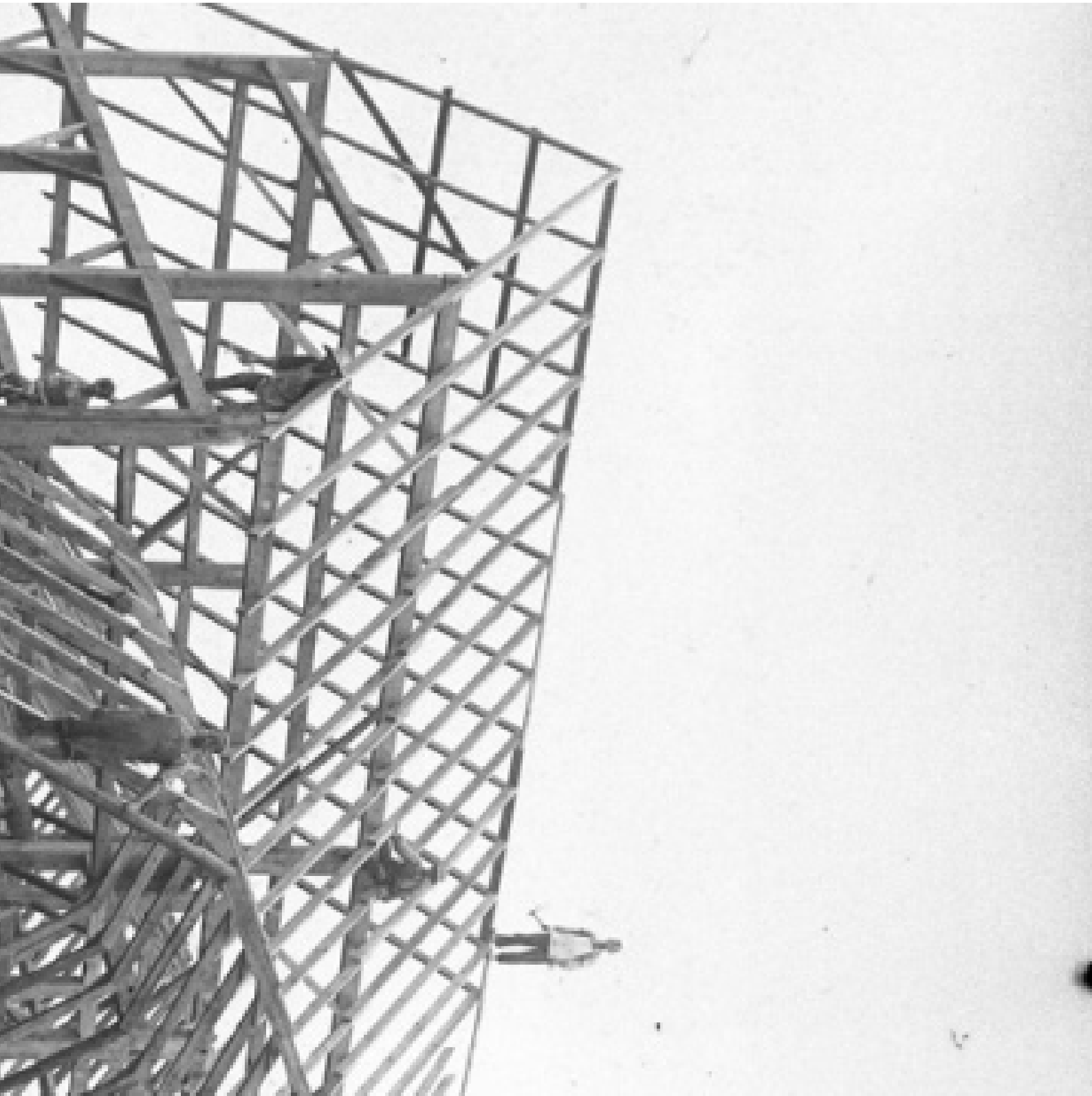


# **BARN RAISING**

**A COLLECTIVE METHOD FOR DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL IDEAS  
PROPOSED BY MICHAEL KLIËN**



## OVERVIEW

originally proposed by Michael Kliën, 2009 and developed at Duke University through the work of the Laboratory for Social Choreography at the Kenan Institute for Ethics.

*Barn Raising* is a simple framework for engendering new thinking, a collective practice of supporting one individual in cultivating her own psychic landscape of knowledge. Inspired by the communal act of building a barn together, the method offers a structure for shared intellectual and imaginative labor.

In a small and personal setting of up to ten invited participants, the host initiates *Barn Raising* by presenting their current field of concern: a practice, idea, or theory they wish to develop. This exposition, lasting no longer than fifteen minutes, outlines her present mental map or belief system and may include references to the foundations of her reality construct, covering the thinkers, traditions, or experiences on whose shoulders their work stands.

In the second phase, the guests may ask brief questions to clarify aspects of what has been presented. They refrain from challenging, debating, or critiquing the host's ideas in any form. The purpose of this exchange is understanding of concepts, goals and objectives, not evaluation.

In the final stage, that typically lasts between 30-60 minutes, guests offer, in a warm and generous manner, their own knowledge to extend the host's mental landscape. They may propose conjectures, analogies, readings, connections, blind spots, or potential inconsistencies. The process is associative, nonlinear, and exploratory, unfolding as a living conversation that branches, jumps, and meanders beyond conventional logic. The guests actively avoid statements or tones that might make the host defensive. Throughout, it is understood that the collective work belongs to the host, who will later inhabit and refine the ideas in their own way. *Barn Raising* is a temporary extension of the individual into a hive-mind — a way for a community to think one person's reality further than they could alone, while laying no claim to the new terrain that emerges.

It is, in essence, the collective gift of attention, imagination, and care offered to one of its members. The session ends with the host offering the guests refreshments.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

Handbook Score: Core Principles of *Barn Raising*

Purpose: To collectively extend one person's field of thought or practice, not to critique or judge.  
Structure

1. Exposition (max. 15 min): Host presents their field of concern and its foundations.
2. Clarification: Guests may ask short, factual questions to gain clarity of the territory.
3. Raising the Barn: Guests offer associative, generous contributions to expand the field.

### Principles

- Do not say *no* or negate someone's contribution, just position a different idea or thought
- Do not say *but*, always say *and*
- Remain generous and curious.
- Avoid anything that makes the host defensive.
- The host retains complete ownership and direction of the evolving concepts and work
- Close with a gesture of hospitality — such as tea or coffee provided by the host.