

Contextual Essay Accompanying
“Adventures in the Wonderland:
Process-Oriented Psychology Board Game”

A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in
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Abstract

I begin by describing the basic idea of my game and the exercises that are its core. Players are to be aged 15/16 and more. Through playing the game, I hope that participants will develop a richer repertoire of reactions to different life situations.

Next I offer my thinking behind creating the game, and illustrate the ideas and tools of Process-Oriented Psychology (POP). I hope that working on ourselves can be done in a playful way and be supported by a community of people. Bringing back the spirit of childhood, when we used to play different games together with our friends, will be helpful in this regard. As individual members work on themselves, each group will get to know itself better, too.

The reader is then invited on my journey while creating the game, from the first dream through different experiences I had before the final version was created. There were difficult moments when I hesitated to bring it out and moments of happiness when the game was well-received. I learned from this process both personally and as a Process Work student, and I feel the playful part of me better now.

Successful experiences of using the game are described. I include feedback from participants and show how incorporating this both ensured its quality and shaped the final form of the exercises. Also, I write of any ethical dilemmas that I've encountered during the whole process.

Finally, I address how the game contributes to the field of conflict facilitation through enabling groups to get to know themselves and spreading POP to the general public. One of its main limitations is that a facilitator needs to have some PW experience. Recommendations for further development of the game: trying it out with various groups and facilitating it by people new to POP.

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I would like to thank many persons without whose support my game could never have been created.

First and foremost my thanks go to Arnold Mindell for developing the process-oriented way of working with symptoms that at a first glance seem only disturbing and unrelated to us, humans as a whole. This game couldn't have been created if it wasn't for his ideas. I want to thank him especially for creating the beautiful "The Earth Spot Exercise" that I've used in my game.

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One: Description of the Board Game

The most important part of “Adventures in the Wonderland,” the process-oriented psychology board game that I’ve created, is its manual. It describes the rules, contains description of exercises (I also call them adventures), and facilitation tips. The board itself can be created from various materials. It’s important that its squares are in 6 different colours: yellow, red, orange, green, violet, and blue. Each colour relates to a particular exercise. In my version of the board I’ve used foam squares for children. Players create the board and totems themselves each time before playing a new game.



Figure 1. Example of a board that I have used to play the game.

By moving the totem and landing on different squares, each player (assisted by a facilitator) goes through exercises that put her or him in touch with new figures in themselves. Most exercises apply to the dream level. One of them allows players to

work on their accidental movements and see what unknown part of themselves is involved in moving this particular part of body. “The Symptom Creator” exercise allows uncovering of the figure that creates the upsetting symptom and allows one to see what message it carries for the player. This often brings some relief to people who identify strongly with only the victim side of the whole situation. When working in pairs players access the background, animal-like energy that’s present in their relationship they were often unaware of. Outcome of another exercise is creating a song together where everybody participates in communal singing. One of my favourites is “The Dream Theatre” exercise. Here players have an opportunity to recreate one of their dreams. One player takes on the role of the director and casts various players in roles that appeared in their dream. Then, as if in a theatre, the whole play evolves creating a unique, dream-like, group process. “The Earth Spot” exercise encourages players to go deeper into themselves and experience the dreaming level. This is a great opportunity to practice meditation-like skills. In this exercise all players, by going down to essence level, work simultaneously on a group issue from their everyday life (the signal is coming thus from the world channel). The game finishes with all players telling a story about what was happening during its course.

The title of the game reflects its spirit. Going through the exercises is a fascinating process. Sometimes it’s irrational, with moments of anxiety mixed with relief and feeling energized. This all happens in a playful atmosphere. There’s the sense of venturing into the unknown and amazement. It all reminds me of Alice’s adventures in the Wonderland, hence the title.

The game is aimed at different groups that would like to find out more about the different figures that create their individual selves and want to have more aware access to them. These figures are like parts of ourselves that are skilled at using

different tools. I believe that having many options in terms of different ways of reacting in life and, at the same time, feeling that we have a choice in using one option or another makes our lives easier and richer. This is similar to learning how to use one tool only to fix many different things in the house. With time, you might master how to use it in various situations, but still it's not entirely universal. Finally, a problem will arise that is very difficult, energy and time consuming, if not impossible to fix with it. It is then when a whole set of tools instead of just one, no matter how well-mastered in use, comes in handy. The main purpose of the game is for players to first use these tools in the game and then afterwards in their lives as much as possible.

