LiFT
Methodology Book

Designing and hosting Collaboratories

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Contents:

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LiFT Methodology Book – Chapter 3

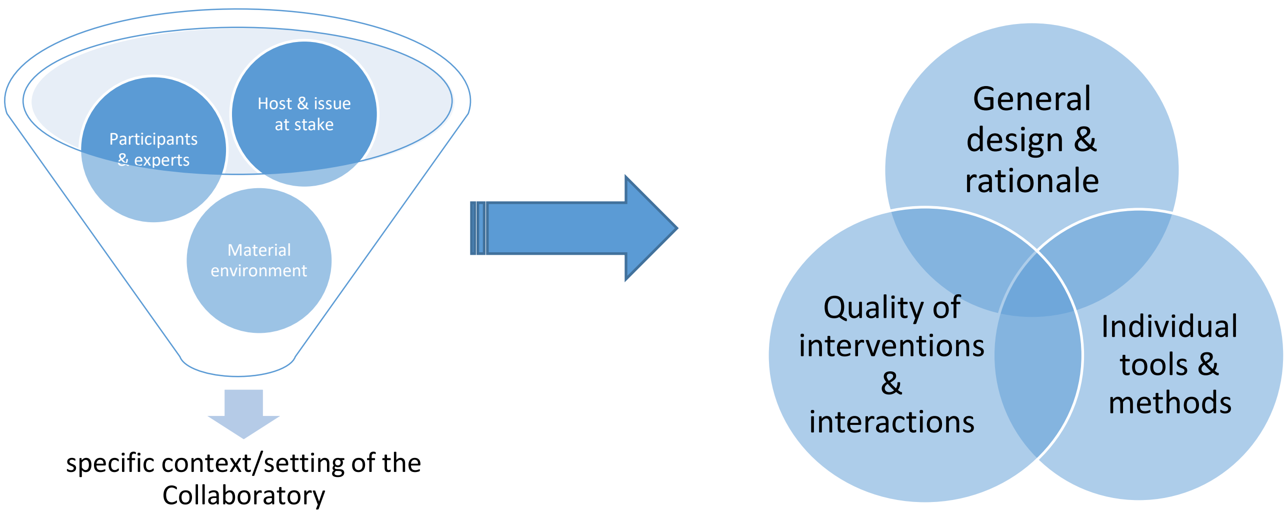
Facilitation: designing and conducting a Collaboratory

Introduction

After having considered the dimension of the context in some depth, we now look at the second dimension of hosting Collaboratories: the design and facilitation processes themselves. As explained earlier, the LiFT research strategy and rationale holds that context and facilitation are two complex variables which interact in many ways. Assuming that **each contextual setting requires a unique approach to design and facilitation**, we will now look at how design and facilitation can adequately respond to specific challenges posed by the hosting context. In other words: *How can and should a Collaboratory workshop and its facilitation be designed in a particular kind of context in order for a Collaboratory to achieve optimal results?*

To recall the model presented in chapter 1, we have so far looked at the following important aspects of a Collaboratory context: The hosting organization and the issue at stake, the participants, and the environment in which an event takes place.

Context: **Facilitation:**



Similarly, we have tested, evaluated and reflected on facilitation throughout the entire journey of LiFT. We have investigated **micro-aspects** such as pose and language, **meso-aspects** such as the various design elements, **macro-aspects** such as the overall design, meta-aspects such as function, interrelation with other elements (e.g. context, participants) and much in between. As each Collaboratory setting is different, this is also the case with facilitation. Each facilitator is different, each method is variable and the adaptation to context and participants is never fully the same.

Although the Collaboratory typically does consist of some core facilitation elements and **tools**, such as the fishbowl and visioning, we have also found it valuable to think of the Collaboratory as consisting of some central **functions**. The tools serve to enable certain outcomes, but their successful adaptation to the given context and group, in other words: careful facilitation requires an awareness of their inherent functions within an overall process, and, based on this, a high degree of wisdom about how to take these interrelationships into account.

The following table maps these **three pillars** which will be the guiding dimensions of this chapter. They can also be used as an orientation as to the level of complexity and the progress of your learning:

Chapter 3: Facilitation design				
Phase	**Tools**	**Functions**	**Awareness**	**Estimated time**
	Observables: what needs to happen	**Intentions & considerations behind**	**Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator**	

While it is natural for beginners to initially focus on concrete requirements, such as standard elements, tangible how-to-do's and recipe-style instructions, more advanced learners will start to develop an interest in going deeper, asking for intentions, functions, background and meta-level considerations behind each single step, task and tool.

In fact, investigating how we can ensure continuous development for facilitators, participants and stakeholders has been an important aspect of our work in LiFT. Since supporting societal change implies shared development, we ideally all leave a Collaboratory better prepared to support change than we came into it – facilitator as well as participant. Therefore, reflective spaces for recognizing what works (or not) and why, where we are at, how we operate and how to meet the next challenge or get to the next level can be built into the process of facilitation itself.

In order to provide these reflective spaces in this book, we look at all three dimensions throughout this chapter. We also go beyond the facilitation process as such and the focus on specific tools and how to use them by including both what we call the pre-facilitation phase and the post-facilitation phase, each of which offers the chance to add deeper layers of understanding of the complexity of what happens at a good Collaboratory.

So while focusing on how you can **master basic facilitation** and giving practical guiding through the various phases and elements of what we think it is necessary to conduct a good Collaboratory, we also indicate how facilitation can be developed further. Ultimately, we also address what could be called the "third level of facilitation", which is the role of facilitation in supporting transition and transformation in a broader sense.

The phases of facilitation

Phases of facilitation

1. pre-facilitation: getting ready and tuning in
2. (event-) facilitation proper: doing the job
3. post-facilitation: debriefing and reflection

Anyone who has facilitated workshops or parts of them, or even just attended facilitated events, recognizes the major difference between the prepared and the un-prepared. Yet, much of the literature on facilitation only covers step-by-step-guidelines about using specific tools. We go beyond this by addressing the pre- and post-facilitation phases as well. What do we mean by this?

During the **pre-facilitation phase**, once you have the necessary clarity about what the context of the event looks like, you consider how to adapt the facilitation design to the context and the expected number and kind of participants, which tools to use, and how to frame and deploy them. What's more there is a crucial quality dimension to preparing oneself as a facilitator which goes beyond technical considerations. This has to do with your inner preparation, allowing you to best tune in with your audience, namely with cultivating your own presence and awareness.

The (event-) facilitation phase covers the deployment of the actual facilitation-tools you are using, as well as the art of creating a safe and "light" environment, in which the facilitation can reach maximum fruition.

The post-facilitation phase (see chapter 4) also requires focus, mainly to ensure that what has been sown during the event facilitation can be harvested and built upon at later stages, but also to enable you to continuously develop your and your team's capabilities as facilitators. One of the success-factors of a well-run workshop is to build a good energy and drive, a true wish for transformation, but if this energy is left hanging, then the change we wish to see will often evaporate as people leave the workshop.

We will now look at each phase in more detail, starting with the pre-facilitation phase, and with a main focus on the various phases of event facilitation proper.

3.1 The pre-facilitation phase

Whereas **preparation is crucial** for a successful event, it is often forgotten or taken for granted. We have found that the best events are described as "effortless", "natural" and "flowing", even though this is often the opposite of what the facilitator might have experienced during her facilitation. The challenge of delving into a pool of unknown elements such as unfamiliar topics, participants with unclear expectations or anxiety of whether or not the facilitation will be a success can make even the best facilitator nervous. But many of these hurdles can be overcome, and some are actually fruitful nodes of energy that can be used and put in service of the event's goal.

3.1.1 Facilitating alignment with the core partners and stakeholders

The first element of good preparation, as explained in some detail in the previous chapter (on Context, chapter 2), is creating alignment with the local host, topic holder and, ideally, also with the most important stakeholders about their core motivations, interests and needs around the topic. In order for having these key partners on-board in view of the desired process, you must create enough common ground between them way before the event. This not only helps you as the facilitator to feel more relaxed and confident. It also gives them enough clarity about what a co-creative, collaborative process with many participants can look like. This likely requires informing partners about the typical steps in the process, including phases of feeling lost and having to let go of familiar communication practices, before novel kinds of solutions appear. You might also want to invite them to a debriefing up front. Similarly holding and representing the whole process face to face with the local host or client beforehand is actually a substantial facilitation task in itself.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Estimated time
Creating alignment between the facilitator(s) and the local host	Meetings and conversations with the local hosts (and affiliated partners, if any) online or offline	● Understanding what drives the host, for example: ○ solving a problem, making progress on a burning topic, ○ creating a wider network/ community of practice within a certain area, ○ learning about collaboration and how to use collective intelligence ○ other… ● Getting a sense of where the host and stakeholders are in terms of their cognitive/emotional relation to the topic	● Responsibility to hold and represent the whole process ● Attitude of curiosity and unbiasedness, non-judgemental inquiry ● Deep Listening, ability to rephrase what is being said ● Emanate confidence and trust that even though it might be complex, one is confident to handle it ● Knowing one's own ability to deliver and be aware of overpromising	weeks/ months

This step is closely linked with the next one, even though the host will generally not be intensively involved in the design process.

3.1.2 Preparing the design

Good preparation and working closely with the local hosts, issue owners and stakeholders is essential also in relation to two more things. One is the **need to be in dialogue in advance with the local partners** in order to design different segments of the Collaboratory tailored to their needs, as well as to think about any customization of those segments and the addition of other small elements between those segments that might be useful for that particular group.

Second, preparation is also essential in order to **have the ability to adapt and improvise in the moment** when things do not go according to plan, or opportunities arise suddenly that require improvisation. However, a foundation, plan or script to improvise from is essential, otherwise it is easy for cascading effects to go in directions that take away from the aimed for outcomes. Having good preparations allows you to make on the spot changes with a sense of when and where you might want to steer back into the original plan, or when you might need to recalibrate the rest of the planned agenda because of what has arisen. As well, if the improvisation doesn't work out, then you have a plan to go back to!

Scripting the whole process design is a good idea, including considerations about the estimated time and needed materials for each phase. We provide a working paper you can use to make this task easier. You also want to consider and think about alternative options for some of the Collaboratory phases, in order to account for expected difficulties you might be aware of up front. Especially if you are a beginner or less advances in facilitation, we encourage you to also script your interventions and prepare the wording and framing needed in each phase – or between two phases, to allow for sufficient clarity and a smooth flow.

Note that **facilitation design is as an iterative process between the facilitation team members and the local host and other relevant partners**, due to varying degrees of information, needs and constraints you will have to work with at various stages of the preparation process. As a rule, preparation will likely not unfold according to any pre-held plans, so be prepared to embrace any new, upcoming situations or changes as part of the challenge. Generally, be flexible enough to adapt to what the given context requires. Ultimately, conducting a good Collaboratory is not merely about implementing the facilitator's pre-conceived design, but as much about their ability to go with what happens and respond adequately to it at any moment.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Estimated time
Preparing the design	• The facilitation team creates a first **high-level design** of the event (audience, general phases, timing, duration etc.) and shares it with the host • Facilitation team collects information and checks availability of specific **technical requirements for the venue** beforehand • The team meets (online or offline) several times beforehand and at least 1 day before the event offline to finalize their more detailed design, including variations (starting position)	• Creating a **match between the needs of the client/host and the availability of the team** in terms of number of people, available time, necessary space and materials, as well as competences, skills and roles needed • Fleshing out the design based on the first outline as an iterative process between the facilitation team members and the local host	• Attention on different levels of detail and timelines • Bandwidth: Holding those "details" in a trusting knowing of how it fits into the whole process • Inner flexibility to adapt to different "real" situations without losing energy on resistance, if they differ from what was imagined, discerning which elements might be most important for the overall process • Depending on the setting (training or client work) keep that additional layer in mind (learning versus specific clients/host needs).	**weeks**

The preparation work likely gets easier if you are a **team of facilitators**, because being able to communicate and share ideas about specific challenges and best ways to deal with them is a crucial for a comprehensive preparation process.

3.1.3 Teaming up for facilitation and defining roles

During LiFT, we have experimented with various constellations for facilitation. Initially, it was our method giver, Katrin Muff, who facilitated the first LiFT Collaboratory, for the rest of the team to be able to experience, observe and actively be part of the process. While this was done with a lot of "editorials", i.e. short interruptions to go to the meta-level of method and explain the considerations and rationale behind specific steps, the rest of the team sort of shifted back and forth from participant to learner roles. Next, we had three more experienced team members design and facilitate the second LiFT Collaboratory. Since two of them already had a substantial record in facilitating together, the respective event (Stockholm, 2014) went very smoothly and well. The experience was also de-briefed later in a nice, welcoming and protected setting. Over the next few LiFT 1.0 events, different team members stepped forward to take and share facilitation roles based on previous experiences.

It was only with the LiFT 2.0 setting that we started to choose a more systematic approach to facilitation, partnering up two team members to facilitate a specific phase (or sometimes: day or half-day) of the respective event, while the others held supportive roles in the background. We have found that **sharing responsibilities** helps the small teams of two to focus better on “their” phases and releases mental space. Not being responsible for every detail in a potentially several day long process is also a good way to build trust and enhance good cooperation within a team.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Estimated time
Defining facilitation slots and roles	• The members of the potential facilitation teams join forces for process design. • Team members are asked for their preferences and inclinations to facilitate or not specific phases. • Ideally 2 facilitators per phase. • If there is more than 1 facilitator per phase, have those team members prepare a **detailed design** of the session they are responsible for, including scripting and connections to other roles (observers, welcomers, hosts etc.), logistics and material they might need during their facilitation slot • Discuss the outcomes with all team members	• Knowing and taking into account **“natural” inclinations** of team members to facilitate certain phases, • thereby drawing on their intrinsic motivation, • discussing each phase in the team increases the sense of feeling comfortable and supported with the task • allow team members to self-determine challenges and leave their comfort zones	• Attitude of curiosity and unbiasedness, non-judgemental inquiry • Deep Listening, ability to rephrase what is being said • perception skills to sense how a specific role fits the person • leadership skills and collaborative capacities to navigate the joint preparation process	

Besides the facilitation roles themselves, the complexity of the process tends to require a number of **support roles** that less experienced team members are predestined to take over, so that each one gets the right level of challenge and scaffolding. At the same time, we have always done extensive pre-brief meetings with the whole team before each Collaboratory workshop, walking through the whole design and thereby allowing the entire team to step in and share responsibility around the envisioned process. This has been a powerful resource **strengthening the “holding environment”** for the Collaboratory process, as well as for those operating in facilitation roles (see also section below).

The following table can be used when preparing for facilitation, to fine-tune roles and responsibilities and to take care of additional materials needed:

Event facilitation									
		Responsible							
Function	**Method/ Tool**	Facilitator	Team	Participants	Other con-tributors	Host	Partici-pants	**Materials/ resources needed**
Setting the stage								
Downloading								
Harvesting								
Visioning								
Crystallyzing/ Generating								
Prototyping/ Sustaining								
(add phases)								

3.1.4 Setting the stage: venue design, materials and technicalities

In view of the more practical preparations (that have been outlined in some more detail in chapter 2 already), a **close communication and alignment with both the local host and the entire facilitation team** are again crucial.

Based on the design draft prepared by the facilitation team, a **list of practical and technical requirements** can be put together for each phase of the Collaboratory, such as room sizes and arrangements, facilitation equipment, visual and sound technology etc. In view of these practical needs (paper, flip-overs, projectors, etc.), it is important to check in time what is available, what you can work with, and what you might still have to organize yourself – or, alternatively, how you might have to improvise around missing things. The main point about this is to ensure that you're not caught offhand and forced to disturb the flow of the process.

If you have essentials you must have, make sure they are in place. Many locations who are accustomed to hosting events will have the most common things available, but the flow will be disturbed if you need an extra 10 minutes to fetch and put them in place. So preparation needs to make sure that you have what you need at the right place for when you need it, and also make sure that it works.

A practice that has proven very helpful is to men**tally and physically walk through the event together** with your team, and look for what you or others will do and need at each point in time. Checking in with your team, assistants and logistic support people in time is not only important for making practical arrangements, it also gives them the opportunity to understand the design, potential challenges and details of their own (support) roles. As indicated in the previous section, a good **pre-brief with the team** also helps to have more people holding the space for the event than just the facilitators. At all the LiFT events we usually took at least half a day to check in, go through the program (as prepared by the facilitation team) and discuss challenging situations in methodological and practical regards. Also, we had participant observers who needed to be briefed about their role and what to pay attention to.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Estimated time
Setting the stage: designing the venue, prepare materials and technical aspects	• The facilitation team derives the **technical requirements** for the event from the design plan • It collects to dos and provides a **list of required materials** to the host • Arrange an **visit on site** for the facilitation team, ideally some time beforehand, but at least 1 day before the event.	• Physically walking through the process on site gives a felt sense of the available rooms and their energetic qualities. • Knowing the local setting allows to **adjust details**, understand what is available and what is still missing for a **smooth process**	• Being able and ready to make adaptations in response to the felt sense of the room, for the process to fit the purpose of the event best • Framing necessary changes (to students, team members, client) such that it creates willingness to adapt	1-2 hours

Another important aspect to have in mind is **food and catering** during breaks. Some conference sites are very accustomed to serve traditional needs for workshops or conferences, and might take pride in serving the food at precisely the time when your schedule says. While this is very good, it can be disturbing if you are in a good flow, and improvise a delayed lunch. You have to clarify such things with the local contact person in advance, and keep in mind that they also have other customers.

