

CHAPTER 8: WHAT YOU CAN DO, THE HARMONIC VIBRANCY MOVE

In the last chapter, I shared the evidence I have gathered so far showing that many people are living experiences of abundance and harmonic vibrancy. I also described a number of significant innovations in quite disparate fields of activity, demonstrating that groups are finding ways to function effectively at *both* the things-matter level *and* the higher levels of perceived reality. The Ecosynomics framework allows us to recognize the basic commonality in those innovations and see patterns from which we can learn to innovate in other fields. The Agreements Maps offers concrete details of what their higher-level functioning looks like, and on that basis, we can make inferences about the underlying agreements that make it possible.

Now it is time to consider how you can get to that kind of agreement in your own groups. The Agreements Map is a key part of a process that can lead you there. I call this process the Harmonic Vibrancy Move. I hope this name will help you keep in mind that the goal is high vibrancy and abundance, experienced in all five primary relationships simultaneously. Like the harmony achieved by voices or instruments coming together skillfully in a musical offering, effective functioning in all relationships across all three levels of perceived reality creates a sense of richness and vitality. This is harmonic vibrancy, the experience we all want to have as often as possible.

In Chapter 2, I described three common pathways people take across the five-relationship-three-level terrain in search of a better quality of life experiences. Followers of the on-the-level path are convinced that possibility or development or things is the only “real” and relevant realm of operation. This path leads only to three separate versions of scarcity: unrealized dreams of what is possible; endless development without tangible results; or a finite amount of things with no prospects for renewal. The enlightened-matter path starts at the things-matter level and seeks to reach abundance by adding in activities at the levels of development-motion and possibility-light. This path leads to occasional experiences of abundance. It cannot take you all the way to the outer circle of harmonic vibrancy, however, because it is built on an assumption of scarcity. In contrast, on the grounded-potential path, one starts with abundance, chooses from infinite possibility what to develop, and then stops development when the time is right to bring forth a specific, desired outcome. This process is the basis for the Harmonic Vibrancy Move.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Of course, each group must determine and then implement the specifics of its own Harmonic Vibrancy Move. What I offer here is a four-step process for proceeding along the

grounded-potential path to get to those specifics (see

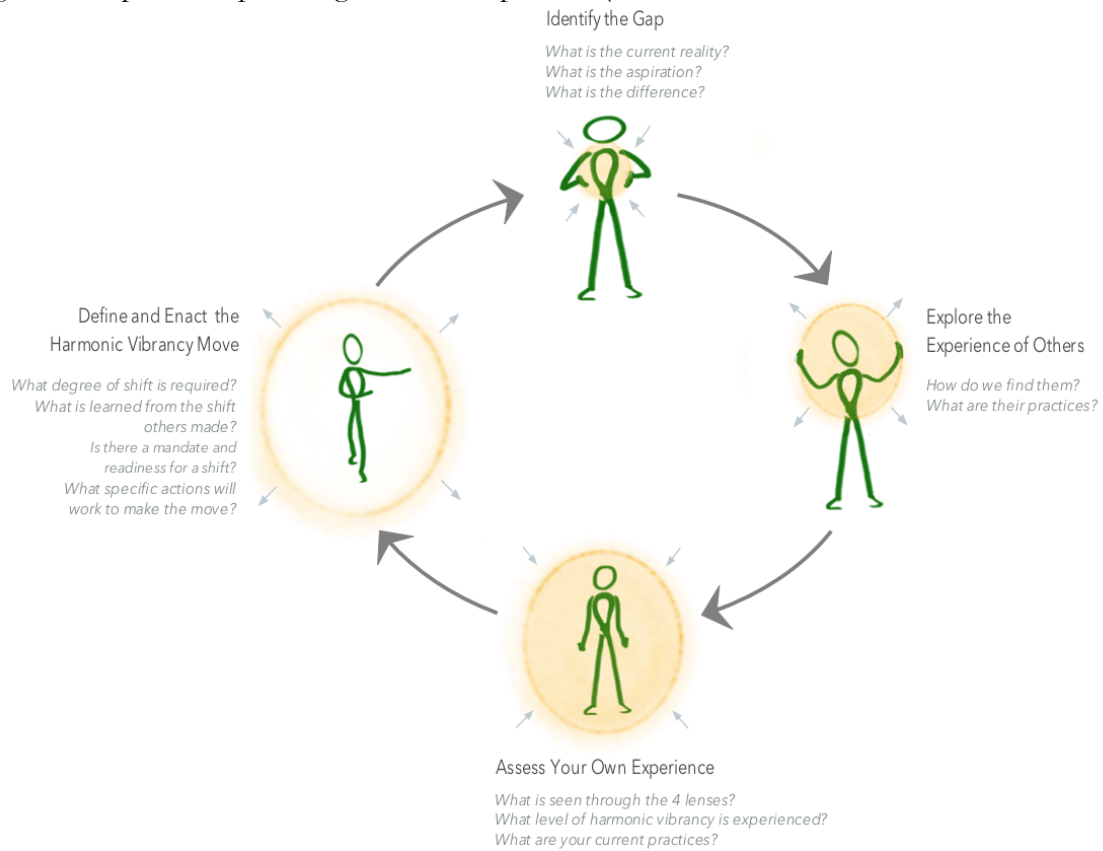


Figure 29). The first step, Identify the Gap, is an awareness-raising exercise. It brings people into the Ecosynomics realm by inviting them to look into the quality of their experiences in the group, both their current experience and the experience they would like to be having. It is an opportunity for them, individually and collectively, to get in touch with their highest aspirations for what the group experience could be like. The second step, Explore the Experience of Others, opens up a more concrete consideration of what might be possible. It does this by extending the inquiry to take in the details of how other groups are living with the kind of experience your group desires—what does a higher level of harmonic vibrancy actually look like?

