Hans-Werner Franz
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Building Leadership in Project and Network Management

A Facilitator's Tool Set

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With
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Springer

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Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 The book

The book in your hand is not a scientific book, although it is based just as much on science as on my own experience in consultancy and management. As its title suggests, we want to build a bridge between the leadership that is typical of facilitation techniques and that of project and network management. Therefore this book does more than provide you with insights into the mainly methodical Messages we want to transmit. It will also make suggestions for how to train facilitators, and in the centre of the book you will find a wealth of 40 carefully selected and reality-proof Tools, many of which have never been previously published in English, and in some case have never been published at all. With all of these you will find a presentation of our way of using them. Our sole objective is to offer our views and experience in improving communication for effective co-operation, i.e. we want people who collaborate in some way to find and decide on the best courses of action, then share and implement these decisions better. We want to promote learning by doing, just as well as doing by learning.

So this book is for people who in some way are responsible for successful co-operation in projects, in and across organisations or networks of organisations.

Action Learning has many fathers (but few mothers) and roots. Just to name a few: Kurt Lewin (1951) was the one who introduced the concept of Action Research; and many social researchers after him have worked in this tradition. Scientists like Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2002) or Bjørn Gustavsen (1992) were interested in the relevance of social sciences in society; the methods used by them were frequently also applied in what was called emancipatory

research (Fricke 1975) and in development policies in what used to be called the Third World (Pretty et al. 1995). Others, such as Argyris and Schön (1974) and later Peter Senge (1996) and Mike Pedler, John Burgoyne and Tom Boydell (1994) have been looking into the learning organisation or learning company and better management (Pedler 2008). It was Reg Revans (1979, 1998) who introduced the concept of Action Learning back in the 1940s; and Joseph Raelin (1997) tried to bridge the gap between the emancipatory and the management lines.

We have not bothered to situate ourselves in any of these lines or to position ourselves with respect to any of these traditions. If anything, we would see ourselves as closest to Argyris and Schön with their reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action approaches. But what you find in this book are our views and concepts, our methods and tools. They have passed through our heads, hearts and hands and if they refer to concepts originally presented by others we only reproduce them because we have made them ours by reflective practice and practical reflection.

We want to enhance the co-operative reflectivity - or was it reflective co-operativity? - of all those who (must) work together in some purposeful joint endeavour, whether it is in projects and programmes, networks and clusters, or innovation and improvement. In our view, at their core, organisations are purposefully structured co-operations of people, just as networks and clusters are purposefully structured co-operations of organisations. In order to shape successful co-operation, a few fundamental things are necessary although they are still frequently and easily forgotten or ignored:

- Co-operation needs careful communication in order to be successful.
- Careful communication needs diligent preparation in terms of the aim(s) of working and learning, deciding the content, how it is to be tackled, which tools and materials might be helpful as a support, and who will play what role in such a process.
- Communication and sharing meaning is greatly enhanced by methods of visualisation. In our context, visualisation does not mean presenting PowerPoint charts. It means making thinking and working processes visible with the aim of sharing the results as a basis for common work.
- Sharing meaning builds on active participation and agreements about what and how to do things.
- Successful communication for successful co-operation is a management task. If managers need an outsider to support them in this task they should contract a facilitator.
- Managers perform better if they are good facilitators. This is particularly true for managers of projects and networks who have no

power and whose authority only resides in shaping successful co-operation.
- Facilitating means leading people to actively shared decisions and practice.

Six basic principles of successful organisational learning and development (Message 2M15) are at the heart of these fundamentals.

1. Stakeholder and/or customer orientation
   Identify objectives; analyse for whom you want to do what.
2. Improvement process
   Build on experience for progress. Only the problems and questions are new.
3. Learning process
   Invite people to join you in learning how to do things better. This includes learning how to learn better.
4. Participation process
   Make people who are affected by change participate actively in shaping it.
5. Decision-making process
   Make sure that people can understand why a decision has been taken, especially if it is not a decision they have taken themselves as participators.
6. Appropriation process
   Only then will people actively make decisions their own, i.e. learn, for practice and accept responsibilities.

The decision to write this book was prompted by many factors, but the main impetus came from my many experiences of success and frustration in international projects and from the very simple observation that outside Germany and German speaking countries the moderation (or facilitation) method developed by Metaplan (www.metaplan.com) in the early seventies of the last century is hardly known, let alone practiced by anybody. However, it is not only moderated visualisation which is not known. More significantly, the combination of visualised thinking and working with structuring tools of analysis, decision making, planning and checking is largely unknown, even in German speaking countries.

The collection of tools presented here is a selection from the many that are available. We have chosen tools from a large range of areas such as creative thinking, organisation development, quality management, project management, human resources development, coaching, evaluation, qualitative empirical research etc. Our focus was not action learning in general, but facilitating networking on an action learning basis as we understand it, to make co-operation easier and enhance reflective co-operativity.

The selected tools cover four clearly defined aims and activities in this specific context: improving communication, collecting information, planning and managing projects, analysing problems and preparing decision making. We have practiced all of the tools on several occasions, quite a few of them for decades, and many specific recommendations for using certain tools are based on this experience. Only a few of the tools could be used in the framework of the Leonardo project SME ACTor which is behind this book. Therefore, the documented experimentation with tools in the project context will not cover all of them.

1.2 The project

Writing this book has been made possible by a European project called SME ACTor, i.e. SME Action learning facilitator. The project was developed in the framework of the European Programme Leonardo da Vinci (LdV). The LdV Programme aims to implement EU vocational education and training (VET) policies by contributing "to the promotion of a Europe of knowledge by developing a European area of cooperation in the field of education and vocational training" (art. 1.3 of the Council decision establishing the LdV programme). In particular, SME ACTor comes under priority 4 of the programme: Continuous training of teachers and trainers and, in fact, its results are intended for (VET) practitioners and the *trainers of trainers* with the aim of contributing to an emergent professional culture in VET based on values such as autonomy, creativity and self-empowerment. In the European learning economy, with its implications for global transferability, VET experts and decision-makers are putting a strategic focus on facilitating learning processes rather than on teaching and training at individual, organisational and regional levels. To support this shift of emphasis, teaching and training competencies have evolved significantly to include several different approaches and techniques such as animation, simulation and group work. These move vocational learning beyond lesson-based activities and the practical demonstration approaches that have traditionally linked training organisations and the workplace.

Starting from this overall framework, the SME ACTor project aims to support facilitators of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the acquisition of the action learning techniques. Such skills may provide more effective ways of promoting SME co-operation and networking processes, which have proved to be of paramount importance in a context – such as the European one – characterised by a huge and increasing number of SMEs risking the loss of their competitive

advantage. In fact, both the experience and the academic debate recognise the need to support and valorise processes of SME co-operation by promoting activities of inter-organisational, non-formal learning, and networking and animation of local expert communities (i.e. entrepreneurs, managers, technicians).

The main product of the project is this book for facilitators acting in SME contexts in which Action Learning methods, tools, training formats and practices are presented and commented upon. A series of intertwined project activities have contributed to the book design and development:

- the **context analysis**, in which the key characteristics of each territorial context involved in the project were traced
- **the facilitator curriculum development,** a training format and its supporting materials
- the **learning laboratories or learnshops,** a "learning space" where facilitators operating in favour of SME co-operation processes applied action learning methods and tools in the field;
- the **collaborative virtual learning community** of trainers and learning facilitators, which aimed to promote the birth of a virtual community of practices and a benchmarking path among a group of trainers and learning facilitators

In order to assure a large diffusion of intermediate and final project results to a widely targeted audience, an articulated **valorisation plan** has been planned, mainly comprising events and publications. A devoted web site - www.smeactor.eu - has been the main dissemination channel.

The project embraced contexts such as Germany where action learning and facilitating techniques are embedded in the day-to-day lives of professionals, but also contexts where these are still almost unknown such as Romania, Hungary and Poland, or only partially used, such as Italy and Spain.

The project partnership has involved three university and research organisations (SFS from Technische Universität Dortmund, University of Katowice in Poland and University Aurel Vlaicu in Arad, Romania), two training organisations (Istituto G. Tagliacarne, Rome, and Forim, Potenza, both in Italy), one consultancy company (Team srl from Genova, Italy), two local development agencies (BIC in Bekescsaba, Hungary, and Fundació Ciutat de Viladecans, Spain), and one employer association: Unimpresa Romania, which has acted as the project's lead partner.

We thank all our partners for a common facilitated learning and working experience throughout the project and for their practical contributions of experiences to this book. A special acknowledgement must

be dedicated to the Spanish partners from Catalonia, Gabriel Rissola and Andrea Diaz, who co-ordinated the virtual space we used for visualising our project progress in terms of products and experience. They also supplied the corresponding section at the end of this book.

2
Messages for facilitators and lateral leaders

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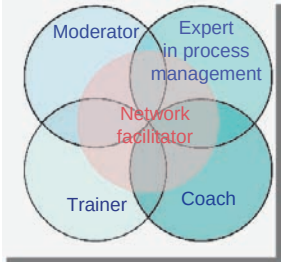
2M1 The functions and roles of network facilitators

2M1.1 Network facilitator

A network facilitator is usually a formal network function or one of the roles of a network manager. In the framework of networks a facilitator is a person with specific competencies who is directed to develop trust to facilitate co-operation between organisations (in our case mainly SMEs) in a given regional or industrial context, despite and beyond their ongoing competition. This trust, if constituting a culture of co-operation, can also be called social capital. So, from a very general viewpoint, they may be called developers of social capital.



More specifically, network facilitators are those professionals involved in supporting and valorising aggregation processes of SMEs by promoting and making easier (i.e. facilitating) networking activities and animation of local expert communities, and within this framework, activities of inter-organisational non-formal and informal learning.

Consequently, typical facilitators are

- Consultants supporting groups of companies in co-operative projects
- Professionals/managers from sector/employers associations
- Professionals/managers from local development agencies
- Trainers from local VET systems

In this role as network facilitators they have four different sub-roles referring to both the action and the learning side of their role. These are

- Moderators with the task of shaping successful communication in the network in general as well as and in its events, meetings, workshops etc.
- Experts in process management not only for communication processes but also for projects and other joint network endeavours.

Cf. 2M2: Moderation as a role

Cf. 2M11: Basic concepts of project work

Cf. Section 4 on Tools of action and learning

- Trainers of facilitating methods and techniques, responsible for systematic reflection with all participants on common learning in such processes as a means of rendering them more effective and efficient and as a central mechanism of creating reflective co-operativity.
- Coaches, since they pursue a specific way of shaping enhanced communication avoiding conflict while, at the same time, they are experts at settling conflicts if they arise in such processes.

Facilitating then means supporting and structuring the perception and communication of a number of people who have a common interest in order to lead a common process of analysis, design, planning, implementation and/or evaluation to become a success.

The problem with such definitions is that network facilitators are usually people who are full-time or part-time managers of networks with a formal responsibility for the overall success of the network. So network facilitating is just one of the roles they can play. At the same time, network facilitating can be a management style, a specific understanding of being a network manager, or a specific interpretation of leadership. In this case it is part of the management function. Therefore, Message 2M8 concentrates on network facilitating in this context.

Cf. Message 2M8: Basic concepts of management and leadership

Network facilitating as we have interpreted it in this book would usually influence how one acts as a manager since it includes a specific way of understanding the world in general, and the management function in particular. As we have explained in Message 2M4 on perception and communication, action learning as we conceive it is linked to a constructivist view of the world, which holds that people only have access to their own individual view of reality and that any attempt to share this view requires communication. Successful leading, both of and in organisations (which are defined as communities of performance – see Message 2M9), thus implies a conscious shaping of communication as a necessary prerogative of joint, purposeful action in and of organisations. For this it is necessary to understand organisations essentially as purposeful co-operation of people.

Cf. Message 2M4: Basic concepts of perception and communication
Cf. Message 2M9: Communities of practice and self-organisation
Cf. Message 2M7: Basic concepts of organisation and co-operation
Cf. Message 2M15: Learning networks – constructing social capital

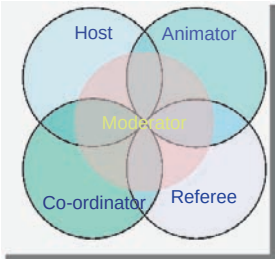
Building co-operation, striving for trust-based networking, creating social capital in communities of practice by the pursuit of continuous learning and improvement – this is the ongoing task of network facilitators, within and across organisations.

2M2 Moderation as a role

A moderator is a person who helps a group of people to solve a problem by supporting their communication, rendering it more effective and efficient. Any person with some basic competence in moderation methods and techniques can assume this role. The role requires impartiality and basically consists of securing agreed rules of communication and the visual safeguarding of the communication results.

2M2.1 The goal of moderation

The goal of moderation is to help a given group of people to achieve a defined purpose of communication e.g. solving a problem or planning a project, within a given setting of space and time, as well and quickly as possible.



2M2.2 The tasks of moderation

Good communication cannot be planned, it happens. But it is possible to create good conditions for communication, good framework conditions and good process conditions. Achieving this is the task of moderators.

Moderation is not always the best way to improve communication. Moderation is the best choice for workshops, i.e. for all those forms of communication where people with different expertise come together with the aim of solving a specific problem, planning a com-

mon project, defining a strategy or a special new task, etc. Also for evaluation purposes and systematic exchange of experience, moderation can be a valid method. It is not good for telling stories. It is good for de-constructing personal and collective knowledge with the aim of re-constructing new collective knowledge. It is particularly good for changing unconscious competence into conscious competence (see Message 2M9).

Analytically, the role of moderating can be differentiated into four basic tasks: a moderator is a host, a co-ordinator, an animator and a referee. During a communication process, all these tasks are constantly on the agenda, and at any moment of this process a different task may assume priority.

For larger groups or for complicated communication processes it might be useful, recommendable or even necessary to split these tasks up into different roles for two moderators. In this case, clear role ascriptions are important. Metaplan (www.metaplan.com), the company that invented the concept of moderation in the 1970s, even recommends a pair of moderators as a standard, with one person animating the communication, the other one writing, pinning up notes, and visualising.

Host

2M2.3 Host

As a host, the moderator is responsible for adapting the setting for the specific purpose of the meeting or workshop (Tool 4C526), taking account of the space, i.e. the surroundings, the building, the room/s, and the time, i.e. during the day, in the evening, on a weekend, etc.

He or she also seeks to provide an atmosphere adapted to the topic, the participants, and the importance of the event; in any case an atmosphere which is pleasant for the participants and positive for the working and learning process.

Finally, providing light food and drinks and the necessary equipment required for working and learning is also the responsibility of the moderators.

Co-ordinator

2M2.4 Co-ordinator

As a co-ordinator, the moderator plans and prepares the workshop. He or she develops a schedule, also called dramaturgy, taking into consideration the aims of the working or learning process, the content,

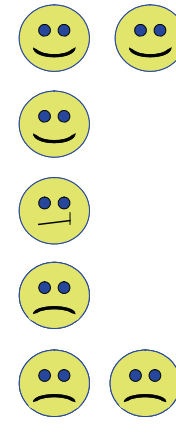
the methods, instruments and materials used and needed, as well as the roles of individuals in the process (Tool 4A5). In addition to all this, the moderator must consider the time and space needed for each of the workshop's phases.

The main structuring elements of the schedule or agenda should be visible to all participants, e.g. on a flip chart or a whiteboard. These can be agreed at the beginning of the workshop. Like all agreements, it can be modified or changed if relevant circumstances recommend such modifications. In this case, a new agreement has to be made. During the workshop, it is part of this task to adapt all these elements continuously to the real process, shifting, modifying, changing, skipping elements or introducing new elements in agreement with the participants.

Most phases might start with a brainstorming process (collection of ideas) leading to a mind map, a matrix, a process chart, or a simple list of items under separate headings. This first result might then be the object of further structuring, deeper reflection, or may be discussed in groups dealing with different aspects of a problem. Later, reporters from these groups provide feedback on their separate results to the whole group where these results are integrated into a common whole. As this may lead to the necessity of planning activities derived from these results, the planning of further steps or projects might follow.

Essential: visualisation

The essential part of this task is securing and visualising the results, writing down the contributions of the participants, fixing them (normally pinning them to a moderation board), structuring them, and checking every once in while that the participants can follow and accept the way the moderator is structuring the contributions towards a common result. Visualisation (see Message 2M12) of the common working and learning process is at the heart of this activity. For all activities derived from this workshop a "to do" list is established fixing what, how, by when and by whom things are to be done. If something is to be done by a group, a responsible person has to be named.



or simply:
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It is also part of this task to make sure that at the end of the workshop sufficient time is left to step back and reflect on the process, on its results, conditions and procedures, as well as on the group atmosphere. As part of this reflection a formal satisfaction survey in which all participants can give their opinion (at least a scale of three to five smileys should be offered) is a must.

Finally, the posters and all other work results created during the workshop should be made available to the participants. There are several ways in which this can happen. The easiest way is to take photos with a digital camera and send them to each participant. Certain groups may want to take the posters with them to continue working with them. In this case, the cards must be glued to the moderation board paper, thus fixing the poster. Then the poster can be rolled and transported easily. At the workplace, it can be fixed to a wall and can serve as a planning or working document.

Animator

2M2.5 Animator

The animating function is strongly linked to both tasks outlined so far. Certain activities are clearly linked to the host function, such as welcoming the participants, making them comfortable, helping them to settle in, and giving them the feeling they are respected for their expertise and important for the problem-solving to be pursued. It is not always easy to structure the warming-up phase in such a way that it can serve as a bridge to the working phase. It depends greatly on the people, e.g., whether or not they know each other and how they know each other, on the topic and the results to be achieved, and also on the setting in which the workshop takes place (see Tool 4A8: Warming up or ice-breaking methods).

Cf. Tool 4A8: Warming-up or ice-breaking methods

It is part of the co-ordinating function (as well as of the animating and the referee function) to make sure that all participants are actively involved in the work. There are always some people who are slower to relax than others or who are more inhibited to talk freely in groups or in public. If it becomes clear that such people need some encouragement, it may be helpful to let the participants speak in a certain order, making sure that everybody says something (see also the referee function below).

A crucial task: asking relevant questions

Linked to the co-ordinating function and absolutely crucial for the progress of the workshop is the moderator's function of asking relevant questions that clarify, fuel and direct the process towards achieving the desired intermediate or final result. An important decision that must be taken several times throughout the whole process of such workshops is how to start a new topic or line of discussion. Should it be by an inductive or by a deductive procedure?

Inductive procedure

An inductive procedure would be to collect all ideas on a given subject existing in the heads of the participants, structuring them once they are written and pinned to the moderation board, e.g. ordering them according to certain categories, and linking them in a specific way appropriate to the topic.

Deductive procedure

A deductive procedure would ask first for the structure, i.e. the main titles or categories structuring the field or theme, and then collect aspects and elements to be listed or grouped under these headings.

The animating function includes logical thinking on what comes next, which is intimately linked to the co-ordination task (see above) since a subtle sense of conflict, moods, aggression or boredom might arise and need to be respected.

When such tension is in the air, sometimes a break may help. Breaks are as important for work as the work itself. People need time for relaxation. Frequently, breaks are times in which people continue their reflection off the record, and after the break they present fresh ideas or unusual solutions.

Priority to conflict!

Of course, in a case of serious disagreement, obvious misunderstanding or real conflict a break will not help. In this case there is a general rule of moderation to be respected: give priority to conflict! Conflict is normal among people with different concepts of a certain problem, process or solution. If it remains unsolved or at least not clarified, conflict may ruin a workshop or group. Therefore conflicts have to be made visible and dealt with in an objective, non-personal way, and this must happen immediately. People must get the feeling that, if necessary, a conflict based on material grounds can be a relevant contribution to finding responsible solutions. It is evident that this part of the animating function is closely linked to the fourth and last task of a moderator.

2M2.6 Referee

Referee

Moderation processes are based on equal participation. Ensuring equal participation opportunities for all is one of the main duties of the moderator. The moderator himself is expected to be neutral and impartial in the working process. He is not a judge, only a referee, as in sports. His task is not to value the contributions but to safeguard the rules of the game. For example, a referee's task in a football match is not to judge the quality of the football played by the teams but to ensure that the rules, which every player knows, are respected. The referee is the personification of the rules and is responsible for their enforcement.

In moderation these rules are either known, if people are experienced in such processes, or must be agreed upon. Agreement comes at the beginning of the workshop if they are general rules, or at the beginning of a specific phase, e.g. brainstorming, if special rules have to be followed in that sequence.

There are a few basic rules which are meant to guarantee this democratic feature of moderation.

- The time for interventions should be limited. Two or three minutes are commonly used limits, but during brainstorming this is reduced to no more than 30 s.
- Especially during the initial phase/s of collecting ideas (cf. Tool 4A10: Brainstorming) three basic rules are imperative:
  - one idea – one card
  - all ideas are good
  - no discussion; if questions are asked they are only for clarification
- General visualisation rules are:
  - don't write, print
  - no more than 5–7 words per card
  - max. 3 lines

Cf. Tool 4A10: Brainstorming

A typical moderated workshop			
#	Phase	Method	Remarks
1	Welcome, warming up	Welcome by moderator/s; poster about aims of the workshop; poster "Who we are"; short self-presentations incl. expectations; sensations and moods	Phase not yet related to contents, mainly for greeting people as they arrive and making them feel comfortable How this is done depends on whether or not people know each other
2	Approaching the problem, topic, agreement on the agenda	Develop agenda or scheduled activities; asking for ideas concerning the workshops beyond the already scheduled planning; agreement on visualised agenda If problem is not yet well known, collecting relevant questions and prioritising them; narrowing down to one issue questions ("How important is …?", "How satisfied are you with …?"one dot per item)	Deal with the relevance of questions to be answered or specific problems to be solved. The aim is to make the questions or problem equally relevant to and understood and shared by all participants
3	Dealing with the problem	Work in plenary or in smaller or larger groups, e.g. depending on expertise needed, and returning to the plenary again Typical process: Collection of ideas, structuring, (if in groups: reporting) reflecting and integrating	In this phase it is useful to have several moderators in order to help smaller groups. With a few hints, most small groups organise themselves appropriately
4	Result orientation, action planning	Isolating results and projects, prioritising and establishing a to-do or action plan: "Who will do what how and till when?"	This is a critical phase as people have to make up their mind about what to do or to be responsible for. Often people are euphoric about having dealt satisfactorily with a problem, and project their present energy into the future (danger of overestimating own energy)
5	Closing and reflection (evaluation)	Satisfaction survey: "How satisfied are you with the results?" How satisfied are you with the process?", feedback and reflection on possible improvements	Reflecting on the day or workshop

6	Fixing results, minutes	Taking photos of final results, if necessary copying posters	Working results are visualised during the whole process; photos of intermediate results should be taken during breaks, final results and to-do minutes should be noted at the end or during the process on a separate moderation board

Such a workshop schedule is modular and can easily be remodelled. As a further typical example of such a workshop see the SME ACTor Curriculum and Tool 4A5: the planning of workshops.

See also Tool 4A5: The planning of workshops

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2M3 Visualisation – why and how it helps you to understand and remember

Visualisation means making spoken or written information visible by using a different set of symbols, i.e. pictures, structures, and graphics. Visualised information is usually provided to make understanding easier and more easily memorable.

This short definition above highlights the two main purposes of visualisation:

- it is not meant to replace the spoken or written word but to complement it
- the aim of visualisation is to make understanding easier and more efficient.

The definition implies that visualisation is able to render this service.

2M3.1 Why visualisation helps …

People perceive with all their senses but the frequency and scope of perception is different for everyone. In fact, 83% of our information intake happens via our eyes, only 11% via our ears, our nose is good for 3.5%, touch for 1.5 and taste for 1%.

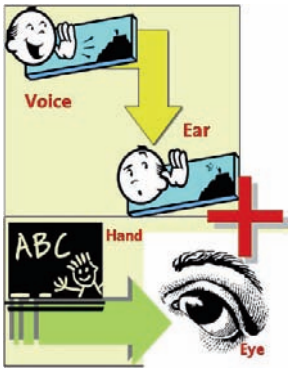
Also, our capacity for retaining perceived information, i.e. our memory, strongly depends on how that information has been perceived. Combinations of ways of perception are clearly more effective than single sense perceptions. We can retain 20% of what we have heard, 30% of what we have seen, 50% of what we have heard and seen, 70% of what we have said ourselves, and 90% of what we have done ourselves.[1]

Perception

• eye	83%
• ear	11%
• nose	3,5%
• sense of touch	1,5%
• taste	1,0%

Memory

- 20% of what has been heard
- 30% of what has been seen
- 50% of what has been heard & seen
- 70% of what you have said yourself
- 90% of what you have done yourself



[1] Although these seemingly empirical data are widely quoted, we have not been able to identify an original source so we just accept them as plausible. Nevertheless, there seems to be empirical evidence for the following statement made in the German Wikipedia on "Sinn (Wahrnehmung)", i.e. sense (perception): Senses have different

In order to confirm this, listen to your colleagues informally reporting about meetings they have been in. Unless they are experienced reporters, most of what they will tell you will be about what they have said themselves.

Visualisation will effectively help to reduce problems of communication and understanding and the problems resulting from them, as it combines at least two senses. An ordinary conversation is mainly based on voice to ear perception. A visualised conversation combines voice to ear perception with visual perception and personal action if people also write or visualise actively.

Ordinary conversation

Group with chair person and agenda

Voice =
in-built transmitter
can be used in any physical position

The voice to ear conversation usually is a **session**

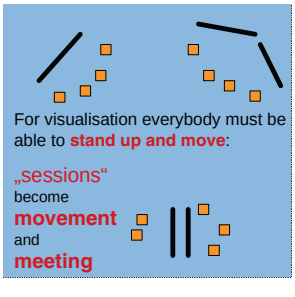
In general, what we call a meeting in an organisation is usually a session; people sitting at a table with a chairperson and a fixed agenda. Here, voice to ear communication is the main way of transmission and only a few people will be able and ready to participate actively in such a meeting. The average number of occasions per hour of people saying something and participating actively is from 30 to 100 times. Moreover, such meetings frequently do not have common minutes. People only take away what they have noted for themselves (cf. Tool 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating and Tool 4A1: To-do form).

Cf. Tool 4A1: To-do form
Cf. Tool 4A3: Chairing versus moderating

Meetings supported by visualisation and moderation usually do not need tables; people are supposed to be able to stand up and move about easily, concentrating on the common visualisation centre and on relating to each other. If they note their own contributions to the common subject on cards and pin them to the wall, they even actively do something on their own. Here people move and meet. The meeting is a literal meeting: an encounter. People on average will have 300–600 occasions per hour of intervening actively in such a meeting.

Visualised conversation

Group with visualisation support



After such a meeting people will still remember their own contributions better than those of others or the overall result. However, they have contributed actively to a common result which is handed over to everybody in order to make sure that everybody will act on the basis of the same result.

Needless to say, both types of meetings have their justification and their pros and cons; it is essential to know that both types are available and can be used according to the aims and purposes pursued in each case.

Visualisation in presentations supports the spoken word and makes things said more accessible to understanding as it translates linear sequences of words (sentences) into structures, pictures or graphics.

capacities of reception. Via our sense of sight we can receive about 10 million *Sh*annon-Units (Sh) per second, via our sense of touch about 1 million sh, via hearing and smell about 100,000 Sh and via taste about 1,000 Sh.

Enacted by the presenter him or herself, the step of translating a spoken message into another set of symbols may improve his or her capacity of explaining and may also increase the connectivity of the information presented in the mindset of the receivers.

Visualisation in working and learning processes helps participants to understand better the development of the common process and deepens the understanding of and commitment to the common results, thus greatly facilitating their implementation.

Visualisation is an essential vehicle for facilitating communication for common action.

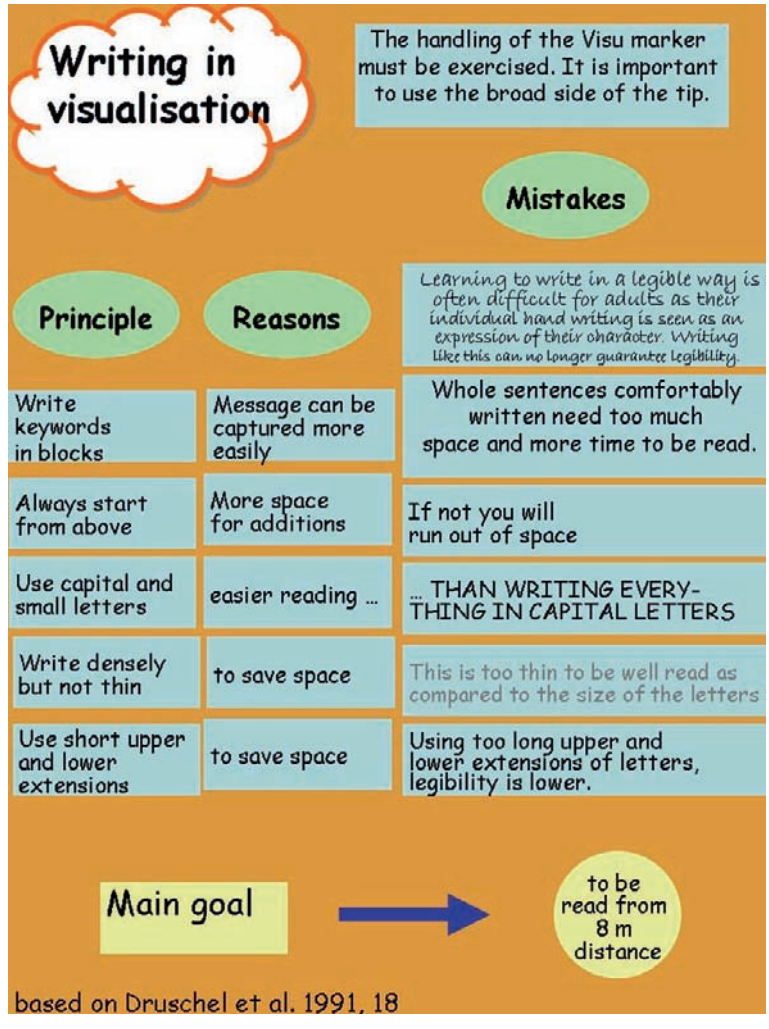
2M3.2 How visualisation helps …

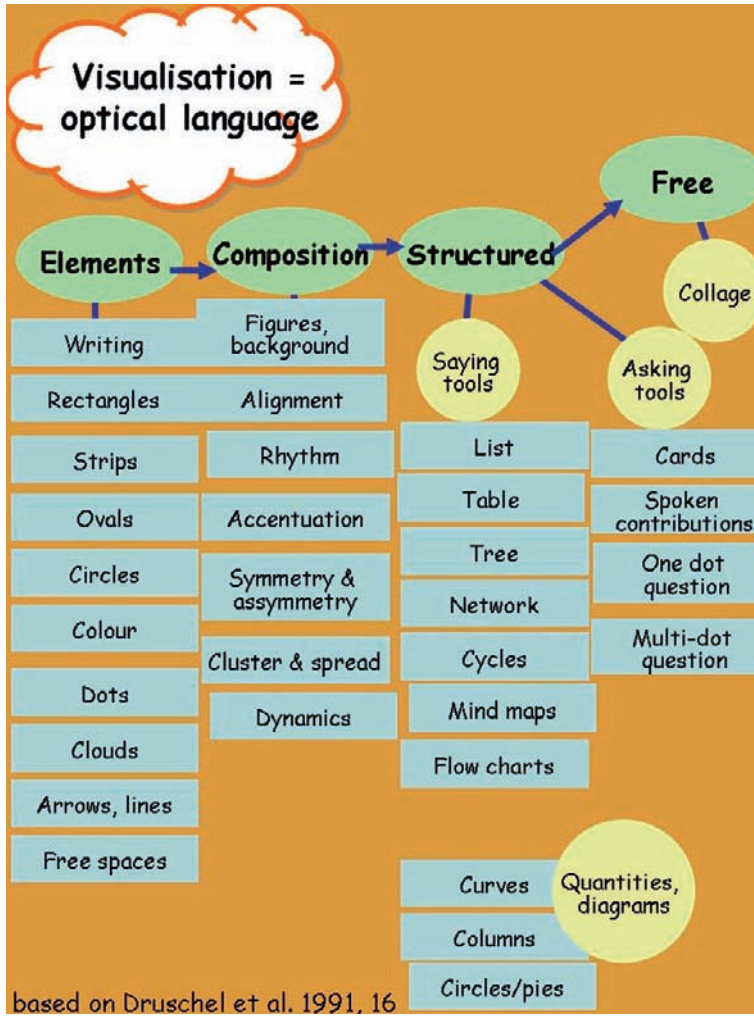
What is needed for workshops using moderation and visualisation has been presented in detail in Tools 4A6 and A4 and will not be repeated here. How it is done must be experienced and exercised in training or in practice. The following information can only provide basic hints about what is possible; the ways of using and deploying visualisation are manifold. Any combination of elements, forms and colours is feasible as long as it serves to pursue the central goal of visualisation: to make communication easier, more effective and more efficient.