One thing we also want to stress in this regard is catering for your own, t**he facilitators' needs and well-being**, both physical and other. Good facilitation, as will become even clearer in the next section, is closely connected to the facilitator's inner state. Therefore, it is your responsibility – towards yourself and the process – to make sure that your own needs are met. For instance, if you need access to tea, coffee, fruit, silent space or other things to work at your best, be sure to get these. Sometimes, this means informing the hosts that you will cover certain things yourself to make sure they are up to your needs. After all, you are a facilitator, not the focus of attention.

3.1.5 Preparing the inner field

"The success of the intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener".
(Bill O'Brien, quoted in Scharmer, 2007)

Before we move over to the event facilitation proper, one dimension we find exceptionally important is the inner preparation of the facilitator. We have therefore added a special column to all of the phase preparation tables in this chapter (see column "Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator").

Being a facilitator literally means to be someone who makes progress easier. Progress in a large group is the result of a number of processes both within, and in between all participating individuals, as well as the unfolding "collective intelligence" their coming together might set free. The facilitator is the holder and enabler of all of this. However, this happens not so much by holding on to a rigid structure or certain principles. Facilitating large groups is more about **holding the space** and thus, generating specific qualities of attention and awareness in a group.

There are several, interrelated aspects to this. The first requirement is probably to **be in good contact with your own inner states and processes**, i.e. to be aware of thoughts, emotions, intuitions, inner responses and mental reflexes to outside triggers, as well as to the interrelations between all of them. A general mindfulness practice is therefore an important general tool facilitators should be using on a regular basis.

Second, related to the facilitator’s personal focus of awareness, is their **ability to “sense into the room”**, i.e. to be aware of the energetic field created by the behaviors and the inner states that the participants bring in, and that they contribute to dynamically shaping through their interactions with each other. While this, in principle, is a “moving target”, in other words, a subtle, intangible quality that is constantly changing as the flow of interactions happens in a large group, the facilitator can set the overall tone for the kinds of interactions that are (or aren’t) welcome in the room. He or she can thereby create an invisible, yet perceptable “container” for the process. This container consisting of certain implicit or explicit expectations, rules, interpersonal modes of communication, awareness and behavior that he or she either voices directly or models through own behavior and thereby invites participants to adopt in theirs.

In this sense, the facilitator, first of all, has to be aware that this process of creating, framing and modeling the container they provide for the group happens anyway, through their way of facilitating and being present (or not), whether they do it consciously or not. So obviously, the recommendation is to dedicate some time and attention to get clear (and conscious) about what kind of container one wants to create – and what might be appropriate ways and behaviors to do so.

Generally, you want to **create a welcoming, safe space where people feel comfortable enough to show up as whole persons, beyond any social roles they might hold**. A space where different positions and perspectives are welcome to be shared, and at the same time, a dynamic of communication that is constructive in the sense that different positions and perspectives are invited to engage with each other in view of working towards solutions that are beneficial to all, and to the greater common good. In order for creating such a space, you must understand how participants experience facilitation, what triggers constructive behaviors and what makes them feel (un)safe. Again, there are various aspects to this.

As the leader of the Collaboratory, the facilitator sends signals to the participants. Their stress or relaxedness will influence the group immediately, as well as their focus and quality of trust. If the facilitator is governed more by the wish to implement a detailed program than by being in service to the process in the room, the level of creativity and motivation is likely to go down. If **the facilitator radiates their trust in the power of the collaborative process and in the (collective) intelligence of the group**, the latter has an easier time to join the invitation to trust that process. This is important especially since parts of the process might involve practices of being and working together that many participants have not experienced before. For them to trust the process and the holding environment created by the facilitator(s) and the overall hosting team is therefore a precondition for opening up and eventually moving beyond familiar habits – or even beyond their own comfort zone.

So while knowing different methods to use in Collaboratory is a basic, more tangible condition of successful facilitation, being present, aware and alert to signals coming from your own inside and from the outside (the group) is as important. Moreover, sensing into, or “**reading the room**” as a more subtle competence is probably *the* most essential leadership skill for Collaboratory facilitators. For a more detailed account of what this can means in terms of personal development, we refer to Jonathan Reams' and Anne Caspari's paper (Reams, J., & Caspari, A., 2012).

In a more practical sense, a number of **principles** might be helpful in this regard. First, as indicated above it is important to be aware of the difference between a specific program (mostly the prepared design and facilitation concept) for the event and the actual process as it unfolds. While it is crucial to be prepared and to have a concept (see section 3.1.2), it is equally important to have the inner flexibility to let go of it if needed to let the process of making progress on the topic in question find its own way for the given group. The more you are present and acting as a **holder of the process – not the programme** – the more space you are leaving for the participants to explore. This goes so far as to accept that some groups might force you to deviate substantially from the initial program in order for them to get something meaningful out of the process. An example for this from a LiFT workshop will be discussed later (see section 3.3.4. about the workshop in Almedalen).

Second, **the facilitator should be in service of the process, rather than in control of it**. This might be connected to the facilitator's own (professional) identity as a leader which ideally should be inspired by the idea of service leadership, rather than being the "master of the universe". More concretely, giving information that is not crucial for the process can be a sign of the facilitator being more self-centered than desirable. A good strategy against this is to let other relevant voices, namely the problem owner and key stakeholders take some more space to communicate their needs and perspectives – which might at the same time inspire the participants into an activated sense of urgency. All this takes courage from the facilitator. In a nutshell, the challenge is not to control the scenery, but to hold it.

Third, and connected to the previous point, what the facilitator can do to both create and sustain an adequate holding space and to support a good flow is to **offer well thought through framings**, i.e. meta-level orientations about what happens in a process or a specific phase of it and why. Framing is important for a number of reasons. Primarily, it is how you set the focal point of participants' attentional space. It circumscribes the larger meaning space within which participants can find their connection to the topic, and can open up a space beyond existing relationships of meaning to the topic to allow for more possibilities of discovery, meeting differences through dialogue and making new connections, both in terms of people and of meaning. What this means for a given event, and how such framings could look like, is very worth spending some time thinking about and sensing into during the facilitator's inner preparation work.

Fourth, while good framing requires quite some experience, as well as sufficient skill to "read the room", every facilitator comes in with a certain – more or less advanced – level of experience and knowledge. It is important to **be aware of and to accept your level of experience** in holding a large group. It might be on a junior, medium or senior level. Whatever it is, accepting your level and acting from that might imply to seek support where you need it and to team up with colleagues who can step in and assist or take over where necessary.

Fifths, again very practically, you might not know how many people will show up for your event until the very beginning of it. Obviously, it makes a difference if you are dealing with just five, or perhaps 150 participants. However, you can prepare to dealing with this uncertainty to some degree. Envision different amounts of people coming to the Collaboratory. Sense into either option and take some time to feel what each of them means for you in your role. With that, you will **be mentally prepared for what's coming – without knowing**.

Last but not least, you might find it helpful to engage in some kind of mindfulness, yoga or other exercise before stepping up in front of a group. Maybe, a similar practice that brings you back into (your own) nature is already part of your lifestyle? The easiest and always accessible technique to get present and alert is probably to do some deep breathing in a calm way before starting.

And with this, we turn to the Collaboratory event itself and the facilitation challenges connected to each of its phases.

3.2 Facilitating a Collaboratory event

Holding a Collaboratory is more about leadership than using a toolbox as a carpenter. Holding a large group is about coordinating relations in the room. It's about balancing working together with being together. It's about a balance between creating alignment around an issue, and inviting open creativity.

(Inspired by Per Hörberg, LiFT partner Initiativ Samutveckling)

This section will look at the major phase of a typical Collaboratory individually, after a few more general remarks about timing/scheduling and breaks and about the initial welcoming before the start of the event.

3.2.1 Timing, scheduling and breaks

In view of timing, the first step is to build consensus about the **high-level design** together with your local host, i.e. the overall duration of the event and how to spread it over several days, if that is an option. For more considerations about the optimal overall duration of a Collaboratory, see chapter 2. Next, you will need to schedule an adequate amount of time for each individual session, in relation and corresponding to the audience you expect to be working with. For instance, groups that are familiar with collaborative methods will have an easier time going through the whole process than ones that are exposed to this kind of event for the first time (see below).

When it comes to pre-facilitation, it is a good idea to provide **time buffers** at various points of the design, so that the latter doesn't get out of hand if the process unfolds differently than planned. For suggestions about the estimated time needed for each phase, see the table slots below and the "Collaboratory Structure Overview" file. In most of the Collaboratory phases, you have some flexibility as to shortening sessions or letting them run longer if that's what the process demands – as long as this doesn't collide with external constraints such as prepared catering breaks or the like.

Yet, an important thing to be mindful of is that **each phase is only a *phase*,** i.e. a part in the larger whole of the entire process and has a function to fulfil (for more detail see the subsections below). So while it might be interesting to extend sharings, for instance during the icebreaker or the fishbowl sessions, the overall process rationale should have priority here, dedicating sufficient time to each phase. Moreover, the rationale behind theory U demands that each phase be closed at a certain point in order to shift the focus, to change the quality of awareness and to go even deeper into the inquiry about the topic. This means that sometimes, lively discussions and conversations have yet to be closed in order to keep the larger purpose of the event in mind. Our experience is that participants usually accept that if it is framed adequately. Providing **breaks in between the ideal-typical sessions/phases** of the Collaboratory also helps to allow people to continue meaningful conversations during these breaks.

In this sense, if the schedule is tight and little time available, **breaks can also be used creatively**, for instance as part of digesting what has happened before (see the case study on Almedalen for more ideas). As in most other conferences, the breaks and the meals are one of the most important occasions for participant to relate to each other and to follow up with conversations or topics that have arisen during the previous working phase. It is therefore most helpful to have an arrangement in place where people do not dispatch and rather take the meals as much as possible together.

Inversely, we have also had workshops where it soon became clear that we needed to extend a certain phase (for instance the fishbowl in the Rastatt case), because the respective format provided just the right challenge for participants to experience a new way of communicating, seeing and hearing each other. In that case, speeding through the rest of the process can be an excessive demand you might need to let go of.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator
Timing & scheduling breaks	• Be clear about timing and give **succinct instructions** about timeframes • Keep to the time of own intervention • Gently remind others of speaking time • Create different options for **reminders**, for example walking around working groups to remind them of time. • Set, communicate and adjust break times as needed • Give signals to begin and end break times	• Allocating the appropriate time for each phase allows for a smooth process • Be able to adjust to what is emerging in the room and might be crucial to the process, even though not “planned” for.	• Track one’s own speaking time and reduce it if necessary. • Sense the room and know when times of interventions/workshop/breaks need to be adjusted • Have awareness of external services (catering etc.) to arrive at a certain time and know when changes need to be communicated to the participants, the external services or the host

Generally, most participants have a need for information about the timing. It is therefore a good idea to present them with the general plan of the workshop and the timeframes for every phase beforehand. This can be done by announcing them publicly, but also by **putting up a well visible agenda** that includes the timings of each phase for people’s orientation.

As far as the timing of specific interventions is concerned, for example self-introductions in a check-in round or expert statements in the fishbowl, these can also be modelled practically, for instance by the two facilitators, or by someone you have briefed in advance, and who then is the first to speak up in the desired form. Generally, it is recommendable that the facilitator(s) speak less (but to the point) and leave as much room as possible to the participants and their process.

Last not least, remember that all timing should always be in service of the larger process – and be framed that way, so that participants have a better chance to understand why things are done the way they are, and are thus more likely to relax into and trust the process (and the facilitator).

3.2.2 Welcoming, arrival and registration

The importance of **hosting as a specific art that frames the quality of the overall event** has gained more public focus with the "Art of Hosting" movement whose wisdom and tools also flow into the Collaboratory method. In the LiFT team, our ideas about the many faces of creating a welcoming atmosphere have been particularly inspired by our Swedish partners from Initiativ Samutveckling who have developed a specific role for hosting and welcoming participants at the annual forum of Almedalen (see LiFT case study about this). The so-called "värd/ar (host/s)" were wearing special vests and

had the exclusive task to make sure every participant was greeted personally, accompanied to a seat and provided with all the information they might need or be interested in about the event.

Hosting and welcoming can be done in many different ways, and what is adequate in your case, again, depends on the setting and expected group of participants. While more conventional settings might draw on more conventional, more familiar welcoming practices, creativity can be unlimited at the other end of the spectrum.

Generally, what you should have in mind is that an **appreciative and thought through welcoming strategy** can set a positive tone from the beginning that will benefit the whole event later on. It thus also makes facilitation a lot easier if participants have a general sense of being welcome, well looked after and catered for. Therefore, the criterion for a good welcoming practice is the right degree of positive surprize of participants when they walk into the door and enter the event space.

This can be done by preparing **welcome packages** with some kind of handmade name tags (as for example at the LiFT Stockholm event, see picture on the left). It can also be done by decorating the welcoming and registration space in a way that gently invites people to start engaging with the topic, as for example at the first LiFT Vienna event (see case study for more detail). Or it can be by inviting participants into some kind of communicative, conversation exercise to get in touch with each other.

The latter can be a playful exercise, or more focused on the topic of the event. At LiFT Stockholm, participants found a piece of a puzzle in their welcome packages and were invited to find another participant with a complementary piece of the puzzle to partner up with and introduce themselves. At LiFT Vienna (pictures below), participants could pick a piece of paper with a question related to the topic of the event hanging on a clothes line and exchange about that with another participant in the hall. Before that, they had to step over a symbolic threshold to get into the meeting space, which was framed as an “evolutionary step” into the future of organization (the title of the event).

In any case, we recommend that you **define a specific role around welcoming and hosting** and assign that responsibility to a person who has a taste and dedication for it. If you have specific creative (and/or financial) means at your disposal, this can of course be done very professionally too, as long as it is well aligned with the topic, spirit and overall purpose of your event.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Estimated time
Welcoming Registration	• Have all necessary **lists and registration items** ready beforehand and a person in charge for this • Create a well thought through flow of the necessary admin elements (registration, badges, name tags, data protection, welcome package etc.) • Have people at the entrance/registration desk with a **welcoming attitude** • Designing a **pre-event icebreaker** can help to lower the threshold for communication among participants	• Provide a sense of welcoming • Ease the "admin" stuff • Start to support participants to get to know each other	• Be present with authentic kindness and welcoming, supportive attitude • Sense into the room and know ○ when to adjust the flow of admin or ○ when to attend to arriving/arrived participant's needs	1 hour

3.2.3 Opening, introduction, framing and orientation

With this phase, the public Collaboratory process begins. And like with most events, the beginning is crucial for **setting the right tone and creating a light atmosphere** that incites curiosity and is most supportive for the process. So the way the first 5-10 minutes are set up matters greatly for how you will be able to win the audience's trust, excitement and engagement.

We strongly suggest that you invite the **local host to open the event**, to welcome the participants and say a few words about why they have chosen the topic in question and what their motivation for hosting the event is. Ideally, they should share a certain passion to make progress on the issue and give some background about how they have been connected to that so far. If there are important stakeholders in the room, particularly ones that the host wants to give more visibility upfront, this can be done here too.

After this short introduction by the local host (5-15 min), they should be the ones to introduce and hand over to the facilitation team, which will then be in charge of guiding through the process. If you are facilitating in a team, it is mostly helpful for the audience to have one lead facilitator holding the role of "**master of ceremony**", responsible for meta-level framing and orientation through the process. This person can be the "main face" of the Collaboratory, giving an initial overview about what will happen during the workshop, as well as give a high-level introduction to the Collaboratory method and how it can help to make progress on the topic in question.

> If the purpose and direction are clearly described by the host or topic owner and held by the facilitator, and if participants are asked to truly contribute, motivation and curiosity will arise.

Depending on how familiar the audience is with similar kinds of collaborative methods and practices, this framing will need to be adapted to typical sets of expectations, sometimes also reservations. While with more open and familiar audiences, it might be enough to arouse curiosity and enthusiasm, more skeptical audiences likely need some degree of referencing and explaining the whys and hows in a language that is accessible to them. For instance, audiences, used to more "conventional" style presentations might appreciate some slides and references pointing at structures or authorities they can relate to. However, if you have such an audience, don't try to meet all of their immediate needs (which would mean falling behind the potentials of the method), but rather try to build up some positive tension by inviting them to explore something new.