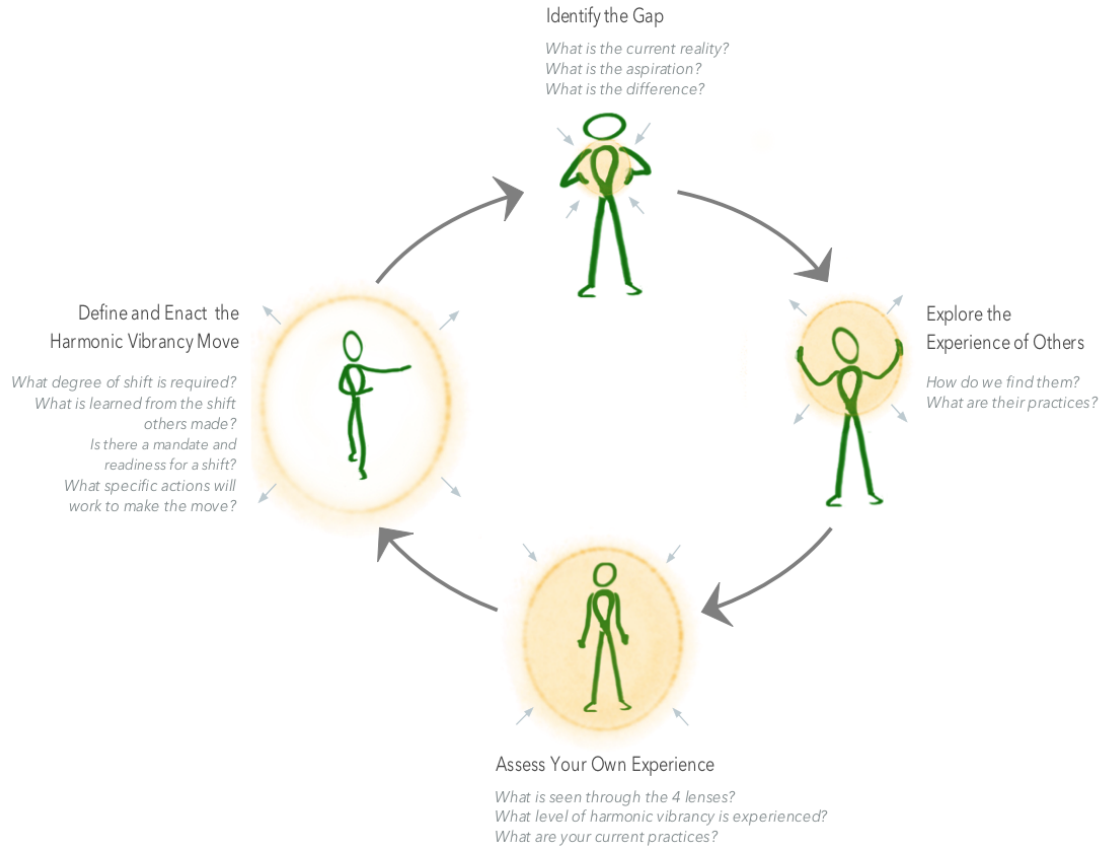


Figure 29: Harmonic Vibrancy Move Process

In the third step, Assess Your Own Experience, the group lays the groundwork for moving to the next level of experience and outcomes. The key tool for this step is the Agreements Map. With a detailed understanding of the group’s current practices in all five relationships, as seen through the four economic lenses and mapped onto the three levels of perceived reality, the areas in need of development will be abundantly clear. This clarity provides a basis for seeing how the underlying agreements can shift and need to shift in order to move to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy. On this basis, the group can move to the fourth step, Define and Enact the Harmonic Vibrancy Move.

