The Kaleidoscope Conversation Instructions

* A simple tool to study a complex reality

From:

What is it?

The **Kaleidoscope** brings people from various disciplines together in order to explore complex realities facing a community from multiple points of view, or “lenses”, simultaneously. The kaleidoscope is comprised of practitioners of the predetermined topic and community members, both interested in learning more about the topic at hand. If we want to study and know the systems we are inquiring into, we need to experience multiple representations of that system interacting.

Both practitioners and community members take turns asking questions shaped by their backgrounds or expertise. Then the group collectively absorbs the questions, which hopefully are new and insightful, and that may lead to an interdisciplinary way of approaching the problem.

What it is not.

The kaleidoscope is not a question and answer session. It is not a panel discussion or a discussion at all. There are no answers to the questions asked, there are no solutions that emerge. This is not a problem solving tool, but rather, a tool for collective understanding moving forward.

How does it really work?

Necessary components include a “collective”, or interested audience, “*real life situations*” which are 2-4 people with a burning question who would like to share their story and pose an issue, and “*lenses*” which are 2 practitioners in the field who are willing to share a specific field of expertise through the precision of describing what they are looking at and what they see from their professional lense.

Set up: 5 seats in an inner circle. 2-4 of the seats are occupied by “lenses” of certain fields who do not move throughout the session. One seat is for the person with the “real life situation”, and the rest of the seats are available for the “collective” to step in.

The Kaleidoscope comes into motion by one Real Life Situation shares their story briefly and concluding their story with a burning question (what they want to gain from sharing). A
volunteer writes down the questions as they are asked so that the Real Life Situationist is not burdened while they listen. After the story is heard, the lenses describe what they will be looking for in the situation and what questions they ask or explore when presented with the situation based on their expertise in the topic. Lenses are only allowed to be curious and are forbidden from offering advice or suggest what should be done.

Collective members are allowed to step in if they feel moved to ask questions from an alternative perspective that is missing and essential to the story. Each session lasts about 20-30 minutes and as the Kaleidoscope stops turning, the Real Life Situationist reflects on the questions they have been asked, and then the next person steps into their role as Real Life Situationist.

Why this method?

This tool offers the group a chance tackle multi-disciplinary perspectives and expertises by learning language associated with the topic and multi-disciplinary perspectives while remaining present and immersed in the complexity of a system.