

community building in britain

**113 - Autumn 2010**

## editorial

by Eric Ballard

A slight apology for not getting a Summer newsletter to you. There were insufficient contributions and I was too busy with facilitating ourselves to conjour up some inspirational content! Talking of facilitating ourselves; the event continues to nurture and inspire me. This year's event was the best attended ever, with a mix of past attendees and newcomers which was rich and dynamic. As an experiment, 3 children stayed through the week. Their presence was very positive and harmonious; they made lovely contributions in, sometimes, unexpected ways.

I would love to receive more contributions for the newsletter! Letters, articles, stories, poems, artwork, photos. All very welcome and the life blood of an organ that will cease to beat without them.

visit our web sites:

[www.communitybuilding.co.uk](http://www.communitybuilding.co.uk)

[www.facilitatingourselves.com](http://www.facilitatingourselves.com)

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**Peter Cooper, 2 Spinney Way, Needingworth, Cambs. PE27 4SR**

**e-mail: [peter-cooper@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:peter-cooper@tiscali.co.uk)**

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# Scott Peck quotes

from [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)

Discipline is wisdom and vice versa.

It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually.

One extends one's limits only by exceeding them.

Real love is a permanently self-enlarging experience.

Share our similarities, celebrate our differences.

The difficulty we have in accepting responsibility for our behavior lies in the desire to avoid the pain of the consequences of that behavior.

The great awareness comes slowly, piece by piece. The path of spiritual growth is a path of lifelong learning. The experience of spiritual power is basically a joyful one.

The whole course of human history may depend on a change of heart in one solitary and even humble individual - for it is in the solitary mind and soul of the individual that the battle between good and evil is waged and ultimately won or lost.

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

Ultimately love is everything.

Until you value yourself, you won't value your time. Until you value your time, you will not do anything with it.

We cannot let another person into our hearts or minds unless we empty ourselves. We can truly listen to him or truly hear her only out of emptiness.

We cannot solve life's problems except by solving them.

Whenever we seek to avoid the responsibility for our own behavior, we do so by attempting to give that responsibility to some other individual or organization or entity. But this means we then give away our power to that entity.

You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time.

# twelve stages of community building?

by Eric Ballard



## Stage One - Isolation:

Community Building begins with the realisation "I am alone!" followed bumper to bumper, in this gregarious human, by the desire to be with others. Feeling isolated, I crave the company and support of others.

## Stage Two - Gathering:

When I can manifest the special skills of gathering, I can attract others to me; light a fire in the lonely darkness which will gather and welcome fellow travellers. Mostly, I wander through the desert of my isolation until I spy a

flame which calls and welcomes me into the company of others.

## Stage Three - Pseudocommunity:

And perhaps I am greeted with handshakes and how-dya-dooos and a place in the warmth of the fire. Gradually I suss out and try to honour the unspoken rules of the gathering - it is warm by the fire and I don't want to be rejected. Everybody seems to be doing their very best to fit in. I try my hardest to fit in.

## Stage Four - Unexpressed Judgement:

No matter how hard I try, I don't quite fit in. I notice how others around the fire are different to me. In some cases I don't like what I see! There seem to be groups or cliques within the gathered who seem to get on better or fit in more than I do. Is it me they are giggling together about? Others have habits, mannerisms or ways of speaking which, quite frankly, irritate me. Have I come to the right place? Found the right group? Am I really included? Judgements bounce around, on and off the inside walls of my head. I find myself in a fearful and acutely uncomfortable limbo. I have become far too judgemental to remain, with any comfort, in pseudocommunity but I'm too scared or too bloody civilised to plunge into the deep end of chaos. I am a wuss, shivering on the poolside, stretching to touch my big toe to the surface of the deep water.

## Stage Five - Chaos:

If I pluck up courage and take a leap, I begin to let my judgements plunge into the deep pool of the circle. I say what I see and feel, or what I imagine I see or feel, when I look at you. Others have addressed their judgements "for the attention of" - me. I think we are being more honest but it feels a

## twelve stages of community building...

bit brutal and laced with blame. Harmony is a fading dream; conflict rules OK! It's a mixture of "Every man for himself!" with side-taking and shades of courtroom drama as 'witnesses' weigh in on the side of the 'prosecution' or the 'defence'. It's bloody uncomfortable, rather uncivilised, ill-mannered and, frankly, unconscionably rude! It is so acutely uncomfortable that I am desperate to find a way out.

