

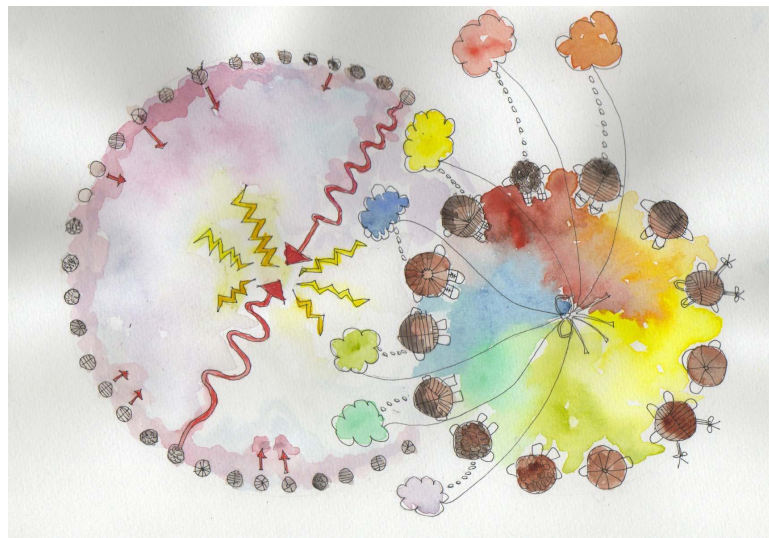
CREATING LARGE GROUP DIALOGUE in ORGANISATIONS and SOCIETY

A Study Programme of Connected Residential and Zoom Workshops

Approved as an IGA (London) Short Course and in association with the Group Analytic Society International

The day will come when whole communities and nations will deal with their affairs in this way.

SH Foulkes, founder of Group Analysis (1975)





WHAT IS IT?

Starting in January 2018, this 'slow open' series of median group residential workshops is offered for those wishing ongoing learning and support for working in situations that involve larger groups. Initially we met five times a year, for a weekend, every two months at Roffey Park Institute, Horsham [<https://www.roffeypark.ac.uk/about-us/venue-hire/>]. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we continued working online with Zoom and so members unable to travel, were able to join us, which has been an extremely enriching and challenging experience.

Now we are able to return to Roffey Park we are offering the workshops in blended form using leading-edge technology.

If you need more information, feel free to be in touch.

PARTICIPANT STAFF

Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, Michael Tait along with invited staff.

DATES

'Roffey' WEEKENDs in 2022:

28-30 January; 11–13 March; 6-8 May; 15–17 July; 7–9 October [Subject to change]

Zoom SUNDAYS UK:

20 February, 3 April, 12 June, 11 September, 20 November [Subject to change]

TIMES -UK

We start with supper at about 18.00 on Friday afternoon and finish with a cup of tea on Sunday at 16.00 in the summer and 17.00 in the winter.

FEES

In some cases, fees can be adjusted to suit each person's economic situation.

Fee for Zoom only In-between Median Group:

£35 [These are Sunday UK time only]

Fees for 'Roffey' when on Zoom only:

£200 [These are 3 days as before but with time adjustments]

Fees for 'Roffey' when on Zoom Widget:

£250 [These are 3 days as before but with time adjustments and includes cost of Zoom Widget, which is optional]

Fees for Residential 'Roffey' when paid by weekend:

£536 [includes accommodation supplement of £160 per weekend]



Fees for 'Residential Roffey' when fee of £1600 is paid in advance:

£470 [includes accommodation supplement of £160 per weekend]

ETHOS of the WORKSHOPS

Our aim is to make these workshops inspirational and transformative: to match learning with practice through group experiences, and through live 'action research' based on our own working or living environment. The particular focus is on how hidden processes in the socio-political context influence our capacity to think, make decisions, develop policy and form strategy whether it is to include the public in decision-making, encourage consultation processes, bridge racial, cultural and religious divides, or to tackle current local and global challenges.

