

Spirit-Source – a Model for Emergence

Our world is getting bigger, complexity is increasing, chaos is spreading... and nowhere there are easy answers, or can we rely on the past. What is asked from us to deal with all this? It seems we are asked to grow too, in the same ways: embrace more, increase our collective complexity and access deeper places of inner ground. Getting our roots deeper, embrace more of our environment and being open to any innovation we can think of – and learn from nature.

I see our human evolution, as an ever-expanding movement, basically across two lines. The vertical line, running up and down, is the line that represents our inner alignment, where body, mind, spirit and soul are more or less in resonance or alignment with one another. The challenges of our time ask for an ever more fine tuned alignment within ourselves. That's why personal practices that aim to support this, are so important now.

The other line runs horizontal, it spreads out around us in all directions. It is where we connect with others, our neighbors and our enemies; where we are conscious of our environment and act accordingly; where we can feel connected with the moon and the stars; where we know that the health of our physical body depends on so many different bacteria etc. It is the line of interconnectedness, and it leads to balance and harmony all around us. (The steps of development in both directions and how they influence each other is explained in a few video's on womenmovingtheedge.ning.com and will be part of an upcoming book.)

The model that formed itself out of my experiences, from many gatherings and conversations, was looking at the vertical line first. This is how it began:

What is holding space?

I said in 2006: We were talking that, in these gatherings like Moving the Edge, we name the masculine as 'spirit coming in'. But what is the complement for the feminine? Being able to embody the field where the spirit can become manifest? The deeper layers of holding the field are needed for higher vibrations of spirit.

I didn't realize at that point that I was naming the core of my model. The real insight, embodied, came much later! I became more conscious about it when I was holding a question for a long time: What am I doing when I am holding space? Many facilitators or hosts nod their heads when we speak of holding space. They/we seem to understand, but I never heard anybody explain it. Different experiences in the following months made me aware of some aspects of it. First of all it is a subtle way of engaging with persons or projects. Actually it is a very intimate thing to do. Then I realized that it is not recognized much and I had a pain related to that. Most relief came from realizing that holding space is for me an attention and service I do in and through my body. If I am not aware of it, it can sometimes hurt.

But still the question remained: What am I doing when holding space within or through my body? I knew since a long time that my sensing of what would happen in a group process or in a systemic constellation was not the same than when people have visions of the future. Looking back at our experiences in the gatherings of Women Moving the Edge it suddenly dawned on me that we never were speaking about Spirit, but we would always use the word Source. Why was this? Source would point to depth, to something deep inside; Spirit is more related to something high above... mmm... I started drawing on a sheet of paper...

I realized that Source can be seen as Unmanifested Matter; as unmanifest potential. Soon my answer to the question I was holding for many months became clearer. When I am holding space I connect through my body with the unmanifest potential of this person, this group, this place or whatever. It asks for an emptiness and a deep stillness inside to be able to somehow embrace this potential in an unattached way. It is an awareness of connecting with subtle energy levels. I open my body and my subtle senses to consciously connect with this potential in service of that what wants or can become manifest.

This made a lot of sense when I spoke about it with Maria and Sarah, two dear friends, and explained that they, as the callers or initiators of their project, will always be and stay the ones who hold the deepest and widest container of possibilities. They will always keep on being the callers even if they might eventually expand their core group. But if they drop their energy the whole project will die. Other members of the core group can become very active in this project, but when they leave, the project will still go on. They are not holding the space as deep. Later we named it as: callers are holding the source-point of a project.

I realized, that in a sense, women have a natural tendency to hold space for people, places and projects. Just like they hold space in their bodies for the unborn babies, unconditionally, not knowing how it is going to look like. This is has hardly ever been seen or realized, not even by women themselves.

Spirit and Source

So now it became a much deeper quest, involving the concepts of Spirit and Source. I tried to uncover both the core qualities and core functions of each of them in our daily life. More precise: to unearth what this could mean for the world that we all wish to come into manifestation.

This was - and is - not an easy task, as so many concepts and ideas in our language are made to separate. Using them to convey meaning about wholeness makes me look for other - for myself more familiar - tools, like making drawings or reside in contemplation, but the level of share-ability is quite low then... So back to language and writing and making the best out of it.

