

LiFT Case Book

LiFT Leadership
for Transition

Hosting Collaboratories: Insights and learnings from different cases

Editors: Iris Kunze, Elke Fein



5. LiFT Collaboratory in Trondheim 2016

By Iris Kunze, (overall and part 2), Jonathan Reams, Marius Lervåg Aasprong (part 1)

Final editing: Elke Fein

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LiFT Collaboratory in Trondheim 2016

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Hard facts

Date: September 30th until October 1st, 2016

Place: Trondheim, Archbishop Palace

Topic: Adaptive Learning and Job Creation in the Digital Age

Participants: 30-40, varying in phases (*expected: 60*), mid-age, educated, gender-balanced

Host: [U:turn](#), a not-for-profit organization with a mission to create learning arenas and enterprises at the intersection of technology, personal development and compassion

Facilitators: Jonathan Reams, Bettina Geiken, Elke Fein, Christiane Seuhs-Schöller, Björn Rabethge

Duration: 2 days

Specific challenges posed by the event:

- To generate sufficient attendance and engagement from the best possible mix of stakeholders (tricky to get people to sign up, especially as there are lots of free events in Trondheim); additional threshold: getting people to come to an event that runs for 2 days
- Getting the actual target group (marginalized youth) to the event (how to motivate often unmotivated people)
- Reframing of the core issue among a wider stakeholder group.
- To apply interactive and non-mental exercises in a context that was less used to them and to encourage stakeholders to a degree of open and controversial discussions beyond the usual Scandinavian habit of harmony.
- Making new linkages to enable progress on sustaining the U:turn program.
- Connecting related initiatives to find synergies to also sustain their activities.

Specific resources:

- Good connection to the local host and their network of engaged people and organizations
- Particularly intense preparation, including a series of local focus group meetings with key stakeholders

Main Learnings

- For many, being exposed to the Collaboratory as a method was valuable in itself.
- The collaboratory process can help open participants to the deeper kind of reframing of issues that was desired.
- Connecting people informally can contribute to easing more formal linkages with different domains of stakeholders.
- There is an active demographic of 'early adopters' of core ideas put forward.

A. Preparation and context of the Collaboratory

While there are many troubling issues facing society as a whole, it is common to hear people talk about issues of children and education as being critical to our future ability to cope with these issues. Norway is no different in this, and one vexing issue is the fact that there is a 30% school dropout rate. As a complex problem with many relevant stakeholders, it made for an appropriate case for LiFT to apply the Collaboratory method.

The place its relation with the topic

Trondheim, Norway is a city of 185 000 inhabitants, having the largest university in Norway, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, which also draws college-students from the surrounding municipalities. Like many Norwegian cities, it is also faced with a very high school dropout rate, especially in the area of vocational education. On average, more than 13% do not finish secondary education, but more than 22% of pupils in vocational educations drop out. There is also a large gender-gap, where boys are much more likely not to finish their education. While there are a number of government and civic organizations who have given attention to this topic, it remains an unpleasant and uncharacteristic blot on the otherwise healthy Norwegian society.



The event itself was held at a venue at the Archbishop's palace. The centrality of the venue, as well as the large open space makes it very suitable for workshops and conferences, and is frequently used by a wide variety of organizations. Although it is owned by the church, they do not intervene with



programming or contents of the events. However, as the venue is situated next to a cathedral and museums, the site has a sense of calmness and reflection. But it is also one of the most popular tourist attractions in Trondheim, and located in the city center, and therefore not secluded or restrictive.

Hosting Organization and network of stakeholders

This issue drew the attention of a local social entrepreneur, Gunnar Gangstø, who had founded the not for profit organization [U:turn](#) after – and partly in result of an earlier LiFT workshop in Trondheim in 2014. U:turn’s mission is to create learning arenas and enterprises at the intersection of technology, personal development and compassion. When U:turn was founded, it was designed for a diverse group of youth that lost interest in school early. On one hand were those who really struggled to cope with the structure and progress requirements of mainstream educational institutions, and pupils from marginalized socioeconomic background are overrepresented here. On the other hand, there are also pupils with creative and divergent interests and talents, but they do not experience a meaningful way to express and develop these interests in school. U:turn aims at unifying this diverse group of youngsters in a holistic curriculum to make room for this diversity at the forefront of societal changes and job creation.



U:turn had been experimenting with a pilot program for these young adults, and in dialogue with local LiFT members, agreed to be the main local host for the event. Furthermore, representatives of different initiatives around the topic had been involved in organization. As a result, there were three other local stakeholders bringing their initiatives to the event. Marianne Johnsen is promoting a methodology called “People you know” that aims to increase self-esteem and social competence among school children. A group of people are working on creating a new, alternative, self-organized school in Trondheim. Vegar Jordanger was its primary representative connected to this event.

Beyond this, the group had targeted a broader set of stakeholders related to the issue. Fretex (the Salvation Army) has related activities, NAV, the Norwegian government social services agency had a strong interest as they become responsible for supporting these youths at a fairly high cost to taxpayers. Other target stakeholders include educators and industry (Innovation Norway sponsored the initial U:turn program with a view to how it could help bring innovative uses of technology into play in education for marginalized youth). For information about people involved on the event, please check the event webpage. <https://skule.sormo.no/lift/index.php>

Issue at stake and main focus

‘Adaptive Learning and Job Creation in the Digital Age’ had been chosen as the event title by the hosting team in collaboration with the LiFT facilitators. The idea was to emphasize possibilities and positive aspects for co-creation rather than the problem of school dropouts. Public education in Norway and most other western countries has been subject to several reforms over the last decades, usually with a strong push towards theoretical disciplines, a strong focus on math, literacy and sci-
<http://leadership-for-transition.eu/>

ences and then aiming towards higher education. One of the driving factors is the concern about competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace, and a fear for not being able to maintain a general level of competitiveness in a global society.

Thus, making education relevant for a new economy is a central concern. This is especially true for those for whom the current system does not fit. They often find themselves marginalized in society. As well, there are the social costs of maintaining those who are marginalized. All of this contributes to pressure from a wide range of sectors, such as government, industry, education, social systems to name a few, to make progress on this complex adaptive challenge.

However, as technology and artificial intelligence keep replacing more and more of knowledge based jobs as well, and as traditional forms of education are spreading quickly all over the world, the stakeholders involved in this Collaboratory were open to a more holistic approach, in view of adapting education to the ongoing globalization process.