Especially with this kind of audience, the (lead) facilitator's presence and skill to **build trust** not only in the wisdom of the process, but also his or her own competence is paramount. You will likely stretch participants' usual limits of experience or even invite them to step out of their comfort zone, so make sure that the space you create is safe enough for them to do so and go on that journey with you.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Opening, introduction, framing and orientation	• Have the **local host open the event** and introduce the topic, their motivation and stake, as well as the facilitators. • (Lead) Facilitator welcomes, frames the event, introduces the process and the program & rough schedule (with or without notes/slides). • Depending on audience, referring to resources that create credibility for the process can be helpful (besides own standing & experience): scientific studies, articles in magazines with high reputation, widely recognised collaboration partners, or quotes from thought leaders • (optional) Inspirational video • (optional) short (self) introduction of important stakeholders	• **Giving adequate framing**, enough context and reference points to the audience, to help them understand what is going to happen and why. • **Setting the tone** and building a holding container for the event. • Making clear who is in charge of what. • **Wining the audience's trust** in the facilitation and their competence to lead and hold the process . • If done well, this allows to "pick up" people where they are, cognitively and emotionally, to prevent "overload" and to reduce potential resistance to the process upfront.	• Be present, mindful, welcoming and appreciative, make yourself available to serve the process, whatever that may require. • get in touch energetically with the audience, build a relationship, sense into the room. • communicate clearly, "paint" a picture of what is going to happen for the audience. • "Oozing out" the message that all that happens is perfectly normal and professional to do, even though it might be unusual for some.	10-45 min

One element we have often used to help to put people into a field of openness and curiosity is a well-selected inspirational video of just about a few minutes. The video should look at the topic in question or an important aspect of it in a broader, not just technical sense – touching deeper, often personal, philosophical and/or emotional questions related to it. Such videos, if professionally made, can convey powerful messages, sometimes beyond words.

Below are **examples of the inspirational videos** we have used at some of our Collaboratory events.

Event	Topic	Author	Title	Link
Stock-holm 2014	Why School?	Jason Silva	The biological ad-vantage of being awestruck	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8ELXfyoNew i
Rastatt 2016	What are the chances, condi-tions and possi-ble limits of suc-cessfully inte-grating refugees in Germany?	Berliner Mor-genpost	Refugees give roses to women at Berlin main sta-tion	https://www.morgenpost.de/ber-lin/article206905993/Fluechtlinge-schenken-Frauen-Rosen-am-Berliner-Hauptbahnhof.html
Trond-heim 2016	Learning and job creation in the digital age	Jason Silva	Shots of awe	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqKHDz7OBjI
Tartu 2017	Integrating "NEETS" into so-ciety and the la-bor market	The School of Life	How to find a meaningful job	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H91JDqeR_jg (until min. 5:09)

In some sense, the **mini key notes** we had at the start of some of the other events had a similar function. At LiFT Vienna (2014) we had three keynotes, each followed by a 10 min slot for participants to exchange about what they had heard in small groups. They were thus combined with a getting-to-know-each-other slot and had a broadly inspirational function.

In Trondheim (2016), we had a couple of selected stakeholders, all of whom were connected to the work of the hosting organization briefly introduce themselves and their activities. This occurred between the introduction and the getting-to-know-each-other slot.

In Tartu (2017, no case study), we had two short key notes after the getting-to-know-each-other slot and before the fishbowl, one by a scientist researching about the topic of NEETS (neither in employment nor education or training) youth, and one by a NEET youth telling his own story.

While the constellation in Trondheim was still quite conventional, the format we chose in Tartu was a way to take the participants (members of an EU working group on the NEETS problem) out of their usual modes of discussing *about* the target group into actually talking *with* them. Having a NEET young person as a keynote speaker made clear from the beginning of the event that this was going to be different – and it was going to require them to change their usual communication habits.

So to sum up, what you want to aim for when **building the container** for the process during the opening phase is a good **balance of curiosity, challenge and trust**, based on the feeling that it is safe for people to follow what facilitation is inviting them into. Moreover, by inviting them right into these "baby challenges", you provide them with a direct experience of how trusting the process is a safe thing to do.

3.2.4 Icebreakers – getting to know each other

Another "integral" quality of the Collaboratory process you want to have participants experience right from the start is their being welcome and wanted as whole persons, beyond their social roles or functions that they might usually be requested to bring to a similar event. Yet, especially when there is little time or when there are many participants, it is not possible nor conducive for the process to have extended rounds in a plenary where all participants present themselves. This is where icebreakers come in.

Icebreaker exercises are designed to serve a double purpose: First, they **bring participants in touch with each other on a more personal level** than it normally happens in conferences or other workshops, having them speak both from the mind and the heart. This can be implemented by combining tools or sequences where people are invited to share either some personal information and/or something about how they relate to the topic. Thereby, second, the icebreaker also strengthens the overall tone and quality of communication, and thus, of cooperation that you have been building up since the opening of the event.

Examples of common icebreakers that we have used a lot in this phase are "speed dating" exercises and sociometric constellations. In a speed dating, you can give participants several times 1-2 minutes each in small groups of two or three to talk and introduce themselves to each other. This can either be done freely or in a more structured way, i.e. you can give them one guiding question in each round. In the latter case, questions should build up on each other and become more specific in each round. Ideally have around three questions (sharing rounds) to gradually map participants' background and relation to the topic. Typical questions could be:

- What brought you here today?
- What thrills you about the topic?
- Which questions, expectations, hopes, apprehensions do you bring to the workshop?
- What are your experiences with …. (topic/challenge)?

You can use **tools** like "musical chairs" (have people move around while you play music and have them find a new partner/group when the music stops) for making sure that people get to talk to several different fellow participants during the course of the exercise.

If you consciously want to surprise, stretch or positively irritate people – and thus bring them into deeper qualities of personal encounter faster and more directly, you can use more personal questions such as:

- What was a situation or an experience in your life that left you awestruck?
- What was the best/wisest advice you got from your grandmother?
- What is your wildest dream in relation to … (the topic)?

These rather personal questions are also very suitable if you are working with a group of people who are used to showing up in specific social or professional roles which often implies a habit of hiding behind professional expertise. Similar questions are a good tool to help people go beyond their roles and meet on a more equal, direct and personal level.

As to sociometric constellations, they can be playful ways to get people out of their minds, inviting them to move in the room and then to group and socialize with others around some well-selected questions you give them. These questions can be very simple for audiences who are new to similar exercises, or more complex for more "advanced" audiences. Examples are:

- Where do you come from? Please line up according to the distance you have travelled to come here! *Or*: please spread out in the room as if it was a map of Europe/your country/… (depending on how far people have travelled) to show where you have come from!
- How much experience do you have with …. (the topic/challenge in question)? Please line up in the room between the two poles of "no" and "lots of/professional experience". This question

was used in the Collaboratory about the refugee crisis, for instance, to inquire how much personal exposure participants had with refugees (see case study on Rastatt).

- For how long have you been living in community (see case study on Sieben Linden)?

These exercises force participants to talk to each other to various degrees, while finding their position in the constellation with regard to the given question, in order to find out where they should stand as compared to the other people in the room. As an additional option, the facilitator can step in after each constellation has been put up, and interview a couple of participants about why they are at their position. This might actually bring forward substantial differences as to how people interpret their own background in relation to the question. For instance, in the constellation about people's experience with or personal exposure to refugees in Rastatt, it turned out that participants who lined up in the "little experience" corner actually had a family background themselves which was characterized by some form of migration or flight longer ago.

More practically, a tool the facilitator can use to make sure that his or her selection of "interviewees" in the constellation does not come across as arbitrary is to throw a catch-box into the group, and the person catching the box will get interviewed.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Getting to know each other	• Chose an "ice-breaker" exercise that matches the group and allows to bring in the topic • Indicate the rules and structure of the exercise • give clear and simple instructions • if necessary, give a demonstration	• Set the tone for "whole person" learning and collaboration: integrate body, heart and mind • Give room for presenting oneself to fellow participants • Allow for first authentic connections to arise, without overwhelming participants with too much closeness	• Have clarity on what needs to be communicated (less is more!) and how to do it • Be assertive with an inviting attitude • Stay present • Be mindful of time (see section 3.2.1) • While emanating decisiveness, kindly invite participants to move on	15-30 min

Besides these two methods, there are of course many other icebreaker exercises you can use as a "warm-up" tools. Generally, you need to think about what kind of exercise is best for your group. An important consideration in this regard is to **identify the right amount of stretch** in terms of inviting people to do something that might be unusual for them, without making them feel uncomfortable. For instance, the sociometric constellation we did in Rastatt appeared almost as too far of a stretch for the audience, which appeared quite reluctant to engage in this kind of "play" at the beginning. In contrast, at the Collaboratory in the ecovillage of Sieben Linden, where the group was very used to these kinds of exercises and had extensive experience in this area, this phase was even considerably extended and turned into a regular playing field. In fact, several such get-to-know-each-other games were played one after another, and participants visibly enjoyed them.

A more conventional way of bring people into conversation with each other at the beginning of an event is to provide some space dedicated to presenting existing initiatives and projects related to the topic, either before another icebreaker exercise, as part of the opening phase, or at the beginning of the downloading. This can happen verbally, as a poster session, an exhibition or as a market place of initiatives. In LiFT Luxembourg and in an external Collaboratory in India, we have used colour-coded name tags indicating country and domain of work that allowed people to connect more easily during the informal time.

Since at some point, the icebreaker inevitably has to stop, you can point at various **other opportunities** during the process where informal conversations can be continued or followed up with. One of the most important occasions for these relational needs are of course the breaks and the meals (see section 3.2.1).

3.2.5 Downloading

In this phase, the substantial conversation about the topic starts. However, make sure from the beginning that it is not intended to be a usual conversation, but rather a conversation that is framed in a certain way for specific reasons, namely to allow the group to broaden their understanding of the topic and challenge in question and to tap into deeper levels of insight as to what needs to shift in order to make progress on them. Depending on the kind of group you are working with, especially their degree of familiarity with collaborative methods and their openness and willingness to engage in the process, you might give them more or less of **meta-level background** about this phase in your initial framing.

Which method to use for downloading will also depend on the group and context you are working in to some degree. We have generally used a fishbowl conversation in every Collaboratory. It has the benefit of combining the possibility of introductory "expert" statements with engaging the whole group in a focused and productive way. Furthermore, it gently invites participants into respectful listening and making meaningful contributions, thus supporting the development of a light atmosphere and overall flow.

However, the fishbowl doesn't have to be the only – or even the main method you use here. In several Collaboratory workshops, we have also used various other kinds of expert inputs before inviting participants into the fishbowl. Depending on the topic, the group and their familiarity with the latter, it might be a good idea to have experts who represent different angles and aspects of the topic to give some more initial background about it, so that later group conversations don't remain too superficial.

As to the way you integrate and give space to these experts, again, there are several options (and you might also come up with your own one). **Keynotes** are a classic format which therefore also has the benefit to pick up participants with more conventional habits where they are. At the same time, this "conventional" tool can be modified in various ways to adapt it to the purpose of the event and to the quality of collaboration you want to create. As an example, check out the LiFT Vienna (2014) case study, where we had three high level keynotes, yet built in short 10 min slots for sharing and exchange between the participants after each keynote. Also, the three keynote speakers were invited into a joint conversation after their keynotes. This was set up as an improvised camp fire to help create a more informal, "cosy" atmosphere, inviting deeper, more personal sharing and reflection than a conventional discussion between them might have been able to.

> The Collaboratory is an alternative to most conferences where skilled speakers talk from a stage, and the audience gets wisdom from an expert or two. The problem with this is that even the most skilled speaker only produces information to the listener. Without the participants' own engagement with and cultivation of this new information, nothing really happens. No new knowledge, and definitely no action will occur.
> Realizing this and tired of "all these Power Point shows", Dr Katrin Muff wanted the participants to use and develop their own knowledge much more. This was the starting point of Collaboratory.

Besides having key notes, other more conventional formats can also be integrated into the downloading phase of the Collaboratory. Our LiFT event in Luxembourg (2015) included a wide range of stakeholder groups, among them politicians, people from public administration and the educational system. At this event, therefore, we also started by a rather conventional format, a **podium conversation** between a larger number of delegates from the different stakeholder groups that had been invited to the event. This happened on the evening of the first day, after some initial welcome and introduction. Only on the second day did the "Collaboratory proper" take its more regular shape.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Downloading	• Chose an appropriate format or combination of formats for bringing a broad panorama of perspectives onto the topic into the room • Prepare the setup (arrangement of chairs etc.) for the chosen method • Align with the co-facilitators about support roles such as timekeeping • If appropriate, give some background about the rationale of this phase • Introduce the guidelines, verbally and on slides (if possible and necessary) • Read out the guiding question loud, possibly several times during this phase, and make sure participants have it in the focus (a slide is helpful), • Intervene if necessary to keep guidelines in place and focus visible in service of the process	• **Downloading/offloading** what is on participants' minds • Create an awareness for a larger number and a broader spectrum of possible perspectives on the topic – "multidimensionalising" it • Create a better understanding of the complexity of relevant aspects and dimensions of the challenge at hand • Invite participants to consider perspectives that are different from their own	• Be assertive and clear on the focus and intention of the process in this phase. • Hold the space for what for many might be the first "unusual" conversation, i.e. make sure it stays within topic, within format and its guidelines, intervene if necessary to recall principles. • Sense into when it is appropriate to repeat the guiding question and/or some of the guidelines or principles. • Stay in connection with co-facilitators holding the time; announce a last round of possible contributions when it' time. • Sense into the energy levels in the room and either stimulate by targeted interventions or close this phase.	1-2 hours

Note that besides broadening participants' view onto the topic and including as many different perspective as possible (the downloading function), another equally important function of this phase is to **allow an "offloading" of any ideas and preconceptions** that most participants likely bring to the event. This is more a psycho-emotional function, a bit like cleaning up the mental space. It is important, especially in relation to controversial issues, where there is considerable tension in the room and/or between the existing stakeholder positions, that everybody gets the chance to have their voice heard and respected, no matter what they have to say and how much what they have to say contributes to a productive solution. Offloading is about releasing energies of frustration, anger and disappointment – often about not having been heard or not having a say – which is crucial for people to be able to fully engage in a co-creative process afterwards. However, we recommend that you don't make this dimension explicit to participants unless you are dealing with a very developed group who is open and used to similar self-reflective practices on a meta-level.

Below are some more practical **considerations for hosting and holding a fishbowl** session, which, after all, is likely the most common format you will use in this phase, because it is better suited than both panel and key notes to reach the purpose of engaging a diverse audience in a meaningful conversation in a complex context. Since we have used it in each of our events, we have also been able to collect a wide range of experiences as to what works and which possible pitfalls it is useful to have in mind.

Choosing and briefing "experts":

The quality of a fishbowl largely depends on the inspirational statements by the first speakers who will be setting the tone for the rest of the conversation, no matter what they say or do. This is why we give particular attention to choosing up to five so-called "experts" well ahead of time and briefing them beforehand, to make sure they provide what is needed for the process. They should be kicking of a meaningful conversation and give input that is either relevant or inspiring (or both).

An issue that sometimes arises with experts is that they cannot or don't want to attend the rest of the workshop. While an ideal workshop has unlimited time and budget and will give you the opportunity to invite anybody you wish and they will stay as long as you need them to, reality is different, and you likely need to adapt and improvise. The main challenge with including participants only in parts of the workshop is that they often take some of the jointly produced energy and direction with them when they leave. If an experts leaves who is an authority on their topic, this may create a power vacuum which can be difficult to comfortably fill. The other participants might then feel that they would be stepping on their territory or are not capable enough to follow up, and will therefore feel unsafe. If the expert stays on, similar issues can be clarified and worked with during the process. So if you have external experts that can only participate in parts of your workshop, it is often best to facilitate them into a section of a workshop where you won't feel their absence as much afterwards.

While finding the right selection of experts is rather a preparation task, contacting and briefing them ahead of the session (at the very latest) is a facilitator role, as well as giving the right framing at the beginning of the session to make it easier for them to actually bring in what is needed. It is crucial to give them clarity about the fact that their role is not to give a presentation (as they might be used to do), but to make a well-reflected statement based on their knowledge and experience which should rather come from a deeper level than just the cognitive one.

In a Collaboratory, everyone is an expert, of his or her own perspective. The desirable – and most effective – culture of a process in large groups is one of listening. The more participants are truly listening to each other, the easier it is to get to more interesting levels of communication.

The experts' role and some practical considerations:

- This role of the "experts" should also be made clear to the audience in the introduction of the session. Participants must know, understand and actually feel that in the Collaboratory, everybody ultimately is an expert and has something meaningful to contribute. Since this format is likely unfamiliar to most participants, facilitation needs to clearly communicate what is supposed to happen when and why.
- Before the start of the fishbowl, make sure experts get to sit in the center circle and that there are two extra seats which also remain free. This can be done by putting "reserved" signs onto

all seats in the center circle. (See the case study on Almedalen for an example where this was not the case.)