I tend to see Spirit somewhere high out there and I experience Source as something deep within. Watch my words here: I 'see' Spirit and I 'experience' Source. Maybe this is only valid for me, but other people tend to go with it. So, let's stick with it for a while.

If we draw them on a blank sheet of paper, Spirit sits on top of it, and Source takes the bottom position. Then the *real* world is in the middle; the world of space and time that we see and know as the manifested world within its three dimensions. It is the world of our experiences. It is the world of incarnation. The movement from the manifested world to Spirit is the way of dis-engaging with the experience, to witness it, to think and reflect about it; to gain more and more consciousness and awareness. The movement from Source to the manifested world is one of potential that goes through the layers of denser and denser energies, the potential gets more and more manifested.

I draw a circle to connect Spirit and Source, because somewhere they are one; they are the One. I see Spirit and Source like the first couple that came out of the One. The first 'paradox' was created with them. Related are: light and darkness, yin and yang, inward and outward, masculine and feminine, ... "The One is inclusive of unmanifest and manifest, the being and the non-being, the before and the after, all present NOW." (participant in WMtE2, Nov.2007)

Back to holding space... In short: I connect, in my body, through the subtle energy levels, with the potential that can unfold. But much like many failed experiments with non-authoritarian education, something is missing here if we want to see the unfolding of the potential into real manifestation. Holding Space asks for its counterpart, it asks for some structuring energy, the keeping of the intention or the focus. But this focus or intention can't be closed or fixed, otherwise there is no room for unfolding, emergence or birthing of the new. The best I can name it is Staying in Inquiry.

In my drawing I write now: Staying in Inquiry below Spirit, and Holding Space above Source, and I connect them also with a circle.

Looks good, but I am not satisfied. The distance between the two circles is too big for me. How does Source become Holding Space? How does Spirit become Staying in Inquiry? What is Source providing when going in the direction of the manifested world? What is its first level of manifestation (that I can distinguish)?

When I put myself in the shoes of Source I experience unlimited Potential, a vast ocean of possibilities. That makes a lot of sense to me. What then is its counterpart on the side of Spirit? How shows Spirit itself to the world of manifestation? I am inclined to name that Consciousness. Now we can draw the third circle within the two previous ones.

For me it was highly revealing how this full map fits together. Later on I dived deeper into it.