Assignment and expectations in advance

One of the hosts summarized the intention of the Collaboratory with the idea of combining *social accountability* with *digital technology*. It was aimed at connecting creative and technical people, in order to join forces and creating more viable solutions for revitalizing the range of educational opportunities for marginalized youth. There is also a trend in society towards increasing self-employment, which impacts the forms, content and context of education. Last but not least, this issue has arisen because many standardized forms of higher education are not serving the societal needs adequately any more.

The hosting team of this event wanted to create an offer to the local community attractive enough to get both more competent people into the development process for new projects, and to get better funding options. It is crucial that more local citizens commit to contributing and getting integrated into the projects that the hosting organization is already doing. It is also crucial that representatives for the welfare systems in the municipality might find a way to match their structure and logics in order to support the projects.

One concrete mission for one of the event hosts was a project to start a new private school. Their ideal is to create and operate such a school in terms of a “Teal Organization” (see Laloux 2014). That kind of organization is like an open network, with well-defined roles and built on accountability and trust. The stakeholders have an exemplar of this format in mind – a school called ESBZ in Berlin.

Another aim of the event was, that the U:turn project expected to maximize its exposure to the set of stakeholders participating by increasing its efforts and possibilities for more broadly based and sustainable funding for expanding its programs. In short, the owners wanted the Collaboratory to “get the right people together” for generating ideas and new concrete projects.

Participants and their degree of familiarity with process work

The background for this Collaboratory has its roots in the first LiFT Collaboratory in Trondheim, which was held in the spring of 2014¹, and was broadly aimed at generic leadership issues in relation to complex societal challenges. The participants at this initial Collaboratory brought a variety of interests and agendas connected to the main theme to the event. While there were no specific, direct or immediate follow up outcomes from the Collaboratory, some individual initiatives carried forward over time. One of those was focused around the issue of education and how to increase its relevance

¹ You can find a summary under: http://leadership-for-transition.eu/?page_id=153. See also the case description by Katrin Muff in this book and in Muff 2014.

<http://leadership-for-transition.eu/>

for currently marginalized portions of the population. Gunnar Gangstø, formerly an electronic engineer, continued to work on this issue in Trondheim and eventually got some seed funding from Innovation Norway to create a pilot program for young adults who were outside the formal education and work systems in society. Thus the not-for-profit organization U:turn was established to develop learning arenas that can complement public education further. (Gunnar had also been associated with local LiFT coordinator Jonathan Reams for over five years through various engagements.)



Impressions from the first LiFT workshop in Trondheim in early 2014

Among the various stakeholders present at the second LiFT workshop in Trondheim, it was not clear to what degree they may or may not be familiar with such processes. Prior to the event, a number of meetings were therefore held by the local organizing team to familiarize them with LiFT and the Collaboratory format. Thus at least among the hosts and their immediate network, there was a degree of information they received that contributed to some familiarity with the Collaboratory format.

At the level of general participants, it is likely that some had experienced aspects of the Collaboratory in other settings, while for some it was all new. Participants were familiar with educational settings as this was the background, and group work was familiar to almost all participants. Nevertheless, a sense of taking active responsibility in the process was mainly carried by the hosts.

The preparation phase

In terms of content, this Collaboratory event was planned in a phase when U:turn was starting to look for expanding its activities with new projects around creativity and technology. A project on how young people can find work that they are motivated to do, supported by technology as a catalyst for creative expressions and innovations, had been a pilot project in 2015. This program had also focused on the preparation for working life, as well as on personal growth and recognizing the youth as individuals. Many youth feel that the Norwegian social services agency (NAV) see them as problems that need to be fixed in order to be put back into the “normal” system, with little room for individual development and growth. These were aspects which LiFT was keen on taking up with the Collaboratory as facilitation frame. The interest generated by this pilot project, combined with an existing relationship between Gunnar Gangstø and Jonathan Reams, led to the idea of hosting one of the LiFT Collaboratories in Trondheim focused on this issue. The idea was to invite relevant stakeholders (marginalized / drop out youth, educators, social workers, industry, etc.) to participate for two days in a Collaboratory.

Organisation wise, preliminary work to gather a team to organize the local aspects of the event began in early 2016, more than six months before the actual event in the fall of 2016. The local LiFT partner, Jonathan Reams, having been in good working contact with Gunnar Gangstø, we knew that

U:turn had several issues that would be suitable for a Collaboratory, and we also knew that Gangstø himself was quite well versed in the methodology and underlying framework and interested in collaborating in the arranging of a Collaboratory.

Among the main challenges during the preparation phase was the recognition that the main task for the group would be to generate sufficient attendance and engagement from the best possible mix of stakeholders. To this end, a small group of potential advocates for the event were invited to attend a focus group meeting in March 2016. The aim was to get key gatekeepers in various sectors of society to listen to the basic ideas for the event and then to provide input and feedback on this to help develop a more robust marketing message. The host and facilitators invited people for a series of focus group meetings with key targeted stakeholders for the event. In fact, this intense degree of preparatory work and alignment conversations on local level were specific to this event and proved to be an important factor of its ultimate success.

The broader dynamics in Trondheim around this issue before the Collaboratory were also based on the idea-laboratory, which is at the heart of the U:turn project, where technology is applied as a catalyst for creative expressions and innovations. Here the youth were invited to contribute in creative processes that lead to building actual products and services with relevance to their interests and skills. Some of these prototypes were developed further in socio-entrepreneurial activities with the aim of establishing sustainable jobs and businesses. The success of some of these efforts from the pilot program led to wider interest in the project and other stakeholders becoming interested in how U:turn was addressing the broader issue of how to deal with youth leaving school and not finding relevant work.

Degree of involvement and commitment of participants

Leading up to the event, there was a series of meetings with various of the local stakeholders intending to support the development of the event. In particular, in June, a dozen interested people gathered, representing about five initiatives and from which the core involvement was generated. Further meetings in late August and early September led to the creation of a dedicated [webpage](#) for the event that was used for marketing the event locally. Marketing was done in both English and Norwegian.