The following three graphics hopefully speak for themselves, at least in the context of what has been experienced in training and workshops. Each of them is an example of applying visualisation to an abstract and spiky subject such as the method of visualisation.

This first picture informs about the function of writing. Although it seems to be a contradiction, visualisation in moderation creates pictures by reducing individual chunks of information that are spoken or written on cards to a structured picture representing the result of joint reflection.

Writing in visualisation





Visualisation as optical language

Elements of Visualisation

2M4 Basic concepts of perception and communication

Perception is the conscious reception, selection, processing and interpretation of information by our brain via all senses. Perception is also used to describe what is perceived.

Communication can be several things. Regarding the process, communication is the reception, exchange, and transmission of data, information and knowledge between two or more individuals. The communicated material is usually signs such as words, images, gestures, scents, tastes, textures and sounds. Regarding the purpose, communication means informing and/or sharing of meaning.

Cf. 2M10: Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management

Our context of reflection about perception and communication is the shaping of collaboration and learning processes and conditions by facilitators. For this application context, it is vital to remember that we have to consider and organise two "spaces of perception" at the same time; the space occupied by individuals since they are the actual learners (all learning is individual), and the common space of individuals who learn together in a common space of co-operation.

A more extended view of perception and learning is provided in Chap 3.2 on the Didactics of Action Learning

Individuals are understood as independent systems and the actual place of learning is the individual brain. The brain - along with the senses it uses for perceiving - is a self-organising (autopoietic), self-related (self-referential), operationally closed system. Not only from a constructivist point of view but also from the perspective of modern brain research, learning is a way of perception and recursive processing of reality in the forms of data, information and knowledge. Recursive means having a strict relation to the context of already existing cognitive structures, including the experiences and emotions linked to them. We are not talking about a reflection of the outer world in the brain but about a (re-) constructive process of a system with itself (self-referential).

Already the sensory perception of the surrounding system, the environment, is regulated by individual selection criteria provided by

the brain's already existing thinking structures and linkages (synapses). They check whether and how the new perceptions may fit into the existing knowledge, experience and beliefs. Potential new information and knowledge is checked against the existing information and knowledge in a process which in the constructivist terminology is called "representation", as information or knowledge made present. For our context, we will add the notion of re-actualisation because in an action learning context, information and knowledge are not only recalled into presence for the sake of remembering, they are compared, aligned and adapted according to their present relevance for action.

A simple but absolutely mandatory consequence of this aspect of self-referentiality of our spontaneous thinking is that we can never be sure that other people know and understand what we know and understand. We have to reassure ourselves that they do by asking questions or by working together, checking whether the result is what we expected. Only then can we be relatively certain that all have the same understanding. Moreover, when we say something we should be very careful about assuming that it is valid for everybody. Statements starting with "I …" should prevail over general statements.

Two or more individuals working together cannot do so without communicating with each other about the aims and purposes, the contents, methods, instruments, materials and tasks or roles of each person participating in the co-operation process. The quality of co-operation is immediately dependent on the quality of communication. If they are to work together successfully over a longer time span, they must build a common body of knowledge concerning their common work. What was initially done very consciously will become unconscious competence, and only serious problems, significant changes or new challenges from outside will prompt them to examine what or how they could improve their co-operative performance. They would have to analyse what is wrong in what they are doing, unlearn certain things, and establish newly developed (learned) routines which in their turn become unconscious again.

Cf. The 'Four levels learning theory' in Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

A balloon is descending over unknown territory. The pilot asks a person on the ground: "Where are we?" The person answers: "You are in a balloon about 100 ft above the ground."

In such a practical context of co-operation, not right or wrong, true or not true motivate a decision of changing something, i.e. of learning. Decisive for learning is

- The usefulness for what we are about to do;
- It is the perception of the new solution or method offered to me/us or the way it is offered to me/us,
- Whether it is new (not redundant),
- Relevant (important for me/us),
- Viable (practical and useful for me/us) and
- Connectable (fit for being integrated into my/our system).

In order to understand what seemed new, relevant, viable and connectable how to whom, we have to talk about it in some structured way to find a common understanding which will form the basis of the new consent on how to work together going forward.

We call this critical process of collective deconstruction and reconstruction "LEGO playing". The old house is taken apart, a new plan is developed and a new house is built. Facilitators support such processes of joint deconstruction and reconstruction, or of joint construction of completely new projects.

Thus, facilitating means supporting and structuring the perception and communication of a number of people who have a common interest, in order to lead a common process of analysis, design, planning, implementation and/or evaluation to a successful conclusion.

2M4.1 Sharpening perception

In order to sharpen the perception of facilitators, we usually start facilitator training with some simple exercise. An example is the balloon joke in the margin above. It shows that correct information may not be at all useful and connectable to the situative context and hence may be completely useless.

Another similar example is to ask for the colour of clouds. Physically, clouds are white since they consist of tiny water bubbles that reflect light like snow crystals very diffusely, which makes them appear white. Clouds seen from an airplane are white; clouds seen from the ground often show all shades of grey to black; the blacker they are, the less light can penetrate them. To a pilot this means completely different things than to a farmer. Moreover, to a pilot on the ground it means different things than to a pilot up in the sky.

A third very simple example that is reproducible at all times as a spontaneous exercise in precise observation and perception is the "nine or six sign" card (see margin). Draw a thick sign that could be a nine or a six on a card, throw it on the ground between you and the participants and ask them: "What is it?" Usually, they will answer, "a six or a nine". When you don't confirm this immediately, some people might look a second time saying, "This is a white, oval piece of paper." Of course, it is all of these, a white, oval piece of paper with a sign on it that could be a six or a nine. We will have to decide what it is "for us" in the given context. A similar puzzling experience can be provided using an 8 on its side, which could equally be a sign for infinity.

The same applies to listening. When you are the person who visualises what people say, for example by writing on cards or in a mind map,

it is absolutely necessary to capture all contributions; omissions will be noticed as disrespect. Also, summarizing people's contributions in a few words written on a card often means interpreting what they have said. Therefore, it is necessary very frequently to ask,

- "Have I caught what you wanted to say?"
- "Could you please explain what you mean?"
- "I have understood what you said in the following way …. Is this correct?"

Active listening and asking reassuring questions is a must.

Participants will soon adopt this attitude of mutual respect. It says, "Instead of assuming that what I understood is what you said, I ask you whether what I understood is what you wanted to say." People will transfer this attitude to their working environments. It will help to build mutual trust and understanding.

2M4.2 Four dimensions of personal communication

Facilitators - and through them the people they work with - will also learn to perceive unconscious messages as well as to control their own. When we say something, we transmit and receive four messages (cf. Schulz von Thun 1981). We talk with four tongues and listen with four ears concerning:

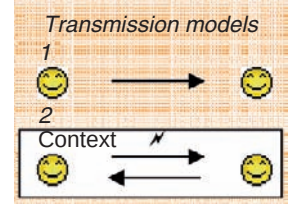
- The content, consisting of the actual statement
- The so-called I-statement telling something about myself, my opinion and my emotions regarding the content statement
- My relationship to the receiver of the message
- My appeal to the receiver expressing what I want him or her to do or to be done in general concerning my actual content statement

Additionally, all the information transmitted by my voice, eyes, attitude and gestures will underline the messages, and is linked to the way the statement is formulated.

Also, here one of the main conclusions is that we should avoid statements which directly or indirectly include assumptions about other

participants or which even attack them. Sentences expressing subjective perceptions and interpretations are usually a more precise way of formulation than generalisations.

Obviously there is an additional complication. The four messages emitted with one statement are not necessarily the same four messages heard and understood by the receiver. We do not know what is heard and how it is interpreted by the opposite party. We only can judge from the response or from the common action whether the meaning of something is shared.

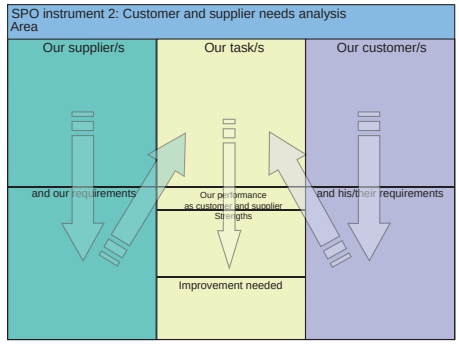


Many problems in communication simply derive from the assumption that something must have been perceived by somebody else just because we ourselves have perceived it, said or not said it, done or not done it. Behind this assumption there is often a theory-of-use consisting of an extremely simplified, purely technical model of communication (Model 1). It assumes that whatever medium is used to transmit a message, exactly this message will arrive at the receiver side. But even purely technical models are usually more complicated (Model 2). They include context conditions and possible problems of transmission, and assume feedback to be complete.

Expanding (with Hall 1980) this basic model, we can see that even in technical communication (more so in direct human communication) problems may arise with encoding a message on the sender side and with decoding on the receiver side. Among other reasons, this may be due to different sets of signs (mindsets) on both sides. Moreover, both sides may not have the same context conditions. Transmission may be blurred or disturbed one or both ways.

Cf. Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning

Avoiding the problems of technical expertise which might arise by following this example further, we have suggested a similar model based on the typical supplier-customer situation as it is used in quality management, which is much more customised to our network clientele. Furthermore, our *Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning* provides a practical model for simultaneously creating a space of co-operation and communication. Like all our tools, it does not only serve as an analytical approach but also for designing, planning and shaping co-operation.



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2M5 Basic concepts of learning and competence

2M5.1 Learning

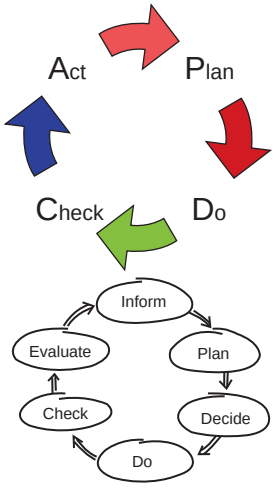
Learning is an active process of appropriation (making one's own) of knowledge, abilities and skills in order to enhance the personal or collective control potential (competence) of shaping reality in a given context or situation.

2M5.2 Competence

Competence means being able to decide, act and learn adequately with respect to the functional and situative context.

These two definitions make transparent that we are not talking about education or teaching in any context. Learning in an organisational or cross-organisational context always means to improve the capacity of individuals and organisations to overcome specific situations, achieve previously defined objectives or simply to do more competently what they are expected to do. The primary result of such learning is not knowledge but competence; the capacity of taking adequate decisions, of planning and executing corresponding activities and checking (self-) critically what and how has been achieved in order to do it better next time.

Therefore, the learning cycle is basically identical with Deming's quality improvement cycle where you plan something, execute it, check its correctness (or viability, as we would say) and improve it if necessary. A more complete learning cycle is Hacker's model of accomplished action, which is widely used in German vocational training. It is a fully action-oriented learning model.



4 Levels of learning	4 Translations
1. Unconscious incompetence	I don't know, what I don't know
2. Conscious incompetence	I know, what I don't know
3. Conscious competence	I know, what I know
4. Unconscious competence	I don't know, what I know

Four levels of learning (more details in Chap 3.2 on the Didactics of Action Learning

We combine this with a practical theory of learning that is "fit for use" as well as fit for shaping learning. It consists of no more than the four levels and lines in the table. We have taken it from O'Connor and Seymour (1996) but the three exemplary explanations of it given here are completely ours. The first explanation is an individual one applied to certain stages in life; the second one refers to an individual in a company in the context of training needs analysis; the third and most extended one applies to a fictitious wind energy cluster.

Level 3 corresponds to what in other learning terminologies is called explicit knowledge; level 4 corresponds to implicit or tacit knowledge (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi 1997; Polanyi 1985). In this wording, one facet of facilitation is the task or role of leading people from level 4 of implicit knowledge and competence to level 3 of explicit competence or even level 2 of no competence (in a specific skill or aspect) but the consciousness and readiness of achieving conscious, explicit competence and eventually of leading them to his own, the facilitator's level of making co-operation easy.

Example 1: Individual

Example 1: Individual Life Stages

Driving a car may be a good example of how this theory works, analytically as well as for the shaping of learning processes:

1. Being a baby or an indigenous inhabitant of the Amazon jungle, I don't know cars and, logically I don't know that I don't know how to drive a car.
2. Once I know that there are cars that I could use, but I have not learned to drive, I know that I don't know how to drive a car.
3. Now I have had my driving lessons and passed the exam, I know how to drive a car, but I must concentrate on doing all the different things very carefully.
4. After years of driving I can do a lot of things at the same time without being conscious of how complex the situation and my activities are. These things include perceiving and understanding the traffic situation at the junction ahead, the changing traffic lights, setting the

indicator, steering, braking, using the clutch, changing gear, listening to the radio, talking with my mate, maybe smoking etc.

Practically every situation or context in life can be constructed and reconstructed in these four stages as a process of new learning, un-learning and re-learning. Let's stick to the example of car driving. Driving a car in Great Britain for the first time might reduce all my abilities as a driver from the European continent from level 4 to level 3; an elderly person might even fall back to level 2.

(see Example 2)

	Competence	Incompetence
Conscious	**Level 2: Conscious competence** • You perform the skill reliably at will. • You need to concentrate and think in order to perform the skill. • You can perform the skill without assistance. • You are able to demonstrate the skill to another person, but probably you cannot teach it well. • Only repeated practice will allow you to move from stage 3 to 4.	**Level 3: Conscious incompetence** • You become aware of the existence and relevance of the skill. • Now you are also aware of your deficiency in this area. • You have an idea of how much and in what aspects you have to improve. • Ideally, you commit yourself to learning and practising the new skill and to moving to the "conscious competence" stage.
Unconscious	**Level 4: Unconscious competence** • You do not consider the skill as a skill any more (see the car example); the skill has become largely instinctual. • You are able to do several things at the same time as performing the skill. • You might now be able to teach others the skill, although for teaching you will have difficulty in explaining exactly how you do things without consciously going back to level 3.	**Level 1: Unconscious incompetence** • You are not aware of the existence or relevance of the skill area. • You are not aware of having a particular deficiency in the area concerned. • You need practical evidence that the new skill will add to your personal capacity of doing something useful for yourself or the organisation you are in. • Only then can the new skill be developed or learning begin.

Example 2: Individual in organisation

Example 2: Individual in company context

The second example (see cross table) presents a more analytical way of using the four basic components of the theory resulting in the four levels.

Example 3: Cluster

Example 3: Wind energy cluster

The third example, finally, is much more complex than the individual approaches. Setting the scene: Our exemplary wind energy cluster produces energy-generating windmills. It is situated on the coast, and over the years more and more companies have established their production facilities here, forming a cluster. The cluster companies have been very successful as the market, originally an ecological niche market, has been growing rapidly. The early Danish example of offshore wind parks has become an interesting development model due to the strong pressure on other forms of CO_2-intensive energy production.

Level 1

Level 1: Unconscious incompetence

The cluster is very busy satisfying a rapidly expanding market. Boosting production and sales is the top priority. Labour is still relatively cheap as redundancy rates are high. Workers can be recruited from other parts of the country, enticed by attractive wages. Little is done to train a qualified workforce, less for establishing relevant R&D and training co-operation with the few regional universities of applied sciences in the neighbouring towns and cities. The cluster is no more than an agglomeration; no serious co-operation to gain political influence towards improved infrastructure is organised. Only a few have a faint idea of what the future holds. The unions are predicting that the cluster is running into stormy weather. But most managers have "no time to deal with the soft factors". For them, earning money is the only hard factor.

Level 2

Level 2: Conscious incompetence

The growing difficulties of recruiting qualified labour, particularly specialised engineers, lead to serious bottlenecks in production. The soft factors have become really hard ones now. Many managers have come to understand that along with earning money their main task is strategic planning rather than operative troubleshooting. They start to understand that in order to have more time for strategic issues, for example, talking to politicians and professors and to their cluster companions, they have to reorganise their companies internally. "They must run without the boss", they say now. They now know what they should have been doing earlier. They are becoming aware of the fact that being a cluster can be more than just being many of the same. A cluster association is formed. A tough young engineer from the unions seems to be a promising cluster manager.

Level 3: Conscious competence *Level 3*

Most company leaders know now what has to be done. And they do it, most of them. The cluster has gained consciousness of being a cluster. A few serious consultants help them to establish sound organisation development projects. Diversity management will help to create a multi-national workforce. This means giving more power to lower ranks. “These people know more than we thought they would. Some of them have real management talent”, they are heard saying in the pub that some of them regularly visit to meet other managers. The cluster association is becoming an effective marketing booster and image machine with a proudly presented booth at a number of interesting fairs in Moscow, Dubai and Shanghai. With energy prices soaring to record heights, the growing US market has become aware of the cluster. However, building up training capacities and trust relationships with the regional science is a slow business. Capacities are notoriously insufficient. Also politicians have been sound asleep for a long time. They are willing to move a lot of money to improve infrastructure and expand the scientific potential. But it takes time; others have been more active and earlier. “Each euro can only be spent once”, they are told. Supported by the cluster association they raise money from the companies to finance a new attractively endowed and equipped professorship; some of the top engineering experts from the south are applying for it.

Level 4: Unconscious competence *Level 4*

Things are running smoothly. The cluster managers, including a very committed young lady who has recently joined the team, are a hit. They are pushing many of the activities the cluster is running. Also the new professor is a success; the first promotion of the new wind energy engineering course is being trained; many of the students have passed their internships in cluster companies and their end of study theses deal with practical problems in cluster companies and institutions. More than 50% of the companies are now active in vocational training. Organisation development projects have become a normal thing; they have helped to mitigate the effects of the continuing scarcity of qualified labour. Most of the managers have spent several hard years travelling to open and develop the new markets. The home market is still a stronghold, but the companies are solidly implanted in the new markets.

But there are also new problems. More and more people do not like the ever larger windmills that have appeared everywhere in the landscape. Parliament has imposed serious restrictions. In Africa and the Arabian world, many unlicensed copies of the cluster’s products from China have turned up at much lower prices. At first, managers think about moving to other countries. In some of these issues, they are on level 2. Those who are thinking of moving away may well be

completely unaware (level 1) of the host of implications this decision would imply.

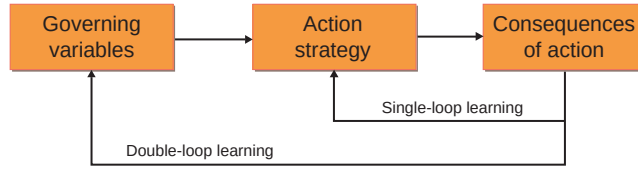
Learning in loops

2M5.3 Learning loops

Facilitators help to facilitate communication between people who do not know what they know. Their task is making the unknown knowledge available for conscious common analysis, planning and acting to create a common treasure of knowledge, projects and experience. Put another way, facilitators are supporters of organisational learning i.e. of individuals learning in common or within a common reference framework which can be organisational or cross-organisational.

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1974) have suggested a process model of learning in loops. The role of facilitators could also be described as helping people to learn in more than one loop. Argyris and Schön depart from the simple idea that everybody acts with more or less implicit theoretical considerations and hypotheses. Therefore they distinguish between theory-in-use, a more or less implicit theoretical framework of action, and espoused theory as the consciously developed framing of action. They assume that people normally become active in order to solve a certain problem that arises as a result of their own or someone else's action. They develop an action strategy for solving the problem having a certain framework of governing variables in mind which remains implicit: general aims they want to reach, certain effects they definitively want to avoid, certain rules that should not be broken, and specific methods they want to employ because they are normal practice. If it is successful, the problem is settled, if not, the action strategy is improved, and so on. This corrective action would be single-loop learning (see graphic).

Single and double loop learning



Double-loop learning then would not only consist of correcting the mistake but asking and reflecting on how it arose, if there is any connection to the framework of governing variables, if something in this organisational framework should be changed, and if the methods employed need to be refined or changed completely, etc.

"When the error detected and corrected permits the organisation to carry on its present policies or achieve its present objectives, then that

error-and-correction process is single-loop learning. Single-loop learning is like a thermostat that learns when it is too hot or too cold and turns the heat on or off. The thermostat can perform this task because it can receive information (the temperature of the room) and take corrective action. Double-loop learning occurs when the error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organisation's underlying norms, policies and objectives" (Smith 2001).

Facilitators are people who support double-loop learning by critical reflection on the conditions of learning and action, and who help to develop answers by questioning the framework of governing variables. Furthermore, facilitators help people to go through these loops of action and learning together, as a group, as a part of the organisation, as the organisation, and as a network of organisations.

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2M6 The concept of responsibility

2M6

Responsibility, in our context, is understood as the individual and organisational ability of responding actively to perceived questions and problems. Accepting responsibility is the aim of learning and working together. The desired outcome of organisational learning is that people, organisations, and networks will assume responsibility for their tasks, situations and perspectives. Individual and collective responsibility is at the very centre of all sustainability in organisational development.

Leading people to responsibility is the main objective of facilitating. People who are responsible or perceive themselves as sharers of a common responsibility, be it in an organisation or a network of organisations, will contribute more actively to asking the right questions and to searching for viable answers. Sharing responsibility defines the difference between communities of practice and communities of performance.

Cf. Message 2M9: Communities of practice and self-organisation

Appropriation, making personal what has been learned, is the aim of all action learning processes. Responsibility is the attitude resulting from such learning. Creating responsibility and making it grow in individuals and groups or whole organisations is the essential task of managers who want to act as leaders. Here is where facilitating and leading coincide.

Facilitators have only a methodical and procedural responsibility for the output of processes they have engaged in to achieve certain results and objectives. They have no power but the power of the rules accepted or established by the participants of such a process. But it is the participants who have to take over the responsibility of implementing and executing the tasks as they are defined and accepted.

Managers have a great responsibility including planning, execution of the plan, and achieving satisfactory results. But they need people, groups of people or individuals to take over tasks in the prosecution of

a plan. In order to make these people do their job, managers have the choice of using power to make people do something, or to act as facilitators of common planning and working, i.e. to make people understand the common goal and motivate them to do things properly from their own impulse and will. It is absolutely necessary to be aware of this choice as it establishes something like a micro-climate of co-operation among the people you work with.

You can force people to work. But you cannot force them to work well.

Being a manager, you can force people to work, but you cannot force them to work well, at least not in the long run. In order to work well, they must be able to do their jobs, willing to do them and allowed to do them.

The concept of competence is explained in Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

- "Able" means they must have learned to perform the task, they must be competent to do it properly, and they need adequate tools and materials to perform the task properly.
- "Willing" means they must want to contribute to shared objectives by completing their task properly. But it also means they must feel a personal need to master a task according to certain levels of quality instead of being mastered by the task.
- "Allowed to do" means the organisation they work in must provide sufficient freedom to take appropriate decisions.

If this general assumption is true for managers, it applies even more to facilitators who by definition cannot order people to do anything. They must motivate them and win them over. There must be some perceived advantage for them to do it - completing a mission, making a valuable contribution to something relevant to them, if possible, something that also creates personal satisfaction. Facilitators have no other way to create responsibility.

2M7 Basic concepts of organisation and co-operation

Organisations are the distinctively structured and regulated form of purposeful interaction of individuals and groups. Put another way, organisations represent purposeful co-operation of (groups of) people based on shared structures, rules, interests and values. The first and foremost objective of organisations (as of all systems) is striving for survival by fulfilling their purpose. Economic organisations must fulfil a double purpose; they must produce the product or service they have been created for, and in doing so they must produce an economic yield that allows extended reproduction.

Co-operation means working together to achieve individual and common advantage. In more detail, co-operation is defined as joint or jointly directed, co-ordinated action of people for achieving individual and common aims, purposeful interaction.

2M7.1 Organisation

It seems self-evident that organisations are a structured and regulated form of people interacting with each other, and to facilitate co-operation it is essential to understand organisation this way. But there are many more theories – in economics, law, political science, etc. – stating that organisations are characterised by a distinct framework of structures and rules, and if people are mentioned at all, they are *in* such a framework. In this view, organisations are containers with people in them.

At the other extreme, there is a sociological theory of micro-politics (Bosetzky 1995; Burns 1961) that primarily conceives organisations as a number of individual people and groups of people with conflicting individual or group interests battling for power and influence, so that

the organisation as a whole, its basic purpose and raison d'être, seems to disappear in a haze of contradicting views, interests and orientations.

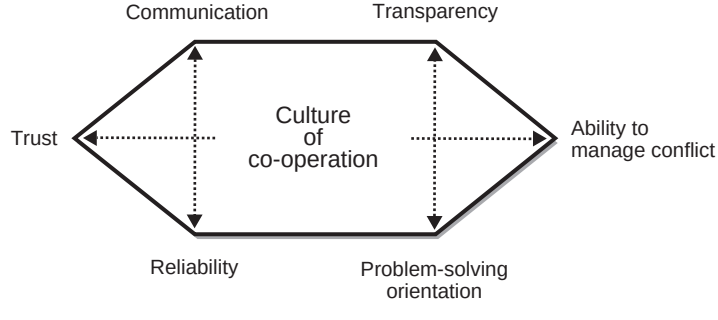
With our definition, we want to stress the fact that certainly hierarchical structures and rules make a difference, but it is just as certain that through all micro-political irritations it is people who govern the success or failure of organisations. Success or failure may depend on many factors, but of primary importance is the quality of work and the quality of the organisation in which this work is done. It is the quality of co-operation which really makes the difference.

The quality of co-operation makes the difference.

We are looking at organisations with the eyes of facilitators, experts of communication who have the task of leading groups to successful co-operation. It is a view from a perspective of responsibility. Hence, our definition of organisation has a simple question behind it: What understanding of organisation helps to make the organisation successful?

2M7.2 Co-operation

Successful co-operation, within or between organisations, depends on a number of aspects which must come together and be accomplished by the co-operating partners (Becker et al. 2007). First of all, without communicating with each other about their interests, partners will not be able to establish joint projects achieving predefined aims and solving perceived common problems. Transparency - having the vital knowledge necessary to achieve the common purpose the network is pursuing - is a necessary condition to enable each partner to measure the perceived advantage of networking and co-operation as compared to competition. Possible conflict situations can only be settled in a sustainable way if there is mutual readiness to except compromise and to invest money, time and emotions into the common endeavour. Networks are exchange mechanisms striving for a win-win situation. Without commitment and mutual reliability, trust as a necessary condition of sustainability will not grow, and without trust none of the other elements will prosper.



Facilitating can become an essential factor in building a trust-based culture of co-operation because it is completely oriented towards creating transparent problem-solving processes, along with an open way of dealing with conflict. Facilitating establishes simple and transparent rules of fair exchange, which in many cases become the procedural charter of networks. Obviously, facilitating cannot guarantee reliability, but experience shows that transparent communication creates a higher degree of commitment and hence, reliability. Mutual reliability (reciprocity) is the most important condition for creating and maintaining trust relationships and creating social capital.

Cf. Message 2M15: Learning networks - constructing social capital

A culture of co-operation is a necessary condition for developing communities of practice into communities of performance, i.e. communities that do not just work together but work together to achieve something in common, learning organisations.

Cf. Message 2M9: Communities of practice and self-organisation

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2M8 Basic concepts of management and leadership

2M8.1 Managers

We conceive managers as people responsible for transforming the knowledge and competence of their personnel into products and services useful to other people and into economic success for the organisation. Managers can also be leaders.

2M8.2 Leaders

Leaders are people who take responsibility in building common sense for common action.

As the definitions show, in our view, management and leadership are not identical, but they may overlap. Here we suggest that if management is exercised in a facilitating way it may come close to this overlapping of both functions. No doubt, both management and leadership can be trained, but there it must be accepted that leadership can only be trained to a certain extent since it includes features of personality which one either has or does not have.

Nevertheless, facilitating processes in network contexts has much to do with managing communication and action but little to do with management as an official, hierarchical function. Facilitating, above all, means supporting and leading people to fruitful thinking, planning and co-operating. Therefore facilitators, whether they are managers or not, have a temporary leadership function. They may be managers at the same time, but then facilitating is a distinct way to be a manager. In our view, managers who are good facilitators tend to be leaders, too.

While management is responsible for organising a company, managers leading a company are responsible for organising a company in a way which makes people want to work and learn.

Hence, to resume the management function we refer to a management and leadership philosophy which comes close to this idea. John Adair's action-centred model conveys such a philosophy, aiming at the overlapping of both functions. Adair, a British consultant, goes beyond the simple organisational function of management and frames a notion of management that includes leadership. For him management has three core responsibilities:

- The task
- The team
- The individual

The three overlapping circles (graph) represent a functional relationship (Adair 2008). Their basic principles are:

- "Achieve the task. The task needs a team since one person alone cannot accomplish it.
- Build and maintain the team. If the team needs are not met the task will suffer and the individuals will not be satisfied.
- Develop the individual. If the individual needs are not met the team will suffer and performance of the task will be impaired."

The following summary describes a catalogue of activities belonging to each of the three core responsibilities (Businessballs 2008).

Task

2M8.2.1 Task

"Your responsibilities as a manager for achieving the task are:

- Identify aims and vision of the group, purpose, and direction - define the activity (the task)
- Identify resources, people, processes, systems and tools (inc. financials, communications, IT)
- Create the plan to achieve the task - deliverables, measures, timescales, strategy and tactics
- Establish responsibilities, objectives, accountabilities and measures, by agreement and delegation
- Set standards, including quality, time and reporting parameters
- Control and maintain activities against parameters
- Monitor and maintain overall performance against plan
- Report on progress towards the group's aim
- Review, re-assess, adjust plan, methods and targets as necessary"

2M8.2.2 Group

Group

"Your responsibilities as a manager for the group are:

- Establish, agree and communicate standards of performance and behaviour
- Establish style, culture, approach of the group - soft skill elements
- Monitor and maintain discipline, ethics, integrity and focus on objectives
- Anticipate and resolve group conflict, struggles or disagreements
- Assess and change as necessary the balance and composition of the group
- Develop team-working, cooperation, morale and team-spirit
- Develop the collective maturity and capability of the group - progressively increase group freedom and authority
- Encourage the team towards objectives and aims - motivate the group and provide a collective sense of purpose
- Identify, develop and agree team- and project-leadership roles within group
- Enable, facilitate and ensure effective internal and external group communications
- Identify and meet group training needs
- Give feedback to the group on overall progress; consult with the group and seek their feedback and input"

2M8.2.3 Individual

Individual

Your responsibilities as a manager for each individual are:

- Understand the team members as individuals - personality, skills, strengths, needs, aims and fears
- Assist and support individuals - plans, problems, challenges, highs and lows
- Identify and agree appropriate individual responsibilities and objectives
- Give recognition and praise to individuals - acknowledge effort and good work
- Where appropriate, reward individuals with extra responsibility, advancement and status
- Identify, develop and utilise each individual's capabilities and strengths
- Train and develop individual team members
- Develop individual freedom and authority"

Adair defines action and improvement cycles for task management with corresponding requirements for dealing with groups and individuals and, as we would put it, for developing communities of practice into communities of performance.

Cf. Messages 2M9 and 2M10: Communities of practice and self-organisation. Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management

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2M9 Communities of practice and self-organisation

2M9.1 Communities of practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a congregation of people with mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire of meanings (Wenger 1998, 45ff.). More explicitly, a CoP shows three fundamental elements:

- Sharing a domain of knowledge which creates common ground and a sense of common identity and, as a consequence, legitimises the community
- Caring about this domain, continuously re-creating the social fabric of learning
- Sharing practices that people are developing to be effective in their domain

Such CoPs have a life cycle and may show varying stages of maturity, from their beginnings to their decline and end.

The concept of the CoP helps in understanding how groups of people in or across individual organisations learn, and also how organisations can learn. It is deeply rooted in the principle of self-organisation.

2M9.2 Self-organisation

Self-organisation related to groups of people or organisations means that a number of individual group factors such as competences, attitudes, methods used, and certain processes with good or bad results, through their interaction (basically attraction or repulsion in common experiences) spontaneously lead to the emergence of a new, relatively

stable structure, method, process or logic of action that is perceived as more effective and/or efficient. For example, Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia that grows according to this principle of self-organisation, which is characteristic of open systems.

Facilitating can be a very useful support method that uses self-organisation principles to render self-organisation processes of CoPs less casual and accidental.

CoPs, communities of practice are everywhere

2M9.3 Communities of practice …

are everywhere, and we all belong to a number of communities of practice wherever we co-operate more or less loosely with other people. This may be at work in our department and across departmental lines, in a business process or in project teams, or in our leisure activities such as sports, charity work, travelling etc. Networking in whatever context is a typical form of participation in a CoP.

