Knowledge Sharing for Change

Designing and Facilitating Learning Processes with a Transformational Impact

Facilitation Handbook

Marc Steinlin & Catherine Widrig Jenkins

IngeniousPeoplesKnowledge

How can People Jointly Ignite their Ingenuity and Knowledge?

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Zürich • Cape Town

This handbook has been written mainly as a script for participants in training courses devised to tackle the facilitation of transformation processes in living systems.

Special acknowledgement goes out to the countless thinkers and pioneers that have developed the approaches and methods referred to and described in this document, especially Marvin Weisbord, Sandra Janoff, Adam Kahane, Harrison Owen and Juanita Brown.

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1. Introduction – Facilitation as the Art of Transformation

1.1 What's the Big Deal About Facilitation?

The popular interpretation of facilitation as a discipline, task and skill is quite a simple one: the facilitator obtains an agenda of an event, welcomes participants, introduces speakers, ensures time management, summarises statements, gives people the floor in a discussion and in the end says goodbye to everybody. Perhaps she/he is asked to propose some facilitation methods to make the event more interactive and lively. She/he may also have to write a report on the outcomes of the discussions. However, this idea of facilitation is simplistic and, by and large, outdated.

The notion of facilitation and the role of the facilitator have been drastically transformed, due to the rapidly changing understanding of social systems, of change processes and of the role of leadership – which now views leaders, more and more, as "stewards" and has a more profound appreciation of participation. Facilitators in the tradition and context in which we talk about them here, now play key roles: they analyse and diagnose a situation as well as the potential for social systems; they design and support transformation processes from inception to conclusion; and they consult leaders. Yet the facilitator remains true to the central philosophy of leadership as the art of enabling performance and transformation by creating the space, by surfacing and unlocking the potential and capacities of people, by mobilising inherent resources and by supporting stakeholders in shaping their own future.

Facilitators thus need to have a series of competencies and skills. They need to be able to:

- Recognise and understand "living systems".
- Handle and work with models of transformative processes.
- Understand and proactively design and shape transformation on a large scale (often over extended periods of time) as well as on a small scale.
- Use and facilitate appropriate methods that are conducive to creating insights, understanding, learning, participation, commitment, the willingness to engage and change, mobilisation of resources and so on.
- Embrace the right attitude and approach: move away from being the "star" in the limelight towards becoming almost invisible in the background, yet always present and attentive. In particular, the facilitator needs to be an inviting and encouraging assistant to the process at large ("from the sage on the stage to the guide by the side").

1.2 A Holistic Understanding of How Living Systems Transform

This handbook advocates a whole-system approach which seeks to gather a broad diversity of actors around a matter of concern. Each of these "view-holders" has a particular perspective on the issue; this perspective results from his/her particular experience, socialisation and wisdom as well as his/her needs and interests. Any individual by him-/herself cannot have a holistic view of a matter – this applies even more if the matter is complex. It is only through interaction, mutual sharing and simultaneous learning that "view-holders" can begin to understand a complex matter in its entirety.

This leads us to two significant conclusions. Firstly, (external) experts, whatever their degree of skill, experience and wisdom, can hardly come up with solutions that do justice to complex systems – by default their view will remain particular and limited. The approach of enforcing "expert solutions" to a problem situation will more often than not provoke legitimate resistance by the system. Only the system as a whole can engage in such a process and co-create possible ways of dealing with challenges and potential.

Secondly, since systemic/holistic views emerge only when different actors in a system interact, a fragmentary approach to generating solutions will remain piecemeal and thus insufficient. It is therefore essential to learn about a complex system as a whole by recreating it in one room with as many members as possible present at a given moment in time (this method is referred to as a collective and synchronous approach).

Some traditional paradigms of management and facilitation have led to fruitless planning and strategy processes, as they have not taken into account the nature of complex adaptive systems. Processes that are designed to control inputs and outputs, and thereby presumably to serve efficiency and effectiveness, in fact often undermine these desired objectives. We must thus distinguish between what we can and cannot control if we wish to understand a complex system and pursue a holistic approach that creates ownership. If we succeed in sticking to this distinction, it will lead to action that sustains itself and has a lasting impact. Factors such as motivation, attitude and behaviour of people cannot be controlled – the same is true for creativity, content and outcome. What can be controlled and influenced are structure and process.

This approach aims at creating conditions that encourage people to perform in a self-determined and self-organised way. We want to design and facilitate events in which participants jointly discover what they bring to the table and the possibilities that exist, i.e. what options they have in terms of ways forward into a self-defined future. Participants create a shared vision and design an action plan geared towards making their vision a reality. We draw on the insights provided by recent research on systems, which suggests that transformative processes and projects should build on three elements: (1) boundaries/limits; (2) rules that encourage favourable behaviour whilst discouraging undesirable behaviour patterns and attractors, i.e. aims and values that attract the attention; and (3) the desire, creativity and energy of the actors/participants involved.

1.3 Pillars of the I-P-K Approach

The work of IngeniousPeoplesKnowledge, and thus the approach represented in this handbook, relies on the groundwork of a series of pioneers and their writing and teaching: Harrison Owen (Open Space), Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff (Future Search and Minimal Facilitation), David Cooperrider (Appreciative Inquiry), Adam Kahane (Facilitation in Complex Situations, Architecture of Processes), Otto Scharmer (Theory U/ Presencing), Juanita Brown (World Café), Margaret Wheatley (Complexity), Dave Snowden (Complexity) and many more.

So if we refer to the I-P-K approach, we do so fully acknowledging that it is in no way unique or of our origin and we would like to acknowledge the original thinkers for their inspiration and guidance. Our reference to "the I-P-K approach" does not claim that we in I-P-K invented it; the term merely refers to the approach we use in our work and by which we are guided.

Perhaps our contribution is the elaboration of a larger framework that integrates the many different ideas, methods and tools into a more systematic whole. This allows us to address many situations in a flexible, adaptable and versatile way.

The approach on which our work relies builds on four pillars, which themselves are based on a few theoretical foundations and axioms.

The first two pillars are deduced from a specific image of the human – a humanistic assumption regarding the human condition, under which people are keen and able to embrace and drive change.

1) **Pillar 1: Conversation and Dialogue are the fundamental mode and superior tool of transformational work: the key to effective, engaging and sustainable transformation is the creation of platforms and safe spaces (containers) where diverse people can learn on a peer-to-peer basis, can discover what matters to them, can define purpose and intention, can co-create visions and can jointly decide what to do in concrete terms.**

   We believe that a core challenge is not to gain more data and information on issues. Quite the contrary: in many decision-taking situations people are paralysed by a surfeit of information. What is lacking is the development of meaningful and shared understanding, and sense-making in the face of this glut of information. The remedy is not more information, analysis and research – which in fact aggravate many situations. Instead, a "digestive" (i.e. consolidating, extracting, reducing) process is needed. And it is our conviction that the best – if not the only – way to achieve this is conversation among committed and diverse individuals. "There is no more powerful way to initiate change than to convene a conversation. Real change begins with the simple act of people talking about what they care about," as Margaret Wheatley puts it.

2) **Pillar 2: The basic pattern of an effective, engaging and sustainable process of transformation follows the formula of Divergence-Emergence-Convergence, which can be translated into three steps or phases: (1) stirring discomfort through some form of learning; (2) co-creating a shared vision; and (3) identifying first steps.**

   Nothing is more practical than a good theory, as the saying goes. The Change Equitation of Beckhardt and Harris (attributed to David Gleicher) takes its strength from its simplicity and practical applicability. The formula allows work on two sides. On the one side, we can work on "resistance" and question the general assumption that people (and living systems) generally and throughout resist change. There are situations in which people actually embrace and drive, even rush, change. We can ask under which circumstances they do so and what we can actively do to favour this. Motivation is a key concept here, and we can look more deeply into what motivates people to change and discover a whole series of aspects that actively contribute to motivation. A key element is the insight that people only own what they create themselves (M. Wheatley) – and thus participation of stakeholders in the front end of creation is indispensable in any transformational process.

The other side of the formula suggests three components of making change happen: discomfort, vision and first steps. In a process leading to change, we can proactively address each of these components and work on them. The three elements can be translated into a simple design pattern of divergence-emergence-convergence. There are countless analogies, Otto Scharmer's U process to mention just one famous one. The pattern is an extremely simple tool we propagate, which, due to its fractal nature, can be easily used and applied to design change processes of all magnitudes: from processes lasting several months, to events of one or more days, to workshop modules or meetings of one hour. Another application of the same principle is the workshop rollercoaster of Weisbord and Janoff.

The other two pillars originate in understanding the reality of many situations as living systems – often referred to as complex adaptive systems. Many other approaches to management assume that the dynamics of life – of social systems, of the natural course of events – follow a linear, predictable, controllable cause-effect relationship. But this is not so. "Chaos" (in the scientific sense) prevents carefully elaborated plans from being workable and practicable. For this reason, distinct approaches are needed to come to terms with reality:

3) **Pillar 3: A complex reality cannot be understood from one single perspective (or even from a few), nor through mere analysis by a few single actors. To understand complex reality, it is necessary to bring the whole system into one room and emulate complex interactions in order to understand complex patterns. Everybody involved needs to learn and overcome the narrowness of an individual perspective and understanding.**

   Analytical, expert-driven attempts to understand a complex entirety by understanding its elements are helpless in the face of complex situations. A Sufi proverb goes: "You think that because you understand *one* you understand *two*, because one and one makes two. But you must also understand *and*." Complex interdependences cannot be predicted in the abstract – they can only be experienced in the actual situation, identified as patterns and explained in retrospect. Therefore an effective approach is to engage diverse people (who in their entirety constitute the complex system) in a mutual interaction and learning process. Jointly they can and will make sense out of a particular situation and identify better strategies to drive transformation. Weisbord and Janoff have been the pioneers in recognising the importance and potential of this principle and have elaborated extensively on it.

4) **Pillar 4: The basic pattern of engaging a diverse group is to organise conversations in small groups in several iterations. What happens is that several small sub-groups dialogue on the issue being considered, surfacing knowledge and resources and discovering meaning. Over time, all the groups are repeatedly reshuffled, in terms of both participants and location.**

   The pattern addresses various concerns and features of complex systems: it capitalises on the potential of diverse groups by creating an increasingly dense web of connections and relationships. This process of repeated cross-fertilisation of ideas, insights and learning leads to an emergent, collective insight, thus harnessing collective intelligence in a structured manner. In addition, through profound conversations between many people, it creates bonds of community, which are beneficial to the participants' motivation and thereby translate into higher commitment to outcomes. The process is also an elegant way to deal with hierarchies (related to all sorts of sources: tradition, bureaucracy/formal status, power, wealth, seniority, …): on the one hand, the intimacy of a small group permits more frankness and allows for more pushing of boundaries; on the other hand, the new constellations break usual mechanisms whereby some people dominate conversations. While some people don't feel comfortable talking in one conversation, they will in others – often finding allies who carry forward particular concerns and issues. While World Café nicely illustrates this principle on a small scale, it can be observed and applied on many levels – even methods like OpenSpace or RTSCs eventually follow a similar pattern. Lastly, because the process translates itself to physical movement, i.e. participants walk through the physical space and get together in new combinations, it "illustrates" the networking. A key insight: if people move physically, this helps them tremendously in moving mentally too!

Finally, all the four pillars together represent a practical application of the principals of social construction and constructivist learning. In complex situations, "reality" does not exist "out there", but is largely constructed by the individuals involved. At the same time, these people learn about the very same reality by constructing their knowledge through active engagement.

While the methods and tools described in this handbook may seem very varied, and sometimes even disconnected, they all follow these features to some extent. Their diversity allows adaptation to different situations, needs and purposes, yet they all rely on the same paradigm of change and thus relate very well to each other.

1.4 The Purpose and Structure of this Handbook

This handbook is designed as a script for training courses in facilitation and transformational change management. It provides a comprehensive introduction to the I-P-K Approach of facilitation, creates the foundations, and gives course participants and readers a set of practical tools they can use. We hope it will create a greater understanding of complex adaptive systems, catalyse the wider adoption of these design principles and methodologies, and kindle a new understanding of facilitation and, eventually, leadership.

In *Section Two*, the handbook initially outlines and explains the ideas and insights that determine this school of transformational work. While the material may seem rather theoretical at this point, it is important to grasp these concepts so that the sense and logic of the suggested design principles and methods can become clear.

Thereafter, in *Section Three*, the handbook covers the practical consequences and application of the ideas set out in Section Two. It explains the framework for designing processes and events on different levels taking place in the framework of an event – from the macro-level (which may span several months of a process) to the micro-level (of, for example, an individual session of less than one hour). The careful crafting of the process design is the key to both the conversational approach and its success. Section Three also deals with the facilitator as a person and with his/her role in an event. The final part of Section Three provides strategies for dealing with apparently difficult situations and participants by suggesting that they be reframed as an expression of diversity and thus an asset for any process.

Sections Four and Five of the handbook look at individual methodologies for facilitation – what may be considered the quintessence of facilitation. Methodology is a very important and powerful aspect of facilitation, yet it unfolds its full potential only in the context of all the other elements presented here.

2. Creating a Basic Understanding

The I-P-K Approach aims to facilitate innovation and transformational processes that are driven by participants' curiosity and motivation as well as their ingenuity, wisdom and resourcefulness. The methodologies applied originate from understanding the complexity of living systems (also often referred to as complex adaptive systems) and social processes, and enable synchronous learning amongst participants.

The approach relies strongly on facilitation and learning. The techniques applied aim at creating and sustaining strategic-dialogue platforms geared towards development/collaboration/innovation/transformation. We understand groups, communities and organisations (as well as society at large) as learning and living – i.e. complex adaptive systems – and place emphasis on linking knowledge and action to achieve our goals and aims. Knowledge is the matter and result of human interaction, i.e. a process between individuals. Information, by contrast, has the character of an "object/good/commodity". Our events therefore have three important characteristics: they ensure broad stakeholder involvement (whole system approach/learning and co-creation of change); they focus on what is possible rather than on what is problematic (resource orientation and common vision building); and they consist of simultaneous, iterative planning and action (address the complex and rapidly changing challenges of development).

Transformative processes must be inclusive and participatory at the level of co-creation, and not just consultation, if they are to generate individual commitment to a collective plan of action. Sustainable strategies that do justice to the complexity of social systems can emerge only from the interaction (not just the "lining up") of the maximum number of different perspectives. The knowledge required to drive innovation/transformation is inherent in each organisation/living system. Ongoing collective and simultaneous learning, planning and implementation processes can leverage and co-create knowledge for transformation. We need to initiate and nourish knowledge-sharing platforms that lead to collective and sustained action. We also need to increase the frequency and quality of strategic dialogue processes to address rapidly changing circumstances and subsequent challenges effectively.

Lastly, but importantly, our approach allows for integrating Knowledge Management with a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), and vice versa. The HRBA implies the application of the core values of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and linkage to rights, which are central to our way of working – with partners, in a workshop, in a group, in a community, or with any kind of institution. In rights-based environments (and we support the idea that every society and group should rely on the respect of fundamental rights), such an approach allows leaders to: (a) gain the necessary credibility by walking the talk at every moment and in every aspect of work; (b) lead by example; and (c) take empowerment to a higher level – beyond that of the often purely rhetorical and declaratory.

2.1 Understanding Living Systems: Playful Ways to Experience Complexity

The concepts and ideas around complex systems seem to be abstract and theoretical to many people. A good way to introduce these concepts is to provide people with the opportunity to experience them physically before talking about them. Once people live through something at first hand, many concepts suddenly become extremely simple, even obvious. Explanation time can be cut by a third!

2.1.1 Background and Aim

We observe that common ways of addressing and tackling our social problems increasingly fail people, leaving them clueless as to how to deal with the issues that matter in their lives, work and development. Alternative ways of looking at and addressing the very same situations can promise better ways of understanding and dealing with the challenges we face. Complexity as a basic concept of understanding social systems, patterns and interdependencies has become increasingly relevant.

However, many "practitioners" feel suspicious about the "complexity of complexity" – and even more so about the related concept of *complex adaptive systems* (living systems) – and their suspicion drives them away and prevents them from dealing with this topic. This is a missed opportunity, since engaging with it can lead to an important understanding of real dynamics, patterns and interrelations. It can also result in a different way of perceiving the world around us and the reality we experience and struggle with daily.

Below we introduce a playful way of deriving an initial understanding of what a living system is. This game also reduces inhibitions people may feel about this subject. Players do not only get to experience it literally and physically, but also start exploring the underlying ideas and start making sense of them in their own terms. The game allows an exploration of the idea of *dynamic complexity*, in particular. Dynamic complexity means that the cause and effect of an action can be distant from each other in terms of space and time, i.e. their relationship is fuzzy and operates in the long term. The implication of dynamic complexity is that it is not possible to create a clear link between a cause and its effect and the result of a cause cannot be judged swiftly[1].

2.1.2 The Complexity Game[2]

This game requires a group of 10–40 people.

As an introduction, all the people should just wander around the room in complete silence and look at each other, but mainly pay attention to the feeling of how the entire group (as a whole) moves. They wander first without any specific aim. Then, in a second stage, you as facilitator(s) should determine a point in the room and instruct people to head for this as directly as possible (you should constantly change this point). Then invite participants to share their observations and describe the change between the two activities.

Then the game proceeds as follows:

1. Two or three people leave the room as "observers".
2. The rest of the group receives just one simple instruction (= rule): *Choose two other group members and constantly optimise your position in the room, so that you always stand at an equal distance from the two.* It is irrelevant whether the chosen "partners" know who has chosen them or not.
3. Now the observers are called back into the room and have to figure out what the single instruction that the group is following is.
4. As an aid, the following further activity can be introduced: an observer may take hold of one of the players and move the person through the room – this player must willingly follow. The rest of the players must continue following the rule. As soon as the player is "released", the "misled" person will resume the game and adjust his or her position according to the rule.

At this stage the observers may be initiated into the rule and integrated into the game as normal players.

1 Cf. Adam Kahane, Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities, 2004

2 The initial game was introduced to us by Moraan Gilad from Pioneers of Change on the occasion of the Annual KM4Dev Meeting 2007; cf. also Marianne "Mille" Bojer (Pioneers of Change), Changing the Game", 2004

2.1.3 What Can be Learned from the Basic Set-up?

- A complex adaptive system – like any living system – is based on a few simple principles:
  - The entities are individual and organise themselves.
  - The movements are determined by local relationships.
  - There are only a few fundamental rules that determine the course of events and movements.
  - There is no central, steering and controlling authority.
- A living system adjusts and moves constantly: it goes through phases of relative calm and stability, which, however, can suddenly and unexpectedly lead to phases of strong and abrupt movements, and then seeks another state of balance and stability (this process involves the emergence of complex adaptive behaviour through the experience of positive (amplifying) feedback and negative (dampening) feedback).
- A living system constantly adapts to external influences and change (information).
- Since a living system is dynamically complex, one cannot predict what a particular intervention/action will cause/spark off.
- If one is not a part of the system, one will find it very difficult to understand the simplicity of the rule(s), since the emergent behaviour has a very sophisticated appearance.

An important element of the game is that you should interrupt regularly (i.e. after each game step) to discuss the experiences and observations of the players/observers. They will be able to come up with most of these elements/characteristics of complex adaptive systems.

2.1.4 Variations

Below we discuss a series of variations that can be introduced in order to explore system dynamics: Kingmakers; Prototyping; Paralysing Systems; and Manipulating the System.