The groups using my game may be therapy or support groups. It can be also played during various retreats or summer camps. I felt that players should be at least 15/16 years old and more. I spoke with people who work with teenagers and they thought that it would be difficult for younger players to metacommunicate about their internal processes in the way needed to engage in the game. Having written that, I never actually tried the game with younger players. However, I did test the game with my adult therapy groups for people with addiction problems in their present or past relationships—it worked very well in this setting.

The game is strongly experiential. The purpose is for players, by going through different exercises, to experience different parts of themselves. Hopefully, by doing it, it will be easier for them to access various ways of behaving later in life. This in turn can be a great support in handling different issues in groups and relationships as they occur.

Two: My Thinking Behind Creating the Game

I thought that it would be great if people could both play and work on themselves at the same time. That's why I pursued the idea of a Process Work (PW) board game that came to me in a dream.

Thorsten Böhner writes that play in a group setting isn't only an interesting way of spending time together. He notices that through this activity, participants:

- notice in a sharper way themselves and others;
- are able to recognise their own boundaries better and are more sensitive about them;
- practice working as a team because the balance between coming forward and staying in the background is important;
- learn elastic behaviours through play, without the threat of having to react to new situations in real life (e.g., when taking on different roles in drama therapy).¹

Playing and enjoying yourself is also considered an important metaskill in Process-Oriented Psychology (POP). The way I've heard Arnold Mindell put it during one of the workshops is, "Serious is good, fun is better!" Whenever I laugh in working on myself with my therapist, I always feel that something subtly shifts within me. My body and mind relax. I'm able to see things in a wider perspective. This often results in moving away from some internal positions (or roles) I might be stuck in. I also feel that if I can laugh with my therapist, he or she really cares for me and it's easier to trust them. Laughing together creates great atmosphere for building intimacy. All these important processes happen seemingly with no, or very little, effort! I love it!

¹ Böhner, T. (2002). *Zabawy ułatwiające nawiązywanie kontaktów* [Spiele, die Beziehung knüpfen]. Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność

The game gives an opportunity to do it in a group of people. Players can discover themselves and feel the support of the group all the time. Walking in the mountains with friends comes to my mind. This is a mixture of working on myself and heavy workout, rewarded by incredible views and encounters with nature. It is unforgettable to share these gorgeous moments with someone at my side. I am aware of the unique opportunity that one-to-one sessions with a therapist can give in terms of building trust and sharing very intimate moments of our lives. Yet, similarly to group therapy, there's something in us that's skipped over then. I feel it is the opportunity of feeling the support of community and celebrating the progress with others around you. We are humble, we are proud, we are happy or sad, strong or weak—we are not one thing only. Let's celebrate together how diverse and beautiful we all are!

I think that playing a board game is a good way of bringing back the spirit of childhood. With it comes more openness to parts of ourselves that we don't know, natural curiosity, and the ability to enjoy ourselves while learning. I also feel that fun opens us up into the secondary in a similar way that we laugh about "the unspeakable" in jokes. Using a board game is an elegant way of navigating through a collection of various exercises. Each time a player throws the dice the Tao decides what comes next for him or her. It is as if it is choosing how it wants to be explored.

Another great influence that creating a light, positive atmosphere by playing the game has, is that these are perfect conditions for the group to get to know itself. Fun and laughing relaxes us and make us open to other, different ways of being in life (that other players represent) in a similar way it makes us open and nondefensive to our own variety of experiences. Knowing each other well is an important factor in building trust within the group. This is helping with opening up to more secondary processes within ourselves, which in turn builds more trust, and so on.

I chose specific exercises for the individuals, and sometimes the whole group, to go through. Each of them focuses on signals coming through particular channels. There are many reasons why I thought it would be great to design the game that way. The main one is to draw players' attention to different areas of everyday life where their secondary processes might manifest (in signals) and develop. Before starting to study POP, I found the idea that something important for my development could be happening in an accidental movement or body symptom amazing and completely counter intuitive at the same time. Through training my own awareness I was gradually able to access more and more information that was manifesting itself through my dreambody in different channels and make use of it, if I wanted to. In dreams, body experiences, relationship problems, and synchronicities we feel the influence of an all-penetrating field.² I know that anybody is able to do it. I see playing the game as a great opportunity to master awareness training in areas that we usually aren't taught about when at school or being brought up in our families.