Communities of practice vary in their characteristics; they can be defined in three ways (Wenger et al. 2002):

- What they are about (their domain)
- How they function (their community)
- What capabilities they produce (their practice)

Participation in a CoP is voluntary, and it is obvious that we do not belong to all CoPs with the same degree of commitment and intensity, but we contribute to them and take advantage of them - and we learn in them. These varying degrees of commitment may change over time and we may assume different roles within such a community.

Potential

Communities of Practice have a life cycle with five typical phases.

- In Phase 1 (potential)
  one or several persons start promoting a certain topic or activity.
- Phase 2 (coalescing)

Coalescing

  is marked by the emergence or formation of a basic structure with more or less clearly defined aims, tasks and ways of communication.

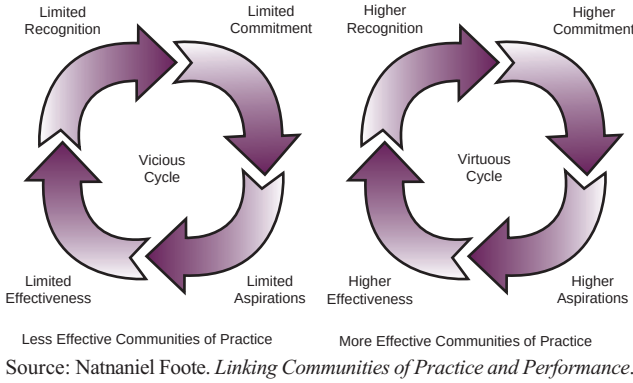
Maturing

- In Phase 3 (maturing)
  begins what actually characterises the CoP, the development and exchange of knowledge and competence. The expansion of activities usually leads to a growth in the number of people belonging in one way or other to the community. With the growing stock of shared knowledge, the models and practices, aims, tasks and ways of communication are permanently revised and adapted to the changing needs of the community's members and their common enterprise.

- Phase 4 (stewardship) *Stewardship*
  is reached when most of the CoP's members have achieved the level of competence and sense of responsibility which is required to cope with the common enterprise and its tasks. From now on the quantity of information and knowledge fed into the common stock of knowledge is smaller than the quantity of information and knowledge extracted from it.
- In the last Phase 5 (transformation) *Transformation*
  the community becomes less important as a reference point and common marketplace, either because the exchange with other sources of knowledge becomes more important or due to the reduced relevance of the topic which originally led to the creation of the community.

Communities of practice may or may not follow this life cycle but these phases help us to understand in which phase of maturity they are and how the self-organisation process in such a CoP can be supported from inside or outside. A CoP sooner or later enters one of the two patterns of functioning depicted in the graphic below, which represents the downward spiral of less effective and the upward spiral of effective communities of practice.

Two Patterns of Organizational Performance for Communities of Practice



Source: Natnaniel Foote. *Linking Communities of Practice and Performance*. Paper presented at the Communities of Practice Conference. San Diego, California, April 2000. Cited in Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder. 2002. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press. Taken from: http://www.adb.org/Documents/Studies/Auditing-Lessons-Architecture/ala2.asp

2M9.3 … and communities of performance

CoPes, communities of performance

Once communities of practice have succeeded in establishing an upward spiral of effectiveness and efficiency they tend to become more than a mere community of practice. During the first three phases of their

life cycle, CoPs basically are more or less spontaneous mechanisms of exchange. In Phase 4, called Stewardship, a CoP is at the peak of its effectiveness; it has reached a state of affairs where it usually achieves what it has undertaken to attain. Just as important, people have developed the sense of belonging and identity to their community which is necessary to feel responsible for the common enterprise. In order to distinguish this phase from all the previous phases, we call this a community of performance (CoPe) (Franz 2003a). It goes well beyond mere exchange and mutual learning; these properties continue to be the main characteristics and to represent the core purpose of the CoPe, but CoPes achieve effectiveness by practicing efficient mechanisms of facilitation and management and, at the same time, they are deeply immersed in the sense of common usefulness, achievement and success. In our view, one of the foremost missions of management and leadership is to lead CoPs to this stage of CoPe and, once arrived there, to keep alive and perpetuate this phase of stewardship as long as possible. Without a corresponding style of management and leadership (see Message 2M8) this will not be achievable.

Cf. 2M8: Basic concepts of management and leadership

Communities of performance are very advanced forms of communities of practice; they typically are or exist in learning organisations. They represent the social spirit of organisations and networks with a developed internal culture of learning and change, and they exist in a framework of an explicit common purpose and strategy and continuously managed or co-ordinated action to implement this strategy. If they are institutions, they usually have a self-image of being service agencies to their clientele. Professional organisations or associations of companies within an industrial sector tend to develop from mere initial communities of practice to such communities of performance with semi- or fully institutionalised agencies.

A facilitation style of leadership and management is just one necessary requirement for becoming a community of performance. A second one for reaching and perpetuating this phase is effective competence management, i.e. management of development, use and maintenance of the growing and changing competence incorporated by the individual people belonging to a CoP and by the whole functioning body of such a CoP. Usually this is called knowledge management (see Message 2M10), but we prefer to speak of competence instead of knowledge; competence being defined as the ability of individuals or groups, also organisations, to decide, act and learn adequately with respect to the functional and situative context.

Cf. 2M10: Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management

Cf. 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

2M10 Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management

2M10.1 Knowledge

Defining knowledge is difficult as there are many different approaches. Our own definition should be seen in a constructivist and systemic as well as a neurophysiological context, as was roughly described in Message 2M4 on perception and communication. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that our application context is facilitating co-operation.
Knowledge must be distinguished from data and information.

Cf. Message 2M4: Basic concepts of perception and communication

- Data are signs or structured accumulations of signs - things seen or heard or sensed in any way - figures, statistics, texts, pictures, etc. – which an individual or organisation (a system) may or may not perceive. They are there, independently of me.
- Data become information "for me" once they are perceived as different from existing data and able to affect existing information or knowledge.
- Knowledge is selected information embedded in the system of existing knowledge and experience (as well as physical and genetic dispositions) with proven or expected relevance (sense and meaning) for present or future contexts of the life of an individual or an organisation.

It is important to recall that we are not talking about knowledge that is separate from people, such as books, databases or similar stocks of recorded knowledge. For our context, these sources only contain data which are transformed into information and knowledge by active people. The way we use search engines on the internet is symptomatic of our approach.

Cf. Chap 3.1: The didactics of action learning

Our context of talking about knowledge is co-operation and facilitating communication for action and learning. Therefore one of the logical conclusions derived from the above definition has radical consequences for facilitating: If knowledge is the result of data and information selectively perceived and processed by our brain according to relevance to the perceiving system (individual or organisation), knowledge is always individual knowledge and cannot be transferred or taught. It can only be offered to others as data, and only these others, the possible receivers, can decide whether, how and how much of this data they perceive and accept as information. Only the use of such information in practical life contexts will decide whether this information is embedded into existing knowledge, rejected or modified.

The consequences from this conclusion for co-operation and facilitating co-operation are manifold.

- In order to make sure that people working together have, as far as possible, the same understanding of what they are expected to do or want to achieve together, it is useful to create collective situations and contexts of learning, decision-making or planning. Making people participate in a common process of learning and creation will enhance the probability that these people will receive the same data and experience similar conditions of processing this data into information that is meaningful for the common work context.
- Only an ongoing active exchange about the experiences made using this information in work will create a common stock of knowledge about this common work context and foster the development of team spirit and identity.

Cf. Message 2M9: Communities of practice and self-organisation

- Applied to organisations and networks, this means that it is useful to allow for and actively support the development of communities of practice by creating favourable conditions of exchange and common learning.
- One favourable condition is having people trained as facilitators, i.e. people who render communication more effective and efficient, not least because this helps such communities of practice to learn how to create favourable conditions of exchange and learning themselves.
- It is not knowledge as something separate from people, stored away in databases that should be of primary concern for strategies of knowledge management; it is more important to develop the individual and collective competence of co-operation in organisations or across organisational borders or, as we have also called it, the competence of co-operativity. It is for this reason that we prefer to talk about competence development or management instead of knowledge management.

2M10.2 Competence development

Competence development instead of knowledge management

Traditionally, organisational design (and usually knowledge management, involves designing organisational structures, rules and processes) has focused on creating structures, systems and roles. Contrary to this traditional approach, competence development focuses on creating favourable conditions of self-organisation. The actual aim of competence development is the creation and development of "aliveness" (Wenger et al. 2002), openness and creativity. Instead of knowledge management, Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder speak of "cultivating communities of practice". They have formulated five design principles for such a type of organisation, each of them culminating in the statement that it must come from inside the community instead of being imposed on it. Put another way, the community can only be designed by itself.[1]

1. *Design for evolution*. *Design for evolution*
   There is no general remedy for how to design a successful community of practice (CoP); a community will create its own mix of regularities and rules. But in any case it is important to create space for new ideas, change, integration of and adaptation to new members, and to introduce simple rules of functioning (e.g. regular meetings, a common web platform, etc.) that foster dynamics and allow for evolution. The community will find its own pace of change and continuity in the tension between internal needs and external pressure (see principle 7).
2. *Open a dialogue between internal and external perspectives*. *Open to internal to external perspectives*
   Communities often have an innate trend of closing down, of excluding external influences and of protecting their expertise. But to remain open to new ideas and new people they need external views and contrast. This strengthens their own expertise and their pioneering spirit. Confronting communities with what other communities do and how other communities function helps them sharpen their critical assessment of their own performance. Common debates on new impulses foster the development of shared meaning and create common sense.
3. *Invite different levels of participation*. *Invite participation*
   People participate in communities for very different reasons, some for learning, some for maintaining personal relationships, others for sharing the joy of fruitful communication at work. So "good community architecture invites many different levels of participation." Not all need to participate at the same level of intensity, not all can be active core members, at least not at the same time. People also need to change their level of participation according to their individual needs and possibilities.

[1] All comments on the seven principles are a mix of excerpts from Wenger et al. and own observations fitting into their pattern.

It is also important to offer small occasions and roles where people can make a valuable contribution or even excel. All this creates a plurality of perspectives, which is part of the richness of a community.

Develop public and private spaces

4. *Develop both public and private community spaces*.
This principle corresponds with two former ones. CoPs should organise various types of meeting and decide from event to event how formal and how open the meeting should be. Community events should usually provide time and space for both formal and informal exchanges across all levels of participation.

Focus on value

5. *Focus on value*.
Communities, along with focusing on the needs of their members, should have a value focus that delivers a valuable contribution to the common framework organisation and its objectives. The sense of belonging and identity is then made up of the internal value a community may provide to its members and of the measurable quality contribution to the common framework organisation or network and its purpose. It is important to make that visible, along with how the community has been able to achieve it. Sometimes small or spontaneous ideas mentioned in an informal way may grow to become important and significant contributions when they meet a receptive mind. Such processes should be traced and made visible within the community.

Combine the familiar with the exciting

6. *Combine familiarity and excitement*.
Along with a few formal routines of commitment creating stability, communities should strive to become a protected and yet exciting place for those who need somewhere to expose half-baked ideas and concepts which are still too soft to be exposed to a larger public. They should also be a test bed of inventions and other novelties. Conferences, meetings, and workshops dedicated to offering such creative situations can provide the necessary excitement which makes learning easier and more intense.

Create a rhythm

7. *Create a rhythm for the community*.
Communities should create their own specific rhythm and tempo of functioning. Along with the familiar regularity of meetings communities will have to find their own pace and frequency of creating events for exchange and learning. The tension must be found and felt between business as usual and exciting new projects, small and large gatherings, inside and outside oriented events, and going slow and racing.

Cf. Message 2M15: Learning networks - constructing social capital

Many of these principles can also be found, although in a very different framework and wording, in our own design concept of learning organisations and networks (Message 2M15: Learning networks – constructing social capital).

2M11 Project work as a work style

2M11

Project work as we define it here is not just working in projects. For working in projects, all other Messages and all Tools may be of some help, and we have provided six specific tools for viable projects in the C section of the Tools Chapter.

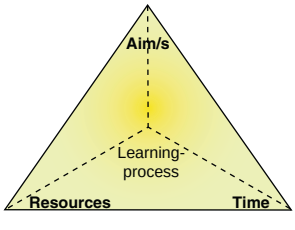
Cf. Chapter on Tools, section C

What we are aiming at here is to define project work as a professional work style, as the way of thinking and tackling almost all aspects of work as projects. Every problem, every task, every event, every agreement taken or promise made, every purposeful co-operation within or across organisational boundaries can be defined as a project.

As we said when presenting the SMART tool, projects are the pursuit of defined objectives in a defined time span with defined resources. These co-ordinates of project work (see graph) are applicable to almost every activity. Several of the simplest tools in this book are conceived to make this way of thinking easier. The most important one is Tool 4A1: To-do form. This basic tool helps defining all decisions as projects, asking for:

Cf. Tool 4C1: SMART - five basic rules for planning a feasible project

Cf. Tool 4A1: To-do form



- The what, i.e. in this case the aim or aims pursued with the decision which is the origin of your task
- The how, demanding identification of the way it is to be carried out and the resources needed or available
- The when, i.e. the time available or needed for achieving the defined aims
- If you take such decisions not only yourself but with others, the tool also asks you who will do it or be responsible for having it done or organising it
- Finally, the to-do form asks you to check whether the activities agreed have been completed

To do (minutes)	Project Date:	Participants:		
WHAT (issue, measure, aim)	HOW (organisation, implementation, steps)	WHO	till WHEN	Done

Thus, the tool not only supports you in planning and organising your own and your community's work in a practical manner, but if applied in the way described here it also fulfils an ongoing evaluation function following the classical control cycle of planning, doing, checking and new planning or doing better (see Message 2M12). The aim of evaluation is goal attainment and improvement as well as learning about how the project was carried through successfully or how to do things better the next time. Learning in and for work is a hidden agenda of such a project work style, and this must be made a normal and visible part of everyday work.

Cf. Message 2M12: The nature of quality: continuous improvement, continuous learning

Say what you do. Do what you say.

In other words, working in this way of defining decisions as projects, planning and carrying them through as projects and evaluating them as you do with projects, makes it easier to build up a capacity and characteristic which is key to co-operation in and across organisations, and which builds reliability or, as we have called it in Message 2M6, responsibility. Say what you are going to do and do what you said you would do. The consistency of words and actions is a fundamental condition of organisational quality. Of course, it is always appreciated when you do better than you promised. But promising more than what is possible will soon label you as unreliable, weaken the common achievements, and finally exclude you from co-operation or bring the co-operation to an end.

2M12 The nature of quality: continuous improvement, continuous learning

2M12.1 Quality definition of ISO 8402 (used for ISO 9001 and 9004)

ISO 9001-04 Quality management

"In this International Standard, quality is defined as the totality of characteristics of an entity that bears on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs."

This is the sober definition of quality as it is used in the framework of the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) and the corresponding institutions at European (EN) and national levels (e.g. BSI for the UK, DIN for Germany). "Entity" here means product or service or process, also an organisation or a person (p. 4). Depending on how it is implemented it can work quite well for products and material processes, even for most services and for persons regarded as an abstract workforce as it is directed towards the organisation of functioning structures and processes. ISO 9001 is a quality management system.

Cf. Message 2M7: Basic concepts of organisation and co-operation

However, for a holistic understanding of organisations as essentially purposeful co-operations of people it is not sufficient just to keep structures and processes functioning. Direction, orientation, meaning, and making sense become essential elements of what an organisation needs to develop its internal functioning as a community and its relationships to its natural and societal environments.

2M12.2 Total Quality

Total Quality: Management quality instead of quality management

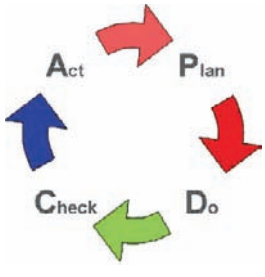
Total Quality does not define quality, since everything has quality. Therefore Total Quality approaches, such as the American Malcolm Baldrige Model or the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management, do not set out to be quality management methods

but models for management quality. The word "quality" does not appear in the Excellence model of EFQM. A 5 year study covering no less than 600 companies participating in the Baldrige award contest shows that, after implementing the TQM system, they outperform by far the various control groups of companies without such quality approaches. Depending on the control group used, the mean outperformance ranges from 38 to 46%. And this is not only true for large companies; in fact, for SMEs this outperformance is significantly higher. The study "clearly indicates that effective implementation of TQM principles and philosophies leads to significant wealth creation" (Hendricks/Singhal 2001).

With this base line argument in mind, our main concern for quality in the context of this book is the quality of (the management of) organisations and networks. Throughout the Messages, we have put forward the idea that facilitating can help in making communication and co-operation in and across organisations more effective and efficient, enhancing the degree of responsibility in communities of practice with the aim of developing them into communities of performance. This plain idea implies conceiving such development as processes of learning and improvement.

Quality is often reduced to not making mistakes. There may even be ways of reducing defaults, mistakes and errors to zero, but they evidently only apply to the execution of continuously repeated work processes. Zero default programmes cannot be applied to processes of thinking up new ideas, planning new strategies and developing action plans for implementing them. It is our conviction that most of the serious defaults and mistakes in organisations are caused by management as a result of insufficient and ineffective management of communication. There is no programme for achieving zero default communication but facilitating methods can help to render communication more effective and more efficient. Above all, thinking in terms of facilitation ensures that careful and diligent communication is a prerequisite for successful action, greatly reducing misunderstandings, and that organising active participation is an important factor in preparing effective implementation of what was planned.

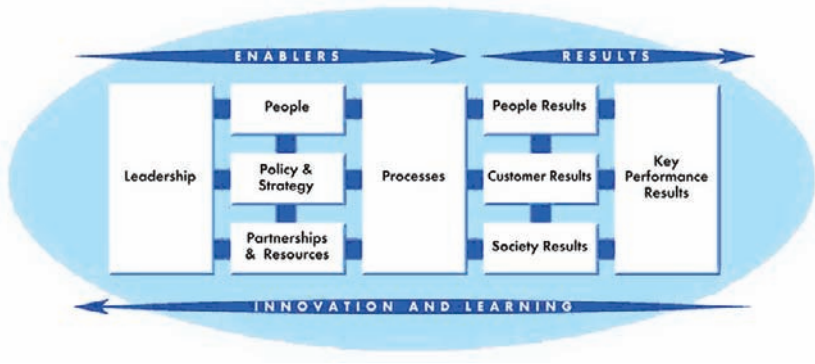
Say what you do.
Do what you say.



Quality may have many faces; for management, one of them lies in the simple phrase: "Say what you do and do what you say". One could add: "and reflect on why some things work out and others don't when planning to do it better the next time." This short sequence reproduces the Deming PDCA control cycle of plan: do, check, act for improvement.

The whole EFQM Excellence Model constitutes such a control cycle for the management of an organisation or any part or process of it with the ultimate aim of learning and improvement (innovation).

Basically, the whole model and its philosophy is captured in a catalogue of very specific "how statements" (How we make sure that …)



which provides the basis of the self-assessment as well as of the external assessment, if you want to have your status confirmed by an authorised expert. While the five first elements, the so-called enablers, get you to describe how you manage to do what you want to do and how you do it, the final four elements prompt you to describe and measure the results of what you have done. The catalogue is a perfect disguise for the two fundamental questions of all quality approaches:

- Are we doing the right thing?
- Are we doing it right?

2M12.3 Elements of management quality

- Leadership: The control cycle established by the nine criteria starts in this first one by asking whether those who are responsible for the success of the organisation are aware of this responsibility towards the five stakeholders of the organisation whose expectations are to be satisfied. Here is where the substantial and economic objectives and values of an organisation must be stated.
- Policy & Strategy: Logically, here the (self-) assessment catalogue asks how you are pursuing all the objectives and values you have been claiming under leadership, which policies and strategies are in place, and how they are implemented.
- People: This element requires details of how you ensure you have the right people in the right places, how you treat these people, and how you safeguard their continuous development according to the objectives and strategies formulated in the first two elements. The

Cf. Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)

fact that "people" is a separate element (the corresponding element in ISO 9001 is listed under "Management of Resources" along with machines and materials) and has the second highest value in the scoring system of assessment after customers, shows that organisational culture and participation are of great importance in this system.

- Partnerships & resources: Here you are requested to describe how you manage your resources and the corresponding, mostly contractual, partnerships with the suppliers of machines, materials, advice, information, and sometimes also people.
- The element "Processes" gets you to describe how you have structured what you do in order to pursue your aims and strategies.

Five enablers. Four result elements.

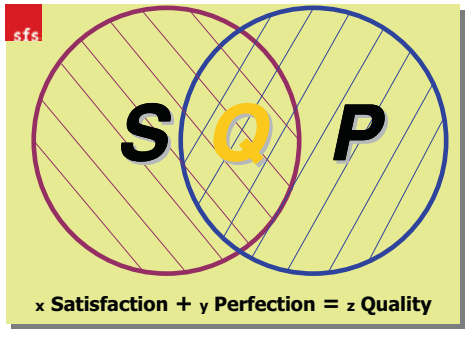
- The following four elements simply require you to state and measure your performance in achieving all the substantial and economic objectives and values, referring to the main stakeholders and the overall performance of the organisation. They ask for results.

The whole model invites you to set off on a never-ending journey towards the moveable target quality, a journey of continuous learning and improvement. It demonstrates a perfect understanding of the circumstance we have been describing throughout this book: that learning means appropriation through applying what has been learned from previous performance. It all builds on the indispensable congruence between saying and doing. To do what you said you would - reliability - is the basis of self-respect of an individual person just as well as of a group of people, an organisation. The readiness to act in congruence with your learning is the dominating feature of a learning organisation.

2M12.4 A basic theory of quality

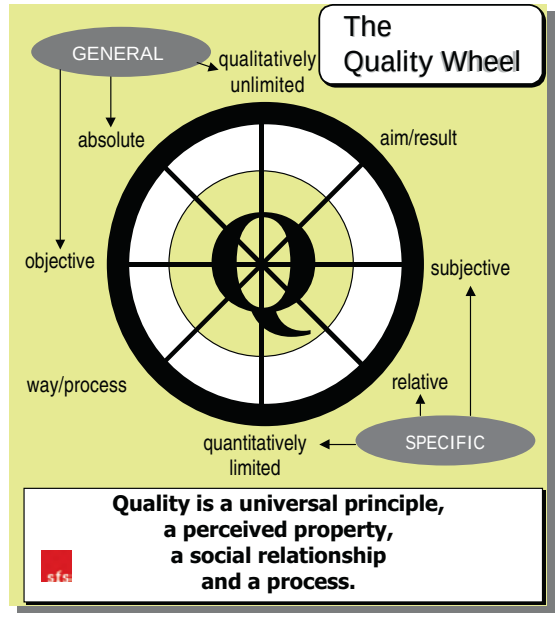
Improvement is a change in the degree of quality. So far, we have been using quality concepts such as customer orientation, improvement and TQM without trying to explain what quality is. Nearly all authors avoid this explanation by giving specific, individual product or service-related definitions. However, for organisation development and consulting purposes it is of vital importance that all persons involved have a common understanding of what quality is. The shortest possible definition is: xS + yP = nQ. Quality is the intersecting quantity of satisfaction and perfection from each of the participating perspectives (see graph). In other words, quality is a

multi-perspective construction which has to be consensuated in a co-operative context.



Quality itself can only be defined as the perceivable essence of things (products), actions (performance) and impacts (e.g. satisfaction). It is their perceived property. As it depends on individual perception, it is objective as well as subjective, which means that each perspective on a specific quality item is dependent on the interests and expectations of the perceiver. Thus, quality of organisation is by no means the basis of harmonious community concepts, as "community of performance" and "community of practice" might suggest. Quality is the object of struggle. Also, power has quality.

As such quality might have (objectively or conventionally) absolute dimensions, but it is definitely also relative to "my" interests and expectations, hence it is the result of a social definition process. Quality is, like money, a universal currency, unlimited in qualitative terms but limited in terms of quantity. Quality is a perceived or defined property of an aim or result and of the process of achieving it; a social relationship, and a universal principle. Just like a wheel, it is a moveable target (see graph). More than a "fact" (in Latin: what has been made), quality, like truth, is an attitude. It is an attitude for indiviuals and a culture for organisations. It concerns all dimensions of an organisation, namely its potential (people, technology, materials), its process, and its performance (products, services, economic viability).



Quality is locked into the concept of commodity, but primarily to its use value. The same applies to the production of commodities. Thus, in a company it is not sufficient to look at the production processes; without looking at the working processes you will not understand very much about the organisation. It is of crucial importance to understand that quality is a market concept (ideally) based on the freedom of decision and the equality of conditions. Quality is a contract. This explains why it is a concept based on a democratic and participative core that is opposed to undemocratic structures of dominance and power.

Obviously, the fact that quality is primarily locked to the use value of products and services cannot hide that it cannot be stripped of its twinning relationship to their exchange value, ultimately their price. If I cannot afford a Mercedes Benz, my subjective range of quality will focus on a car from a lower segment of the car market.

However, the essence of these considerations is that quality is a concept based on interest (hence perspective or standpoint) and competence (knowledge and experience), only measurable in relative terms of satisfaction and perfection.

Applied to organisations, we can say that a learning organisation is a system of improvement and self-improvement (enhancement of competence) of individuals, groups, and the whole organisation, including their formal and informal purposes, structures, rules and values. That improvement and self-improvement is directed towards achieving purposefully defined aims via a community of performance.

2M13 Basic concepts of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

2M13

SMEs in Europe

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), that is, companies with up to 250 employees, constitute the engine of most of the world's economies. In the enlarged Europe, some 23 million SMEs represent 99% of all enterprises and provide about 75 million jobs (EC 2008).

SMEs are a major source of entrepreneurial skills, innovation and employment, but they can be the companies most affected by the globalisation process and are often confronted with certain difficulties and barriers; for example, SMEs frequently have difficulties in obtaining capital or credit, particularly in the early start-up phase.

Therefore, support for SMEs is one of the policy priorities at national and European level. Policies for SMEs could address:

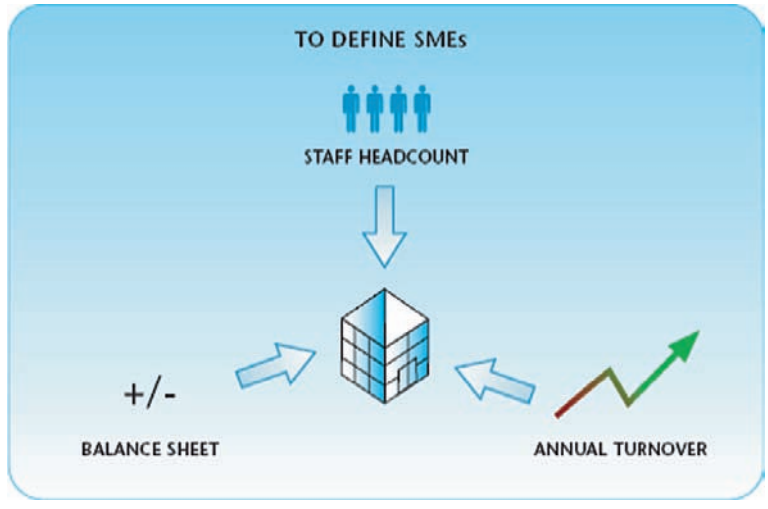
- Education and training
- Research and technological development
- Information diffusion and accessibility for firms (databases, websites, information centres - all of a general, non-customised nature)
- Policies providing customised services to firms (for example, environmental services, labelling, certification and testing, participation in exhibitions, transportation intelligence, logistics, design or new production techniques).
- Policies supporting labour recruitment
- Policy backing the internationalisation process
- Policy for improving quality development in firms
- Policies for setting up incubators of small firms
- Policies improving venture or risk capital availability

Recommendation 2003/361/EC provides a definition

In order to avoid distortions in the Single Market, the European Commission has provided a legally secure and user-friendly definition of SMEs in the Recommendation 2003/361/EC. Its recommendation concerns all Community policies applied within the European Economic

Area favouring SMEs and it is addressed to the Member States, the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund.

'The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euros, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euros.' (Extract of Article 2 of the Annex of Recommendation 2003/361/EC)



(Graph and table taken from: EC, The new SME definition. User guide and model declaration, Enterprise and Industry Publication)

The Recommendation also formally identifies sub-categories of SMEs: medium-sized, small and micro.

Enterprise category	Headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	<250	≤€50 million		≤€43 million
Small	<50	≤€10 million		≤€10 million
Micro	<10	≤€2 million		≤€2 million

See Message 2M14: Basic concepts of networks and clusters

At regional level, one of the transversal strategies put in place by relevant local stakeholders, such as Chambers of Commerce, local development agencies etc., for supporting SMEs consists of encouraging co-operation and networking. Co-operation and networking could cover a wide range of areas such as training, R&D, quality, internationalisation - actually nearly all the policy areas enumerated above. In this, Action Learning and facilitating techniques have proved to be among the most effective and powerful methods for initiating and sustaining the SME empowerment process and for making co-operation in and outside the single company easier.

2M14 Basic concepts of networks and clusters

2M14.1 Networks

Networks represent a specific, relatively open and flexible form of loosely coupled, yet purposeful co-operation between individuals and individual organisations on the basis of shared structures, rules, interests and values.

Cf. Message 2M15: Learning networks-constructing social capital

2M14.2 Clusters

Cf. Message 2M13: Basic concepts of SMEs

Clusters are regional aggregations of mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with varying forms and intensities of co-operation. According to Porter (1998) they are labelled as a 'cluster' when they take on the form of "a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities". In this particular context, companies compete but also co-operate, interacting with their external environment and creating dynamic mechanisms of knowledge creation and use.

The growing interest in geographical concentrations of firms in the same or related industries for economic growth processes has stimulated a wide international debate which has resulted in an overproduction of theoretical concepts and 'labels' best represented by the notions of 'clusters', 'industrial districts' (Becattini 1989), 'learning regions' (Cooke 1996), 'milieux innovateurs' (Aydalot, 1986; Maillat 1998), 'local productive system' (Courlet 2000) and 'regional innovation systems' (Braczyk 1997; Howell 1999).

There is a large semantic ambiguity in this wide stream of literature because many researchers apply these labels carelessly, as if they were synonyms, while others devote considerable effort to trying to define clear theoretical boundaries among them.

Porter introduced the term cluster with the meaning of both a territorial and functional group of interconnected companies and associated institutions. He did not provide clear criteria and "operational rules" for identifying clusters. The geographical scale of clusters is extremely flexible, ranging from sub-regions, to regions and even to nations. The sectoral boundaries are even more flexible because in Porter's definition, in order to identify interconnected companies, suppliers, service providers and associated industries, the boundaries need to be shifted from the focus industry upstream and downstream, horizontally and vertically, depending on the economic interrelations linking the values chains of firms and institutions.

As Porter has put it, what is typical of a cluster is its organisational nature: "*Clusters represent a kind of new spatial organisational form in between arm's-length markets on the one hand and hierarchies, or vertical integration, on the other. A cluster, then, is a new way of organising the value chain. A cluster of independent and informally linked companies and institutions represents a relatively robust organisational form offering advantages in efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility". (Porter 1998:79)*

Clusters can therefore be considered as specific organisational forms whose main characteristic is that they are particularly capable of favouring knowledge creation, use and exchange within local socio-economic contexts.

Co-operative agreements

2M14.3 Co-operative agreements

In the cluster, co-operative agreements represent a family of arrangements between two or more organisations. These could embrace a wide range of arrangements, from cross-share-holding deals, to licensing arrangements, formal joint ventures, and informal co-operative deals. Collaborative ventures vary from highly formal long-term agreements linking two or more organisations, to short-term consortia of organisations engaged in a relatively short-term project, i.e. from shared research to formal joint ventures and minority equity participation.

Collaborative ventures can be categorised as *vertical*, *horizontal*, or *diversified*.

Vertical backward (or upstream) alliances represent co-operation between a business and its suppliers (e.g. including co-operation with

the suppliers of capital goods such as machinery and tools), while *vertical forward* (or downstream) is between a business and its distributors or customers. *Vertical co-operation* may focus, for example, on issues of quality and delivery.

Horizontal co-operation between firms in the clusters has two main aspects. Firstly, it takes the form of fair competitive behaviour, such as refraining from labour poaching or from setting prices below rival costs, sharing of technical information, and subcontracting out to less successful competitors (Brusco 1982). Secondly, it can converge to provide joint programs for the provision of collective goods, notably training or education and research and development, but also medical care and unemployment insurance.

Finally, *diversified alliances* are between companies in industries which are not closely related to each other (e.g. usually important from a portfolio perspective for businesses to enter into a new competitive arena).