2.1.4.1 Kingmakers – Bringing People into Particular Positions

A piece of paper is placed on the floor – this is the position of the CEO or president, for example. The person who stands on the piece of paper becomes this function. Two volunteers are nominated as change agents (so-called kingmakers) and released from the rule of having to remain equidistant from their two partners. Instead, they have the task of getting a designated player to stand in this position by altering their own position and thus trying to "influence" the entire group. All other players have to carry on observing the main rule of remaining equidistant from their two chosen partners. The task of the kingmakers now is to move and, while doing so, observe (1) who in the system does follow them and (2) what the chain of reaction is up to the person they try to "impact" (i.e. move). They will learn how difficult it is to understand (let alone predict) the movements of the system. They might discover that it is in fact easier to influence the system in a particular way by walking very far away from the centre, rather than standing in it.

Facilitators can introduce the concept of communication by prompting the two kingmakers to talk to each other (in order to coordinate the efforts) and by communicating with other system members (in order to gain information about the system) – for example ask people who is following whom. This will clearly make it easier to predict and steer certain movements.

2.1.4.2 Prototyping: Act First, Plan Later

The usual process that many people or organisations adopt involves planning first and acting thereafter. However, some argue that in complex systems, this order should be reversed: (1) act; (2) observe the effect; (3) plan on this basis what you want to reinforce or avoid; (4) act again; and (5) continue this cycle. This is called prototyping.

In this game (i.e. in the Kingmaker variation), prototyping can be demonstrated clearly. It is impossible for anybody to predict, anticipate and thus plan the movement of the whole system. Therefore, change agents first have to act, i.e. move in any way and observe what happens. They need to analyse this, come to some sort of conclusion about what to try next and then – when enacting this – observe again whether the system reacts in the desired way or not. If it does, they can try moving further in the same direction. If it does not, they need to try something else. Over time they will, little by little, and in constant reiteration of their planning, learn how to shift the entire system.

2.1.4.3 Paralysing Systems

Ask 2 or 3 players to stand still. All the other players play according to the standard rule. Experiment with more or fewer players standing still. Observe how many players need to stand still to paralyse the entire system. It might be the case that just 2 or 3 people can block the entire system of 30–40 participants.

2.1.4.4 "Manipulating" the System – Hidden Agendas

All players receive a small piece of paper. Most of the pieces are blank. Only the change agents are presented with a hidden agenda: they receive a particular instruction, which supersedes the basic rule. They are not allowed to disclose their identity and should try to remain unrecognised. The instruction to the change agents may be something like:

a. The change agents try to get the group rotating clockwise in a circle around the centre of the group.

b. The change agents try to shift the entire group into another part of the room.

As a follow-up activity, it might be interesting to observe how the group reaction alters if these change agents are known as such by everybody.

2.1.5 Experiencing Emergent Group Behaviour

2.1.5.1 Like a Shoal of Fish

A group of people gets just two instructions: (a) constantly move; and (b) stay as close together as possible. The group starts moving and, after some time, it should start to form into a rotating circle (possibly even into two concentric, counter-rotating circles). Usually (particularly in larger groups), none of the group members is aware of this emergent group behaviour. The group can be filmed from a slightly elevated spot and debriefed afterwards by showing the film – and making the link to shoal behaviour in fish.

2.1.5.2 Like a Flock of Sheep

Dave Snowden has introduced an interesting variation of the first game we discussed. In Snowden's variation, each person keeps the two partners, but the rule of equidistance is lifted. Each of the players now decides on one of the two partners to be his/her friend and the other one to be his/her predator (enemy).

Each player tries to protect her-/himself by positioning her-/himself so that her/his friend is standing exactly between her/him and the predator. The effects will be that (1) the group becomes rather scattered; (2) people move towards the margins of the room; and (3) in general, there is very high dynamism (a lot of running). It seems that overall (i.e. for the entire system) this requires a lot of energy.

Now slightly alter the rule: each player tries to protect his/her friend from his/her predator by standing in between the two. The emerging behaviour of the system will be the exact opposite of what happened in Snowden's variation. The effects will be that (1) people will immediately lump together, crowded at the centre of the playfield; and (2) movement is often much slower than in the previous case.

These two variations correspond to the principles of competition and cooperation.

2.2 A Few Basic Concepts that Underlie Transformation-Oriented Facilitation

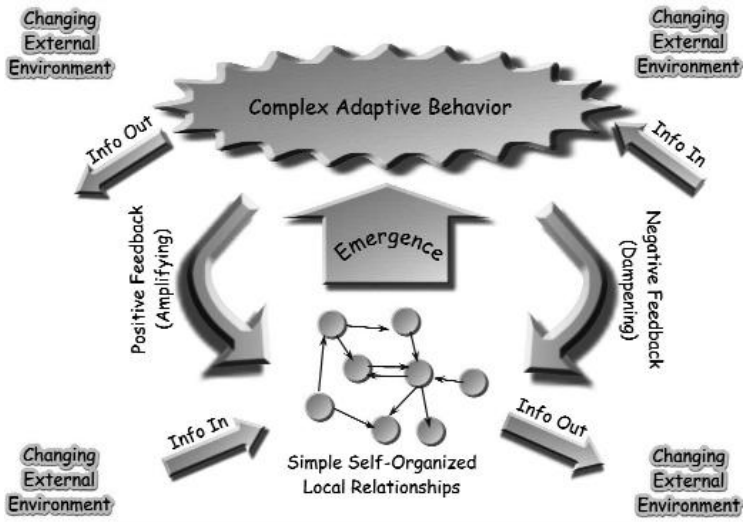
In nature, we encounter immensely fascinating phenomena. In these phenomena we observe two things at the same time: on one level, very simple processes, and on another level, highly sophisticated appearances. A termite hill will serve as an excellent example. On the one hand, we have a certain understanding of termite hills and the termites that erect them. Science does understand quite well the "simple" processes of how the individual termite – a rather primitive insect (even the queen) – behaves.

Yet, on the other hand, if we remove the outer shell of the termite hill, and if we observe the behaviour and performance of an entire "state" made up of termites, we discover an incredible complexity, for which we lack explanation.

In our attempts to understand the termites' building of the hill, we have two elements: (1) we know pretty much about the individual insect – its biology, constitution, behaviour; (2) we see complex, well-organised, incredibly high-performing systems. We are able to describe both in their set-up and functioning – but there is a missing link in explaining how the latter emerges from the former. In between the two a miracle seems to occur.

" I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

2.2.1 Complex Adaptive Systems



Nature is organised in and populated by living systems. They are also often referred to as *complex adaptive systems*. These systems can vary enormously in size: they can be tiny (i.e. a cell in a biological organism) or huge (i.e. the global human society). No matter what their size, they have a few commonalities:

- At the core are individual elements, that maintain relationships to neighbouring peer elements and organise themselves according to a few simple rules.
- Out of this self-organised behaviour, a collective behaviour emerges that cannot be easily predicted; yet it relies on the simple rules mentioned in the point above. The systems are neither coincidental nor predictable through easily comprehensible linear equations. Their behaviour constantly adapts itself to changes (a) within the system (among the elements that form it) and (b) in the external environment. This behaviour is termed "complex adaptive behaviour".
- This behaviour of the whole, in turn, has an impact on the elements of the system, i.e. feedback. This feedback impact can be twofold: (1) it can "encourage" or strengthen the elements to produce more of the emergent behaviour, which leads to an amplification; or (2) it can discourage this behaviour, so that the elements produce less of the emergent behaviour, which leads to a dampening of such behaviour.
- Information is an important component. The elements absorb and digest information about the whole system and the environment (i.e. through direct reaction or through observation), which informs their local behaviour at the same time the elements emit information (either through deliberate communication or by being observed). But also at the same time, the system *as a whole* absorbs information about the environment and emits information in various ways.

We are only at the very beginning of understanding these living systems. However, they have become a key field of research for many disciplines, from quantum physics to biology to sociology. Heavy investments are being made into efforts to understand them.

2.2.2 Three Dimensions of Complex Problems

Adam Kahane, in his book *Solving Tough Problems*, suggests distinguishing between three dimensions of complexity in order to be able to operate practically with complexity, i.e. to conclude ways of dealing appropriately with living systems, to interact with them and transform them: (1) dynamic complexity; (2) generative complexity; and (3) social complexity. Kahane's distinctions allow one to decide, for a specific problem on each of these three dimensions, whether the problem is simple or complex.

Simple Problems	↔	Complex Problems
Example: You drive your car and it suddenly breaks down and stops. You're not sure what happened. So you call the roadside assistance organisation and its mechanic comes.		Example: In the second half of 2008, an economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions hit the world economy; it almost led to a meltdown of the global financial system. Leaders all over the world started debating what to do.
The cause-effect link is clear (mostly linear) and the result is quick (i.e. the effect will follow the cause immediately). This type of problem can be solved piecemeal, i.e. it can be divided (fragmented) and analysed like a machine.	**Dynamic Complexity** ↔ How clear/quick are cause-effect relationships?	Cause and effect are distant from each other in space and time. The link may be very fuzzy. When the cause occurs, it may take long periods for the effect to become effective, if it does so at all (since other factors can interfere). This type of problem must be solved systemically, i.e. the entire system, with its interrelations, must be understood and taken into account.
The car mechanic opens the bonnet of your car and sees immediately that the belt that transmits the power from the engine to the axle is torn apart. At the instant when the belt tore, the car stopped. The way out is pretty clear: to replace the transmission belt. The mechanic assures you the car will run again.		Economists, politicians and activists from all walks of life still argue about the reasons: Was it just the combination of the property market and bad debt? Or was it the general situation of the financial market, the energy situation, wars in the Middle East, a saturation of the global economy? People have offered many different recipes for how to deal with the situation, each with his/her own theory. Various governments have come up with emergency programmes, many of them contradicting others. Everybody grapples to understand the global economic system.
The past is a good predictor of the future. What worked previously will be most likely to work again. Problems can be solved in a backward-looking manner. "Best practices" can be applied.	**Generative Complexity** ↔ How predictable is the future on the basis of past experiences?	Problems are changing constantly and in unpredictable ways. The situations in which they occur are unique and local. Solutions must emerge from every particular situation; they must be generated in creative ways.
The car mechanic is so sure about how to fix your car because he/she has fixed cars several times before and has always got them going again. You dare not contradict the mechanic; after all, cars have always been a mystery to you. On top of that, every manual and every manufacturer provides a simple guide on how to replace the belt quickly – it would be totally unreasonable to try anything else.		Initially there was quite some discussion on the extent to which the current crisis is comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s. People asked, "Can we repeat President Roosevelt's New Deal?" It quickly became clear that this crisis was different and unique and that there are no patterns and "best practices" from the past that can be applied to resolve the situation. The solution must be generated by testing new avenues and ideas creatively. There is no existing recipe or quick fix.
"Truth" can easily be established and agreed on. An "expert" is able to establish reality and to advise on how to deal with it. The problem can be solved in an authoritative way, i.e. an established, knowledgeable authority knows how to deal with it and can give appropriate instructions.	**Social Complexity** ↔ How high is the level of shared assumptions and perspectives?	There is no singular truth, neither about the situation nor about the problem. No "expert" can claim to have the only right view on it (although many will). However, there are many different perspectives and conflicting opinions on what the problem actually is and how to deal with it. Such a problem can only be dealt with in a participatory way, i.e. interrelating all the differing perspectives and including all opinions. This leads to a holistic understanding of the system and thus to a better solution.
The car mechanic will tell you how to get the car going again. After all he/she is the expert. Since you're not an expert yourself, you won't dispute his/her diagnosis and you will willingly, although grudgingly, both let the mechanic fix your car and pay the bill.		Getting out of the economic crisis requires a global conversation that respects and includes all the different disciplines and angles. It requires international meetings and the interaction of the various stakeholders. No single nation (let alone expert) is able to, nor entitled to, provide the one and only correct way out of the crisis.

2.2.3 Managing Complex Systems

How do Kahane's three dimensions of complexity translate into a management approach? Conclusions can be drawn on each of the three dimensions.

Complexity Dimension	Instead of …	it is a better idea to …
Dynamic Complexity How clear/quick are cause-effect relationships?	cutting problems and solutions into pieces and establishing rigid plans,	take the whole system in account; plan and implement at the same time; and build on "modelling" and prototyping by including all perspectives.
Generative Complexity How predictable is the future?	(strictly) applying past experiences (recipes), i.e. designing plans in a backward-looking manner,	generate new, creative solutions in generative dialogues by drawing on all forms of experience.
Social Complexity How high is the level of shared assumptions and perspectives?	relying on a "command and control" paradigm of management,	conduct participatory/inclusive dialogues to discover the complex reality in all its dimensions, and to create ownership and sustainability.

The current paradigm of management all too often still leads to processes, activities and projects that don't fulfil the expected purpose, that miss outcome and impact. The fundamental mistake is confusing the kind of problem and situation to be dealt with:

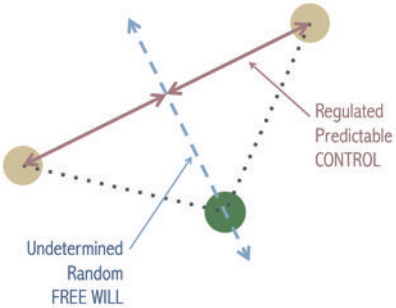
> One of the greatest mistakes when dealing with a mess is not seeing its dimensions in their entirety, carving off a part, and dealing with this part as if it were a problem and then solving it as if it were a puzzle, all the while ignoring the linkages and connections to other dimensions of the mess (R. Ackoff/M. Pidd in B. Ramalingam: Exploring the Science of Complexity, IDS Working Paper 285).

Mess: Systems or issues that do not have a well-defined form or structure. There is often not a clear understanding of the problem faced in such systems.

Problem: Systems that do have a form or structure, in that their dimensions and variables are known. The interaction of dimensions may also be understood, even if only partially. In such systems, there is no single clear-cut way of doing things – there are many alternative solutions, depending on the constraints faced.

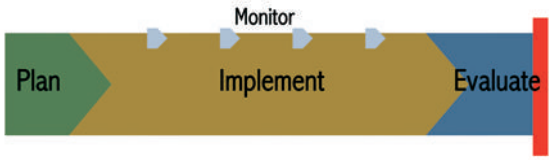
Puzzle: A well-defined and well-structured problem with a specific solution that can be worked out.

The *first dimension* (dynamic complexity) calls for questioning and scrutinising of the chains of causality that underlie many plans and strategies. For example, the famous Logical Framework as a planning tool postulates an objective hierarchy. On this basis, the Logical Framework further postulates a linear chain of causality: input → activity → output → outcome → impact. However, in a dynamically complex situation, it is unreasonable to assume such a chain at all. Why? Because to assume such a chain means assigning a mechanistic logic to a system that is inherently non-mechanistic, but, rather, organic.



In the Complexity Game (described in section 2.1.2) players comply to one simple rule as they move in the space: they must always stand in equidistance from two partners whom they have freely chosen. When all the people in a group of people play according to this simple rule, this produces a dynamically complex fabric, as described in the section on complex adaptive systems above. In this situation, the position of any person is neither random nor certain. The situation follows certain rules, but it can't be foreseen. In terms of the diagram above, it is known as a certainty that the person represented by the green circle stands somewhere on the blue line, yet it is impossible to anticipate *where* on this line the person stands. Yet, because the person represented by the green circle may be a reference person (represented by a brown circle) for someone else, this randomness can translate to (and multiply into) the entire system. Therefore one can say that the system does follow a certain causal logic, but this logic is not linear and it can't be predetermined. Such a system does not follow a clear equation. It is not predictable. But one *can* identify certain *patterns* of behaviour, which one can take into account and with which one can work. Patterns can be identified through iterative (i.e. repeated) observation.

Working on the *second dimension* (generative complexity) is a response to the challenge set out by the first: the current logic of project-cycle management must be reassessed. The logic of planning → implementing → monitoring → evaluating relies on the image of linear causality as described above.



The way to generate solutions (→ generative complexity) is to start with action, not with planning. Only on the basis of observations (and, eventually, patterns that become apparent), can the first planning step be successfully undertaken. This plan can concern only the next step, i.e. determine what would seem reasonable to move towards a final objective. Enacting this next planned step allows another observation, which then leads to the next planning step. This procedure is called prototyping: a prototype of an action is undertaken, which is then observed and evaluated in terms of how it leads/contributes towards a final goal. On this basis, the prototype is improved and put into action again. This is an ongoing (iterative) loop.

The *third dimension* (social complexity) translates into an approach which can be effectively illustrated by a famous poem by John Godfrey Saxe (1816–1887), "The Six Blind Men and the Elephant":

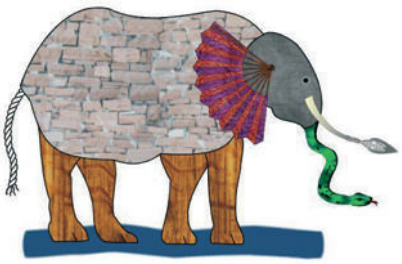
It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and
sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he,
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"



The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

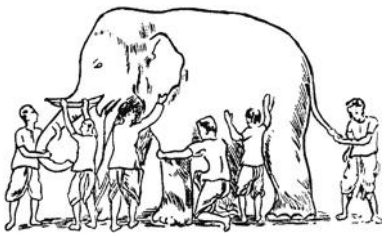
And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

The key insight of the poem is that each of the blind men was partly right and at the same time all were in the wrong when claiming to know and see the "right" way. None of them was able to see and understand the elephant as a whole. A successful strategy to escape this dilemma would be to visit the elephant jointly and have a conversation about the different individual perspectives; through this learning process, all the individuals would be able to put the different pieces into perspective and understand the elephant as a whole.

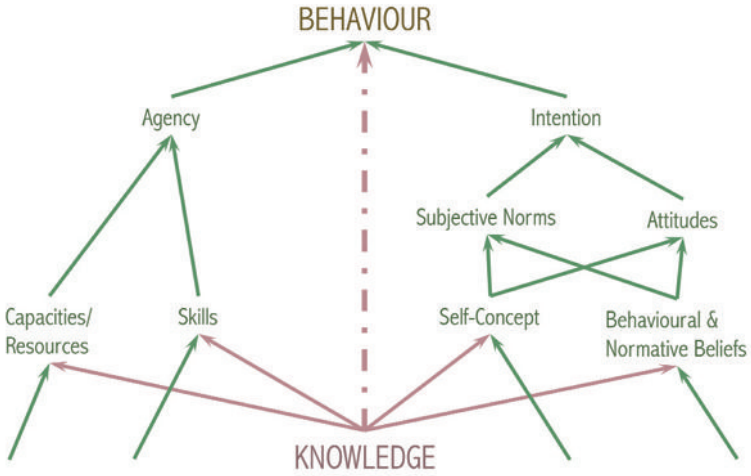
The same applies to many situations in which we grapple to understand living systems and subsequently want to plan for them. In these situations, our current paradigm suggests that things must be clear cut and that experts will be able to tell us the "truth". However, given the social complexity of many problems, even a competent expert will not be more knowledgeable than one blind man who holds his particular view on an issue and depends on others in order to understand the whole. Therefore, it is key to, rather than resorting to any "clairvoyant", engage in a participatory dialogue that develops a comprehensive, sustainable perspective.



As an additional, yet very important, benefit, this process of participatory learning and co-creation creates ownership of the solutions produced. It is these two qualities that lead to transformative change in social systems.