Other relevant context / background information

Young people who are just embarking on adult life touch upon all aspects of society. Firstly, their own life, their feelings, anxieties, hopes and capabilities are at the heart of the issue. But parents, schools, future employers, colleagues, families and friends are also impacted by the educational system. In Trondheim, several groups and initiatives were dealing with this, partly from outside the established system, partly inside, and some were trying to combine them. The Collaboratory in Trondheim aimed at gathering such groups and initiatives, in order to identify new ways of dealing with the issue. As such, much of the preparation focused on identifying and getting these groups and people together, as well as aligning them so that they had a common understanding of the process LiFT provided. Since many of the participants had familiarity with the core ideas of the Collaboratory, and were open for alternative approaches – after all, one of the things they had in common was the recognition that the current method of addressing the issue wasn't working, a high degree of trust in the process was established from an early stage.

B. The Collaboratory itself

Character and design of the venue

In one of Trondheim's oldest building-complexes, the Archbishops Palace, there is a modern addition called Øysteins Hall. This large seminar room with a high ceiling and stone floor has a sacred atmosphere – to be expected in an Archbishop's palace. The lobby was also spacious. Next to the entrance of the seminar room, a small room could be used for the LiFT team to meet in between sessions and to store materials.



Øysteins Hall was selected as a venue due to its centrality, as well as to the pragmatic fact that it was available and within price-range. The Hall is run by the Church of Norway, and it is frequently used for seminars, concerts, shows or workshops. However, there are no religious requirements for the usage. Jonathan Reams, one of the facilitators, had also previously used this venue for an earlier event, and as such there was already an established familiarity with the space.

In order to arrive at the Hall, you have to enter the Courtyard of the Archbishops Palace, which means that you pass directly by the Nidaros Cathedral. Besides the religious aspect, this is an imposing building, with a large space in front of it, which usually bustles with tourists, and locals using it as a shortcut to and from their daily activities. When you then enter the Courtyard you suddenly find yourself taken back in time, and the city outside the gates seems to fade out of mind. In contrast to conference-centers or busy venues, the natural reaction is to slow down, perhaps hush your voice, and listen more intently to those around you. Many people must have walked on these stones deep in contemplation. If the Hall itself, which can hold 240 people, had been placed in a mall, it would perhaps feel cold and strange. So the physical entering of a venue pre-shapes your expectations to a certain degree.

The seminar room is literally one big hall, with full height window slits on one wall, and the other walls are red brick. Although there are no break-out rooms, the hall is spacious enough to use different parts for breakout-activities. There is a large canvas which can be lowered from the ceiling to the left when you enter the hall, and tapestries covers parts of the walls. The crossbeams supporting the wooden roof are visible, and simple round chandeliers hang from the roof. There is no other ornamentation or art, and although the simplicity of the room could be intimidating at first, the natural materials make it humble and inviting.

The seminar room itself had been prepared in the beginning with audience chairs facing the front. Next to the exit (entrance from inside), a flip chart was placed with markers with the heading: “your comments and questions”. The room was well equipped also in the technical sense for the needs of the Collaboratory, for showing an introductory film and presentations. Although the tapestries do help with the acoustics of the room, quiet group-conversations could be strenuous, as noted by some of the participants.

Background of participants

The Collaboratory workshop had attracted a very diverse group of participants belonging to different stakeholder groups such as NGO, business, administration, and high schoolers. From the latter came only 1-2 persons – although these have been an important target group. Also tech-people and university staff participated due to pre-facilitation of U:turn. U:turn had already established several important connections amongst university staff within pedagogy and education as well as technology development and applied sciences. In addition, Gunnar had a large network established within the tech-industry, representatives of whom were also present in the Collaboratory.

The same kind of diversity was present in terms of cultural backgrounds. A high percentage of “new” inhabitants of Norway (e.g. from Serbia, Russia, Palestine, Italy, France etc.) made active contributions to the Collaboratory. At several points in the beginning of the Collaboratory (e.g. in Fishbowl) it was emphasized that citizens with emigrational background are often not being valued or equally treated as “own” national citizens by the Norwegian institutions (e.g. schools) as well as by Norwegian society. It appears that especially the “new citizens” welcome the opportunity to participate in an inclusive process. According to an Italian lady living in Trondheim, the Norwegians have a strong national collective culture and rather less of an individualistic culture which could lead to the fact that individual skills and competences are not valued to the same degree as in more individualistic cultures. Most of the participants with multicultural background seem eager to participate in questions that could shape the local society and schooling system. Interestingly, the international participants had been invited directly by Gunnar. They were mostly sent by organizations they were affiliated with and that had a connection to the topic. One was from the larger network of organizations from the organizing team (e.g. CAI = Catholic Arbeiter International; associated departments at the university psychology and tech departments).

Two of the persons interviewed by the LiFT team were currently looking for work in Trondheim, so the topic interested them, but they didn’t exactly know what to expect and were rather brought along or sent by someone or some organization. The others also came because they were interested in the topic or working with Gunnar or one of the represented NGOs (speakers) and felt they wanted to support their team or their colleagues. Two people mentioned that they were interested in the topic as much as in the collaborative method since they professionally work with different methods of dialogue and participatory processes.

The Facilitation – design and implementation

Preparing the Collaboratory design

As indicated earlier, LiFT, represented locally by Jonathan Reams, had the responsibility for the facilitation, while Gunnar Gangstø had the main ownership for the topic and formulating the guiding question – into which they together included a broad group to insure common understanding (see section above). Once the focus of the event was more clear, a process of identifying and inviting experts for the fishbowl was started. The fact that many people were included in the early development process made it possible to identify a fairly wide pool of possible relevant candidates. After the <http://leadership-for-transition.eu/>

experts had been chosen and had accepted the invitation, they were invited to meet with the LiFT team on the day before the event for some orientation and information about the aims and method of the general process, their own role and the questions in focus.



Preparatory team meeting at Trondheim university on the day before the event

Note that the process of defining and framing the actual guiding question in a way that all stakeholder groups could align with was a long, iterative process which ultimately lasted until a few minutes before the opening of the event. The working question for the event was then formulated as follows:

“Why educate the heart? How can we create possibilities for learning that are inspiring and relevant for everyone?”

As to the more specific design of the event, a number of general considerations were reflected upon during the preparation phase. One was the wish *“to start with something impactful”* in order to set the right tone for the event. Related to this, another one was the aim to give local stakeholders some initial visibility without interfering with the flow of the process. At the same time, we did not want to shift towards a conventional presentation format. So we thought about some creative way of including the local stakeholder perspectives as part of the “downloading” phase in the beginning of the process which is about adding perspectives and reflecting on them (before and during the fishbowl).

Another consideration that emerged after a couple of preparation meetings with the local stakeholders with the LiFT design and facilitation team was that people were looking for an emphasis on action more than just for reflection and talk. Some discussion around how to best shape the two days based on this need resulted in the decision to spend the whole second day on the third phase of the U, i.e. prototyping and developing actionable projects.