2M14.4 Networking in clusters

Networking in clusters

Co-operation in clusters usually establishes links between local institutions and the economic performance of firms and economies. As a consequence, in a cluster we need to take into account not only the firm's relations with other firms, but also the institutional context around the firm (e.g. development agencies, intermediaries, public authorities, educational institutions etc.). In this context, the complexity of relations between individual firms, and between firms and institutions implies varied typologies of structures, which can also be considered as networks. Relations of interdependence and collaboration between all types of local actors characterise these network forms of organisation. For example, inter-firm alliances may be self-organised or supported by some catalyst such as public and semi-public institutions.

Public institutions are organisations that are in total or almost total public ownership, that operate in the targeted area by providing incentives, services and/or control mechanisms to the firms, and that follow general goals for the development of the territory. Examples of public institutions are: local government, local development agencies, public research centres, etc.

Semi-public institutions are organisations that are privately owned and operate in the area involved by the project, providing general incentives and services. Despite their private ownership, services provided by semi-public institutions have a public/collective nature. Semi-public institutions might require payment for their services, but the most

important features are those services that normally *have a general (non-customised) character and require a rather limited payment*. Examples of semi-public institutions are: associations of firms providing non-customised and collective goods such as information or technical support to firms, non-profit organisations for economic development (foundations, etc.), industry education and training associations, and technological institutions.

2M15 Learning networks - constructing social capital

The following theoretical deliberations try to encompass the 14 previous Messages in one conceptual framework. They constitute a learning organisation development theory which here is also applied to networks. Networks have similar conditions to projects in organisations or groups of managers in matrix organisations where different experts from different parts of the organisation work together without a hierarchy. The project management responsibility is no more than a delegation of powers for the specific purpose. In networks, sometimes this delegation of powers may not exist; organising co-operation towards common objectives on the basis of joint strategies may be the only defined task of a network manager or facilitator. This definitely applies when networks are the project and when projects are driven by networks where the participants represent different organisations. As we have said before, learning organisation management in networks can be summarised as leadership without hierarchy, building social capital.

Therefore this Message contains two large sections divided internally by sub-headings.

- Part 1 deals with networks and social capital,
- Part 2 is dedicated to our theory of (network) management as facilitation.

2M15.1 Networks and social capital

Part 1: Networks and social capital

2M15.1.1 Learning networks?

Initiating, building or developing co-operation of SMEs, in clusters or independently, is a task which can be roughly described as network development. The task is normally taken over by public or semi-public agencies

or by private agencies with a public or semi-public mission and funding, sometimes also called meta-organisers. Their function is to discover, orient and improve the potential of a network or cluster to enhance the individual performance of organisations belonging to the network as well as the performance of the network as a whole. Enhancement of the control potential is also the aim of learning, be it of individuals, organisations or of networks. However, it may be doubted whether networks can learn. Individuals can learn, organisations can learn, but can networks learn?

Cf. Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

2M15.1.2 Can organisations learn?

We understand organisations as social organisms constituted of people (members) and groups of people on the one hand, and by formal and informal purposes, structures, rules and values on the other. Purposes, structures, rules and values only become an organisation by people enacting them. Without their interaction more or less conforming to these rules, the organisation does not come to life. Hence, *organisations are the distinctively structured and regulated form of purposeful interaction of individuals and groups*. Consequently, the question of whether organisations can learn must be answered with 'yes' and 'no'. It is 'no' in so far as they are an objectively existing construction of purposes, structures and rules which can only be altered by people who have learned to do so. (How they have learned to do so is a very important variable of how, what and how much organisations learn.) But it is 'yes' when we consider organisations to be a purposeful interaction of people (co-operation) who apply and modify these structures, rules and values or even replace them by new ones. By doing so, they learn *in organisation* and in *being the organisation*. Even so, one could object that it is still the individuals who learn. The answer to this could be sought by posing a counter-question: Would they learn what they learn without belonging to this specific organisation? Definitely not! The conclusion is that *organisations learn as their members learn, individually as well as collectively, being the organisation and changing the organisation*.

Cf. Message 2M7: Basic concepts of organisation and co-operation

Cf. Message 2M10: Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management

It must be stressed once more that, of course, individuals can also learn individually and independently of the organisation. But this is not our primary concern, even if this learning is used by the organisation. For this discussion, organisational learning is always purposeful or intentional learning as opposed to informal or discrete learning. One could also say it is learning with a double condition and contingency. On the one hand it is more or less strictly conditioned by the organisation's purposes and economic constraints as well as by its present structure and state of development, but on the other hand it is learning in order to become a learning organisation. Both conditions must be met to be successful. A learning organisation which is not economically viable is a clever zombie.

A learning organisation can thus be described *as a processing structure determined by purposes, rules and values, conceiving itself as improvable. It wants and enables its members to learn with this end in mind and considers this capacity of learning for improvement as a necessary characteristic of survival*.

2M15.1.3 Networks of organisations

Networks of companies - co-operation of organisations represented by people

If organisations are basically the intentional, structured and valuing co-operation of people, networks of companies are the intentional, structured and valuing co-operation of organisations represented by people. The question is: Who learns in networks? People? Organisations? Networks?

The English term *learning organisation* conveys several meanings, which do not completely translate into other languages. One is an *organisation which learns*, another is a *qualifying organisation* – these are the two translations possible in the Latin languages. However, there is also the idea that the organisation of the company and of its works is, at the same time, the *organisation of learning*. This is only connotated in English. Moreover, it means that organisation is understood as a process, a dynamic fuelled by a process of learning. If it is true that organisations only learn through their co-operating members, then networks obviously are not structures in which organisations learn. The learners in networks understood as communities of practice are the networking people, i.e. the actual actors, who convey what they have learned into the decision-making process of organisations. Organisations in networks are processors of learning results of networking individuals; the input comes from lessons learned via the individual and is not the result of organisational learning within the organisation. Learning of individuals in networks may lead to different action and different ways of doing things in organisations. The implementation, in its turn, may initiate or constitute a learning process in the individuals' respective organisation. Thus, learning in networks via a multi-staged process may eventually lead to the network learning something. But a cautious interpretation would be that networks as such do not learn and it is the individuals within them who learn. However, they are not the network; they are just representatives of organisations that form the network.

2M15.1.4 Learning in networks - constructing social capital

Nevertheless, these learning processes create a common stock of practice and experience, approaches and achievements, relationships and attitudes, sympathies and antipathies among people active in the network understood as a community of practice. In their common learning and practice, they build up a growing social capital within a network by enhancing their co-operativity, as we have called it. This social capital

constitutes a potential, an option, which can be drawn on or not and which may or may not be put into practice by individual or collective action. The decision on whether and how to take this potential into consideration is up to the individual actor and his or her organisation and the specific considerations required at a given moment in time. After all, it is the individual action which provides analytical evidence of how and how much such factors influence real activities. Put another way, social capital is the result of a learning process and the final culmination of the learning process, i.e. appropriation or taking decisions or acting according to what has been learned or achieved in terms of trust building; it is activated social capital.

The concept of social capital has several "fathers". Although Fukuyama's theoretical contribution (1995, 1999) seems to be underestimated in the literature, without any doubt the three constitutional "fathers" of social capital approaches as they are mainly used today are Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam.

Bourdieu

For Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network or more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (1983b:248) and he also refers to it as "a capital of social connections, honorability and respectability" (1984:122) which shows that he is more concerned with social capital as an individual attribute in terms of individual networks intentionally pursued and used for individual purposes and aims, such as getting a job, belonging to an in-group, etc.

Coleman

Although not opposed to Bourdieu's approach (which he pretends to ignore, referring to Glenn Loury), James Coleman (1988), the late American sociologist, favoured a broader and systematic (macro-micro) access to social capital in the framework of a general social theory of social action encompassing individuals, social groups, organisations and societies. Coleman's approach, drawn up in analogy to the human capital approach, is a rational choice model following the assumption that all social interaction, be it individual, of groups, organisations or whatever social collectiveness, is based on four constitutive elements, i.e. actors, resources, control and interest. Social capital is conceived as one of the four forms of resources, along with private goods, events (actions and specific capacities, human capital) and information.

Putnam

Putnam was the one who succeeded in introducing social capital into the political sphere. He defined it as those "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (1993:167). The World Bank's definition of social capital (1999) is very close to that of Putnam, namely "social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collective action. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion – social

capital – is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development." More recently, Putnam has shifted the emphasis from trust to reciprocity, insisting on a horizontal approach to social capital as co-ordinated action.

Fukuyama

Francis Fukuyama has established something like a missing link between:

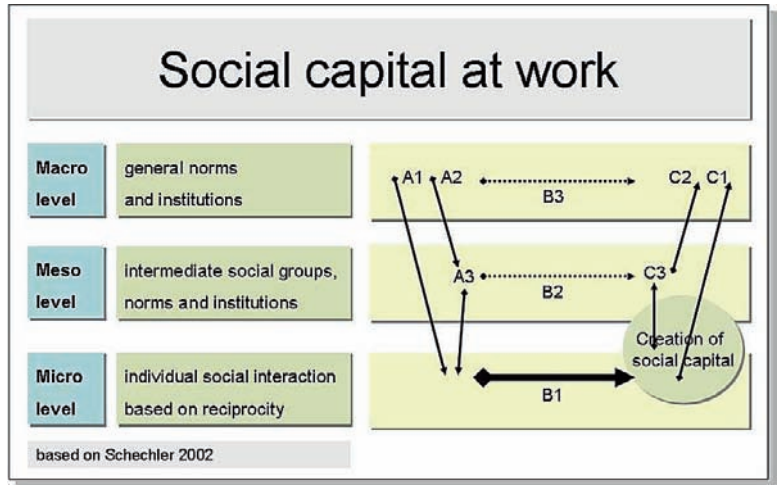
- Bourdieu with his focus on individual interest, intention and activity
- Putnam referring to horizontal relationships of trust and reciprocity, thus taking the norm or the network instead of the interaction for the social capital
- Coleman operating with a rational choice model and a macro-micro-macro level scheme of social capital based on social interaction

He introduces a meso level between the macro and micro levels. It was Fukuyama's research that established a cultural link between strong family structures, e.g. in the Latin European countries, and the corresponding industrial structure of capitalism. According to him, social capital is an "instantiated informal norm that promotes co-operation between two or more individuals", in other words, social capital is co-operation influenced and influencing social norms (culture).

Schechler

Thus it seems reasonable to construct an approach overcoming the weaknesses by trying to integrate the strengths of each and all these approaches. Jürgen M. Schechler (2002), a young German economist and social scientist who specialises in network economies, has constructed such a model. For him, social capital is the result of social interaction of individuals in groups, organisations and networks based on reciprocity (including trust) and leading to (more) trust. This social action on the micro level is influenced by existing social norms and values on the macro and meso levels. These norms and institutions are understood as already substantiated social capital, which can be reproduced, developed, enhanced or newly created by real social interaction. The model is built on the basis of a smoothened rational choice approach of socially active individuals.

The following explanations of the model's levels and mechanisms of functioning already provide translations considering our network and cluster context:



Levels of functioning

2M15.2 Levels of functioning

- The macro level
  This consists of general norms and institutions such as the economic system and its mechanisms, the legal and political system and its mechanisms, and general cultural rules and values. A generally positive attitude of national governments or the EU Commission towards e.g., cluster formation may also play a role on this level.
- The meso level
  This is constituted of intermediate social groups and communities such as families, clans, specific associations and networks with their interests, norms, values, institutions and cultures - in our case, clusters with their corresponding networks. Also regional or local governments and their attitude towards cluster development may exert an important influence, not to forget the direct or indirect influence of, for example, company headquarters or contracts of domination on subsidiary decision-making on the local level.
- The micro level
  This is the level of individual decision-making and action or interaction with other individuals from which, on the basis of reciprocity, mutual trust may or may not arise. Here is where decisions are made and action takes place, where company or network managers opt for competitive or co-operative strategies, taking or not taking into account what “the network” or “the cluster” expects them to do.

2M15.3 Mechanisms of functioning - and learning

Mechanisms of functioning

The following mechanisms consider social capital primarily as a process based on an already existing potential. Describing, measuring and analysing existing social capital requires the adoption of further and possibly different concepts and methods. It is important to repeat that social capital is formed or effective only in so far as it is activated in individual or collective action – this is what Fukuyama means by 'instantiated'. Social capital may well exist without being used; in fact, most of the existing social capital is not activated but remains either unused or latent. It may even diminish and become obsolete over time simply because it has not been used and reactivated or because it is no longer accepted, e.g. by children no longer accepting cultural standards familiar to their parents. A very current German saying goes: little gifts maintain friendships. In other words: relationships must be "actualised"; if they do not receive attention by both sides they will fade away.

Actualisation - a central concept

By using the term 'actualisation', we are drawing on the constructivist hypothesis of re-presentation as a process of recalling existing knowledge or memories of the past into the present by re-presenting them to the own mindset. As we (Franz and Kopp 2004) have argued in another context, for practical learning processes (learning by doing) re-presentation also means "making memories fit for action in a present context", i.e. actualisation. The present context is very important as it has a very important selective influence on what we recall. A curriculum vitae is a good example of this. Although it is normally a written document and not just remembrance, it will usually be modified by leaving out certain aspects and adding others, depending on the context for which it is used, in order to make it more meaningful to the addressee of the CV[1]. In other words, even a professional life is a purposeful construction with varying identities. We tell different people different stories about the same subject, ourselves.

2M15.4 Mechanisms of actualisation and learning

As we are focussing here on the development and enhancement of cooperation as a basic factor of social capital production, our attention is directed towards *mechanisms of actualisation*.

[1] My standard CV for a tender as a consultant is different from the CV I present for a proposal of a scientific research project.

Actualisation - situative mechanisms

- So called *situative mechanisms* (A)
  These situate the interacting individuals on the micro level, and influence their selection of options of action and attitudes. Variables from the macro level may influence individual action directly (A1) or may be mediated through cultural standardisation on the meso level (A2). Finally, influence variables from the meso level such as strong clan or family ties or weaker network ties may modify the individual selection or decision-making process (A3) on the micro level. In Western clusters, the "old families", existing associations or chambers of commerce may have this selective influence providing bonding or bridging social capital, whereas in the former socialist countries, old party clans may play this role, reinforcing or counteracting new institutions such as chambers of commerce or specific employers' associations. In a cluster context, along with the individual interest of a person or company, specific competitive or co-operative cultures and habits may exert pressure to act in a particular way. Also, economic policies from any level promoting cluster action may be pondered. In other words, how a decision maker is embedded in a social and institutional context, be it competitive or co-operative, will most probably make a difference.

Actualisation - formation mechanisms

- The so called *action formation mechanism* (B)
  This leads to the selection of options regarding how to implement reciprocity. For social actors in clusters, the basic decision to be taken is whether to opt for competitive or co-operative action strategies or a specific mix of both. Networking constitutes a third option besides make or buy, virtually: "make or co-operate" (Kogut et al. 1992:348). How far they are influenced by A1, A2 or A3 mechanisms, depends on the individual person's and the organisation's specific interest. Strictly speaking, the level of action is always the micro level, i.e. the individual one (B1); nevertheless, the meso and macro levels may be strong action determinants, especially for representatives of norms and institutions of these levels, and may lead to communicational adaptation. Therefore, B2 and B3 are symbolical "action" strands. Social capital is confirmed or modified, enhanced or eroded, created or destroyed exclusively in social action. This is what Fukuyama wants to say by "instantiated norms". Social capital exists in norms and institutions, but it "lives" only through communication and action, only through co-operation, and it will only go on existing if these norms are confirmed or constructively modified.

Actualisation - transformation mechanisms

- So called *impact or transformation mechanisms* (C)
  These transform the result or output of social interaction into an impact on existing norms and institutions or contribute to the creation of new ones. These processes are described by the C arrows, C1 having an immediate impact on the macro level, C2 influencing the

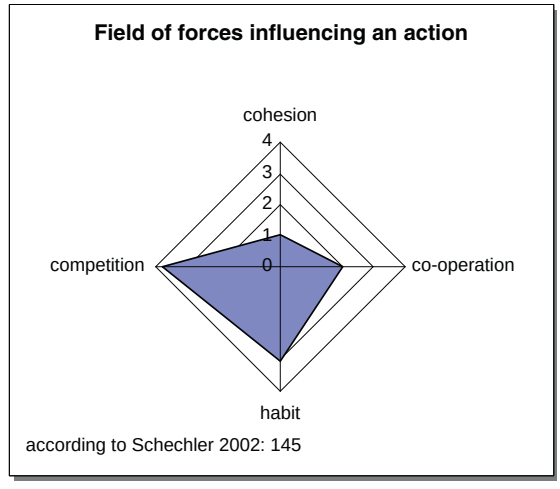
development of the meso level, and C3 including impacts from the meso onto the macro level. Successful cluster practices in one region may lead to political programmes on the macro level (C1) or probably through the C2 strand as they normally would include already effective co-operation or certain degrees of cohesion expressed in networking and specific associations or project initiatives. Most probably, both strands, C2 and C3, together might have major effects on the macro level, resulting in special policies and programmes, e.g. on the EU level.

Each of these action processes can also be conceived as a learning process following an interested strategy intentionally organised by a network manager.

2M15.5 Co-opetition networks

Co-opetition - co-operation and competition

Network relationships tend to develop weak ties. Granovetter defined the intensity of relationships in terms of the frequency, duration, emotional closeness and reciprocity of relations between individuals (1973:1361). Strong relationships develop strong emotional ties and a high degree of reciprocity. Weak ties, on the other hand, pursue information gains and advantages of collaboration in order to make work easier; they are emotionally less intense but also function on a basis of reciprocity. Granovetter argued that weak ties help to overcome strong internal orientations by bridging the gaps to more remote social groups and organisations. It is easier to establish weak ties as they require less investment, particularly in terms of time. Networks have a wider span in terms of the number of persons involved and in terms of space. They are more likely to permit access to novel information as more sources are involved. “The strength of weak ties”, thus, consists of the larger exchange potential and the lower degree of solidarity, a mixture which altogether does not lend itself to building strong identities. Network relationships can be instrumental or expressive or both. They tend to be primarily instrumental. Instrumental relations are clearly work-related and draw on the exchange of information, expertise, professional advice and material resources, while expressive relations are based on friendship and social support and require higher and longer investments (Ibarra 1993).



Schechler (2002:127ff) has suggested a reduced model of how to measure the proportional influence of four basic factors of social capital in networks: competition and co-operation, solidarity and habit. Their proportional influence is graphically shown in a field of forces. According to Schechler, solidarity could be a valid indicator of a high potential of social capital. Co-operation indicates a high degree of interest in developing or confirming existing social capital, whereas high values of competition may indicate low degrees of development or an erosion of social capital. Habit provides values which confirm the importance of other salient factors, e.g. in our graph, solidarity seems habitually to be under developed. In Schechler's view, cluster networks are typical co-opetition communities, a notion which has been coined by Nalebuff and Brandenburger (1996) and which suggests that network partners accept the co-existence of both the principles of competition and co-operation as basically beneficial. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, what makes a difference in the development of a network or cluster is co-operation enhanced by solidarity.

Although these four action principles may constitute a serious reduction of descriptors for the social capital of a cluster network, they seem to be very helpful in measuring social capital as it is expressed in individual actions and measures. They also provide a certain orientation for what network management is required to achieve in order to facilitate cluster development towards a higher degree of mutual reliability (solidarity). As solidarity may be perceived as a concept which is focused on network actions of aid, the term 'cohesion' would be probably preferred instead for a general network or cluster context.

2M15.6 Network management as facilitation

Part 2: Network management as facilitation

2M15.6.1 Learning in networks

Even if it is true that it is only individuals, as representatives of organisations, who learn in networks of organisations and who as a community of practice may learn together what they would not have learnt in their organisations, it must be explained how this learning can be facilitated and fostered by the network management, i.e. how network managers can facilitate this learning process in a holistic way. Networks constitute an additional supra-organisational level of organisation, so called meta-organisers. Therefore, some basic reflection on organisational learning may be quite helpful.

Harald Geissler is one of the German authors from the educational side of the debate who has most influenced the progress from reflecting on 'learning in organisations' to considering the 'learning of organisations' (1991:79). For him, 'learning like working is an individual as well as a collective process' (1996a:267) which has to be seen as 'one complex context' 1991:82). He defines learning as a 'change in the control potential'. Hence, organisational learning is considered to be a change of an organisation's control potential implemented within a complex context of collective and individual learning processes. Even so, the questions remain: who learns, how, and with what objectives?

As to the objectives of organisations, we agree with Sattelberger (1991) for whom the overarching aim consists of staying or becoming capable of surviving under changing or unstable environmental conditions by intentionally transforming the ability of the organisation to face the future successfully. He takes up the definition of learning as a change in the control potential, especially in relation to the organisation's potential for controlling future challenges which may or may not be known in the present. This overall objective, which is also perfectly applicable to cluster management, is translated into three immediate learning objectives (p. 13):

(a) responsiveness to the needs of the respective target groups (customers, suppliers, investors, the public, employees, stakeholders of whatever kind)
(b) 'learnability', the ability to apprehend additional valid knowledge about oneself and ones natural and social/societal environment
(c) competence, defined as ability to act, with the aim of satisfying given and perceived needs

According to Sattelberger, there are five distinctive forms of organisational learning which directly or in some modified way also apply to networks and the organisation of networks (1991:15):

(a) the learning of an elite or dominating coalition, e.g. top management, given the fact that learning and power are intimately related and that the learning of the powerful stands the best chance of having real influence in organisational decision-making processes
(b) the learning of other subcultures, e.g. political alliances, functional units, specific levels or parts of management, innovative groups
(c) fundamental knowledge shared by all members of the organisation such as organisational maps, shared frames of reference, communities of practice and assumptions
(d) the change of the organisation itself by transferring or translating learning experiences into organisational standard procedures, norms, values, strategies, artefacts, systems, structures, programmes or rules which come into effect independently of the memory of the members of the organisation
(e) the use, change or development of the organisation's knowledge base, i.e. of the total amount of knowledge available in the organisation

For more details, please cf: 3.1 Making learning easy - facilitation and the didactics of action learning and Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

Summing up, we can say that *learning is oriented towards the improvement of an individual's or an organisation's control competence*. The process of learning itself can be defined as a *process of construction or re-construction of reality*, in other words, as a theoretical and practical *process of appropriation oriented to enhance personal mastery* (as Senge would call it) *or an organisation's competence to cope with known or unknown future challenges*. Although modifications of detail may be necessary, the same can be said about the intentional development of networks promoting clusters.

2M15.7 Six dimensions and action principles of network management

How such development can be practically pursued is shown by the matrix in the Table. It shows six dimensions of how to become and to be a learning organisation. As these six dimensions are aimed at creating and developing a learning culture in organisational contexts, we think that this learning organisation theory and method can also be applied to networks of organisations. Using facilitation methods will greatly help in adhering to these six principles.

See Message 2M12: The nature of quality - continuous improvement, continuous learning

These six dimensions are, at the same time, the objectives and the ways of achieving them, as well as the product and the process of producing learning and improvement. They are based on a general theory of quality which is briefly resumed in Message 2M12. Each of these dimensions must be compatible with and applied to all the

others, thus constituting a strategic planning tool, a methodical guide and an analytical evaluation matrix of the dimensions of a learning organisation and of all further methods and instruments used in the process of developing one, e.g. all our Tools. Each of the following six characteristics of a learning organisation can be cross-checked against each other as the matrix suggests. The same cross checking of aims and ways also helps in examining the validity of tools and instruments deployed in the implementation and development of learning organisations (of networks). It will soon become obvious that this is a cyclical, discourse-based total quality approach. The matrix (see Table) contains the whole theory.

Ways / Aims	Stakeholder orientation	Improvement process	Learning process	Participation process	Decision-making process	Appropriation process
Stakeholder orientation						
Improvement process						
Learning process						
Participation process						
Decision-making process						
Appropriation process						
General theory of quality						

Principle 1: Stakeholder orientation process

There is no sense in inducing any sort of change in an organisation without clearly identifying who will benefit from the improvements, and in what ways this change is good or better for whom. Each organisation has to pursue the satisfaction of five stakeholders who have an interest in the success of the organisation (or network in our case). In a certain way, each of these stakeholders is a customer to the network organisation; hence we often reduce stakeholder to customer orientation. These five stakeholders are (see the mind map):

See Tool 4D2

- the investors of capital, time, interest
- external customers
- the employees
- partners, i.e. suppliers of parts, services or necessary information
- the societal and the natural environment

For each decision taken and action or project of a cluster network implemented, these five stakeholders and their specific interests must be identified in order to direct and orient the action in line with the interests at stake.

The mind map is an analytical tool that can regularly be used in companies and networks for exploring the immediate interest and advantage structure envisaged by a specific project or change of the organisation. It also serves to check the fit of individual solutions or targets with strategic orientations, and also to examine the strategic orientations themselves. For strategic purposes, it can be developed along the lines of the Balanced Score Card devised originally by Kaplan and Norton (1997).

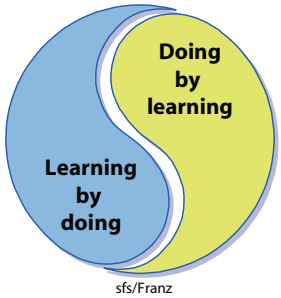
Cf. Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning

Another very simple tool supporting customer orientation (external as well as internal) is our Tool 4D3, which seeks to analyse the specific task or objective of a change or problem-solving process.

Principle 2: Improvement process

Each project, change or problem-solving process is initiated with the intention of making something better. Why go for change if it is not for the better? Why initiate a project if not for solving a problem? Why initiate a network for promoting a cluster if it does not lead to benefits? Therefore, the development of a learning organisation as well as a learning network is an intentional improvement process. Improvement is a change for the better in the degree of quality. The only meaningful measurement of before-after difference of this is the intention of those who have induced or suffered this process. This is not only true for organisation development; it is especially true for intentional learning. Learning in an organisational context is by definition the endeavour of improving one's control potential or competence, i.e. self-improvement. Learning is an improvement process. What was said before about working well is true: one must be able, want and be allowed to work, and so it is with learning. The task is not fulfilled by seeing it as an improvement process; it must also be shaped, i.e., managed, like an improvement process.

It is particularly here that the general theory of quality may serve as a reference (cf. Message 2M12).



Principle 3: Learning process

The only original innovation of the learning organisation thinking is to conceive organisation as a way of learning, and hence the development of organisations as a learning process. Consequently one understands from this the requirement that shaping organisation development is a learning process embedding learnability within an organisation. As we saw at the beginning, this is also the most difficult part to conceive and, hence, to shape.

Learning is defined as the process of re-constructing reality virtually. Organisation development is defined as the process of re-constructing reality practically. As learning is, on the one hand, an improvement and self-improvement process, and on the other, an appropriation process of constructing or reconstructing a new reality, it implies a twofold learning strategy. This can be re-stated in the formula: learning by doing must be completed through doing by learning. In terms of organisational learning we can only admit that the organisation has learned something when at least the second learning loop must have been performed, i.e., the group(s) of persons must have a concept of how they have achieved this. They must be able to reproduce this process, in other words, they must have learned how they have learned.

On learning loops see Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

Therefore, virtual and real managers of change, development or transformation (Sattelberger's three scopes of change) must possess an understanding of learning that allows them to shape learning processes. The process of learning (and real work) must be shaped in a way that makes it as easy as possible for the learners (workers, deciders) to understand how they are learning and how they can contribute to the advancement of this learning process.

There can be no doubt that this is easier for them when, as well as wanting to learn what they are supposed to learn, they also know how the learning is organised. In fact, this is the only way of achieving a higher degree of self-reflection and sustainability.

Competence development means developing the capacity of deciding, doing and learning (checking) better. But how can we transform competence into knowledge and knowledge into competence? There are many complicated explanations which are difficult to understand and more difficult to use in practical terms. Therefore we have tried to develop a simpler tool that can be used for any problem-solving or improvement and learning process. It not only facilitates the planning and shaping of effective and efficient learning processes but also enables clients to evaluate what has been achieved (see Message 2M5).

See Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

Corresponding with this simple learning theory, we use an interrogative strategy of mobilising competence which we have called a process of re-actualisation (see above), of restoring existing but unconscious competence, adapting it to the specific context of application.

Large parts of learning in organisations must start by making conscious again (re-presenting) what I/we know or think we know. This is not only a way of mobilising the existing competence; it may also show, together with the customer-orientation tools, that requirements have changed and our competence or parts of it are no longer consistent with the new requirements. But the most important effect is that it helps to make people participate actively in learning and problem-solving by showing that together they know more about the problem and ways

Tools 4D2 and 4D3

of solving it than any individual participant would assume. Intentional learning becomes intimately entwined with experimental and experience-based learning.

4 questions strategy
1. What do we know? Do we really know that?
2. What do we not know?
3. What do we need to know?
4. Where do we get it from?

Cf. Message 2M3 and nearly all Tools

The Four-Questions-Pattern is a simple way of leading people to this point of mobilisation; at the same time, it is a method which they can use easily without the helper. Methods of visualising this process (Metaplan techniques, mind mapping, fishbone diagrams etc.) are of the utmost importance for this process. Starting with the customer orientation, the new competence can be built up, then the advantages of the new competence can be made clear (improvement), and the way that this has been achieved (learning process) can be described as a systematic method. The same applies to the three other elements - participation, decision-making, appropriation.

Principle 4: Participation process

Quality is a moveable target. A target can move for two reasons: because the target has changed one or some of its components or its position, or because the perceiver has moved or changed his or her position. Any change requires a re-presentation of the target from each of the different positions from which it is perceived. As we have seen in the customer orientation section, all learners of an improvement process are customers and suppliers who want to see their part of the definition of quality respected in order to be able to work well.

Nevertheless, we live in times of quality-based markets, and you can be forced to work, but you cannot be forced to work well. If any of the other individual positions are harmed or just not respected, before long this will have negative consequences for the two main targets of an economic organisation, i.e. firstly, achieving sufficient yields for an extended reproduction by, secondly, fulfilling the specific purpose (production, service) of the organisation. Therefore, it is very important that all customers and suppliers of (the specific) quality (item) position themselves with reference to the specific subject on the agenda. The important point about this is that each stakeholder can perceive his or her special requirements and contributions to the definition and the production of quality.

This is what we call participation. All those who are affected by a problem or its solution must be involved in a way that respects

their interests and responsibilities. This consequence implies a non-hierarchical approach to improvement and learning processes. Problem-solving processes must be organised in a way that gives each contribution its own special right, since it is based on a specific experience and view of the problem. The same applies to learning. The apparently clear-cut roles of teachers and learners get blurred in the process of a common learning process where everybody feeds in his/her special experience and questions. Again, modern brainstorming and moderation methods (Metaplan techniques of visualisation, mind mapping and other brain-writing instruments, etc.) can be of great importance for organising such joint learning processes.

This approach necessarily implies a discourse-oriented and decentralised concept of quality and improvement responsibility for the organisation as well as for learning, especially if the organisation wants to become a learning organisation. We have seen that learning is a process of improvement and self-improvement where the learner-customer is a co-producer of the learning quality. Hence learning processes must be organised through participative and co-operative processes of construction and re-construction of competence. A former Labour Director and living legend in the German steel industry, Alfred Heese (1992), used to say: 'Participation is not everything, but without participation everything is nothing.'

Principle 5: Decision-making process

This means that it is not enough to ask people's opinions. Participation without consequences is not participation. If quality is understood as a contract that comes into existence under conditions of free will and equality, each of the contracting parties must be able to say 'no'. We know that these conditions do not always exist, and very often there are even good reasons why they do not currently exist. But there is no way to achieve and maintain momentum in a learning organisation when they never exist.

It would be unthinkable and impossible for a learning organisation to be based on compulsion or even force and inequality, or on fear and structural disadvantage. Therefore, the most important requirement of participative processes of learning and improving the customer orientation is transparency. Whenever people within a participative process have come to a conclusion, that conclusion must be made reality as soon as possible unless there are very good reasons why this cannot happen. Anything else will lead to deception and hinder the implementation of whatever other decision has been taken. The English concept of *empowerment* means exactly this: participation in order to take decisions to realise what has been decided.

Transparency is a tricky thing. It is only accepted and only works under conditions of trust. Transparency means control. Control is only accepted as control of processes, not as control of persons. Nevertheless, data and facts controlling processes are always also data and facts about people. Therefore, transparency must be embedded in a culture of improvement. This means not asking who is to blame but how to make it better. Control is good but trust is better. Transparency needs trust. Trust needs transparency.

Transparency is also an indispensable precondition of learning about a problem, how an organisation works or what the implications of certain decisions are, and how one can know how something is better if one is not informed. Improvement needs transparency and openness just as much. But the softest fact, in the long run, becomes the hardest. Transparency is the necessary precondition of voluntary and responsible cooperation. There is no free will without good information. Transparency is the enemy of frustration. Frustrated people know they have to work, but do they work well?