Intentional/functional considerations:

As indicated earlier, the downloading phase ultimately is not just about getting diverse perspectives into the room, but also about "offloading" deeper needs, such as having one's perspective being heard and voiced. Since this touches emotional and interpersonal levels more than cognitive ones, facilitation needs to be aware of these levels and navigate these needs. A crucial factor for achieving this is the general **level of trust that the facilitator or facilitation team builds up** in the course of the process, and very much so from the first moment of it.

In a Collaboratory, it is more important to build up trust than to give lots of information. The facilitator is the role model in the way he or she is open and trusting.

The spectrum of trust is likely also influenced by the level of difference that exists between participants. To little difference can create group-think or even a sectarian mood – which can feel good but often generates the same solutions or issues that were already there before the workshop. In contrast, direct hostility between participants is a challenge and can take focus away from pursuing realisable outcomes. While providing a good degree of diversity, again, is a preparation task, it is also necessary to navigate the actual level of diversity in the room in a way to ensure development and transformation.

Modes of running a fishbowl

The typical course of a fishbowl will have at least **two rounds** or parts. In the first part, the invited "experts" in the inner circle open the conversation with their inspirational statements. As a rule, the facilitator would then give them an opportunity to respond to each other once or twice. Only after that is the fishbowl opened for the second round. In this part, people from the outer circles are invited to take one of the empty seats in the center circle and to join the conversation. At this point, the kick-off experts can leave the inner circle if they want or feel they have said enough, or they can stay on.

Helpful instructions

- Speaking happens only in the inner circle.
- Speak only when you have the microphone (to be used as a talking stick).
- Please speak from you heart.
- Be mindful of time (indicate invited time for each statement)!
- Recall the guiding question!

It is helpful to give only a few initial **instructions** before the first round (such as maximum speaking time, using the microphone as a talking stick and inviting a mode of sharing and deep listening) and then to give more precise instructions again once the conversation is opened for all. Otherwise, the facilitator tends to speak too much, and part of what has been said in the beginning is forgotten half way through the fishbowl anyway.

Variations within this format can come from various degrees of activity of the facilitator. In LiFT, we have mostly chosen a parsimonious role of the facilitator, intervening only to remind speakers to be mindful of time, or to make relevant announcements, such as of the guidelines in the beginning, of the opening in the middle, and of the upcoming closing at the end, inviting last statements before that. An alternative approach has been chosen by the main facilitator at the Rastatt Collaboratory, who not only sat with the chosen experts in the center circle, but also actively engaged with each of them after their statements in some kind of interview mode. He would partly repeat what the expert had said, probing into particular aspects that appeared especially interesting for further discussion (see case study on Rastatt).

Ultimately, it is up to the facilitator to decide to **what degree interventions is helpful** after the center circle (expert) statements – depending on the content and quality of the statements and on the perceived expectations of the audience. One observation we have made during our Collaboratory in the ecovillage of Sieben Linden was that it was experienced as not optimal to have just a minimalistic facilitation there. Rather feedbacks suggest that the facilitator should have sat with the people in the inner circle instead of standing outside, at least at the beginning of the session. Giving instructions from the outside was perceived as imposing an external structure – and thus problematic for the local 'culture' of the audience.

Another variation of the Fishbowl method can be to have no experts at all for opening the conversation and rather trust that participants with the most relevant contributions will come in and take the lead in sharing their position. While this can work in a setting where participants already know each other well, have a certain level of mutual trust and a strong motivation to make progress on their issue, the option with experts appears better suited for more diverse audiences, because it helps to make sure that important aspects are fed into the conversation.

A lot more could be said about this phase. Yet, we leave it to this for the moment, trusting that more interested readers find enough resources for further inquiry beyond this book.

Last not least, if you **combine a fishbowl with other tools** (see the ones described earlier, for instance), give some thought to how you combine these and how to make sure that each new step in the process can be designed to further deepen and enrich the quality and the content of the conversation.

This is also what needs to happen when we now move to the next phase of the Collaboratory template.

3.2.6 Dialog

According to theory U which inspires the Collaboratory methodology, downloading is a rather mental activity where people bring in thoughts that occupy their minds when listening to what others say. Actually, our downloading phase in the Collaboratory combines elements of Scharmer's notion of downloading, as well as of his notion of "debate", and even some aspects of his "dialog", all of which are distinct modes of conversation in theory U. As a matter of fact, in the Collaboratory, we so far haven't put a special emphasis on implementing a "clean" *debating* mode (i.e. trying to convince someone else by factual arguments), first, because this is a mode that is usually very present in our conventional communication habits and that most people have more than enough of in their usual environments. And second, because this is a mode that – by itself alone – is not sufficient either to bring about sustainable solutions due to its strong mental focus. In this regard, it is similar to Scharmer's "downloading" mode, even though there is more factual grounding to an ideal-typical "debate".

Rather, what we have been focusing on in the first part of a Collaboratory – and what, by convenience, we call "Downloading" – is to **make visible various aspects of the topic and to bring as many perspectives onto them into the conversation**. Rather than aiming for any kind of "objective truth" between these (which would be the main focus in a "pure" debating mode), we have put our emphasis on a **quality of inquiry** in a broader sense. So while bringing in relevant *information* is absolutely welcome in this phase, what's equally important is to make visible perspectives connected to persons, in other words, to bring in the socio-emotional dimension of people telling their stories. This is one of the benefits of the fishbowl method as compared to more conventional conference style presentations. In result, we are usually able to already create a first sense of dialog and listening to each other in our "downloading" phase. So how then does the "dialog phase" proper differ from that?

Generally, what we aim for during the first part of the Collaboratory, following the U process, is to **take people deeper and deeper** with regard to the qualities of listening, inquiry and emphatic understanding that characterizes their communication. So between the Downloading and Dialog phases, we purposefully change the mode in which the conversation is framed towards deeper listening and to providing opportunities for more personal encounter and understanding. This can best be done in relatively small groups of between about three and seven people, where every participant is given the chance to speak, share their perspective and be listened to by the others.

So as indicated above, there are two **main goals in the dialog phase**. Besides that of going deeper in the way people communicate and relate to each other, this phase also gives space for personally and collectively (in the small groups) processing what has been said and happening before, during the downloading. This already is not always a possibility in more conventional conference settings, which mostly limit themselves to monological presentations, followed by what is called a "discussion", the latter generally being a combination of Q&A and some people from the audience making statements of their own in response to the main presentation. Very rarely is there a true interactive quality to "discussions" in these kinds of settings. In the Collaboratory dialog, we invite people to mentally "step back" from what they have heard so far, notice their own inner reactions to it and then take a fresh look onto the topic or problem in question together with their fellow group members. Maybe one has felt a strong sympathy with some statements from the fishbowl – or maybe a strong disagreement with something that has been said. Maybe one has found oneself disagreeing with something, but still felt sympathy or empathy with the speaker, because hearing their story has made it easier to understand how they came to take their position. Maybe one has also been touched emotionally by what someone said, or even experienced that somebody's story caused one to see things in a different light than before.

When it comes to sharing these personal dimensions of what one "thinks" or "feels", in other words, of one's positions or convictions, there is often a reluctance to admit "blind spots" of one's own attention and focus, all the more having been unaware of something important – or even having been "mistaken". While in principle, it is perfectly human to have limited knowledge and insight in whatever area, our culture has a strong bias towards knowing and "being right". Therefore, many peoples' identity is somehow connected to either of this, which is why admitting mistaken views or even changing one's views on things is not always easy, at least in more conventional conversational settings. This is the hidden treasure of the dialog phase – to provide a safe enough space for people to open up toward these deeper qualities of sharing and reflection they would otherwise not necessarily be able – or feel drawn to engage in in their everyday contexts.

With these considerations in mind, there are many **ways to implement dialog groups** in practice. The most straightforward way is to divide people up into groups of about 3-7, have them sit in small circles in various corners of the meeting hall or – if space allows/requires, in separate breakout rooms. While the latter can provide a quieter atmosphere for the respective groups, there are also benefits to having all groups in the same, large room. Since we are still in the first part of the process here, it might strengthen the sense of connection and co-creation of the group as a whole if people at least passively perceive the other small groups while focusing on their own process.

Content wise, the simplest way to frame dialog groups is to invite them to share what came up for them during the fishbowl (or previous session) and make sure that each person in the circle gets to speak at least once. It is generally helpful to have a facilitator in each small group, even though they might not have to do a lot, besides making sure that the group remains in a sharing mode, without entering discussions and commenting what other people have said. If you don't have extra small group facilitators available, you can also ask one person in the group to take over this role. In the simple version, this sharing procedure can be repeated once or twice inside the group until time is up.

In a more elaborated version, you can give a guiding question to the breakout groups, which invites a more focused reflection about the previous session or an aspect that has come up there. Generally, you might want to instruct participants with regard to a mindful listening quality. This, again, can be done as simply as asking them to not interrupt or comment what other people say. Or, you can give more detailed instructions. However, we suggest not to over instruct breakout groups, especially if you just have one dialog session, in order to build and maintain a quality of an open, mindful space for sharing whatever comes up.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Dialog 1	• Design a process for numerous breakout groups (with a facilitator in each of them) that invites participants to reflect the previous phase. • Train the breakout facilitators beforehand, assist rehearsal. • Present the aim of this phase and its corresponding instructions to the audience • Organize the breakout groups. • Keep time. • Provide some kind of documentation of results, if needed.	• Going deeper by a) processing what has been said/heard before, and b) **slowing down** the thought process, • inquiring from a deeper, less obvious/ordinary place, moving from head to heart, thereby • discovering more personal aspects of the topic, • becoming aware of one's own thoughts and habitual reflexes, • creating deeper personal **connection** with other participants.	• Be appreciative and clear with enough sense of where the group is at. • Sense where the group facilitators are at and frame/explain/clarify the intentions where needed. • Keep an overview of the different groups, sense into where groups might need some support and trust your intuition whether to step in or not. • Stay aware of time and adjust if necessary	20 min – 1h

At the same time, knowing that more precise instructions can be helpful for achieving richer kinds of dialog, we usually aimed for two rounds of dialog, where the first one was rather open, as described above, and the second one could be used to invite participants into a more structured dialog format. This way, they can "offload" their most immediate responses in the first round and thus be mentally more relaxed when entering the second round.

If you have enough time available, consider building some kind of physical activity into the process, for example between the two dialog rounds. Since **changing the format is always about changing the mode of thinking**, and thus to support the processing of mental material and new perspectives to come up, physical movement is particularly powerful here. A very simple tool is to invite participants to go for a short reflective walk – either individually or in groups of two or three, with some kind of guiding question. If the environment allows, going into nature is always a good way to reconnect to the bigger picture of things, and thus, to give room for mental relaxation, reflection and processing.

In terms of possible framings for a second round of dialog, the aim should be, again, to **help participants to go deeper in their quality of conversation and sharing**. This can most likely be reached by inviting to shift the focus from the outside, i.e. talking about the topic in a more objectifying way, more towards the inside, i.e. one's own relation to the topic. This can include observing one's own thoughts, emotional reactions and habitual reflexes.

The exact type of listening and speaking that is most helpful for this in the second dialog round may depend on the individual capacity and level of practice and experience with deep listening that you have in the given group. Examples of structured instructions that go from relatively simple to more demanding are to

- use a talking stick (or similar item) and only speak when holding the stick
- to take a deep breath each time before a new person starts to speak to slow down the process
- only ask questions and not make statements or come up with solutions,
- to take a (another) deep breath before speaking and notice which thoughts come up in their mind while they do that
- to take another (second) deep breath and notice which emotional or other reactions might be connected to the thoughts they have observed
- etc.

One of the most powerful practices from this list is to "**brainstorm questions**" instead of answers (point 3). Note that the effect of this practice has also been discussed in Harvard Business Review (April 2018).

It can be a good idea to not only properly introduce, but also to prime the respective practice beforehand, for instance by giving a live demonstration between two facilitators. For some more detail on where to use which kind of framing and dialog structure, please check out our case studies, in particular the ones about Trondheim and Sieben Linden.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Dia-log, 2	• Call people back after the first round • Present the workings of the second round (may have a different set of rules, facilitating deeper inquiry) • Organise breakout groups • Keep time	• Going even deeper into sharing and inquiry, into less obvious/ordinary dimensions • Shifting the focus more to observing one's own thoughts, emotional reactions and habitual reflexes • Use different approaches to cater for different ways of circling back	• Same as in Dialog 1	20 min – 1h

In order to keep a good balance between small group work and the overall process in the large group, consider implementing some kind of **harvesting of the results of the small group work** and bring these back to the large group at some point. However, it is important not to frame the harvesting in a way that would shift the conversational tone towards a "working" kind of atmosphere, since the overall intention of this phase is less about specific contents than about personal encounter and transformative learning through that deep encounter. So in this situation, the harvesting of contents from dialog sessions can rather focus on some key insights, elements of surprise, new questions that have emerged and the like. While harvesting already in the dialog phase is not a must, it *is* valuable for documentation, as well as for comparing what has come up prior to the visioning with what emerged after the visioning.

Depending on where the dialog and visioning are scheduled in the overall event, bringing in some of the core insights from dialog groups can happen after the second dialog round, before transitioning to the visioning or, ideally, before a break. In view of optimal alignment with the dialog phase itself, this can be done in a very informal, interactive way, for instance by having a facilitator go from one breakout group to the other with a microphone and asking someone from each group to name their most important insights in just a few words. Moreover, **documenting things on paper** can be a good strategy for actually letting them go – which is what is ultimately intended when moving on further. This can also be verbalized in the facilitator's transition towards the visioning phase, yet another step into an even deeper, ideally the deepest phase of the process.

3.2.7 Visioning

Most of what happened so far can in fact be considered as a preparation of the next phase, which ideally should be the "**bottom of the U**", i.e. the deepest phase in the Collaboratory process. In the theory U template, this is the phase where all mental activity ceases, and one collectively steps back from all information, from all perspectives, concerns, ideas, personal responses etc. that have been voiced and exchanged before. What Otto Scharmer calls the "presencing phase" is about letting sink all that has been said before, like the sand that is stirred up in water. It's about slowing down the thought process, until the surface of the water (a metaphor for consciousness) has become calm again, while the water itself gradually becomes clearer and clearer. Stepping back even more from the mode of an active participant in the conversation to an observing mode is like **opening up the space** of the conversation to a new "participant" coming in, namely the deeper wisdom speaking from collective intelligence. Its voice can only be heard if all other voices, i.e. those of the individual participants, become silent and make room for it to appear. Another metaphor that describes this phenomenon very nicely is that of emptying the space in the center of the circle, again, to make space for what wants to appear from "another dimension", so to speak, namely the emerging future. Otto Scharmer therefore describes the quality to be created in this phase as a mixture of conscious *presence* and intense *sensing* into this energetic field of what wants to emerge, hence the term "**presencing**". It is a humble, "passive activity" of making room for something bigger to inform and "refill" the empty space. Scharmer also calls this activity building "landing strips" for the emerging future. The metaphor indicates that latter is a potentiality that is always present, but that can only become visible and materialize if it is given appropriate space, i.e. a landing strip.

So in this phase, you want to be very clear about the **quality of attention and awareness** that is needed in the room – mainly by embodying and radiating it yourself as a facilitator. In terms of stewarding participants to enter this space, you need to first make sure that a number of preconditions are in place. You need a **protected space** where people can feel safe enough to enter what for most will be an unfamiliar state of exploring a future reality beyond the mind. Practically, this means that you should have a room where there is no disturbance and where the doors can be and remain closed for the duration of the exercise. Also, ask participants to stay in the room during the whole visioning process if they decide to take part in it. Make sure they really understand the significance of this phase.

The visioning phase consists of two parts. We suggest to spend the first part of this phase on an appropriate kind of relaxation exercise. Invite everyone to be comfortable, first of all in their body, to then let their mind gradually calm down, to notice any thoughts or sensations or disturbances…. or whatever is present for them in that moment….. and to slowly and gradually let them go, one after the other…. in order to eventually, really, fully relax into the present moment…. And this is where the journey into a visionary future will start.

