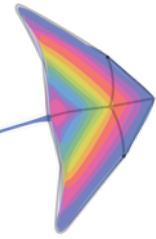# Open Space Report
Agile Portugal 2011

About one third of the conference speakers, staff, and attendees attended the opening session of the open space meetings. 13 persons proposed 15 meeting topics, and 24 different persons showed their interest by casting 58 votes into 12 of the topics. Seven sessions took place during the afternoon, originating three reports.

The beauty of Open Space is that it gives everyone a voice and the appropriate time and space to have it heard in a conversation.

— Dirk Riehle

What happened?

On Tuesday, June 21st, the participants of Agile Portugal 2011 were summoned from the green fields between the Faculty buildings into room I-105, right besides the grass.

Starting at 2 pm, the open space facilitator asked every participant to quickly introduce himself (or herself) to the others, stating in particular why they came to a conference about agility.

The stuffed dog "Amigo", used as the talking stick, was very successful in engaging people. People waved the dog while talking and, sometimes, even talked to the dog, turning the introduction into a funny and relaxed experience. A lawn mower passing by the room provided an unexpected interruption and also originated a few laughs.

After the round of introductions, the facilitator expanded on the insightful remark of João Cerdeira that the conference attracts "an unusual number of people with the agile mindset", noting that the conference provides a unique opportunity to exchange ideas with like-minded people, and that the open space method optimizes that opportunity for everyone.

The anticipation rose in the room while the facilitator explained the rules of open space, and there was excitement in the air as participants wrote down and announced their own proposals.

The agenda wall quickly filled with 15 proposed sessions, complete with a proposed time and place for each one, selected from the slots identified by post-its.
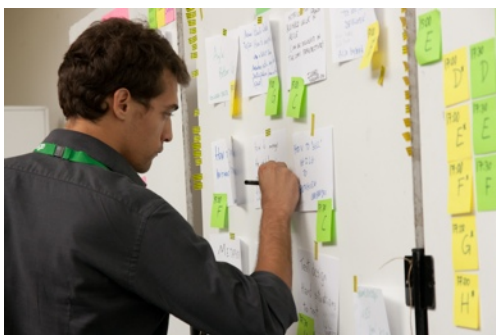
The participants were then asked to write their names in interesting sessions, providing instant feedback to the proponents about the popularity of their topics. 24 different persons cast 58 votes. Three sessions had no votes, while the most popular session received 11 votes.

Participants then selected which sessions to attend, went to the space proposed for the session, and started to talk with the people there.

Inside the room, three sessions took place on points A, B, and C:
- Client education and expectations (standing group in the photos).
- How to manage the schedule of members with different skills? (large sitting group).
- Metrics that show/track business value in agile (can be discussed in the CMMI perspective) (group of two).
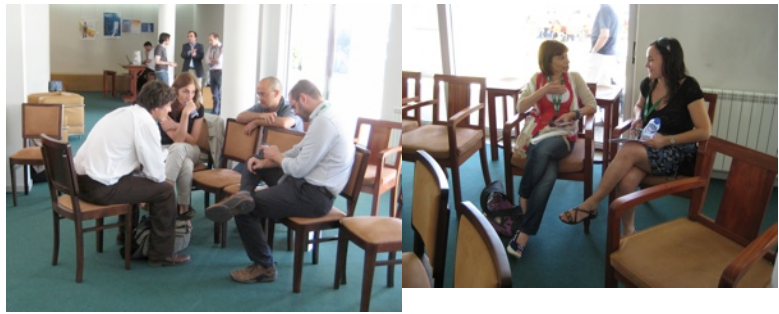
Outside, two sessions took place at points F and H:
- How to document without documents? (right photos).
- Metaphors (photo below).

Point H featured bean bags provided by the organization and became a coveted space for open space meetings, especially by people such as Eduardo Guerra who had not met this kind of light furniture before.

At 5 pm, Alexandru Bolboaca hosted the only session that happened during a coffee break (on the right, a photo of Monday's lunch shows the coffee-break venue). He talked to five persons as they "came and went".