2.3 The Nature of Transformational Change

2.3.1 How Knowing Leads to Acting: A Complex Relationship

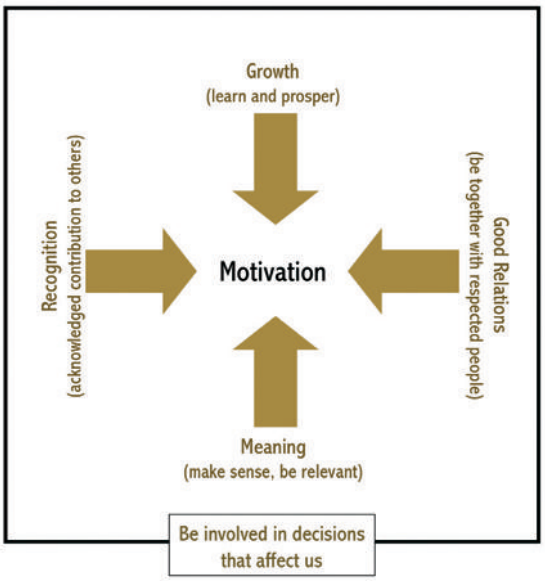


In many programmes for change and development, training is a key component. The basic assumption is that if people learn new things or see them in new ways, they will behave differently, applying their extended perspective. However, research into behavioural change has clearly shown that this assumption is simplistic and rarely accurate. Most significantly, in fields like anti-tobacco and Aids-prevention campaigns, a bitter lesson has been that people, even if they know better, in many instances do not change their behaviour.

Look at the model on the right, which shows – still in a very simplified way – how (changing) knowledge influences (changing) behaviour. This model may give evidence of how complex the relationship is, and thus how improbable a direct (linear) causal effect is.

The generalised statement that people are resistant to change has been lent credence by the failure of many training programmes that have not led to the anticipated behavioural change. A result has been the mushrooming of all sorts of strategies regarding how to force, trick, convince or manipulate people into changing behaviour. However, the image of people being simply resistant to change is too narrow to be accurate and does not apply in many situations. There are countless cases in which people have been more than keen to adopt even the most profound change. The spread of cell-phone use at an incredible pace, and thus the profound change in communication behaviour of the populations of literally all countries, is a clear example. On an individual level, people often eagerly embrace change. Getting married, for example, is for many people a pivotal point in their life; it would be wrong to generalise that people always resist such change. Therefore the question is: Under what conditions do people not only embrace change, but actually drive and own it?

Margaret Wheatley offers an explanation containing the following five factors that motivate people to accept, support and drive change:



- As a precondition, people must be involved in some way in decisions that affect them. People are reluctant to just nod through a decision or plan. While they may pretend to support and follow top-down instructions, they might sabotage them later on. The power argument ("I order you to do x-y-z") usually does not help much.
- Change must make sense and be meaningful in some way. If people can't see the relevance, or if the change seems unfounded or insignificant (e.g. in a bureaucracy) or if they expect negative effects, they will resist (for good reason, after all!). They must be genuinely aware and convinced of the meaning in order to invest in transformation.
- If people realise that changing has a growth potential for them (that in some way they can learn and prosper by changing), they will see this as an incentive.
- People want to be acknowledged for their efforts and contributions. Transformation in one way or another requires resources – time, effort, energy, and financial resources. If someone else gets all the credit, people will refrain from participating in change. Recognition can be related to growth: improving one's "reputation" can be a form of increased wealth and a better situation.
- Last but not least, in many situations people don't want to be in it on their own. This is not about declaring top-down that everybody should pull in the same direction. What is meant is a genuine sense of fellowship, where the individuals reinforce and encourage each other.

Setting out these conditions is not to say that each of these conditions must be present and fulfilled every time. But overall they provide a good indication of and framework for how to involve people in change and provide them with a solid basis of motivation.

These insights suggest a different understanding of leadership and how leaders bring about transformation and change:

Old model of change and leadership	New model of change and leadership
Imposed change	Co-created change
Change requires control and domination	Change requires trust and co-operation
Narrow involvement of stakeholders	Broad involvement of stakeholders
Incomplete map of current reality	Complete map of current reality
Focus on problems	Focus on possibilities
Vision shaped by elite group	Vision shaped by everyone
Linear thinking	Systems thinking
Transmission of messages	Strategic conversations
Plan then implement	Plan and implement simultaneously

(Source: Martin Leith, Leith's Guide to Large Group Intervention Methods, 2001; www.theinnovationagency.com)

There are different ways of getting people to participate in a change process. Brian Smith has created a "continuum" of five stereotypical ways of managing a change process:

	Tell	Sell	Test	Consult	Co-Create
	Demand compliance	Seek buy-in	Invite response	Request input	Collaborate
Does vision, strategy or plan already exist?	Yes (final form)	Yes (final form)	Yes (draft form)	No	No
Who decides on the final version, strategy or plan?	Boss	Boss	Boss	Boss	Everyone
Communication method	Top-down transmission of information	Top-down transmission of information	Top-down & bottom up transmission of information	Top-down & bottom up transmission of information	Conversation
Level of engagement (and therefore commitment to action)	Low				High

In our context, the more complex a situation is (in the understanding of Adam Kahane, see section 2.2.2), the more appropriate it becomes to choose an approach at the right end of the level-of-engagement spectrum shown in the bottom row of the table. To build on the example used earlier, fixing a car is a simple problem and you would quite willingly accept the solution the car mechanic offers you in fixing your car, but many people wouldn't "buy" a strategy to deal with the economic crisis. In the solution of complex problems, experience consistently shows that a solution that involves co-creating strategies and approaches (elaborated with the whole system, i.e. considering the whole elephant) most often outperforms any solution developed and designed by experts and decreed from the top down.

2.3.2 Translating the Change Equation of Beckhard and Gleicher into an Architectural Principle

Richard Beckhard and David Gleicher have developed a Change Model Formula (Change Equation):

D x V x F > R

D	V	F	R
Dissatisfaction (with the status quo)	Vision (of positive possibility; not just pain)	First Steps (in the direction of the vision)	Resistance to change
Clarity: Why things need to change? Why is the current way unacceptable/ undesirable?	Fully understand and picture the future and one's own place in it; genuinely have a share in this future	Clearly see doable ways and understand one's role/contribution	

It is important to note that if any of the three factors is zero or near zero (i.e. is absent), the product will also be zero or near zero and the resistance to change will prevail.

This formula is helpful in two situations: (1) when planning a major change, planning teams need to make sure that their plans deal with all three elements; and (2) during the change process, it can be used as a "trouble-shooting tool" for figuring out what is missing to encourage people to overcome their resistance.

As mentioned, this equation can – among other uses – be practical and helpful in the design of change processes. At some stage such a process must aim at each of the four components of the equation: on the one hand, keeping resistance low (and we have seen above which elements are key in motivating change), and on the other hand, in deliberately working on the three elements of *discomfort/dissatisfaction, vision*, and *first steps (pathways)*.

The three elements can be translated into a general design pattern that has proven very handy in the design of actual events:

We can transcribe this diagram with a "formula" as follows:

<D(E)C>

Many successful processes of transformation follow the three phases of divergence, emergence and convergence (in this order):

<D The stage of **divergence** is the initial phase during which people open up: they broaden their horizons, learn about the world (system) they live in, and reflect about (their own and others') past experience, about their peers and other stakeholders, and about new ideas, concepts, research and the like. They open their eyes to (possibly) new realities and raise their awareness of things having changed. This opens up the space of possibility; in other words, more and more options become available. At the same time, a gap opens up between the current state, on the one hand, and how things should be (in the negative sense: redressing deficits) and could be (in the positive sense: harnessing potentials and opportunities), on the other. A structural tension (→ discomfort/dissatisfaction) builds up.

(E) The stage of **emergence** is the central turning point of a process. Something new emerges: a direction, vision, future that in some way has the character of novelty, that is desirable and attractive. This emerging shared vision becomes the beacon of future action, which directs and bundles the efforts made by all those involved in the transformational process. To ensure that everybody pulls in the same direction, it is essential that everybody shares this reference point – demarcating a shared future, intention and purpose.

C> The stage of **convergence** is the final, opposite movement. Once participants know the scope of possibility, and – within this space – they have determined their preferred direction, they now need to close in on those options that lead straight towards this new future, that are conducive and practicable, and are doable at the same time. This means also excluding and dismissing all the other possibilities. It means becoming concrete, realistic and practical: deciding on real first steps.

Many different disciplines think in terms of similar three steps:

Divergence <D	Emergence (E)	Convergence C>
	Psychology/Behaviourism: CAB	
Cognition	Affect	Behaviour
	Pedagogics (Pestalozzi)	
Head	Heart	Hand
	Change Management	
Discomfort	Vision	Pathway (First Steps)
	Knowledge Management	
Learn	Create Ideas	Implement
	Advertising Industry: AIDA	
Attention – Interest	Desire	Action

One way to illustrate this model of Divergence-Emergence-Convergence is the workshop rollercoaster as presented by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff:

Ideally, a transformational event brings participants initially into a valley of "despair", which creates the ground and the willingness to change in the first place. Only participants who feel this urge and start owning it (developing a sense of responsibility) are then willing to engage in the further process. The event then must create a sense of hope (dreaming), from which action planning can take place in a positive way.

Well-designed processes do not only accept the phase of despair and confusion, but they *proactively* seek it, deliberately driving participants into this valley – yet having a clear idea about it and taking measures (in the next steps) to deal with it and continue beyond this point.

The term "despair" should not necessarily be taken to mean deep misery and distress. Often a phase of confusion is extremely helpful (even though difficult to endure for everybody involved – including, or perhaps in particular, the facilitator) and some degree of discomfort is an absolute necessity.

3. Translating Systemic Thinking into Practice

3.1 Defining Impact and Purpose

Often, facilitators are called in to obtain a given agenda, a tentative programme that has already been put together. On these occasions the "sponsor" (or owner) of the event designs it and, in the common view, that's where the task of the facilitator starts: by reeling off the given programme in the most effective and efficient way. A friend who is a great, experienced facilitator once said: "I never facilitate other people's events". What she wanted to say was that it is very difficult and thankless to take over the facilitation task of an event at a late stage – when many of the decisions on format, structure and so forth have already been taken. Why? Because 80 per cent of the success of an event lies in the preparation (once the event starts, the ball keeps rolling, just as it does in a marble run!).

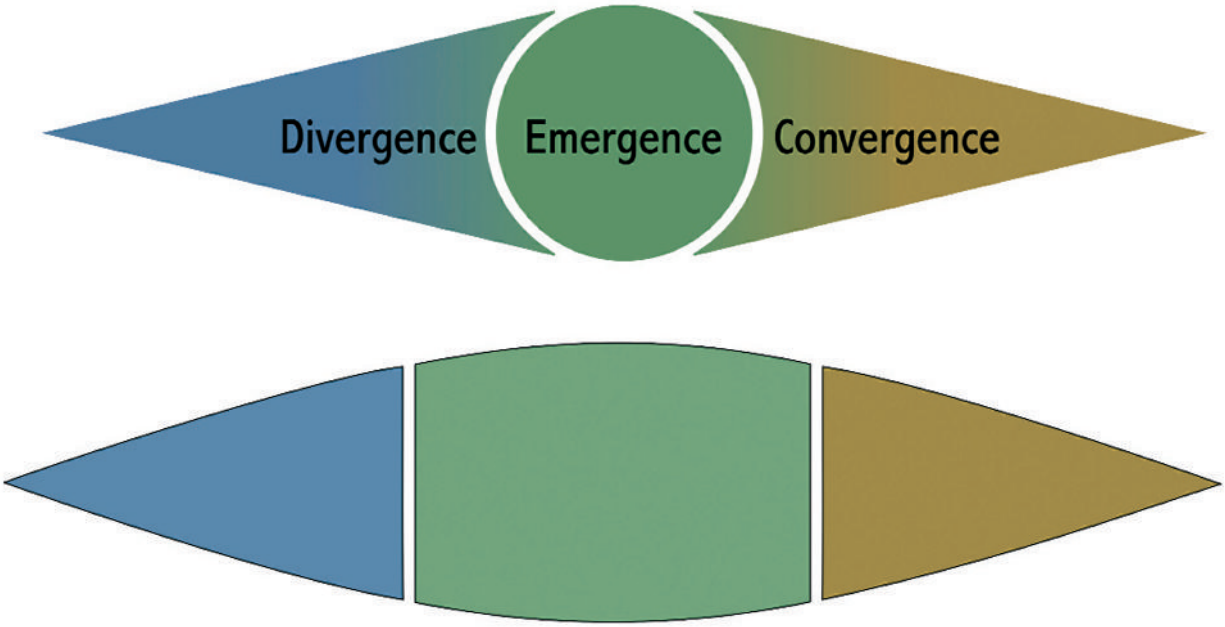
With regard to outcome and impact of an event, the most crucial part of the preparation work is designing and structuring the overall event. So the main task of the facilitator lies more in the work accomplished *before* the facilitation of the actual event starts. To put it differently, the most important part of the job of a facilitator is to facilitate the lead phase to the event.

The main challenge of this design work is to define the expected outcome/impact of the event – we're not just talking about output! Often, people who come to us are very clear about what they want to see at the end of the event: they have heard about this or that topic, they have shared their ideas and knowledge, they have drafted a plan or strategy … But that's not our main concern! We then ask them, "So far so good, but what do you actually want to see happening in the six months after the workshop, that will lead you to the conclusion that the workshop was worth all the time and effort? What criteria will you use at that later stage to judge the workshop and our contribution to it?" We ask these questions because once we as facilitators know the answers to them, our task is then to design an event and outputs that best lead to that impact. However, usually when we ask these questions, people fall silent. Then they tell us that these are good questions – and ask us to give them a few days to figure out the answers!

3.2 Choreographing Transformational Processes – The Architecture of Events

While it is important, in an event, to pay much attention to methods used, it has become clear that the actual design – the architecture or choreography – of an event is at least equally important. A few interesting, interactive, dynamic facilitation methods to engage participants are not sufficient. It is crucial also to think about when to do what, to give the event an inherent structure and flow, and a thread that guides participants from one phase to the next – working (and learning) step by step to create a logical structure which targets precisely the purpose of the event. A carefully worked-out structure also keeps the energy level high throughout the event. An illogical, disruptive, fragmented event without any rhythm is much more tiring; people will disconnect early in such an event.

The previously presented basic design pattern of divergence-emergence-convergence <D(E)C> provides a simple framework that can be used in many ways. The translation of the pattern into practice is very simple:

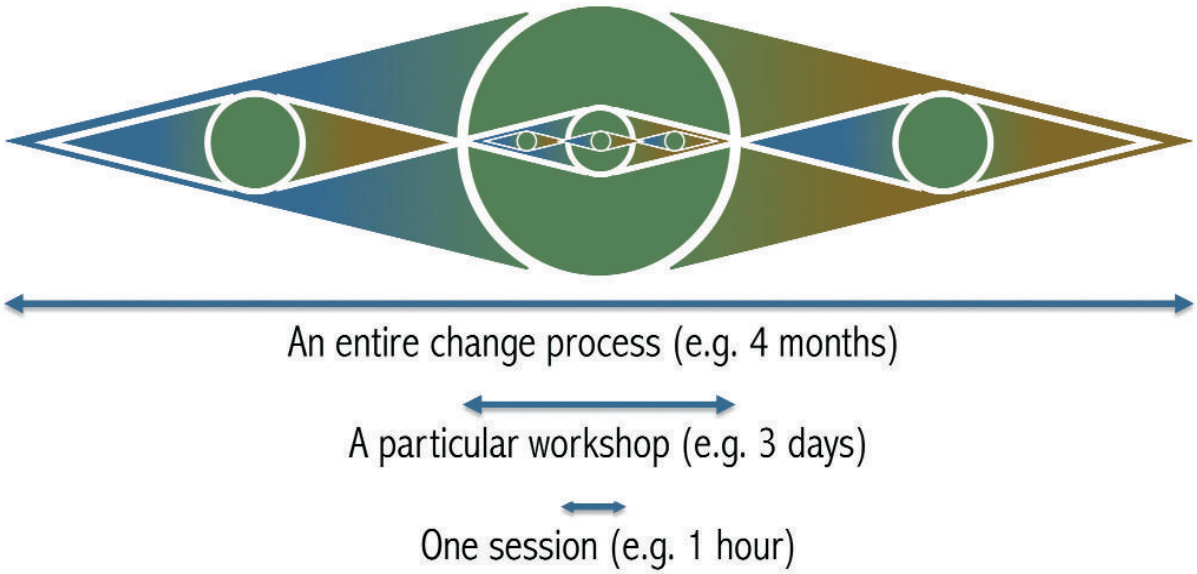


Learn <D	Co-create a Shared Vision (E)	Define a Pathway/First Steps C>
- From own experiences/ the past - From each other - About new stuff	- Where people invest themselves - Where people participate in what concerns them	- Make things tangible ... - ... and feasible and - assume responsibility
The core competence of good facilitation is to …		
ask the right question	evoke the right story	trigger the right engagement

A powerful, effective vision has three essential elements:

1. It must be a vision that attracts and mobilises energy.
2. It must be co-created by the participants, so they have ownership and support it on a lasting basis.
3. It must be shared, i.e. all the stakeholders have one and the same vision and thus pull in the same direction.

The threefold design pattern has a fractal quality. In other words, it can be applied on different, convoluted levels. On each level, the same pattern applies again:



Each individual level can contain phases of divergence, emergence and convergence.

3.2.1 The Meso Level: Applying the Design Pattern to Events

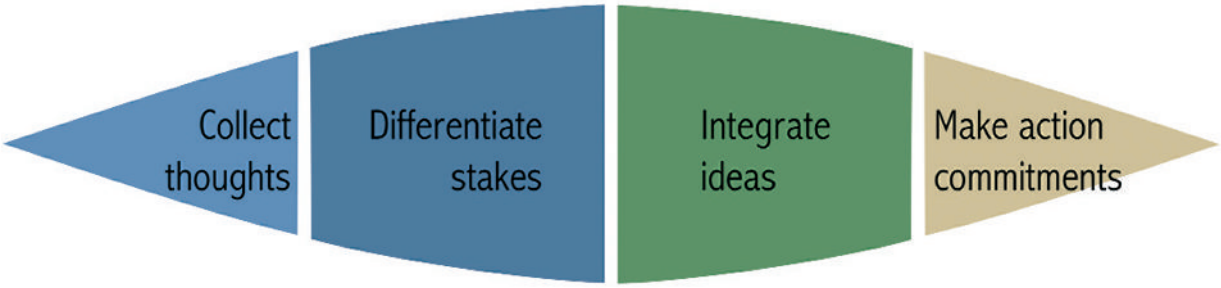
The most evident application is on the level of an individual event – for example a training session, a workshop, or a meeting held with a transformative purpose in mind. In other words, the event aims at participants perceiving and acting in a different way after – and due to – the event. The event should have an impact that transforms the system.

There are different ways to translate the design pattern into a concrete agenda. Again, different practitioners and authors have come up with variations. However, they all rely on the same three steps.

Emily and Dick Axelrod speak of the meeting canoe. They divide the three steps into several sub-steps:

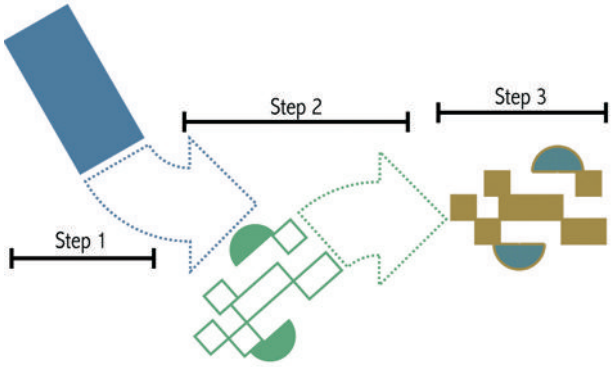
An exemplary agenda for a one-week workshop on knowledge sharing/action planning – "filling" the different steps with carefully tailored methods – might look like this:

Mon 5th	Tue 6th	Wed 7th	Thu 8th	Fri 9th
Checking In: Sociometric Introduction	Appreciative Interviews to surface positive experiences	Round Robin: getting to know a new technology	Open Space to explore concrete ideas, develop measures	Defining personal action plans
World Café to identify issues, concerns and what preoccupies people	Fishbowl to explore the larger context	Future Story: sketching out a preferred future		Checking Out AAR



Again, for the individual steps, different methods can be applied, yet the overall design framework remains the same.