### Stage Six - Organisation:

The civilised way out of chaos is through organisation. "Let's do an exercise to bring us closer together!" "My father always said that any differences could be settled by the application of diplomacy!", "If we could make the schedule less intense we'd have more time to get to know each other better."; "Will everybody stop shouting and listen!" Organising out of chaos has one destination - pseudocommunity. It may be a new pseudocommunity; it may be more attractive than the last one; it is, perhaps, better organised; but it is pseudocommunity and pretty soon I feel not fully included, not fully heard and, once again, judgemental.



### Stage Seven - Pseudo-Chaos:

With time and experience, I feel I have hardened myself to the seductive charms of organising out of chaos (yeah. Right!) but it seems there are other mermaids wanting to lure me out of the sea lanes and on to the rocks that surround the process of building community. You see, I value Chaos; I know it's the way through and, to be honest, I quite like it when everyone starts hollering! In fact, there are particular expressions of chaos that I feel comfortable with. Could it be that it feels right to me when there are tons of tears? Or does shouting feel better? Is it biting, conflict-ridden humour that feels like progress? Or is it ridicule? What about silence you can chip at with an ice-pick? What kind of chaos

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## twelve stages of community building...

do I feel more comfortable with? What feels familiar? Exciting? More manageable? Do I have any tendency to model, move or manipulate the group's chaos in that direction? I do. Do you? And here we go! That's better! 'Real' chaos! Feels like we're making progress now! Pseudo-chaos is that 'chaos' that I feel most at home with. Actual chaos is always uncomfortable and resides in that place I least want to visit. Pseudo-chaos is just pseudocommunity's rude twin sister!

### Stage Eight - Letting Stand:

My route through and out of Chaos involves letting stand - allowing apparently contrary realities to stand side by side in the circle. In Chaos I wish to obliterate realities contrary to my own. (I see black, you see white, we fight, I win, It's black!) In organising out of Chaos I seek a compromise, an agreed reality. (We negotiate, we take witnesses, agree it's probably grey). Either of these options leaves some reality suppressed or denied (pseudocommunity). In the stage of letting stand, I begin to allow contrary realities to remain in the circle side by side; not changed; not moulded to fit; no compromise; no reasonable solution. (It is black. It is white.) This is so refreshingly or unnervingly un-scientific! So thrillingly or reprehensibly illogical. I have found no other way up and out of chaos.

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contrary realities to remain in the circle side by side;  
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### Stage Nine - Emptying:

Is about letting go, letting out, swinging the gates to gaping. In Chaos I might say to you "You never let me speak, you always interrupt, you make me so angry!" In Emptying I might say "When I look at you I see my father. He couldn't listen to me, he barely saw me, he died a stranger. I'm sorry I've never connected with you because of that." I might cry from the heart or laugh with relief. I might stamp my feet or shake my body. In emptying, I show part of me to the gathered circle and have it witnessed. Equally, in emptying I might say nothing at all but sit quietly alive and vulnerable, sharing my silent self.

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### Stage Ten - Emptiness:

In my experience, Emptiness is a state of grace which descends when I have truly emptied of something from deep within, witnessed in the circle. In contrast to the outpouring I have just experienced, I feel quiet, still, zingingly alive, somehow vast, without borders. I sit or lie in unfamiliar stillness. Others may be sharing - I feel fully aware of their words and emotional energy. I am not drawn in but feel a full and attentive witness from a temporary space of grace.

### Stage Eleven - True Community:

For me, True Community is a sharing of emptiness. Emptiness, by nature, has no boundaries and may grow from individual experiences to encompass the whole circle. The group in emptiness is a true community. Inclusive of all gathered and yet somehow outward facing and opened up. Beautifully whole in the moment but, perhaps almost ready to part, to move on, to engage with others, to re-engage with life, invigorated.