Furthermore, there was the idea to include some reflective and mindfulness activities to help participants recall, link and integrate parts of their experiences during the event better. We considered using a gong for a moment of reflection every hour or to ask people to take a short moment to reflect on specific questions every once in a while. Finally, we chose a contemplative walk in silence as the appropriate tool for this.

The process as a whole – overview and phases step by step

In the following section, the process of the two-day Collaboratory is described step by step. The description of each phase of the Collaboratory is accompanied by observations from LiFT team members. In view of documenting and evaluating the process, LiFT team members had taken different observation roles during the Collaboratory. For instance, they looked at the quality of interactions between participants and the facilitation team, and thus, at how well specific elements of the meth-

od actually reached their goals in the different phases. On this basis, data were generated which help to interpret the process and its impact. Below, comments from these observer role perspectives are cited which illustrate and reflect about how the initial design actually worked out in the different phases.

Moment in time	What happened (Collaboratory elements/ facilitation tools)	Collaboratory phase
DAY 0 <i>afternoon</i>	Stakeholder meeting: Briefing of stakeholders and experts of fishbowl about the process Walk through the location	Preparation
DAY 1 10h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening: Welcome, framing the event, high level introduction of the context and rationale short introduction to the method, the U process and the facilitation team inspirational video Speed Dating: having participants introduce themselves to each other 	Phase 0: Opening and introduction
10:25h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short presentation of various existing dimensions of and perspectives onto the topic Introduction of local stakeholders and their perspectives to give them visibility 	Phase 1: Downloading, open mind
10:45-12h	Fishbowl conversation (short explanation of the set-up and rules, introductory statements of 5 experts, opening the inner circle for broader conversation)	
12-13h	Lunch: Framed as an invitation to start processing the previously downloaded content, and as an active listening exercise in smaller dialog groups	
13h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue groups 1 (introduction to the set-up and guidelines, small group sharing) Reflective, contemplative walk (in silence) 	Phase 2: Dialog, open heart
13:50h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue groups 2 Deep dialogue exercise 	
14:30h	Harvesting (Flip chart): Facilitators walk around with microphone and ask for core experiences/insights	
15h	Visioning (Introduction and guided journey)	Phase 3: Presencing, open will
15:30h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harvesting individual visions by drawing on paper Sharing visions in small groups 	
15:55h	Closing the day: briefing participants to bring their vision back the next morning	
DAY 2 9:30h	Creating a joint vision, exchange and collaboration (in groups of 7-8): Art gallery, then harvest 3-4 themes from that	Phase 4: Crystallizing

10:15h	Opening the market place of initiatives, introduction of the method of open space proposing activities, projects and working groups, build groups	Phase 5: Prototyping, open space
10:50h	Open space and /or world café format for informal conversations in small groups to co-create actionable projects: prototype ideas and visions, fill in posters Self-organized coffee break in between at everyone's ease	
12:15h	Lunch	
13:15h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further develop project ideas (breaking them down into tasks and personal commitments), prototype • Creating commitments and plans (group work) • Fill in posters (continuation) 	(continuation phase 5) Prototyping
15-16h	Harvesting results, defining next steps of co-creation on this basis, closing ritual	Phase 6: Closing
17-20h	<i>internal Collaboratory de-brief with host and LiFT team</i>	<i>Debrief</i>

In the following section, these phases will be described in more detail, combined with *observations* about the interaction between participants and facilitators and *methodological comments*.

For the first time in LiFT, we experimented with rotating facilitation, shared between two groups of two facilitators, one leading and one assisting where necessary. The facilitation team consisted of Elke Fein and Bettina Geiken from IFIS (morning/afternoon of day 1), and Christiane Seuhs-Schöller and Björn Rabethge from Evolution at Work (on day 2). Jonathan Reams as the local LiFT host had the role of opening the event, framing the transitions between the different phases and wrapping up the results in the end and handing them back over to the local topic owner. Other LiFT team members had support and observation roles and participated in the process themselves.

DAY 1

Welcoming in the hall

The local hosting team had set up a table for participant registration with welcoming materials and some sweets. Next to the table, a banner by U:turn and some leaflets informed about the hosting organisations. Inside the main hall, two half circles had been set up for the opening, and besides, people could wander round in the room. Given that some technicalities still needed to be fixed and that fine-tuning the guiding question was a challenge that kept the facilitation team busy until the very start of the process, some of the team members were less focused on hosting and welcoming than on getting these issues sorted out. This problem of attention was picked up by some participants:



“The stakeholders were present and welcoming. I felt a warm welcoming to the inner circle. I felt the connection. Less so to many of the other participants. Some of the participants were not noticed. The LiFT team was not so welcoming. The LiFT team could be more aware and generally welcoming. It matters.” (Interview account by one of the experts invited to the inner circle of the fishbowl)

Phase 0: Opening and introduction

The event was officially opened by Jonathan Reams from LiFT, welcoming participants, giving some framing to the intention of the event and introducing the local initiatives around U:turn that were engaged in co-hosting the event. The process then started right away with a brief inspirational video by Jason Silva designed to open up the space for a broad discussion about the purpose and possibilities of education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqKHDz7OBjI>. Its main message was that one can make something meaningful out of one's life and have an impact in society regardless of one's upbringing. This set the tone for the event and oriented participants towards a high-level, visionary approach to the topic in question.

After this, Elke Fein gave an introduction to LiFT which in some sense was a good example of the core message of the video that meaningful things can emerge out of a place of openness. She also briefly introduced the Collaboratory method and theory U as its main sources of inspiration and gave an overview of the schedule of the two days.

Next, the *getting to know each other* subphase started by giving some space to those stakeholders who had been involved in preparing the event to briefly present their work in the form of elevator pitches. Getting some insight into the work that was already being done and hearing about achievements and setbacks gave a good overview on what is currently happening in Trondheim in the field. The presentations were held in 10min notes without applause, but with some silence in between. One of these presentations was in Norwegian, the others in English, which was meant as an invitation for participants to use whatever language they felt more comfortable with.