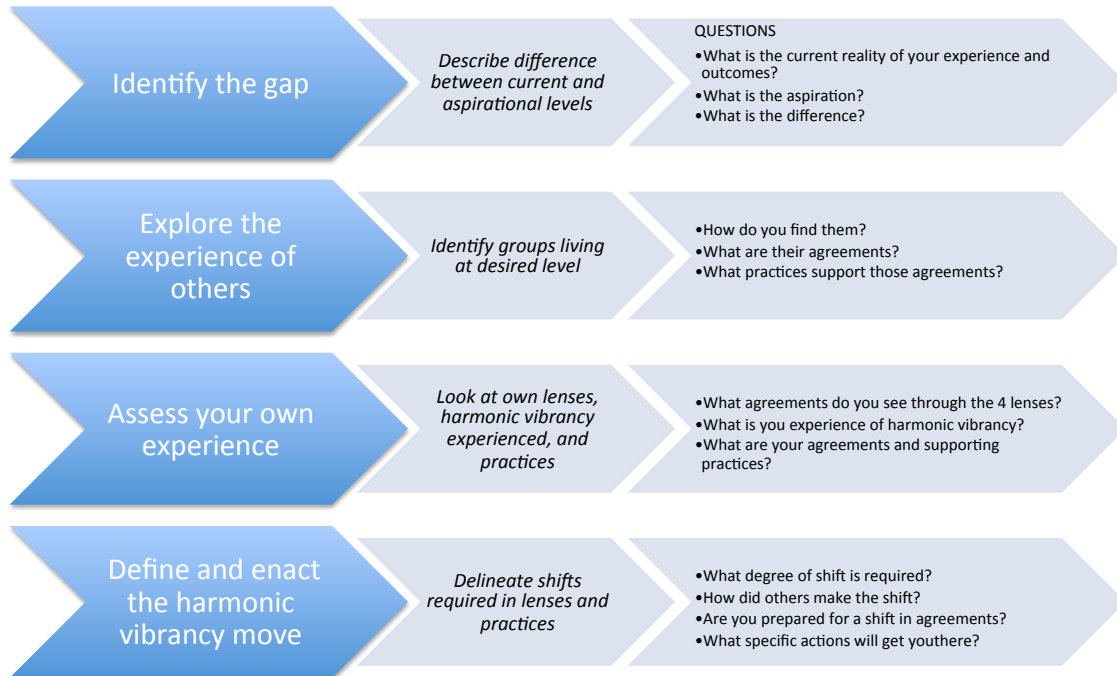


Figure 30: Four-step Harmonic Vibrancy Move Process

Figure 30 lays out the four steps in table form and suggests what each step involves, including some of the questions to be addressed. In principle, the steps are relatively simple and straightforward, yet many groups will need to have some assistance in following them. There are a wide variety of group practices and process tools that can support your group in moving through this process, as well as many consultants who can use those practices and tools to facilitate the kinds of analysis, reflection and conversation the process requires. I propose Ecosynomics and the Harmonic Vibrancy Move as general frameworks; they are not meant to be a branded, proprietary approach to individual or group transformation. Rather, they provide a broad, inclusive framework—a way of looking at and making sense of our experience—that can inform any change strategy and increase its chances of creating the results people want.¹²²

In this chapter, I will explain each of the steps in more detail. In the following chapters, I will share the stories of some individuals and groups I have worked with and supported in using these steps to make a Harmonic Vibrancy Move. I will describe some of the process tools I use and provide some practical tips from my experience. I hope that in the wide variety of examples you will find one that is suggestive of the kinds of issues you are facing.

IDENTIFY THE GAP

To move to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy, the first step is to visualize the gap between the level of harmonic vibrancy you believe is available to you and the level you currently experience (see Figure 31). Determining the desired level creates a clear goal by showing you

where you want yourself or your group to end up. Then, seeing the gap between that goal and your current experience shows you just how much work you will need to do to get there. This is a common way of starting a change process, because, for most people, identifying this gap provides direction and also a strong motivation for change. In a Harmonic Vibrancy Move, however, there is a particular focus in this exercise on exploring current and desired states and defining the gap clearly in terms of the five relationships and the three levels of perceived reality.

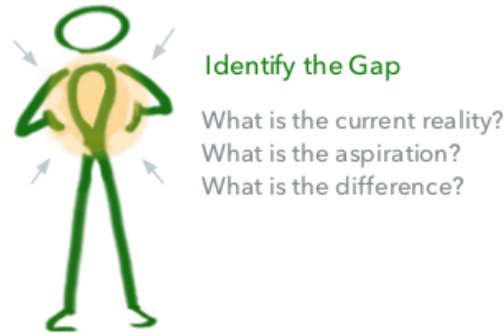


Figure 31: Identify the Gap between Current Reality and Aspiration

Current level

Let us start with the current level of harmonic vibrancy you are experiencing. To determine this, you need to determine the quality of experience you are having in the five primary relationships. The 3 Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy diagram will help you to do this. Look at the three different levels of each of the five relationships in

Figure 32 and circle the picture that best captures your current experience of that relationship in the group. For example, think about your experience of your self in the group. How much of you shows up? What does it feel like? If none of your true self shows up, then circle the sitting person who is crouched over in the inner circle. If you feel that you and your capacities are present and seen by others and you stand strong, then circle the upright figure in the middle circle. If, on the other hand, you feel that you bring and share your greatest gifts in this group, you feel that you bring and share your greatest gifts in this group, then circle the celebrating figure in the outer circle. When you have gone through this exercise with all five relationships, you will have described the vibrancy you experience with this group.

When I did this with a friend who works at a local school, she said, “Most of the time I feel insignificant. I do my job, get criticized and am rarely appreciated for everything I do for the kids. It is very draining.” When she saw the graphic in

Figure 32, she immediately pointed at the inner circle. “That’s my life,” she said, “and I don’t want it to be.”

In a different setting, a small group of executives in a training company I worked with saw themselves living just inside the middle circle of Harmonic Vibrancy. They had done the exercise with the 3 Circles diagram individually and compared their results. It emerged that

they all felt proud of their professional capabilities and also felt acknowledged for their individual and team successes.