All exercises combined allow players to experience the richness of the POP approach: get to know all six different channels in which signals might appear and work on two different levels (the dream and the dreaming level). I want the game to get players curious about various tools POP has to offer, because they appeal to me personally a lot. Playing it is a great way of introducing POP to the wider public. For people already knowing it (e.g., PW students), the purpose would be to deepen understanding and experience of this unique way of looking at ourselves and the world around us.

² Mindell, A. (1995). *Lider mistrzem sztuk walki* [The Leader as Martial Artist]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MEDIUM, p. 28

Three: Personal Inspirations in Creating the Game

The idea of creating a Process-Oriented Psychology (POP) board game came to me in a dream about 2 years ago. As it happens with dreams, I didn't remember the content of it very well. Whatever I was dreaming about, it felt like something just clicked. Suddenly this thought came to me from somewhere and I got excited about it so much that I woke up. "Process Work board game! Wow! What a great idea! I could include working on synchronicities and body symptom exercises!" I was literally drunk, high on the idea still lying in bed.

The whole creative process is coming from a dream and bringing it to life was, and still is for me, the continuation of this dream. I put a lot of thinking into designing the game in the way I did. Regardless, my main motivation when working on the project is to continue on a personal journey of developing the dream-born idea no matter what doubts I have, obstacles I encounter. On one level, the board game seems like a pretext for me to experience living my dream and get to know myself through this creative process. On this level it doesn't feel like there was any chain of thoughts that influenced me in creating the finished product—the game manual. The dream itself was enough to start and continue with the whole process. This allows me to be in touch with something very deep in me—somewhere where both me, Maciej, and my dreams originate.

Dreams have an important place in my life. Sometimes they foresee what's going to happen to me the next day. If I don't know which way to go in some moments of my life, I usually check out my dreams looking for hints. It feels like they connect me to a never drying source of a cosmic energy, somewhere I personally no longer exist. Interpreting any dream, I always pay attention to how much energy is

bound in its different figures. The idea of the board game got me very excited, telling me that some lively, energetic process might stand behind it.

Carl Gustav Jung remembered his first dream that he had when he was 3-4 years old—he was thinking and analysing it a lot later in life.³ He thought those so-called archetypal dreams show how typical experiences of humanity are reflected in an individual's life.⁴ Similarly, I still remember my very first dream (or so I think). Since I was a child I remembered lots of my dreams. They were often intense and I would be scared waking up from them in the middle of the night. It wasn't until I was about 17/18 that I started to pay more attention to this incredible phenomenon, tried to interpret them, see how they related to what was happening in my life the day after I had dreamt them. I got even more interested in them when I started to read about Jungian analytical psychology, which eventually led me to studying Process-Oriented Psychology. What appealed to me in these approaches was the fact that they treated dreams as important messages from the unknown, unconscious realms of ourselves and beyond, to our conscious parts. They were treated as messages that wanted to be lived, not only intellectually interpreted.

Dreams were important for Jung. He was using them very often working with his patients. He tried his own theories as working hypotheses—their value was to be recognised by their utility. Interpreting dreams was similar to creating practical solutions that should never be treated too literally.⁵ Jung was also claiming that dreams show aspects of ourselves that we aren't usually aware of and that they

³ Jung, C.G. (1999). *Wspomnienia, sny, myśli* [Memories, Dreams, Reflections]. Warszawa: WROTA, p. 24

⁴ Jacobi, J. (1993). *Psychologia C. G. Junga* [The Psychology of C. G. Jung]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wodnika, p. 15

⁵ Vedfelt, O. (1998). *Wymiary snów* [The Dimensions of Dreams]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury ENETEIA, p. 59

represent new points of view in conflict situations.⁶ He was aware that reading books about dreams is giving, at its best, theoretical knowledge about dreams and our own dreams are too close to ourselves to be able to look at them objectively. People look at their own dreams and say: “Yes, I know what it means!” and then project their old knowledge onto them.⁷ I felt good about the idea that in order to deepen understanding of a dream, it’s good to live it.

There were many milestones in learning to understand my dreams. One of the major ones was reading Ole Vedfelt’s book *The Dimensions of Dreams*, which showed me many ways of looking at dreams, various ways of interpreting dream figures. Since that moment I started thinking of language used by dreams as extremely rich in meanings. When I dream of a tree the content behind it may be a real tree that grows next to my parents’ house; it may be a phallic expression; it may be my father or my mother in reality, or my own internal figures of my parents; it may represent myself; it may be a symbol of the soul and the life principle. It may be some or all, or none of it.