A comparable pattern even applies to actual sessions of adult training:



<D In a first step, learners gather and amass their pre-existing knowledge and preconceived ideas on a particular issue. This creates the "seedbed" in which the learning can take place.

(E) In a second step, an external "expert" (specialist, instructor, trainer) provides them with some "novelty" knowledge plus some concepts, structures and guides to take their knowledge and understanding to a higher level. In order to anchor the new ideas and knowledge, the "expert" ensures that his/her intervention builds on and draws from what learners have put forward in the first step. The "emerging" element (which creates a turning point, a qualitative shift) is, in this particular case, introduced from the outside.

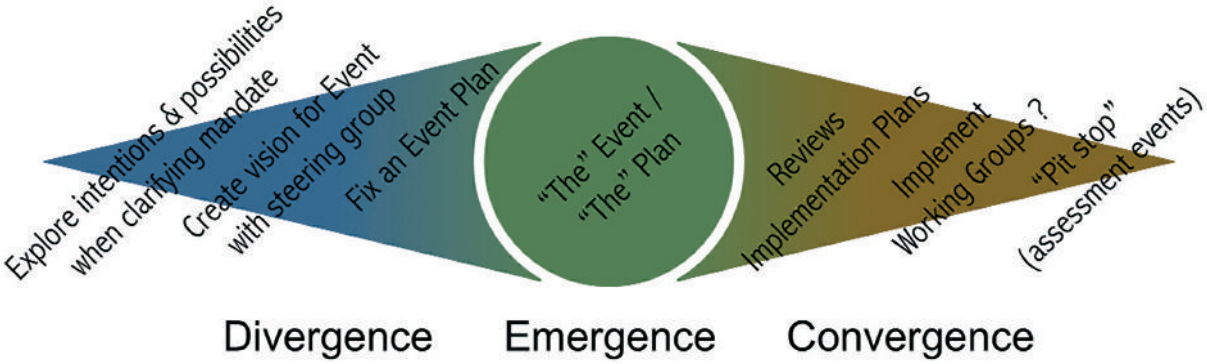
C> In a last step, learners take their pre-existing ideas and knowledge from Step 1 and apply it to, or combine it with, the "new" ideas and concepts from Step 2. They reflect on the significance of these "new" ideas in their situation/context/task and work out how to apply them concretely in their reality.

Again, in each of the steps, we can use a whole range of concrete methods, yet we must make sure that these methods target (and are adapted to) the goal of every particular step.

3.2.2 The Macro Level: Designing the Whole Process of Change

The same structure of divergence-emergence-convergence can be applied as a macro structure to the whole period of a change process, i.e. over a few weeks or, even, months. Typically, in the centre of such a process would stand one or a few "change events", which would (on the basis of previously gathered and acquired knowledge) define the actual transformation, which would then be implemented in the convergence phase of the macro process.

Let's look at an exemplary process with a possible duration of a few weeks:



<D The divergence phase could take up to a few weeks. Within this phase, once again a divergence-emergence-convergence pattern could apply:

- <D A first step could serve the goal of exploring different intentions and possibilities behind entering a change process; as a result a clear mandate would be defined (→ divergence).
- (E) Then a vision of how the process should look and what it should achieve is elaborated with a steering group that represents the whole system of stakeholders (→ emergence).
- C> Lastly, a change process/event plan is fixed (→ convergence).

(E) The emergence phase could take 2–3 days and consist of an actual change event (as outlined above in the section on the meso level); the outcome of this phase would be "the" plan/strategy/other outcome.

C> The convergence phase could last several months:

- <D It could start with a review process of the plans/strategies/other outcomes elaborated in the change event. A task force could scrutinise them, looking at feasibility, resources, organisational issues, and responsibilities, and distribute the work (→ divergence).
- (E) Task teams or working groups would then put the plans into practice, and implement the ideas (→ emergence of the new reality).
- C> After a defined period, the stakeholders would gather again and review the work achieved, its impact and, on this basis, the plans and the entire process (→ convergence).

Looking at a practical example, a fairly complex process could look like this:

What	Learn, discuss and define what the change issue is 3-day leader-ship workshop	Awareness raising in the entire team Information day on upcoming process	Learn specialised knowledge 3 x 3 day-training work-shops on specific skills and know-how	Create shared vision on how to change, where to go, who does what 2.5 day event	Create business plans (task plans, roles and organigrams, resource plans)	Implement tasks	Review Process: 1-day outcome conference
Who	Management Team and Steering Group	Everybody in Team	Task Managers	Everybody in Team	Task Force	Working Groups	Everybody in Team
When	Feb '09	Early Mar '09	Mid Mar-Apr '09	Mid-Apr '09	End Apr '09	May-Nov '09	Dec '09

3.2.3 The Micro Level: Structuring a Particular Session

Even in the context of one particular session – applying a specific facilitation technique – the <D(E)C> formula can be helpful. Let's consider just two examples for illustration purposes.

World Café is one of the very versatile facilitation formats. It typically consists of 3 rounds of questions of 20 minutes each (for details see description of World Café in this handbook in section 5.4). The key of a successful World Café is the quality of the questions asked. The format allows the three rounds to be designed according to the design pattern. The questions could be formulated along the following lines:

1. **Explore the issue:** "Where do we feel the urge and pain to change something?"

   The first question opens the thinking, the horizons, and the perspective of people. People start to see and think beyond their current limits, they learn new ideas, they hear from peers about what their reality entails, they dig into their own experience and they share what they sense.

2. **Co-create an idea:** "What is our shared future calling for from us? What do we want?"

   The second question could be seen as a visionary step on a micro level. It surfaces what is possible and desirable. People try to see around the corner, to see what is there that wants to realise itself, that wants to emerge. They think about what they themselves care about and what they want to bring into being.

3. **Plan together:** "How can we achieve this together? Who needs to do what? What can I contribute?"

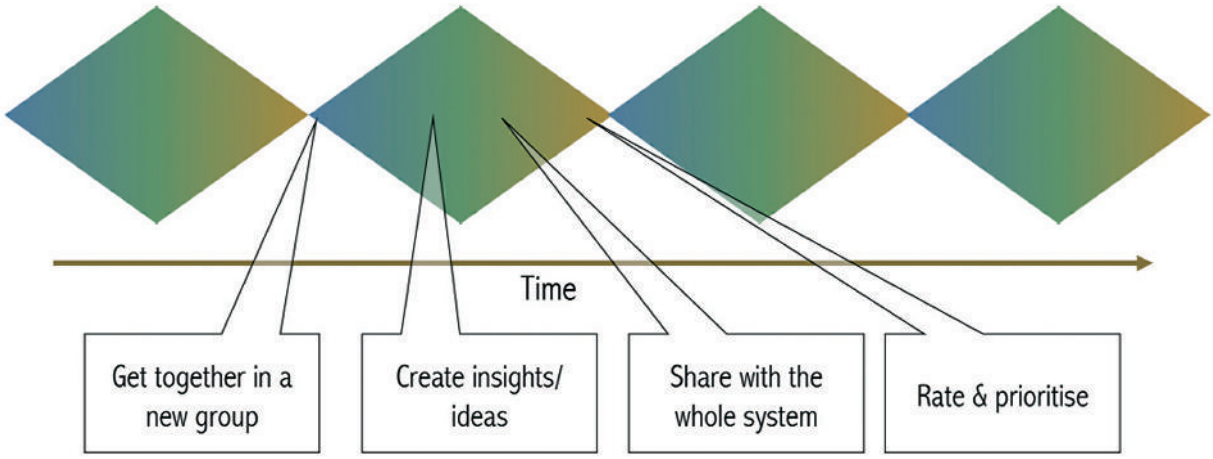
   The third question tries to translate this back into reality: what needs to be done, what needs to happen to make this a reality, to make it concrete, tangible, effective, real. What can I do/contribute to seize this potentiality?

As an example, let's take questions from a World Café on the promotion of gender equality. The overall goal of that particular World Café was: What is our understanding of gender mainstreaming and where do we see our own roles and responsibilities?

The respective 3 questions (each discussed in 3 consecutive rounds of 20 minutes each) were:

1. Sometimes it's really difficult to advance the goal of gender equality. How do you think gender equality is promoted in your workplace and the organisation as a whole? With regard to gender equality, what are the challenges currently on your plate? What expectations and responsibilities related to promoting gender equality do you have to cope with?
2. In terms of gender equality, what do you truly care about? What do you like about your active role in promoting gender equality? From this perspective, how should gender equality in the organisation be promoted – in projects, policies, at the workplace? What would success look like after having achieved gender equality?
3. Which concrete initiatives/strategies/measures could you pursue in order to succeed? How would your role and responsibilities need to be adjusted? What would need to happen in your working environment to achieve success?

To give another example for a micro-level pattern, we can look at other facilitation formats like RTSC or Future Search Conferences (cf. the toolbox in sections 4/5 for details). These consist of a succession of modules, in each of which many small groups of people simultaneously get together and all work on the same task at the same time. Each group brainstorms and develops ideas on a particular question. It then needs to confine itself to 3–4 favourite ideas, which it shares with the plenary (i.e. all the other groups). The favourite ideas of all the groups are then collected. All the participants in the process then rate the suggestions and ideas in a democratic process. The top priorities of the plenary as a whole are publicly announced. Then all the groups reshuffle (i.e. participants get into new groups) and move to the next task. The <D(E)C> movement looks as follows:



3.3 The Facilitator's Self – The Most Powerful Instrument

The following ideas and suggestions rely on the teachings of Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff. In this handbook you will find only a few of their excellent recommendations (some in our own wording and variation), which may be particularly useful in this context. If you would like to learn more about the original source, consult their book (Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! – Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter*, 2007 – see the literature list at the end of the handbook).

3.3.1 What You Can Control and What You Can't

For you as a facilitator it will be key – and sometimes very relieving – to distinguish clearly between what you can control and what you cannot control in an event. The well-known "Serenity Prayer" of Reinhold Niebuhr may serve as a useful guiding principle:

God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
The courage to change the things that I can;
And the wisdom to know the difference.

So let's see what you as a facilitator of an event actually have under your control:

Can control	Can't control
Goals (before the meeting starts!) Structures - Agenda - Physical space - Available means - Rules and codes Processes (What happens in the room? What tasks do you give people? → defined by the agenda to a large extent) Most importantly: Yourself!	Participants - Their behaviour - Their attitude and motivation Outcomes
It's a good idea to deal with as many things as possible before the meeting actually starts. Focus your energy on those aspects. Many facilitators "waste" part of their time and energy on trying to control what is beyond their reach anyway.	Even though you can't control those aspects listed above, you can create structures and processes that are favourable to learning, sharing and good conversations. This will encourage participants to take an interest in and responsibility for their own behaviour, attitude and motivation, thus contributing to a positive outcome.

It is useful to become aware of what your actual role in an event is – and what other roles there are in the room. Weisbord and Janoff quote Larry Porter, who has developed a typology of four roles. A slightly modified version looks like this:

		Do you have a stake in the content?	
		No	Yes
Are you managing the meeting?	No	Process observer	"Regular" participant; "experts" such as presenters
	Yes	Facilitator	A group member with formal authority

Clearly the role in the bottom right quadrant is a very difficult one: if this is your role you'll need to "swap" roles constantly – on the one hand you should manage a meeting, on the other hand you are involved in the substantial discussions because you're entangled in the issues. While you're actively participating in the debate, you are likely to lose track of the management and facilitation of the meeting. In the end you are likely to be blamed for having abused your managerial role, i.e. to have manipulated the meeting in the direction of your personal agenda.

What's the solution? Avoid getting into this position in the first place! Avoid this clash of roles and interests. If you have a stake in the issue, make sure that you have a neutral facilitator to help you. If you can relieve yourself of the facilitation role, you can dedicate your full attention to the topic, issues and outcome. Some leaders hesitate to take this step, because they want to keep control over the meeting. Yet, in doing so, they cause the opposite to happen: since they are divided during the meeting, they can't dedicate their full attention to what actually matters to them. In the worst case scenario they might lose control over both the meeting and their own personal agenda.

3.3.2 Create Ownership

Your aim is for meeting results to be sustainable. You depend on participants to back decisions and follow up on them. What you need is the full commitment of participants, and for this to occur they must own the outcome and hence the process to get to the outcome. There are several ways to create and promote ownership:

- Keep out of people's way so they can get to work. A paradoxical effect of a very active facilitator is that she/he can get in people's way. The more time a facilitator occupies for facilitation, the less time remains for the other participants. Be aware of this! Some facilitators feel they have to prove their worth by doing as much as they can, constantly occupying the stage and using up scarce time for themselves. Their intentions may be good, but is this necessarily the best approach?
- Do less so participants can do more. Every task you're fulfilling won't be taken care of by someone else. This denies them the opportunity to become more engaged, involved and caring through active participation. So ask participants to assist you wherever you can – helping you with writing on flipcharts, setting up the room, doing recording and documentation tasks, handing out documents etc. Give participants responsibilities – the more responsibility they assume during the event, the more they develop for outcomes and follow-up.
- Encourage self-management of sub-groups.: Create sub-groups as often as you can and hand over roles within these groups (each group will determine a facilitator, a time keeper, a writer, a reporter, and so on).
- Allow sufficient time when you ask questions, invite comments and ideas, or request final remarks before moving on to the next topic. If they are to say something meaningful, rather than state the obvious, people often need time to think first. Allow them at least 30 seconds to respond (count for yourself – it feels like an eternity!) before you offer another prompt. And if you can't or don't want to allow that much time, then it would be better not to offer the opportunity in the first place! Participants find it highly frustrating when they are *almost* ready, after 20 seconds, to ask a question or make a comment, but then find that the facilitator moves on too quickly, not giving them the chance to actually make the comment.
- If you get asked a question as the facilitator, make it a habit to reflect questions back to people in the group. Ask whether someone knows an answer. Once again, you're providing a platform for others; after all it's not about you and what you know – you're just the facilitator! The same is true if you're at a loss as to how to deal with a particular situation: ask people for advice – someone will always know! And again, by involving people, you encourage them to develop responsibility and ownership. What more could you wish for?

3.3.3 Create Structures

One of the things you can influence and control in an event are structures (see the table in section 3.3.1). So use this possibility to the fullest! The following aspects of creating structure require attention:

- Agendas: Invest in preparing a good agenda and plan it carefully. Firstly, *before* the workshop make sure you feel comfortable with it and that it is 100 per cent workable for you. Don't allow yourself to be pressured into doing things (for example trying to fit too much in) for which you can't assume responsibility! Secondly, communicate the agenda clearly to participants. If they feel comfortable and have some framework to hold on to (and if they trust that you know what you're doing), they may accept more uncertainty and openness in other fields (like content). If you have a plan and they trust you, it's easier to take them on a voyage of discovery.
- Rooms and room set-ups: Think carefully about the room you need and how to structure, organise and decorate it. The room is the first thing participants experience. It will immediately communicate what the event will be like and create a mood that will endure. Insist on daylight and on fully flexible furnishings!

  In general, tables are not needed in the main room (except when you are using World Cafés or breakout groups in an Open Space). People will always tell you that they need them to take notes, but in 99.5 per cent of cases it's just habit. Once you're rolling, only few will continue to ask for tables. Once they overcome their initial surprise, most participants will quickly appreciate the advantages of not having tables. Tables are problematic in two ways: (1) a tabletop hides half of each participant's body – the lower part of their body, where their emotions, their gut feeling, their intuition reside. By "withdrawing" that part from the group, they are only half present, which you can't afford; and (2) you are unlikely to have the strength and flexibility to constantly rearrange the table formations and/or seating order in your room.
- Create rules, and make contracts and agreements: Giving people a lot of freedom does not mean anything goes! People fear the total absence of order more than anything; often just a few very simple rules make all the difference! Consider letting people create their own code (which will be much more readily observed than one made by you alone). Make proper contracts too: give people a full and fair opportunity to express dissent, and explicitly obtain their approval (at least by seeking eye contact with all of them, with each of them nodding!).
- Make people move! Remember this ground rule: if people don't move physically, they won't move mentally. You can do this by (1) planning to rearrange the room for each session (therefore no tables!) into a different layout; (2) building in methods (such as sociometric line-ups) which mean they need to stand up; (3) sending them for a walk with a task; or (4) improvising a coffee break (if you get stuck).

3.3.4 Preparation: 70 per cent of Success Is Defined Beforehand

In our own practice, when an event has not developed in the way we had hoped for, we have tried to work out the reason. Why did some workshops not meet the expectations? Why were hopes and aspirations sometimes disappointed? While, in most cases, there was no clear-cut answer, one point did often arise: lack of preparation.

The main task of the facilitator is to prepare and design the process carefully to ensure that the event leads towards the goal set out in the beginning. This task is often greatly underestimated. As we have said before, an event is like a marble run: you construct it carefully, you consider possibilities and different options, but once the ball is rolling, it will just follow the track you have laid out. If the track gets bumpy, this is usually caused by some design features you have built in – or neglected. However, in many cases this will not jolt the ball out of the run, so don't worry unnecessarily! It is reassuring to know that if you have invested the necessary care, you can trust the ball not only to make progress somehow along the run, but also to arrive at the destination you're expecting it to reach.

A complementary warning: as a facilitator you need to be open and flexible to react to situations, to change your design and to replan your event, but don't do this carelessly. Remember the time and effort you have put into the design of an event. In the heat of the moment in the workshop, can you invest an equal amount of time and effort? Do you have the tranquillity to think through your options and decisions? Or are you abandoning a more or less functional plan for total improvisation? Don't get seduced into rushing into a new agenda that you haven't had the time to consider – take the time you need to weigh up the consequences and options!

Several areas need your attention and must be defined before the workshop:

- Firstly, pin down the purpose. Ask yourself: What is the intention of the workshop sponsors? What is the intention of everybody else sitting in the room? What are the issues that will drive this group? Often, the real issues are not just those that get openly aired at the start. Get to know the field. Whether people like it or not, certain issues will clearly influence the event and determine the outcome – if these are not acknowledged or are banned from discussion, they will not go away. However, you need to place *everything* at the centre of the event – there may be legitimate reasons not to. But you as a facilitator need clarity about the issues and you must have an idea, a plan, of how to deal with them. If you continue feeling completely uncomfortable with the situation you encounter, and you feel you're not able to deal with it, it might be wise to choose not to facilitate the event (see also section 3.1).
- Define a pathway – which translates into an agenda – that leads to the outcome you need. Recall the metaphor of the marble run, which we've mentioned before. Consider carefully what "stage outcomes" you need in order to get to the final outcome. What by-products do you want to produce? What is really essential on this route, and what is distracting? Your sponsor may press you to build in x, y, z, may tell you that this, that and the other are also needed, may try to insist that some important person gets an opportunity to speak or give a presentation, and so on. Don't be disconcerted! You're responsible for reaching the final outcome. Carefully examine why something is important and deserves to be built into your agenda. Learn to say no if you're uneasy. Argue your case. If you can't prevail, then at least you must clearly point out to your sponsor what the consequence is. Make it clear!

- Keep your agenda slim. Time-management problems usually develop in the course of the agenda being overloaded – this is your fault as the facilitator! Plan your time budget realistically and carefully. Build in spare time, which will allow you to catch up with the schedule. Again, don't allow others to pressure you into an agenda that you are not able to handle! Say no. In general, we give sponsors options. They have to make choices; if they add something, something else must be dropped. And we highlight what the consequences of such decisions are.
- Consult the participants. Ideally, you can form a steering group that consists of a representative sample of your group of participants. It is best to have representatives from all hierarchical levels and from all teams/departments/sectors/stakeholder groups. Try to balance gender, age, seniority and other factors.