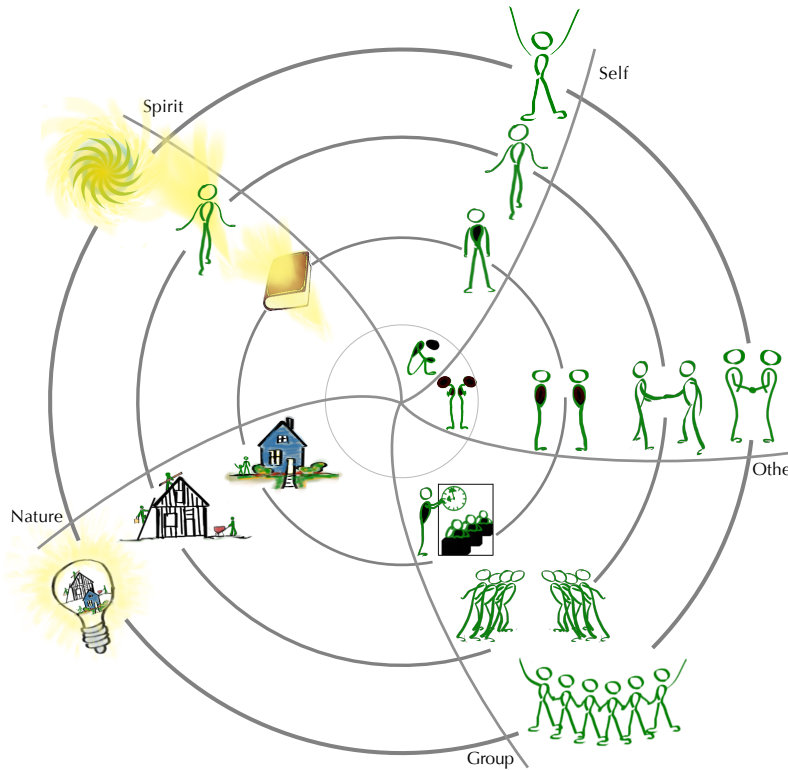


Figure 32: Determining Current State in Five Relationships

Desired level

Once you have described your experience in all five relationships, ask yourself, “Is this the best the group can do?” If the answer is yes—your experience of the five relationships in this group is as good as it is possible to get—then there is nothing more to do except consider how you will sustain that experience. Many of the higher vibrancy groups I have worked with were happy with the level of vibrancy they were currently experiencing, but since their leader would soon be moving on to another group, they were not sure how to maintain the experience they were having. In this case, the desired future level is similar to the current, but the expectation is that the current level will fall quickly, and thus there is still a gap. If, on the other hand, the answer to this question is no, then you can explore what something better might look like.

Exploring what a better state might look like can take you in a couple of directions. In many cases, people realize that their experience is varied. Sometimes, or perhaps all the time in some situations, there are experiences of higher harmonic vibrancy in the group. On those occasions, things just seem to work better. More of me and more of you show up. We are better together. We see in each other the potential for creativity that we can develop and

bring into action. But this only happens sometimes. At other times, or more of the time, less shows up. Because you know that the group is capable of performing at a higher level, at least some of the time, you might reflect that a higher level of harmonic vibrancy would be possible if the agreements shifted. For example, my friend who worked at the local school realized upon reflection that every now and then she experienced the middle to outer circle. This happened when she was in charge of a bigger project and was focused on doing something very creative with others for the kids and their parents. This gave her the sense that something better was possible.

Another direction this inquiry can take is to lead a group to imagine a positive change in outcomes and harmonic vibrancy even though it has never demonstrated the capacity to achieve this higher level. The small group of IT executives I described above developed this kind of aspiration. They saw that the improvements in performance they needed to make would require changing their agreements and shifting their culture toward the outer circle, a level of harmonic vibrancy they had never experienced. Yet they could envision that experience and wanted it. One of them summarized the group's thoughts as follows: "What we want is to experience the greater efficiencies and innovation possible in collaboration. We want to move to the outer circle with other teams in our company. We can be much better than we are."

The gap

Now, having described the harmonic vibrancy you *currently* experience in a group and the level you *want* to experience, you have identified the gap between the two. This exercise often provides a positive motivation for change. My friend who worked in the school was very clear at this stage of our conversation. "I want to experience more of my life like those special times," she said. The executives were also clear that they had to try to make the shift they envisioned. Their current successes would not get them where they needed to go.

This first step, identifying the gap, is the most important step of the Harmonic Vibrancy Move. It sets the foundation, the future course, and the amount of energy that will be required for the move. You have now shifted from a question, "Is this the best we can do?" to a statement of the harmonic vibrancy you know is possible. From this vantage point, the next question is, "What does life look like at the 'desired' level?"

EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

The second step in a Harmonic Vibrancy Move is to explore what people do at the higher level of harmonic vibrancy you aspire to (see Figure 33). I have worked with dozens of groups trying to do this, and they all needed some kind of example to guide them toward what they were aiming for. Sometimes they could find this example in their own occasional experiences of higher-level harmonic vibrancy. More often, however, they needed to find another group or individual to demonstrate what that higher-level functioning looks like.



Figure 33: Exploring the Experience of Others

Finding a group

The task of identifying an exemplary group or individual can seem daunting. How many people are even thinking about their experiences of harmonic vibrancy, much less in a position to provide guidance? You know there are groups functioning at higher levels, and the survey data I presented from over 1,600 groups confirm this. However, they may be in different lines of work or different parts of the world. How will you find them?

The answer is shockingly simple: just start asking the question. Ask yourself what you want to experience, and ask others if they have experienced that. Use the conversations I described in the early chapters of this book as a model. Just as I did, ask people if they have had the experience of greater vibrancy. They always answer “yes.” Then ask them to describe what created that experience, what were they doing? People know that they have had the experience of higher vibrancy, and they can usually tell you a great deal about it. I found this out in my own research. By asking around, I began to find dozens of higher vibrancy groups. This is a very “soft” way of identifying higher vibrancy groups—not hard science. But it is effective.