Principle 6: Appropriation process

Whatever I have learned or changed or improved, it is vital that in the end I am satisfied with the result. The same applies, although possibly to different degrees, to each stakeholder of an organisation or network. So for those responsible for organising the learning process and its results this means that evaluating the learning output and outcome against my own and the customer's orientation requirements will tell me what I have achieved, i.e. improved. It may not be perfect but it will be as perfect as possible according to the defined requirements and under given conditions. Also, I must have the hope or prospect of being able to make it even better the next time. Only then will I make the decision, and help with all my improved competence to implement and perform what I (and we) have learned (together). This is part of what responsibility means.

Cf. Message 2M6: The concept of responsibility

But responsibility means more. It means to be able to respond to questions that I have accepted I will be asked or which I have asked myself. People who do not ask do not want to see problems or to make themselves responsible for solving them. Sattelberger uses the term 'customer responsiveness' to describe this qualitative ability of responding to needs and requirements. However, responsiveness is only the aim and result of a process, a perceived property of an attitude or culture, not a process category itself. Therefore, we prefer the less contemporary learning theory term of 'appropriation', which embraces the result and the process of learning and of taking decisions about how to make it better.

2M15.8 Conclusions

The theoretical concept of a learning organisation can be applied to organisational learning processes in network and cluster management and is fully compatible with the theoretical concept of social capital as it has been described here. Learning and the arrangement of learning processes are central to the building of social capital; both learning and the building of social capital are based on existing trust and need further development of trust in order to be successful. Therefore, trust-based management is a necessary requirement in (cluster) networking, and respecting the didactical logics of learning arrangements along with the systemic thinking of total quality management may greatly facilitate the success of networking and cluster initiatives. Facilitation principles, methods and tools can offer very valuable support for making this learning organisation and learning network successful.

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2M16 Reminder – Konrad Lorenz dixit

2M16

Thought is not **said**

Said is not **heard**

Heard is not **understood**

Understood is not **agreed**

Agreed is not **done**

Done is not **continued**

Continued is not equivalent to **valid for ever!**

Konrad Lorenz[1]

[1] Konrad Lorenz (1903–1989), Austrian zoologist, animal psychologist, one of the founders of modern ethology; head of the Max Planck Institute for Behavioral Physiology, Nobel Prize winner in Physiology in 1973, first winner of Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca in 1969.

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3
Didactics and curriculum

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3.1 Making learning easy – facilitation and the didactics of action learning

3.1.1 Introduction

Facilitating networking is facilitating co-operation. Co-operation is built on mutual trust and the expectation that co-operation will improve the working conditions of all co-operating partners. Learning how to improve and intensify networking is part of the process of building mutual trust and accumulating social capital through co-operation. Working together and learning how to co-operate better to achieve the best possible results are just two faces of the same coin.

Action-oriented learning is learning in action just as well as action through learning, learning by doing and doing by learning. This is what we do every day without really being aware of it - it just happens to us. The aim of facilitating action learning is to make co-operating people, in and across organisations, aware of learning by helping them to achieve the desired results more effectively through the use of more efficient working and learning devices. This task and process includes reflecting on how learning could be achieved and on how performance can be further improved, "reflection-in action" as Argyris and Schön (1974) called it.

Cf. Message 2M10: Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management, and Message 2M5: Basic concepts of learning and competence

Hence, the aim of learning in a co-operation context is the enhancement of co-operativity (the capacity to co-operate) of all those participating in the co-operation. It is not enhancing knowledge in the first place. Above all, it means improving competence. Competence means being able to decide, act, and learn adequately with respect to the functional and situational context.

Reflecting on the didactics of action learning requires a practical theory of learning. It must be "fit for use" (Juran's too brief definition of quality) and fit for shaping learning, a useful theory of learning. The

following very simple but highly sophisticated competence theory of the four levels of learning meets these requirements. It consists of no more than the four levels and lines in the table. Nobody knows with certainty who was the originator of this theory (for informed speculations about possible origins see www.businessballs.com/consciouscompetencelearningmodel.htm).

Four levels of learning

4 levels of learning	4 Translations
1. Unconscious incompetence	I don't know, what I don't know
2. Conscious incompetence	I know, what I don't know
3. Conscious competence	I know, what I know
4. Unconscious competence	I don't know, what I know

We have taken it from O'Connor and Seymour (1996) but the explanation of it given here is completely ours.

Driving a car may be a good example of how it works, analytically as well as for the shaping of learning processes:

1. Being a baby or an indigenous inhabitant of the Amazon jungle, I don't know about cars and, logically I don't know that I don't know how to drive a car.
2. Once I know that there are cars that I could use, but I have not learned to drive, I know that I don't know how to drive a car.
3. Now I have had my driving lessons and passed the exam, I know how to drive a car, but I must concentrate on doing all the different things very carefully.
4. After years of driving I do a lot of things at the same time without being conscious of how complex the situation and my activities are. These things include perceiving and understanding the traffic situation at the junction ahead, the changing traffic lights, setting the indicator, steering, braking, using the clutch, changing gear, listening to the radio, talking with my mate, maybe smoking etc.

Practically every situation or context in life can be constructed and reconstructed in these four stages as a process of new learning, un-learning and re-learning. Let's stick to the example of car driving. Driving a car in Great Britain for the first time might reduce all my abilities as a driver from the European continent from level 4 to level 3; an elderly person might even fall back to level 2. The same might happen to a company whose environmental conditions have changed considerably, for instance because of market conditions due to globalisation, because of the imposition of new standards or just by being taken over by a

larger firm. And again the same applies to the people in a company (see the cross table below).

Four components of competence crossed

	Competence	Incompetence
Conscious	**Level 2: Conscious competence** • You perform the skill reliably at will. • You need to concentrate and think in order to perform the skill • You can perform the skill without assistance • You are able to demonstrate the skill to another person, but probably you cannot teach it well • Only repeated practice will allow you to move from stage 3 to 4	**Level 3: Conscious incompetence** • You become aware of the existence and relevance of the skill • Now you are also aware of your deficiency in this area • You have an idea of how much and in what aspects you have to improve • Ideally, you commit yourself to learning and practising the new skill and to moving to the "conscious competence" stage
Unconscious	**Level 4: Unconscious competence** • You do not consider the skill as a skill any more (see the car example); the skill has become largely instinctual • You are able to do several things at the same time as performing the skill • You might now be able to teach others the skill, although for teaching you will have difficulty in explaining exactly how you do things without consciously going back to level 3	**Level 1: Unconscious incompetence** • You are not aware of the existence or relevance of the skill area • You are not aware of having a particular deficiency in the area concerned • You need practical evidence that the new skill will add to your personal capacity of doing something useful for yourself or the organisation you are in • Only then can the new skill be developed or learning begin

Level 3 corresponds to what in other learning terminologies is called explicit knowledge; level 4 corresponds to implicit or tacit knowledge (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi 1997; Polanyi 1985). In this wording, one facet of facilitation is the task or role of leading people from level 4 of implicit knowledge and competence to level 3 of explicit competence, or even to level 2, the consciousness of missing competence (in a specific skill or aspect) but the readiness of achieving conscious, explicit competence (level 3) and eventually of leading them to his own, the facilitator's level of making co-operation easy.

If didactics is the competence of teaching or, even better, helping people to learn something, then didactical competence is something like a meta-level of levels 3 and 4 combined, which could be called reflective competence - the competence of doing something "instinctively" but with full consciousness of what you are doing, and how, why, and when you are doing it. Facilitators need this reflective didactical competence. Their objective is to lead people in intentional or unintentional situations of joint working and learning to reflected working and learning together until they have this reflective competence themselves, which we can call reflective co-operativity.

Therefore, facilitating is a way of leading people without being superior to any of the partners involved. This type of leadership is not only typical of partnerships between organisations; it is also very current in many contexts and projects within companies in which various departments with very different types of expertise and functions work together in the pursuit of a successful project. It is also typical for co-operation along the value adding chain of a sector or cluster, or for co-operation with and learning from customers. Facilitators are process managers for all phases of co-operation, from the creation of ideas, objectives, and strategies through the development of projects and plans to their implementation and successful achievement. Within facilitation, it is the role of the moderator, who has the responsibility of shaping and leading joint learning processes, which is the main concern of this chapter.

In this chapter we first discuss learning and what learning means for the learners on the one hand and, on the other, for those "teachers" who have incurred in a responsibility of fostering, stimulating or facilitating learning as a part of action and action as a part of learning. We will not forget this double determination of learning in the context of this book, but for considering the subject of learning in detail it will be necessary to discuss learning separately from teaching. Talking about teaching is also necessary because we define the main task of teachers as facilitating learning.

Didactics describes the way the nexus between teacher/s and learners is defined in terms of content, methods and techniques deployed. We have to deal with didactics in two ways: regarding the curriculum and regarding more spontaneous and less structured learning situations. The most concentrated expression of how we see this nexus is our curriculum on how to learn action learning methods for becoming a network facilitator. Already the way this is presented is unusual and the reason for this will be explained in this chapter and in Tool 4A5. Shaping good learning conditions, another simple definition of didactics, is the general concern of this chapter.

3.1.2 What do we mean by learning?

What is learning?

"Learning is inherent in human nature" (Wenger 1998: 226). "For a human being it is impossible not to learn" (Arnold et al. 2005: 12). Curiosity is one, if not the most important ability of the human being. Given the relatively low instinctive determination of human beings as compared to other animals, this ability is of vital importance for human survival as a race. The human capacity of learning is a lifelong capacity. It may change, it may decrease with age, but it cannot be lost as long as the brain functions. Learning can happen intentionally or by accident. In order to deal in more detail with learning it is necessary to clarify our basic assumptions of what learning is and how it works physically.

This entire theoretical occupation with learning and didactics is fed from a systemic and constructivist background (for coherent summaries see Arnold and Siebert 2003; Siebert 1998) as well as from what the so called "subject science" of Klaus Holzkamp's Critical Psychology exposed on learning (1993). Both approaches concentrate on the subject of learning and its situatedness - the physical, emotional and social context of interaction. In other words, before talking about teaching it is necessary to think about learning. This is true in general as well as for the individual learning context or for whole study programmes. It is here that these two approaches differ greatly from theories of learning with a behaviouristic background, which still dominate. While the latter would describe and observe the effect of learning as a "change of behaviour or of the potential of behaviour of organisms in a defined situation deriving from repeated experiences of an organism in such a situation"(Hilgard and Bower 1983:31 as representatives of this line of thinking), the constructivist and subject thinkers would hold that as a result, changes or reinforcements of behaviour might be empirically observable but they would not accept this as necessary evidence or an impact causally related to a distinct previous learning process. For them, only the learner would be able to approximately reconstruct a nexus between a certain learning process with a discernible content and context and an eventual change of behaviour. They would always argue that only successful practising of the newly learned is the final confirmation of learning, again taking into account the context of the practice.

Finally, neuro-physiological researchers such as Roth (1987) and the Manifesto group[1] (Elger et al. 2004) would hold that the place of learning is the human brain. The brain - along with the senses it uses for per-

[1] In 2004, a group of 11 leading German neuro-physiologists published a Manifesto on the consequences of their research concerning the functioning of the human brain.

ceiving - is a self-organising (autopoietic), self-related (self-referential), operationally closed system. Not only from a constructivist point of view but also from the perspective of modern brain research, learning is a method of perception and recursive processing of reality in the forms of data, information and knowledge. Recursive means having a strict relation to the context of already existing cognitive structures including the experiences and emotions linked to them. We are not talking about a reflection of the outer world in the brain but about a (re-) constructive process of a system with itself (self-referential). If this process occurs in a similar way in a number of brains (groups of people) owing to shared institutional or culturally determined social norms, it is called "syn-referentiality" (Heijl 1992: 195). Already the sensory perception of the surrounding system, the environment, is regulated by individual selection criteria provided by the brain's already existing thinking structures and linkages (synapses). They check whether and how the new perceptions may fit into the existing knowledge, experience and beliefs. Potential new information and knowledge is checked against the existing information and knowledge in a process which in the constructivist terminology is called "re-presentation", meaning information or knowledge made present. For our context, we will add the notion of re-actualisation because in an action learning context, information and knowledge are not only recalled into presence for the sake of remembering, they are compared, aligned and adapted according to their present relevance for action.

The perception of reality, including learning, is never immediate but always mediated through existing information, knowledge and linkages of the perceiving brain; it is "2nd level observation" (Watzlawick 2002). The outer and the inner systems are "structurally coupled", but the perception through our senses only transmits stimuli which function as triggers of attention. Only if in this comparison of the old and the new an irritation (or perturbation) occurs owing to a perception of difference between the outer and the inner system ("Something is wrong." "That's new to me." "How is this possible?" "Does it make sense?"), may there be consequences relevant for learning, expressed either by an increased interest, or possibly through aligning it with existing structures (self-organisation) or through rejection. In any case, learning requires a decision. This decision is guided by the degree of usefulness expected from the new information, whether it promises a higher availability of resources, a larger scope of mastery with regard to my environment, or an enhancement of my control potential in the given context.

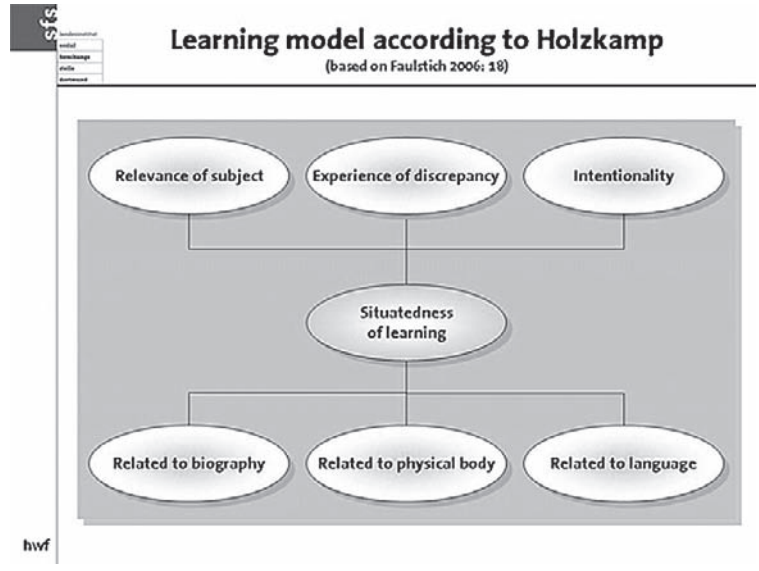
Neither right or wrong nor true or not true motivate a decision of appropriation, of making the new construction my own. The concept of appropriation was coined by Vigotsky and is closely linked to Piaget's concept of assimilation. Decisive is the perception of whether a subject

or an individual learning item offered to me or the way it is offered to me, is new (not redundant), relevant (important for me), viable (practical and useful for me) and connectable (fit for being integrated into my system). Expressing it in a very pointed way, this means that I only learn what I want to learn. A subject which is not relevant to me because I cannot establish a meaningful relation to my present practical context will lead to a lower degree of attention and participation, it may even bore me. I may also perceive something as irritating, relevant and "somehow" new or different when in a future context it may seem viable and connectable. As a consequence, what we call memory is distinguished by Holzkamp as two different processes, retaining and remembering (1993:139ff., 319ff.).

The conclusion which has to be drawn from these reflections is that learning is a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of reality with the aim of (self-) improvement. Appropriation, the final apprehension and acceptance, is a decision of the learner. The outcome of a learning process is a perceived improvement of a person's capacity for understanding, decision-making and action, enhanced knowledge, confidence and experience. Learning leads to enhanced competence.

What "sounds" so rational, may or may not have to do with rationality in the sense of reason, at least not with a rationality perceivable and understandable from outside. "The only thing expected from us is that we cannot act against our own interest as I perceive it from my own point of view" (Holzkamp 1993: 26). Such a learning "discourse of reasoning" (idem: 21 ff.) always implies a subjective perspective considering that perception is linked to will, feeling and imagination, including confusion, mistakes and insanity. Because at the same time, this way of looking at the world and creation of our own world is immediately linked to our own sensuous and material physical body, our own individual and social biography, and to the circumstance that all human thinking is strictly linked to language. This includes the fact that under certain circumstances I may see the world according to how I feel in this particular moment. All these aspects are components of what Holzkamp calls the situatedness of learning. A very good example of what all this implies is the "Vignette I" in Wenger's book on communities of practice (1998:18–34). As a learner in a learning occasion, I bring with me a load of situatedness in terms of biography and links to a living and time environment. This load is then related to the situation of learning in terms of space and time and other conditions, e.g. who else is there. In this situation, it is the experience of discrepancy between the inside and outside which defines the more or less interested way of dealing with the perceived or ascribed relevance of the subject and the intentions linked to it, by myself and by other relevant persons, e.g. a professor or the CEO of my company. Summarised in one sentence, the conditions

of the learning situation are of great relevance for the learning process and result.



Of special importance in our context of networking with whatever background and environment is the social situation of learning. Contrary to the didactics of learning in many academic or professional settings, we part from a collective and social learning situation. The composition of the group, its internal competitions, conflicts or alliances in the learning process and in the breaks make a difference to what and how I learn. The exchange of views with others gives access to different experiences and allows me to live the learning situation as an "experience of difference" (Arnold et al. 2005:35). This is even truer if the learning is continued in common action or if it involves the evaluation and further development of past co-operation.

This circumstance of learning in a group leads, at least potentially, to learning different things in a different way and to certain parts of the learning being seen as collective appropriation for subsequent action. This bridges the gap between the theory of individual learning and the learning of groups or organisations. To put it very briefly: If it is correct that organisations only become operative through the co-operation of people, and that all co-operation, at least potentially, is also a learning context, it would mean that organisations can learn. It is true that they learn through the individual minds of their people who work together and decide to do certain things differently and who after a first experience and certain adjustments make it part of their everyday practice. However, in doing so, they learn in, for, and as an organisation. They learn while doing their work and maintaining the organisation, being the organisation. They

develop their practical work and life knowledge, their competence, in common. They learn what they learn because they are in this specific community and not in a different one somewhere else. Learning in such a "social fabric of learning" (Wenger 1998: 251) is co-evolutionary, at least in part. People work and learn and develop their competence together, the stimulus and momentum being their common necessity to make work less difficult and less stressful by participating in the solutions found jointly or by others. For example, the familiarisation of a new colleague with the common work is a typical work situation completely dedicated to establishing a community of practice and learning. Lave and Wenger were the first to call this (often spontaneous) learning organisation of "situated learning a "community of practice" (1991, 1998).

Such communities of practice, like all communities, can also become communities of defence against new practices. Like all communities, they develop internal coalitions and rituals, competition and rivalries. They are not progressive *per se*; instead they may develop defensive routines against change, against unlearning or re-learning. In fact, from a management perspective of developing a complete and adaptive organisation it might be necessary to dismantle such communities. Most of them will not conceive themselves as communities of learning but just communities, if at all. For our purpose, i.e. the organisation of learning, it is only important to know that common work can be used as a fertile context of common learning and vice versa. The creation of communities of practice and learning can become a booster of learning processes including unlearning and re-learning, used in the framework of an action learning arrangement or in the more or less stable context of a common project. Such "communities of learning" can range from the simple group that during breaks cannot stop reflecting on the work on their hands, structured groups working in parallel, or complementary groups contributing to a common objective, to the plenary group that evaluates and reflects on the results of subgroups.

This brief excursion into collective forms of learning shows that our initial concentration on intentional learning is fictional, at least to some extent. Humans learn in all situations. When and if some perception of difference provides for sufficient irritation or perturbation, they will gain learning from it and reproduce this as their own knowledge the next time they have the opportunity of doing so; or they will use the next possible situation for checking whether this new piece of knowledge is reality-proof. Informal learning is an "unplannable" part of any learning situation. It is the individual person that decides where and when he learns.

For Holzkamp there are two fundamental forms of learning: expansive learning and defensive learning. Faulstich, dealing with the reasons for not learning (2006: 19), has summarised these two forms very concisely: "When we ask why we learn there are two alternative answers:

either I hit upon a problem and I want to solve it myself, i.e. *I want to*. Or I am confronted from outside with a task, for example in the context of a training situation, then it is *I shall, I am supposed to*. In this second case I have again two possibilities of dealing with the task: either I make this task my own problem, then I want to solve it, or I reject this task, nevertheless fulfilling it, then I must. Holzkamp codes these possibilities, denominating them "defensive" or "expansive". They do not constitute extreme poles but degrees of freedom in dealing with such learning situations." Said in other words, expansive learning is subjective learning for good reasons, whatever these reasons may be. It means active participation and analysis of the subject of interest or at least of certain parts of it, and appeals to intrinsic motivation. Defensive learning follows an "OK, if it must be" pattern; it is forced learning requiring at least extrinsic motivation. However, "defensive learning comprises all sorts of cheating, copying from my neighbour, learning by heart and forgetting after the exam" (Grotlüschen 2005:18). It is a way of tactical learning, eventually of not learning.

So is it always the learner who decides the success of learning? Is this the message? For a start, the answer to this question must be affirmative. At least, we must "skip the illusion of planning an optimum learning situation" (Faulstich 2006:19). People do not learn because they are taught. The "conceptual shortcut of "teaching" and "learning" (Holzkamp 1993:391) cannot be sustained. Adults can learn but cannot be taught, this is the quintessential point of all our deliberations (vgl. Arnold u.a. 2005:34).

Once again, when has learning been successful? Put in a colloquial way, learners would say after a workshop: "This was really great, exactly what we needed, not always easy, but always interesting and well organised, rooms and everything okay, the folks were good company, really a win." In constructivist speak the same would be: The workshop and its contents were new, relevant, viable and connectable to the participants and their backgrounds. It has made possible expansive and co-evolutionary learning.

Constructivism and the subject-centred learning theory have their weak points mainly where the nexus between individual/subject and society with its functional mechanisms are concerned, including areas such as power and domination; but they convey two fundamental messages which seem to be of a very general nature. Nevertheless, for the successful shaping and organisation of learning situations, arrangements, and processes they are the key to all methodical and operational deliberations.

- The first message is *tolerance*. If it is correct that teachers and learners cannot perceive (the doubtlessly existing) reality except in a subjective personal way, all forms of perception of reality are equal,

have the same value, and merit the same respect in the first place. This fundamental statement does not exclude debate, but debate no longer deals with who is right or wrong, only with whose views are fitter for achieving what is at stake. Knowing that we can only argue about our views of reality, not about reality itself, has a distending effect. It allows us to take things more calmly, with more composure - a very important virtue for teachers as well as for learners.
At the same time, it becomes evident that science also is not in possession of the truth; at best it can represent the search for truth, although this may turn out to be no more than the search for evidence. Even a scientific theory, although the most developed form of human knowledge, has to compete with other theoretical views of reality to provide the best fitting offer for a given context or application.

- The other message is *responsibility*: We are responsible for the construction of our views, for the diligence we invest in checking them and for the relevance we attach to them. We are also responsible for what we do. We can decide; we take decisions. This is true for the decision to learn as well as for the decision to be a good teacher.

But, after all these restrictions, what does it mean to be a good teacher?

3.1.3 What is teaching?

What is teaching?

It has been said that facilitators and moderators are not teachers; they are responsible for providing and organising successful learning processes. It is exactly in this aspect that teachers and facilitators coincide. Whatever teachers may have to offer as their specific subject, they are responsible for providing and organising successful learning processes.

Adults can learn but cannot be taught. Since it has numerous consequences, we repeat this simple, near-to-commonplace phrase which Horst Siebert used to summarise the core affirmation of constructivism with respect to learning. Which didactic possibilities remain vis-à-vis the unilateralism of this core sentence? The teacher only decides about what he or she can offer, not on what learners learn. “Knowledge … is a category and accomplishment of the subject” (Arnold and Sieber 2003:112). Teachers only furnish material for individual constructions of the learners, data and information; they can only offer their own constructions. Transforming these data and information into personal knowledge is an accomplishment of the learner. The “knowledge” provided by the teacher is nothing but his or her knowledge. What we call the body of knowledge of a “subject” is a construction of the scientific community. Technical knowledge of a subject is the knowledge a

teacher has gathered and elaborated into his or her own construction, which is then offered to the learners. The learners transform it into their own knowledge according to their own criteria - if they do so at all. How much of the teacher's knowledge coincides with the learners knowledge remains open.

The dualism of teaching and learning is fictional. Even in a teaching situation communication is not a funnel, a one way feeder system. Communication is a two-way system, of varying effectiveness, based on furnishing data and information on the one hand, and sharing meaning on the other. So in reality, teachers are never only teachers, and learners are never only learners. In a two-way system of communication, both are both, teachers and learners, although not necessarily with equal shares. If this is true for a teaching situation, it is much more applicable to the situation we have in an action learning context. Here all participants are always both teachers and learners, and normally they know. Nevertheless, here we also have the same basic question of how people can understand each other. How can they share knowledge? How can they share mental models of what they are going to do? And how can this process be facilitated in a way that makes communication successful?

What is good teaching?

3.1.4 What is good teaching?

The title of this chapter promises a reflection on didactics. So finally we want to discuss didactics as the general nexus between teaching and learning. Didactics starts with designing a curriculum, a workshop or a learnshop. Taking decisions on what and what not is part of such a curriculum already is part of a didactical task. Didactics has to give reasons for the relation existing between learning aims and the learning content before it comes to designing the implementation in terms of methods and techniques used with the personal and material context conditions. Didactics understood as the shaping of learning "basically is the mediation between the technical logic of the content and the psycho-logic of the learner. The technical logic supposes the knowledge of thematic contents and structures, the psycho-logic the consideration of the learning and motivation structures of the learners" (Siebert 1996:2). Transcending the individual psycho-logic and also reference to action logic in possible action contexts should be considered. For example, in order to understand automobile technology it is necessary to have the material and personal context conditions of "driving a car" in mind. It is the objective of good teaching to balance these three logics (cf. Arnold et al. 2005:64).

So let us finally face the really decisive question: What is good teaching? In consideration of what has been reasoned so far, the first and immediate answer must be: Teaching is good when it makes learning easy.

As to the how, there are many possible answers which we will not go through in detail since teaching, strictly speaking, is not our main subject. However, considering that when preparing a teaching situation it is necessary to aim for "making learning easy", different criteria for making learning successful have to be applied. Not transferring knowledge is the first rule; instead it is preferable to create situations in which the learning requirements of the learners are satisfied. Providing space for all forms of active learning - learning arrangements that require learning in action - is of primary importance. Teachers, besides being experts in a specific subject, become "helpers of learning" or "learning consultants" (Kemper and Klein 1998), facilitators of learning. Teachers take a variety of roles, and knowing about them is one of the principal requirements of being a "good teacher" (Schulz von Thun 1998:38). Teachers as well as all other organisers of good learning conditions have several roles in the process of designing, planning, preparing, conducting and evaluating a learning event or sequence (cf. Message 2M11: Moderation as a role). Knowing about these roles and playing each of them consciously is part of the professional competence and detachment of such a "teacher".

3.1.5 Seven characteristics of facilitative didactics

Eight dimensions of action learning didactics?

Seven of the following eight characteristics of facilitative didactics in whatever context have been adopted from Faulstich and Zeuner (1999: 52f.) as they delimit well the set of requirements. However, all brief comments made under the seven criteria are exclusively ours, and are related to learning in the context of facilitating action learning processes. It is important to see them not as a checklist but as seven strictly interrelated dimensions of teaching or moderation or facilitation situations and processes.

Action orientation

- Action orientation
  All learning of adults is further or continuing learning; any learning of adults in whatever context or situation implies previous learning in education, training and by experience. The expectations of the learners are marked by this previous learning and by the application context each of them has in mind. Hence, adult learning is always "connected and interpretative learning" (Faulstich and Zeuner:36).

Its aim is enhanced competence in a context which is only completely known by the learner. For whole groups with a common context, the connectivity and connectedness of learning and practice is of particular relevance.

Learner orientation

- Learner or participant orientation
  If further learning is connected learning, then finding out to what the present learning process is connected becomes important. For our context of facilitating networking, defining the connectivity of learning has a double purpose; on the one hand related to the learners' backgrounds (cf. Tool 4A8: Warming-up or ice-breaking methods), on the other hand related to the common working and learning objective. The whole planning procedure of workshops (see Tool 4A5) is deeply affected by this effort.

Interest orientation

- Interest orientation
  The whole orientation of the learning process is characterised by agreements among the participants as well as between the participants and the moderator, whose main function consists of helping the participants to do what they want to do. This reference to the decision-making and action context of the participants has to be renewed at each new step in the progress of working. This reassurance about the working and learning progress is more important than sticking meticulously to a predefined programme.

Problem orientation

- Problem orientation
  For the workshops and learnshops we are talking about in this book, this is self-evident. Solving problems, developing a strategy, clarifying decision-making criteria and options of action, and planning and preparing projects is the immediate purpose. In the framework of a curriculum for training facilitators, this reminder is of fundamental importance because the pure training of methods and tools without practical reference cases, problems or situations will soon lead to a lack of attention.

Methodical openness

- Methodical openness
  Network facilitators usually have to work with people who are responsible managers in their own organisation. They do not appreciate over-determined didactical settings (Fietz and Junge 2005: 18); they want to decide themselves what to work on and how to work in the common network context. Hence, the workshop schedule is no more than an offer, and the methods of working and learning displayed in the programme can only be suggestions which the participants may or may not follow. This means that the facilitator of such a process needs a very high level of flexibility and versatility in suggesting, agreeing and applying the right methods and tools. Exactly for this reason, our selection of tools focuses on simple, easily applicable tools for working and learning.

- Own activity
  Own activities
  The combination of learning and experience is unbeatable. What you have done yourself will be remembered much more intensely than anything heard or seen. The principle of action orientation is not only a passive one in the sense of connectedness to the participants' action and interest backgrounds; it is also activity-based. Making people do something - create a new common plan, solve a problem, design a project - using the methods and tools to be learned will motivate them much more than anything else to work together on implementing the jointly developed result. Any working and learning decision taken by the learners themselves will support expansive learning and reconfirm the appropriation of the working as well as of the learning subject. At the same time, this principle reminds of activating the self-organisation capacities of the learner group, which is also addressed by some of the previous dimensions of action learning.
- Group orientation
  Group orientation
  This principle does not relate to the learning group but to the social group that learners in a learning group come from, their social background. If it is possible to identify a social group, e.g. managers of a certain sector, the teacher/facilitator can refer to his or her assumed knowledge about the mind-set related to this social group, certain views of the market, of technology, for example. During the ice-breaking phase, this mind-set may be activated and intentionally reconstructed in order to create common ground for working. It will make people more attentive and receptive to the joint work process.
- Reflectiveness
  Reflectiveness
  This eighth and last principle is our own. It says that successful learning, like successful working, needs reflection on how it has been achieved. As we said above, the aim of such a learning process consists of enabling the learners to use action learning methods as soon as possible without a facilitator, to reach a meta-level of reflective co-operativity, and to become facilitators of co-operation themselves. For this, during the learning process, at each new step agreed with the participants and at the end, an evaluative reflection loop is needed asking: How have we come here? What have we achieved? Where are we? What is missing? How do we get there? Evaluation and self-evaluation are an integral part of the concept.

3.1.6 Other relevant sections on didactics

More on action learning didactics in this book

Our network facilitator curriculum as well as 4A5 show how all these principles are already implemented in the design and planning phase

of a workshop or learnshop. Several other Messages and Tools provide valuable information on how facilitators and moderators can support the working and learning of groups.

- In particular, *Tool 4A5: The planning of workshops and learnshops* offers step-by-step advice on how to plan and prepare a workshop or a learnshop, systematically implementing the eight principle dimensions in a basically open and unplanned process. It shows how careful reflection and planning of all elements. That is of working respectively learning objectives, contents, methods, instruments, materials and roles, will qualify the moderator to be a good moderator.
- *Tool 4A4: The setting of workshops* gives a comprehensive view of the environment which should be created for workshops, and the tools and materials needed for supporting a results-oriented working and learning process.
- *Message 2M2: Moderation as a role* describes the ways a moderator can make working and learning together easier.
- *Message 2M3: Visualisation – why and how it helps you to understand and remember* shows how making thinking visible through certain moderation methods and techniques will help a group to work in a more effective and efficient way, creating a common set of co-operation methods and practice. In other words, it shows how a spontaneous community of practice can be transformed into a conscious one on its way to becoming a community of performance.
- *Message 2M4: Perception and communication* provides a more specific look at our understanding of these basic concepts.
- *Message 2M5: Learning and competence* is interesting mainly because it goes into further detail about the four learning levels.
- *Message 2M10: Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management* discusses why we prefer to operate with the concepts of competence and competence management.
- *Tool 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating* compares the two situations and explains on one page the major differences.
- *Tool 4A8: Warming-up or ice-breaking methods* provides a number of basic techniques of making learner groups feel at ease and motivating them to engage in joint working and learning.
- *Tool 4A14: Learner satisfaction analysis* and *Tool 4A15: Learnshop evaluation* stress the necessity of organising feedback and reflection on the proceedings and results of a common working and learning process.
- Finally, the *Network Facilitator Curriculum* offered in the following sub-chapter provides a complete planning structure and a possible combination of objectives, contents, methods, instruments, materials and roles when learning to become a network facilitator with an

action learning approach, and a vast selection of simple and useful action learning tools.