  In a *first* preparatory meeting you
  - run the purpose and goal past this steering group (e.g. try to identify whether the issue is relevant only to the sponsor or to everybody, or whether there are other covert issues)
  - consult them on who should attend the event (see section 3.3.5).

  In a *second* meeting you
  - obtain approval for the agenda and for the documentation that you need for facilitation purposes
  - use those present as a sounding board to pretest any questions (e.g. for a World Café). Do people understand what you had in mind? Does it make sense in their eyes? Are you asking attractive questions that matter to them?

  A key aspect of involving a steering group is that participation does not start at the event itself. Many key decisions ("agenda setting") are as important as the event itself – and people may feel "manipulated" if they come in at a "late" stage. Conversely, involving them (and not just the "boss") in the preparation process may come as an encouraging surprise to them and you may prepare the ground for a positive, constructive workshop.

  If you're not in a position to meet a steering group (e.g. because you are geographically distant), you can choose to do extensive briefing interviews with people who would usually participate in such a steering group (cf. example of such an interview in section 5.1).

  Ask your steering group members to spread the word about what they have heard and seen, to share with their colleagues and to consult them. After all, the steering group members "represent" the rest of the group of participants; they talk on their behalf. The event should not be a surprise; the more accurate people's knowledge about what is coming up (and the more they feel involved), the more productive they will be.
- Last but not least, define structures for your workshop (see the previous section).

3.3.5 Work the Whole Elephant

The third dimension of a complex problem (see section 2.2.3) requires that the whole system be not only taken into consideration, but also actively represented in the process of (a) understanding the complex reality and (b) coming up with an appropriate and adapted solution.

Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff have developed what is known as the "ARE IN" formula, which helps in considering the groups who should BE IN a meeting, i.e. who should participate. ARE IN stands for:

- **A** Authority (to take decisions and ensure they are accepted)
- **R** Resources (financial, human, time, other)
- **E** Expertise or Experience (specialised know-how/skills about the issue at stake)

- **I** Information or Insight (knowledge of the concrete, specific facts about the particular situation/issue discussed)
- **N** Need (to be involved, because one is affected by the decision, e.g. has to implement it, is a "beneficiary", is "suffering" the consequences, and so on)

If any of these five groups are not well represented, difficulty may arise at some point. It can arise either (1) *in* the event itself (e.g. because part of the information is lacking, because decisions can't be taken, or because the availability of resources is unknown, and people feel frustrated and obstructed); or (2) *after* the meeting (e.g. because people key to the implementation process have not been part either of the learning process or of the solution-design process and won't support or agree to its outcomes afterwards).

We often take the ARE IN formula quite literally and go through it with the sponsor and with the steering group. We mention each of the five stakeholder groups who must be involved and ask how we can ensure that they are there. If the steering group is already composed according to this formula, this will make things much easier.

If you are unable to ensure the whole system outlined above is represented in the room, Weisbord and Janoff suggest the 3x3 rule: involve any three hierarchical levels and any three different functions in the conversation. Sometimes a lack of diversity of perspectives and thinking prevents progress, because two sides collide, or because people cook in their own juice. Try to mitigate that right from the beginning. If you get stuck in a conversation, think about how you can expand the circle of people involved. New participants will create new conversations and new ideas and can thus unblock a situation.

3.4 Working with Diversity

People sometimes ask, "How do you deal with difficult people? How do you handle conflicts in your events?" They're referring to participants who are commonly considered as obstructionists, who ask difficult (so-called awkward) questions, who do not buy into a compromise at all. We have started looking at these people less as obstructionists than as an expression of diversity, which almost by definition constitutes valuable capital for creating sustainable solutions. And they are just a reality.

Furthermore, in many of these situations, while it may be unpleasant when they raise issues, a facilitator should be grateful to have these issues visibly on the table. It allows the facilitator to deal with the issues actively and to avoid hollow compromises, which in the aftermath of an event could defeat the whole process. In fact, you can assume that the person raising concerns or asking these awkward questions is just the one being brave enough to articulate what others think as well – at least partially.

A big trap is to limit someone entirely to one specific position or view that she/he expresses. If we're sincere and open enough (in particular towards ourselves), we'll recognise that we often have more than just one opinion on a particular issue; we can see different – often conflicting – aspects that have some truth in themselves. We carry many disputes within ourselves – and often someone raising issues talks not just on behalf of others in the room, but also on behalf of a voice in ourselves, about which we may be in denial.

To conclude: this is where actively working with diversity in constructive ways comes in. In this way one can turn something generally seen as a problem into an opportunity. Thus variety, as the basis of creativity and innovation, and inclusion become visible and effective.

Many of these practices and techniques have been developed further by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff. For a more in-depth understanding, we highly recommend their book on facilitating meetings that matter.

3.4.1 Begin at the Beginning

As we explained in the previous section, careful preparation and planning are key – and this applies also when it comes to dealing with diversity. Many differences of opinion – and conflicts – can be anticipated. A thorough preparation process does not only involve the sponsor or the leader, who often has particular, biased perspectives. Instead it involves a representation of the group as a whole. These people can and will surface many of the controversial issues and latent conflicts – and you can prepare for the event and address them before the event starts.

The divergence of expectations and hopes is a common source of conflict and discontent among participants in events. If people have been waiting for a meeting for a long time, seeing it as *the* opportunity to deal with their issue or concern, they will be disappointed if the event takes an unexpected course. You need (a) to know before the event what such issues might be (and just asking participants at the beginning of the event about their expectations will *not* do the job – it requires more commitment to bring them to the surface; and (b) to communicate plainly and unmistakeably what the event will be about and what it will *not* be about. Actively manage the expectations – and create a commitment to the event, its goal and agenda as it stands *before* the event starts. You can do both through providing your steering group with active, real opportunities to participate in the preparation process.

Lastly, define a clear playing field. At the beginning of the event (not at the end!), define and explain

- what the event is and is not about
- what will be done with the results after the event
- what the non-negotiables are
- what rules, codes and etiquette of engagement must be respected.

Ideally, you should ask the leader of the system (e.g. the sponsor, the boss, the director) to explain these points to his/her crew. Carefully prepare this initial statement with her/him – it is, extremely important!

3.4.2 Understand the Whole Picture

In many situations, conflicts are side effects of a lack of understanding of the situation/issues/system as a whole. The six blind men (in Saxe's poem, see section 2.2.3), none of whom can see the whole elephant, dispute for ages who is right and what an elephant really is. Each one relies on his experience and perspective. The "solution" to the problem of their understanding is to acknowledge that there is not a single right or wrong. Each of them possesses part of the truth, but none the truth as a whole. Putting the pieces together in an additive process will help everybody to gain an understanding on a higher level and enable them to argue in a more accurate and understanding way. You can cool down certain conflicts significantly just by holding a session that reveals the "big picture". They may even evaporate entirely.

If you anticipate such a conflict or divergence of opinions coming up and dominating the process, it may be a good idea to build such a "big picture" session into your agenda right from the beginning. Various methods are perfectly suitable for doing so. Among them (depending on what the issue for exploration is) are collective mind maps and time lines (see the toolbox in sections 4/5 of this handbook), as well as the methods explained in the next section.

3.4.3 Putting Things Into Perspective

In the course of an event, you need to give particular attention to people making absolute statements like "everybody thinks …" or "nobody wants …", as these statements are a denial of diversity. If you manage to return to diversity by making it visible, many conflicts may just disappear. In certain instances, such absolute statements may also represent an attempt of someone with a particular agenda to "hijack" the process and get into the driving seat. This person is directly competing with you as the facilitator.

Sociometric line-ups (see the toolbox section of this handbook) can be used very well to return to diversity. If you are dealing with controversial positions (two poles → the Line Game; three or more → Spatial Line-ups), define the line/space and ask people to position themselves. Then open a dialogue on why each person is standing where he/she is. You will find that only a minority will take extreme positions. You can start differentiating and also ask people in a conciliatory position to give their views – you will enable the articulation of many integrating statements. You – and more importantly the group as a whole – will soon discover that even those in the outlier positions will start referring to centre positions and qualify their statements. Often, this provides the grounds for a positive, constructive discussion on the issue at stake.

The physical line-up, where everybody must declare her-/himself, can be too exposing. In certain situations an anonymous process may be more appropriate. In this case you can draw a line on a large sheet of paper and label the two ends with the extreme positions. Now distribute sticky dots (adhesive labels), one per person, and ask everybody to position theirs somewhere on the line. The group will quickly see that there is no single position that attracts all of the views. You can have a very brief conversation on what comes to people's minds when they see the illustration of their opinion as a collective. This is a quick way to refute absolute statements – and since you don't need to make transparent who claimed to speak out on behalf of everybody else, nobody will lose face. The "instigator" will often silently relinquish his/her opposition.

3.4.4 Isolation, Sabotage

In some cases, a particular person will persist in breaking away from the rest and isolating her-/himself. In certain instances, the sponsor or the other group members may experience this as disruptive or, even, as an attempt to sabotage the process. Your task is to avoid being carried along with them. You need to remain in your facilitation role.

Remember, it is most likely that the person involved is expressing something that is part of the process and deserves attention – perhaps an inconvenient truth! Three things to be noted here are as follows:

1. The person has a concern and thus a right to be properly heard. If the person feels increasingly isolated and consequently alienated from the others, the attempts to make his/her point will become fiercer and fiercer. Trying to shut the person down, or trying to "convince" her/him to join the others or to give in to a compromise, may have the opposite effect and make the situation worse. Instead, you, as a facilitator, should make sure you create a safe space for the person to unburden her-/himself in a dignified way.
2. You should act counter-intuitively: expand the floor to accommodate that particular view or position. A person feels isolated as long as she/he is alone, and is the only person with a particular perspective; she/he will fight fiercely. However, although one is alone, two are company: therefore find that person an ally! You can do so by asking, "Does anyone else feel the same?" Wait and give people time to come forward and support that supposedly isolated position. You will find – to your and others astonishment – that if people are no longer alone, they feel genuinely heard and will be able to move on. You can "resolve" issues within minutes, whereas you may lose hours (or even the entire process) if people retreat into their trenches and defend their positions. This great way of dealing with such situations may initially require some courage, but it's absolutely worth it! Once more, Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff were the ones to discover this effect.
3. Weisbord and Janoff also developed the next step to use if you have two "groups" taking two positions, and you realise that you still can't move on. The thing to do here is to let them have a dialogue about the positions. However, *do not allow a dispute to develop between the two groups* – if you do allow this they will fight each other and try to gain ground and thus make the situation worse. Instead, let them have an *intra-group conversation*, i.e. ask all the members of one position to discuss it exclusively among themselves; the other "group" only (and strictly!) listens. Then ask them to swap roles; the second group explores and elaborates their position or view. What happens in this process is that each of the groups starts differentiating within themselves. You will end up with more than the two radical poles, and will start to expose differentiated perspectives and nuances – the polarised pattern that leads to a clash and blockade thus dissolves.

3.4.5 Common Ground Instead of Compromise

There is a tendency to consider a good compromise as something superior and desirable and therefore many tend to aim at it, pushing people towards it. Yet the best definition of a good compromise we have come across is this: "a compromise everybody is equally unhappy with". Compromises often have the disadvantage that everybody comes out of them with a sense of having lost.

In many situations there is a better alternative: identifying common ground. Common ground – as distinct from compromise – is those agreements for which nobody needs to compromise, but about which a genuine and inherent/natural consensus exists.

Often, issues are not controversial in the sense that someone with viewpoint A disagrees 100 per cent with viewpoint B. In general, people will easily agree – genuinely agree – on 80 per cent of the issues. However, in a controversial dispute, they will take these 80 per cent "hostage" to build up pressure to also obtain agreement on their view of the remaining 20 per cent (this 80:20 ratio is defined by the well-known Pareto principle). When this happens, it represents a real loss for everybody involved – because in many situations, a good enough outcome would be agreement on a large proportion of the issues. Often this consensual part builds a basis large enough to act on, and the remaining conflicting issues may be acknowledged to be beyond agreement. These conflicting issues can be kept for a later time, when interests, circumstances, the level of information or other pertinent factors may have changed.

A useful technique to identify this common ground is described by Weisbord and Janoff: ask the participants to write the issues on which they think everyone can agree on cards. Stick all the cards up on a wall. You will need two further empty walls, on which you then put up titles saying "Agreed" and "Not agreed". Now take the cards one by one and ask all the participants to express their consent. *Encourage them to disagree if they feel they need to compromise!* If anyone disagrees, ask whether there is a minor issue that could be changed that could make it possible for them to agree. If they respond by suggesting such a minor change, and you manage to get to an agreement with everybody within 2–3 minutes, make the necessary change – and move the card to the board "Agreed". Otherwise, don't even try to enforce an agreement; just move the card to "Not agreed". You will quickly sort out all those issues where common ground exists – and it will be a big and encouraging majority of issues! Now, with the time left, you can still go back to the "Not-agreed" issues and try to work on those. No matter how far you get with this, you will have made a great achievement!

Last but not least, we learned an important lesson from the "Deep Democracy" approach developed by Myrna Lewis (see the details for *Inside the No* in the literature list at the end of this handbook). This lesson was that saying no to something often contains a great deal of wisdom. In the interests of a better solution for everybody, it may be worth exploring why some may say no to a position or proposal – and jointly explore what aspects of those concerns can be integrated into the yes. Ask those saying no what it would take for them to join the yes and feel comfortable with it. If you succeed in integrating the two, this will be to everybody's advantage!

4. Juggling with Methods – The Right Instruments for the Right Purpose

The methods listed in this section belong to the genre of knowledge sharing, on the one hand, and various conversation or dialogue-oriented methods, on the other. The latter are often referred to as "whole system approaches". They include methods such as Open Space Technology, Future Search Conferences, Real Time Strategic Change, Appreciative Inquiry, World Café, and Theory U, to name but a few.

These various techniques share similar assumptions and concepts whilst serving different purposes. They can be combined, altered and fused, according to particular situations, conditions, and requirements. Factors such as the following all influence the choice of methodology: (1) the degree of conflict and tension within an organisation; (2) the participants' levels of motivation, experience and knowledge; (3) the size of the system; (4) time frames; and (5) the availability of resources.

It is advisable for a facilitator to first get to know particular methods and understand their inherent logic by applying them as they stand. Only later on, once the facilitator is familiar with them, should he/she modify them if necessary to better suit a specific purpose. For many arrangements and instructions, there are good reasons for doing things in a particular way; you risk losing some of the essence if you strip the method of too many aspects and features.

4.1 Calling All the Learning Sources In

4.1.1 Learning from All Sources

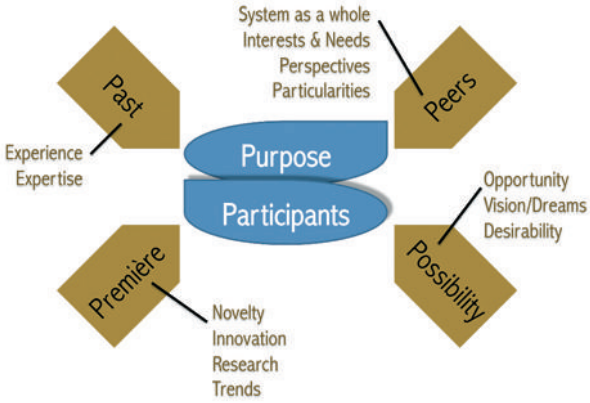
The essence, the foundation, of change is learning. Yet, this learning must be understood in a comprehensive sense. A whole range of sources and ways of learning must be brought together to reinforce each other if one is to understand complex systems, processes and situations in all their wealth, diversity and facets. Missing out on this means falling short in terms of understanding and all that flows from it.

Learning sources can be looked at in terms of time, as follows:

Learning from …		
the Past	**the Present**	**the Future**
i.e. from experience – one's own and that of other people What worked? What didn't? What should one conclude from this?	i.e. about (1) the system as it presents itself; (2) peers (who else is in the system and what does it look like from other angles?); (3) resources available (and missing) – possibly more/others than one would have thought; and (4) new knowledge, research, insights, ideas, concepts	i.e. what is possible? What wants to emerge? What paths are open? Which are closed? Who cares about what?

4.1.2 The Critical Learning Mix: Six Ps of Learning

Two P factors decide the sources of knowledge, experience, ideas, and insights you want to involve in your learning effort:



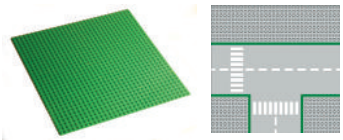
1. Purpose: Why do you want to learn anything in the first place? What is the target of your effort? What is needed? Prejudging these questions and subsequently rushing to eliminate sources of knowledge is a dangerous approach. Many efforts go off course because the learning effort is not designed broadly enough; the information and knowledge were there from the beginning, but nobody asked for them, and there was no opportunity to raise and consider them.
2. Participants: Who is in the room? Who is involved in the process? What interests, needs, backgrounds, experiences, resources, practices, and skills do these people bring to the table? What can you build on?

On the basis of these two Ps, the other four Ps (Past, Peers, Première and Possibility – referring to the four sources) can be considered:

	Past	Peers	Première	Possibility
Intention	Gathering and consolidating past experiences	Connecting people; discussing issues; creating common ground	Exploring the front line; leaving the known terrain; looking outside; observing the flow; researching and discovering	Breaking into new ground: cross-fertilising ideas and sustaining innovation; creating visions, dreams, targets and pathways
Typical Questions to Ask	What do we know? What went well? What can be improved? What experiences have we had? What can we replicate or amplify?	Who else is in the system and what other perspectives do they have? What resources are we provided with? Where do peers stand? Who brings what to the table? What is the common ground?	What keeps my neighbour and the world busy? Where are the frontiers? What is new or cutting edge? What are new results, insights and ideas? What is looming, emerging or evolving?	What is possible? What is desirable? Of what do we want more, of what less? For me, for you, for us?
Potential Methods	Appreciative Inquiry; After-Action Reviews; Retrospects; Time Lines	Mind Maps; Fishbowls; Round Robins; World Café	Presentations/inputs; Knowledge Markets; Excursions; Speed Geeking, Fishbowls	Collegial Team Coaching (Peer Assists); Six Thinking Hats; Future stories; Open Space Technology

4.2 Which Method When, and What For: A Schematic Overview

To help in understanding the idea of this schematic overview, the analogy of Lego works very well. There are different elements:

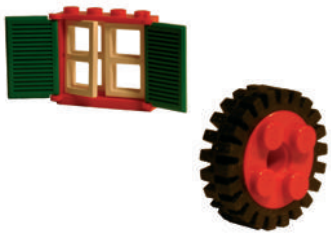


Ground Structure: Like baseplates, which may already predetermine certain conditions (limitations, shape, even certain structures or givens)

The Design: Like the instructions on a Lego box set

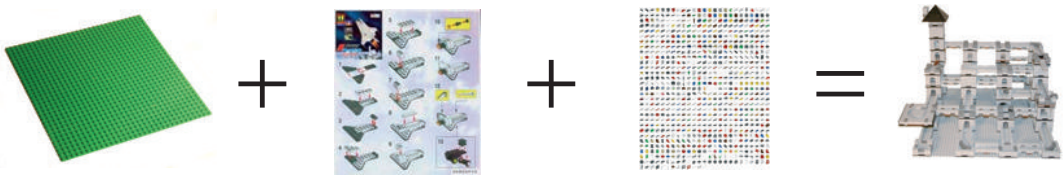
Basic methods: Like basic bricks – they are very versatile, i.e. they don't fulfil a specific function, but they can be used for various purposes, often as elements in a larger set-up

Specific methods: Like functionally specific bricks – they are used together with other bricks, however they fulfil a specific purpose (e.g. a wheel or a sloped roof brick or a window or an axe). On their own, they do not serve much of a purpose, yet they are very useful in specific situations in conjunction with other bricks



Stand-alone methods: Like "stand-alone elements" that can be used on their own, e.g. a Lego mini figure

Combined methods: Like Lego box sets, which consist of several bricks that are specifically selected and combined towards a particular purpose



Methods can have different functions – which can be related to the time orientation of the activity (see section 4.1.1), the source of learning (see section 4.1.2) and the phase of a transformation process (see section 3.2.1).