Emergence

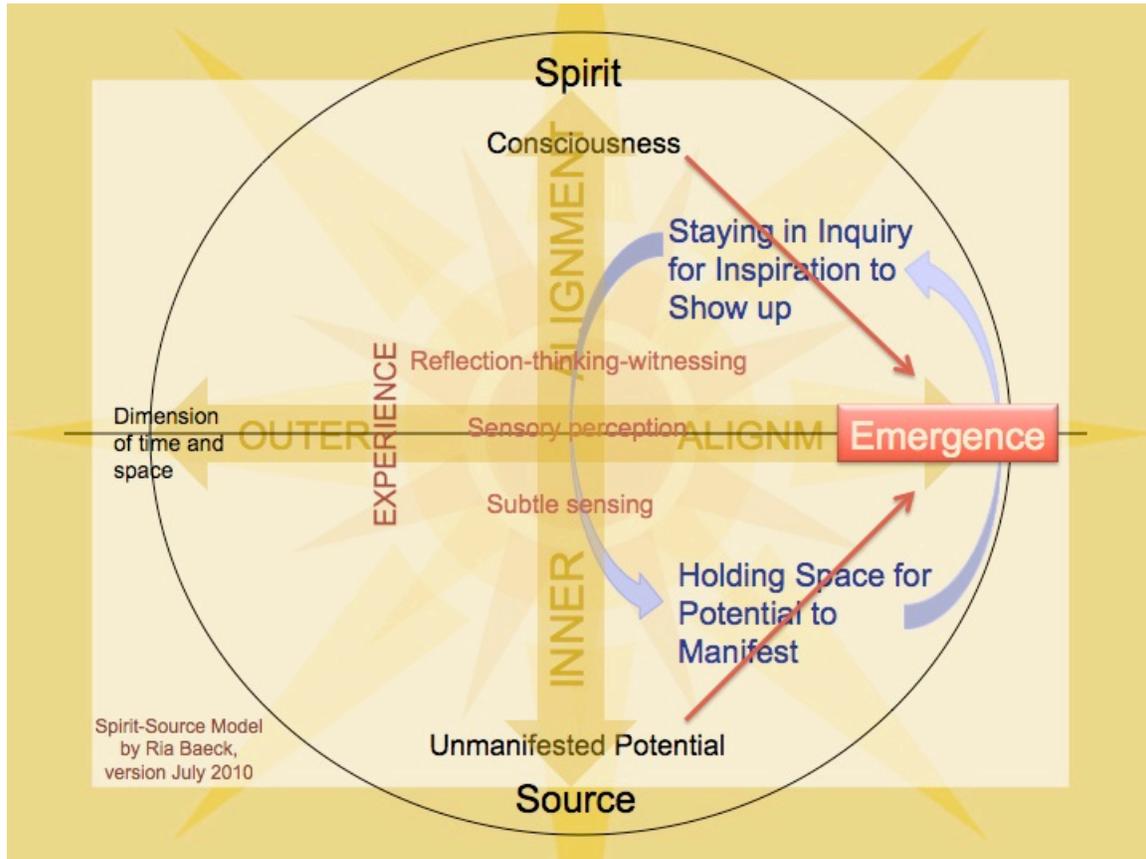
My next step in this inquiry was: When I am holding space for the highest potential, then what is it for? What is the real purpose of holding space? I dawned on me: of course I am holding the possibilities of its manifestation! Obvious now when I look back at it, but revealing in that moment! So, Holding Space is in essence a supporting energy or attention that bridges Source and the real world: it is **Holding Space for a Potential to Manifest**. That is exactly what parents are doing for their kids, and it is what we are doing when we host conversations in groups. And it should be a core quality of leadership teams.

Then what is its counterpart on the other end? Here I didn't have such clear distinctions, so I turned to a male friend to ask about it. We came to the conclusion that the basic function of **Staying in Inquiry is for Inspiration to Show up**.

In this way I saw how they can work together nicely: if we hold space so that potential can manifest, and if we keep the inquiry open for inspiration or innovation to show up, then these two merge or co-create and emergence will happen! Emergence is the manifestation of the real new that never existed before. A potential that was not known before has come to the surface and we notice an innovation in products and/or processes.

Emergence seems too much chaos to a lot of people, not enough order, not enough control. But for emergence the solidity or grounding doesn't come from outside structures or order, but it comes from keeping the energetic container strong in which some chaos is allowed to happen – holding space for the potential to manifest - and at the same time from staying with the guiding question or intention. This is sometimes named as walking the chaordic path. There isn't much tangible to hold on to, as this holding space expresses itself only through a few guidelines and is basically done in the intangible or subtle space.

This has implications for designing meetings and processes if we want real emergence to happen. It is clear now that it is not enough to do the classic brainstorming, that doesn't go 'deep' enough. We need a process design that supports the holding of the space. In essence it is about methods that can show the whole potential. Deep listening and generative conversation are skills that are highly needed here. But as this map clearly shows: listening to all the diversity isn't enough on its own either. There is at the same moment the open inquiry that calls our attention, and that guides us to innovation.



Ongoing spiral between Holding Space and Staying in Inquiry

There is an ongoing dynamic - like a spiral going back and forth - between the level or depth of Sourcing and the level or depth/height of Consciousness or awareness. The depth of the potential can only become accessible for manifestation and action when we are equally able to become aware of the intention or the clear purpose. This explains us the importance of finding the good guiding question(s) and take care of naming clearly the shared purpose. If our question comes from a higher level of consciousness, and has found it's right words and language, it will invite in a deeper possibility of sourcing, of accessing information in deeper and subtler levels. In this ever widening field of wisdom, through many cycles, new wisdom can be generated. The image of the ship with the highest mast needing the deepest ballast or keel speaks to this.