Living dreams in various ways is a long journey that still continues for me. One of the things that happened to me on this journey is my growing confidence in dreams as something precious and meaningful. This enabled me to trust the thought of developing the board game and bring it to life.

Second biggest inspiration that influenced my way of thinking about how to create the game was my study of Process-Oriented Psychology and Analytical Psychology. There is something very true for me about the way the two look at every

⁶ Sharp, D. (1998). *Leksykon pojęć i idei C.G. Junga* [Jung Lexicon. A Primer of Terms and Concepts]. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskie, p. 102

⁷ Franz von, M. L. (1995). *Ścieżki snów: Marie-Louise von Franz w rozmowie z Fraserem Boa* [The Way of the Dream: Marie-Louise von Franz in Conversation with Fraser Boa]. Warszawa: Jacek Santorski & CO, p. 27

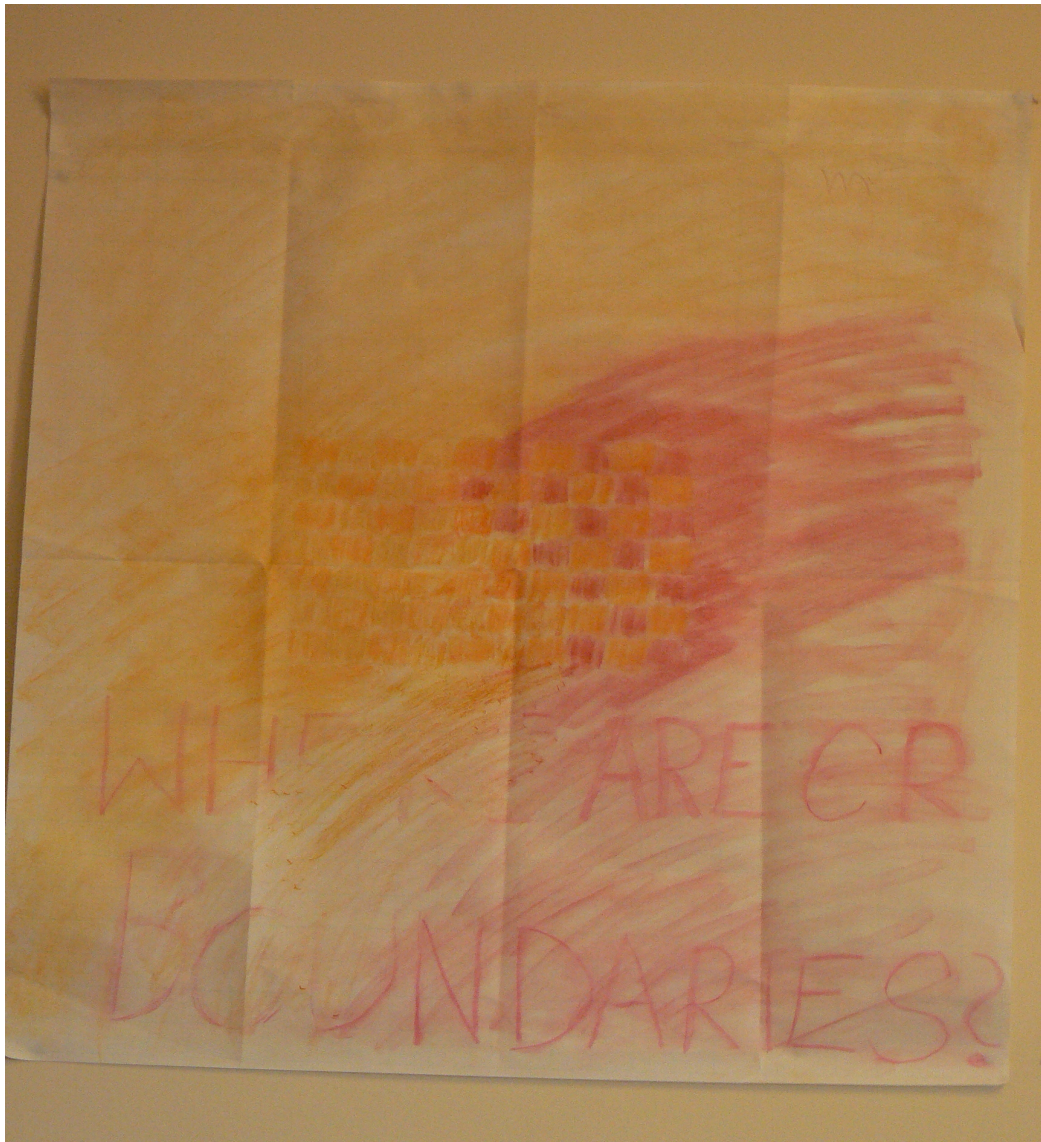
human being. They see the process of development, individuation, lasting all our lives and that it is necessary to integrate what's unconscious into the conscious while still maintaining conscious autonomy. It's scary and beautiful to me at the same time, what became apparent already with Freud's discovery of the unconsciousness, that we aren't entirely in charge of all psychological processes that influence us. There is something beyond ourselves that wants us to become and do certain things in life. It wants us to live certain parts of ourselves, no matter how hard it might be for us to do. These parts show themselves beautifully in our dreams, in our body symptoms, in synchronicities, in our relationships, in everything we call secondary in Process Work. What I learned from POP is that getting to know different parts of myself can be sometimes difficult and scary, but in the end it makes my relationships deeper, my projects more interesting, and my life happier in general. That's the idea that I wanted to convey by creating the board game.

