

The Collaboratory method and spirit

The purposes of the document are as follows:

- Share my reflections and experiences on the Collaboratory method and similar methods
- Inspire and contribute to further development and use of the Collaboratory method, within and outside LiFT project
- Encourage continued education and dissemination of methods and forms of deep and playful cooperation and dialogue in the world.

Table of content

The Collaboratory method and spirit	1
Table of content.....	1
1. The Collaboratory method as I see it	2
1.2 My reflections	2
1.3 My suggestions.....	2
2. When using Collaboratory as a problem solving method and when not?	3
2.1 My reflections	3
2.2 My suggestions.....	3
3. The Preparation phase in the Collaboratory - The topic	3
3.1 My reflections	3
3.2 My suggestions.....	4
4. Roles involved in the Collaboratory.....	4
4.1 My reflections	5
4.2 My suggestions.....	5
5. The outcome of a Collaboratory - The product.....	5
5.1 My reflections	5
5.3 My suggestions.....	6
6. The Collaboratory training	6
6.1 My reflections	6
6.2 My suggestions.....	6
7. My thanks.....	6
7.1 Who is Marina?	7

1. The Collaboratory method as I see it

The Collaboratory method is a structured, co-creative and integral based method directed to societal organisations and businesses in need for concrete solutions on complex problems or challenges, and at the same time, processes and solutions leading to societal transition. A change journey starts.

1.2 My reflections

A Collaboratory event requires time. One of the characteristics of the method involves reflections on a deeper and more conscious level. Reflections on both the problem/challenge itself, reflections on the problem solving process and, not least, reflections on the consequences for the affected stakeholders.

Reflections takes time and requires tranquility. Co-creation, team-building, also takes time. This is one of the reasons why a collaboratory is typically running in two whole days. Perhaps is two days though a too long time to attract most people?

When starts and ends a Collaboratory? Does it start when preparing for facilitating and conducting the Collaboratory event itself? Does it start when the "Problem Analyst" gets into contact with the Topic owner? Does it end when the outcome of the Collaboratory event is handed over to the local host for the event? Does it end when the self-organised projects have handed over their project results (solutions) to the topic owner? Or are there other end-characteristics?

Is the right problem solved during the Collaboratory event? The quality of the "pre-preparation phase" sets the level and quality of success for a Collaboratory. Spending time and efforts on the dialogue with the topic owner and thoroughly formulating the guiding question and expectations on the outcome has to be focused.

Focus on Product or Process? Awareness of these differences are needed. A conscious and open decision on the priority between these are necessary as guidance for the whole Collaboratory event.

Running a Collaboratory affect, in shorter and longer term, all involved stakeholders, even the non-present. It affects people as individuals and as groups. A holocratic view emerges.

1.3 My suggestions

- Conduct a Collaboratory event in only one day and reflect on the consequences for both the process and the product
- Clarify the difference between "A Collaboratory" and "A Collaboratory event"
- Clarify when the Collaboratory starts and when it ends
- Put more focus on the topic owner, the guiding question and the topic owners expectations on the event (e.g. priority between process and product) and expectations on the outcomes (of the event respective the projects).

2. When to use Collaboratory as a problem solving method and when not to?

Understanding why the Collaboratory method should be used or not, for what purposes and to serve which stakeholders, is a key issue.

2.1 My reflections

There are other methods for problem solving e.g. PSTB (Problem Solving Team Building). This method is also a sophisticated and structured problem solving method but is very fast (can be run in two hours) and has not the width and depth compared to the Collaboratory.

The PSTB method is also using the resources of collective intelligence, involves business or organisations staff as whole persons and has the approach of team-building/co-creation, like the Collaboratory. PSTB is though mainly focused on the outcome, e.g. a to-do list including concrete action-based activities, end-dates for these, appointed responsables and "pros and cons" to each activity. PSTB uses tools like brain-storming and encourages unusual, multi perspectives as well as design thinking but has no or few elements of visioning, deep dialogue and listening etc. Perhaps PSTB can be used for solving some social and sustainability challenges but my experiences of using the PSTB is for business issues.

2.2 My suggestions

- Urge the preparation team to carefully consider if the Collaboratory really is the appropriate method or if there are other more suitable methods for the specific case.

3. The Preparation phase in the Collaboratory - The topic

Meeting with and getting to know the topic owner/owners and listen to their problems and/or challenges is the first thing to do for a "Problem Analyst" or the "Pre-Preparation team".

3.1 My reflections

The issue at stake has to be scoped, i.e. enough limited, and the guiding question has to be right on spot and enough inspiring formulated.

It takes a lot of time to contact, meet, interview, have a dialogue with the topic owner, together scope the topic, be aware of the "real" problem, formulate the essential Guiding question and formulate the expectations for the Collaboratory event and the outcome. This has to take time. The quality of the whole pre-preparation work is the key success factor for both the process within and the result out of a Collaboratory event.

Perhaps should a "pre-preparation team", not only one person, act towards the topic owner? In any case a "business" mindset is needed even when acting towards non-profit organisations, i.e. more of outcome/product planning, not only process planning.

3.2 My suggestions

- Include a separate "Pre-preparation phase" in the method, separate from preparing the facilitation of the Collaboratory event.

