

Building the Field for Deliberately Developmental Spaces



Life
Itself

COMMONWEAL
Healing people, healing the planet



Fetzer Institute

EKSKĀRET

A Joint Effort

- This is a collaboration between collaboration of Life Itself, Fetzer Institute, Commonweal & Ekskäret
- First step in field-building efforts focused on mapping and forging awareness
- Research work here has been carried out by Life Itself and we take responsibility for any errors or omissions 😊



SETTING THE SCENE

Setting the Scene

- Background: project partners had interest and experience over many years e.g. Commonweal's youth programs, Fetzer's work with retreat centers and many other communities, Ekskäret island Nordic Secret etc, Life Itself hubs and residencies
- DDS piece in 2021 - What is a DDS?
- Why be interested in DDS: metacrisis - distilled in the manifesto
- Inspirations: Nordic bildung and folks schools, Monasteries, variety of alternative educational programs etc

In summary: Acknowledge there's all this existing stuff ... (e.g. monasteries have been around for 1000s of years! etc)

... And sense there is maybe something distinctive ... or at least worth distinctively naming at this point ...



What is a DDS?

<https://lifeitself.org/blog/2021/10/05/deliberately-developmental-spaces-a-key-to-addressing-the-metacrisis>

Physically colocated groups together for a sustained period of time with a conscious engagement in multidimensional developmental praxis.

1. Space. These environments are spaces in both a physical and temporal sense. They are a site for a group to live, work, practice and engage with one another with shared time that can be dedicated to these ends.

2. Developmental. These environments are explicitly *developmental* spaces: their practices and activities revolve around fostering the growth of participants "ontologically", both individually and collectively. As discussed above, ontological development is a shorthand for sustained development in the capacities which enable us to make sense of and engage with the world around us, particularly in how this relates to our own inner states. This can extend to more traditional education but also, and arguably more importantly, the domains often covered by spirituality and personal development such as emotional intelligence, self-knowledge and so on.

3. Deliberate. Development is *intentional* in that both the creators and participants are consciously orientated towards ontological development. This may not be the exclusive focus (as it is with traditional monasticism, for example). However, it should be a clear, conscious and central component of their participation.

Deliberately Developmental Spaces: a key to addressing the Metacrisis?

The piece reflects Life Itself's experience with practically creating developmental spaces in the last five years as well as our research, discussions and engagement with many others. We especially acknowledge ongoing discussions with Tomas Bjorkman and colleagues (whose terminology, borrowed from Robert Kegan's 'Deliberately Developmental Organisation', we have unashamedly adopted and built on) as well as with Oren Slozberg at Commonweal.



Rufus Pollock



Theo Cox

Oct 5, 2021 · 10 min read



#co-x #culturology #hubs #ontology #our-philosophy #top-pick



Why DDS: metacrisis need + developmental understanding potential - developmentalspaces.org (launched today)

Developmental Spaces for a time of Transition

A Draft Manifesto

October 2023*

We call for the creation of "deliberately developmental spaces" that cultivate the psychological and cultural capacities to respond effectively to the growing crises before us. These spaces can take many forms ranging from courses or programs to physical environments including new forms of monasteries or universities.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Part I

- Background: various of us had been speaking over several years
- In late 2022, we want to get things moving and collectively resourced this work
- Emphasize it is preliminary work

Building the Field for Developmental Spaces: a new project in collaboration with Fetzer Institute, Commonweal & Ekskäret

This project is a very first step in our field-building efforts. Its focus is on an initial "survey of the field" to map stakeholders and programs and start forging connections and awareness.