Of course, this curriculum is only one possible way of composing an action learning facilitator course for an unknown group of participants. Other compositions are not only possible but may be highly advisable in certain defined settings and with a specific clientele whose learning needs have been detected and evaluated. For this *Tool 4B1: Participant questionnaire* will be useful.

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3.2 A curriculum of action learning - the modules

SME network facilitator

Module 1: Facilitators - why and what for?

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
Date to be specified		Duration at least 8 h		better: 14–16 h	
45 min	Understanding the aims, contents, methods and arrangements of learning of the whole training course	Welcome, presentation of the trainer, general information on the training contents and structure; presentation on the overall training concept, and introduction of basic rules	Plenary session Personal presentation of the trainer/s Presentation and course orientation (if possible based on specific analysis and evaluation of participant questionnaire) Presentation and discussion of possible modifications	Printed training programme, Evaluation of participant questionnaire *Tool 4B1: Participant questionnaire*	Trainer/s Discussed by all
60–90 min depending on number of participants	Contextualisation of the training: articulating own expectations and understanding those of co-learners	Participants present themselves, their professional background, and their expectations, then share some personal information and feelings	Plenary session Self-presentation of all participants Main information: name, first name, relevant background, expectations, (personal information) on each participant is noted (poster matrix) and stays on the wall of the plenary room during the whole course	Moderation tools	All participants Trainer
15 min	Break				
60–90 min	Understanding the functions and roles of facilitators	Facilitators are responsible for successful communication and action	Plenary session Brainstorming and comments step 1: Mind map on contexts	Moderation tools and flip charts and/or laptop, MindManager, projector	All participants

		Functions and roles of facilitators according to varying contexts are suggested, structured and discussed	step 2: Adding functions to mind map step 3: The four basic roles: moderator, trainer, coach, process expert	For step 3: create separate picture of 4 overlapping circles Message 2M1: *The functions and roles of network facilitators* *Message 2M6: The concept of responsibility*	Trainer
15 min	Learning about personal shortcomings or practices which need change or improvement (own judgement)	During the common learning process, participants take note of perceived personal improvement possibilities and decide on which to tackle first	Plenary session Contract with myself	*Tool 4A2: Form "Contract with myself "*	All participants
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			
60–120 min depending on number of participants	Learning from own projects which can be implemented to practice things learned in the SME ACTor training	Participants present personal projects from their organisations of origin (already running or to be initialised) which can constitute a meaningful and useful context for applying things learned	Plenary session or first small groups and then plenary session Participants develop (using tool 3) and present projects (one per participant) that are noted on a poster (matrix) which stays on the wall of the plenary room during the training period	*Tool 4A1: To-do form* Moderation tools, flip charts	Participants Trainer
15 min	Break				

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 1: Facilitators - why and what for?

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
120–360 min depending on learning methods and arrangements used as well as on number of trainers available	The concept of responsibility Comprehending basic concepts of … … SMEs … organisation and co-operation … networks and clusters	Action methodology is based on a number of concepts, all based on the concept of responsibility, including certain views of how people and organisations co-operate. They are to be presented and discussed	• Can be offered through presentations with subsequent debate, or accompanied by debate in the plenary session. • Can also be organised as a plenary process of collecting and structuring existing knowledge supported by visualisation (mind map recommended) and comments by trainer/s	PowerPoint presentation (attention: not too long, breaks needed) or moderation material flip charts Message 2M13: *SMEs* Message 2M7: *Organisation and co-operation* *Message 2M14: Networks and clusters*	Trainer/s
	… management and leadership		• Can also be organised in group processes of collecting and structuring existing knowledge supported by visualisation (mind map recommended) with results being presented in a plenary	Message 2M8: *Management and leadership*	Participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller
			session and receiving comments from all participants and trainer/s.		and reporter/ presenter
30 min	How to reflect on successful learning	Analysing and learning how to analyse learning processes	Plenary session Satisfaction analysis using a scale of smileys	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s

			Critical analysis (and self-evaluation) of all structural aspects of the learning arrangement (context conditions, aims, contents, methods, instruments, materials, roles) and its implementation		
120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	How to define goals and implement goal attainment	Facilitators are responsible for successful communication and action Training will include strategic context analysis and planning, and stakeholder and customer needs analysis Along with technical training, basic concepts of perception and communication will be discussed and taught	Depending on the number of participants and the duration of the module: Plenary session or plenary session and work in groups. For work in groups, sufficient time for presenting and discussing results is absolutely necessary step 1: Analysis of needs (brainstorming leading to simple tool structures) step 2: Presentation of existing tools step 3: Using the tools on real cases, if possible suggested by the participants. (Trainer/s must be able to suggest model cases.)	Moderation material and flip charts If working in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available If laptop-based, MindManager and projector should be available *Message 2M4*: *Basic concepts of perception and communication* *Tool 4A1: To-do form* *Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)* *Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/presenter

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 2: Communication for co-operation

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
15 min	Break				
			All tools must be suitable for quick learning and for use under real working conditions. They must be simple and applicable under all context conditions (e.g. not dependent on a PC or laptop).	*Tool 4B3: Case studies*	
120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	How to define tasks and competence needs and how to organise critical task implementation	Training will cover task-specific context analysis and planning, task analysis and planning, and competence analysis and planning Along with technical training, basic concepts of competence and learning will be discussed and taught	See above	Moderation material and flip charts If working in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available If laptop-based, MindManager and projector should be available *Message 2M5*: *Basic concepts of learning and competence* *Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning* *Tool 4D4: Flow analysis and planning* *Tool 4D5: Skill needs analysis and planning*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter

30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			
120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	How to define and plan processes	Training will cover process definition and planning including basic techniques such as drawing up flow charts, GANNTs and PERTs Along with technical training, basic concepts of communities of practice and self-organisation will be discussed	See above	Moderation material and flip charts If working in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available If laptop-based, MindManager and projector should be available *Message 2M9*: *Communities of practice and self-organisation* *Tool 4C5: Flow charts* *Tool 4C5: GANTT*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
15 min	Break				
30–45 min	Learning about personal shortcomings or practices which require change or improvement (own judgement)	During the common learning process, participants take note of perceived personal improvement possibilities and decide on which to tackle first. In this session, they also briefly present their first experiences with different ways of tackling problems or situations.	Plenary session Contract with myself	*Tool 4A2: Form "Contract with myself"*	All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 2: Communication for co-operation

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
60–120 min depending on number of participants	Learning from own projects which can be implemented to practice things learned in the SME ACTor training	Participants present and discuss progress reports on personal projects in their organisations of origin (already running or to be initialised) which can constitute a meaningful and useful context for applying things learned	Plenary session or small groups followed by plenary session Participants present projects (one per participant) that are noted on a poster (matrix) which stays on the wall of the plenary room during the training period Presentations are discussed in terms of content and modes of presentation	PowerPoint presentations Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form*	Participants Trainer
30 min	How to reflect on successful learning	Analysing and learning how to analyse learning processes	Plenary session Satisfaction analysis using a scale of smileys Critical analysis (and self-evaluation) of all structural aspects of the learning arrangement (context conditions, aims, contents, methods, instruments, materials, roles) and its implementation	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s

SME network facilitator

Module 3: Moderating, visualising, problem-solving

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
Date to be specified		Duration 12–16 h			
60 min	Moderation is a role which can be played by everybody How to chair meetings and how to moderate group processes	Characteristics of the moderator as a role How to chair meetings and how to moderate group processes	Plenary session Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts *Message 2M2*: *Moderation as a role* *Message 2M3*: *Visualisation* *Tool 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating* *Tool 4A16: Preparing meetings as a chairperson*	All participants Trainer/s
30 min	Why and how visualisation helps in understanding and remembering	Why and how visualisation helps in understanding and remembering	Plenary session Presentation by trainer/s Discussion and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts PowerPoint or transparencies, laptop and projector or overhead projector *Message 2M2*: *Visualisation - Why and how it helps you to understand and remember*	Trainer/s All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 3: Moderating, visualising, problem-solving

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
15 min	Break				
120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	Learning how to moderate	Training in various moderation techniques Subject of work: Knowledge management - about data, information and knowledge (What types of "knowledge" do networks gather, distribute, mediate, handle?)	Plenary session: After brief introduction of a few moderation techniques Work in groups on: What types of "knowledge" do networks gather, distribute, mediate, handle? Plenary session: presentation of results by group reporters	Moderation material and flip charts For work in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available. *Message 2M10*: *Basic concepts of knowledge and knowledge management*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			

120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	Learning how to moderate	Training in various moderation techniques Subject of work: problem-solving using standard tools such as: • SWOT analysis applied to cases, solutions, and examples contributed by the participants • Cause/effect diagrams and solution impact diagrams (also called Ishikawa or fishbone diagrams) • Field of forces analysis (Trainer/s should be prepared to step in with own examples.)	Plenary session: After brief introduction of a few moderation techniques work in groups on: • SWOT analysis applied to cases, solutions, and examples contributed by the participants • Cause/effect diagrams and solution impact diagrams applied to cases, solutions, and examples contributed by the participants • Field of forces analysis applied to cases, solutions, and examples contributed by the participants Plenary session: Presentation of results by group reporters	Moderation material and flip charts For work in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available. *Tool 4D6: SWOT analysis* *Tool 4D8: Cause/effect diagrams* *Tool 4D9: Force field analysis*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 3: Moderating, visualising, problem-solving

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
15 min	Break				
120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	Learning how to moderate	Training in various moderation techniques Subject of work: Case studies (context analysis report on participants' regions, clusters, networks)	Plenary session: After brief introduction of a few moderation techniques Work in groups on: Development of case study designs for the participants' regions, clusters, networks, etc Plenary session: Presentation of results by group reporters	Moderation material and flip charts For work in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available Tool 4B3: Case studies	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			

120–180 min depending on number of participants, learning methods and arrangements chosen, as well as on number of trainers available	Learning how to moderate	Training in various moderation techniques Subjects of work: • Semi-standardised in-depth interviews with relevant representatives of regional networks or cluster experts • Focus groups	Plenary session: After brief introduction of a few moderation techniques work in groups on: • Development of a semi-standardised in-depth interview guide with relevant representatives of regional networks or cluster experts • Development of focus group (or expert panel) approach for specific context suggested by participants Plenary session: presentation of results by group reporters	Moderation material and flip charts For work in groups, sufficient space or rooms must be available. *Tool 4B2: Semi-standardised expert in-depth interviews* *Tool 4B4: Focus groups*	Trainer/s all participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
30–45 min	Learning about personal shortcomings or practices which need change or improvement (own judgement)	During the common learning process, participants take note of perceived personal improvement possibilities and decide on which to tackle first In this session, they also briefly present their experiences with different ways of tackling problems or situations	Plenary session Contract with myself	*Tool 4A2: Form "Contract with myself"*	All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 3: Moderating, visualising, problem-solving

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
15 min	Break				
60–120 min depending on number of participants	Learning from own projects which can be implemented to practice things learned in the SME ACTor training	Participants present and discuss progress reports on personal projects in their organisations of origin (already running or to be initialised) which can constitute a meaningful and useful context for applying things learned	Plenary session or small groups followed by plenary session Participants present projects (one per participant) that are noted on a poster (matrix) which stays on the wall of the plenary room during the entire training period Presentations are discussed in terms of content and modes of presentation	PowerPoint presentations Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form*	Participants Trainer
30 min	How to reflect on successful learning	Analysing and learning how to analyse learning processes This time: Using learner satisfaction questionnaires	Plenary session Learner satisfaction analysis using a basic questionnaire (filling in and evaluation) Critical analysis (and self-evaluation) of all structural aspects of the learning arrangement (context conditions, aims, contents, methods, instruments, materials, roles) and its implementation	Moderation material, flip charts *Tool 4A14: Learner satisfaction analysis*	Trainer/s

SME network facilitator

Module 4: Project and quality management

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
Date to be specified		Duration 12–16 h			
60 min	Problems are projects – What is a project? Co-ordinating - leading equals	Defining basic characteristics of project work as compared to "normal" work Leadership without hierarchy - the challenges of being a co-ordinator	Plenary session Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts *Message 2M11: Project work as a work style* *Message 2M8: Basic concepts of management and leadership*	Trainer/s All participants
45–90 min	How to plan a project	SMART – Five basic rules of planning a feasible project Planning a project (grass-roots) If wanted: Planning a large project in detail using an advanced tool	Plenary session Presentation of tools and debate If wanted: Planning a large project in detail using STEPP, an advanced tool for project planning (EXCEL-based), with laptop and projector If several trainers are available, the participants could be split up into groups with different scopes of expertise, some working with the grass-roots instruments, others with the advanced instrument	Moderation material, flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form* *Tool 4C1: SMART – Five basic rules of planning a feasible project* If wanted: *Tool 4C3: STEPP Specific Tool for EXCEL-based Project Planning*	All participants Trainer/s

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 4: Project and quality management

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
15 min	Break				
30–45 min	How to start a project	Starting projects is easy …!? Issues of • division of tasks • project communication internal (transparency above all) • corporate identity, external project communication • time economy • reliability and fairness	Plenary session Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form*	Trainer/s All participants
30–45 min	How to run projects	Facilitating the running of projects … Current problems and issues of conflict? How to tackle them?	Plenary session with brief work in groups Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s All participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter

30–45 min	How to finish projects	Finishing projects is not easy! Current problems and issues of conflict? How to tackle them?	Plenary session with brief work in groups Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s All participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
30–45 min	How to use a standard project tool such as GOPP (Goal-Oriented Project Planning)	The project world according to GOPP Can GOPP, originally a USAID and World Bank tool (Logical Framework Approach) for international development projects, serve as a pattern for regional or cluster development?	Plenary session Presentation of GOPP Brainstorming and debate Moderation and final comments	PowerPoint, laptop and projector Moderation material, flip charts *Tool 4C4: GOPP Goal-oriented Project Planning*	Trainer/s All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 4: Project and quality management

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			
120–180 min	Understanding the nature of quality: continuous improvement, continuous learning	Development (of regions, of clusters, of networks, of projects, etc.) as an incremental improvement and learning process Issues of: • evaluation and monitoring • quality management and management quality • building up social capital	Plenary session Presentation (PowerPoint or developed step by step guided by contributions of participants) and debate with reference to experiences reported by the participants	PowerPoint, laptop and projector and/or Moderation material, flip charts *Message 2M12: The nature of quality: continuous improvement, continuous learning* *Message 2M15: Learning networks – constructing social capital*	Trainer/s All participants
15 min	Break				
120–180 min	How to develop a learning laboratory	Participants develop a learning laboratory template and/or several learning laboratories related to their specific backgrounds and development necessities. For learning labs all methods and techniques learned so far can be used depending on the needs of the specific case	Starting with a plenary session Agreement on development steps to be taken Splitting up into groups according to number of labs to be planned Trainer/s walking from group to group, supporting them	Very large room or several fairly large rooms MindManager, laptops and projectors Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/presenter and/or	Trainer/s All participants

				sufficient moderation material, flip charts *Tool 4A6: Learnshop or Learning laboratory*	
15 min	Break				
120–180 min	Learning lab planning continued	Learning lab planning continued	Work in groups according to number of labs to be planned Trainer/s walking from group to group, supporting them Closing with plenary session where all work results are presented, regardless of their maturity, and discussed among all participants	Very large room or several fairly large rooms MindManager, laptops and projectors and/or sufficient moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s All participants Groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter
30–45 min	Learning about personal shortcomings or practices which need change or improvement (own judgement)	During the common learning process, participants take note of perceived personal improvement possibilities and decide on which to tackle first. In this session, they also briefly present experiences made with different ways of tackling problems or situations	Plenary session Contract with myself	*Tool 4A2: Form "Contract with myself"*	All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 4: Project and quality management

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			
60–120 min depending on number of participants	Learning from own projects which can be implemented to practice things learned in the SME ACTor training	Participants present and discuss progress reports on their own projects in their organisations of origin (already running or to be initialised) which can constitute a meaningful and useful context for applying things learned	Plenary session or small groups followed by plenary session Participants present projects (one per participant) that are noted on a poster (matrix) which stays on the wall of the plenary room during the entire training period Presentations are discussed in terms of content and modes of presentation	PowerPoint presentations, laptop, projector Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form*	Participants Trainer
30 min	How to reflect on successful learning	Analysing and learning how to analyse learning processes	Plenary session Satisfaction analysis using a scale of smileys Critical analysis (and self-evaluation) of all structural aspects of the learning arrangement (context conditions, aims, contents, methods, instruments, materials, roles) and its implementation	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s

SME network facilitator

Module 5: Other creative techniques

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
Date to be specified		Duration 12–16 h			
60 min	How to use brain writing	Brain writing is a technique of rapid concept or project development for a small number of people (3–12)	Plenary and work in small groups of 2 or 3 in rapidly changing combinations, on topics suggested by the participants	Paper and writing instruments *Tool 4A11: Brain writing*	Trainer/s All participants
60 min	How to use World Café	World Café is a brain writing technique for larger groups	Plenary and work in small groups of 3 or 4 in changing combinations (frequency adaptable from completely free to changes at regular intervals), on topics suggested by the participants	Tables of four, paper table-cloth (or flip chart paper as table cloth) *Tool 4A12: World Café*	Trainer/s All participants
15 min	Break				
120–180 min	How to use Open Space	Open Space is a technique of concept or project development for large groups of people (30 up to several hundred)	Presentation of the concept by a trainer or expert. Can only be taught practically as a modification of World Café due to lack of people.	Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4A 13: Open Space*	Trainer/s All participants

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 5: Other creative techniques

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
30–120 min	Long break (if during the day)	(90–120 min if meal included)			
120–180 min	How to use the case consultation method with colleagues	Case consultation with colleagues is a role play on real cases with strictly defined roles: case provider, case advisors, moderator, supervisor	Presentation of rules by a trainer or expert Can be easily carried through with a group larger than 4 (up to 10)	Room large enough for two groups of people to work and listen Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4D11: 3C - Case consultation with colleagues*	Trainer/s All participants
15 min	Break				
60–120 min	How to use the method of Six Thinking Hats (by Edward de Bono)	Very helpful role play technique for clarifying complicated case and conflict situations (groups of max. 12 advised)	Presentation of rules by trainer or expert Can easily be carried through with a group larger than 4 (up to 12). If group is larger it should be split into two Cases should be real ones suggested by participants Trainer/s should be prepared to suggest a model case	Moderation tools and flip charts or laptop, projector *Tool 4A 12: Six Thinking Hats*	Trainer/s All participants or groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter

30–45 min	Learning about personal shortcomings or practices which need change or improvement (own judgement)	During the common learning process, participants take note of perceived personal improvement possibilities and decide on which to tackle first. In this session, they also briefly present experiences made with different ways of tackling problems or situations.	Plenary session Contract with myself	*Tool 4A2: Form "Contract with myself"*	All participants
15 min	Break				
60–120 min depending on number of participants	Learning from own projects which can be implemented to practice things learned in the SME ACTor training	Participants present and discuss progress reports on personal projects in their organisations of origin (running or to be initialised) which can constitute a meaningful and useful context for applying things learned	Plenary session or small groups followed by plenary session Participants present projects (one per participant) that are noted on a poster (matrix) which stays on the wall of the plenary room during the entire training period Presentations are discussed in terms of content and modes of presentation	PowerPoint presentations Moderation tools and flip charts *Tool 4A1: To-do form*	Participants Trainer

(continued)

SME network facilitator (continued)

Module 5: Other creative techniques

Time	What for (Learning aims)	What (Learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (actors, partners)
30 min	How to reflect on successful learning	Analysing and learning how to analyse learning processes	Plenary session Satisfaction analysis using a scale of smileys Critical analysis (and self-evaluation) of all structural aspects of the learning arrangement (context conditions, aims, contents, methods, instruments, materials, roles) and its implementation	Moderation material, flip charts	Trainer/s
Open end	How to organise a swell farewell party for people who have worked together intensely over a long period	Planning a farewell party using some of the methods and tools learned during the course	No trainer needed	Moderation material, flip charts Collecting money, individual skills	All participants or groups of participants, each with participants as moderator, time controller and reporter/ presenter

4
Tools

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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter we present a collection of useful tools for action and learning. Action learning as such has no tools; it is a method of arranging learning in action, and action through learning. So we had to select useful tools from a large variety of possibly useful methods and instruments available. Hence, the tool collection presented here is a tool selection. The tools come from a wide range of areas such as creative thinking, organisation development, quality management, project management, human resources development, coaching, evaluation, qualitative empirical research, etc. Our focus is not action learning in general, but facilitating networking on an action learning basis as we understand it, i.e., making co-operation easier and enhancing reflective co-operativity.

The selected tools cover four clearly defined aims and activities in this specific context: improving communication, collecting information, planning and managing projects, analysing problems, and preparing decision making. We have practiced all of the tools on several occasions - many of them for decades - and the many specific recommendations of using certain tools we provide are based on this experience. Only a few of the tools could be used in the framework of the Leonardo project SME ACTor so the documented experimentation of tools in the project context will not cover all of them.

Additionally, one third of the 40 tools are our own developments or adaptations based on experience which have not been published so far in any English speaking context.

Selection criteria

In making our choice, we had a number of demanding criteria and each tool had to fulfil all of them. The main criterion was "fit for use", as Juran, one of the fathers of quality management defined quality. The criteria were that the tools should be:

Fit for the facilitation of networks

1. Fit for the facilitation of networks in contexts such as sector associations, enterprise or institutional associations in general, regional clusters, regional or local economic promotion activities, chambers of commerce, or just inter-organisational co-operation.

Fit for use in action

2. Useful for action, for everyday work.

Fit for shaping learning in action

3. Useful for the intentional and conscious shaping of learning in such action.

Fit for learning

4. Useful for learning only, which here means for structuring data, information and knowledge in a meaningful way, which is one of the most important tasks in facilitating networking.

Fit for collective working

5. Fit for creating and structuring collective working situations, working in groups of people who want to shape, structure, plan joint strategies, activities, projects, etc.

Fit for visualisation cf. 2M3: Visualisation - why and how it helps you to understand and remember

6. Fit for visualisation, i.e., for being used with or as visualisation of collective thinking, planning, problem-solving, or decision-making processes in a networking context. Most of them can also be used individually for structuring such processes. For what we mean by visualisation see 2M3.

	Selected tools
A	**Improving communication**
A1	To-do form
A2	Contract with myself
A3	Chairing vs. moderating
A4	The setting of workshops
A5	The planning of workshops
A6	Learnshop or learning laboratory
A7	The start-up tool
A8	Warming up or ice-breaking methods
A9	Angles and corners
A10	Brainstorming
A11	Brainwriting
A12	World café
A13	Open space
A14	Learner satisfaction analysis
A15	Learnshop evaluation
A16	Preparing meetings as a chairperson
B	**Collecting information**
B1	Participant questionnaire
B2	Semi-standardised expert in-depth interviews
B3	Case studies - methodical guidelines of context analysis
B4	Focus groups
B5	Yellow pages
C	**Planning and managing projects**
C1	SMART - five basic rules for planning a feasible project
C2	Countdown planning
C3	STEPP (specific tool for EXCEL-based project planning)
C4	GOPP (goal-oriented project planning)
C5	Flow chart
C6	Gantt diagram
D	**Analysing problems and preparing decision making**
D1	Mind mapping
D2	The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)
D3	Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning
D4	Flow analysis and planning
D5	Skill needs analysis and planning
D6	SWOT analysis
D7	PEST analysis
D8	Cause and effect diagrams

D9	Force field analysis
D10	The five whys
D11	3C - case consultation with colleagues
D12	Six thinking hats
D13	Pen portrait

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4A Improving Communication

4A.1 To-do form

The to-do form is a very simple tool serving a variety of purposes. Originally a systematic form for recording the to-do decisions of a meeting, it may also be used for planning meetings, projects or other activities. 4A2, the "contract with myself", is just a simple example of how, with minor modifications, the basic form may lend itself to adaptations for multiple purposes.

To do (minutes) Project Date: Participants:

WHAT (issue, measure, aim)	HOW (organisation, implementation, steps)	WHO	till WHEN	Done

Download tool from book website

4A.1.1 To-do minutes

The most current method of using this simple device is for record keeping. In many contexts, writing minutes of meetings is an unpleasant task given to those who have not looked out of the window quickly enough when it comes to deciding who will take over the job. In processes

of organisation development from which the tool originates, the to-do form is the normal way of keeping records of decisions taken.

There are two main differences between traditional minutes and to-do minutes:

- Traditional minutes describe the process of a past meeting, while to-do minutes focus on future action based on decisions taken in the meeting.
- Traditional minutes are written after the meeting, while to-do minutes are written during the meeting. Usually, to-do minutes can be handed out to all participants at the end of the meeting.

In other words, traditional minutes are used to aid memory while to-do minutes are current working documents.

The record keeper responsible for to-do minutes, using a laptop or by hand, notes the issue dealt with (the *what*), what was said about the how of its implementation, who is responsible for doing or supervising it, and (by) *when* it is to be done. If all sections are not completed, the record keeper will remind the chairperson and the participants about this missing information. Then, after having recorded all aspects, he or she will repeat what has been noted. If everybody nods, it is taken as an agreement. At the end of the meeting, all participants receive a print version or photocopy of the to-do minutes. This copy will stay on the desk until the task is carried out and ticked as done (last column) by the person responsible.

The next meeting will start with a check of whether the tasks decided in the previous meeting have been tackled. For tasks which remain uncompleted the person responsible has to give an explanation. Necessary modifications are recorded. Tasks remaining open continue to be subject to this checking until they are done.

Reliability – quality of co-operation: Say what you do. Do what you say.

This way of recording and working not only serves to reduce record keeping to the necessary minimum, it usually leads to more consistent meetings focused on clear and specific action. Just as important, it significantly increases transparency and the probability of subsequent action following a decision. The reliability of co-operation is improved, and it is an important improvement in the working conditions and organisational culture if people say what they do and do what they say. For this reason, in some organisations the who column is the first one.

4A.1.2 Other uses

Other uses of the tool follow the same logic of systematic recording of action planning, be it an event, a project, simply the next meeting or any other activity.

Download from Moodle platform via http://www.smeactor.eu

The tool can also be downloaded from the project's Moodle platform accessible via http://www.smeactor.eu.

4A.2 Contract with myself

The contract with myself is a very simple learning and planning tool. It supports you in taking note of specific observations, tools, tricks, or other notable things you come across in a meeting and which you think may be helpful in overcoming possible shortcomings you have detected in your own way of tackling problems, situations or difficult people. It is a tool for personal improvement.

Contract with Myself	Name	Date		
WHAT I want to do	HOW I want to achieve it	WHO may be helpful	till WHEN	Done

Tool download from our book website or from http://www.smeactor.eu or from

In the first place, the *What* column of the contract sheet which is something like a learning diary, is used to record noteworthy things, such as:

- What was new to me?
- What can I link to my personal experience?
- What do I want to practice differently from today?
- What questions remain?
- What should I observe more critically?

If suggestions for how to deal with these things come up they can also be noted. The rest is personal consideration and reflection on how to make personal improvement a feasible project.

If people agree, exchanging information about selected experiences may prove helpful at certain moments in a joint learning or working process.

4A.3 Chairing vs. moderating

Chairing a meeting and moderating a meeting are very different things. It is up to the person who is responsible for the organisation and results of a meeting to decide whether to chair or to moderate, or do whatever

he or she thinks might lead to the most successful outcome of the meeting. In both cases, it is important that the person responsible is able to distinguish between both tasks.

To identify the differences the table below sets out both options in a schematic way describing chairing in a relatively conservative way.

Chairing meetings	Moderating meetings
The chairperson …	The moderator …
• Is usually a person with a higher position in the organisation than the rest of the group. He or she is responsible for the success of the meeting. Being the chairperson is in line with his or her main task in the organisation, not a role.	• Is methodically responsible for the work process of the meeting. He or she is usually external to the organisation or to the respective part of the organisation. Even if this is not the case, moderation is a strictly defined role and is independent of a formal function or hierarchical position in the organisation.
• Is always concerned with the subject of the meeting. He or she values contributions, and backs or discards options.	• Is formally (by definition of the role) independent of the subject. He or she has to ensure formal and equal treatment of all contributions.
• Concentrates on the subject itself and less on methods and procedures.	• Concentrates on choosing and practising methods and procedures supporting the process.
• Makes sure that his or her intentions and priorities are covered.	• Supports and considers contributions by all participants in the meeting.
• Introduces clear and specific objectives of what the meeting is to achieve.	• Supports the formulation of objectives common to the group.
• Intervenes personally in the case of conflict and personal attacks, directing participants to argue strictly about the case.	• Registers upcoming conflict, mirroring it neutrally and providing opportunities to clarify the conflict's relevance for the process.

4A.4 The setting of workshops

A workshop is not a conference or a seminar, nor is it a forum or a simple meeting. *A workshop is a gathering of people with the aim of working or reflecting in order to produce results leading to action towards accomplishing some common purpose or task.*

One of the central tasks of facilitators is organising such workshops for their networks or for parts and projects of such networks is to create conditions which ease contact, common learning and working experience and encourage the growth of trust and mutual understanding. The planning of the working and learning arrangements includes detailed consideration of which tools, media and materials are needed.

4A.4.1 Location and space

The workshop space chosen should be fit for working and learning together.

From a networking and facilitator's perspective, workshops need an open, generous and communicative environment allowing participants to focus on the common work process and result. The aim of shaping such an environment is the creation of a common work space, a common projection of the common project. Therefore the location or the space chosen for a workshop should match the working and learning purposes or objectives of the workshop.

A workshop aimed at defining a mission or reflecting on strategic planning should have a venue which takes people out of the daily work environment and provides them with the distance they need for critical thinking. On the other hand, a workshop with a small number of people and a concise and specific purpose may be arranged at a place which is close to where most of its participants come from and is thus easy to reach. It may even take place in a specific work environment to allow participants to have a practical look at a particular problem for which solutions are sought.

Workshops need space and natural light.

Workshops need space for people to organise themselves and their common work process. There should be room to stand up, walk around, move with and be moved by the work process. For work processes of several hours duration, such rooms should have natural light.

A workshop needs functional and comfortable chairs

Workshops only need tables in defined situations, i.e., when tables are necessary to accomplish a certain task for which a table or tables are needed. In general, tables create a barrier between the participants, and it is even worse when the participants disappear behind laptop screens. People are supposed to concentrate on working together on a common subject. The didactic idea is that the creation of common pictures, agreements and working experience is more important than individual notes. Therefore, a workshop does not need tables. What it needs even less than tables are fixed rows of chairs where people sit

behind each other. A workshop just needs functional and comfortable chairs which can easily be moved. If tables are there they should be moved to the walls, concentrating the chairs in an open circle around the common visualisation centre.

4A.4.2 Equipment

Visualisation is the centre.

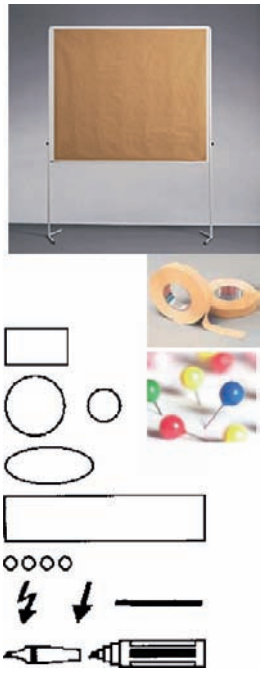
Visualisation is the centre; therefore, various projection surfaces must be available: pin boards, flip charts and/or whiteboards. For presentations or work with software, e.g., a mind mapping programme, projection screens are required. If no pin boards are available, the walls should at least be large and empty.

A digital camera is of great help.

Pictures are taken of all results and relevant side notes to provide documents of common work. A digital camera is a great help as it avoids copying all the results. Photographs aid the memory of participants, while copies only reproduce the structure of what is remembered. Copying should be confined to those cases where the writing is badly legible or the photo quality is poor.

Laptop/s and projector/s

For presentations of inputs or working group results or for working with a computer, a PC or laptop and a projector are needed. If work in groups is planned and such media are needed, several of them must be available.



For brief notes, items to be remembered, or a quick drawing, one or two flipcharts are required. A white board is even more useful.

Pin boards or moderation boards and corresponding moderation materials are strongly recommended. If no moderation boards are available, at least cards (see below) and self-adhesive tape which is easily removable and repositionable are absolutely necessary. For a plenary session, 2–3 boards should be sufficient. The overall quantity depends on the number of groups (normally 3–6 people) working separately.