The intention is to enable us to develop our skills and knowledge, so we are able to more confidently open the space for dialogue in settings of our choice. This is an approach that allows personal experiences to be heard in diverse collective settings enabling new and perhaps more appropriate responses to be found: 'Second Order Change' solutions (Watzlawick et al).

We live in a time of growing global crisis that includes economic collapse, unemployment, increasing youth suicide, homelessness, forced migration, environmental destruction, war, aftermath of colonisation and organisational 'terrorism'. These dilemmas are so overwhelming that they are often met with, what John Dryzek an Australian political scientist, refers to as *survivalism*, and result in responses based on past experiences: 'First Order Change' (Watzlawick et al). The workshops provide participants with the opportunity to develop the courage to embrace and mobilise the inspired potential of larger groups to face these awesome problems.

We've learnt that the best way to learn about how to manage Larger Groups is to be a member of a regular slow open Median Group. Teresa began a completely new way of working with the community as a manager and an architect while in an on-going Median Group and Seminar Group with Patrick de Maré for ten years. She would try things out and come back and talk about it in the group. As he suggested being a regular member of a Median Group acts as a form of 'ballast' that enables people to take risks that would not otherwise be possible. They provide an often much-needed place of support whether it be conducting or convening actual groups or using 'the large group in the mind' to work in organisations or community projects.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Since the pandemic, the composition of the group has changed as Zoom has made it possible for more international participants to join us. A question then emerges about how these participants become part of our learning community - in an ongoing way. It won't be possible to know until we know how long travel will be restricted and for how long existing members are willing to continue on Zoom. The current situation makes planning for the future more difficult than it has been until now, so we are also having to work with more uncertainty than most of us are comfortable with. This means arrangements will change from time to time to fit with what we can make possible. Managing this uncertainty is part of our work.



Until now, additional staff members have been individuals that Teresa or Mike have either worked with previously or have expressed an on-going interest in and support for this endeavour. They also have some understanding of the thinking behind the project - and Teresa's understanding of large group processes grounded in her work with Patrick de Maré. Central to this thinking is a willingness to learn through experience - sometimes a painful and gradual process - in which the use of interpretation or more didactic forms of learning, play a very secondary role.

Student-participants come from a variety of life experiences and bring with them very different theoretical backgrounds. They are invited to contribute their thinking to the different situations that group members bring with them - potentially leading to cross-fertilisation but also to inevitable frustrations when those ideas appear not to be easily integrated.

Anyone can invite student participants providing they write to let Teresa or Mike know of their interest in joining and whether they plan to come as a one-off or in an ongoing way.

OUR RESIDENTIAL VENUE at ROFFEY PARK - ITS HISTORY

The origins of Roffey Park link to the thinking prevalent during the early 1940s that gave birth to the National Health Service, the Tavistock and Northfield:

It began life after a council of industrial and commercial companies decided to set up a Rehabilitation Centre to care for people in industry who were suffering from overwork, strain and depression in 1943. This council included representatives from the Bank of England, Courtaulds, Reckitt & Colman and Rowntree and was designed to create congenial surroundings away from the workplace that could help to return people to productive roles in industry.

The centre took a holistic approach to treatment and combined medical treatment, dietary supervision, physical education and occupational therapy. In the first two years after opening, the centre treated 1,700 people. Later the Council also set up a Research and Training Institute. In the late 1940s the Institute's work became more focused on well-being in the workplace and the Rehabilitation Centre became part of the St Thomas's Group of hospitals and was absorbed into the new National Health Service (NHS). In the 1950s it ran bespoke development programmes and international programmes and became an educational charity in 1967. It now has a distinctive philosophy encouraging participants to speak about their personal experiences and to learn from each other in all its own management courses. So, we fitted into the context like a hand into a well-worn glove!

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended Learning enables meeting face-to-face alongside meeting on Zoom. So, if you are unable to be at Roffey Park you can take part as if you were physically present. Those of us present will sit in the usual circle with the number of chairs representing the whole group whether present in person or not. So, some chairs will not have a person sitting in it but instead will hold a robotically



controlled iPad that is controlled through an app on your iPad, iPhone or computer. The app is easily downloadable.