After I had had the dream (already in MACF program), I forgot about the thought for some time. It wasn't until the first final project classes started that it came back to me. I hadn't a clue why I would like to do something as unusual for me. I never had too much interest in working with children—I thought of them as the audience for the game at first. I was never skilled in arts and crafts either, and it looked like preparing the game would require such skills. At the same time though, it felt good. Developing something that was leading precisely into the unknown and was born in a dream was all it needed to be in the very beginning.

After finishing the third residency, sitting on an aeroplane back to Ireland, having decided that creating the board game will be my final project, I couldn't sleep with excitement. I had lots of ideas on how to design the rules of the game. They were going in different directions. I didn't mind it. I let the brainstorming happen and

I was enjoying it. I was writing them down one by one. At the time, my wife and I were expecting a baby. I was imagining how we might play the game outdoors with our child.

I think it was during classes in the following residency when I created a poster of my idea. As I mentioned before, I was never any good at drawing. During the final project class, I caught myself drawing doodles—different coloured squares. Like big,



checked pattern in red and yellow. I did a similar poster, which I'm proud of.

Figure 2. Poster that I created during final project classes.

Red, orange, and yellow squares blurring into each other and overshadowing a question referring to my final project at the bottom: “Where are CR boundaries?” It looked great! Still in Portland, I told my wife via skype how happy I was about it and she encouraged me to bring it home with me. I liked the fact that I was doing something that mattered to her. I brought it to Cork and I am looking at it writing these words.

“Where are CR boundaries?” So that’s, among other things, what the game is to be about? At first, I was surprised about it. Yet the question was coming from a place in me that I knew well before starting my studies in Portland. Already being 14/15 I could feel something; it felt as if the whole world around me was there for a reason. At times, I had a strange feeling that it would disappear immediately after someone would have thought some magical “right sentence.” It’s as if it would cease to exist after producing, through some individual, these holy words. Thinking all this strange stuff, I felt particularly attracted to discovering some hidden rules or boundaries that reign in the unknown, the unconscious. I was imagining I was an ant in a labyrinth with no chances of finding the way out, not realising even what a labyrinth was, but somehow with an enormous effort succeeding in it. Aha! So that’s what the game is about as well. It occurs to me so clearly now only after having written these words. Transcendental trip into the unknown for me, and possibly serving humanity as I discover something new about the unconscious realms.

I knew from the very beginning that this project, coming from the unknown, born into this world through me in excitement, would gradually start to live its own life, like a child depending on his or her parents entirely in their first months and years grows more independent later in life. Because I felt that the game belongs to the

world, I had this explicit thought of testing it out and then feeding back my observations into its rules. It is easier to write about it than do it. Even creating the first set of rules wasn't an easy task. Some ideas had to be abandoned, others developed in greater detail. Still, it seemed that children, as well as adults could play the game. Later, the more I was thinking and speaking with other people about it, the more I was getting convinced that it would be aimed at teenagers and adults. It didn't seem that young children could conceptualise the idea of internal figures and different processes connected to them. It was also dawning on me that some Process Work experience would be necessary to facilitate it. For all the players to be able to access underlying, secondary processes through exercises, the facilitator needs to feel comfortable in noticing and amplifying them. I'd imagine that without it players wouldn't feel the new figures in themselves strong enough and the whole game could be experienced as a collection of strange exercises with no purpose at all. There could be no sense that these new figures really belong to ourselves in the same way other parts do. Some previous facilitation experience is also necessary to be able to follow a player's process, gently encourage him or her to experience what's secondary, and hold an attitude of playfulness at the same time.