Some observations gathered by the LiFT team noted an *“open, warm, opening atmosphere”* and a *“lively exchange. Lots of smiling faces. Could have gone on longer”*. Others observed that the *“attention of the audience varied with the quality of the presentations. Time keeping was a challenge, it could have gone on longer. A woman excused herself for taking up the space and time. Otherwise very welcoming and flowing. Good descriptions to get an overview of the issue.”*

A methodological suggestion for the future was: to have a PPT-Presentation with pre-defined overall time frame (i.e. 2 min) and automatic slide transition.

Later, this phase continued with a Speed Dating exercise for everyone else to get a sense of who is in the room and meet some people more personally. The lead facilitator invited participants to stand up and move around in the room while music was playing and to stop and introduce themselves to one other person when the music stopped. This was repeated three times with specific questions on peoples' motivation and their expectations to participate in the event.

Phase 1: Downloading in a Fishbowl setting

“Who is the expert in a situation like this? Aren’t we all experts in a sense of different perspectives on something we, in certain content have been in contact with – drop out from school?”

In the meantime the team re-arranged the chairs and the setting of the room for the next session, the fishbowl, and participants were then invited to take a seat on one of the chairs in the outer circles.



In the 1st round of ‘fishbowl’ invited experts share their experiences. Later, people from the audience can take one of the empty chairs and participate in the conversation, asking experts to move out of inner circle.

The lead facilitator briefly explained the rules of this conversation setting and the rationale behind it: to open up space for a broad range of perspectives to come in and enter a respectful conversation with each other. The rules were also shown on a power point slide in the background.

In the first phase of the fishbowl, four invited speakers (“experts”) kicked off the conversation by sharing their individual perspective and experience in relation to the topic. Then, in the second phase, the conversation was opened up for other people from the outer circles to join the inner circle and make a contribution. Overall, it was about a handful of people who were particularly present during the sharing and discussion.

During the fishbowl conversation, the facilitator intervened very little, unless she sensed a need to recall or clarify one of the rules of the process. In the first part, some participants started to clap after the expert’s statement, as they were probably used to do after more conventional presentations. At this point, the facilitator explained that rather than showing their sympathy and support for a statement by clapping, participants could focus on noticing their inner responses to what was said and voice them later in the open circle.

The following observations were gathered in this phase:

On Interactions: *"The atmosphere was overall very respectful and constructive. Nodding when other people talked. The discussion was emotional, but not at any time controversial. Despite the complexity and the heterogeneity of the audience, all participants appear to share the same basic view. In my opinion, this would have been different, if representatives or people in charge of the 'old' educational system (administrators, deans, politicians) had been invited. The facilitator gave a good introduction, but there was generally very little connection with facilitators. Could have been a longer session."*

"In the 1st round, the level of listening² varied between 1 and 2, same in the 2nd round. High resonance when two persons raised provocative questions. Energy rose when student spoke from the heart."

Comment on the method: *The Fishbowl method appeared highly adequate to harvest different perspectives in the download phase of the overall U process. Alternative options:*

- 2nd round: An additional empty chair in the expert circle (so that nobody is obliged to make room)
- A more directive role of the facilitator with provocative questions (similar to talk show settings). This approach being usual in talkshows, could be adequate in any situations requiring some lead (i.e. escalation).

Fishbowl instructions (opening up)

- When experts feel they have said enough, they are invited to leave the circle to make room for other perspectives.
- There are 2 empty chairs in the inner circle that can be taken by people from the outer circles.
- If there is no empty seat left, and you feel you have something important to say, you may gently tap on somebody's shoulder to ask them to take their place.
- In order to ensure the quality of the conversation, please speak only when you are really moved to and feel you have something relevant to contribute
- Nobody should talk for more than 2 min.
- Speakers should refer to what others have said, for example by reflecting on something, or by asking a question.

After another about 30 minutes of conversation, the facilitator had to gently intervene in view of closing the increasingly lively discussion. With some high-level framing about now transitioning from the downloading to the dialog phase, participants were invited to take the conversation into the lunch break which, following Norwegian culture, was scheduled at 12h, and start digesting what they had heard over lunch.

At this event, lunch had not been organized by LiFT. Rather, some people had ordered sandwiches, others went out or went home for lunch. Still, a number of lively conversations took place or continued during this break.



Participants during lunch break in the hall and lobby



² The observer is referring to Scharmer's 4 levels of listening: 1) Downloading: Listening from habits (reconfirming old opinions and judgements), 2) Factual: Listening from outside (disconfirming new data), 3) Empathetic: Listening from within and with emotional connection (seeing through another person's eyes), 4) Generative: Listening from the source (from the future which wants to emerge) – connecting to an emerging future whole.

Phase 2: Dialog

After an hour of lunch break participants were introduced to the format of dialogue groups. Small groups of 4-6 chairs had been prepared in each corner of the room and participants were asked to come together in groups of 3-6 persons. Facilitation was now taken over by Bettina Geiken.

Participants could choose groups with people they already knew if they wanted. Nevertheless, a certain level of diversity was reached, and all dialogue groups seemed to be more or less equally productive.

The aim of the transition from downloading to dialog was to slow down the conversation and to have participants becoming aware of what might be their usual habit of following their urge to immediately respond to something. This phase of the Collaboratory covered most of the afternoon and was split up into three parts: two dialog phases and a contemplative walk in between.

During the first round of dialogue groups (15 min), we invited participants to generate deepening questions based on what they had heard during the morning session, and to engage in active listening instead of discussing. A first question being put into the group, they were asked to notice the impulse to answer, but let a question emerge instead. To look for new insights, discoveries, learnings etc. and guiding questions for the next round.

Observation 1: The atmosphere was very harmonious, constructive, and attentive. One participant felt more convenient to communicate in his native language. The methodological rule to generate only questions was adopted very well in the group I [the observer] was hosting. The questions were jointly written on a DIN A 4 page.

Observation 2: Vivid discussion. Listening level varied between 1 and 2 (partly 3). Initial problems to focus on a sole topic. Everyone had her own topic and wanted to impose it in the discussion.



After the first round of dialog groups, the facilitator invited participants to a 20 minutes contemplative walk in silence outside. People happily followed the suggestions and came back refreshed.

Observation: The reflective walk between the 2 dialog rounds was supposed to be silent. However, many participants had problems to remain silent and were engaged in discussions. The focus was less contemplative, rather than creative in an interactive context.

With the second round of dialog groups, participants were invited to dive deeper into their reflection and sharing by staying in the same groups. Therefore, this round was given a longer time slot (30 minutes) and used a different method. The aim was to support participants to enter deeper qualities of dialog or even access the realm of collective intelligence through active listening and the suspension of automatic thoughts.