When putting them into relation to each other, one could place them in the following order:

Function of the Method	Time Orientation	Source of Learning	Phase of the Process
Connect with people, build relationships	Present	Peers	Divergence
Gather experiences (from events/actions/projects)	Past	Past	Divergence
Understand system (whole elephant)/ explore issues/create common ground	Present	Peers/Première	Divergence
Create shared visions, ideas	Future	Possibility	Emergence
Share knowledge/cross-fertilise ideas across borders	Present	Peers	Divergence
Innovate, create new ideas/solve problems	Future	Possibility	Emergence
Resource mobilisation/capacity building	Past/Present	Peers/Première	Divergence
Deal with conflicts	-	Peers/Possibility	-
Plan action/translate general ideas and visions in concrete action (plans)	-	Possibility	Convergence

On the following few pages, the different methods are discussed in relation to the various functions a method can have.

	Purpose		Function (cf. previous page)									Participants		Facilitation		
														Time		
	Purpose	Functional Type of Method (see the Lego metaphor)	Connect with people, build relationships	Gather experiences (from events/actions/ projects)	Understand system (whole elephant)/ explore issues/create common ground	Create shared visions, ideas	Share knowledge/cross-fertilise ideas across borders	Innovate, create new ideas/ solve problems	Resource mobilisation/ capacity building	Deal with conflicts	Plan action/translate general ideas and visions in concrete action (plans)	Type of group/dealing with diversity	Typical Group Size	Typical Event Duration	Preparation	Degree of sophistication/complexity of method/conflict in method
Collegial Team Coaching (Peer Assists)	Typically run before an action to mobilise past experiences	Stand-alone	(✓)	✓✓			✓	(✓)				Non-specific	4–8	30–45 min	0	Very simple process
Sociometric Line-Ups	Make diversity transparent Introduce group (warm-up) *or* Explore/appropriate controversial issues	Specific	✓✓						(✓)	✓✓		Diverse groups	10–50	1–2 hours	2 hours	Simple process, but demanding to steer heated debates
Soft Shoe Shuffle	Explore/appropriate controversial issues	Specific	(✓)		✓✓					✓✓		Conflicting group with strong opinions	10–50	1 hour	10 min	Simple process, but demanding to steer heated debates
After-Action Reviews	Evaluate/learn from an activity; typically run at end of a day/activity	Specific/ Stand-alone		✓✓								Participants of an action/shared experience of same event	4–50	1 hour	0	Simple process, no particular skills
Story Telling	Many different forms w/ diverse applications	Basic		✓✓	✓	✓✓			(✓)			Non-specific	5–40	2–3 hours	1 hour	Simple process
Fish Bowl	Diverse forms and applications	Basic/ Stand-alone		✓✓	✓✓		✓✓	(✓)	(✓)			Non-specific	20–40	1–1.5 hours	0–60 min	Simple process
Six Thinking Hats (de Bono)	Evaluate a strategy, plan, action – both: ex-antes or ex-post	Stand-alone		✓✓	✓✓					(✓)	✓✓	Project teams, people involved in a joint venture	5–15	1–1.5 hours	0	Simple process

Legend: ✓✓ = main purpose of a method, ✓ = secondary purpose (can be used for, but initially not specifically intended for), (✓) = positive "side effect" (not targeted at, but still has influence)

	Purpose		Function (cf. previous page)									Participants		Facilitation		
														Time		
	Purpose	Functional Type of Method (see the Lego metaphor)	Connect with people, build relationships	Gather experiences (from events/actions/ projects)	Understand system (whole elephant)/ explore issues/create common ground	Create shared visions, ideas	Share knowledge/cross-fertilise ideas across borders	Innovate, create new ideas/ solve problems	Resource mobilisation/ capacity building	Deal with conflicts	Plan action/translate general ideas and visions in concrete action (plans)	Type of group/dealing with diversity	Typical Group Size	Typical Event Duration	Preparation	Degree of sophistication/complexity of method/conflict in method
Appreciative Interviews	Mobilise energy and resources, identify best practices, turn "moods"	Specific	✓✓	✓✓	✓		(✓)		✓✓			Non-specific	2–300	2–4 hours	2–4 hours	Simple process, but facilitator w/clear understanding
Joint Mind Map	Create a shared understanding of an issue	Basic		✓	✓✓							Non-specific	5–60	1–1.5 hours	0	Simple process
Joint Timelines (Alternative) Story Lines	Create a shared understanding of the past	Specific		✓✓	✓		✓	✓			(✓)	Non-specific	5–60	1 hour	15 min	Simple Process
Round Robin	Explore and gather knowledge and experience from group members	Basic		✓✓			✓		✓			Non-specific	10–40	1–3 hours	30 min	Simple process, no particular skills
Speed Geeking	Participants get a quick exposure/insight into several (aspects of an) issue(s)	Basic			✓		✓		✓✓			Non-specific	10–40	1–3 hours	30 min + Preparation of short presentations	Simple process (requires a few topic "experts")
Future Backwards	Create scenarios for the future	Stand-alone		(✓)		✓		✓✓			✓✓	Participants of an action/shared experience of same event	5–20	3 hours	30 min	Simple process, easy to learn
World Café	Can be used for very different purposes	Basic/ Stand-alone	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		(✓)			Depends on purpose	15–300	2–4 hours	1–2 hours	Simple process, easy to learn

Legend: ✓✓ = main purpose of a method, ✓ = secondary purpose (can be used for, but initially not specifically intended for), (✓) = positive "side effect" (not targeted at, but still has influence)

	Purpose		Function (cf. previous page)									Participants		Facilitation		
														Time		
	Purpose	Functional Type of Method (see the Lego metaphor)	Connect with people, build relationships	Gather experiences (from events/actions/ projects)	Understand system (whole elephant)/ explore issues/create common ground	Create shared visions, ideas	Share knowledge/cross-fertilise ideas across borders	Innovate, create new ideas/ solve problems	Resource mobilisation/ capacity building	Deal with conflicts	Plan action/translate general ideas and visions in concrete action (plans)	Type of group/dealing with diversity	Typical Group Size	Typical Event Duration	Preparation	Degree of sophistication/complexity of method/conflict in method
Dynamic Facilitation		Stand-alone			✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓		(✓)	(✓)	High diversity of perspectives, experiences, knowledge	5–20	1/2–1 day	0	Simple process, but demanding in terms of facilitation
Open Space		Basic/ Stand-alone/ Combined	(✓)		✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	(✓)	✓	✓✓	High diversity of perspectives, experiences, knowledge	10–2000	1–3 days	2x 1/2 day Prep Meeting w/ steering group (2–3 months)	Simple process, but facilitator w/ clear under-standing
Appreciative Inquiry	Co-create a vision & strategy based on positive experience of a system, develop imple-mentation plans	Combined		✓✓		✓✓		✓	✓✓		✓✓	People concerned	10–300	1–3 days (rollout several weeks)	2x 1/2 day Prep Meeting w/ steering group (2–3 months)	Complex process, expertise in design/ facilitation
Future Search	Co-create a vision & strategy owned by a system, create ownership & develop implementation plans	Combined		(✓)	(✓)	✓✓		(✓)			✓✓	Representative group of system concerned	20–1000	2–3 days	2x 1/2 day Prep Meeting w/ steering group (2–3 months)	Complex process, expertise in design/ facilitation
Real Time Strategic Change	Introduce a plan/ strategy to a system, bring about appropriation & develop implementation plans	Combined	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓✓	(✓)	(✓)			✓✓	Representative group of system concerned/ High diversity of perspectives, expe-riences, knowledge	20–1000	1–3 days	2x 1/2 day Prep Meeting w/ steering group (2–3 months)	Complex process, expertise in design/ facilitation

Legend: ✓✓ = main purpose of a method, ✓ = secondary purpose (can be used for, but initially not specifically intended for), (✓) = positive "side effect" (not targeted at, but still has influence)

5. The Methods Toolbox

There is plenty of information to be found on the web on many of the methods. For a few selected methods, however, we give brief summaries and instructions in this section. The selection is by no means an indicator for importance, value or usefulness. We have chosen to cover those about which we haven't come across other useful and brief information.

Below is an overview of what to find where:

Collegial Team Coaching (Peer Assists)	http://www.daretoshare.ch/en/Dare_To_Share/Knowledge_Management_Toolkit/Collegial_Coaching
Sociometric Line-Ups	Summary sheet below
Soft Shoe Shuffle	For more, see M. Lewis, *Inside the NO – Five Steps to Decisions that Last* (see the literature list at the end of this handbook)
After-Action Reviews	http://www.daretoshare.ch/en/Dare_To_Share/Knowledge_Management_Toolkit/After_Action_Review_AAR
Story Telling	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Story Guide – Building bridges using narrative techniques, http://www.sdc.admin.ch/ressources/resource_en_155620.pdf
Fish Bowl	Summary sheet below
Six Thinking Hats (de Bono)	Summary sheet below
Appreciative Interviews	See "Appreciative Inquiry" below
Joint Mind Map	In M. Weisbord and S. Janoff, *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There* (see the literature list at the end of this handbook)
Joint Timelines (Alternative) Story Lines	Time Lines: In M. Weisbord & S. Janoff, *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There* (see the literature list at the end of this handbook) Alternative Story Lines: Contained in SDC Story Guide (see above under "Story Telling")
Round Robin	Summary sheet below – including a section on the difference between Round Robins and Speed Geeking
Speed Geeking	Summary sheet below
World Café	Brief summary below. For a detailed description, cf. article "Café to Go!" in annex; also downloadable under: http://www.theworldcafe.com/hosting.htm
Dynamic Facilitation	A good manual at http://www.diapraxis.com/dfmanual.html
Open Space	Brief introduction below – and some basic information on what to think about when considering an Open Space See also http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?FacilitatorResources
Appreciative Inquiry	For more, see M. Leith, *Leith's Guide to Large Group Intervention Methods* (see article in annex and the literature list at the end of this handbook)
Future Search	For more, see M. Leith, *Leith's Guide to Large Group Intervention Methods* (see article in annex and the literature list at the end of this handbook)
Real Time Strategic Change	Short information below. For more, see M. Leith, *Leith's Guide to Large Group Intervention Methods* (see article in annex and the literature list at the end of this handbook)

5.1 Preparatory Interviews with a Representative Sample of Workshop Participants

This interview may serve as an example of how to engage with event participants when you are in the process of preparing an event. It is an alternative to meeting with a steering group (i.e. a representative group of the event participants) (see section 3.3.4). The interview may take about 1 hour per person interviewed – it's not a token interview, but a tremendous opportunity for you as a facilitator to get your preparation right. The interview format relies on Otto Scharmer's Stakeholder Interview format. Below is an example:

[Introduce yourself]

On [give the dates] your team will have a 2-day workshop on [describe the topic, issue and purpose of the workshop]. I am mandated to facilitate this workshop and we will spend these two days together.

I want to talk to a series of people about this workshop to find out about the situation and context in which this workshop will take place – and I want to solicit your help in getting the workshop right. I want to build on your experience and knowledge to design this 2-day event.

[Explain your intentions a bit more and say what has already been planned.]

Begin the interview by asking the person to introduce her-/himself.

What is your role/function in your department/organisation?

For how long have you been working in your team?

Now that the foundations are laid you can start with the core questions of the preparatory interview as follows:

1. What do you feel you really want to achieve in your team – personally, what are your most important objectives? Where do you see your role?
2. What key forces of change currently reshape the context of your team and your work in your current position? What do you need to pay more attention to?
3. In your present work, what are your biggest sources of frustration, and what gives you energy?
4. In the context of this workshop, how can I help you realise your most important objectives in your job? What do you need me for?
   More precisely: If I, as a facilitator of this workshop, were able to change two things within the next six months, which two things would create the most value and benefit for you?
5. In terms of workshop outcomes, what would constitute success and what would success look like? What criteria will you use to assess whether this workshop and my involvement has positively/successfully contributed to your work?
6. How could such future success be tested (prototyped) after the workshop on a small scale, in order to "learn by doing"?
7. What practical next steps would you want to see happen after the workshop?

5.2 Fish Bowl

Fish Bowl is sometimes also referred to as "Samoan Circle". The following application is a variation adapted to the purpose and situation.

5.2.1 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

The purpose is fivefold: (1) find a balance between expert perspectives and participants' views; (2) engage all participants in an interactive dialogue; (3) provide a platform which allows them to "watch" the experts, without putting them on a stage; (4) create an ambience of intimacy, which leads to true dialogue; and (5) have a lively exchange of ideas rather than a one-way lecture type of presentation.

The method is also excellent as a means of reporting back from group-work sessions.

5.2.2 Features

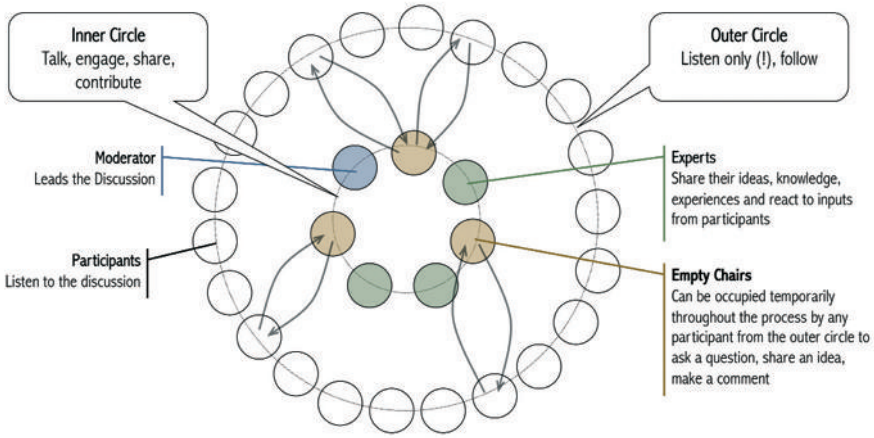
- Experts have the chance of transmitting 2–3 key messages which have a better chance of engaging participants than is the case with other formats.
- Participants have the opportunity to bridge the gap separating them from the experts by taking a proactive role and involving themselves in a real conversation.
- The discussion is more pertinent, relevant and lively because of the open dialogue format.
- The very subtle alienation of the format (through pretending to be a TV talkshow) allows participants to put aside certain biases and involve themselves in a more genuine exchange.

5.2.3 Set-up and Procedure

Set-up 2 concentric circles of chairs:

- the inner circle has 1 chair for *each* expert + 1 chair for the facilitator + 2–3 empty chairs.
- the outer circle consists of enough chairs for all the participants.

The participants' chairs in the inner circle initially remain empty.



1. The facilitator introduces the situation and topic. He/she verbally generates the situation of a TV talkshow, to which experts have been invited to present their views and enter into a dialogue with the audience.
2. The facilitator invites the first expert to give a short exposition of ideas in a casual conversational style. The same procedure is followed with the other experts.
3. The facilitator involves the experts in an exchange of ideas and issues; they are invited to engage with and react immediately and spontaneously to each other.
4. Participants in the outer circle are not allowed to speak or react in any other way. Yet they are invited to join the debate in the inner circle – where there are 2–3 chairs designated to visitors from the outer circle – and as long as they sit on one of these free chairs, they are equal members of the conversation. Once they have been able to ask their questions, expose their ideas or express their comments and opinions, they return to the outer circle, thus providing an opportunity for others to get involved.
5. Should the "visitor chairs" be occupied over a longer period, other participants from the outer circle may "claim the floor" by queuing behind a chair. This puts a certain degree of pressure on the occupants of these chairs to go back to the outer circle.
6. Towards the end of the time available, the facilitator invites the people (coincidently) present in the inner circle to expose their most important insight, comment or recommendation to the audience.

5.3 Taking Up a Position – Working with Sociometric Line-Ups

5.3.1 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

Sociometric line-ups can be used for various purposes:

- Opening a workshop/introduction: In this way participants get an opportunity to see and experience who is in the room, who comes from where, who stands at which point, who brings along what. This initially creates the big picture, and allows people to get a sense of each other and experience a first voice. It is an interesting way of raising expectations too.
- Making opinions and views transparent: Participants can express where they stand regarding a particular issue or question. The distribution of views becomes evident.
- Dealing with conflicts: Participants can express views and articulate deviating opinions, take sides and/or oppose in a structured manner. The diversity of views and stances becomes clear.

5.3.2 Features

- If people are to move mentally, they must first move physically.
- People must "walk the talk", which is a powerful way of giving the talk more depth.
- Participants who don't dare to express themselves publicly can still put across their point of view by just standing somewhere – they don't need to talk, but can express their opinion by walking and thus are still part of the group.
- Distribution (majorities/minorities/multitude of opinions) becomes clear – the loudest voices no longer dominate the picture; it's literally one person one vote.
- Diversity of affiliation and changing divisions become evident: alliances/groups are not permanent/constant/congruent, but change within minutes depending on the issue. While certain people may stand together with a view on one question, these same people may stand in the opposite direction with a view on another issue. This breaks up lines of defence.
- The method invites the participants to take critical/deviating positions, yet to do so in a respectful and constructive manner.

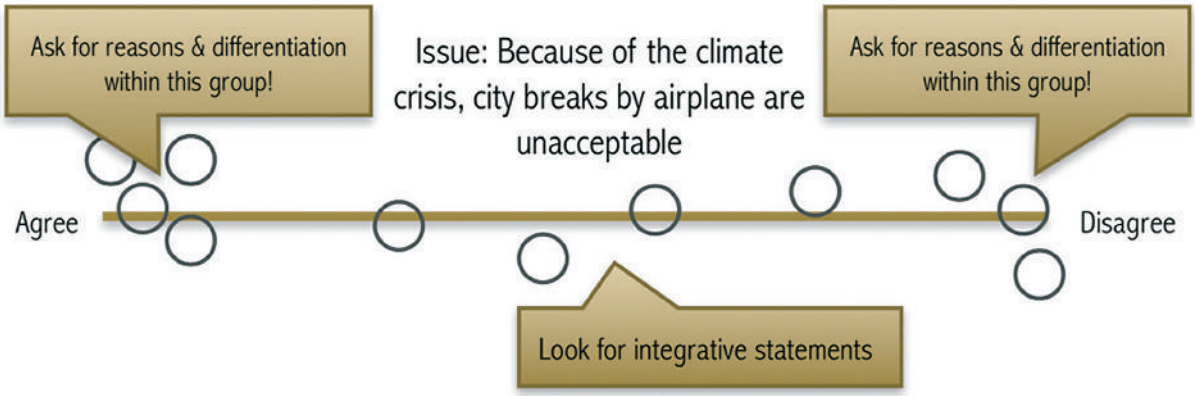
5.3.3 Set-up and Procedure

The Line Game and Spatial Line-ups are two different sub-formats of the same approach.

5.3.3.1 The Line Game

The Line Game works with questions/issues that have two opposite answers/views. The aim is to (1) explore the different views and arguments, (2) see who (how many people) stand where and, possibly, (3) find integrating arguments.