With the first manual of rules ready and board itself invented, came the most difficult moment—actually trying it out in the world for the first time. What a hard time it was! I was procrastinating. It was a big edge. My biggest fear I think was that no one will want to play this game for many reasons: that it's not a game like many others, that the combination of working on yourself and playing won't work, that people will be too shy to work on themselves in front of the group, that it's too difficult.

I wanted to consult about the content of the manual with more people thinking I could tweak it that way. Somewhere deep inside though, I felt that what my game needed most was playing it to see how it works. The poster was staring at me from the wall like a great remorse. (Now, having already tried it out numerous times, I barely notice it—amazing!) There was never good time for starting it: too busy at work, going on holidays, writing essays for MACF course, not knowing where to buy a dice to use it in the game. All I needed was to make the decision. What helped me to do so was the timeframe that we were encouraged to create during our final project classes. Here comes the insight, another learning I got out of it—big creative projects, in order to be successfully completed, need a lot of self-discipline. I have both: creativity and discipline, and it's a privilege I want to remember.

Finally, I decided to go ahead with it. I am facilitating two groups for people whose parents or partners have (or had) addiction problems. I thought this might be a good place to give it a try. Around the same time, my wife bought me two beautiful big dice. I had all the equipment ready. It was time to focus more on working on myself. On one hand, I was afraid how such a game would be received: Will people in the group want to play it at all? On the other hand, they knew me well as their facilitator and they were accustomed a bit to the idea of roles and figures within themselves. I spoke from both sides, feeling deeper into them until I had a better sense what the conflict was about. What helped ultimately most I think, was me going over the edge and feeling strongly what fun it could be to test the game and simply try to enjoy it, no matter the outcome.

I will never forget the feeling I had after playing it for the first time. "Huge success" were the only words that were coming to my mind! People liked it. They were working on themselves and applying this knowledge in difficult situations that

they had recently. Great, positive feedback! I was literally jumping with excitement, dancing and singing after this group session had finished. What a feeling! Wow! That moment was worth all the work I put in the project so far.

Immediately afterwards, I understood more about why I was doing this particular final project. It was great to experience how playful I can be working with my clients. It was partly due to this important metaskill that I was bringing to the game that the whole process of playing was flowing so smoothly. I am working on a Process Work game because I need to be more playful with my groups and individual clients. Wow! This did it! I didn't need any more rationales.

More awareness was coming my way though. My wife told me, after I shared the success story with her, that I have a natural gift of encouraging and bringing people together to play various games. She gave me some examples that she witnessed herself in the years spent with me. That's right! As a child, and later a young teenager, I was very popular among friends in the downturn of communist times of no computers, boring TV, and no money in our pockets, because I had many crazy ideas and they were contagious. I remember being greeted by one of my friends, just having come back from holidays with my family, with the words: "The boredom is over, Maciej came back!"

After a session with my teacher and final project advisor Ayako, I've realised how playing was an important process for people with coaddiction problems (being addicted to a person who is addicted to a substance). Their very strong primary process is looking after others and solving different problems for them. By doing so, they sometimes neglect themselves, isolate and become pretty serious individuals in life. Focusing on their own experiences instead of the other person's and enjoying themselves in a group setting is often their secondary process. Playing this kind of

game with them can be a great possible intervention. Working on yourself and enjoying it—what a great experience and a reminder of how it can be done sometimes!

I've witnessed this process happen in various ways with the groups I've been playing the game with. Sometimes everything goes as planned, so to say: we are playing the game, players are getting in touch with their secondary parts, try to bring it into interactions during the game, they react to each others' figures, and create group story at the end of the game. Other times, we might work simultaneously on one person's dream and a similar, other person's current problem in life. In this situation what worked well was not continuing the game until the second person's problem got worked on, too. It didn't matter to anybody in the group that we didn't finish even one round of the game. It felt natural to support the person with the problem. The more I am playing the game with my groups, the more I see it as an intervention as any other. In order for it to work well, I need to watch the feedback after I suggest it and be fluid, able to adjust, and follow the unique process of every game after we decide to go ahead with it.