By 5:30 pm, Eduardo Guerra hosted the session "Testing design: hard situations to test" at the bean bags of point H. The conversation was good enough to override the session proposed for 6 pm at the same place, "Being agile vs. advanced programming techniques".

At the end of the day, open space participants had completed seven of the fifteen sessions proposed. During the conference retrospective at 7 pm, Joseph Yoder (photo at left) reviewed the conference feedback, comprising humorous comments (like "no lawn mowers" and "ohh... bean bags!!") and serious comments (program update publishing).

The open space "evening news" met a tired crowd. A round of individual "Amigo" feedback provided further retrospective and an opportunity for individual insights. In a hitch, the facilitator asked the participants to propose follow-up sessions, but everyone were just too tired to comply.

During the following Wednesday, the conference schedule lacked a dedicated slot for proposing further open space sessions. Although the tables, chairs, and bean bags remained busy during the day, there are no records of the results achieved. As far as the organizers know, the following proposed sessions did not happen:
- Being agile vs. advanced programming techniques (overrun by the previous session of Eduardo Guerra).
- How to "sell" agile to Portuguese companies? (two signatures).
- Scrum vs. kanban (two signatures).
- How to incorporate in a scrum team members with very low participation (hours in sprint)? (one signature).

- What other tools you use to lead agile projects (eg estimation wallboard) (one signature).
- How to teach agile? (no interest).
- Guerilla Scrum: agile bottom-up (no interest).
- Defining done (no interest).

At 6 pm, by the end of the conference, Joseph Yoder solicited more structured feedback before leaving the floor to the open space closing. As the stuffed dog "Amigo" moved from hand to hand, you could hear a change in the voices of the participants as they cherished their participation in the conference. People spoke as members of a stronger agile community, and not as isolated lone practitioners. In the age of the Internet, that is the kind of personal and social evolution that justifies a trip to a conference.

As the open space facilitator, I was truly happy with the open space outcomes. I would like to finish by thanking everyone else involved, in particular:
- Filipe Correia, for the opportunity to serve as facilitator.
- Aline Lopes, for creating the stuffed dog "Amigo".
- Patrícia Magrinho, for creating the beautiful drawings.
- Marisa Silva, for providing the conditions in the open space room.
- João Anes, for the photos.
- Open space participants, for the energy. I just had to unleash that energy...

Joaquim Baptista

Votes	Topic proposed in open space agenda
11	How to document without documents?
6	Being agile vs. advanced programming techniques
5	What is painful to you, software developer?
3	How to manage the schedule of members with different skills?
3	Metaphors
2	How to "sell" agile to Portuguese companies?
2	Metrics that show/track business value in agile (in the CMMI perspective)
2	Scrum vs. kanban
2	Testing design: hard situations to test
1	Client education and expectations
1	How to incorporate in a scrum team members with very low participation (hours in sprint)?
1	What other tools you use to lead agile projects (e.g. estimation wallboard)
0	Defining done
0	Guerilla Scrum: agile bottom-up
0	How to teach agile?

How to document without documents?

Proponent: Ademar Aguiar.
Note-taker: Participants wrote and collected post-it notes.
Other participants: (not recorded)
Interested: Fernando Almeida, João Cerdeira, José Luis Soria, Claudio, Inês Santos, Martina Šimičić, Hugo Correia, Filipe Correia, Paulo Bastos, Tiago Sousa, Daniel Rodrigues.

Forces to balance:
- Complexity.
- Time to market.
- Audiences:
   - Multiple kinds.
   - Different skills.
   - Looking for different contents.

"Fears" (needs):
- Increasing complexity.
- Knowledge transfer (team & client).
- Synchronicity.
- Not to document knowledge of system.
- Manage "team agility" (developers leave + new developers come).
- Standard code documentation for all languages.
   - Automated tools for generate versions of documentation like version control.

You hate...
- Document code.
- Inconsistency.
- Copy-paste "things" from "here" to "there".
- Rewriting documentation to comply with implemented features ☺ the "sync"
- Having piles of documents to read.
- Having **no** document at all to read.