Rufus Pollock Jun 20, 2023 · 3 min read

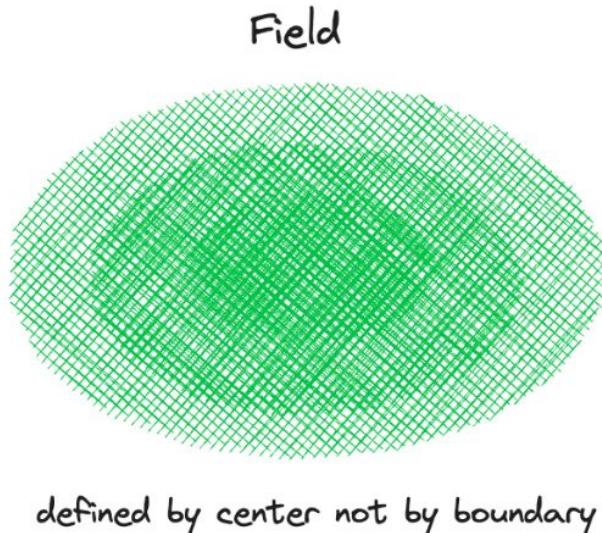


#labs #deliberately-developmental-spaces



Part II: Fielding Building ...

Part II: field building - what is a field



Literal metaphor of a "field" - some kind of space

Note: Centers rather than boundaries

Rather than focusing on "boundary" (who's in or out)

Focus on "center" and closeness to center

<http://nature-of-order.stefan-lesser.com/from-boundaries-to-centers>

Part II.1: Steps in Field Building ...

Part II.2 Steps in field-building

We are here

1. [Birth] Sensing the center: is there a field? Preliminary mapping ... 
2. [Birth to Growth] Strengthening the center: "Becoming a recognizable field"
3. [Maturity] ...

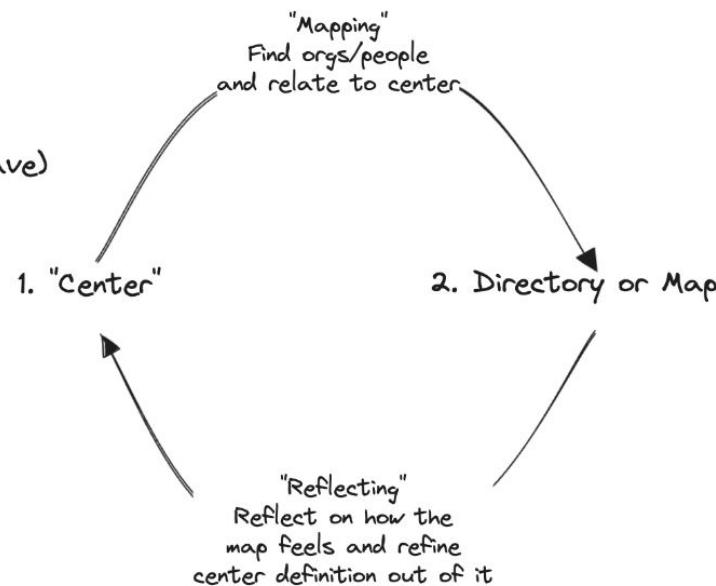
Part II.3: Sensing the Center - Reflective Equilibrium

Part III: Sensing the Center

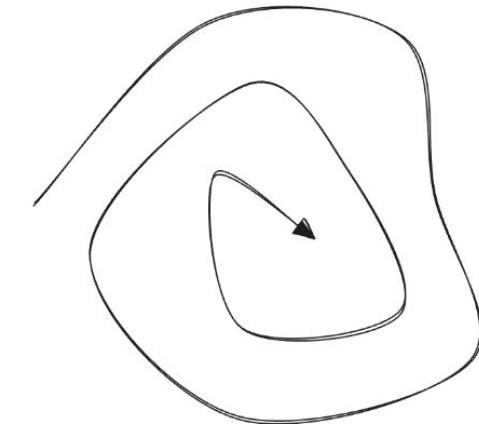
(e.g. through a reflective equilibrium e.g. approx center i.e. definition of kind of orgs, "map" i.e. go search with that, refine definition etc

1. Initial intuition for the center
2. Search for orgs against that
3. Refine the center (definition/criteria/terminology)
4. Search for orgs again (and/or recompare the list you have)

... keep repeating until ..



Define, Search, Reflect Cycle



Iterating the Cycle

As we iterate the cycle we will hone in on a good, clear "center" for our field plus a good list of stakeholders mapped in location to that center

(good list = not too big, not too small)

WHAT WE DID

Published a Manifesto

<https://developmentalspaces.org>

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October 2023*

We call for the creation of "deliberately developmental spaces" that cultivate the psychological and cultural capacities to respond effectively to the growing crises before us. These spaces can take many forms ranging from courses or programs to physical environments including new forms of monasteries or universities.