For example, I asked this question of a group of parents having a hard time working together on a project at their kids’ school. Their answer surprised them. They knew exactly where they experienced the higher level of relationship they wanted in their group—in their kids’ classroom. Having either chaperoned a field trip or assisted the teacher in a main lesson, they had seen how the teacher and students interacted. The parents talked among themselves and with the class teacher to extract the practices they experienced in their kids’ classroom. This led to them taking on those practices for themselves, remembering the experience they wanted.

In another case, I was working with the founders of a very successful toy store who aspired to outer-circle leadership. When I asked them what groups were living the experience they wanted, the leadership team immediately identified three groups in which they had experienced the types of processes and relationships that I had identified as characteristics of

that higher-level functioning. When we looked more closely at those three groups, we saw that they all responded similarly to the four economic questions, and all had similar practices, even though they were situated in completely different industries in different countries.

In another instance, my colleagues and I were supporting a community group in the Coatlán region of western Guatemala. This area is one of the poorest, most vulnerable regions in the Americas. The group aspired to move its community from the inner circle of scarcity and low harmonic vibrancy into the middle circle but had no way of knowing what that desired state might look like. My team was able to help them by finding many examples of communities in other parts of the world that were working in the middle-circle level, with processes that bridged the things and development levels. These examples included, for example, groups working in cooperatives or with complementary currencies or asset-based community development. All these innovations were potentially applicable in Coatlán.

In all of these cases, I was the one asking the question of whether the group knew of another, higher-vibrancy group or had previous experience of higher vibrancy. But of course, groups are able to ask themselves this question, and usually someone will have an example or an experience of higher vibrancy. If this is not the case, however, then the group can look to the examples I highlight in this book and on the Institute for Strategic Clarity website, or simply scan the news. One group found me by doing just that. By searching on the Internet, they found my work under the terms “harmony,” “vibrancy,” and “better outcomes.” Much is being shared these days about these higher levels of agreements.

Mapping the group’s practices

Once you find a group that is living at the level of harmonic vibrancy you desire, you will need to find out what its practices are like at that higher level. I have found that often someone has a direct relationship to the higher-vibrancy group, which is how it was identified as an example in the first place. It is usually through this kind of personal connection that the request to observe a group is made. Start by meeting with that person from the higher-vibrancy group and ask if you can visit and observe its practices, to better understand how it operates and what agreements it has in place to support its higher level of vibrancy. While not every group will be open to this kind of invitation, I find that most are. You are asking to understand their agreements and how those agreements support the level of vibrancy you aspire to. All groups I have approached in this way have said yes.

Once you meet the group, you can use the Agreements Map to guide your inquiry and record the information you find, as in the example in the last chapter. Look at what the higher-vibrancy group says it does, for example in its public documents, and observe in your visit what it actually does. You will see quickly whether and how its practices support the higher level of vibrancy the group experiences. The questions to ask in this exercise are the ones we asked in the last chapter when constructing the Agreements Evidence map.

ASSESS YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE

So far in the Harmonic Vibrancy Move, in Step 1 you asked yourselves if you want more. In Step 2, you asked what “more” looked like. Next, Step 3 looks through the four lenses at your own experiences, agreements, and practices (see Figure 34). As in Step 2, the Agreements Map can support you in synthesizing the three questions in this step to get a clear picture of the agreements your group is currently using, the quality of experience it is having, and the practices it has in place to support those agreements and experiences. Using the Agreements Map to analyze another group can be challenging; applying it to one’s own group can seem even more daunting. However, there are many processes available for running and validating a rigorous internal audit, which is essentially what this step is. Most important, when you do this, you need to be skeptical and make the effort to find multiple pieces of evidence to document your conclusions about the existing agreements.



Figure 34: Assess Your Own Experience

Does the picture you describe when looking at your group’s practices through the four lenses align with the level of harmonic vibrancy group members are actually experiencing? If so, you have some validation of both. If not, you need to explore a bit further. For example, the senior team of a large utility company assured me that they looked through the lenses and saw abundance, widespread awareness of all five relationships, and the harmonic vibrancy experienced. The results from the Harmonic Vibrancy Survey, administered to over one hundred employees, told quite a different story, however. It showed their experience to be halfway between the inner and middle circles of harmonic vibrancy—in other words, an experience of quite a bit of scarcity.

What caused this mismatch between the view of top management and the reality in the company? What might be happening? In fact, this is a common situation, in which a group thinks it is working with one set of assumptions but is really using quite a different set in practice. Some time ago, Harvard professor Chris Argyris named this pattern as the discrepancy between “espoused theory” and “theory in use.”¹²³ You have experienced it if you have ever heard someone expound on some idea of how things work and thought to

yourself, “That’s nice, but what actually happens?” Somehow you knew that he was making up a story that did not jibe with reality. The espoused theory and the theory-in-use diverged.

In the case of the utility company, we re-examined the Agreements Map, pushing more deeply into what was actually happening, as opposed to what they wanted to see. Then we could uncover how the company was operating on the assumption that it needed to allocate scarce resources to maximize returns to investors for every quarterly report. All other relationships had been sacrificed to this group-level focus. The senior team could see that this picture more closely aligned with the company’s Harmonic Vibrancy Survey results. This awareness provided a firmer foundation for undertaking a Harmonic Vibrancy Move.