Simplest techniques you love:
- Taking pictures and put it on a wiki.
- Photos of whiteboard through dropbox app's (mobile).
- Sketch on wiki before I code.
- Do selenium test to show to the client.
- SQL to database diagrams.
- Transclusion contents (code, text, models, ...)
- Executable models.
- Version control systems (subversion, mercurial, ...).
- Writing tests (unit), good + clean code, automated.
- Simple, "pen-&-paper" prototypes/mockups (digital/shared).

(obscured) by the client.
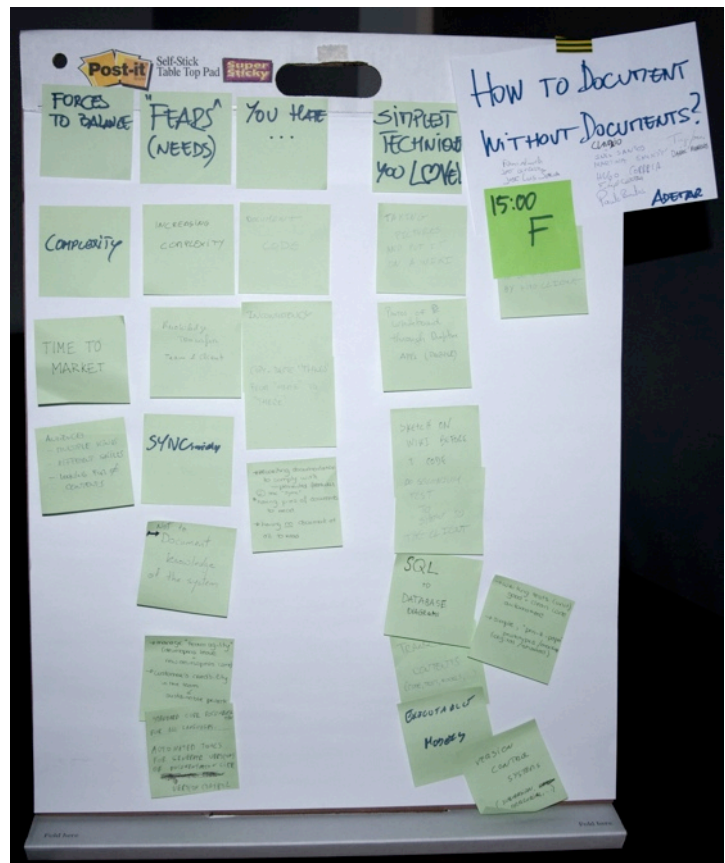
Metaphors

Proponent: Filipe Correia
Note-taker: Filipe Correia
Other Participants: Allen Wirfs-Brock, Eduardo Guerra, Ivo Timóteo, Nuno Flores, Eduardo Santa.

We have talked about metaphors in software development, focusing on the "System Metaphor" practice of "Extreme Programming".

Metaphors in software development can be born in a top-down or bottom-up fashion.
- Top-down metaphors drive the code. We come up with a metaphor that is good at describing a certain solution, and use it to create the abstractions in the system.
- Bottom-up metaphors emerge from the code. We come up with a abstraction that solves a certain problem, and use a fitting metaphor to explain it.
- In both cases the language of the metaphor is prevalent in the system.

Metaphor = Abstraction + Analogy. The "analogy" helps to explain the system.

On the flip side, some metaphors may make communication more difficult (although their purpose is exactly the opposite), when it doesn't fit the abstraction like it should, or when the abstraction has to change, making the metaphor no longer fit as well.

Test design and hard situations to test

Proponent: Eduardo Guerra
Note-taker: Eduardo Guerra
Other participants: Rebecca, Martina, Pedro, Simão, Filipe, Paulo Bastos.

- Quality of the test code is important!
- It is important to invest time in the creation of test abstractions.
- Your tests should verify the class requirements and do not the actual class implementation.
- Mocks should be used for components that you control. External dependencies should be encapsulated.
- Difficult things to test: performance, security, usability. Some of these tests might not be automated.
- Managing the tests in big systems is hard (that reinforces the first point, "quality of the test code is important!").
- Architects should create test patterns to each type of component.

Thank you all!
See you at Agile Portugal 2012!!