4. Roles involved in the Collaboratory

A lot of diverse stakeholders and actors in different roles and groups/teams are involved in preparing, designing and conducting a Collaboratory event. Even other roles are needed, in the Preparation phase and in the "Project phase" coming after the Collaboratory event. Besides that there are further other stakeholders e.g. citizens to be affected by the Project results.

Roles

1. Stakeholder (all of the following)
2. Topic owner (problem/challenge owner, customer, outsourcer, case giver, project results receiver)
3. Problem Analyst (interviewer/questioner/definer of the topic formula and expectations)
4. Local host (at site representative of the topic owner and the project ideas receiver (hte Collaboratory event outcome)
5. Collaboratory host (holding the event)
6. Participant (topic involved/concerned/contributing person)
7. Topic expert (specially invited participant)
8. Facilitator (conducting the event)
9. Project initiator (delivers the project idea to the local host, becomes a project participant or not)
10. Project participant
11. Project representative (towards the topic owner)
12. Affected stakeholder (one or several of the above stakeholders but more often external stakeholders, e.g. citizens)

Groups/teams

1. Preparation team
2. Facilitation team
3. Project team (self-organised group to design and conduct a tangible project and carry forward the project results to the topic owner)

4.1 My reflections

Being aware of the different Collaboratory roles, groups/teams and responsibilities is very important. I think that the Collaboratory method documentation and training is in need of further clarification especially for people not experienced in using other problem solving methods.

4.2 My suggestions

- Draw a roles and groups/teams map illustrating and clarifying the different roles related to different groups/teams and different phases of the Collaboratory.
- Consider whether certain roles should have other names, e.g. change Local host to Local topic owner
- Include a Pre-preparation team role
- Include a Problem/Challenge Analyst role

5. The outcome of a Collaboratory - The product

The outcome of a Collaboratory event is ideas on tangible projects delivering innovative, sustainable but still concrete solutions addressing the topic owners problems and challenges.

5.1 My reflections

The "dry and hard" outcome of a Collaboratory during the Collaboratory event is several quick-born project ideas invented in the end of the Collaboratory by more or less topic involved and/or affected participants. These participants are more or less used to self-organisation and have more or less experience/professional knowledge in financing, starting, steering, executing projects and delivering "hard" project results. It is a risk that these project ideas doesn't even start or, if started, doesn't lead to anything or, even worse, leads to frustration and disappointment in the project team and by the topic owner.

The "soft" process oriented results during the Collaboratory is of course important e.g. sense of self and connection to others, sense of lightness, playfulness, inspiration, creativity, possibilities, access to more intuitive knowledge, sense of connection to the bigger picture and to common consciousness.

My experiences are though that the problem owners will not become satisfied without even "hard" product oriented results.

Who is in need for the solutions, the product? The Collaboratory method has to consider even the affected stakeholders, e.g. citizens and business customers.

It is easy to feel keen on the project ideas during the Collaboratory event but these project ideas can easily be forgotten afterwards. Committed persons are required to form the self-organised project groups where the project result is impatiently requested by committed topic owners.

What is a project? Which are the steps for implementing each project? Who should design the project? Who should ask for and follow-up the project deliverables? Even if self-organised projects these questions have to be answered.

5.3 My suggestions

- Sharpen the Collaboratory method and the designs of specific Collaboratory events to deliver even hard product results in order to market the Collaboratory to be seen as "a fundamental trustful global problem solving method"
- Invite probably affected stakeholders, e.g., citizens to the Collaboratory events
- Describe "best practices", good examples of creative project ideas, realised projects and useful solutions as results of Collaboratories.

6. The Collaboratory training

It is important to give Collaboratory trainings for both academic educational reasons and for societal and political development reasons. Our society is in need of innovative, tangible, and sustainable problem solving methods and solutions.

6.1 My reflections

A Collaboratory training is a training for a students personal growth and for growth in facilitation competences in order to become a supporting resource for facing human, societal and business challenges.

6.2 My suggestions

- Keep up the good work 😊

7. My thanks

My grateful thanks to all of you who contribute to the Collaboratory and other structured methods and forms for business/societal collaboration on local and global challenges.

Most importantly thanks for in every day life acting for a relaxed, trustful, playful and creative collaboratory climate between people and for offering spaces and contexts where we can connect to each other and everything else within and around us.

Marina Hammer

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7.1 Who is Marina?

I am 61. My family consist of my two parents of 85, a sister and her family, two grown up children, two grand children and three "extra" grown up children and their families.

As a professional Business Analyst consultant and Business owner I am working for big companies in Sweden, e.g. Scania (Volkswagen) and for the public sector such as the Swedish Police Authority. My missions are pre-studies and business analysis work in Change Programs and Projects affecting business processes and routines, business rules, external and internal stakeholders, organizations and roles, and IT systems and services.

In my sparetime, I do singing, dancing, skiing, hiking, reading and writing.

As a person I am globally engaged and locally active, always striving for trust, dialogue and co-creation in my life and between people.

I have worked for initiative of co-creation since 2012 and have been a representative in the LiFT Project events "Why School" in Stockholm 2013, "The Evolution of Organization" in Vienna 2014, "Meetings needed for the world" in Visby 2016, "Growing up in Eco Villages" in Sieben Linden 2017 and "Summer School and Facilitator Training" in Vienna 2018.