To facilitate this, people were invited to take two deep breaths when hearing the question, before answering. During the first breath, they were asked to notice what arises in thought (the first thing that comes to mind in response to the question), thereby suspending it. While taking a second deep breath, they would direct their attention to the solar plexus and become aware of what kind of sensation is present, then allowing a response to the question to arise from this place within to share it with the group. The response could be the same as what first arose (maybe with a deeper quality to it), or something new. When vocalizing their response, the invitation was to speak to the center of the group, the collective, rather than to any one individual. Also, if someone did not want to speak, silence would also be a contribution.

The facilitator suggested that groups use a talking stick to indicate that if someone would like to contribute a response to the question, and that they not the key points of their conversation for later sharing in the large group.

Observation 1: The methodological rule to take two breaths before each contribution could only partly be adopted.

Observation 2: Quote of a participant: "It was a challenge to not throw out all the ideas that I had in my head in the beginning, and to stop and breath and listen carefully, but in the end I had the feeling that everything was said and understood"; "The extra breath helped actually to be able to listen when others are talking".

Observation 3: The groups used the "talking stick" in different ways or quit using it at all. Some held up a pen that they had in their hand anyways before talking, some used a glass in the middle. Depending on the method they used – the dynamic was very different. Even though groups didn't always stick to the rule, to slow further down, they still enjoyed discussing like this and the "guide-line" to try to listen actively lead to everybody bringing in their opinion and to listen (more) carefully (than usual) to the other one's.

Towards the end of the 30 min dialog phase, the facilitators went from group to group with a microphone to ask for key points of their conversations.

Observation : The dialog level was mostly reactive, factual and cognitive.

In result of our joint debrief and reflection of the event, we received the following methodological comments and suggestions from our observers regarding this phase of the process, especially in view of promoting a more generative dialogue:

- *Maybe give clearer instructions and explain why to use a talking stick.*
- *Provide a facilitator for each breakout group to ensure the quality of dialog.*
- *Explain / present the 4 levels of listening (see footnote above) to enable the participants to become more aware of their dialogue style.*
- *After the first 10 minutes, invite a 1 minute silence break and ask to become aware of emerging pictures*
- *Ask participants to take a different role in three (short) dialogue rounds respectively: participant, passive observer, host. The participants would benefit from a perspective shift.*

After the second dialog group, a number of participants left (approx. 10 people), partly due to private reasons they explained to us.

3. phase: Visioning

After a coffee break, the visioning and a first round of sharing about peoples' visions was planned to close the day, in addition to a preview of the second day and some transition allowing to seed the experience of the visioning.



The visioning was introduced as a contemplative phase and consisted of three parts: a relaxation and slowing down part, the actual visioning itself, and a first harvesting round for people to share their visions. First, the facilitator asked participants to close their eyes, relax and feel their bodies for a grounding exercise of several minutes. Then, a guided visioning supported participants in imaging themselves in a world of infinite possibilities. In this state of awareness of future possibilities, the workshop topic of learning was

brought into the visionary journey as an element of the desirable society of the future. Questions probed into several dimensions of how learning happens in the society of the future.

After returning from this visionary journey, participants were invited to draw or write what they had experienced in the visioning exercise. Paper and pens were provided to use as needed.

Finally, in the third step, participants were invited to share and exchange their visions in small groups of three.

Observation 1: The Meditation could be adopted well by most of the participants.

Observation 2: There was a certain unclarity regarding some notions like "solar plexus". An alternative notion could be i.e. "navel region".

Observation 3: The creative step (drawing pictures) resonated well, however a greater variety of pencils was missing. The exchange in feedback-groups appeared to me very useful.

Closing and outlook after the first day

After this intense visioning exercise, the day was ended by an invitation to a brief sharing of drawings as part of a 1-3 words check-out round, and some concluding words by the facilitators. The announcement was made to bring back any notes, drawings and memories from the visioning the next day in order to continue working with them.

A pinboard with cue cards and outlook questions was also provided for posting notes about:

- 1) What have I learned?
- 2) What is bothering me?
- 3) What could be my next step(s)?



DAY 2

Phase 4: Crystallizing and harvesting the vision (continued):

The next morning was started freshly by a new facilitation tandem, Christiane Seuhs-Schöller and Björn Rabethge. At the same time, the number of participants had slightly decreased as compared to the day before.

To follow up on the first day, people to take their visions from the day before, find other people in the room who had a similar vision and to build groups of up to 7-8 people around a similar focus. This exercise was intended to help participants recognize common themes in what had emerged for them from the visioning session the day before, as well as between any reflections and further ideas on these that might have emerged overnight. The task was then to create a joint, common vision. It was also a way to create a realistic number of visual representations to share with the whole group, as previous experiences with every participant sharing their individual vision had led to energy draining, and potentially rather long periods of passive listening.

Next, participants were invited to cluster their individual visions and build joint picture on that basis. For this exercise, groups of tables with paper and pens, as well as 4-6 chairs around them had been prepared beforehand for the working groups. As an outcome of this phase, the groups then posted their common visual representations of their joint visions onto the walls of the venue. Their posters added up to a type of 'art gallery'.



For the next 20 minutes or so, one person from each group was asked to stay at that group poster and explain it, while the others were free to roam around the room to hear about the visions and images generated by other groups. In the course of this, a collective sense of the results of the visioning could emerge and iteratively developed in a more active and engaged way. The atmosphere in the room during the vernissage was very positively recalled by observers and in participant feedbacks.

The process of mutual familiarizing with each other's visions, again, made visible the areas of overlap and common ground between the different groups' ideas, and thus, built more solid ground for going deeper into more specific aspects of the vision(s) and how to bring them about. In fact, about 3-4 ongoing themes could be harvested from that journey which would later be taken on in the open space session.

Observation: Strong commitment and self-organized engagement of the participants. Very high energy flow.

Methodological comment: This method appears highly adequate for an audience being familiar with self-organized work and a constructive dialogue culture.

After this, the process went directly into the prototyping phase, without an extra coffee break in between. Rather, participants were offered the opportunity to self-organize their coffee break once they had found a working group for the next session.

Phase 5: Prototyping – Open Space

The following phase consisted of two sessions, one before lunch and one in the afternoon, since the preparation team had decided to make sure that enough time for creating projects and prototyping was desirable.