You are welcome to use some of the above metaphors and images yourself in your framing and introduction to the visioning phase. If they don't resonate with you, find your own for better authenticity.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Visioning	• **Prepare a script!** with detailed notes and formulations for both grounding and visioning itself, possibly rehearse it with peers: formulations and instructions to be simple, short and concrete • Depending on the audience, define an adequate setting (i.e. sitting in a large circle or people finding comfortable spot in the room (chair or cushions, occasionally also mats for lying down); in silence or with soft music playing • Have paper and pens distributed beforehand for immediate harvesting of the individual vision. • At the beginning of the process, indicate what will happen (grounding/creating a mindful space, activating imagination, intuition and wisdom and diving into collective intelligence and future possibilities). • Make sure that no-one leaves the room during the visioning. • Speak slowly and with a calm voice when guiding the group on a visionary journey into the future. • At the end, give people time to come back mentally and physically • Afterwards, invite them to draw/paint/write down their vision	• Letting go of the known and of familiar ways of knowing, • accessing the imaginary and intuitive capacities of consciousness, • creating space for a new quality of ideas coming from a future that wants to emerge, in response to the challenges in question, • open the will to surrender to what wants to emerge through the group.	• **Speak from the heart, energetically embodying what one is saying.** • Be very present and connected, to the group and to "essence" or source of wisdom • Serve as a channel through which the creative energy can flow (decreasing mental activity is a side product) • Sense the room and track the subtle energetic dynamics in the group, i.e. by stepping into the guided meditative journey with one foot oneself	15-45 min

So now to **the visioning journey** itself. When you have gone through the previous phases in enough depth and have put your group into a mentally and physically calm and quiet state, they will likely have an easy time following you on this visionary journey. This journey can be framed as an imaginary trip into the future, to a time where the challenge you are currently working on (name it!) is solved in a very satisfying and sustainable way. There are various ways to picture and fine-tune this time travel, which we cannot describe all in detail here. You can use metaphors such as

- rising above the present and moving on the timeline,

- stepping into a boat that goes down the river of time until the desired moment in the future, or

- using a time machine or something similar.

As always, you need to adapt the fine-tuning to your audience and provide enough safety and comfort for them to be able to let go and actually follow the process. During the whole process, make sure that you don't lose contact with your group, either by being less present yourself, or by "technical mistakes" interrupting the flow of the journey (such as less than optimal formulations, see below).

When you then step into the "land of the future", give your participants a few hints and images to support their imagination, and when doing so, be as concrete and precise as possible. It can be

- walking them through an average day in the world of the future

- having them experience how certain things are done differently there

- looking at a certain practices or arrangements for doing things.

Whatever it is that you point at, make it concrete and ask people for concrete perceptions and sensations on their journey. By all means, **avoid abstract language** and hypothetical terms! Use a language that immediately generates images, bodily perceptions or inner sensations in peoples' minds. Abstract language speaks to our cognitive mind and thus tends to pull us out of the visioning mode. We don't want reflection here (neither during nor after the visioning), we want immersion – which, ideally, will then lead to empowerment!

After you have guided your group through a number of visionary images and situations, gradually lead them towards the end of the journey. This should happen inside the image you have chosen, for instance by inviting people to look (not "reflect!" back onto their day in the world of the future. Invite them to make an inner "screenshot" of their experience, and to take whatever strong, touching, powerful pictures (not "impressions"!), feelings etc. they have experienced back with them, to the here and now.

Example visioning

You wake up in the world of the future, where the challenge (...) is solved in a surprising and sustainable way.
How do you feel when you wake up there?

What do you see?

What do you hear? Where are you?

Who else is there?

What do you do when you get up in this world?

How do you start your day?

(Then include questions that refer more directly to the topic/challenge in question)

If you have used a particular technique for time travelling, you might want to use the same technique for bringing people back (for instance travelling back on the timeline, stepping back into the time machine etc.). Then ask everybody to take a few deep breaths to come back into their bodies, stretch as they like and open their eyes when they are ready.

Excerpts from a Visioning script from a Collaboratory *on how to integrate NEETs (young people that are "not in employment, education or training") into society and the labor market, held in Tartu, 2017, illustrating some of the framing you can do:*

Intro: This next phase is a way to do backcasting from the future – a practice that is used a lot in order to identify the right strategies, actions or steps to actually move us towards a desirable future situation.
For this phase, which will only be about 10 min, we kindly ask that you stay in the room, to stay seated, and turn off or mute your mobile phones, in order not to interrupt the process and not to disturb the other participants.
Even if maybe you feel a bit discomfortable or irritated about the process, please just listen quietly, and trust me, while I take you on a visioning journey. I promise you will all survive it!

Relaxation: If you are familiar with some kind of relaxation practice, you can use your own practice for putting yourself into a quiet, open, attentive mode of awareness. For those of you who are less familiar with it – or who do this for the first time, I will walk you through some steps more explicitly, that you can simply follow. (… Sitting comfortably, breathing, letting go of concerns and preconceptions, ideas about how the issue could or should be solved…) For the next moment, stay in this quiet, comfortable, relaxed state.

Visioning journey: Now, while your body remains quiet, I invite your mind to follow me on a journey on the timeline, which connects you to both the past and the future, into the desirable future. In your imagination, rise way up above the timeline and let the present become smaller and smaller. (…) Then turn to the direction of the future and move into this direction, fast-forward yourself on the timeline, to a point in time, 30 years from now, when the challenge of providing everyone, and especially every young person with a good education and meaningful work … is solved in a pleasant, mutually satisfying, fulfilling, visionary, powerful and lasting way. From that point above the timeline, go down into that society of the future for 1 day. Watch yourself as you wake up in this future society.

Cues/questions to support imagination: Where are you? What do the surroundings look like? What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Who are you? What is your role /what are your roles in this society? What does the place look like where you fulfill your most important tasks in this society? What are the things you are doing? What feels important about them? Who are you doing these things with? How do you relate to others? How do you feel? How did you learn to do what you are doing? Who taught you? How does learning happen in this future society? How are young people growing up? How do they get ready for their adult life? How do they matter in society? How are they supported to find their place in life? How do you interact? Do you notice tensions? How are they dealt with? What is it like to live in this society of the future? What do you like most about it? (…)

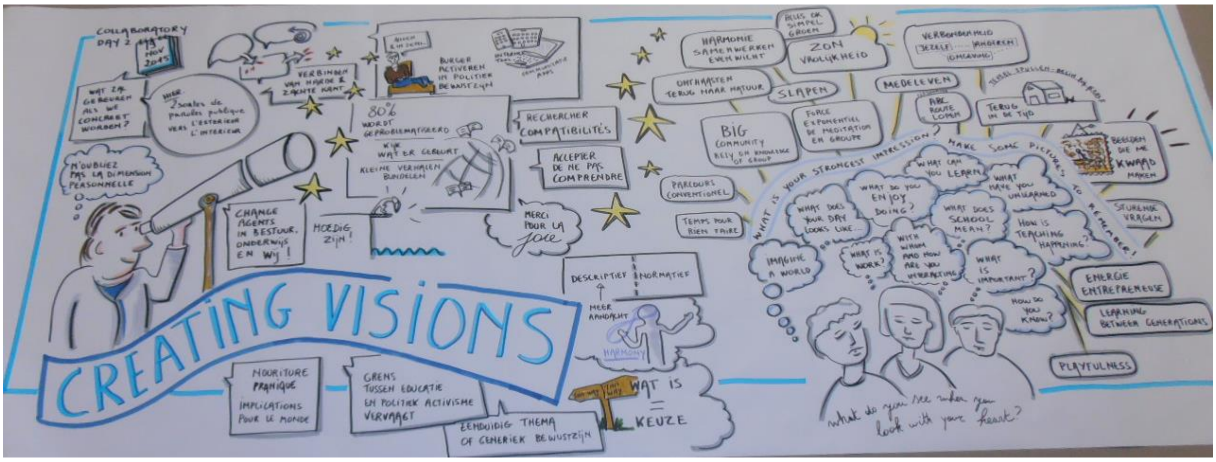
Coming back: Now imagine you had a camera and take a 3-d-picture of what you have seen, heard and experienced. And take this picture back with you as you slowly prepare to return from the future society (do it in your own time!) Go all the way back along the timeline, until you finally land again in the here and now. Before you open your eyes, take another long, deep breath, wiggle your fingers & toes. Stretch again if you feel like it. And welcome back!

Remember to read all of this slowly, with a very quiet voice, and make a lot of pauses in between.

Transition to harvesting: Now please remain silent and take another moment to recall what you have seen and heard. You find paper and pens closeby. Feel free to use them to note or draw whatever was important in your vision journey. (5 min)

After that, either continue taking your own notes or exchange with your neighbor what you have seen and heard. (5-7 min)

It is very important at this point to **maintain the quiet, intensive quality of awareness in the room** to keep people connected with their visions. Ask them to remain silent for a moment, holding their visions, before you invite them into a first, immediate round of harvesting. The best way to do this is to provide paper and pens at different points in the room and have people jot down (write, paint, draw…) their vision. You can also provide other materials such as clay or Lego blocks for those who are more "hands-on" – as long as this fits the overall character of the group. This very first, immediate round of harvesting intends for people to capture their visions so that nothing gets lost. As always with creative expression, this likely also already generates a more creative, thus active dynamic with which we move out of the "U", towards the co-creative second part of the Collaboratory.



Before moving to the next section, here are a few more general remarks about quality and timing. The visioning being the "lowest" part in the U process, it is here that the quality of awareness will decide from which place solutions and projects in the next phase will be defined. That's why it is so important for the Collaboratory as a whole, even though it is the shortest one of all phases. With more "conventional" groups, ten minutes can already be much to ask and need to be well framed for people to hold up their attention. In more experienced groups, this phase can well be extended beyond 30 minutes. This happened at our Collaboratory in Sieben Linden, for instance, where people had been particularly looking forward to this phase and enjoyed the journey a lot.

However, there are also groups for whom this phase is rather difficult. Many participants that are not used to accessing their interiors (including some seasoned educators, as we have seen) tend to have difficulties with the approach generally chosen for this phase. It is thus not uncommon that some people do not envision anything or only very vague things. A negative exception we encountered was a participant who was even more desperate after the visioning than before, because he was unable to see a positive future; he only saw destruction. From time to time, there might also be participants who, out of their own discomfort with the visioning process, start to contest the whole process instead of sharing anything envisioned. This jumping onto the meta-level in an unhelpful moment).

As for any other phase of the Collaboratory, it is therefore an ongoing challenge to look out for **functional alternatives and/or adaptations that increase your flexibility** to deal with diverse groups.

3.2.8 Crystallizing – harvesting and condensing the vision

After the individual visions have been captured and partly visualized on paper, the Crystallizing phase is about condensing these into what we could call a **collective vision**. We have been using a number of different methods for doing this. In most cases, you will find considerable overlap between the individual visions, which sometimes is so strong that people are quite overwhelmed by the phenomenon of collective intelligence. After a good visioning, it may even seem that collective intelligence is speaking through the different participants when collecting and adding up everyone's most important aspects.

The sharing of visions and building a collective vision on this basis can happen in several steps. As always, it will depend on the group and the amount of time available which formats it is best to use and how to best combine them. Below, we have distinguished a "simple", short version and a more extended version, each of which consisting of a number of suggestions as to which tools can be used for what. The important thing is to **build the collective vision based on participants' individual visions** (so that everyone present can feed their part in and thus be an integral part of the co-creation) while at the same time transcending the latter by the former (so that ultimately, everyone co-authors the collective vision.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
First/ simple harvesting	• After people having drawn/written down their individual visions, invite them to briefly exchange about what they saw with 1 other participant • If this is the end of the day, invite participants to look for "signs" (encounters, dreams, objects coming into awareness etc.) for the new reality in their life • If your process continues, either chose one of the below more extended harvesting tools, or… • Invite people back into a large circle, let the microphone circulate and have everyone briefly share *one* important aspect of their vision at a time. • Emphasize being brief, so that the mic keeps circulating. Make clear that there can be several rounds, as long as there are important things to share. Instruction: please share new aspects rather than repeat what has already been said (*from Dragon Dreaming*). • Have 2-4 assistants at a flipchart each in the corners of the room to sequentially note what is being said	• Make visions explicit • Discover areas of overlap between the individual visions, find common ground and combine them into a (more) shared, collective vision. • Shift the focus towards "thinking back" from the visionary future • (*Dragon Dreaming harvesting*) Create a dynamic where each new element strengthens the collective vision and makes it more powerful	• Give room to what comes out of the room. • Serve as a channel for the creative energy • Sense the room and track the subtle energetic dynamics in the group, notice when the sharing is complete enough to continue. • Be sensitive as to how the quality of the visioning can be carried on if the process is interrupted overnight.	15 min 1 hour

The **short version** basically refers to a format where the whole Collaboratory is done in just one day. In this case, two steps are helpful to move from the individual visions towards a larger, more comprehensive whole: sharing one's own vision with a partner and collecting the gold nuggets from each couple. The latter can happen in a large circle where one powerful tool is the **harvesting process from Dragon Dreaming**. Let a microphone circulate in the room and invite everyone to share just one (most) important aspect at a time. This way, the mic should be moving around quite easily from person to person. If someone wants to pass, that is perfectly ok. Otherwise, ask people to be brief and to focus on adding things that others haven't said, instead of repeating similar things. While there tend to be a lot of similarities in most groups, this procedure has the effect that listening to each other's contributions, people tend to get even more clarity about how their own vision fits into the larger whole and what they can contribute to it. So in fact, what happens is not just a sharing of preconceived ideas, but a true co-creation process.

This harvesting method has been used extensively by Katrin Muff from LiFT partner BSL and less so in the LiFT events proper which have often been longer than one day. In Katrin's version, the harvesting is documented by a small group of assistants (up to four) who are placed in the four corners of the room (with the circle of participants in the middle), each equipped with a flipchart. As the microphone goes round, the first assistant notes the input from the first person, the second one that of the second person sharing, and so on, since the process should ideally move quickly between people who just share a few words or a short sequence. What happens here can be like a spiral of taking the initial visions to an ever higher, more condensed level every time the mic goes round again. So the collective vision gradually builds up and becomes more and more clear and powerful.

If you are conducting a **longer event**, it is a good idea to have the visioning (or at least a first part of it – there can be two visionings if necessary!) at the end of day one, to allow for some "digestion" happening overnight. Important things mostly need time to sink in and develop their full impact, especially if it's new things that people haven't done or thought of before. In this case, a possible point for closing the day is after people have shared their own vision with one other person. However, it is good to consciously close the event at that point, i.e. to explain the importance of harvesting and "digesting", and by inviting participants to be mindful about holding their vision until the next morning. It might also be a good idea to ask the not to talk about it to other people, i.e. people who haven't been part of the process, because this could weaken or dilute their vision and its original power. So make sure that the high and dense energy of the visioning process is kept and held overnight.

In fact, **making the transition between two phases**, which are sometimes spread over two days is one of the delicate, yet crucial facilitation challenges in a Collaboratory. Besides the facilitator's methodological skill, their own presence and awareness are paramount for keeping the right flow between phases, so that the transition is perceived as light and easy.

If you have more time, and especially if you have a night between the visioning proper and the second part of the process (which generally enables and fosters deeper processes), the section below offers some more ideas for a more extended harvesting session. You can of course also combine elements from both sections as best fits your context. As often in Collaboratory design, being able to dedicate more time to developing the vision, making it more explicit and visible, and thus to crystallize what wants to emerge from the future generally adds a deeper quality to the vision and helps to achieve more powerful results. It also gives participants more time to both sense into their visionary ideas and to engage in co-creation work – and thus to develop a shared sense of mission and authorship.

In LiFT, we have mostly used one or several of the below tools for harvesting and crystallizing the joint vision(s), tailored to fit the timeframe that was available in each case. Note that if the visioning has been done before closing in the evening, you might need to give participants a moment to reconnect to their visions the next morning. A short silence tends to be the most straightforward tool for this (after the general opening and check-in of that day, if applicable).

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
More extended harvesting options	• (if there was a night in between) Invite participants to reconnect to their individual visions/images in a short silence *Options for condensing the collective vision:* • *Harvesting pyramid*: Gradually extend the circle of sharing (1+1, 2+2, 4+4 persons), depending on the size of groups, give more time in each round. • *Art gallery* (1): In breakout groups (4-8 people) invite participants to weave their individual contributions to the vision together to create a vision of the group and express it artistically (writing, drawing, acting, music, poetry etc., or other ways) • *Art gallery* (2): Invite participants to expose" their works to the other participants • Arrange the constellation of chairs according to setup and provide all necessary materials (paper, pens etc.) beforehand • Keep time	• Find and increase common ground between individual visions, and merge them into a shared, collective vision step by step. • Have people experience their joint visionary and co-creative power • Collective visions serve as the basis from which to create prototypes that are informed by the emerging future rather than by past experiences	• Be grounded, curious and assertive • Hold an appreciation for creative expressions through art • Be able to give clear and simple enough instructions about a multiple step process • Stay aware of time • Keep an overview of the different groups, sense into who might need some support, trust your intuition whether to step in or not.	1-3h

One way of gradually building up a joint vision among a growing number of participants is **the *harvesting pyramid***. We have learnt this method from The Alternative (Denmark). As explained in the previous section, start by having two people share their vision for a couple of minutes. Then put two groups of two together and have them share what they came up with – and what they have in common. You can extend this format pyramid-wise for another 2-3 rounds, each time putting two of the previous groups together. Make sure to give more time for each round, as the groups get bigger. Note that the harvesting pyramid has a strong focus on talking and might thus be experienced as a bit limiting or reductionist by some people if used exclusively.