The whole process of creating the game has two main dimensions for me. One is getting to know myself: being aware of my creativity, discipline, the ability to bring in playfulness in groups. It is also an amazing journey for me in putting an idea from a dream into practice. It is a way for me to get in touch with something bigger, greater than myself where my dreams and personal processes originate. Arnold Mindell writes that somebody interested in dreams studies them carefully, but someone who is interested in them even more starts to think where they come from.⁸ I feel that my own interest in dreams is moving in this direction too. The other is to develop further

⁸ Mindell, A. (2007). *O istocie snów* [The Dreammaker's Apprentice]. Katowice: Wydawnictwo KOS, p. 216

as a Process Work student: use playfulness as metaskill, be able to follow process where it naturally flows, and watch the feedback.

Four: Insuring Quality—Experiences of Using the Game

I was delighted, after having tried out the game with my therapy groups, that I was getting many positive responses about it. It was an objective sign for me that the game was a quality product that could be used in practice, not only my own dream.

Generally speaking, participants were saying they enjoyed it. They liked the fact that it was both a game and they were getting some wider perspective on problems they were working on in their lives at the same time. Many of them were saying it was a great idea to combine playing and working on themselves—something I felt strongly about myself. There was also very positive atmosphere after finishing playing the game. I could sense some sort of lightness in the air that's often present after an individual or a group goes over an edge. I could see people were relating to each other in a different way: they were more direct and explicit when addressing each other, there were fewer double signals. Conversations were flowing more naturally. I remember a situation after finishing the game when some people had a difference of opinions. They were able to work on their conflict in a more skilful way (being respectful to each other, consider different points of view) than I've ever seen them do before.

Most of the time players were genuinely interested in uncovering double signals. With my assistance, they were staying with their processes and unfolding them until we got to some sort of insight about their origins. I've tried this kind of intervention with the same groups before and it didn't work (the feedback was negative). I think that framing the whole situation as "a board game" significantly helped them to go over an edge to do it.

Many times focusing on one person's experience would start the whole group process. I remember working on a dream, in which the dreamer was trying to

convince her mother not to do an abortion. While their conversation took place, the father was sitting nearby not saying anything, half present. All participants helped act out the dream. They all had many reactions about different characters in the dream. I wasn't surprised. The dream touched on a quite typical dynamic within families with addiction problems: father addicted and withdrawn from family, mother worried, child acting as a parent trying to console and support her. The innocence and the fragility of the unborn baby and death were both in the background as well. My clients (all of them being brought up in families with addiction problems) knew this kind of situation very well. We didn't continue with the next person moving their totem until everybody's reactions were processed. People were taking on different roles, the most difficult being the addicted father himself, and sharing what was on their minds and hearts in the situation. After we had finished they were telling me it was great to work on the whole issue having a dream as a starting point. In later sessions, they were recalling working on this dream saying how their attitudes towards members of their families of origin changed since then. It was easier for them to communicate with their parents and handle differences of opinions.

Another time, everybody recreated a dream becoming a person appreciating the dreamer. This was the last time this particular person was with us in the group. She did very well working on herself and on issues within her family. She also met a new boyfriend she was very happy with and got offered good work in Poland—she decided to return to Poland (all my clients are Polish immigrants working in Ireland). In spite of all these successes, she was struggling with self-appreciation. The dream helped her to get in touch with this part of herself. Appreciating herself at the end of the exercise, she had tears in her eyes, describing it as “a magical experience.”

It is also amazing to see how the fairy-tale created at the end of the game gives people opportunity to react to different roles that appear during its course. In one instance I remember one person becoming a volcano in “The Earth Spot” exercise. She didn’t want the volcano to become an important part of the story. Everybody else felt differently though. It was great to have conversation with all the participants about how we all need this “volcano” energy in our lives and how we sometimes use it unconsciously, hurting others around us.

All these situations that I’ve witnessed made me happy because they showed me that the game achieves its goal—people gain access and start using more consciously parts of themselves they weren’t aware of.