The process was different for my friend in the local school. She had pointed to the inner circle of harmonic vibrancy as representative of her experience at work. The Agreements Map then enabled her to see, through the four lenses, that this experience derived from things-matter level agreements in all five primary relationships. Through the lens of “how much?” she saw that her school was always scrounging and begging for resources. Through the lenses of “who decides?” and “by what criteria?” she recognized an overwhelming emphasis on group. In every situation, the “health” of the whole school was the overriding consideration. My friend could then see, through the fourth lens, that all activities were organized to serve this dominant value: “we decide what the school needs, what jobs need doing and who will do them. That’s as far as we get.”

The Agreements Map showed a predominantly scarcity-based set of agreements, which aligned with her experience of the inner circle of harmonic vibrancy, with only occasional experiences at the development-motion level. She saw that the agreements in place supported an experience that she did not want. In step 1 of the process, my friend had identified the experience of a higher level of vibrancy in those times when she was engaged in a special project, when people had permission to bring more of their creativity to the task. In step 2, she had delved more deeply into the conditions that made that experience possible and examined the practices followed by her higher-vibrancy project groups. Now, step 3 gave her a clear sense of the difference between the agreements she was living with most of the time and those that she had observed. This set her up for step 4.

DEFINE AND ENACT A HARMONIC VIBRANCY MOVE

The fourth step in the Harmonic Vibrancy Move process involves developing and launching an action plan for the necessary shifts to close the gap between the current level of harmonic vibrancy and the level the group aspires to (see Figure 35). An important part of this step is assessing your group’s readiness for the move. The agreements you will need to support a higher level of harmonic vibrancy will likely be completely different from those currently supporting you at the lower level, because they will have to enable you function at a higher level of perceived reality. As we saw in the Agreements Maps we examined, the practices in all areas—resources, allocation, value and organization—differ significantly from level to level. By implication, the underlying agreements will have to be different as well. Your group will need to be ready and willing to define and enter into those new agreements.

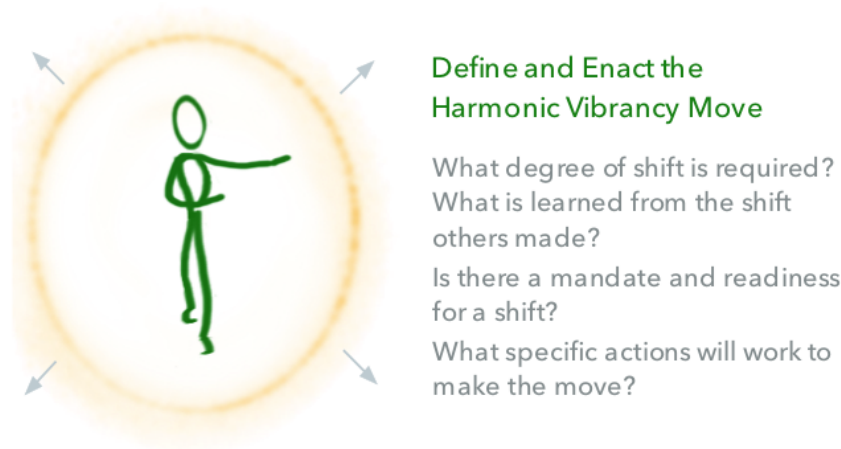


Figure 35: Define and Enact a Harmonic Vibrancy Move

A basic assumption of the Ecosynomics framework is that, whether we are aware of it or not, human beings live in a constant state of movement among the three levels of perceived reality. We live into the possibilities that we see as we develop new capacities and relationships and create outcomes. This perspective has implications for the Harmonic Vibrancy Move process, because it means that our groups too are always in a state of change. The group’s implicit and explicit agreements around “who we are,” “what we have,” “what we value” and “how we interact” are constantly adapting to the changing world around it, as well as to the internal dynamics created by the actions of individual group members. Even when we think our group culture is very established and stable, it is constantly changing.

This means, on the one hand, that even if we just want to maintain what we do well with our current culture, we must work at it. On the other hand, it means that cultural change—changing our agreements—might not be as difficult as it looks. If, in fact, we are already living in a river of change, then changing agreements may be more a question of influencing the direction of the flow than having to start a new flow. When groups believe their culture is going to be hard to move, that they are stuck, I suggest that they are ignoring this constant change. We have a choice here. Instead of ignoring the change, we can give it our attention and bring intention into the process. Working with the four questions in this fourth step will help you do that.

The answers to the four questions will determine the contours of your action plan. The response to the first question specifies the scope of the change you need to make in your agreements and the supporting practices. Does the shift need to be small, moderate, or huge? Is it a shift of degree or a more basic shift in the kind of agreements you are working with? Your answers to the second question in this step—how have others made this shift?—will start the process of determining the actions you need to take to make your move. The third question invites you to look inward, individually and as a group. Your responses will tell you whether you are truly ready to make the shift successfully. The fourth question then points you toward the specific actions you will need to take to make the

change. Answering this question brings you to the point of enacting the move. Let us now look at each question in a bit more detail, to see what you can do with it.