Mark a long line (several meters) with tape on the floor. Ask a question or describe an issue (you could tell a short story) with two possible answers/positions/opinions and indicate which end of the line stands for which opinion. Participants now stand on the line according to their personal view – at one of the ends of the line if they agree 100 per cent with a particular view or somewhere in-between if they can't decide or have a "mixed" opinion. Now go to some representatives at each end of the line and ask them what made them choose this particular spot. Also talk to people along the line/in the centre, as they are usually important bridge builders/integrators. Using this method, you will often find that controversial views will quickly fade away.



5.3.3.2 Spatial Line-ups

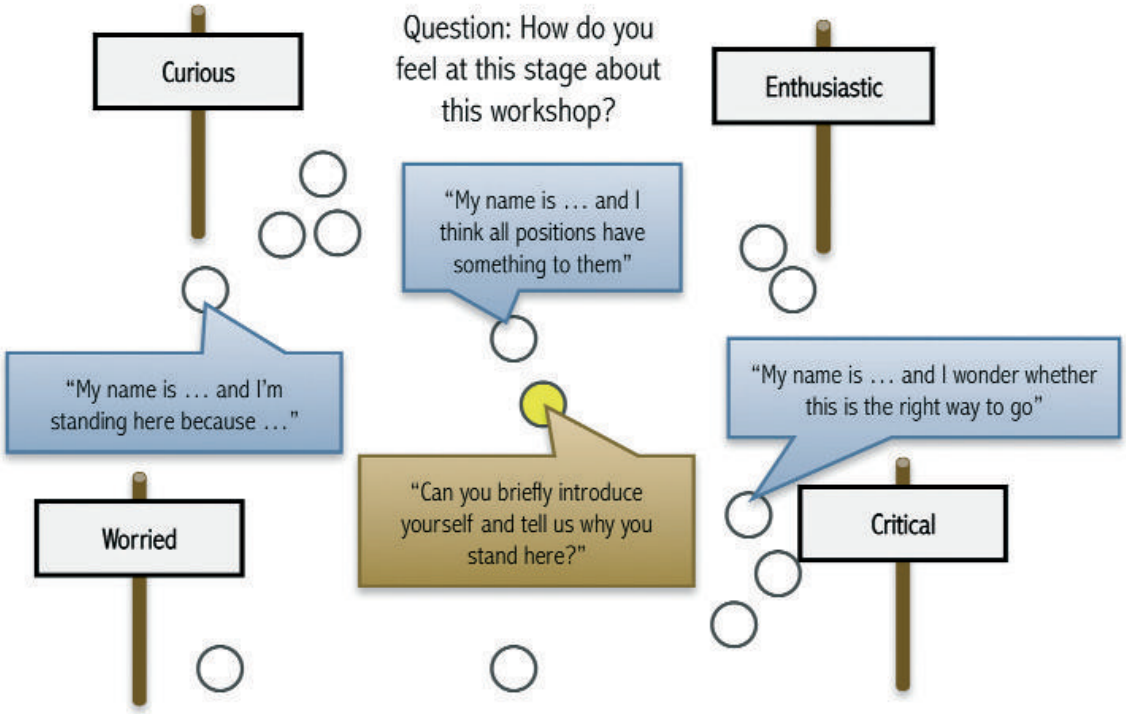
This method is particularly useful for starting a workshop and inviting people from the beginning to engage, actively participate and take the floor.

Prepare 2–3 questions. For each question prepare 4 possible answers (as in a multiple-choice questionnaire). For example, choose something along the lines of the following three questions (you'll need to adapt them to your particular situation/topic):

1. "How do you feel about this workshop?" (→ ① curious; ② enthusiastic; ③ critical; ④ worried)
2. "What do you expect from this event?" (→ ① "Finding solutions to problems"; ② "Exchanging and learning about the issue"; ③ "Networking with peers"; ④ "Having fun")
3. "What do you think about the issue at stake?" (→ ① "It's highly relevant and there's a big opportunity"; ② "It's very difficult and discouraging"; ③ "It's boring and overrated"; ④ "It's exciting and forward-looking").

There are countless possibilities in each situation, yet it's important to ensure that the whole spectrum of opinions is covered (from very positive to very negative) – without ridiculing anybody.

The 4 different answers should be printed in large letters each on a sheet of paper. Four volunteering participants now stand in 4 different corners of the room or else record the answers on flipcharts. The facilitator asks the question and each participant stands next to the answer that best represents his/her view – people can also stand in-between. The facilitator now visits each "cluster" of views and asks 2–3 representatives of each group to introduce themselves with their name and express why they have chosen to stand there. Over several rounds, each time different people get the floor. Once all the "clusters" have been visited, the next question is asked and people move to the next position.



5.3.3.3 Observations/Tips

- Encourage people to take critical standpoints. If people have enough courage to stand all alone in an isolated/negative/unpopular position, "honour" them by standing next to them, giving them a real platform to explain their point of view (you will always get constructive and useful arguments and reasons!) and thank them. Then explain to the group that critical positions are most welcome as long as they are constructive and respectful. In this way you can set the tone for the entire workshop!
- Use a microphone if one is available. In this way you can not only ensure that people can hear each other, but you can also ensure that only one person speaks at the time (a "talking stick" can be used if a microphone isn't available).
- Look for "integrating" statements. In highly controversial situations, you will always find people expressing views that integrate the extremes. You will even find that people at the poles will say that, in fact, they could also stand somewhere else if they were looking at the issue from another angle. You will find that integration happens best through *further differentiation*, not through trying to push people to agree!

5.4 World Café

5.4.1 Purpose

World Café (WC) is an innovative yet simple method for the purpose of "hosting conversations about questions that matter" – to use the words of the method's creator, Juanita Brown. WC is one of the essentials in a facilitator's toolkit. It enables a wide diversity of stakeholders to interact and build relationships, to gather and share experiences, to explore issues, to discover shared meaning and common ground, and to create shared visions and translate them into action steps.

5.4.2 Features

WC conversations link to and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and gain new insights relating to the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community. As a conversational process, WC can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims.

5.4.3 Set-up and Procedure

The WC design principles provide useful guidance in finding creative ways to foster authentic and collaborative dialogue aimed at surfacing collective knowledge on which to act. The principles include the following:

- Set the context and clarify the purpose.
- Create a hospitable space and explore questions that matter.
- Encourage everyone's contributions and connect diverse perspectives.
- Listen together for insights and share collective discoveries.

A WC typically consists of 3 progressive rounds of conversations in groups of 4–6 participants. The total number of participants is only limited by the space and number of tables and chairs available. If you want to aim for more intimate conversations, you should set up the WC with no more than 4 chairs per table. If, however, you would like to allow for a broader variety of viewpoints in each conversation, you can set up the WC with 6 chairs per table.

The WC questions are of critical importance to its success. As in other cases (e.g. Open Space Technology), it is therefore advisable to craft each of the 3 question rounds carefully (see section 3.2.3 on how to apply the divergence-emergence-convergence pattern to these three rounds).

As the facilitator, you introduce the process and procedure and ideally work with the group to establish their own café etiquette. Participants choose their seats randomly but are invited to join a table with people with whom they are less acquainted or have not worked with before. This course of action encourages the connection of diverse perspectives in new combinations in each round.

In the first round, a table host is chosen. The host remains at the table to ensure that the insights of the previous groups are introduced to the next group. The other participants move on to other tables and reshuffle at the end of each round. They thereby carry key ideas, questions and insights into their new groups. After several rounds of conversation, the key discoveries and insights are shared with the whole group. Patterns across all conversations can now be identified, growing the collective knowledge even further and allowing possibilities for action to emerge.

The table hosts are given the following 3 tasks:

- Remind people at their tables to record their key connections, ideas, discoveries, and deeper questions on the paper tablecloth as they emerge.
- Remain at the table when others leave; welcome their new guests.
- Briefly share the key insights from the previous rounds of conversation at their table with newcomers, allowing them to link and build, using ideas from their respective tables.

We have found it useful to print the instructions for the table hosts on sheets of paper and display them on each table when setting up the room. The room set-up – i.e. creation of a café atmosphere – is another crucial factor that determines the success of this facilitation format. It is important to create an environment of informality and intimacy. Small and (preferable) round tables covered in paper tablecloths and colourful pens and crayons are part of the WC set-up.

To learn more about the World Café, we recommend that you consult the brief guide "Café to Go", which is available on the website of the World Café Web Community (http://www.theworldcafe.com). In the guide, you will find very useful hints on how to draft the questions and set up the room so as to create a conversation-enabling ambiance.

5.5 Round Robin

There are variations of this facilitation format. We will only discuss the one we practise here below.

5.5.1 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

The purpose of a Round Robin (RR) is to (1) surface the collective ideas, pre-existing knowledge and experiences of a group; (2) analyse and "recompose" a situation/issue/problem/domain of common interest, i.e. generate and consolidate an aggregated picture of it; (3) allow people to learn about how the knowledge of other group members complements theirs.

5.5.2 Features

- The format works well with 20–50 people and takes approximately 90–120 minutes (depending on the number of participants and the number of aspects to be investigated).
- An issue is discussed and analysed according to a number of distinguishable aspects/features/fields/dimensions (e.g. talking about a network, one can distinguish aspects like management, sustainability, membership, financial matters, decision making, relationships with external groups, and so on).
- Small groups move from one aspect (to be recorded on a flipchart) to another, quickly brainstorming their ideas on a particular aspect and after a short time moving on to the next. Allocated time spans decrease from one round to the next (since relevant material accumulates as it is recorded on the respective flipcharts by the previous groups).
- All participants have the opportunity to look into all aspects. They don't have to make choices. Thus they can also contribute what they know and think in each area.
- Participants experience how much more the collective knows. Through their interaction more complex and innovative ideas surface than each of them individually (even the best expert) could have contributed – the wisdom of the collective is larger than the sum of each individual contribution.
- Ideas of some people may trigger and cross-fertilise ideas of others and thus lead to greater abundance.
- The different areas/aspects are connected – ideas from one area spill over into the other areas.
- The set-up has a playful character if the pace remains fast, i.e. if people are "rushed" from one flipchart work station to the next.

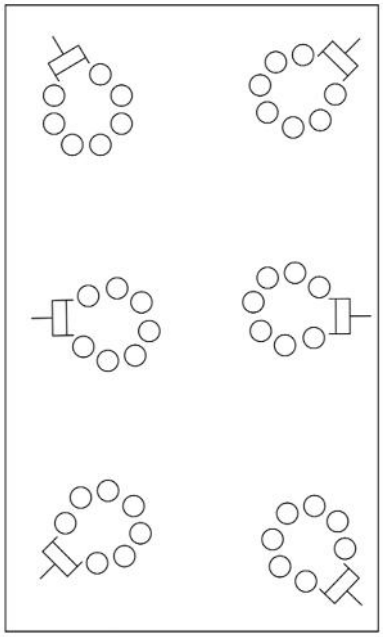
5.5.3 Set-up and Procedure

5.5.3.1 Preparation

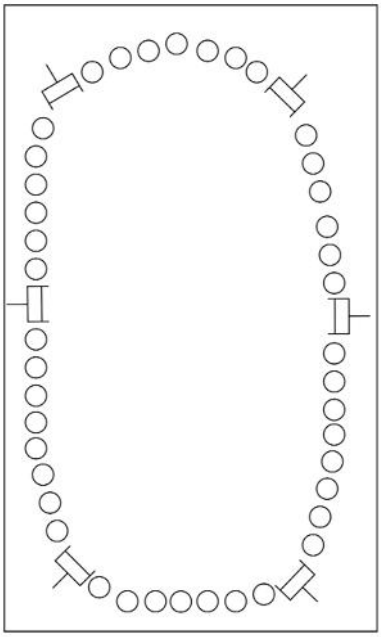
1. Determine how many aspects you want to distinguish and deal with. Divide the number of participants by this number to determine the average group size. Ideally a group has 5–8 members and the issue is split up into 4–7 partial aspects.
2. Set up one flipchart for each aspect and write a title on a flash card, which you attach to the flipchart (it shouldn't be covered by the sheets, even if they are turned over). Put enough chairs for your group size with each flipchart.
3. Set up a time plan. Allocate approximately 15 minutes (maximum!) for the first "session" and 8 minutes for the last session. Linearly decrease the time for the sessions in between; but add another 2 minutes after each session for rotation (e.g. 15 - (2) - 12 - (2) - 12 - (2) - 10 - (2) - 8).
4. An option (which we highly recommend) is for the RR to end with each group returning to its point of departure. There they work for another 15 minutes, reviewing all the comments and ideas that subsequent groups have added and prepare a short presentation of 3 minutes.

5.5.3.2 At the workshop

5. Distribute participants into groups of equal size (usually they do that best by themselves and don't need help from the facilitator).
6. Briefly introduce the topic and the different aspects to be dealt with at each work station and explain what you expect participants to brainstorm about. Tell them to record all their ideas on the respective flipcharts.
7. Get them started on their first session; 2 minutes before the elapse of the time allocated to the first session, give them a warning, i.e. ask them to finish their sentences on the flipchart.
8. Give them a signal to move on. Make sure that they *do* move (you could "sell" it as a "sports" event with some quasi-competitive character). Use a microphone if you have a low voice/large group. Nobody should stay behind!
9. The first thing participants need to do at each work station is to study what the previous groups have done. This is important: since they have no one to "introduce" the work of previous groups, they have to "reconstruct" and interpret what they find written down – an important step of sense-making! Then they add, complement, correct, specify, and exemplify. The idea is for them to add only what is missing, from their perspective, not to reiterate what has already been documented.
10. Let them work through all the aspects/work stations, until they come back to their original one.
11. In the final round, you should, ideally, let them work on their initial aspect again. They review all the comments and ideas, summarise and prioritise.
12. Then you ask them to report back to the plenary on the consolidated knowledge and insights of everybody in the room. Give them only 3 minutes per group/work station. Alternatively, you could make one big circle with all the flipchart posts in between the chairs – then move with the whole crowd from post to post (use of this technique depends on the group's size and room set-up).



Room Set-up for Group work



Room Set-up for Reporting Back

5.6 Speed Geeking

5.6.1 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

Speed Geeking (SG) is a large-group method aimed at quickly exposing participants to a new technology, approach or methodology. It can be adapted to other types of content as well, but the focus is on short exposure to something new as presented by someone with deep, practical experience in the tool or method he/she is presenting. We sometimes also refer to it as "Meet the Experts". The advantage of the method is that it can host a number of expert presentations within a fixed amount of time, whilst allowing participants to also interact with the presenter in a small-to-medium group (as opposed to a large plenary discussion).

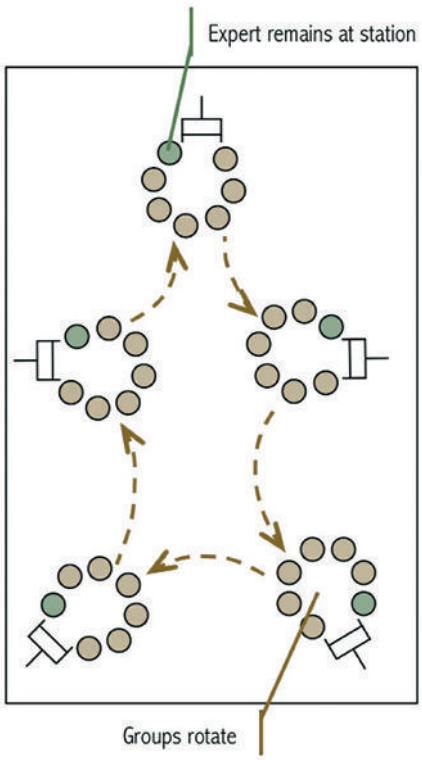
SG comes out of a well-established group process known as the "Gallery Walk", whereby outputs from small-group sessions were viewed by the rest of a larger group that was split into small, roving groups to visit the results of the work done earlier.

SG can be used when there is limited time and there are many things to look at and discuss. The limited time (normally between 15 and 25 minutes) keeps the presentations short, focused and to the point. Usually experts are given 5–10 minutes for their input, followed by 10–15 minutes for discussion and interaction with their audience.

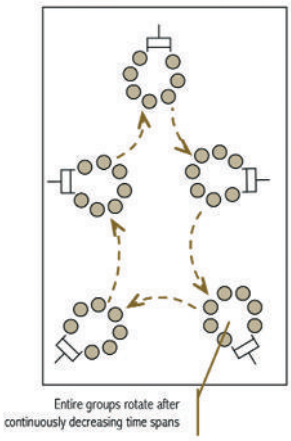
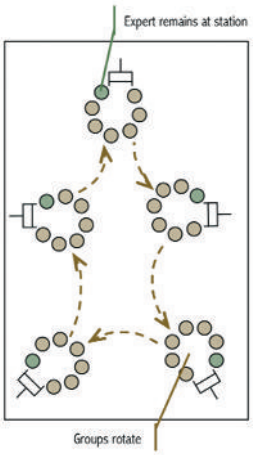
All the presenters are arranged in a large circle around the edge of the room. The remaining members of the audience stand at the centre of the room. Ideally there are about 6–7 audience members per presenter. Once proceedings start, the audience splits up into groups and each group goes to one of the presenters. The session ends when every group has attended all the presentations.

5.6.2 Set-up and Procedure

- For each topic ask an experienced practitioner to provide a 5–10 minute overview of their topic. You can select these presenters in advance or from the group, depending on experience and context.
- Presenters should be briefed on the process. Coach them to focus on key points. Advise them that they will probably get better at conveying their key messages in a concise way with each round, so this is a good training opportunity for them. Also ensure that they have water to drink nearby. Presenting can dry the mouth out fast!
- Place each presenter at one of the tables in the room, each supplied with a flipchart and pens. If the presenters are demonstrating a technology, they will probably have a laptop and need appropriate power/internet connections.
- Divide the participants into groups. The number of groups is determined by the number of presenters. An easy way to do this is to simply count off around the room (1, 2, 3, 4 ... 1, 2, 3, 4 ... and so on).
- Give a brief instruction that each round is x minutes long (any length from 5 to 20 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the number of stations and time available). Explain that when you give a signal, the groups will rotate around the room to the next station. The intention is that everyone visits every station.
- Proceed through all the rounds. Towards the end, people might be tired and may become loud and rowdy. You may need to intervene.
- At the end, do a short debriefing session on the experience. Suggested possible questions: What did you learn that you did not expect to learn? What do you want to learn more about? What did you learn that you might apply tomorrow in your work?
- Thank the presenters and conclude the session.