Using the feedback of my clients and teachers, I was modifying the rules of the game accordingly: I’ve changed the exercise “Let’s sing a song!” because it was very difficult for players who I was facilitating to sing in public. If this is the case, creating roles that are main characters in the song that comes to player’s mind might be a good option. I’ve encouraged all players who go through “The Earth Spot” exercise to have a look at different problems they are encountering in groups they are part of from a different perspective. I thought that by doing it, it will be easier to apply the energy of the earth spot in a real life situation. It also made it possible to go through the same exercise many times during the same game without getting bored. All players need to do it in that case, is to think about a different group they are part of. I’ve added more useful comments for the facilitator, hoping it would remind less experienced facilitators what attitude and metaskills are especially important in particular exercises. I also looked at many board games and carefully examined how their manuals were constructed.

I've learned to use the game as an intervention. Every 2 to 3 weeks, I suggest the game as a way of spending the 1.5 hour session and people say if they want it. Usually the main reason for not wanting to play is willingness to simply hear what is happening in other participants' lives and to share their own struggles.

One of my ethical considerations is that I wouldn't push against group's will, if they didn't want to play it. The other one is delivering on the promise that this will indeed be a game, not a place for so-called "heavy duty" therapy work. Sometimes, as a facilitator and therapist at the same time, I am tempted to go deeper with processes that manifested themselves in exercises. It can be to a client's benefit as long as they are fine with it. I realize how difficult it may be for players to refuse it once they get involved in the process of working on themselves, and are already on the spot. There may be also an implicit pressure from other participants to work on something that may be their own edge too. In these moments I pay close attention to player's feedback and usually don't suggest deepening work on the issue, unless clients themselves are explicit about it. Ensuring that the metaskill of playfulness is always present is a great help in not hurting the client by going against their will. Finally, all participants in the group have agreed that anything that's happening during the course of the game is confidential.

Five: Contribution to the Field of Conflict Facilitation, Limitations, and Suggestions for Further Development

I see my “Adventures in the Wonderland” game as a great tool for supporting diversity in various groups. That’s what in my opinion all group processes are about—experiencing different parts of ourselves in a group setting and, through it, building a sense of community through this diversity. That’s what happens during the game. Players not only experience different parts for themselves. There is much more happening. These parts are born, so to speak, with others witnessing, which causes natural interactions. Players are encouraged to use these new parts in informal interactions throughout the game. Some of the exercises directly encourage group interactions: working on a dream, working on a relationship with another player, and working on a problem they have in some group they are part of (“The Earth Spot” exercise). Finally, it’s fascinating to see how in the fairy-tale created at the end people react to each others’ parts. All these result in players getting to know themselves and each other better, knowing each person’s struggles, feeling safer with each other, and ultimately a greater sense of community develops (see previous section for examples of these processes). Usually they are also able to identify with each other’s experiences and dream figures.

There is one more important reason that inspired me to create the game. That is the idea of spreading the process-oriented way of looking at ourselves and the world around us to the more general public. I would like others to find out about this beautiful, universal method of work. I love the way it shows us how we are influenced by what’s happening around us and how to use this information in a way that enhances development (be it of an individual, group, or an organisation). I deeply feel for the way its language translates in a more understandable way the information

often coming from other, less known realms of reality. It shows how to unfold signals so that they reveal their essence. When we amplify and interact with these events we have an opportunity to find out their meaning. Without it, it is only “a mystery waiting to be discovered.”⁹ POP makes use of my subtle experiences and I truly believe there are many people around me who could be happier in life by trying to use this tool to understand better what’s happening with and/or to them.

I feel there are two main limitations of the game. One is that it is addressed to the audience that is able to access their internal processes through exercises that I suggest. Having used Process-Oriented Psychology techniques with different individuals, couples, and groups, I know they don’t work for everybody. Even presented with the metaskills of playing and enjoying yourself, they require from players the attitude of letting it flow, counting on intuition, and using imagination. It can be extra difficult for some people to access these in a group setting, with others watching. The other limitation applies to the facilitator. He or she needs to know the main ideas of Process Work; preferably they should also have some practical experience applying this knowledge with clients and be able to use the metaskill of playfulness throughout the game.

In the game’s limitations lies its potential for future development. Some possibilities that come to my mind include rewriting the manual so that it could be understood for people with no Process Work experience and modifying the exercises so that they could be well-received by younger players. From my experience creating the game, the only way it can be done is through trying out different sets of rules with different players and checking out what does, and what doesn’t work.

⁹ Mindell, A., & Mindell, A. (2002). *Riding the Horse Backwards: Process Work in Theory and Practice*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, p. 14

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