The method of 'open space' was introduced with the help of some slides, visualizing its core principles and guidelines. The first part of the first Open Space session was then to open the market place of initiatives, invite people to propose topics of particular interest, activities and projects for open space sessions, before building self-organized groups around these.

It turned out that quite a lot of topics were offered, too many to have large enough working groups around them. All proposed topics were written on sheets of paper and publicly presented by the person who came up with them. The facilitators had prepared a matrix on one of the walls where the proposals could be assigned a specific time slot and area for meeting. Yet, before doing so, the facilitators invited a 2nd round of going over the proposed topics, pointing out similarities and overlap between some of them, and inviting participants to connect and cluster those topics in a self-



organized fashion. After this was agreed upon, each group was assigned their slot, and the groups could form and start working.



Matrix with open space sessions on the wall

Again, group working spaces with tables, chairs and paper and pens had been prepared in various corners of the hall for people to dive into informal conversations in small groups in view of prototyping ideas for co-creating actionable projects. They were asked to document what they came up with on posters and later present it to the full group.

Groups were then free to self-organize their coffee break in between at everyone's ease and continue their work afterwards.

After about 1,5 hours, the process was interrupted by the one-hour lunch break which participants were free to organize themselves, for instance also by eating lunch in their groups if they wanted. In fact, given the very high degree of self-organization and flow among the participants, the facilitation team had a discussion about whether it might be useful to indicate the end of the lunch break and thus, the beginning of the 2nd round (so that they won't miss it) at all (simply trusting their self-organization skills) or whether that kind of intervention would rather interrupt the flow of the participants.



Ultimately, facilitation limited itself to ringing a gong when the official lunch break was over, to remind participants that they could now either continue in their groups or change groups following the “law of two feet” for the second, slightly longer open space session. (This principle holds that if you don’t have anything more to contribute or have lost interest – you might use your feet and find another group where you can participate more productively.)

Again, working groups of between 4 and 8 people came together, and started or continued their work at the tables, using paper and posters to fix their ideas and plans. The working groups which attracted the largest number of participants were either around the “idealistic” topic on “How to develop self-esteem and spiritual awareness among pupils/students” and the more “down-to-earth” topic on a “Classroom of the future using digital technologies”.

Groups were asked to further develop their project ideas, getting as concrete as possible, by breaking their projects down into smaller tasks and ultimately decide who will do what by when. Thereby, ideally, commitments can be created that allow for carrying the group’s work forward beyond the end of the Collaboratory event.

Observation 1: Very active, motivated and communicative atmosphere with a collaborative notion. Again, impressively strong commitment and self-organized engagement of the participants. Quite little interaction from the facilitators. Which was very good. The group/the process does the work.

Methodological comment: Very good introductions. This approach fitted extremely well to the skills of this audience.

Observation 2: The introduction of the Open Space Method was not immediately clear to the audience. It seemed to be a bit difficult for some participants.

Methodological comment: While the style and length of the presentation appeared adequate, a warm up exercise, i.e. The Village (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAsg3e6Jap8>) or Social Presencing Theatre (<https://www.presencing.com/social-presencing-theater>) could have been a better re-entry after the lunch break.

Capture Outputs



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Posters for participants to fill in about their process of generating ideas, projects and actionable steps

Phase 6: consolidation, round up and closing

At the end of the second open space session, facilitators asked people to come together again in the big circle for harvesting the main insights, ideas and projects they had developed and encourage participants to state their ambitions and commitments for getting active. These results were then handed back over from the LiFT facilitators to the local host and topic owner, Gunnar Gangstø from U:turn, for further processing and local follow-up.

He was also invited to have a final word, summing up the main gains of the event for his organization and commenting on how the event had met his original intentions. Gunnar reported a great deal of satisfaction about the connections that had emerged and the specific plans and projects that had been formulated during the last session.



Observation: The time-keeping during the closing presentations of the participants was challenging. Facilitator Christiane was “pushing” a bit – that was good.

C. Outcomes, feedbacks and follow-up activities

Feedback on the process by the participants

More than 15 participants have been interviewed by the LiFT team about their previous expectations and on how they perceived the Collaboratory. Below is a selection of feedbacks from participants on the process and method of this 2 day workshop in Trondheim.

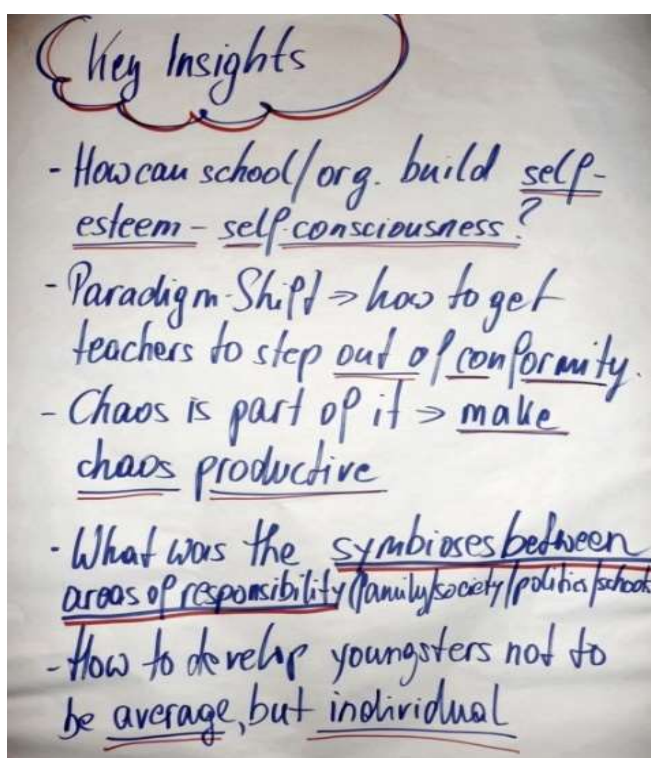
Participants' previous expectations range from not knowing exactly what to expect, but being curious, to looking for general inspiration, to a general or more specific interest in the method of facilitation, communication and participation and how it can be useful in the labor market and in new schools. Also, there were various degrees of expectations regarding the topic of teaching, learning and exchanging experiences about this with peers and fellow-professionals. Several participants were also hoping to expand their network of people they could cooperate with on school-related issues.