We are experiencing a polycrisis or metacrisis

A constellation of escalating and interwoven crises ranging from ecosphere degradation to political polarization. Crucially, these crises are interlinked both in source and solution, linkages which travel all the way down to how we envision ourselves, our societies and our civilization.

This demands new ways of being personally and collectively

A response to this crisis therefore calls for new ways of being in the world – ways sufficient to bring forth collective movements adequate to addressing this crisis at the level and scale required. Such a transformation in being is essential and foundational.



Research process

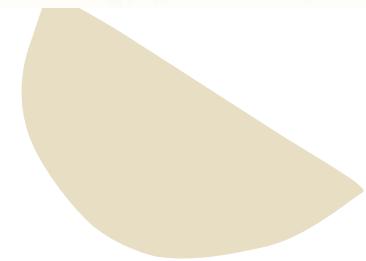
- Working for 5 months so far
- 53 organizations
- Snowball
- 12 interviews



The Soil Project

- 2-year Gap year program, Vietnam
- 'Soil education' philosophy
- Providing nourishing foundation knowledge, resources, community
- 4Hs:
Heart, Hands, Head, and Healing the World

The screenshot shows the homepage of The Soil Project. At the top right is a large yellow stylized leaf logo. The header includes a logo with the text "Soil Project", a language selector set to "EN", a search bar, and a "Log In" button. Below the header is a banner featuring a group of people outdoors and the text "THE SOIL PROJECT REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION". A subtext below the banner reads "A Community of Passionate Educators and Learners". At the bottom of the page is a section titled "ABOUT THE SOIL PROJECT" with a "Let's Chat!" button.



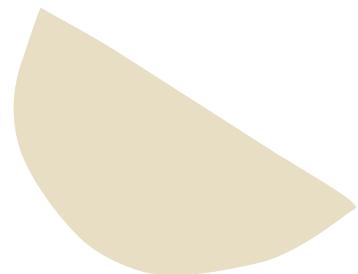
Deep Springs

- Self-government
- Elected student body
- Admitting students, hiring faculty, reviewing performance
- Immersive
- Self-contained & place-based
- Manual labor



City Year

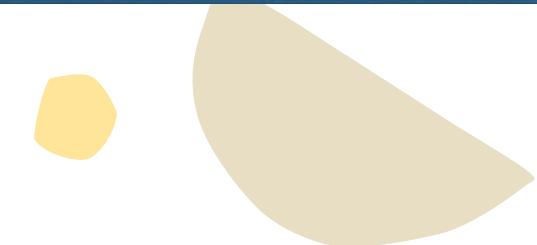
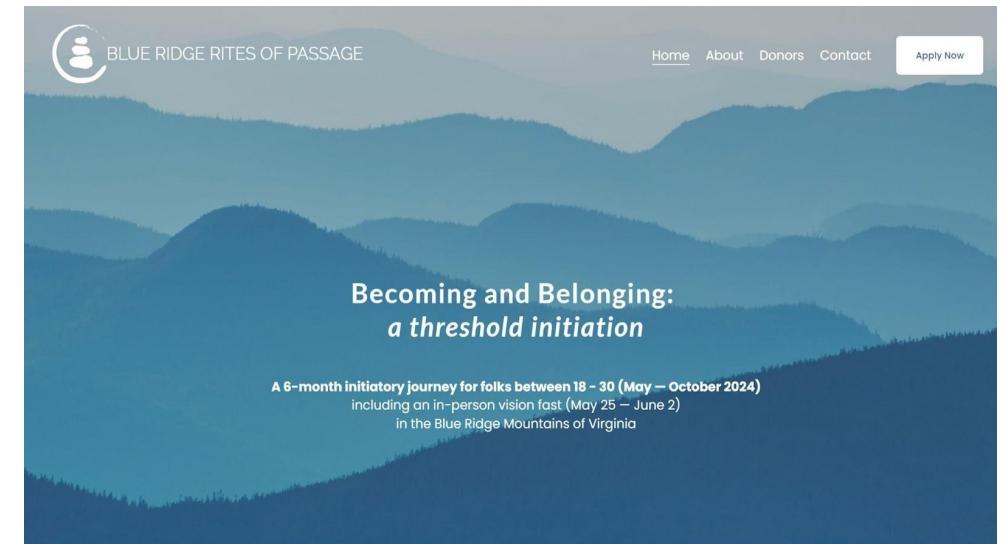
- Social-emotional focus:
 - Trained and supported in social-emotional abilities
 - Self-led experimental approach to problem-solving
 - 'Asset-based mindset'
- Multi-level
 - Linking coaches to their community and beyond
 - Ubuntu mindset: "You are, therefore I am"
 - Social justice & educational equity: seeking to eliminate stigma