The scope of change

To answer the question, what is the scope of change required for a successful Harmonic Vibrancy Move? is to define the move in broad strokes. The analysis your group has done in the previous steps will enable you to do this. Basically, there are two possibilities for a Harmonic Vibrancy Move: it can move you higher within one level of perceived reality; or it can take you across levels. A move within a level can be large or small, but it is essentially a shift of degree. A move across levels is a more fundamental shift in how your group sees the world and functions within it.

MOVES WITHIN A LEVEL OF PERCEIVED REALITY

A shift within a level seeks to move to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy within the same level of perceived reality. For example, a group working intentionally at the lower end of the development-motion level and functioning solidly at the things-matter level is likely to be experiencing itself between the inner and middle circles of harmonic vibrancy. This group might want to move more fully into the experience of the middle circle, supported by agreements at the development level of perceived reality. This would call for a Harmonic Vibrancy Move *within* that level. The group would still be working with the same kind of reality, but now at a different level of awareness and agreement.

A small within-level shift often means that the group's fundamental assumptions about the five relationships and the three levels of perceived reality remain the same. The shift is in the degree of awareness that informs its agreements and how it functions. For example, in the Mexican office of a global engineering firm, there was a low-end development-motion level awareness of the importance of learning, supported with a database of "lessons learned." In contemplating a Harmonic Vibrancy Move, the group recognized that it had created this database mostly for the purpose of "auditing"—determining whether or not learning was happening. This is a things-matter level focus on outcomes. When the group formulated a desire to move solidly into the experience of the middle circle of harmonic vibrancy, it saw that it needed to take on a greater awareness of the importance of learning. In addition to using the lessons learned for the audit, the engineers began to pay more attention to the content of the lessons learned and to bring the learning more directly into their daily work. This brought it more into their awareness, a relatively small shift of degree.

A large shift of degree within the same level of reality adds another dimension. In addition to a shift in awareness, it typically requires developing agreements to create different practices and structures. I saw this in a food company I worked with in the UK. The management team wanted to move the organization from living with the experience of being inside the second circle of harmonic vibrancy to being solidly outside the second circle, heading towards the third circle. From working through the second and third steps of the Harmonic Vibrancy Move process, the team realized this would involve a jump in how it was operating, from low to high within the development-motion level of perceived reality, with new agreements and awareness to match. For instance, the managers saw that, if they

wanted to transform development and learning from occasional occurrences into a valued discipline practiced routinely throughout the organization, they needed to go from asking a question or two about learning at annual performance reviews to providing mentoring on an ongoing basis. A higher-level process such as mentoring could support changed behaviors and a shift in what people were paying attention to, both of which are required to create a higher-level experience.

MOVES ACROSS LEVELS OF PERCEIVED REALITY

As compared to a shift of "degree" within a level, a shift between levels of perceived reality is a shift of "kind." The agreements and processes at another level of perceived reality are very different in character. For example, valuing learning is very different from valuing outcomes. Learning takes place over time; it is what you "are doing." Outcomes are the events of specific moments in time; they are what you "did." To make a shift in orientation from one to the other, a group will need to deal explicitly with its fundamental assumptions about what people should be paying attention to, and why. This then provides the basis for moving into new agreements.

A between-levels shift also involves rethinking agreements in terms of the five relationships. At the things-matter level, it may be possible to produce acceptable outcomes while holding just one relationship as primary, as in my friend's situation, where the primacy of group was expressed in the overriding emphasis on "the good of the school." Yet all the evidence I have gathered, from my personal experience, my wide-ranging conversations, and my research, indicates that groups must honor and attend to multiple relationships in order to function sustainably at the development or possibility levels of perceived reality. This then is another area in which your group will need to address its underlying assumptions. If this is the kind of work your group needs to do, Step 4 is the place to consider how to go about it.

In many cases, the cultural transformation required can build on what is already available, perhaps subconsciously. In most of the Agreements Maps I have presented so far, there have been bands of yellow and/or red. These signify that there are partial or weak indications of agreements at higher levels of perceived reality than the one at which the group is primarily functioning. I interpret this to mean that, in most groups, there is some tendency toward higher-level agreements. It may exist below the level of collective consciousness, but it represents an emerging awareness of possible new agreements already alive within the community. When this is the case, the cultural transformation can focus on awakening what is already there, for example, by highlighting instances of higher-level functioning and learning how people have been able to do this within the group's culture. In Chapter 11, I will share the story of how this strategy worked at THORLO in the company's adoption of "integrated collaborative conversations." This was a significant move across levels, which the community was able to take up quickly by making explicit many assumptions about shared purpose and respect for the different voices that were already resident within the community.

The requirements of a cultural transformation are quite different when it entails taking up a completely new set of assumptions, never experienced before within the group. As we have explored throughout the book, there are various ways to broach the possibility and desire for

this new experience, such as agreeing on the experience of harmonic vibrancy and outcomes we know we want and are not achieving, or maybe finding that there are indeed pockets of people within the group who have found a way to interact at the higher level of vibrancy.

This fourth step in the Harmonic Vibrancy Move process rests on the previous steps. The group has explored its desire for a new experience in Step 1, looked at what a higher-level experience looks like in Step 2, and compared that to its own experience in Step 3. It is essential to do those steps thoroughly to bring the group to the point of deciding what new agreements it needs in order to move to a higher level and that it indeed wants to invite in such agreements. Many group processes, such as the “Immunity to Change” approach developed by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, are available to support you in uncovering and shifting existing agreements, including those that limit the group’s ability to make changes.¹²⁴

How have others made the shift?