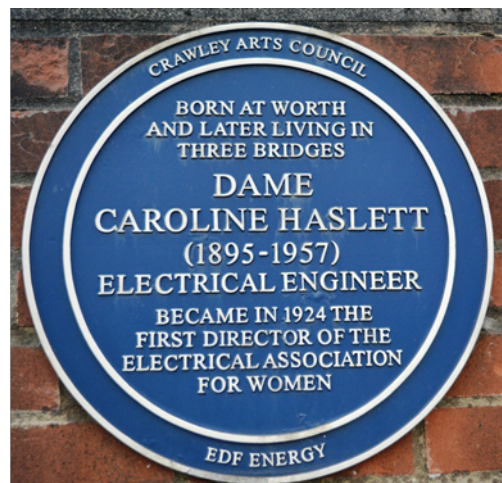
The downside of international blended learning is dealing with the different time zones. Our intention is to accept that some people will not be able to be present at every meeting. It is something we will all have to manage and is a characteristic of community groups.

OUR MEETING ROOM

Our meeting room is named in memory of Dame Caroline Haslett, a pioneering female engineer, champion of women's rights, and one of the founders of the Roffey Park Institute.

She was mainly interested in harnessing the benefits of electrical power to emancipate women from household chores, so they could pursue their own ambitions outside the home. In the early 1920s, few houses had electric light or heating, let alone electrical appliances; the National Grid was not yet in existence. She was largely responsible for the adoption of safety gates on UK electric sockets (no doubt saving many children's lives) and for the ring main circuit - both present in every UK household today. She also had a cable-laying ship named after her that laid the first electrical cable between the UK and France.

On liberating all women from 'soul-destroying drudgery', there is no doubt still a way to go(!). But who knows how many women she has helped 'liberate' in the war and post-war years by her example and her tireless campaigning?





Content of the WORKSHOPS

What is planned is not easy to explain but our hope is that everyone, both participants and staff, will bring areas of expertise and questions to discuss together. The intention is to work it out together depending on the expertise in the group and what people want to know. To start the process off, everybody has been asked to fill in an Information Form.

We are creating a Community of Practice, so we are all in this together so to speak. The method of learning will not be specifically didactic. The conversations will centre on each person's project or focus of attention, with the workshops providing support, encouragement, new ideas and learning, through conversation in the group. Every two months we will meet over a weekend where support will be available to enable you to initiate and work through a project of your own choice, using the theoretical input and experience of the group to inform your action. Ad hoc groups are also formed by participants themselves to discuss related concerns.

To summarise: There will be five weekend blocks each year that until COVID were fully residential. Until it is safe to meet face to face, these workshops will be on Zoom but once we return to Roffey Park, these workshops will be offered as Blended Sessions with those present at Roffey, alongside those who are unable to be present at Roffey either on Zoom or with 'Zoom Robots'.

There will also probably continue with five shorter 'Zoom Sunday' median groups in between the 'Roffey' workshops, which you are welcome to join as appropriate for you.

The workshops will be framed around an experiential 'slow open' Median Group and a Social Dreaming Matrix as constant features. The Median Group will be used in different formats to enable you to plan and make sense of your own work, learning and experience. You are expected to keep a reflective diary and from time to time be asked to present a short reflection to the group about your experience.

As it is not a course in the usual sense, there will be no pass or fail assessment. Instead, the ideas that emerge and how they are used will be the focus. To complete the process, when people feel ready, a certificate of attendance with a description of your project will be awarded.

We strongly recommend that you take part in any of the following Large Group experiences to enable you to have live experience of the group analytic Larger Group: GASi Symposium, GASi Summer School, GASi Quarterly Members' Groups, in London and Edinburgh, and the Alternative Large Group offered on Zoom every Sunday, The Shadow Workshops, Let the Culture Speak in Stockholm, and IAGP regional and or main conference large groups or similar.