### Stage Twelve - Ongoing Community:

Community Building is something I practise; something I do with a unique group at a particular time. I may take away learning, a new open-ness,, a

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whole new lease of life. Community Building enhances and informs my life but is not my life. For better or for worse, I cannot take my new-found community away with me (Perhaps on some higher plane?!). Our true community existed in its own space and time and is now gone. Were we able to gather the same group together for a re-union - where would we start? In Pseudocommunity with our fond recollections of "how lovely it was last time!" one of the bricks to be removed in our new journey through the stages of building community. This is why, when I arrive at a gathering of people committed to moving through the stages of community building, that I feel part of an ongoing community from the start - even whilst I recognise that our adventure has just begun.

# community building in Derbyshire Dales

(after the General Election) by Amila (Y'Mech)

Hello there again.

You may remember that I stood as a Parliamentary Candidate for "Humanity" (see [www.humaine.org.uk](http://www.humaine.org.uk)) in the General Election in May. I was working more than full time throughout the campaign, to settle some debts I want to clear by the end of July, and I wasn't ready anyway to take my standing very far, but I did it anyway to put a marker down, so that my coming efforts are built on some sort of foundation. I received positive feedback from most people, made some useful connections, and learned the process of standing for Parliament - technically it's quite a trip. I got 50 votes, which is 5 times less than I had hoped for, but it was a reality check and actually not so bad really, given that I hadn't campaigned, other than putting out an A5 leaflet and hosting 5 meetings in different parts of the constituency. And then I thought, what do I do next?

Well I knew that my plan was to meet every representative organisation in the constituency between this last election and the next. But I always knew that it wasn't about getting me elected, but about inspiring people to take charge of their lives and working together to create the kind of social transformation that most of us in "the people movement" only dream of. And then it came to me, as I was driving my truck full of 40 tons of Coca Cola up the M1!

I always knew that somehow Community Building was a key, as I wrote last time round after having re-read "A World Waiting To Be Born". In September I shall invite everyone I made a connection with during the campaign in May to meet together. At that Humanity meeting, as well as everything else we may share and discuss, I shall invite everyone there to our Sheffield Community Building Week-end in November (which should be advertised elsewhere in this Newsletter). I shall also propose that we create a Derbyshire Dales Constituency Community Circle, inviting anyone and everyone who lives in the Constituency and wants to participate, including especially all the other political parties who operate at a constituency level. I shall suggest that this group undertakes together a Community Building event, and that we then continue to meet quarterly as a group, both to Community Build and to see whatever constituency level ideas and proposals might arise. I shall also propose that we create up to 10 Community Circles in the various population centres in the constituency, and again invite anyone and everyone in those areas to meet and Community Build and then meet regularly to continue this process. What do you think?

Looking forward to your feed-back.

# facilitating ourselves 2010 - feedback



Facilitating ourselves 2010 was held at Unstone Grange at the end of August. The following is a selection of responses to a feedback questionnaire from a small number of participants (percentages are of the responses given by these respondents). Further feedback would be welcome.

## **1. How did you first hear about facilitating ourselves?**

Word of mouth. *Searched on the internet, after reading 'Different Drum' & found the FO web site.* Invited by M. to Cryndir (first FO). Newsletter.

## **2. Prior to the event did you read about it in any of the following?**

*www.facilitatingourselves.com* 66%

*www.communitybuilding.co.uk* 33%

*Community Building in Britain Newsletter* 66% *Event leaflet* 66%

## **3. Did these media give an accurate and helpful idea of the event you experienced?**

Yes (66%). *As much as they could - R.'s blog is good; it'd be good if there was more first hand experience stuff like that. Hard to say since I contributed to them and suggested some things that weren't used: I imagine so.*

## **4. The actual cost of the event per person is about £145. Given that CBiB needs to make some surplus to be able to put on future events, what would you consider to be a fair minimum fee?**