Another way for building up strong shared visions that is more "creative", speaking to several senses beyond mere words is the ***art gallery***. This method consists of two parts or phases. In the first one, groups of 4-8 people are given some time to share and exchange about their visions and whatever overlap and common ground between them appears most thrilling to be elaborated. Arrangements of tables with the sufficient number of chairs around them, as well as paper and colored pens are prepared in different corners of the room (or in breakout rooms, if available and necessary). The groups are then invited to draw, paint and visualize their joint vision on a piece of flipchart paper. If you have the materials and logistics available, you can also offer other, additional ways of creatively expressing visions, for instance by using legos, clay, music, etc. About 30-45 minutes should be accorded to this activity (more if needed). After that, in the second part (phase) of this session, all groups are invited to put up their "pieces of art" to the walls (if it is paintings or drawings) to form an art gallery, or to otherwise give an artistic demonstration of their vision to everybody else. So far, we have only had paintings and drawings, so that one member of each group can stay with their piece of art and explain it to participants from other groups who walk past and stop by. For this second phase of exposition, another 30-45 can be an adequate timeframe. If you have a lot of groups, more time might be needed.

In fact, designing small group collective visions on flip chart paper can have a double function: first, it furthers the crystallization process and second, it is already a form of co-creation. Then the gallery part ideally is building and deepening a collective awareness of the whole and the field of possibilities, while helping seed connections around these ideas that could then be prototyped in the Open Space session(s).



Harvesting the vision at the LiFT Collaboratory in Šibenik/Croatia, 2017 was done by first keeping participants in the non-verbal mode and letting them silently paint a drawing reflecting key aspects of what they envisioned. For this, a long paper strip was spread out on the floor, for everyone to paint on. Thus, the strip was gradually growing into a collective picture. After it was finished, people were asked, in a first round, to explain the part they had painted and, in a second round, to share their observations on the picture as a whole.

During these working and exposition phases, your main role as a facilitator is to **hold the space and to be mindful of the flow of the process in each group**, as well as in the room as a whole. Make sure to give clear instructions and to announce the available time before each new activity starts. Shortly before time is over, give a signal or walk from group to group to give indications about the remaining time. While the facilitator(s) don't need to be deeply involved in the content of what is produced, it is good for them to aim for a rough overview of the main topics and ideas that come up during the harvesting phase. Based on this, they might summarize some essentials of what they have heard and seen either at the end of this phase, or at the beginning of the next one. This will **help the group to see the big picture** and to better perceive possible connections between the various visionary ideas that have come up.

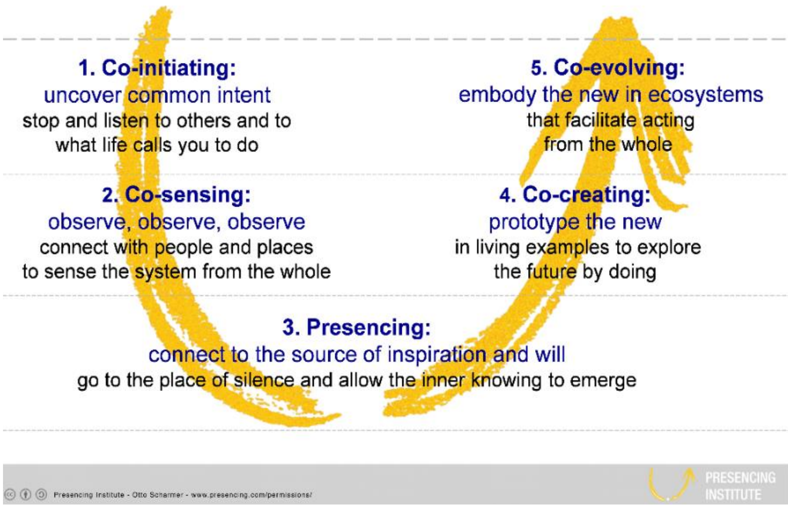
And with these, the transition to the next phase can be facilitated in a way that keeps the focus on co-creation based on the joint vision.

Another, additional way to harvest ideas and results is of course also to engage a professional **graphic recorder**.

3.2.9 Prototyping/co-creating – building projects based on the vision

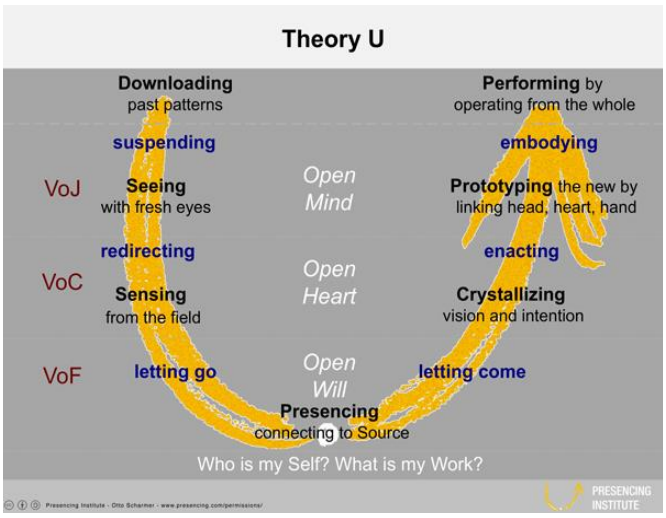
This next phase is where the Collaboratory can unfold its fullest potential, if well prepared, designed and framed. Ideally, project prototypes emerge out of the joint visions that have been developed before, by breaking these down to smaller, actionable steps. Generally, the focus in this phase is about **how to build bridges between the vision and the current reality**. In other words: which concrete, tangible actions could be building blocks of the visionary future reality?

Note that we are using the term “co-creating” as a general, subordinate concept for the whole right side of the U here, i.e. for everything that is connected to bringing the vision into reality. Co-creating projects for implementing the vision can happen in different ways and in a number of different steps, mostly depending on how much time is available for this process and what kind of outcomes are targeted by the host.



For more interested readers, we point to the fact that Scharmer’s model uses various terms for describing these activities. The rough/minimalistic model distinguishes between “prototyping the new” (1) and “embodying” it in existing systems (2), in other words conceiving (1) and implementing (2) it (see the first U graph).

In his more detailed model, Scharmer distinguishes three phases for describing the single steps that lead from visioning to action, namely Crystallizing, Prototyping and Performing (see the second U graph). So Scharmer uses the terms “prototyping” and “co-creating” similarly, if not synonymously, while calling the actual implementation part “co-evolving”, “embodying” or “performing”.



Here in the LiFT context, we will only look at the first part (of Scharmer’s above minimalistic model), since the second part is bound to happen beyond the facilitated event.

Yet, if we consider the more detailed model, the first two of its phases (Crystallizing and Prototyping) are clearly integrated into the Collaboratory template, whereas the third one goes beyond what one can normally do in a facilitated large group process. When it comes to people actually embodying and implementing their projects, we have to rely on the participants and/or the local host to follow up with them and reporting back to us, the facilitators, about these more long-term impacts of the process.

Since this book aims at helping interested users of the Collaboratory format to find the best design for a specific context and stakeholder constellation, we will not enter a more theoretical discussion about the model as such and how to best represent and visualize the core insights of theory U. Rather, we want to raise your awareness for the different challenges that you will be facing at each point of a

Collaboratory process – and to help you choose and **facilitate the right qualities of communication and cooperation** to best address them.

Essentially, the co-creation part of the *Collaboratory* consists of **two core activities: first, conceiving and defining projects (prototyping them), and second, preparing to implement them in real life** (preparing to co-create), i.e. looking at the more practical questions around who does what by when etc. This allows for the actual implementation to happen easily beyond the facilitated process. In other words, what your participants will need to do is to collect ideas for projects, to build working groups around these and to have these flesh out their project ideas. Whether you design just one or two (or more) formal process phases for this, is a matter of available time and design choices. The same applies to the wording and labelling of these phases in your process.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Prototyping	• Design an appropriate format for people to create tangible projects based on their vision(s), i.e. Open Space, Pro Action Cafe etc. • Create the necessary space in the room for a marketplace if you use Open Space, otherwise prepare appropriate setup • Prepare clear instructions and slides or flipcharts to support these. • Explain the guidelines and rules of the session. • For Open Space encourage participants to step forward to suggest a project prototype. • Cluster proposals (if there are too many) and support participants to join groups. • Keep time for the groups and invite them back to the plenary, for continuation or a second round if foreseen.	• Bridge the visioning and emerging future realities, • shift participants' focus towards concrete, tangible actions which connect the vision (potential, future realities) to the current reality, • break down the vision into small, actionable steps to achieve it.	• Be connected to the emerging field and support leaning forward into future possibilities (be the bridge) • Have a playful attitude, emanate the quality of fun or excitement connected to stepping into a new reality. • Stay connected to the teams while they are working in their breakout groups • Stay mindful of time • If a second round is foreseen, sense into whether it needs facilitation to transition to it or whether people can self-organize • Towards the end of the breakout session, gently but assertively invite participants to wrap up and to come back to the plenary	45 min – 3 h or more

The tools and methods that can be used in this part of the process are, again, not unique to the Collaboratory. Yet, what is different here from, for instance, just having an open space session on its own, standing all by itself, is the grounding and preparatory work that has been done in the first part of the Collaboratory. Ideally, this has generated additional levels of depth, communicative quality and focus, which are not necessarily present otherwise. However, in order to make optimal use of these, a comprehensive framing is crucial here, too.

While people might be inspired by various aspects and dimensions of the visions they generated, the **prototyping phase is** not about the long-term future, but **about what can be done more or less immediately** to actually move towards the vision. Therefore, we strongly emphasize the goal of generating “concrete, tangible projects” and recommend that you explicitly invite people to suggest only projects or **activities that can be implemented over the next 2-3 months**.

As indicated above, prototyping projects mainly includes two parts: first, collecting ideas for projects, and second, building working groups around these to flesh out these project ideas. The most straightforward tool to use for this phase is the **Open Space technology**. It clearly distinguishes and frames these two parts as the “marketplace” (where people suggest project ideas) and a session (or several ones) for breakout groups to work on their selected projects. In between, it mostly needs some coordination for creating alignment between similar projects, for instance by joining projects that have some overlap. Thus, the overall number of groups can be reduced and their work be made potentially more effective (since people have an easier time choosing a group).

Similarly, in a World Café or Pro Action Café, you would need to define which topics to work on and which questions to focus on before you send people into their groups. Yet, in the latter two, structuring tends to happen before the process by defining the guiding questions, which leaves less room for creativity. In LiFT, we have therefore mostly worked with Open Space, being the least structured format and literally providing lots of “open space” for whatever comes up from the participants themselves in result of the visioning. It thus appears to be best aligned with the idea of building and facilitating “landing strips” for the emerging future.

We will not go into the details of Open Space facilitation or any other possible methods here, since these methods themselves are well known, and there are valuable descriptions and introductions to them available. What is most important when using them in the context of a Collaboratory is to frame them adequately, explaining their function as part of the overall process. They are used here as tools to **enable and support the implementation of the vision** that has been generated before. And we believe and have experienced that based on a strong and powerful vision, existing co-creative methods can be used even more effectively.

Here are some **framing and facilitation specifics** to be mindful of when using open spaces in a Collaboratory. As mentioned above, it is the facilitator’s task to embody the transition into the prototyping phase as part of the larger purpose of the Collaboratory, namely to generate innovative solutions to complex challenges that likely would not otherwise have been accessible. Therefore, it is crucial to remind participants to

- propose projects based on their own and the collective vision, i.e.
- be bold, listen to what their heart yearns to do, regardless of the mind’s immediate take on it (more ideas will come once the group work has started!)
- propose concrete, tangible projects that can be implemented in about the next 2-3 months, rather than just topics to discuss about

Despite careful and explicit framing, you will still see topics being suggested that may appear less straightforward or actionable, and that rather invite joint reflection about than actual action on certain things. This is a natural expression of where participants are at in their own process of digesting and integrating things. So while you can repeat the invitation to be concrete and tangible, we suggest that you **do not intervene to change peoples’ topics**, just make clear at beginning what is desired.

Another way of holding up the focus towards generating actionable steps is to have **co-facilitators** or someone responsible for keeping the focus inside the group. These people can also make sure that results are documented and that a responsible contact person is designated to follow up about things in the respective group (see reporting back phase).

For the second part of this session, the actual group work, much again depends on how much time and which kinds of rooms you have available. If time allows, several sub-sessions can be designed to facilitate the different steps on the way towards implementing the chosen project. Generally, if the previous phases have gone well (in other words, if the topic has been explored intensively and in depth, if people have made deep connections between each other and the visioning has been intense and powerful), there can almost never be enough time for co-creation. For this will be the natural drive for people to follow then. If the focus of your event actually is to generate innovative and sustainable solutions, make sure to schedule enough time for this phase. A **rule of thumb** would be to **have as much time before as after the visioning/presencing phase**.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Co-creating	• If more tangible outcomes are desired and/or forseen, provide a similar space for creating more concrete actions and steps as for prototyping proper • If possible, have 1 facilitator per prototyping group • Assure documentation of results	• Start exploring the future by doing, • coming into action, with short ideas-to-action cycles • focus on practical considerations, • create hands-on, personal commitments	• Group facilitators should have experience in (iterative) prototyping and an inner knowledge about one's creation power, • be able to convey the mechanism of manifestation (i.e. by enduring moments of frustration and by steering the attention back to the original intention if needed), • be present, appreciative, and assertive, support generative listening for better co-creation and enduring silence for new elements/concepts/steps/actions/committments to emerge • make sure that actionable steps can be realized in 2-3 months.	45 min – 3 h or more

Example from LiFT

In the LiFT workshop in Luxembourg (2015), we had one and a half days just for co-creation, spread over two days, with an evening of mingling and networking in between. In this case, the prototyping and co-creation phase was split up between a number of sub-phases, namely:

- creating ideas
- creating partnerships
- creating actions
- creating prototypes (1)

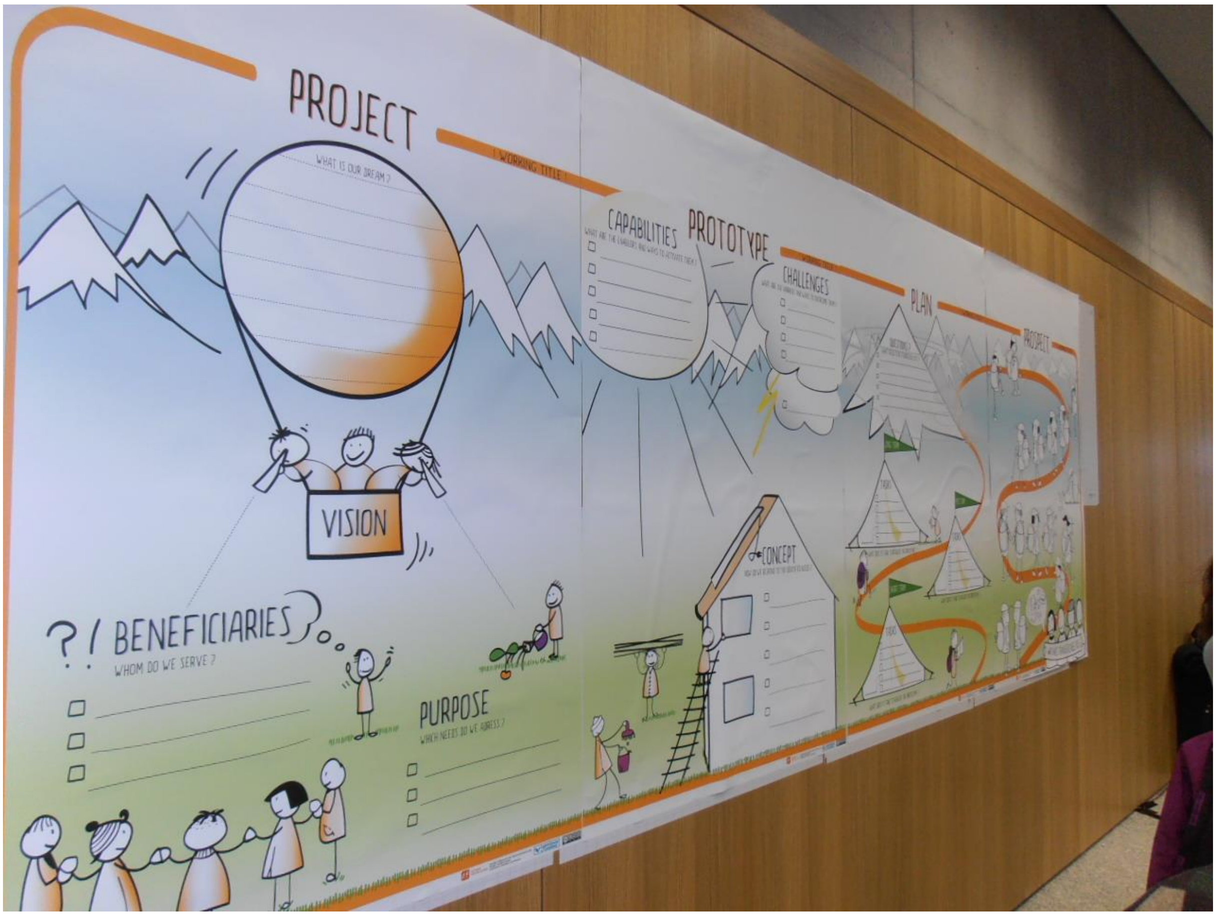
day 1

- creating synergies
- creating prototypes (2)
- creating commitments

day 2

Each of these sub-phases was introduced and facilitated carefully, to allow participants to take their time, making one small step after the other and thus to produce more solid and sustainable results. Note that in this case, we were working with a very experienced and engaged group, consisting of many professionals that had already been working with each other on the given topic for about three years. Therefore, this approach seemed to be worthwhile in view of enabling them to go deeper and make more substantial progress than they had done before.