Blue Ridge Rites of Passage

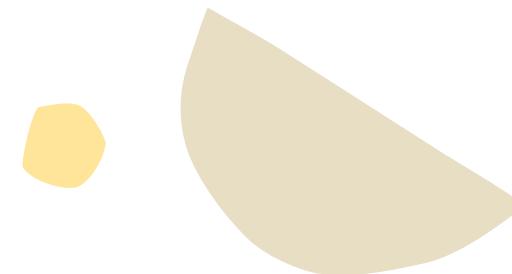


- In the process of launching
- Desire to 're-nature' ourselves
- Vision quest
- 1 on 1 coaching, group counseling



ILALI

- Practice, perspective, praxis
- Worldview literacy
- Development (in part) as the capacity to consider
- Wayfinders program
- Integration into the community



The International Youth Initiative Program

- 10-month residential program, based in Sweden
- Age range: 18-28
- “Societal entrepreneurship”: developing capacity to take initiative to contribute positively to the world



 THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH INITIATIVE PROGRAM

[HOME](#) ▾ [PROGRAM](#) ▾ [PEOPLE](#) ▾ [APPLY](#) ▾ [ORGANISATION](#) ▾ [GET INVOLVED](#) ▾ [NEWS](#) [CONTACT](#)

WELCOME TO THE YOUTH INITIATIVE PROGRAM



The International Youth Initiative Program (YIP) is a 10 month residential societal entrepreneurship training for 18-28 years olds based in Sweden. It offers a holistic educational program that expands global understanding and personal awareness. YIP aims to strengthen young people's capacity to take personal and collective initiative in the face of current global realities.

YIP ON INSTAGRAM

 [YIPSWEDEN](#)



[Load More...](#) [Follow on Instagram](#)

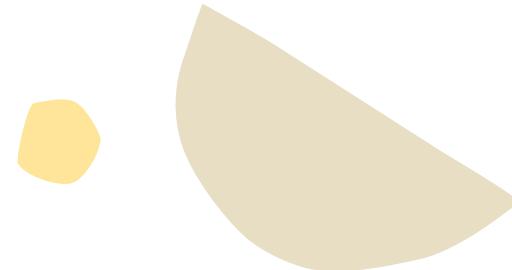
NEWSLETTER



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Harvard

"We have committed to creating and sustaining the conditions that enable all Harvard College students to experience an unparalleled educational journey that is intellectually, socially, and personally transformative."

Why is Harvard not a DDS?



[About](#) Admissions Financial Aid Academics Student Life

Guides Search



About

Mission, Vision, & History

The Transformative Power of a Liberal Arts and Sciences Education



Discussion: what do you think of these examples?

Which would be a DDS?



What kind of features stand out to you ...



Discussion on Development

- Youth self-governmentality
- Immersive environments
- Inclusion of mentors & 'elders'
- Expanding our notion of what 'development' means
- The challenge of a 'societal link' to personal development



Open-ended questions

- How do you consider 'development'?
- To what degree do you consider development a spiritual process?
- What are some spaces that you have 'developed' in?
- What makes a place developmental?
- What kind of 'development' happens in different places?
- To what degree does it make sense to have developmental models?



What's Next

- 3 M's of field-building: Manifestos, Mappings, Meetings
- Share and revise manifesto(s)
- Continue mapping and publish the directory of examples we've found
- Publishing the report
- Meetings / Convenings ...

