

Write up of the Re-inventing Work Network event held Tuesday 1 October 2019

Our focus for this event continued to be the **Human Future of Work** and our aim with this session was to delve deeper into this topic, building on the previous sessions throughout the year.

The participants warmed up and got to know each other by moving into trios and asked to identify words that resonate with three key questions:

1. What is the definition of meaning and satisfaction in work?
2. What gets in the way?
3. What are the factors that impact on meaningful relationships at work

Each group was asked to identify one word that summed up their conversation and the Human Future of Work. These were laid on the floor and then grouped into similar themes. Words emerged such as:

- Spark
- Creativity
- Learning
- Identity
- Belonging
- Personal growth

The facilitator then moved the group into a constellations exercise, starting with the Human Future of Work. Constellations are where individuals take the role of a word they have connected with and position it where they feel most drawn to.

The participant representing the Human Future of Work places themselves in the position in the room they feel most appropriate and then volunteers were requested from the audience to become a 'star' in the constellation through the embodiment of the word that most appeals to them. The first star was **Personal Growth**. The participant who was very strongly drawn to represent this particular word placed themselves very closely to the right of the Human Future of Work.

The second star to join was then **Identity**. Interestingly the reflections from the 'stars' were that Personal Growth felt very happy that Identity had joined but Identity acknowledged they felt a huge responsibility. It then got deep very quickly when the Human Future of Work voiced that they felt that personal growth and identity excluded those dispossessed in the world of work so **Dispossessed** joined the constellation but as a very faint star in almost the next galaxy over they were so far away from the Human Future of Work, Personal Growth and Identity.

This led to Identity trying to engage with Dispossessed, *"I'd like to speak to the part of you that's been rejected. I'd like to find out who you are."* Dispossessed explaining that their identity does not come from work but from their community, football team and family and that work is for money but not much more. After much cajoling from Identity, Dispossessed entered the constellation directly opposite the Human Future of Work on the basis that they were caught between the assumption that in order to have an identity you need work and the fact that having work makes you feel 'useful' and earning money leads to having more to contribute to society.

The facilitator then asked all the 'stars' if they wanted to move now. Dispossessed then came closer towards the Human Future of Work on the basis that they felt that there was the opportunity for growth within work but that this should be in the present as well as the future. Identity felt they wanted to weave all the way through and be a part of everything. Identity expressed a reflection that people who need work often do not have it and others who have work, it is not satisfying. This felt uncomfortable to Identity.

Work then joined as they did not recognise that there was much future in the human element of work but that there was a recognition of Work itself and that there was a need for more of it.

At this point the star of **Belonging** joined and entered between Work and opposite Personal Growth. Belonging had a felt need to be part of something and wanted to help others get over the expectations. Dispossessed felt aggressive to Belonging and Belonging felt the need to connect.

Observations from participants - *At this stage the observations from the floor were about the definition of work being more about paid work and the value of non-paid work such as caring did not appear to be represented. This moved into a debate about Gender as built into that, Dispossessed felt very male in its depiction.*

Money then joined as a star in the constellation and placed themselves in-between Dispossessed and the rest and then both Identity and Personal Growth moved towards Money citing that having Money in the constellation made everything feel different "*people need money to help with personal growth.*" Identity "I relate to working in association with others"

Observations from participants – *It was noted that Dispossessed appeared to get their identity from others and identify when they were working for others and potentially this is where the struggle has been most felt. There were further observations that Dispossessed triggers an ancient response and that in terms of physical labour and the tradition of building community around that type of industrial labour has meant that there has become a struggle between community and individual Identity.*

Purpose entered the constellation and noted that although Purpose and Identity are closely connected, they actually did not want to stand with Identity but felt more drawn towards Dispossessed. The constellation observed that most of the stars were moving away from the Human Future of Work; they all needed a shared understanding of their place in relation to Human Future of Work and that they did not want to leave anyone behind. The constellation had a shared discomfort but agreed this felt right.

The facilitator then asked each star to take one step towards better to see what that would look like. Money moved towards Human Future of Work quickly followed by Personal Growth and Identity. Dispossessed moved much closer to Purpose and Belonging and Work ended up in the middle.

Observations – *adaptability is key and the ability of the Human Future of Work to adapt will be crucial. It was observed that the difference between Work and the Human Future of Work is the ability to lead a dignified human life. Universal income was cited as something that could be the key, as if this could be got right then the rest should follow. There was a debate about the relative interconnectedness between Belonging, Purpose, Identity and Personal Growth. It was agreed the first three were vital but some divide on whether or not Personal Growth was an essential part.*

Identity felt that Work had too much to do with how people identify and there should be a reconsideration of how, as humans, we define ourselves. If we define ourselves as Work and Work changes or we lose it, do we lose our Identity and risk becoming Dispossessed?

The constellations exercise then led to a series of questions:

- How do we create space for the inclusive voice? Is now the time to challenge traditional definitions and structures? How do we do this well in a way that moves us forward and does not amplify the 'haves and the have nots'?
- How does society reach out its hand to others to say 'belong to us?'
- What is the societal form of the Human Future of Work?
- Do we feel equipped to deal with this with its complex and ambiguous nature?
- How do we continue when we do not yet know the economic model in which we will work in?
- Who are the 'they' in the future system i.e. politicians and those we rely on to create the systems in which we operate?
- How do we find our voice and use our privilege to benefit the whole?
- Self-determination will be needed more than in the past.
- How do we move away from the pressure to know our purpose?
- The patriarchal system has defined the framework in the past and now we have to step into the not knowing and make up the answers.
- What is our responsibility in that?
- Knowledge is the easiest thing to automate and the caring profession will be more valued in the future. How do we make the shift to the Human Future of Work?

This was a really energising and interesting session with discussions that went on past the original finishing time.