Below: Posters focusing on Project – Prototype – Plan – Prospect



Logistically, the working groups were supported by a series of posters (see picture below), that the local host, LiFT partner Alliance for the Future, had prepared beforehand. These were specifically designed for participants to fill out in each new step of the prototyping, thereby helping them to focus on one aspect at a time. In fact, this procedure was somehow similar to developing a business plan for a start-up. It started with the vision, the purpose and the designated beneficiaries of the project, then moved on to mapping available skills, resources and capabilities in the group or its extended network, then asked about details of their plan for implementation, from unsolved questions to long-term, mid-term and short-term tasks. The final poster then asked for commitments of every group member.

So while this has been a particularly productive example, most Collaboratories will have to deal with less time. Therefore, in order to enable meaningful results, do have this point in mind already when setting up an event.

As a matter of fact, the prototyping and co-creating phases have often been a weak point in LiFT Collaboratories. This was not so much because of lack of time, but rather because some of our events within the LiFT action research project have not been (co-)initiated by an external client who served as the local host and had a strong interest in making progress on the issue in focus (as it was the case in Luxembourg, Rastatt and Tartu, for example). Rather, they were initiated by the local LiFT partner themselves for testing and experimentation with the method. While these events did produce relevant results (for more details see the LiFT Case Book), we can imagine that results might even be more resilient in an optimal scenario. Generally, in "real life" situations, **having a committed local partner who brings in an issue they have a strong stake in, is one of the success factors** when it comes to co-creating powerful results (see the chapter on context in this book for more info about choosing and setting up the context right).

A reflective question that came up in relation to the co-creation part is to what degree the visioning and harvesting as suggested here is powerful enough to **bring the majority of participants to the bottom of the U**. For one observation was that some of the proposals that participants brought up in the Open Space sessions have been on their minds already prior to or at the beginning of the Collaboratory. Yet, in these cases, the process surely did provide space for deepening their initial ideas and creating momentum around them among the other participants.

Also, while for us, certain outcomes might not appear world-shaking, they might well be for the participants. Ultimately, the goal is to **facilitate a space that is deeper than what the given group would normally be exposed to**, and thus, help to take them to their own next more complex level of dealing with the challenge in question – not to make us, the facilitators, happy.

This points to a dimension that we have been aware of, but were not able to research more systematically within the limits of the given project, namely the **level of personal and cognitive development that participants bring in** and how it influences both what kinds of processes and what kinds of results are possible within a given Collaboratory. Generally, the assumption is that the more participants are already used to complex and systems thinking, the easier it is for them to see the value of going even deeper and ultimately aim for working with collective intelligence proper.

3.2.10 Harvesting results – reporting back and celebrating

At some pre-defined point in the schedule, the co-creation part has to come to an end. Since this is an important and usually an intensive part of the overall process, people should have enough time to wrap up their group work before coming back to the large group for a joint harvesting and closing. Groups should have been primed up front to document their results and to later present them to the plenary, so ideally, each group has nominated a spokesperson and prepared a flipchart paper to support this.

In order to keep the momentum, focus and flow of the process, the sharing of results should be clearly framed by a **time limit and precise instructions** for every group. These include to share:

- what is at the core of your project?
- what are your next steps?
- who is responsible?

These are the core questions that help to best make visible the results of the process in a condensed way. If facilitated efficiently, the reporting back from groups can take the shape of **elevator pitches**.

And if that is intended, you might want to announce this beforehand, so that people can prepare themselves accordingly.

If you have had a more extensive prototyping phase, for example by making use of the step-by-step from-vision-to-action process using the above-mentioned posters or similar tools, you might want to extend the harvesting phase accordingly and invite participants to a more detailed sharing of

- the vision behind their project
- the purpose of their project
- the beneficiaries they want to serve with their project
- the available skills, resources and capabilities in their group or its extended network they aim to make use of,
- their plans for implementation, and
- (long-term, midterm and short-term) tasks and commitments.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator	Time
Harvesting results, reporting back	• Re-arrange the setup back to plenary session • Every group shares their projects and next steps • Results are somehow documented visibly (flip-chart….) • A contact person for each project is named with contact details	• Have outcomes that are as tangible as possible • Have someone responsible to do or coordinate follow-up activities • Appreciate and make visible what has been achieved	• Give clear instructions to keep up the momentum. • Be appreciative of peoples' work • Encourage ongoing activities of working groups and cross-fertilization between them • Reconnect the visionary work to the larger challenge and the bigger picture	20 min – 1 h

The facilitator's main task in this, besides giving clear instructions, watching the time and keeping the focus, is first, to **create an atmosphere of appreciation for the work the has been done** and second, to **meta-relate it back to the bigger picture** and the challenge underlying the event. Most likely, the process has generated at least some degree of fresh insight into the topic, and the co-creation phase has likely produced some outcomes that participants wouldn't have come up with otherwise. We encourage you to find a way to explicitly appreciate that and to emphasize the value of stepping out of the usual modes of conversation and networking.

At this point, it is also good to **bring the local host and/or topic holder back in** to whom the whole process has been in service in some sense. You might also give them some space again here to share a few words about their response to the outcomes of the process and how they envision following up on them in the near future. This then can be a good transition to the last phase of the public process, the closing and celebration.

3.2.11 Closing the process, celebrating results

The first and the last part of a book, a speech or an event are usually particularly crucial, because this is what many people remember best, the latter being the most recent thing in their memory. This is equally true for the Collaboratory, especially if the closing is successful in bringing together the whole journey in a good way. Just as we dedicated special attention to the beginning of the process, in order to have an opening that sets the right tone for the overall event, so it should be with the closing as well. This is not only to **create a sense of completeness**, but also to **anchor the experiences** from the process and allow people to **leave the event inspired** to continue working on their commitments, energized by the experience as such and thus, content to have made this investment of time.

One element of a good closing – if this hasn't already happened in the previous phase – is to formally or symbolically hand the substantial outcomes and results of the process back over to the local/thematic host. This can be done rather unspectacularly, by announcing verbally that this is as far as the facilitation team can take the process, and that the continuation is beyond its control.

Or it can be done with some form of ceremony as for instance at our Collaboratory in Sieben Linden. The latter combined a handing over ceremony with another valuable element of a closing worth remembering. It collected explicit commitments from all participants (or those who feel drawn to) in view of next steps they are willing to make in result of the process. In Sieben Linden, such commitments were written down and announced publicly in the closing circle, after which the basket was handed over to the local host by one of the facilitators. A similar closing ceremony is at the same time an appreciation and celebration of the results, a confirmation of peoples' commitments, and a symbolic exonoration of the facilitation team, giving responsibility for further progress back to the local host.

With this, the substantive Collaboratory process itself has been ended formally. Yet, a comprehensive closing of an intensive event of a full day or more would be incomplete without some kind of meta-level feedback. Stepping back for an **element of meta-reflection about the process** as such not only provides valuable feedback to the hosts, organizers and facilitators. It is also an opportunity for the participants to reflect back on what was particularly valuable for them, what were their most important insights and which learnings they take back home.

Even if there might not be the time for an extensive feedback round – and the latter might not fit the co-creative momentum you have ended with, there are options for harvesting at least short feedbacks and reflections from participants. One option for a big group is to have everyone just say one or two words about how they leave the meeting. Another option is to give people a feedback question to talk about in small groups of two or three, similar to the speed dating exercise in the beginning. This way, everyone has the opportunity to share, but it does not take a lot of time. Both of these can of course also be combined, if time allows. In terms of feedback for the hosts, you can also circulate a **feedback sheet** or ask people to fill in a quick **online survey**.

The second last step in the closing should be to **give thanks and appreciation** to whoever had an important role or made significant contributions to the hosting and conduction of the event. Depending on the kind of group and their cultural dispositions, this can happen in more formal or in more playful ways.

Last not least, a brief **closing ritual** might be a good way to wrap up the event and the community that has been built up among the participants energetically. This can be as simple as everybody standing in a big circle and having a look round the circle to give a smile to everybody else. It may be people in a circle holding hands and giving their neighbors a squeeze. Or it may be more extensive or more playful practices, depending on the tastes and inclinations of your group. For instance, at the ecovillage of Sieben Linden, a quite extensive series of singing, dancing and play followed the official closing, as a way to celebrate the gift of community that had built up over the days of the event. In fact, this happened independent of the LiFT closing design, but was initiated by the local host themselves, together with a number of participants.

Phase	**Observables: what needs to happen**	**Intentions & Considerations**	**Inner condition and requirements of the facilitator**	**Time**
Closing and celebrating	• design an intentional closing worth remembering • handing results back over to the local/thematic host • include element of meta-reflection about the process • (examples for big group: a one-word closing or have people connect and close in small groups, but with everyone in the room • include thank yous to role-holders	• closings help to anchor experiences of participants • appreciate and celebrate what has been achieved • provide a sense of completeness • have people leave inspired, energized and content	• Radiate a sense of humbleness, gratefulness and service, • intervene if sharings become too long • sense into what kind of closing practice or ritual actually fits the group and feels right in the moment, regardless of what has been prepared	10 min – 1h

3.2.12 Taking the Collaboratory action research further: testing other tools and methods

This run through the whole Collaboratory template step by step focused on the LiFT experience and the tools and methods that we have experimented with over the last five years (2014-2018). Our focus being the Collaboratory as a complex, comprehensive whole, we have studied how a variety of existing tools and methods for facilitating large group conversations and cooperation can best be used at various stages of a Collaboratory in a specific setting, so that the collaborative process can unfold its best potential.

At the same time, Leadership for Transition is an **ongoing action research project**, and we are fully aware that many things can still be leant and improved. Each new Collaboratory setting being different, there is a lot still to be tried out and experimented with. We invite you, our readers, students and trainees, to use the LiFT materials as a basis and starting point for doing your own experiments, trying things that we still haven't done ourselves.

In view of further creative experimentation with the Collaboratory, we invite you to consider other tools and methods that might fit the purposes and intentions described in this chapter. If you are interested in taking our Collaboratory action research further, check out the database of the Hosting Transformation project for a number of **helpful resources**, especially their Methods Database. The latter provides a search function that helps you to find suitable facilitation methods for different kinds of challenges and situations. It also includes a number of videos featuring these methods.

If you do engage in Collaboratory action research, we would love to hear from you about what you found out. Note that our resources, in particular the LiFT Case Book, is open to include further cases, so please let us know about your experiences!

LiFT is eager to learn from your experiences. So if you have hosted a Collaboratory on your own, please do contact us and share any interesting insights you might have gained!

3.3 General considerations

Beyond the individual phases of the Collaboratory template we have presented in detail in the previous sections, there are a number of more general challenges and aspects to be mindful of as a Collaboratory facilitator, designer and/or host.

3.3.1 Breaks and transitions between sessions and phases

Even though a "break" is usually a "time out" of the ongoing process, in a Collaboratory, being a comprehensive whole, breaks can and should be **intelligently designed into the process** to support the overall purpose and flow of the event. Besides just being an opportunity to cater for practical and bio needs, they can also serve several process-related needs at the same time. So our invitation here is to reflect about how this might be possible in your event – first, to save time and make the best use of it, and second, in order to design an optimal flow that is not interrupted by breaks that don't serve this purpose.

For instance, what you don't want is people leaving the venue into all sorts of directions for private, personal errands during the breaks – and thus dispersing the connection and built up energy of the group. This can partly be avoided by having a venue that is located away from immediate distraction, but partly also by consciously designing break times accordingly.

Three aspects are relevant here: first, navigating the spectrum between scheduling breaks strictly according to plan and going with the flow; second, the spectrum between "light" and more "heavy" structuring of breaks themselves; and third whether, when and where to insert extra breaks for stepping out of the process itself onto the meta-level of reflecting it with the participants.

As to the first aspect, it is generally known that the **average attention span** for passive listening and taking in content is at around 90 min in a row, so sessions should aim for not exceeding this timeframe. However, if you have sessions that include a lot of interaction or even physical movement, this timeframe can be extended, because change and variety are generally good tools to keep attention up. At the same time, people will experience time subjectively.

Subjectivity of perception and flexibility of breaks

As we are working with diverse groups, we need to be aware that time is experienced subjectively in each of the Collaboratory phases. Therefore, any phase is likely experienced as too long by some participants and as too short by some other participants. The facilitator needs to be able to feel the stretch that is still possible for those participants who are closer to the extremes of this spectrum, while at the same time making sure that a phase is wrapped up when the results are there that are needed for the subsequent phase. The level of energy in the group is a good indicator in this regard.

In a practical sense, you will mostly need to make some **re-arrangements in the setup** of the meeting room between different Collaboratory phases, such as changing the constellation of chairs, preparing flipcharts or other materials etc. So this is obviously one substantial criteria for the minimum needed length of a break. Also, experience shows that with large groups, it is mostly difficult to have efficient, short breaks due to the natural inertia of processes like moving back and forth between the meeting room, catering area and bathrooms. So rather than having many short breaks, more extensive breaks at crucial transitions between phases are most appropriate.

How long to run a session – and when to wrap up?

People who like talking and interacting with others could stay “forever” in the early dialogue phases, whereas more action-oriented people get increasingly nervous if they are prevented from starting to eventually do something.

The facilitator also has to have a sense of the Collaboratory choreography as a whole. As it is a choreography, it has phases where tension/energy builds up and phases where tension/energy can be released again. People participating in a Collaboratory for the first time cannot see nor anticipate this longer pattern. The facilitator needs to find a good mix of calibrating the phases and explaining /re-explaining what is going and on and what is going to come next.

Meta-level reflections (“editorials”) as part of transitioning from phase to phase

Another calibration issue is about whether and when to move from the process itself (first level) to framing/reflection (meta-level) and back. This, again is relative to the group’s need and interest to get more explanation about what is going on and why. A good Collaboratory is built on a light structure, i.e. a structure that is liberating and enabling things to happen, and might thus hardly be perceived as such, at least not as limiting the natural flow of things. Therefore, the focus should generally be on the level of the process itself with only as much meta-level framing as needed.

However, it also happens that participants jump onto the meta-level themselves, in particular when they have an issue with the method. Therefore, the challenge throughout is to give just enough of the right framing for people to be able to trust and relax into the process as such.

The degree to which you can leave breaks “empty” for people to just “hang out”, grab a coffee and talk (as in a more conventional conference format) depends on the existing timeframe, and partly on how much structure you want to give. We assume that most people will appreciate some kind of **active**

design and facilitation of breaks, sensing that this is an expression of a thought through process and event which “holds” them in a conscious way.

How these breaks – and the transitions they help to constitute between Collaboratory phases – are facilitated, is a question of design and group culture, similar to the process itself.

If your overall schedule provides enough time for each phase of the process (including slack time), there is less need to use the breaks for supporting the process. However, our experience is that time is almost always scarce, and that thus, **inviting peoples’ focus into some specific direction can add value** on the level of the energetic flow of things. Even if you don’t structure breaks a lot though, we recommend that you aim for **having everyone together in one room or in one space** (catering area), so conversations from the previous phase can easily continue or be followed up on. For generally, having people engage in conversations to connect and exchange is beneficial to the process already in itself.

This is also why we often don’t facilitate breaks in some parts of the process at all, in particular in the open space, but rather invite people to self-organize their coffee and bio breaks when they need them, provided that catering logistics allow this.