Further moderation materials needed are:

- Moderation screen paper (light brown or white) on which posters are created; they can be transported to other places to be worked on further
- Pins and pin cushions
- Cards (Visu cards) with the five shapes you can see in the graph, and in four different colours per shape (white, light green, yellow, light blue)
- Visu markers with a broad tip, if possible in two sizes and at least in two colours
- A repositionable adhesive stick for fixing the cards in their final agreed position

- Adhesive dots for evaluations and voting, e.g., when agreeing on priorities
- Finally, self-adhesive tape (Tesa masking tape), the type used for protecting adjacent surfaces when painting walls or windows.

If you have no such materials yet, please buy a complete basic equipment set, available online at http://www.nitor.de/onlineshop or at www.neuland.eu

http://www.nitor.de/onlineshop

The only reason why we indicate Nitor here instead of the other provider (www.neuland.eu) is the fact that only Nitor's online shop works in German and in English.

4A.4.3 Food and beverages

Along with an open, generous and communicative environment, it is important to provide light drinks (water with little or no gas, sugar-free juices), coffee and/or tea (mainly for the breaks), and light food (fruit, cookies). This should be available all the time as it is a crucial part of general well-being and concentration capacity.

Meals should not be too heavy during the day. Light soups and salads along with light snacks (finger food) allow energy to be maintained and not dissipated on digestion.

Breaks are an essential part of work; therefore, they should be planned as carefully as the work itself, and they should be meticulously respected.

For events over several days, evening meetings in a pleasant environment can be an important part of the community building process.

4A.5 The planning of workshops and learnshops

Planning and preparing a workshop or learnshop is a responsible task which should be tackled conscientiously and early enough to create comfortable conditions. As a rule of thumb, at least for beginners, you need as much time for diligent planning as for the workshop itself. Even with some routine and experienced assistance you will need between one third and one half of the time the workshop lasts.

If you are going to moderate the workshop with somebody else, the best approach is to plan the whole workshop together. If this is not possible, you need an intense briefing session before the workshop starts. Experienced moderators will be able to read the schedule with didactic eyes. Nevertheless, a short briefing is recommended.

The scheduling tool provided as a .doc file at the book's website

Title of workshop or learnshop

Module# : Title of module

Overall aim

Time	What for (Working/learning aims)	What (Working/learning content)	How (Methods)	How (Instruments, materials)	Who (Actors, partners)
Date		Duration			

1st step: Define the overall aim

- Step 1: The first task is to define the overall aim of the workshop or learnshop. The question is: What do we want to achieve? If it is a workshop, the aim is a working result, a problem solution, a project defined and structured, etc. If it is a learnshop, the aim is to learn how to do something by working on some issue relevant to the participants.

2nd step: Define the individual aims of each step

- Step 2: Define the individual working or learning aims of each working or learning step you are going to plan. The question here is also what: What is to be achieved in each step? Define all of these aims vertically in column 2 before you pass to column 3 for content. It is important to keep aims and contents separate. During the workshop you might be forced to depart from your scheduled procedure since people might suggest working on different objects or issues, or new ideas might come up. But changing the object may not necessarily mean a change of the aim. Separating aims and contents helps you to keep track. Don't forget breaks!

3rd step: Identify the content of each aim

- Step 3: Identify the content of each working or learning step, what issues have to be dealt with, what questions have to be answered. Do this vertically too, going down column 3 for all the aims you defined before. Check whether the segmentation of steps was correct.

4th step: Detail the methods of working

- Step 4: From now on you plan horizontally. Column 4 asks you to detail the methods you are going to employ to deal with the content previously identified, e.g., brainstorming using a mind map as a structuring device. The question is: How are we going to work?

  Here you also decide whether to work with the whole group together or in parallel working groups. If you work in several groups, it is here that you need to define which tasks the individual working groups might have, e.g., whether they work on the same issue because you want a variety of solutions, or whether each of the groups is to concentrate on different individual aspects or partial problems of the common task.

Don't forget that it is the group that should define how you will work. Your task is only to make suggestions. But it is important to be prepared to give reasons in favour of each procedure suggested.

Remember: If you work in parallel groups, the next time unit must be dedicated to a plenary session to allow reporting on the results of the working groups, the prioritising of parallel solutions or the composition of complementary solutions.

- Step 5: Column 5 asks you to provide detailed information on which instruments or materials, rooms, furniture, catering, etc. you will need. It is important to be precise, and you should clearly imagine or even look at the specific conditions of the meeting room, especially when another person is going to prepare this room for your meeting; in this column, he or she will find all the specific information on what to provide, prepare or think of.

5th step: Detail media, materials, other conditions

Rooms:
For group work you might need more rooms if the plenary meeting room is not large enough for the number of groups you want to work with. Several working groups with a clear working aim, each with a visualisation board of its own, can easily work parallel to each other in a large room if the air and light conditions allow this (cf. 4A9: Angles and corners).

Furniture:
It is here where you note, for example, that you want comfortable chairs but no tables and that you need a small table for the moderation kit.

Instruments:
Here is also where you note the media you are going to use. If you need a laptop and a projector, a moderation board and other visualisation equipment, one or two flip charts or a whiteboard instead, note it here.

Materials:
If handouts of working materials have to printed, note it in this column. If special paper or other materials should be available for what you plan to do with the group, don't forget to write it down here.

Catering:
As we said in 4A4, workshop participants may need water and light food, e.g., fruit, at any moment if they feel their concentration is fading. Physiologists say that a 2% loss of liquid in your body causes a 20% loss of concentration.

- Step 6: The last column, the who column, should contain brief descriptions of which actor is supposed to play which role in each

6th step: Fix actor roles

of these successive programme steps, i.e., participants, all or specific ones, the moderator/s or an invited expert. If you plan to work in groups, note here also that each group will appoint a moderator, a time keeper and a reporter at the beginning.

7th step: Fix time. Respect breaks

- Step 7: At last, in the first column the time available for each individual phase, i.e., line of the learnshop's scheduling matrix, has to be fixed. It may tell you that have tried to stuff too many items or tasks into too little time. Correct all other steps if the timing requires it. Respect breaks! Participants will need them. You will need them.

4A.6 Learnshops or learning laboratories

Learnshops or learning laboratories (learn labs) are organised opportunities for working and learning together. They have a flexible, context-specific mix of working together on some relevant common subject and practicing learning methods and tools under relatively open conditions of joint working and learning. Learnshops are workshops with the intention of learning or reflecting on common tasks or purposes in order to improve the collective competence of accomplishing some common purpose or task.

They can be used as a periodically organised method of collective learning in a company, institution or network, or as special events organised to develop and promote change. Their aim is to improve the quality of performance and performance conditions of individuals and organisations or networks, or to develop new customer-oriented ideas for products and services in a specific context.

Cf. 2M6:The concept of responsibility, and 2M9:Communities of practice and self-organisation

Learnshops are proven action learning concepts for developing communities of practice systematically into communities of performance.

- Communities of practice are spontaneous, sporadic communities of working and learning together at work or in any other collaboration context.
- Communities of performance are communities of systematic joint working and learning directed towards a common shared aim of better performance.

Building communities of practice into communities of performance means developing rather spontaneous and sporadic collaboration to become systematic collaboration toward shared aims using shared concepts, methods and tools of working and learning (cf. 2M2 and 2M10). Such action learning opportunities help to:

- promote the formation of networks
- motivate relevant groups in organisations or actors in networks
- make the organisation or network more vital and dynamic

- ensure sustainability beyond individual learning concepts
- activate a constructive culture of learning
- create identity and strengthen the sense of belonging
- create and convey innovative energies in the organisation or network
- improve the capacity of reflecting, information processing and communicating within and across groups and networks

We have described how to plan, prepare, organise and carry though such learnshops in the following Messages and Tools:

2M2: Moderation as a role
2M3: Visualisation – why and how it helps you to understand and remember
4A4: The setting of workshops
4A5: The planning of workshops

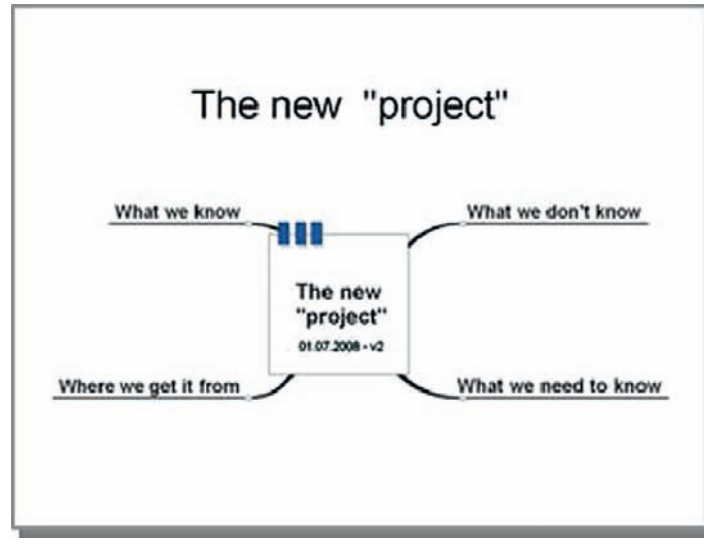
Cf. 2M2 and 2M3 and 4A4 and 4A5

All other tools may be used for making working and learning together more effective and efficient.

4A.7 The start-up tool

The start-up tool is a tool for beginners. With no more than four basic questions it seeks to provide more awareness of what can or must be done. At the same time, it is a question-asking strategy which is useful to remember in any situation where something new is about to be initiated. In any individual or collective analytical or planning process such a situation may arise. If it does, these four questions are fundamental and help to structure the brainstorming, be it in a group or with yourself.

1. What do we know?
   What do we know about the subject, the situation, the persons involved, etc.? Of critical importance are the questions: Do we really know? Or do we just think we know? Have we ever confirmed this?
2. What do we not know?
   Is there something we do not know that we must know in order to be able to deal with the situation?
3. What do we need to know?
   Establish a list of everything you think you need to know in the context of the situation or project.
4. Where do we get it from?
   Where can we find what we need? Which resources do we have and which do we have to provide for? Are they retrievable in our library, in a data base or via a search engine in the internet? Can a customer help us?

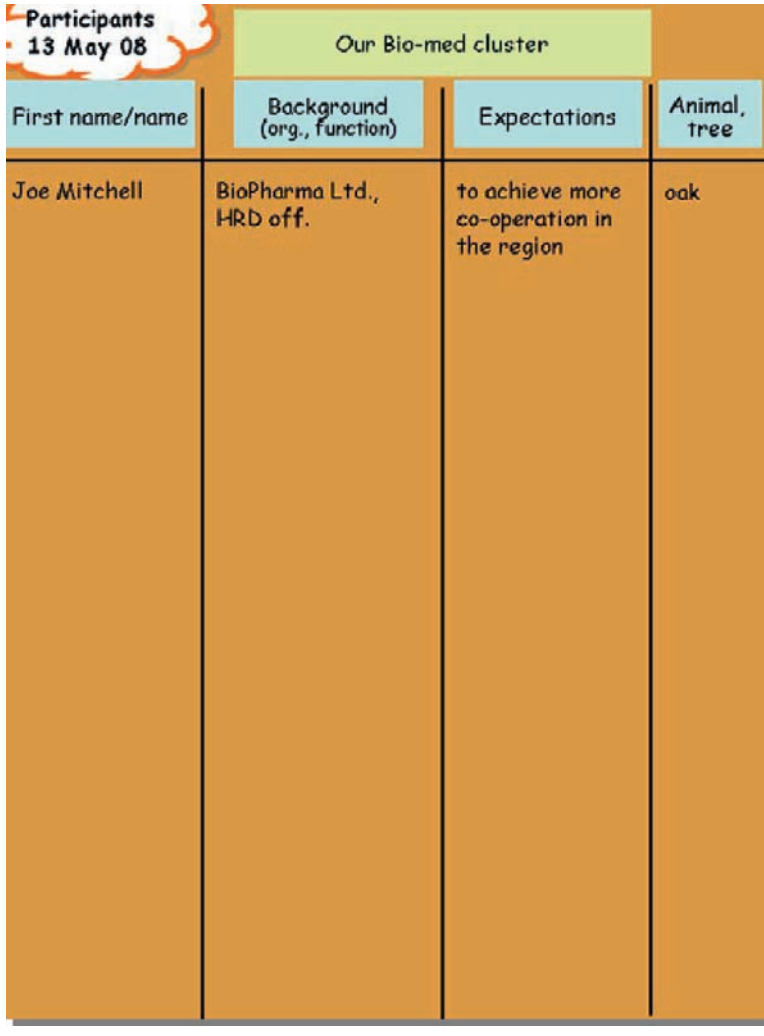


The brainstorming in whatever of the two example forms given can be visualised on a moderation board or with a mind mapping tool.

In the process of such a brainstorming session, seemingly very complex or difficult things become more transparent, the task becomes feasible, and it becomes clear that with a joint effort it can be tackled.

4A.8 Warming up or ice-breaking methods

Warming up or ice breaking is a short procedure at the beginning of a meeting to make people acquainted with each other, and to provide them mutually with some information on their backgrounds, interests and personalities in order to open them up for joint working.



Participants 13 May 08	Our Bio-med cluster		
First name/name	Background (org., function)	Expectations	Animal, tree
Joe Mitchell	BioPharma Ltd., HRD off.	to achieve more co-operation in the region	oak

Workshops or learnshops are expected to have a result. This means that the participants of such a workshop have to work together. In order to achieve good results, learning and good work must be desired by all participants. So everyone should know at least something about the others and about each person's reasons for participating in the workshop.

There are a great number of ice-breaking tools. The few presented here presuppose adult participants who have already come with a certain readiness to work together and achieve a result.

In each of the three model cases assumed below, independently of the ice-breaking method chosen, a formal list with the name, the organisation, the address and email and a signature should be prepared. The filled-in list should be copied for all participants.

We distinguish three different occasions: an ordinary workshop, a kick-off workshop, e.g., for a project, and a meeting of a larger group of people who are meeting for the first time.

Workshops

4A.8.1 Workshop (5-12 people)

The workshop moderator will prepare a poster with the structure shown in the graphic. It should not contain too much information, just some elementary information that you want participants to provide about themselves:

- The first name and the surname
- A few background data which give a hint to why the person is there
- The personal expectations which give a hint to what for the person is there,
- A personal symbol, an animal or a tree, maybe a musical instrument, and a brief personal view of why this tree, animal or instrument is important

People presenting themselves are asked to stand up so that everybody can see who is speaking. The presentation should not take longer than 20-30 s per person. The moderator will note the most important data on the poster (see graphic). For the personal symbol at the end, what matters is the personal view of the symbol given by the person. It is an indirect way of giving away something very personal. No commenting on this is allowed. For example, it is not important that a dolphin can also be aggressive and cruel, if the respective participant says she likes dolphins because they live in the water, are intelligent, helpful and elegant animals with a friendly attitude to humans.

The very first ice is broken if the moderator himself starts presenting himself this way. At the same time, this may serve as a model of what sort of information is expected and how much, in what time.

The poster stays on the wall during the whole workshop. At the end of the workshop, the expectations noted on the paper are used for evaluating the workshop (cf. 4A14: Learner satisfaction analysis).

Kick-off workshops

4A.8.2 Kick-off workshops (5-12 people)

If people meet for a first workshop leading to a more intense collaboration, e.g., for a project, people might need more time to get acquainted with each other.

Prepare the same poster as above but without the final symbol column. Ask people who do not know each other to sit together and opposite each other in pairs. Give them 3–5 min per person to present themselves to each other. Inform them that they will have to present each other to the group. Besides the functional information structured by the poster, people may include personal data like “I am 50 years old, married, with twins, a boy and a girl aged 24”. They may take notes.

Then ask them to present each other to the group and note the most important information on the poster. Of course, the person presented may add briefly to the presentation if something relevant to them was missing.

4A.8.3 Larger groups meeting for the first time

Larger groups meeting for the first time

Here the assumption is that people who are going to network in whatever context are meeting for the first time with a more or less formal aim of establishing some type of collaboration. In this case, it may be more important to allow people to meet properly rather than having a formal presentation.

The method used here is called "Getting acquainted by walking around". Ask people to walk around the room and shake hands with everybody, just presenting themselves by giving their name. The aim is to shake hands with all people in the room, moderator included.

In a second round, ask people to walk around trying to remember names. Most names will not be remembered, which is normal. This time they should speak to each other presenting themselves with some more information like "My name is Ray Charles. I am the founder of Music Downloads", linked to a statement such as "and I am here because I think we should make downloads of music cheaper". The statement may also be more general like "I think it could be useful for all of us if we promoted our region more actively". All the people should meet each other in this second round also.

By now, people will know who they want to spend more time talking to. Give them time, say, 10 min, to talk to some of those they want to meet again for whatever reason. They should meet three other persons. Indicate by clapping your hands when 3 min are over and when about 6 min are over.

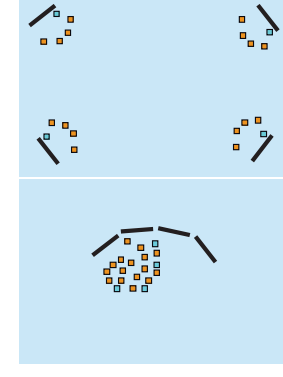
Then you can start working on the subject of the meeting.

4A.9 Angles and corners

Looking at a subject or a problem from different angles can be done by placing groups into different corners of a room and letting them analyse the subject or problem individually.

This method can be used as a tool in its own right or as a reinforcement of a previous process, e.g., a stakeholder analysis (see 4D2: The five satisfactions). It can also be used as a conflict settlement method.

Cf. 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)



Like most of the tools, it can be used in an inductive and a deductive way.

- The inductive use is for opening up a subject, collecting aspects and structuring them.
- The deductive use serves instead for detailing previous analyses or aspects, e.g., selected stakeholder perspectives, or for cooling down conflict emotions by taking different stands on a pre-defined conflictive subject.

Inductive use
Several groups of people in different corners of a room look at the same subject according to different interest positions or questions prepared by the moderator or by the entire group beforehand. Each group organises a visualised brainstorming and structuring process.

In a further step, all views from the different angles are presented in the middle of the room to the whole group with the aim of comparing the results and finding integrative aspects or compromises which become the basis of an action plan.

Deductive use
Here the angles and corners method serves for detailing previous results of a stakeholder analysis or other analytical steps that have already led to certain results and headlines. For example, the first round of a stakeholder analysis consists of asking who these stakeholders are for your specific context. Now selected stakeholders of different interests could be simulated by different groups working in parallel.

In a further step, all work results are presented and integrated with regard to a joint strategy or action plan.

4A.10 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a simple but very effective method of associative or lateral thinking. Brainstorming in particular is one of the most current methods of mobilising a group of people and their minds in a collective effort of analysing and solving a problem, developing a concept or strategy, or planning projects, programmes or actions, etc.

See SME ACTor 2M11 and 2M12 on Moderation as a Role and Visualisation

Brainstorming
is normally moderated and visualised, the moderator being the person who organises the brainstorming process and its visualisation.

For a well prepared brainstorming session, it is useful to have a moderator who knows the subject well and understands the context of the process. A person without this information but with experience in moderating may also serve. It is important that the moderator is, or pretends to be neutral throughout the whole process. The moderator is no more than the master of the rules and the steward of visualisation; certainly not a person to decide about wrong or right, good or bad. He or she is the organiser of shared visions.

There are four clearly discernible steps or phases in a brainstorming process:

- Step 1: collection of ideas
- Step 2: clustering and structuring of ideas gathered

- Step 3: establishing priorities
- Step 4: decisions and actions to be derived from the result

Steps 2 and 3 may change order depending on the material gathered.

The rules for the collection phase (Step 1) are simple and must be respected.

- Only one idea, one card or one contribution at a time.
- Ideas should always be put forward with an action orientation, i.e., they should always have at least a verb (to do) and a noun.
- All contributions, even seemingly crazy ones, are valid and of equal value.
- No comments on contributions of others.
- If necessary, speaking time is restricted to half a minute or less.

Brainstorming can follow an inductive or a deductive procedure.

Deductive approach

- With a *deductive* approach it would start with a pre-established structure residing in the subject itself or known to all participants. For example, in a workshop analysing the treatment of natural environmental resources in a company, the brainstorming could start with three headlines: soil, air and water.
- With an inductive approach, e.g., gathering ideas on improvement potentials of network management, the brainstorming would start completely open. Only Step 2, a clustering of the ideas noted on the cards pinned to the board, would lead to a number of improvement areas which would then have to be prioritised and treated in more detail one after the other.

Inductive approach

Step 4 is used to focus the structured gatherings on decisions to be taken and actions to be implemented, assigning to each step of action a date and the name of the person responsible.

If you split the workshop into working groups who are supposed to use brainstorming make sure you provide them with the basic rules (see Handout Basic Brainstorming Rules).

Handout

Handout can be downloaded from the book's website

Basic Brainstorming Rules

for working groups

Rules for organising the group

At the beginning, each working group appoints

- A moderator
- A reporter who will present the results in the plenary meeting
- A time-keeper to watch the given time limit

Rules for working in groups

- All participants should add to the common work (attention of moderator)
- Gather ideas first, discuss later
- No discussion during the collection phase
- All contributions are of equal value and are noted

Rules for working with cards

- Note only one idea per card
- First collect
- Next, establish priorities
- Then decide about the final structure of the visualised results
- Use each card only once (no writing on the back)

Rules for noting your ideas on cards

- Think in activities:
  verb (to do word)/ noun/ for grading, use an adjective or adverb, e.g., train people decently.
- Don't write, print.
  It must be readable from a distance of two or three metres
- Don't use capital letters
- Never print more than 5 words, max. 7, on a card
- Never use more than 2, exceptionally 3 lines on a card

4A.11 Brainwriting

Brainwriting is a modification of brainstorming for relatively small groups of 5–8 participants. The most important difference is that with brainwriting, people are sitting at a table and writing. No talking is required or wanted. Like brainstorming, brainwriting is ideal for making implicit knowledge explicit, or unconscious knowledge conscious.

The associative force of brainstorming lies in listening and looking at what has been said and noted by others on cards stuck on a pinboard. The associative force of brainwriting lies in writing and reading, reading and writing, using each other's ideas as an uncommented basis. Brainwriting can easily be modified; therefore there are many ways of doing it.

Here are my two favourite variations in more detail.

Inductive brainwriting

1. Open (inductive) brainwriting, paper moving.
   - A group of people sits around a table. Every participant has a sheet of paper (A4) and notes a brief idea concerning the previously agreed topic.

- Then he or she passes the paper to his/her neighbour. She will read the idea and add what comes to her mind in relation to this idea.
- Then she passes the paper to her neighbour. If he is still busy with another idea, he will pass it to the next neighbour.
- This continues until the paper comes back to the original provider of the idea.
- If he or she can add something after reading all the contributions a second round is started. If not, he/she puts the paper in the middle of the table.
- In a second phase, every participant has a look at all the papers in the middle of the table and can add any further ideas he or she may have.
- In a third phase, the ideas are ranked in terms of priority of further processing.
- Finally, the participants discuss the implementation of the highest ranked ideas.

2. Closed (deductive) brainwriting, people moving

Deductive brainwriting

- A group of people stands around a table that is covered with a large paper tablecloth or two sheets of flipchart paper fixed with Scotch tape. They are going to work on a previously identified idea which is written in the middle of the table. It is recommended to identify a few main aspects and to use a mind map structure. Now each participant starts writing his or her associations on the paper.

Cf. 4D1: Mind mapping

- After a short time, everybody moves around the table passing to the next aspect of the common issue.
- This moving around the table is continued until nobody can add anything.
- Then the outcome is streamlined from a feasibility and implementation point of view.
- Finally, the implementation of the idea is planned.

Both varieties can easily be combined, with the second method being used as a deepening phase for ideas that emerged in the first open brainwriting sequence.

4A.12 World Café

Cf. 4A11: Brainwriting

World Café is an extension of our second variation of the brainwriting method (cf. 4A11) but for many more people, at least 12, better 16 or 20, and even up to 40. Under certain circumstances up to several hundred people can participate in a World Café. In this case the event would certainly last 2 days. Like brainwriting, it is very useful for

making implicit knowledge explicit in a playful manner. The important difference here is that people talk to each other and write.

Graphs taken from http://www.theworldcafe-europe.net

The method is simple but it needs very careful planning of all environmental conditions. For a larger group, two moderators and an assistant are recommended. The basic requirements are:

- a room that is large enough to host all participants at individual tables with no more than four persons per table
- a paper tablecloth on each table
- permanent markers on each table in two or more colours like the ones used for flipcharts and moderation. Several pinboards on the periphery are useful
- a device for recording reports in the second phase.

Let's assume you have a group of 24 people from a regional cluster who want to find solutions to the growing pressure of globalisation. You have predefined six topics (for six tables) related to problems in the cluster arising from globalisation.

- For each table you need to identify an anchor person or host who is the owner of the table's topic. He or she will later present the results visualised on the tablecloth.
- *During the first phase*
  Here, people start giving their views by talking to each other and writing, scribbling, doodling or drawing what they want to contribute to the table's topic. The anchor person can moderate the process if needed, e.g., suggesting a common way of visualising the contributions. A mind map which permits many forms of contributions might result in a meaningful structure.

- After 15 min – the time span is defined by the moderators – all but the hosts change tables. Each person joins a different new table forming a completely new group which works on the specific topic of this new table (see graphic).
- This phase is over when all participants, with the exception of the anchor persons, have worked at all six tables.
- *In the second phase*
  Here, the host or anchor persons report the results of their respective tables. All other participants move to the reporting table, gathering around it to listen to the report and look at the visual results. If the reports are going to be used for further planning of actions it may be helpful to record them. Together with the notes on the tablecloth they can constitute a very rich source of ideas. All participants receive the reports and a photograph of the tablecloth.
- *Possible third phase*
  In this, the plenary may now proceed to select the most relevant ideas and concepts and develop them to a more coherent concept or action plan. If several ideas are to be implemented, further work can be organised in parallel groups at separate tables. If the tablecloth with the basic idea is too chaotic for further planning, it is pinned to a moderation board and the planning is developed on a new tablecloth paper.

Such a process can easily last a whole day, or even a day and a half or 2 days with larger groups. The more people and the longer the duration, the more complicated the final elaboration of results becomes.

Needless to say, for such an event the whole setting must be well organised, including provision of drinks, light food and a few planned breaks where people can experience their community in a different way (cf. 4A4: The setting of workshops).

Cf. 4A4: The setting of workshops

4A.13 Open Space

Open Space is a conference (self-) organisation method for large groups from 20 to 2,000 or even more participants. An open space conference does not have a clearly predefined theme beyond something like “The future and what we have to change” or “Globalisation – what does it mean for our cluster?” In any case, it must be important, urgent and complex as well as broad enough to allow all participants of such large groups to relate their own concerns to it. Within this very general frame, the participants are asked to suggest topics which are important to them. In a well organised open space conference the community building aspect is as important as the thematic work aspect.

The concept of Open Space was developed by Harrison Owen (2008).* It is said that he felt challenged to do so when a friend, after being asked how he liked a large conference prepared by Harrison Owen, told him that the coffee breaks had been the most interesting parts. The challenge was to conceive a method of organising a meaningful conference which had the freedom and ease of the breaks.

An open space conference may last from half a day up to 3 days, depending on the "size" of the subject, the number of participants and the intensity of work to be reached. For example, if the conference is not only to open up and structure a theme but also to plan the first steps of implementing solutions, it will go into deeper detail and last longer.

Open Space has

- no agenda, only a time structure
- no previously fixed presentations
- no previously fixed tasks for participants
- no fixed breaks, a light catering buffet being permanently available, changing only with the time of day, i.e., it is different at lunchtime and before or after lunchtime.

On catering during workshops
cf. 4A4: The setting of workshops

The basic organisation principle involves a maximum of self-organisation and freedom of movement. It trusts that people who want to meet will meet in the open space provided. This implies that the moderation of such a conference is reduced to a minimum. But in order to make this principle practical and useful, an open space conference needs a large amount of planning and preparation, especially of its logistics of communication, i.e., how to capture and record the results of a previously unknown number of working groups with a changing composition, and how to analyse, evaluate and focus the results during and after the conference. An effective plan and an efficient well-briefed team of assistants are needed to facilitate a smoothly running pleasant atmosphere. As a rule of thumb, the planning and preparation, especially of these background logistics, tend to last as long as the conference itself, often longer.

The market phase

- Step 1: *The market phase*
  At the beginning, all participants are sitting in the market or forum, the plenary meeting space, in a large circle or circles. The official organiser of the conference should welcome people, explain the aim of the event and make a few points on givens and opportunities. Also what participants may or may not do should be clarified from the start in order to avoid useless debates and frustrations.

  The conference facilitator "opens the space". He or she invites people to participate and presents the method and the principles of

*Owen, Harrison (2008), Open Space Technology. A User's Guide, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

self-organisation while walking around the inner circle and talking to people directly. Within the very general thematic headline of the open space, the participants are asked to "market", i.e., to suggest and advocate topics which are important to them. Their suggestions become topics of the conference if a sufficient number of people are interested in them and feel prepared to organise a working group on the topic. These topics are fixed to a wall or pinboards at the back of the room, together with details of the room where the group will meet, and a rough time structure in line with the general conference time schedule. People note their names under one of the topics suggested. The host/s and the initial participants of each group themselves decide how many people are required to start working and how they will work.

- Step 2: *The group work phase* — *The group work phase*
  Group work is completely self-organised. The hosts are responsible for structuring the work and recording the results, which are published at the central market place where all participants can inform themselves about what has been done in the other groups.

  Here is where the concepts often show flaws as the hosts' capacity to record and display meaningful results is often limited. Offering well organised, i.e., not intrusive assistance in this aspect is one of the keys to success of such conferences.

  After this group phase, all participants meet again in the market place.
- Evening news and morning news — *Evening news and morning news*
  If the conference has a second day, the first day is closed with the evening news and the second day is opened with the morning news in the forum or market place. If there is a convergence phase planned (see below) it would follow now.
- Step 3: *The final meeting* — *The final meeting*
  This takes place in the forum, again with people sitting in circles around the open space. People are asked to provide their views about the conference concerning the thematic work as well as the way they felt during the conference.
  Frequently, this phase is structured by the talking stick ritual. The ritual is characterised by two basic rules:
  - Whoever has the talking stick is the only person allowed to talk (among Native Americans, the talking stick is a nicely adorned wooden stick of varying origin with different attributes; in modern times it may be a microphone, adorned or not).
  - Whoever does not have the stick is expected to listen carefully to the speaker in order to be able to refer to her or him respectfully when talking himself.

Then the open space is closed.

The convergence phase

- The convergence phase
  This phase is optional but is highly recommended if the main purpose of the conference is not just community building but initiating change in the way it has been described during the event. Here, all the group records are actively presented, either on the poster walls or as a handout, and topics or results are grouped and concentrated for further treatment and implementation. Priorities of implementation are discussed and agreed. If necessary and desired, the most important topics are set by the newly formed thematic or implementation groups (who might also briefly come together in parallel meetings in the forum) in order to agree on the first steps of implementation, e.g., when and where to meet to make things agreed come about.

One law and four principles have to be accepted by all participants:

The law of two feet ...

The law of open space

This is the law of 2 feet or the law of mobility (for those who cannot walk). It says that it is up to every single participant to decide whether he or she can contribute constructively to or get value from the group. If not, absence is better than obtrusion or boredom. The law of two feet says, "Don't be negative. Go away, go somewhere else whenever you feel like it. You alone are responsible for where you are and for what you want to contribute".

... and its four principles

The four principles corresponding to this basic law of open space are:

1. Whoever comes are the right people:
   This reminds the participants to accept the people who are there as valid partners; whoever is there is "right" simply because they care to attend.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened:
   This tells the participants to pay attention to what happens here and now, instead of worrying about what could possibly happen
3. Whenever it starts is the right time:
   This reminds the participants of the fact that they alone are responsible for what happens or not in the time and space of the conference and that there is no given schedule or structure which will tell them.
4. When it's over, it's over:
   This, finally, encourages the participants not to waste time, but to move on to something else when the fruitful discussion ends.

Attendees to open space conferences can have four different roles during the event:

- *Hosts* are those people who want to put forward their topic or concern and who are willing to take the responsibility for organising

a group and harvesting meaningful answers and solutions to his or her topic.
- *Participants* are those who constructively want to take part in a subject of a group and contribute to its deliberations.
- *Bumble bees* are those people who move from group to group cross-pollinating, working and learning in several groups.
- *Butterflies* are those who fly in and out, just listen, or sit on the lawn or in the comfortable corner where they may meet other butterflies and open their own spontaneous little group.