5.7 Round Robin Versus Speed Geeking

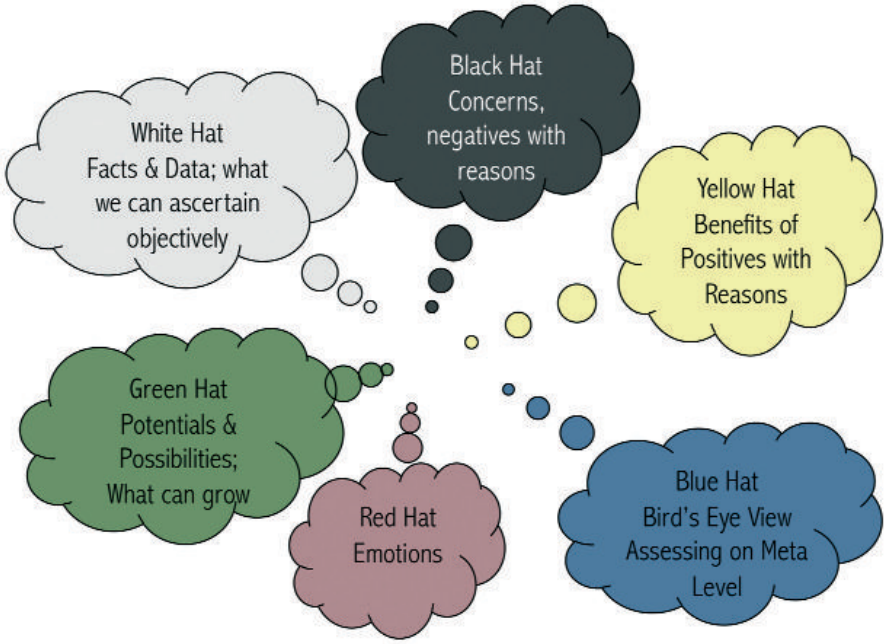
	Round Robin	Speed Geeking
Participants are at the…	contributing end	receiving end, yet actively engage in dialogue
Rotation by…	everybody  	participants, but experts remain at their station 
Timing is…	decreasing (i.e. each round is slightly shorter than the previous one)	constant: experts have an initial input of 5–10 minutes (presenting just one idea for discussion) plus 10–15 minutes of discussion between them and the group
Topic	One topic is looked at from x different perspectives Example: All stations are about 1 project, where the following are covered: - management structure - financial aspects - learning and innovation - interaction with stakeholders or the 1 topic is "Gender analysis (GA)", and the different stations look at the 4 dimensions of GA: - Gender-specific needs - (Access to) resources and power - …	There are x different topics with x different experts, preferably somehow related to each other (i.e. under 1 thematic umbrella)
Purpose	Quarrying knowledge from participants Sense-making	Rapid exposure to different technologies/ areas of expertise/approaches etc. Scrutiny of plans/strategies/projects/etc.

5.8 The Six Thinking Hats (Edward de Bono)

5.8.1 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

The purpose is to (1) gain a holistic view on an issue by looking at it from all sides; (2) avoid one-sided perspectives; (3) overcome roles and attitudes to which each individual is naturally inclined; and (4) make use of diversified judgements (as a form of suspension in a "shifting" way).

The Six Thinking Hats can be used to assess from all perspectives (1) the effect/consequences of a decision, project or venture *before* undertaking it, or (2) a past activity/project *after* completion.



5.8.2 Set-up and Procedure

There are many ways to apply the Six Thinking Hats. However, what is essential is that all group participants *wear the same hat at the same time;* the method is not about different people taking different roles! Instead, all group participants put on each of the hats simultaneously and brainstorm jointly on the issue from that same particular perspective.

To avoid people "slipping away" from an unpopular hat by remaining silent, you can invite participants to write their thoughts for each of the hats on cards. Having physical hats can help people to adopt different perspectives. These hats are not worn by anyone, but you can collect cards in each respective hat (thereby symbolically depositing thoughts and voices in the hats).

White Hat	Red Hat	Yellow Hat
Information and data about the project Checked and believed facts What we can objectify	Emotions, feelings and intuitions Fears and joys, worries, hopes, gut feelings How it feels "at this point"	What went really well and why Values and benefits (effective and potential) The good in it Successes → Logical reasons
Green Hat	**Black Hat**	**Blue Hat**
Learning, conclusions, potentials, possibilities, alternatives, new ideas and concepts	What did not go well and why Cautions, concerns, dangers, problems, faults, risks The negative in it Failures → Logical reasons	Take the meta-perspective, hover above all the other colours What stands out from the previous perspectives, what remains, dominates, contradicts Summarise and make final assessment

5.8.3 Roles to Observe

The following are the basics you will need to remember when facilitating a Six Hat team-thinking session.

- There are 6 imaginary or metaphorical hats that can be worn – only one at a time. Nobody really puts on hats! This is a serious communication framework for serious issues; it's not trivial in any way.
- Each hat is a different colour, representing different types or modes of thinking.
- Everyone on the team does the same type of thinking at the same time. That is, all participants "wear" the same colour hat.
- When participants change hats they change their thinking. You, as the facilitator, are an exception. You will always wear the control hat (or facilitation hat), which is blue. However, you may also contribute to the content of the thinking if you are qualified to do so and are comfortable doing so.
- Remember to use the hats and colours terminology, even though this may feel uncomfortable at first. The artificiality of these symbols has proved to be a powerful mental cue for producing a specific type of thinking at a specific time. Experience in many organisations has shown that in a very short time, participants will become unaware of the symbols themselves – the hats and colours. Instead they will key into the thinking being requested and automatically switch when necessary.

5.8.4 Facilitation Hints

- Give participants 2 minutes at the beginning of each hat-session to "warm up", i.e. to think quietly about the perspective and what they want to say.
- People should write on cards, as this encourages each person to formulate their thoughts clearly and participate in each hat-session and not to dodge tricky issues/sensitive topics.
- With regard to the yellow and black hats: make sure to emphasise the importance of stating the facts and looking for the whys (reasons). It might be best to ask participants explicitely for their views on each of these two levels.
- The red hat (emotions) has two elements: (1) to give emotions space and express them; and (2) to explain these emotions, relate them to each other, and add causality and reasons.

5.9 Open Space Technology

5.9.1 When is Open Space Technology the Appropriate Format for a Workshop?

Open Space (OS) experts mention four criteria:

1. High levels of complexity (in terms of the issues to be resolve the issuesd).
2. High levels of diversity (in terms of the people needed to solve it).
3. High levels of conflict (potential or actual) and consequently a high level of commitment/passion.
4. A decision time of yesterday (i.e. there is a certain urgency to resolve the issues at stake).

We suggest adding a fifth criterion:

5. The answer(s) must be unknown.

If participants think they already have the answers and are not open to innovative solutions, this will lead to a process breakdown. This is particularly applicable to the system's leadership. It is extremely frustrating (and a waste of trust, energy, and resources) for people if they are encouraged to create new ideas and solutions, just to see them being turned down by leaders who are not willing to engage. We tend to argue that people (and in particular leaders) must expect to be surprised (i.e. ready for the unexpected) and be open for change!

5.9.2 Purpose of the Facilitation Format

Open Space has various purposes, and your choice will have an impact on the practicalities. One can think of the following list of purposes as a ladder of increasingly complex issues, each step hierarchically building on the previous one (although some can be "skipped"):

1. Share ideas and experiences.
2. Learn from each other.
3. Develop ideas for a project or process.
4. Create a sense of community and cohesion.
5. Promote structures, culture and co-operation within and between institutions.
6. Find new ways out of deadlocked situations.
7. Agree on further concrete/tangible steps and measures for implementation.
8. Organise work to be done.

Consider an example: it is not possible to find new ways (point 6) without first learning from each other and developing both new ideas and a sense of cohesion. This has implications for the duration of an OS. A full-feature format takes up to 3 days (ideally from noon on day 1 to noon on day 3), which is the time required to achieve the "higher-ranking" purposes on our list. In such an OS, it is possible to run approximately 7 consecutive session slots with about 3 opportunities to collect new topics. This reiteration of the agenda-setting process allows participants (1) to engage with each other and the topic and to learn about it; (2) on this basis, to suggest new workshops for the creation of ideas and the exploration of new ways; and (3) eventually to consolidate with concrete measures and to commit to those. With a one-day OS, there will only be 3 or 4 time slots, with only 1 agenda-setting session, which will prohibit participants from evolving the topics and will thus trim emergent dynamics. If the purpose is simply the sharing of ideas and learning from/about each other, that's fine, but the higher level of change is unlikely to be reached.

5.9.3 Set-up and Procedure

The preparation process of an OS is absolutely crucial. Be aware that once the Open Space event has actually started, it is almost impossible to intervene (in fact, experience shows that the only way to bring an OS event to its knees is by trying to control the event itself). Therefore all the attention and hard work go into the process and period *before* the event itself.

5.9.3.1 Invitation

Much of the success of an Open Space, especially if it is a "stand-alone" event, depends on who is invited and how. Do consider this as being an important part of the event itself. In the formulation of the topic, the lead question, and the "tag line", as well as the subsequent invitation text, you have a unique – and irretrievable! – opportunity to invite the right people and set the stage. People will come with a mindset and an attitude that are shaped by the invitation.

Give deep consideration to this, especially to the formulation of the topic/main question. Does it really and precisely express what you want to have addressed (and nothing else)? Will *all* the people you target clearly and unequivocally understand it? Is it expressed in language appropriate to them? Is the formulation precise enough to trigger the required attention and buy-in, yet broad enough to open a space for reflection and action? Does the topic express some tension (and conflict) that brings people to the table?

Sometimes it is worth (1) reflecting for a couple of days on just a two-line sentence; (2) discussing it in a team (see the section below); (3) submitting it to potential participants and asking them what they understand by it; and (4) re-crafting it again and again until it's exactly what you want and need. It is very much like formulating an advertising campaign.

5.9.3.2 Steering Group

Gather a steering group composed of "representatives" of all the people you want to participate in the OS. By *representatives*, we don't mean "political" delegates, but rather those who represent, i.e. depict the whole system in a statistical sense. For example, if you want many school children in your OS, then you will have 2 or 3 school children in your steering group; if you want some social workers in your OS, then you make sure there are 1 or 2 social workers in your group. If you want your OS to be composed of an equal number of men and women, your aim is to have a steering group that is composed in this way.

With this group you run 2 or 3 preparatory meetings. Make sure you run them early enough! Initially you discuss with them the intent of the OS and consider who should be included and invited as participants – you determine who should be at the table in order to achieve your purpose. The steering group may suggest people and groups that you may have overlooked or whose ability to contribute to your issue has not struck you.

In a later meeting, discuss the invitation with the group. Run brainstorming sessions on how to formulate the topic/question, probing it with them. You could also submit the text of the invitation to them for their comment and for improvement.

5.10 Real Time Strategic Change

Real Time Strategic Change (RTSC) is a large-group intervention method whose primary aim is the design and implementation of "whole system" change. An RTSC is a 2- to 3-day event that consists of a defined sequence of small- and large-group activities that are previously determined by a design team. Participants mostly work in mixed stakeholder groups of 6–8 people. An RTSC is not just an event, but the key moment of an entire process that leads to fundamental system-wide change in the way the organisation (or community, team and so on) works.

An RTSC is a process that leads towards a predefined goal. It can be used for different purposes, for example (1) to implement a strategy; (2) to improve a situation; (3) to smooth procedures and workflows; (4) to increase collaboration and communication. Central ideas are (1) the inclusion of different interests, backgrounds, hierarchical levels, perspectives, and experiences, and (2) the understanding of a complex whole as the precondition of efficiency and effectiveness.

In contrast to conventional events, an RTSC is a form of interaction, dialogue and joint creation of ideas among a broad diversity of stakeholders and people with varying views. At its core is a conceptual design pattern that aims to create change through three indispensable key elements: (1) bringing about a certain readiness to move by creating some discomfort with the current state or situation (i.e. learning about the necessity and possibility of improving things); (2) creating a shared vision of how a preferred future should look; and (3) translating this into a feasible way forward, to which all stakeholders individually commit themselves. Through the interactive process, all views, ideas and interests are integrated and all participants take ownership of the outcomes of the process.

The process requires that all relevant groups of a social system are involved and included into the dialogue – they all contribute relevant specific experience and perspectives, which are necessary to understand the entire system (see the second layer, or "skin", from the middle in the model illustrated here). The process then involves producing a holistic plan on all levels, including the strategic, technical, and organisational level (see the third "skin" from the middle in the model). An RTSC employs a diverse range of methods to accomplish the production of this holistic plan, including small-group discussions, expert inputs, brainstorming, and many others (see the fourth "skin" from the middle in the model).

At the core of an RTSC, deep beneath the sequenced activities and the underlying framework, are seven immutable design principles:

1. Gather the *whole system* (or a large representative sample of it) in the room. Have a microcosm of this system design the event. Include a few sceptics.
2. Foster a maximum degree of *ownership* of process, content and outcomes.
3. Work in *real time* (simultaneous planning and implementation).
4. Treat *current reality* as the key driver. Work with the group where it is, rather than where you think it ought to be.
5. Include *preferred futuring*, whereby participants create a compelling representation of what "better" will look, sound and feel like.
6. Build and maintain a *common database* of strategic information that is available to all.
7. Create *community* – foster an environment in which individuals come together as part of something larger than themselves that they have created and believe in.

In many ways, an RTSC is an application and combination of many of the concepts and methods explained above. It integrates them into a comprehensive framework and represents the typical "combined method" as mentioned above in the systematic overview over all the methods (see section 4.2).

The art is to "construct" the right group of participants, to design an appropriate process on all the different levels (macro, meso and micro) and then, as a facilitator, to trust the process and let things evolve along the foreseen lines.

6. Resources (Literature and Websites) on Knowledge Sharing, Facilitation, and Complex Systems – An Annotated List

6.1 Knowledge Management/Knowledge Sharing in General – General Ideas and Toolkits

ICT-KM Toolkit of CGIAR and FAO
http://www.kstoolkit.org

This excellent online Knowledge Sharing toolkit has been developed by the ICT-KM Program of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It explains many methods and tools (including Web 2.0 technologies) and puts them into context, i.e. explains what purposes they serve and when they can be applied.

Learning to Fly: Practical Lessons from One of the World's Leading Knowledge Companies
By Chris Collison, Geoff Parcell
Capstone, 2001
ISBN 184112124X, 9781841121246

A classic on knowledge sharing of the second generation, describing a series of basic ideas, concepts and approaches to knowledge sharing and adding many hands-on methods and tools. Based on their experiences in British Petroleum (BP), the authors develop a comprehensive approach that has informed and shaped many practitioners in international co-operation.

Tools for Knowledge and Learning – A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations
By Ben Ramalingam
Overseas Development Institute, July 2006
ISBN 0 85003 813 8
http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/Tools_KM.html

A classical toolkit providing a useful overview over the state of the art. Many of the most commonly used methods are explained in short chapters. Suitable for use in gaining a quick idea of different methods and tools.

KM4Dev – Knowledge Management for Development
http://www.km4dev.org

The leading community of practice on the subject. With rich resources, wikis, articles, book hints, and a very lively mailing list that gathers 600 key thinkers in this field.

CP Square
http://cpsquare.org

The community of practice (CoP) on communities of practice. This CoP was initiated by Etienne Wenger, the main creative spirit behind CoPs. Resources, online discussions and training courses on the state of CoPs as well as their further development (partly for members only).

6.2 Facilitation Methods for More Effective Face-to-Face Meetings, Relying on Knowledge Sharing and Dialogue

Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! – Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter
By Marvin Ross Weisbord and Sandra Janoff
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007
ISBN 1576754251, 9781576754252

Most people think meetings are all too often a waste of time. But Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff say that's only because of the way most meetings are set up and run. In Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! they offer ten principles that will allow you to get more done in meetings by doing less. The key is knowing what you can and can't control. You can't control people's motives, behaviour, or attitudes. That's one area where most meeting leaders' attempts to "do something" actually end up doing nothing at all. But you can control the conditions under which people interact, and you can control your own reactions. Based on over 30 years of experience and extensive research, Weisbord and Janoff show exactly how to establish a meeting structure that will create conditions for success, efficiency, and productivity. And, equally importantly, they offer advice for making sure your own emotions don't get in the way – for knowing when to "just stand there" rather than intervene inappropriately, unproductively, or futilely. This book comes with lots of illustrative examples.

The Change Handbook: Group Methods for Shaping the Future
By Peggy Holman, Tom Devane
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999
ISBN 1576750582, 9781576750582

Originators and practitioners of such change methods as Future Search, Real Time Strategic Change, Gemba Kaizen, and Open Space Technology outline the distinctive aspects of their approaches, detailed roles and responsibilities, share stories illustrating their use, and answer frequently asked questions. A comparative chart allows readers to evaluate the methods to find the one that seems best for them.

The World Café
http://www.theworldcafe.com/

Official website of the global World Café community with many resources to download (including the famous beginner's guide, Café To Go (http://www.theworldcafe.com/hosting.htm), a blog, a newsletter and many illustrative samples.

Open Space World
http://www.openspaceworld.org/

Official Website on Open Space. Open Space Technology is a simple way to run productive meetings, for 5 to 2000+ people, and a powerful way to lead any kind of organisation, in everyday practice and extraordinary change. Maybe the most radical way of implementing the new organisational paradigm, relying on complexity and self-organisation. Many resources (documents, videos, and so on) and a very active mailing list.

Inside the NO – Five Steps to Decisions that Last
By Myrna Lewis
http://deep-democracy.net/products-page/books-dvds/inside-the-no

Deep Democracy is a way to do justice to and accommodate those in a group or system who are defeated in a majority process. Finding the wisdom of the no and dealing with those that threaten to go "underground".

Leith's Guide to Large Group Intervention Methods – How to use large group intervention methods and collaborative gatherings to address complex strategic issues
By Martin Leith, The Innovation Agency
http://www.largescaleinterventions.com/documents/leiths_guide_to_lgis.pdf

An overview of why so many change processes fail, suggesting a shift in perspective (and paradigm), and how methods for large group interventions can take a significant step forward by bringing a whole-system perspective.

Solving Tough Problems – An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities
By Adam Kahane, Contributor Peter M. Senge
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Incorporated, 2007
ISBN 1576754642, 9781576754641

Written in a relaxed, persuasive style, this is not a "how-to" book, but rather a very personal story of the author's progress from a young "expert" to an effective facilitator of positive change and conflict resolution. This almost biographical record of how to engage people in solution-oriented dialogues is an unequalled series of conversations in extraordinary situations, from the first post-apartheid all-party dialogues to the post-genocide in Guatemala, dialogues between guerrilla and army generals in Columbia, and talks between first nations and government in Canada, as well as examples from the corporate sector.

6.3 Complex Systems as a Conceptual Basis of Change in General and Facilitation in Particular

Exploring the Science of Complexity – Ideas and Implications for Development and Humanitarian efforts
By Ben Ramalingam and Harry Jones, Foreword by Robert Chambers
Overseas Development Institute, Working Paper 285, February 2008
http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/RAPID_WP_285.html

Is there anything for the development sector in talking about complexity? Complexity science has emerged as a means of understanding dynamic processes of change found in a wide range of physical and biological phenomena. Increasing attention is now being paid to how its ideas and concepts can help researchers and practitioners understand and influence social, economic and political realms. This paper explores and explains 10 key concepts of complexity science, and then moves on to outline a number of specific implications for humanitarian and development work. A meta-review of scientific studies and articles, which explains in "plain language" and illustrates the application and consequences of complexity for this particular sector.

The Four Rooms of Change
By Claes F Janssen
http://www.claesjanssen.com/books/the-four-rooms-of-change/index.shtml

A simple model helping to understand that renewal as the goal of change and transformation as a necessity must involve stages of confusion and disorientation. As a conclusion, one should learn how to contain and manage confusion and disorientation rather than avoid them – since the latter is not only impossible, but also actually an obstacle to change.

Website of Dave Snowden
http://www.cognitive-edge.com/

On the basis of 20 years of experience in this particular field, Dave Snowden (one of the pioneers of knowledge management (KM)) is today exploring adjacent fields of KM that rely on complexity science, decision-/sense-making and so on. He offers a pronounced critique of the "old school" of Knowledge Management (including ideas like "best practices" and capturing and storing of knowledge), urging us not to stand still but to push further the thinking about knowledge and its impact on organisations. An interesting blog and resources.

Website of Margaret Wheatley
http://www.margaretwheatley.com/writing.html

Many articles on the implications of the new sciences (like system theory and chaos theory, quantum physics, and biology) on organisation and leadership. Margaret Wheatley figures as a pioneer and an avant-garde thinker of an alternative, simpler, impact-oriented paradigm at a time when many models and current ways of management fail in the face of increasing complexity and uncertainty. People tend either to find great inspiration and value in her writing or to dismiss her as not serious. A more fruitful response, however, might be to assess whether her ideas "work" (i.e. produce results and improve practice in daily work) – and this may have been the experience in her case.