Phase	Observables: what needs to happen	Intentions & Considerations	Ideas for conscious facilitation	Time
Ideas for breaks	• 10-30 min breaks between sessions • Re-arrange the set-up of chairs and other logistics in the room • Prepare eating, drinking, catering service	• Practical, logistical and bio necessities • Give people time to digest, meet and exchange • Re-arrange the set-up in the room • Make a smooth transition to the next phase	• Give a sound signal (i.e. bells, cymbals, gong) when breaks start and end • Verbally relate the break to the session you transition out of (i.e. use it for digestion, …) • Give clear instructions before the break about its duration and what you expect people to do during the break • Use the break to get support from participants with re-arranging chairs etc. • Use the break as part of the process, i.e. for a reflective walk or as a mindfulness exercise	10-30 min each

The second consideration is about degrees of activity when facilitating breaks. A rather light form of navigating participants’ focus into beneficial directions for the process is to invite them to use the break to “digest” the previous session and observe what was most important for them. The next more structured approach would be to invite them to take some question or aspect that has been raised before into the break and reflect about it, either individually or together with someone else. An even more “solid” way of facilitating breaks was done at our Collaboratory in Almedalen, where we had extremely little time (4 x 1,5 hours). So here, we used the break between the fishbowl and the dialog for having the participants do the necessary rearranging of chairs. Calling for a “mindfulness exercise”, we asked every participant to stand up, remain in silence, grab their chair and carefully move in the room, then find three other people and – without speaking – form a small circle together with them and their chairs. So this is an example of how even logistic constraints can be creatively turned into benefits and be used to serve the overall process.

Finally, as mentioned in the box above, a third issue worth considering is whether, when and where to insert extra breaks for changing from the process itself to the meta-level of reflecting it with the participants. The more a group is interested in the hows and whys of the Collaboratory method (for instance, a group of trainees), the more it is adequate to **dedicate some time to "editorials"**, i.e. comments on the method itself. If such moments are built into the process at various occasions, this can free the rest of the time from meta-level interventions to have as much of an undisturbed first level process as possible. While a parsimony of meta-level is desirable, it is important to be flexible enough to shift this balance, if there is a tension or disturbance building up (see the section on tensions below), and to have an outlet for dealing with it.

In view of **transitions** proper, make sure that there is a plan about what needs to happen in view of changing the setting for the next Collaboratory phase, and that you have enough people ready to help who know ahead of time what will be expected of them, for moving furniture (primarily chairs), guiding people physically to the right space for a new segment etc.

3.3.2 Seeking feedback during the process

If the facilitator(s) can draw on a helper/observer team, a good way to collect feedback is to have **team meetings** at certain points of time in the process. Additionally, it makes sense to liaise with representatives of the local and international host, as well as "feeling the temperature" by listening to selected participants during the breaks. A plenary with a feedback round at the end of each day (or the beginning of the next) is also a way to capture needs, frustrations and suggestions.

Graphic recording and other observation activities

Engaging a professional graphic recorder where possible is generally a good idea, because their work helps to make visible the progress of the process and its most important results. Besides mindful facilitation itself, this is not only a tool for documenting the event, but also to let participants experience that they are part of an actual co-creation process.

If you have a graphic recorder and/or members of your team taking over some kind of documentation role, these people should have **regular check-ins with the facilitation team** in order to best orient their focus and grasp what is essential in the process. While recording and documentation is generally part of the post-facilitation activities, it likely needs continuous awareness even during the process. Inversely, the facilitation team might get valuable feedback from observers if space is provided for intermediate debriefings and re-alignment meetings.

3.3.3 Typical tensions, pitfalls & difficulties

Among the many challenges you will typically meet when conducting a Collaboratory, even though you may have thoroughly prepared it, some will come **from the outside**, i.e. from the context and group you are working with, and others more **from the inside**, i.e. your own attitude, sense of competence etc. Below, we will briefly look at some of them.

As a general rule, **be prepared for things going differently than expected**. Having a (good) plan does not mean or imply that the plan must be implemented at all cost. On the contrary, good plans are rather a tool for the facilitator to prepare themselves for optimal and less optimal scenarios, in other words, to help them sense into the expected process ahead of time and mentally run through various scenarios. Since **having to improvise** around unexpected situations at some point during the process **is the norm, rather than the exception**, having several potential scenarios available in one's toolbox to chose from is probably the most pertinent feature of an experience facilitator as opposed to a beginner.

	Tensions and challenges during facilitation	Desirable competences and helpful strategies
Challenges from the outside (context and group)	• encountering last minute changes on the side of the local host and/or venue, catering etc. • desire to move faster versus process design slowing down initially • needing certainty, when the process leads to moments of uncertainty, not-knowing and fuzziness • some participants getting triggered by their personal patterns, thereby disturbing/deviating energy and attention from the whole process • relation-orientedness versus task-orientedness • stretching the “cognitive task demand” too much and thereby inducing resistance in participants • temporary discontent of host/client/participants	• get a sense of the expected participant group in advance • being explicit about meta-level process rationale and requirements up front • being comfortable with last minute changes, trying to accommodate partners wherever possible • provide a good mix of structure and flow, to cater for different needs • holding silence and discomfort when it arises, radiating one’s trust in the process, make explicit that moments of discomfort are normal • be ok with however the process goes (it is the group’s process!) and assume that whatever happens is the only/best thing that could have • stay connected to one’s essence and source (higher self, evolutionary impulse) • being able to notice all sorts of emotions, perceptions, inner responses etc. without having to attribute or project them to any outside source • inviting participants into holding any discomfort connected to not-knowing, or to own viewpoints being challenged as part of the experience • make explicit existing tensions and dilemmas to help participants to dialectically move beyond them • provide space for discomfort to be processed somehow
Challenges from the inside	• not feeling up to the task • lack of trust in oneself, thereby unintentionally radiating shakiness • difficulty to endure fuzziness and uncertainty • lack of trust in the process • Not daring to be assertive, seeking confirmation from the participants rather than relying on one’s inner strength • uncertainty about timing and adjustments • staying in the comfort zone, rather than going for the next learning edge	• prepare well, for having many options available to choose from • rehearse as often as possible, especially parts you find new/difficult • get support from mentors • facilitate in a team and share roles • design support roles and integrate their holders into the team • be in good contact and communication with the local host and other relevant partners throughout • make explicit moments of uneasiness, either in debriefs or in the process itself, if it is caused by an underlying tension in the room, and try to articulate that tension • regarding timing and adjustments, ask the participants if they are willing to go with a certain change in the schedule up front

As outlined several times before, preparation is everything, also in view of upcoming challenges. Many of them being typical, you can at least mentally prepare yourself for them. If possible, do also **rehearse**

sequences of the process that you feel less comfortable with in order to learn from experiences and thus extend your comfort zone. Do as much as possible of this together with your team, for a well-aligned team provides additional support and back-up if needed.

Good preparation is always a **mixture of inner and practical preparation**. In both areas, there are a lot of well-known pitfalls that can be avoided – or at least navigated successfully if you take sufficient time to prepare for them in advance. The table below contains some of the most common difficulties and challenges that we have encountered, along with ideas about how to prepare for and respond to them.

At the same time, **know that you cannot meet all expectations** in a Collaboratory. Moreover, part of the process is precisely about counteracting certain expectations, in order to take participants into experiences they haven't been in before. This is one of the tensions a facilitator should be comfortable with holding. However, if you sense tensions around certain expectations not being met, either before (for instance with the local host or other partners) or during the process, there are numerous ways to productively address and reduce these. Making them explicit and outlining available options is one strategy. Asking participants to hold their discomfort for a while and trust that the process will ultimately produce ways out of it is another. Navigating sensitive tensions and balances in a conscious and confident way is one of the most important skills and competences of a good Collaboratory facilitator.

We have tried to carve out and make visible these skills as best as we could throughout the last chapters, even though this book has mainly focused on the more practical aspects of designing and conducting Collaboratories. By providing numerous general and background considerations behind the more immediate tools and options for application, we hope to equip you with sufficient food for thought to raise your awareness for what matters most, and thus to enable you to be more relaxed and knowledgeable when preparing a Collaboratory on your own.

Yet, we would like to stress that beyond these practical aspects, much of the **quality of good facilitation also comes from the person of the facilitator** itself, more precisely from their personal leadership development in various areas.

3.3.4 Important skills and competences

Among the single most important skills and competences of a Collaboratory facilitator are first of all, the ability to **create a light, positive atmosphere** and, connected to this, the **art of "reading the room"** and to be dynamically responsive to the audience in adequate ways, especially in relation to tensions, disruptions and other unexpected situations or events.

Creating, shaping and maintaining a light, positive atmosphere during the event

As mentioned earlier, good facilitation should be as lightweight as possible for supporting the overall process. Ideally, it is in service of the latter to the degree that it is hardly noticed by participants as a guiding structure at all. So while some structure is helpful and necessary, the **structure should** not be dogmatically implemented, but rather kept open enough to **"breathe" along with the overall flow**.

At the start of a Collaboratory, when people are gathering, everything is possible. In an ideal world, the facilitators create a positive, enthusiastic, yet deep climate around the topic of the event, so that people feel at ease from start and most of them get the impression: "this will be fun!" from the moment they enter the room. Or, if the topic is severe, at least let's feel laidback about it. This holds true for before, during and after the Collaboratory.

He or she is scouting the collective process of inquiry, inviting and reinforcing brave conversations through their way of introducing and framing them. Without having to interfere a lot during the sessions themselves, s/he might put in the guiding question – or a deepening question here and there, but usually, initial framing and focused attention is what is needed most. As Bill O'Brian has put it, the **success of the intervention is a result of the inner condition of the intervener**. So as a vulnerable listener, the facilitator is supporting the process by pure presence, intimacy and warmth.

Another aspect that is helpful for creating a positive, light working atmosphere is to have the facilitation team well aligned and tuned in, and able to keep their **focus on the joined intention** for the event. They also need to have enough free attention both to sense or "read" the room and stay calm and not enter into "serious" vibration when the process in the room unfolds with all its messiness... It is supposed to do that in order for meaningful processes to occur.

The art of "reading the room" (Jonathan Reams)

LiFT coordinator Jonathan Reams describes the art and skill of 'reading the room' as quite subtle and involving a number of key aspects. When perceiving what is going on in a group of participants, what comes to our conscious mind is likely the product of internal filters we are usually unaware of. So what we actually notice among all that is going on has mostly already been filtered. Also, the lenses of perception we bring to this play a role in shaping how we interpret what we perceive going on. Similarly, how we make meaning out of the local issue owner and of their needs, has an influence on how we 'read' a room. So the facilitator should aim for becoming more and more aware of their own lenses and filters of perception (see Chris Argyris' Ladder of Inference, box beside), in order to be able to actually perceive more accurately what happens in the room without confusing it with his or her own inner responses.

The ladder of inference by Chris Argyris and Peter Senge

Actions	Actions are taken based on prior beliefs and conclusions
Beliefs	Conclusions are drawn based on interpreted facts and prior experiences
Conclusions	Conclusions are drawn based on prior beliefs
Assumptions	Assumptions are made based on the subjective meaning of observations
Interpretations/ meanings	Facts are interpreted and given subjective meaning
Selections	Facts are selected based on filters based on prior experiences and beliefs
Observations	Factual reality (information) is observed

The challenge that is related to this is that we can **project our own needs and desires as facilitators** onto what we look for and selectively filter what we read. At the same time, the more we can learn to notice and ultimately suspend our own lenses and filters and take a meta-view on events, the more we are likely to be able to hear and see and make meaning of what is going on in a way that reflects the participant's' experience.

Yet another challenge connected to this is how we choose to value participants' sense of meaning and value in each moment in relation to our own. In other words, can we **maintain and hold existing tension and discomfort** in a way that can enable breakthroughs and innovations or do we "give in" to them?

For being ‘responsive’ in terms of giving people what they say they want, is not always what is called for. Collaboratories can be about helping diverse stakeholders do adaptive work (in the sense of Ronald Heifetz’s concept of **adaptive leadership**) where what people need can be different than their wants of the moment. So in this sense, being responsive to the reading of the room needs to take into account what are the adaptive challenges in relation to the issue, how much tension can the group take in relation to what their current knowledge and default practices are? To what degree are they ready to “dance on the edge of what they know” (Heifetz)? And how do time constraints and other contextual factors influence the responsiveness and capability of the facilitator to orchestrate the conflicts this may bring up?

Marius: I was observing that you (…) walked around quite a lot, drifting between the participants, and sensing the mood or atmosphere. In order to do that you have to have somebody else take care of practicalities, if there are any. If somebody new were to do this, what are the key points you look for to see if the atmosphere is right to start initiate something?

Jonathan: That is a good question. I think there are multiple considerations. Part of it is a **very soft gaze or focus of the hearing senses**. Listening for the tone of voice, the quality of energy, how animated are the conversations, how flowing, how intense. Listening to the hum of the room. It is similar to a classroom where you have small groups discussing. You are trying to sense when is there a lull, when are they ready to be done. You are training the sense of **listening to subtle clues**. To try to find a point for the intervention, when to change from this loose structure to a focused attention.

(From a post-facilitation interview)

How one chooses to navigate these tensions and difficulties depends on how you understand them in relation to what is going on, i.e. how you are reading the room in relation to the issue. If the difficulties are of a technical nature (i.e. not adaptive, but simple to define and have known solutions) then there is no need to hold people in tension. Finding ways to accommodate or adapt to emergent situations is important.

However, if the tension or difficulty is arising due to a discomfort coming from an assumption being challenged, habit being shown to be out of sync with the issue, old loyalties being questions etc., then it can be important to deal with this by keeping the tension in the system or group and to help them process it in some appropriate fashion.

Reflecting on this, in a larger sense, the Collaboratory is designed to help people scaffold their functioning in relation to such adaptive challenges, so often the appropriate response will be to “trust the process” and enable the steps in the Collaboratory to do the work of helping to resolve such adaptive tensions.

Metaphorically, **the facilitator “tunes” into the group like a radio** that must be tuned in to function properly. The large group might be seen as an orchestra to fine-tune. “Tuning” the Collaboratory is about **emphatic listening to the “grand violin”**. Again, to use another metaphor, the great choirmasters don’t focus on each instrument, but to the collective impact of what is going on. To listen to the “grand violin” is to be present in openness and trust. That also means **that the facilitator’s own “ego” or agenda is subordinated to the bigger potential**, the emerging collective intelligence. *(Per Hörberg)*

Dealing with unexpected situations

Despite all preparation, being tuned in and reading the room, there will always be difficult situations that you haven't thought of – and could not have prepared. Besides those challenges mentioned in the table beneath, here is an **example** of a situation we faced at the LiFT workshop in Almedalen. The workshop had been difficult in itself due to a less-than-optimal constellation of local host and topic owner. One of the challenges was the latter having a strong agenda of her own, including the attempt to bring in a number of "important people", even though these were not always able to adapt to basic necessities of the Collaboratory process (see case study on LiFT Almedalen in the LiFT Case Book). Below is an excerpt from the interview by Marius Lervag Aasprong with Jonathan Reams about handling this situation.

Jonathan recalls: "There was this fellow, who was desired to be there by the local issue owner, but didn't show up until 1:30 in the afternoon. The local issue owner desperately wanted him to speak to the group, but our design had no room for this. At that time, people were in small groups, sharing and discussing things that came to them after the visioning session. There were very intense small group conversations going on. The challenge was how to adapt the emergent need and desire from this person and the local issue owner. One option was to say 'we've got a methodology and design for the day and we need to be strict about those, so sorry, you missed the boat.' Another option was to offer them to come later for the open space, which I tried to suggest. However, he was not available later on. So then, I had to think: Okay, it's not going to happen that way, and so what's wrong if we just create something that makes it look like it was a natural thing for him to go around and listen in on each small group conversation, and then summarize and feed back to participants what he was hearing and make some comments on this. This way he could have a moment in the spotlight and engage the audience. In doing it this way, it was not disruptive at all for the process. Then it was an intervention of improvising and framing it to the participants by saying: 'we've had a special guest appear, and we have an opportunity', and simply presenting it in a way that was not a disruption of their experience, but a natural organic emergent part of it."

Marius: "So your approach to disruptions, in lack of a better word, is to see how you can include them into the facilitation itself?"

Jonathan: "I would say that there is a decision process around that. It is not automatic that it wants to get included. There may be times when it is just disruptive, and you say 'we have to put up a boundary here'. I think it is not as straightforward as that you always just go with the flow. There are judgements and decisions. I think in this case, there were very specific things like the nature of the participants that were there, where the process was generally going, and how we felt about that. It was also more amenable to that at this point. The process was not like there was a group that was heavily immersed in very concrete work and action and somebody was going to come in and make a half hour speech on a tangential subject. That would really disrupt the momentum, and then I think we would say no."

While the latter incident was an example of how unexpected situations can be dealt with, we cannot offer any generally valid recipe in this regard. As the earlier sub-sections have shown, the **degree of skill** with which a facilitator is able to respond to similar challenges will be connected to their overall **leadership development and experience**. You find some more background about this in our Foundations and Resources Book and in our related readings available on the LiFT website, as well as in the leadership development literature and tools that are widely available beyond LiFT itself.

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