



Fulfilling the Promise of Mediation

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Mind Mapping and the Transformative Framework

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Guest blogger, Kees van Eijk, supports human interaction by mapping thoughts, ideas and emotions. He is a registered mediator and team facilitator working in the Netherlands.

Most of us will recognize a mind map at first sight. A mind map is a diagram used to visually organize information. It develops around a single expression, drawn or written down on a blank horizontal piece of paper. Associated representations of ideas, such as images, words and expressions are progressively added. Mind mapping is the process of creating a mind map, usually during a brainstorming session.

About two decades ago, I started mind mapping as a way of taking notes during lectures, conversations and discussions. The specific mind mapping characteristics helped me to reflect on what was said, identify different themes and see the interrelations between them. In the beginning, my maps were just for personal use. But gradually they turned out to be a helpful means for shared reflection amongst fellow participants during conversations. With the increase in the number of users, the map sprung from the size of a napkin in front of me, to a sheet of wallpaper (1.5 x 6 meters) used during team facilitations.

I started integrating the Transformative Mediation model (TM) into my practice as a mediator/facilitator of team development sessions, about eight years ago. I immediately became interested in the similarities I noticed through the use of *reflecting* by mind mapping and *reflecting* verbally, in order to support potential empowerment and recognition shifts.

I noticed that there are a number of interesting similarities. For instance: mind mapping can support the participants in hearing their own voice and the voice of others, which often opens up opportunities for empowerment and recognition shifts. Mind mapping can also help to increase participant's awareness of what's going on in the communication process, both within themselves and in relation to others. This may support new and different insights, views and options, and in so doing, strengthen the basis upon which participants make individual and group choices.

But there are also some notable differences. In contrast to a verbal *reflection* as practiced in TM, which lasts only as long as it takes to say it, *reflecting* by mind mapping literally leaves traces on a map. On the one hand, this thought-process-map may highlight and support opportunities for participants to grasp new insights and make empowerment shifts. On the other hand, the map or the mapping process may become 'a thing of its own' and, in that sense, solidify and/or change the focus of their interaction process.

My excitement grew concerning the similarities and uniquely different aspects of both the Transformative Model and Mind Mapping; and how they might be adapted or adjusted to work better together in practice. This excitement, in turn, prompted me to write a paper on the topic. In ***'Mind Mapping and the Transformative Framework'***, I explain how I use mind mapping in team development sessions, while exploring the relationship between mind mapping and

the Transformative Model of facilitation. In what ways is mind mapping a good fit for and with the transformative model? In what ways may it endanger the facilitator's commitment to following the participants, and risk taking away or supplanting team members' choices? How may we guard against the map becoming the focus of the facilitation and the conversation, rather than a means of following the parties?

Carol Bloom, mediator, facilitator, trainer and board member of the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, has been of tremendous help in the writing of this paper. Her editing (including some translation of my thoughts from Dutch to English) has served to sharpen and enrich the concepts, providing insights for mediators and facilitators into the possible use of a new tool (mind mapping) in tandem with the Transformative Model.

We are happy to introduce mind mapping to other (TM) facilitators in this paper, and to inspire them to explore to what degree and in what ways the use of mind mapping does or does not work well in combination with Transformative-based facilitation of team/group sessions.

You can request a PDF of the paper ***'Mind Mapping and the Transformative Framework'*** by sending an email to: cjmvaneijk@gmail.com or carolvbloom@gmail.com.