*£150* 66% *£160*      *£170*     

## **5. Did you find Unstone Grange to be a suitable venue for the event? If not, specifically, why not?**

Yes! I liked it a lot. *Fine, yes. Yes in a lot of ways. No because of niggles - awkward to get in, to unload a family-worth of stuff, can't take the car onto campsite, can't really link campsite and house (R.'s idea of singing round a bonfire wasn't attractive largely because of the weather, but I think we'd have been more keen if the campsite/firepit wasn't so separate.) Difficult bathrooms and toilet facilities - I thought the place was pretty cheap, but if*

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*they're charging per head (now?) rather than a flat fee, then the niggles become more noticeable. The group room becomes unusable for socialising due to the 'no shoes no drinks' rule so we have to split into fairly small sections. The dining room is pretty grim and there's no real shelter outdoors. Yes - some concern about bringing my disabled daughter next year as we wouldn't be able to get upstairs - I guess we'd have to camp. Yes I enjoyed it better this year.*

**6. Do you know of any venues suitable for facilitating ourselves?**

Possibly Lower Shaw Farm near Swindon.

**7. At the event, were the descriptions of Community Building and facilitation:**

*Too long?\_\_\_ Too short?\_\_\_ About right?\_83%\_*

*Inappropriate. The first session should have had a short introduction and maybe role playing or otherwise modelling exercises, to illustrate helpful and unhelpful communication. Then people who really didn't want it could have arrived later. It shouldn't have been replaced with a check in session and certainly couldn't wait for open space (sorry I contributed to that).*

**Any other comments on the descriptions given?**

*I thought they were fine, helpful. Maybe the question "How can I be fully involved in this group/process?" could be explained as it was at FO 2009.*

*The wall posters were superb!*

**8. If you had a go at facilitating the circle, please describe your experience:**

*Facilitation not an easy topic. I found it quite easy and enjoyable, I just tried to hear what everyone was saying and be with it... there wasn't much conflict so not too painful to do that. Very good; challenging times but rewarding. Thank goodness I was at the end of the week, and could be properly present and able to (feel I was) hold(ing) the circle. It would have been very difficult and possibly inappropriate any earlier. I felt decidedly unheld and unfacilitated earlier in the week, during certain sessions. (only one, really). Felt fine apart from my co-facilitator who spaced out on the*

Facilitation:

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time and whose attention I could not secure! *N. and I managed well, I believe.*

**9. Was your small group supportive, nurturing, difficult, challenging? Please describe something of your small group experience.**

Quite difficult & challenging at times as there were tensions in the group - but useful and worthwhile; supportive also. *Slow and supportive; men's group; felt good to be with males.* I came with a group already decided on, and I'd have to go back in time to do it differently to know if that was helpful or unhelpful. I'd be interested to run the week again and put my name in a random group; found it very hard to settle for the first 3 days, and only really found cohesion as a group after cooking together, which was a very good experience. *Only problem was one member wanting to leave on the last day because he was bored!* Good, if on the low key side. *Difficult, challenging & ultimately rewarding.*

**10. Did you offer any Open Space sessions? No: 66% How was that? Did you have any notable experiences at other's sessions? Please describe your experience of Open Space.**

I only went to three - really enjoyed all of them; dancing, hearing about water treatment, & seeing a conflict resolution; all left me feeling good. *Great.. offered a couple of sessions & they went well; I got a lot out of that & want to do more offering of space in the future.* I enjoyed singing E.'s songs. Otherwise I found the open space sessions disappointing and unengaging (is that a word??) Maybe I just can't recall one I liked. Mostly I mooched about... the conflict resolution was satisfying to be part of. I usually like the open space format very much, so assume it was a mix of 'the other people' and 'where my head was'. Some - labels, gender mix up - were an interesting chat, but too loose to work properly. We usually have a mix of head stuff (eg: the sayings of Goethe) therapy style sessions (what makes it hard for me to listen to you) and creative play (music, clowning) but this time it was more bitty. (I say 'usually'... I mean, the

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twice I came before.). *Open space experiences fine - sobering to see how few showed up!* Next time I will avoid sessions that restimulate stuff from the big circle eg. "Attractiveness". *I positively experienced Dynamic Meditation and Fire & Passion.*

**11. Did you feel that closure was adequately taken care of by the group? Any thoughts on this?**

Yes amply.. all good. *Yes it was very well handled.. gracious.* Yes. . It was a good session; Felt real; *I didn't like the end... People got up and rushed off (out the room, not the building) in a way I hadn't expected, and I just felt miserable, and worked solidly to get my family's stuff out of the bedroom and back to the car; I was in bits for the rest of the time at Unstone and I still can't pinpoint why; Was ok once I got underway.* It was good but I didn't leave on a personal 'high'.

