Good Vibrations Facilitation: Creating Spaces for Dissonance and Harmony

This research summary presents the initial findings from the first stage of a research project exploring the facilitation processes within Good Vibrations projects. This research builds on previous studies that have investigated the outcomes of Good Vibrations projects, [1] and the musical learning processes that lead to those outcomes. [2]

Two key findings from these studies are:

- The **relationship** between the facilitator and the participants is fundamental to the **social** and **musical** development of the participants ;[3]
- The **space** for discussion and reflection, fostered through audio recording and feedback, enables people to develop their **communication** and **team work** skills as well as improve their **musical work.** [4]

With these two findings as a starting point, the current study seeks to look more deeply at the **process of facilitation** in order to provide some insight into:

- The relationships within a project and the ways that these contribute to the social and musical experience of the participants;
- The ways in which the spaces for discussion and reflection are created by the facilitator and how participants are engaged in these.

Overview of Findings

Each facilitator has their own 'took kit' of activities, but it is the **spaces** both within and surrounding these activities, and a care for the **experiences** that they create for both participants and facilitators that contribute to the Good Vibrations approach.

All of this is with the recognition that ones' own practice is constantly **developing** and effective facilitation comes from **self-reflection**.

The process of self-reflection involves **noticing**, **questioning**, **observing**, **listening**, **taking on criticism**, and **adjusting language**.

These are also the things that enable facilitators to create, hold, and invite people to inhabit **safe** spaces for **conflict**, **reflection**, and individual and group **flourishing**.

Knowing **how** to give space in musical activities through the way activities and sessions are both structured and navigated is as important as knowing **when** to give space. These things come from a constant concern with the **experiences** of participants not only **musically**, but also **emotionally** and **socially**.

Ultimately the process of facilitation involves **empowering** participants through the normal **human** behaviours of **dialogue**, **communication**, ….

Spaces for individuals and groups to flourish – 'I like to get out of the way rather than me being a necessary part of it, and then noticing the changing dynamics.'

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[1] Jennie Henley et al., "Good Vibrations: Positive Change through Social Music-Making," *Music Education Research* 14, no. 4 (2012): 499–520, doi:10.1080/14613808.2012.714765.

[2] Jennie Henley, "Musical Learning and Desistance from Crime: The Case of a 'Good Vibrations' Javanese Gamelan Project with Young Offenders," *Music Education Research* 17, no. 1 (2015): 103–120.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Jennie Henley, "Young Offenders," in *Routledge Research Companion to Music, Technology and Education*, ed. Andrew King and Evangelos Himonides (Farnham: Routledge, 2016).

- A recognition that you are holding the space but not central to the space is important – you are giving the space for composition rather than composing for them.
- The balance between democracy and leadership is important. Participants are enabled to occupy the space on terms negotiated as a group, but sometimes you need to make a decision to enable the group to flourish.
- You need to give participants space to give themselves a chance, sometimes this is by allowing awkward moments to happen and letting them work out how to get past them.
- Noticing when individuals need their voice to be heard, but also when individuals are not listening to others is key to the decisions you make in relation to group activities.
- Removing disruptive people from the space may be an immediate solution but is not always the best solution for either the individual or the group.

Spaces for conflict - 'It's not just giving space, it's got to be held. It's got to be held with the best intentions, that people are going to get the most out of this.'

- Conflict is a natural part of human behaviour.
- Spaces for conflict allow things to surface, and issues get addressed.
- Transformation happens through realisation of the self, this often happens as a result of conflict.
- Spaces need to be held in order to enable the conflict to resolve.
- Knowing when to intervene is as important as knowing when to let things run their course.
- It is important to recognise conflict is also natural between facilitators.
- It is also important to recognise and acknowledge when you are wrong.

Safety in spaces – 'You are holding the space that allows these things to happen safely'

- Space within creative activities to try things out away from the spotlight enables people to take a risk in a safe way.
- Parameters do need to be set, but these are more effective when related to the physicality of the space rather than the musicality within the space.
- Establishing trust before asking people to move way out of their comfort zone is crucial.
- It is important that co-facilitators have space to provide you with feedback without fearing conflict.

Spaces for reflection – 'I want the ideas and what they produce to come from them.'

- Organising activities so that there is always space for reflection also helps participants to recognise their own achievements.
- Spaces for informal conversation are as important as spaces specifically for formal reflection.
- Informal conversations should happen between participants, between facilitator and participants, and between facilitators.
- Reflection on an individual basis is as important as group reflection.
- Critical reflection on the part of the facilitator is what strengthens your own practice.