We received the following feedbacks on the process and methods:

- The intro of the local stakeholders seemed a bit detached from the rest of the process while the rest of the workshop segments seemed to have built on each other.
- The speed dating was a great method not just in terms of “breaking the ice” but also in terms of finding partners for group exercises later on.
- The fishbowl helped to make visible the diversity of positions and arguments, instead of going deeper into just one topic (which is ok as the “deepening” took place later on).
- The explanation of the rules of the fishbowl was not totally clear. Positive formulations would be better than negative ones (such as “do not tell your life story”; instead: “please try to be concise in max 2 minutes, you can come back to the inner circle if you feel there should be said more”).
- To give single presenters of the Fishbowl the impression that their contributions were actually heard and valued, a moderator could next time give a résumé of the statements made in the Fishbowl.
- One participant found the methods used “very psychological”, by which she seemed to mean going deeper than usual discussion formats.
- A participant was overwhelmed of the engagement and of all the people that so much want a change. A woman stated: “This is a milestone! Or I have decided that it is a milestone. Things are happening here that have not happened before and then there must be a change!”
- The method of asking questions instead of statements was very apt for deepening the topic. It was well appreciated that a co-facilitator was in the dialogue groups to clarify questions on the process and to friendly remind the dialogue participants to formulate questions rather than statements.

- The contemplative walk seemed to create surprised or bemused reactions by participants. Several were “shocked” about the 20 minutes duration. Some were outside making phone calls for work. Yet, after the process, several people mentioned this silent processing phase as a (surprisingly) positive element (even the one with the cell phone).
- It was appreciated that each dialog group had a few minutes in the end to wrap up what they had spoken about (Quote of a participant: “It showed that there actually was a common understanding and progress in the end), The method allowed for a common understanding and even people who had participated rather passively had the chance to listen, process and re-sume what they took with them in the final round
- The visioning exercise was irritating for some. One participant said: “Sentences like open your heart or speak from your heart fit for a certain crowd but not for everyone.” He would have preferred a more “straight” and conventional way of discussing the topic instead of elements such as a circle with visioning and a breathing exercise. Another one said: “I saw the flowers in the middle and I was puzzled what it means and was waiting for an explanation, but it didn’t come”. Yet, there was also positive feedback: “The visioning worked: I have built a city.”
- A participant of Russian origin particularly liked the switches from group work to breaks to breathing exercises. “The process was interesting – I appreciated the breaks and the silence in between.”
- The facilitation on the first day felt coherent and the participants felt tight in the way of discussing and participating. The facilitation the second day I did not feel the same tightness, but the participants were right into it after the first day, so maybe they did not notice the difference.



Key insights formulated by participants

General feedbacks:

- “I gained lots of ideas for meaningful work that I can use my skills and ideas for”.
- One participant felt empowered and appreciated with her opinion (although younger than the rest of the group, and although she usually does not do well with group work).
- Another participant was happy and nourished after taking part. He found the method and the topic very interesting and wanted to get involved more. It was perceived as very inspirational to “break the conformational in the educational system”.
- It was perceived as rare and impressive to see a two day conference without a program working well due to its structure. The interviewee felt well guided and found the event productive in the end. Another participant appreciated the process of slowing down and reflecting about what had been reflected upon in the group before, and reflecting upon it again. “It was great to go over the same topic over and over again thus widening the scope.”

- “This is a dream coming through” (Tove, one of the local initiators). “I am so happy that two people from the Commune turned up!” “What a feeling to discuss the future with peers in Trondheim!”

Based on these feedbacks from participants, the overall event was rather successful. The carrying structure of the process was a crucial precondition for this. Yet, as indicated and supported by our observers, we took away multiple learnings both in methodological and logistic regard.

Follow-up and post event developments

While a systematic follow-up goes beyond what LiFT can do, we did keep track of a number of activities that emerged in result of our event. Three months after the LiFT event in Trondheim, the main stakeholders were asked about what has happened since the workshop and how the workshop had contributed to progress on their goals. There were two main focal points for the Collaboratory; education and job creation. Both of these have moved forward with more tangible projects emerging.

First, it became apparent that one of the main outcomes for the stakeholders was that getting feedback from other stakeholders on these issues was important in supporting a strategic shift in focus. For U:turn, this led to a clearer vision of itself as a social entrepreneurial organization working in the gaps existing between public, private and formal educational systems. This formulation has allowed for a broader set of activities to be within its mandate.

For the New School initiative, this has led to re-focusing energy away from the specific target of forming a new school, to initiating an educational research organization that can support a number of activities in the educational field that aim to implement new ideas. By utilizing the work already done to research new forms of education and learning, this initiative can provide research expertise to support initiatives aligned with its original purpose. Part of this will involve research with pilot projects taken on by U:turn to understand what works there and what will be necessary to expand these pilots.

For U:turn, the education aspect has taken the form of a specific project with a local school. The project will take 6-10 youth in middle school / junior high age, who are at risk of dropping out, and have them spend one day a week away from the school with the U:turn project in a work office environment. This will bring them two main things. One is that it will give them some support on life skills and other personal mastery learning that was part of the pilot U:turn project. Second is that it will bring them into closer contact with the work world by enabling them to connect with business and other job situations to get a more realistic idea about possible futures.

In the Collaboratory, the founder of the company now housing this project and a representative of the city administration were both part of the expert panel, and they are now supporting U:turn in this endeavor to create closer cooperation between private business and public schools. Elements from a future school that one of the groups worked on during day 2 of the workshop, will be tried out in this new project.

New projects emerged

Another project emerging for U:turn is in the job creation arena. Changes in Norwegian society have placed pressure to change the way formal certification of job competencies are handled. Many people have thorough job experience, but are lacking formal training and certification of their competencies. Current pressure from large increases in the refugee population are in the foreground of this, although it is a much broader issue.

Through a new connection that has emerged just after the Collaboratory, U:turn will be involved in a pilot program to help individuals with interests and competencies in the food services industry, but who are not yet able to work in that field due to a lack of formal certification. They will be able to get support from a government ministry to take on job placements and education that will lead to formalizing their competencies and enabling them to have the necessary formal credentials to work in the field beyond this pilot project.

Conclusion

The outcomes show that the event has produced new linkages and connections and support for existing initiatives, not just the U:turn program – which is one of the main goals of a Collaboratory. Moreover, it became clear that there is quite an active demographic of ‘early adopters’ of core ideas put forward. Existing more formal linkages between different domains of stakeholders could be eased by connecting people informally through the Collaboratory process. The latter helped to open participants to the deeper kind of reframing of issues that was desired. Ultimately, it seemed that the process could provide a frame for deeper exchange and mutual understanding, which gave the base for creating new projects.