This part of Step 4 repeats the exercise undertaken in Step 2 but now with a particular focus on the process of group transformation. Of course, each situation is unique in the specifics of what changes are called for, but the groups I have seen be most successful in shifting their agreements have learned from how others have done it. It is also a way to avoid the common trap of relying on experts to tell you what your group needs to change and how to go about it. The group needs to see the new agreements for itself and adapt them to its culture as it moves to a higher level of functioning. This task requires intention and attention—intention to experience a higher level of harmonic vibrancy and attention to the shifts in agreements and practices needed to obtain that. These cannot be outsourced.

To assess how prepared your group is to shift its agreements; I suggest you start by creating a clear understanding of the potential benefits. A good way to define these benefits is to work with the Costs of Scarcity analysis I shared in Chapter 6. Seeing the likely costs of *not* changing is a good way to clarify the reasons to change. It will provide a concrete and specific way to think and talk about it. How big a deal is this shift? How much do we stand to benefit from achieving it? Keeping these benefits in mind will help the group remain clear about its purpose and the potential rewards as it pushes forward with the work required to shift its agreements to those that support a higher level of harmonic vibrancy.

Specific actions

I am a guy who loves acronyms, and for this final step in the Harmonic Vibrancy Move process, I like the acronym CLOSE. For me, it expresses the excitement of “getting close” to the manifestation of actual changes that will enable the group to experience greater harmonic vibrancy. CLOSE also stands for the five elements that I suggest are essential parts of this step: Customization; Lenses; the O Process; Structures; and Experience. Perhaps you will find this acronym helpful, as I do.

CUSTOMIZATION

It may seem obvious to many, but I think it cannot be repeated often enough that any new agreements your group takes up must be customized to the group's culture. This is a delicate and iterative process, as the culture itself will evolve as the group formulates new agreements. I emphasize this point, because there seems to be a strong tendency in organizations to look to experts for a transition template. The attitude is, "Just tell us what to do, and help us to do it quickly." In my experience, shifting a group's agreements does not have to be a long and painful process. But it cannot be done with a generic formula, or done too quickly, or left to others. After all, these are your group's agreements, and the group must fully own them.

LENSES

It is important to continue using the four economic questions as lenses on your agreements as the group proceeds to defining and implementing an action plan. They are what will enable you to uncover the fundamental assumptions underlying the existing agreements you wish to change. By the same token, they will guide you in articulating a different set of assumptions to provide the basis for new agreements.

THE O PROCESS

The way to achieve customization of agreements is, in the simplest terms, to engage the group fully in imagining a new, desirable reality and taking the steps needed to bring that reality into being. This requires a great deal of open and inclusive conversation, as well as a great deal of experimentation. No one can do this for you, but there are many consultants who can help by facilitating the dialogue and guiding the analysis that needs to take place within the group. There is also an array of process options for this dialogue.¹²⁵

My colleague Scott Spann and I developed one such process, the O Process, which I have since used with many groups, large and small. The O Process got its name because the image I use to describe it to people is a circle. There are six steps in the process, each one involving a good deal of conversation. The steps are meant to be taken sequentially. But the whole process is iterative, so the group will move through the steps—around the "O"—a number of times. Each time it does so, its capacity for collaborative decision-making and aligned action will grow.

I provide a fuller explanation, including an image, in a Tool Sidebar on the O Process in Chapter 11. Briefly, however, the six steps are as follows:

1. Create alignment around the group's shared higher purpose
2. Create shared awareness of the unique contribution each group member has to offer
3. Determine the specific possibilities each group member can see from his or her unique perspective
4. Develop a collective vision of a desired future reality (I call this a "shared probability")

5. Determine the commitment each group member can make to the effort to realize the shared probability
6. Create alignment around the specific actions needed to enact those commitments collaboratively

STRUCTURES

The group needs to define the new structures derived from the Agreements Map. These structures are the agreements that support the higher level of harmonic vibrancy, as described in the Agreements Map. These agreements come in the form of formal and informal organizational structures, processes, and practices. These structures need to be aligned with the new fundamental assumptions seen through the four lenses.

EXPERIENCE

Experience comes last in the acronym, but it is usually where I start. Making sure that everyone in the group agrees on the experience of harmonic vibrancy they want provides the motivation to move from the current experience to the desired one. It establishes the firm foundation needed to move forward.

Conclusion

Now we have come full circle to where we started in Chapter 1, with you becoming aware of the quality of your experience. You now have a way of thinking about “experience” that encompasses the five fundamental relationships and the three levels of perceived reality and gives particular meaning to the idea of harmonic vibrancy—the state you know you have experienced before and want to experience more consistently. With the help of some powerful concepts borrowed from economics, I have given you tools to analyze the structures and practices that shape your experience in particular groups. You can see through those structures and practices to the agreements on which they are based, as well as the fundamental assumptions underlying the agreements. All of this makes it possible to challenge the governing assumptions, particularly assumptions of scarcity, to create new agreements, and to shift your experience in the direction of greater harmonic vibrancy.

In a previous chapter, I shared evidence indicating that many people have made this kind of shift. The final chapters of the book offer a different kind of evidence: the stories of change processes I have witnessed and participated in directly. I call these episodes “learning laboratories,” because it is through them that the Ecosynomics framework has emerged. They will provide some concrete examples of what the Harmonic Vibrancy Move looks like in different settings.