placing "stones" and annotating. Because there's no obvious "right" or "preferable" answer people are more likely to think carefully to make their choice.
- **Maps**: as an ice-breaker, invite participants to mark where they are geographically on a map:

- **Ecocycle:** at the start of a ~~teaching~~ session, invite people to self-assess against some quality that you are trying to teach. This will help you to pitch your explanations at the right level.
- **Colouring in:** as a punctuation or settling tool, give people a mindful activity to carry out, perhaps with some gentle background music, or whilst chatting

Things to watch out for:

- Zoom:
  - there's a setting to enable/disable guest annotation. Ensure everyone has permission
  - During screenshare, participants activate the annotation mode from the "View options" menu
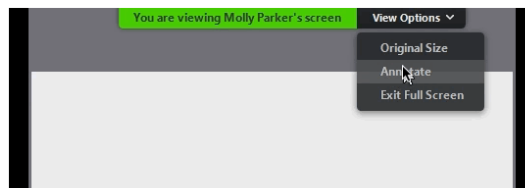
  - On tablets and mobile phones, the "stamp" function is not available; people can use the drawing function instead
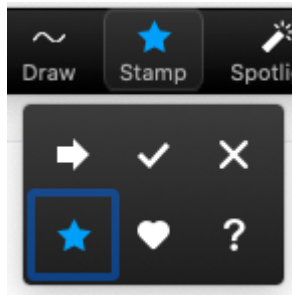
Music

[Get In My Head+](#)

Movement

If people are on an online meeting for a long time, there's a high chance that they are sitting still and after a long time that is not healthy for the body or the brain. So it's definitely good to encourage people to move their bodies.

Some examples of ways to encourage movement and also build connection/rapport

Standup and breathe

Bear in mind that some people may not be physically able to stand, so a good way to phrase an invitation here might be:

"If you're able, I invite you to take a moment to stand up. Raise your arms up above your head and take a long deep breath in [pause 3-4 secs…] and exhale… bring your arms down.. Let's do that again… Inhale arms up… [pause…] … exhale arms down"

Get something red

Invitation: Look around your room, find something red and bring it and show it on the camera. What is it?

This is a nice way to (a) get people to move their eyes (b) get people to move their bodies if they need to move to fetch the object (c) build connection, because the object will give others on the call a small insight into the other person's life and personal space.

Dancing

If you're feeling bold, you could put some music on and invite people to get up and dance. That might only work in certain contexts/audiences, but if the tune is right you might be surprised! People can turn off their cameras if they don't feel comfortable showing off their dancing. In Zoom you can select "share computer audio" when screensharing to have your audio shared with others.

Collaboration spaces/Shared documents

Collaboration spaces are…
- Spaces that can be edited by everyone in the room equally
- In real-time participants can add their thoughts and ideas and see what others shared

You would create collaboration spaces when…

A typical pattern is…

see 02.1 - Tools for a list of collaborative documentation tools