**12. Do you think the group took responsibility for the experience allowing FOOT members to become full participants?**

I hope so - always some air of difference about them though, for me I think. *Yes except N. still has role of food/food money co-ordinator & I feel that could be looked at to give him more space.* Probably only the FOOT team can answer this; did you feel allowed to let go and just be?? I didn't see or experience anyone demanding to be led or organised or taken care of. *I hope so.* Not totally - N. having to go shopping each day. Yes.

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**13. Did you experience any of these stages? (tick)**

**Pseudocommunity** 50% **Chaos** 100% **Emptying** 100%  
**Community** 100% **Any comments?**

I'm not sure if I ever felt pseudocommunity as at first I was not at ease & then we went straight into chaos where we stayed for quite some time. *Emptying is my favourite.* I dislike trying to pinpoint the feelings; I believe there was all the stages at various points – as I recognise them to be – but I think different people experience the room in different places. *All good; I found M.'s conflict resolution process probably helped those unable to see their parts in the conflicts they engaged in.*

**14. Would you come again?**

Probably. Yes. At this point I really don't know; I am able to recognise that it was probably a better, more... (honest?) event than last year, that more people felt 'in community' and therefore it was 'more successful'... also that the experiment to bring children worked better than anyone could have predicted or hoped; but I personally did not come away with the desire to spread the word, hold events or commit to next year. Yes. We will see what life brings. Yes.

**15. Is there anything else you would like to say?**

Thank you very much, FOO Team for bringing this together & making it all happen so that I could be part of it (I'm not suggesting that the reason you did it was so that I could be part of it, but that being part of it was the bit I liked). *Thank you; the web site could do with a make over if we decided to care about that sort of thing - which I'm not sure we would.* Thanks for a good event; thanks for holding it, and keeping the worry of it, even when you handed it over; thanks for taking the risks. *I would like to come with my then 14 year old disabled daughter next year.* I felt the lunch, especially early on, was a weak meal; coming with a favourite recipe that is practical and do-able could be a good idea. Timetable wise I would like the last circle half hour later to leave adequate space for dinner.

**Stages of community building:**

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# facilitating ourselves - our small group

by Christopher Condren

This year I experienced 'Facilitating Ourselves' for the first time – I felt drawn there (Unstone Grange) because of my awareness of the lack of real relationship in my life/the superficiality in my most intimate relationships. I was excited by the prospect and confident that it would be a productive experience for me – mercifully I denied my deepest fears sufficiently as to get myself there: I succeeded in outmaneuvering my resistance to getting ready. Reality struck as I responded Sunday a.m. to the call to put my name down to participate in one of the small groups – I felt challenged – the logical me chose the group that would cook first – get it out of the way attitude – our group happened to have C. in it. This felt like good luck – earlier when I had expressed my deepest fears around working with my small group (in the context of preparing a meal in the kitchen) she had invited me to join in her group indicating that she could support me with her significant kitchen competence/confidence. But from here on, until I had disengaged from our task (say Monday) my fears held me captive.

The tug-o-war: There were sporadic attempts to communicate about our task by individuals within our group throughout Sunday about the preparing of dinner that evening, but I had a sense of impotence – I was not involved – I felt guilty, angry, frustrated. I still remember our last group meeting Sunday afternoon before we would all go to the kitchen and do our stuff: I. wanting to be with our process and C., conscious of the time pressure, wanting to get on and give ourselves time to do our task well. In the kitchen I escaped into chopping vegetables with a series of blunt knives- I was extremely uncomfortable; I was not connected to the people around me – later I seemed to have the task of managing the boiling of the veg. and that took me/us up to serving our offering 5-10 minutes late approx. I did not enjoy the food we produced and, after our last circle, I struggled to get myself back to that kitchen to participate in washing up.

The stampede: when I cook for myself I allow the dishes I bake or grill to settle for, at least a few minutes to mature – it does not feel good for me when I rush this process.

The oven baked food we served did not get that respect and I was aware of that as I ate it- it felt like a huge waste of food and effort.

The last straw: when I did return to the kitchen one of our group, experiencing me to not be carrying my fair share of the effort, took serious issue with me - the dagger that had already pierced my heart got twisted – I winced and bore it silently (I was so dumbfounded as to be unable to communicate). The following morning she apologised and the relief made the pain almost worthwhile.

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My learning: lots, but mainly to be more proactive: between 1.30p.m. and approx. 3.30 p.m. on departure day, when we eventually set out lunch, I felt challenged to participate in the clear up - I noticed that food wise we were still occupying two spaces and some people were already getting themselves lunch in the dining room: with the co-operation of LC. I set about clearing the dining area thus concentrating lunch making in the kitchen only - I also did some washing-up and left feeling I had learned some more.

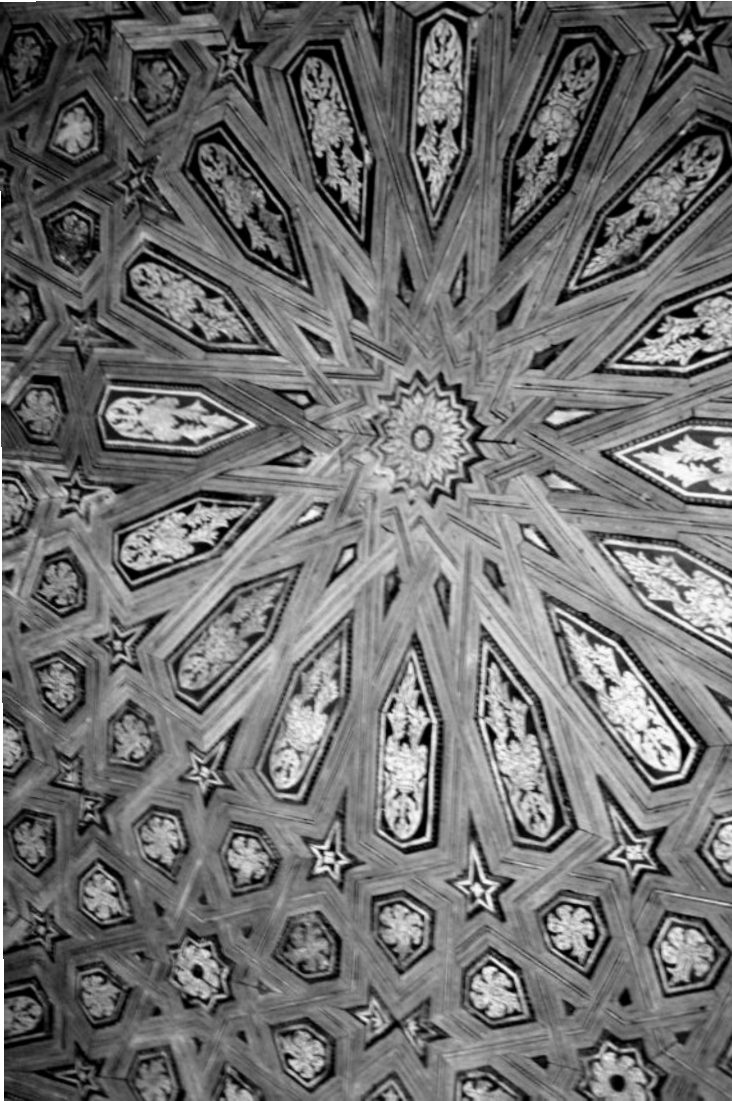
I would give you guys 90+% for organisation and I would change nothing except, possibly, making the last circle half an hour later to make dinner including washing-up less rushed. We did reach community - I would be surprised if anybody was left outside - we all deserve a 100%.

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