The debriefing

The debriefing

This occurs after the conference and is as important as the briefing before the conference. Open space conferences usually mobilise sufficient energies and motivation to keep agreed activities going for several weeks. But the fact that open space is a self-organising conference method cannot override the reality of hierarchically structured organisations. In order to avoid projects imagined and developed during the open space ending in deep frustration, is it very important to consider the conditions of implementation and provide the resources necessary for shaping new realities.

Therefore, it is useful to have a meeting of the open space preparation group right after the open space in order to discuss lessons learned and conditions of implementation. It is also advisable to have another meeting about 4–6 weeks after the event in order to review the process of implementation.

4A.14 Learner satisfaction analysis

Learner satisfaction analysis has the function of providing feedback to facilitators and to those participating in learning and working processes concerning three basic aspects:

- on content and results (functional)
- on methods and processes of learning (methodical)
- on personal or collective feelings and experiences during the process (affective)

Several tools deployed individually or in meaningful combinations can fulfil this purpose.

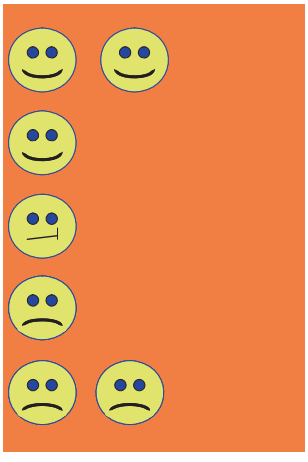
Like all the other tools, such instruments of measurement must be fit for use in a working as well as a learning environment. We are not talking about a thorough evaluation but about more or less spontaneous feedback with varying scopes: individual processes within a

module, a day, a whole module of a day or more, or a whole workshop or learnshop of one or more days. Consequently, the size and application modalities of the following tools may vary considerably, although they all have only one fundamental task, i.e., prompting all participants in a learning and working process to reflect on this process with the aim of improving the next or a similar sequence. They should be easy to handle and not take much time. Usually such a feedback session will not take more than 10–15 min.

Smileys

4A.14.1 Smileys

A scale using smileys allows a very basic form of feedback. Such smileys can be easily prepared by the moderator himself, either by drawing them on small round cards or drawing them directly on a flipchart or pinboard poster. Some possible forms are the following.

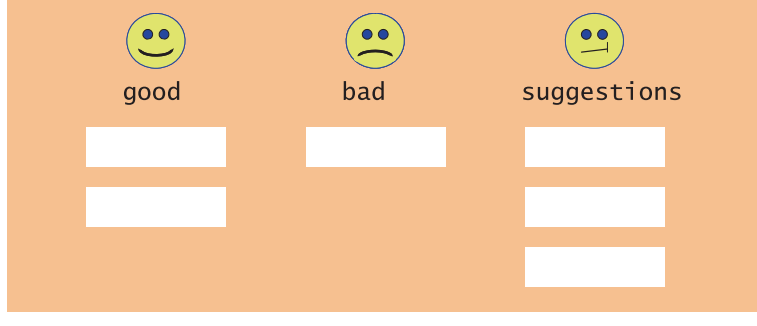


Participants just walk up to the flipchart or moderation board and glue or paint a dot close to the smiley which best expresses what they think and feel.

The latter example could be linked to statements like:

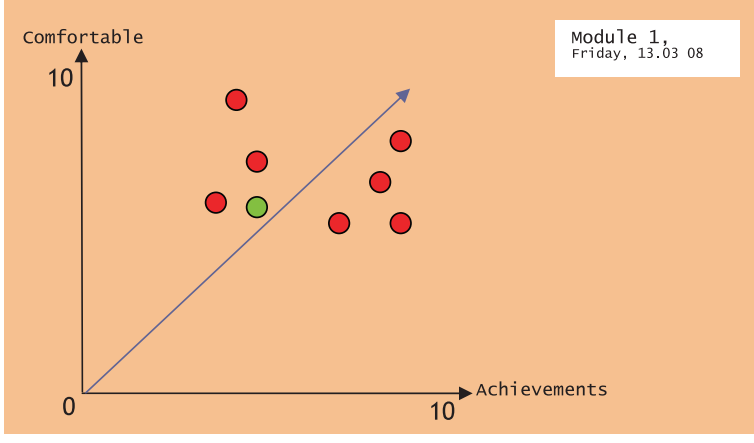
- Today I really liked…
- Today I did not like…
- For tomorrow I would suggest…

The completions of the sentences on cards written by the participants or the moderator should be pinned to the three faces. This may help participants to remember them and take them in account.



Coordinates of satisfaction *Satisfaction chart*

Another visual way of expressing the satisfaction of all participants can be a chart with two basic option coordinates, a cognitive and an affective one, e.g., how comfortable I felt and how much we have achieved and/or learned.



Such a quick self-evaluation may or may not include the moderator/s. In the case of our graph, the lighter dot is from the moderator.

While the participants are marking their values the moderator may leave the room or turn away to avoid embarrassment for those who do not dare to mark a critical statement while the moderator is looking.

Evaluation light *Evaluation light*

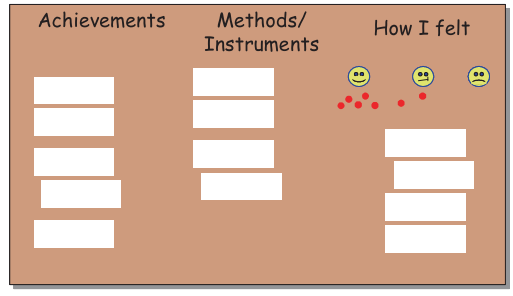
A more complete form of feedback is "evaluation light" where the functional, the methodical and the affective part of the work or learnshop are covered. The moderator divides a flipchart or a moderation board into three sections:

- one deals with the contents and achievements of the workshop
- a second one is reserved for the methods and instruments used during the working and learning process
- the last one asks for an emotional appraisal (how I felt)

For each of the three sections the moderator asks participants to complete the three statements mentioned above, using the smileys if they wish:

- Today I really liked…
- Today I did not like…
- For tomorrow I would suggest…

For a more thorough evaluation, please refer to 4A15: Learnshop evaluation and narrative.



4A.15 Learnshop evaluation annex: learnshop reporting scheme

Learnshops are workshops for learning, or learning events for working. Due to this double determination evaluating them should consider both the learning and working process as well as the learning and working results. Also, the context conditions should be analysed for both parts when briefing for the learnshop and debriefing after the learnshop.

Download the learnshop reporting scheme (Annex to 4A15) from the project's Moodle platform accessible via http://www.smeactor.eu or from the book's website

In view of the above, we have developed a special learnshop reporting scheme. Facilitators and/or organisers of a learnshop are asked:

- to define their workers and learner groups with their respective contexts
- to analyse and evaluate soberly the preparation, the process and the working results against their own established aims in terms of methods used and performance
- to describe their subjective learning experience
- to draw conclusions on the evaluative and on the narrative side
- to integrate both aspects to formulate lessons learned

Target groups and rough context information of workers and learners in the learnshop

SME ACTor **Learnshop reporting scheme**
for fieldbook

Basic framework data

Country		**Region/town**	
2nd tier facilitators		**SME representatives**	
Sector or subsector		**Sector or subsector**	
Target group		**Target group**	
Sector or subsector		**Sector or subsector**	
Target group		**Target group**	
Learnshop 1	fill in data & place	Learnshop 1	fill in data & place
Learnshop 2	fill in data & place	Learnshop 2	fill in data & place
Learnshop 3	fill in data & place	Learnshop 3	fill in data & place
Learnshop 4	fill in data & place	Learnshop 4	fill in data & place
Learnshop 5	fill in data & place	Learnshop 5	fill in data & place
Learnshop 6	fill in data & place	Learnshop 6	fill in data & place
Learnshop 7	fill in data & place	Learnshop 7	fill in data & place
Learnshop 8	fill in data & place	Learnshop 8	fill in data & place
Learnshop 9	fill in data & place	Learnshop 9	fill in data & place
Learnshop 10	fill in data & place	Learnshop 10	fill in data & place

Learnshop 2:	date and place		
Narration		(Self-) Evaluation	
Preparation		Briefing and preparation	
Telling the learnshop experience		Aims in terms of contents	
		Achievements in terms of contents	
		Aims in terms of methods Achievements in terms o f methods	
Personal conclusions		Debriefing	
Lessons learned			

Self-evaluation of moderator/ facilitator in terms of working (achievements) and learning (narration)

The learnshop reporting scheme (see book website) has been developed for the SME ACTor project to conduct its own working and learning evaluation; "working" in terms of drawing experiences from these records for the book to be published, and "learning" in terms of drawing conclusions for improving the methodical and didactical preparation of such learnshops.

Reporting Scheme available at the book website

During the SME ACTor project, an experienced moderator and facilitator usually participated in the first learnshops as a supervisor and monitor, accompanying and observing the process as an external eye. Therefore, for learnshop 1 the reporting scheme notes that a supervisor provides the first evaluation, certainly after an exchange of views with the local moderators and facilitators, while the individual learning experience is narrated by the moderator who has just had his or her first moderating experience.

Learnshop 1:	date and place		
Narration		(Self-) Evaluation	
Preparation		Briefing and preparation	
Telling the learnshop experience		Aims in terms of contents	
		Achievements in terms of contents	
		Aims in terms of methods Achievements in terms o f methods	
Personal conclusions		Debriefing	
Lessons learned			

Learnshop 1: evaluation by supervisor

4A.16 Preparing a meeting as a chairperson

Network facilitation or moderation is a task which may or may not be independent of a hierarchical function. Therefore, preparing a meeting chaired by you requires a number of preparations which may but need not differ from those of a moderator or facilitator. Here we focus on those that may differ.

Cf. 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating

Chairing meetings *(from 4A3)*
The chairperson …
• Is usually a person with a higher position in the organisation than the rest of the group. He or she is responsible for the success of the meeting. Being the chairperson is in line with his or her task in the organisation, not a role
• Is always concerned with the subject of the meeting. He or she values contributions, and backs or discards options
• Concentrates on the subject itself and less on methods and procedures
• Makes sure that his or her intentions and priorities are covered
• Introduces clear and specific objectives of what the meeting is to achieve
• Intervenes personally in the case of conflict and personal attacks, inviting participants to argue strictly about the case

In 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating, we have compared the two very different tasks. The situation assumed for all the tools of this collection is that of moderation. Therefore, at least in one tool, we want to include all the tasks of a chairperson in preparing a meeting. You may have a secretary who will assist in preparing the meeting. Make sure you brief the secretary thoroughly, going through all the relevant items of the meeting.

Cf. Annex to 4A5: The planning of workshops

Basically, for preparing a meeting you can use the same scheduling device as for workshops (cf. Annex to 4A5) because it follows the same planning logic we are applying here.

The difference is that here we include all the items to be considered in one overview.

Objectives and contents

Objectives and contents

You	are responsible for the results of the meeting, for its success
Aim/s	You have to decide before the meeting what decisions or agreements you want to have taken at the end of the meeting. If you want certain decisions to be taken in a certain direction, make sure you have a clear understanding of this direction before the meeting starts. Many things depend on the specific purpose of a meeting
Who	Will be invited, who must be invited? Is the mailing list up to date?
Who else	Will be needed (e.g., experts on some issue dealt with in the meeting)
Who else	Should have the opportunity to make suggestions for a substantive agenda?

Who	Needs to be contacted, briefed, or talked to before the meeting in order to avoid unnecessary conflict or critical situations? Or, if you want to come to a specific decision, who do you need to win for your direction?
What	Will be on the agenda? Is the agenda prepared in time? Is it formulated in a way that invites people to come well prepared?
What else	Will have to be documented or attached (files, photocopies, suggestions, etc.) in order to not lose time during the meeting with long reading intervals
How	Will participants be invited (letter, email, forum, etc.)
How	Will you chair the meeting? What will be your style? Will it be formal or an open moderating style? Do points on the agenda need formal or reflective treatment? Which of them should come first?
When	Are important people on leave or travelling. Must any absences be taken in consideration?
When	Will the meeting take place? The agenda should not only say at what time the meeting will start but also at what time it will finish. You should have an idea of how much time you will need per point on the agenda. What could be postponed without impairing progress? As a rule of thumb, ordinary meetings should not last longer than two hours. If the duration is longer, have you planned breaks?
Where	Shall it take place? What is a good place for the sort of meeting you are planning? Just an ordinary meeting room? Or somewhere out of the ordinary?

Formal checklist for agenda and invitation

Formal checklist for agenda and invitation

Participants	Is the mailing list up to date? Is the mailing list/list of participants on the agenda?
When	Day of the week, date
What time	Starting time, finishing time
Agenda	(at least a provisional) agenda; updating should be possible at the beginning of the meeting
Attachments	Are all relevant materials, documents, etc. attached?

Technical conditions and environment

Technical conditions and environment

Logistics Is the meeting location accessible?

- By car
- By public transport
- Are there parking spaces for all the cars expected?
- Have the reception staff been informed?

Room
- Is the room suitable for what you want or need?
- Has it enough space?
- Is it quiet, if you need tranquility?
- If you need to solve a problem is it close to the problem location? You may have to test things
- Can the room be darkened for projection?
  Are there blinds? If not, might it be too sunny at the time you meet?
- Do you need tables or do you want them to be removed?
- Are there toilets nearby?
- Has it been checked before the meeting?

Technology — What do you need? Have you checked what sort of technical support you need for each item on the agenda? Here is a checklist

- Black-/whiteboard
- Flipchart/s (how many?)
- Laptop
- Projector
- Moderation boards/pinboards
- Moderation kit
- Has everything been checked before the meeting?

Catering — Depending on the length of the meeting, maybe even on the subject, different types of catering are needed.

- Water (not too cold) should always be available!
- If hot drinks are wanted, hot water for tea and (hopefully fresh) coffee should be available.
  Note: coffee is pure poison after ten minutes on a hot surface or in a thermo can.
- Fruits or cookies (low sugar)

Six rules for chairing a meeting

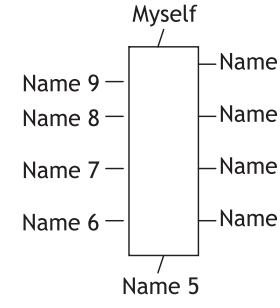
Six rules for chairing a meeting

Chair — OK, you are responsible. But there may be situations or just points on the agenda where you want someone from your staff to chair the meeting. Clarify such issues at the beginning of a meeting. Give people a chance to prepare for it

See 4A1: To-do form

Records or minutes — Who will record the results of the meeting? Appoint a person at the beginning and make clear what sort of recording you want, just results or “minutes”.
Our Tool 4A1: To-do form offers you a very practical way of recording the decisions or agreements taken in a

	meeting and noting who is responsible for transforming them into action
Agenda	The order of the day sent to all participants with the invitation to the meeting is normally a provisional one. Ask all participants whether anything new has to be added. Also clarify whether the order of the agenda is acceptable
Time	If the agenda does not already have time budgets for each point try to fix them at the beginning. If the point was suggested by one of the participants, ask him/her for consent. Make sure you keep the meeting Name 1 within the overall time planned
Participants	Make sure you connect all participants to the meeting. Build rapport. Ask participants for their opinions, address them personally. Use their names. If there is a new participant, take time for a brief presentation of all participants, not only the "newcomer". Start with presenting yourself in exactly the way you want others to present themselves. Note the names if you don't know them or think you might forget them. Record names using the method shown in the graphic. It will make remembering easier



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4B.1 PAL — Personal Action Learning dossier of interview partner and/or future facilitator

Please fill in current number. Automatic transfer to Sections 2 and 3 allows for anonymous evaluation, especially of AL competence by trainer for didactical purposes.

Section 1 — Personal data — Nr. 0

Date

Interviewer

Person interviewed

Name | *First Name*

Agency/company | *Telephone*

Address

Street and number | *Fax*

Postal code | *Town*

E-mail

Principal activities of agency

Function of interviewee

Section 2	The Lab The overall context of the Learning Laboratory (Lab)	Nr. 0

For better understanding!

The Learning Lab that the selected facilitators may contribute to is 'embedded' in a particular socio-economic context. In order to best manage/facilitate the Lab, it may be important to map the participant's degree of consciousness vis-à-vis the overall context.

3.1. The SME context

Have you carried out any kind of activity/job/ project in favour of SMEs (local or not)?	YES ☐ NO ☐
If yes, please provide a short description.	
If yes, what were the main strengths and weaknesses you perceived?	

3.2. The sectoral context

Have you carried out any kind of activity/job/ project in favour of the sector?	YES ☐ NO ☐
If yes, please provide a short description.	
If yes, what were the main strengths and weaknesses you perceived?	

3.3. The 'stakeholder' context

Please identify the main stakeholders or intermediate organisations, both for the selected sector and the SME context.	
Have you carried out any kind of activity/job/ project with or for them?	YES ☐ NO ☐
If yes, please provide a short description.	

Will the interview partner him/herself participate in the facilitator training?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If YES, please go to Section 3 after the next question.

If NO, the interview can stop after the next question.

Does the interview partner recommend somebody else for the facilitator training?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If YES, whom?

Name

Function

Section 3 — Competence in action research and learning methodology

Self-evaluation **Nr. 0**

For better understanding!

General questions asking for acquaintance with action methodology may not lead to positive results. Nevertheless, asking for individual chunks of theory, methods and tools may well lead to positive responses as action research and action learning cannot be understood as hermetically closed concepts. Many of the methods and tools enumerated below may be known without understanding that they are rooted in action methodology. Equally, tools and methods may fit into a methodological approach of action theory without being part of its original repertoire of methods and tools. Any instrument in tune with the participative, qualifying and self-organising intentions of action learning may be used. Logically, this means that none of the following lists can be exhaustive; therefore you will find an open category at the end of each list.

2.1 Theoretical foundations How well do you know each of the following concepts?	**Don't know** 0	**Heard of** 1	**Known** 2	**Practised** 3	**Expert** 4
Action research (Lewin/Argyris/Raelin)					
Action science (Argyris/Schön)					
Action learning (Revans, Freire, Senge)					
Experiential learning (Kolb)					
Systems theory (Luhmann, Parsons)					
Constructivism (Förster/Glaserfeld/Watzlawick)					
Communities of practice (Lave/Wenger)					
Organisational learning (Senge/Argyris/Schön)					
Others (please specify)					

2.2 Methods, tools, instruments How well do you know each of the following concepts?	**Don't know** 0	**Heard of** 1	**Known** 2	**Practised** 3	**Expert** 4
Moderation and visualisation					
SWOT analysis					
SMART					
ZOPP (Targeted Project Planning)					
Creative techniques (brainstorming, mind mapping, etc.)					
Stakeholder analysis					
Open Space					
World Café					
Appreciative Inquiry					
Case studies					
Field book writing					
Participative observation					
Observative participation					

Focus groups					
To-do minutes					
Ishikawa/fishbone diagram					
Others (please specify)					

2.3 English	**Next to zero**	**Basic**	**Will do**	**Good**	**Excel-lent**
As part of the training may be in English or based on documents/materials available only in English we need to know how you would classify your English ability.	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
2.3.a. spoken					
2.3.b. reading					

The whole questionnaire can be downloaded from the book's homepage.

4B.2 Semi-standardised in-depth interviews

Semi-standardised in-depth interviews with relevant representatives of companies, regional networks or clusters, i.e., with experts, are an important qualitative method of collecting data for people who in some way or other are responsible for a co-operation context. They are a systematic, methodical and reliable way of obtaining relevant information from experts on the economic and social tissue constituting a network or any other co-operation context. Their relatively open, adjustable and dialogue-based form permits a large number of applications.

Cf. 4B3: Case studies - methodical guidelines of context analysis

Such interviews may be part of a case study (cf. 4B3) on the respective regional or sector context. They can equally take the form of probing stand-alone research into the complexity of such an economic context. However, if solidly analysed, even a small series of them will quickly provide you with a valuable fund of information and assessments from experts related to your co-operation context. The accumulation of such interviews will eventually provide you with an exceptional overview and make you an expert in your own right since hardly anybody else will have collected the same sort of information and knowledge.

Such interviews are not only useful when you start working in a new network management job or as a facilitator in a new context. Conducting such interviews will notably improve your capacity for extracting meaningful information from ordinary conversations with relevant people, particularly because the interviews develop your capacity for active listening and cross-checking (triangulation) information from different sources. Both capacities are as important for managers as they are for facilitators.

Who is an expert?

Experts

These are all the people who in your personal view or in the view of other relevant actors are able to provide you with useful and meaningful answers and impressions to questions and uncertainties you have concerning facts and trends of your field of responsibility.

What are in-depth interviews?

In-depth interviews

These are a qualitative method of posing probing questions in order to obtain oral information on issues of interest to a larger community, be it a network, an association, a company or an institution with reference to a defined market or clientele, or the scientific community.

What does semi-structured mean?

Semi-structured interviews

When conducting such interviews, a questionnaire, an interview guide or simply a catalogue of questions is used. In these, some questions are

open but others are closed, maybe even requiring quantifying or scaled answers (see 4B1).

Main characteristics of in-depth interviews:

Characteristics

- *Open-ended questions*, i.e., questions starting with interrogative pronouns - what, who, how, why, where, when - instead of questions which only can be answered with yes or no. These will make sure that your interview partner will explain in more detail and the role of the interviewer as an active listener is underlined.

Open-ended questions

- *The semi-structured format* will guarantee that you have a stable basic battery of questions which will be posed in each interview. If possible, questions should also be asked in the same order during the interview. If the respondent deviates too far from the topic, then carefully return him or her to the topic at hand.
  But even if you do not insist in asking your questions in a specific order, just following the natural flow of conversation, the interview guide will reassure you and serve as a checklist safeguarding that you touch on all relevant issues.
  As we are dealing with expert interviews here, most interview partners will accept that you will want a quantified or scaled answer to a few relevant statements (see example 4B1).

The semi-structured format

- The interviews are *basically conversational*; the interviewer's role is primarily the role of a listener. Nevertheless, in an expert interview, experts interviewed by an expert, yourself, will ask back: What do you mean by this question? What is the idea behind this question? So make sure you have clear intentions and be prepared to make hypothetical statements on the background of your question.
  It is highly recommended that you send your interview guide to the respondent about a week in advance. Also experts do not know everything by heart; they might want to prepare themselves in order to provide reliable data and information as well as sound assessments. A well conceived interview guide also serves as proof of your own expertise. Posing meaningful questions is not easy. The letter or email to which the interview guide is attached should explain in some detail the aim and purpose of the interview and expose a question or hypothesis guiding the whole survey context, even if it is the same text as in the interview guide (see 4B1).

Conversational interview

- *Responses are recorded*. This is done at least with written notes, but in research it is usually also done with audiotape or even video. If no technical recording is wanted or possible (ask in advance), make sure you have a second person with you for co-recording. Then you can contrast and complement your recordings later. Recording should also include spontaneous reactions (non-verbal behaviour like laughs, heavy nodding, etc.).

Responses are recorded

Record your own reflections, too

- It is highly recommended that you also *record your own reflections* on the interview as soon as possible afterwards.

Hence, the interview guide or semi-standardised questionnaire should have three sections:

- The face sheet containing all standard information on the background and rationale of the interview (why you do it), on yourself, i.e., presenting yourself very briefly, and on your interview partner (name, organisation, function, etc.)
- The actual questions, possibly also statements to be scaled, and their possible follow-ups
- The final part for notes after the interview, providing you with a space for detailing interpretations, your feelings, and other comments.

4B.3 Case studies – methodological guidelines of context analysis

Case studies constitute a research strategy, an empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research can mean single- and multiple case studies; it may include quantitative evidence and it always relies on multiple evidence sources benefiting from prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin 2002). Rather than using large samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event - a case. They provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information, and reporting results. As a result, the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might need more extensive examination in future research. Case studies lend themselves to both generating and testing hypotheses (Flyvbjerg 2006).

In the framework of a networking programme fuelled by the Action Learning approach, a case study supports the facilitator as well as the community as a whole, providing a better understanding of the overall context in which the networking path will take place. Data collected and analysed in such a case study constitute an empirical foundation for designing the strategy and the operative planning. In this case, the facilitator acts as an expert consultant for the institution or organisation promoting the co-operation or networking path.

See 2M13: Basic concepts of SMEs and 2M14: Basic concepts of networks and clusters

In fact, especially in the framework of local policies supporting the networking process of SMEs, the territorial actor (the administrator, the Chamber of Commerce, or the Development Agency, etc.) is often the one who acts as a “sponsor”, that is, as the promoter of the cooperation path. In these cases the facilitator may be required to act not only

as a mediator, but also and above all, as a process manager able to supply strategic and operational orientation for an effective launching of the networking process framed by competition and co-operation (co-opetition).

In a territorial context, when experimenting for the first time with a planned support action to SME networking through the Action Learning approach, the "sponsor" organisation is required to answer a series of key-questions in order to design and launch an effective networking process, namely:

- Which sectors or groups of enterprises constitute the target group for a networking project? How should these enterprises be approached?
- What guiding idea should be the leitmotiv of the growing network's aggregation process or the declared aim of the network?
- Which other stakeholders can sustain such a networking process and what roles could they play? What lessons could be learned from other ongoing or accomplished networking processes?
- How can the competencies of the local professionals be best taken advantage of in order to ensure the availability of a committed group of facilitators with adequate skills?

The case study as context analysis

In this case, the "case study" is structured as a context analysis that can better situate the networking path to be launched or supported in its overall context and, on this basis, to better tailor strategies and operative planning. In such a context analysis the main areas of empirical research could be:

1. *The overall socio-economic characteristics:*
   e.g., basic data on productive settings (sectors, total companies, entrepreneurship dynamics, average size, etc.); basic labour market; main economic performance data; openness to market; quality of life; local governance.
2. *Local actors:*
   e.g., public, semi-public and private organisations acting as catalysers or promoters of the SME aggregation or co-opetition process. The mapping of relevant local actors helps to identify and prioritise stakeholders to be involved, or with whom a vanguard will be set up.
3. *Overall programmes/projects supporting the SME aggregation and co-opetition process:*
   Mapping and analysing such programme or project resources helps in understanding the local overall policy attitude towards the co-operation paths of SMEs and what are, if any, the key characteristics of the already launched and planned programmes and projects supporting SMEs and SME co-operation paths.

For public, semi-public and private organisations, see 2M14: Basic concepts of networks and clusters

4. *Pre-selected SME context:*
   Such a dossier helps in gaining a better understanding of the immediate target group of the Action Learning and networking process chosen to be promoted and sustained. It supports the analysis of opportunities for and barriers to co-operation, possibly residing in competition, such as sectoral features; co-operative path attitudes, and learning dynamics.
5. *Facilitators:*
   This information provides data useful for the identification of possible typologies of facilitators to be involved (professionals/managers, trainers, etc.), the pre-selection of a possible facilitators' team and the mapping of their overall competencies.
6. *Local competencies in Action Learning methods:*
   The same type of questionnaire serves to map local relevant centres of know-how, detailing their expertise in action methods. It helps in optimising the available competence set to be activated. In principle, major centres of know-how should involve training organisations, service centres, universities and R&D centres.

For mapping facilitator competencies: see 4B1: Participant questionnaire

Such a context analysis should always be handled in a rather flexible way. It should be customized according to specific requirements, for example, it could focus on item 4 in cases where the sponsor organisation has already identified the target enterprises and where it already has a network of sensitised key stakeholders with whom it has set up other paths of co-operation. Most of all, it could focus on items 5 and 6, in which the most important requirement is warranting a qualified offer worked out by the facilitators.

Cf. 4B2: Semi-standardised in-depth interviews

Cf. 4B4: Focus groups

Cf. 4D2: Stakeholder analysis

Cf. 4A10: Brainstorming

Cf. 4D5: Skill needs analysis and planning

Along with desk activities for item 1, several of the tools provided in this book can be used for carrying out the context analysis. These include semi-structured interviews with experts and/or focus groups for items 2, 3, 4, a stakeholder analysis accomplished through a brainstorming with the sponsor organisation for item 2, or skill needs analysis for item 5.

Go to the book's homepage

A template for a full context analysis is provided as a download file on the book's homepage.

4B.4 Focus groups

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of selected persons with a specific expertise related to the research topic are asked, according to a pre-defined set of questions, about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting in which participants are free to talk with other group members. The aim of the focus group is to identify and

analyse research findings, perceptions, feelings, opportunities or shortcomings. Its purpose is not to develop a consensus, to arrive at an agreeable plan or to take decisions concerning the course of action.

Basic premises of organising a focus group

While preparing a focus group some basic premises should be taken into account:

- Group size: from 4 to maximum 12 participants (ideal: 5-7)
- Group composition: is it representative for the topic to be covered?
- Number of questions: about a dozen (depending on the length of the meeting)
- Duration: 1.5 to no more than 3 h

The focus group process includes the following four stages:

1. Planning
2. Moderation
3. Evaluation
4. Reporting

Stage 1: Planning

1. Planning

The overall planning of the focus group should follow the recommendations given in this book for planning workshops or learnshops, although there are a few specific conditions to be met. The meeting should be determined by the answers to the following questions:

Cf. 4A5: The planning of workshops and 4A6: Learnshop or learning laboratory

- What is the aim? Why and to which end should the focus group be carried out? What is the overall guiding question?
- What questions do you want to ask?
- What kinds of information are relevant for you, might be produced, or do you want to gather?
- How will this information be used?
- Who, apart from yourself, wants this information?
- Who needs to participate?
- How can participants be localised?
- What are appropriate incentives? (Why should the invited persons come?)
- Where is the best place to hold the focus group?

Location and equipment

Cf. 4A4: The setting of workshops

As for an ordinary workshop or learnshop, location and equipment are essential. You need:

- a neutral room, free of visual and/or audible distractions
- comfortable chairs arranged in a circle, with or without tables
- sound recording devices (essential for a focus group)
- a flip chart

Questions

The set of pre-defined questions must frame the five phases of the meeting - opening, introduction, transition, key and ending:

Opening
First question or request:
Who are you? Why are you here?
Everybody in the group answers, presenting him or herself (round robin, about one minute each), e.g., name, organisation, position, years of experience in a particular field of activity, etc.
Participants are offered the opportunity of identifying characteristics they have in common

Introduction
Introductory questions open the general discussion topic in order to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on past experiences and connect with the topic.
The subsequent question is intended to foster conversation and interaction among participants,
e.g., "What has been your most important/recent relation to SME networking processes?"

Transition
Transition questions move the conversation to the key questions that drive the analysis, serving as a logical link between introductory and key questions. Participants acquire awareness of how others view the topic

Key
Key questions drive the analysis and the focusing. There should be no more than five questions.
This is the phase of utmost concentration where moderators are required to intervene as little as possible and only with great care

Ending
Ending questions bring about closure and enable participants to reflect on their previous responses/interactions. This part can take three forms:

(a) All things considered
Questions concerning the final position on key areas of the main topic. These questions allow participants to clarify points of view, and identify the most important areas or aspects, e.g., for action

(b) Summary questions
The moderator delivers a short oral summary (2-3 min) of the key questions and main ideas that emerged from the discussion, after which participants are asked: "Is this an adequate summary? What would you like to add? How would you modify it?"

(c) Final question
"Have we missed anything?"

(d) The answers received can inform subsequent focus groups

2. Moderation

Stage 2: Moderating

- *The moderator*
  For a focus group, the moderator must be an expert on the topic, at least to the extent that he or she is able to understand the implications of certain contributions or positions for the given context. Important: the moderator does not take part in the debate; his or her task consists of conducting the group by asking questions.
  If it is possible to visualise the debate, do it. It will help to structure the debate and provide a basic structure for the closing summary. Mind maps usually allow mapping even of very complicated debates if you are an expert of the topic.

Cf. 2M3: Visualisation – why and how it helps to understand and remember
Cf. 4D1: Mind mapping

- *An assistant may be necessary*
  Records and notes are fundamental in the focus group; therefore, an assistant for the moderator may be essential. The assistant is in charge of taking notes (especially of nice quotes, non-verbal activity, seating arrangements) and monitoring the recording. Normally, he or she sits outside the circle in an observing position and does not participate in the discussion.
- *The beginning*
  After the welcome, the moderator and host presents an overview of the topic and introduces the basic rules of debate by writing them on the flip chart.
- *Managing*
  Time keeping is essential: the maximum timing for each category of questions should be included in the schedule. Give licence to express differing points of view; respond (verbally or otherwise) to participants' comments through non-assuming statements (e.g., OK, yes); put shy participants at ease by giving them opportunities to talk.
- *Closing*
  A successful closing depends on a competent summary of the debate.
  Check recording (if unsuccessful, try to recover as much as possible from notes and memory before leaving the location); prepare a brief written summary of the key points.

3. Evaluation

Stage 3: Evaluation

- *The evaluative analysis must be verifiable, focused and practical. It should underline:*
  (a) What is known: confirmed or challenged by the focus group?
  (b) What is assumed: confirmed or challenged by the focus group?
  (c) What is new and was not assumed?
- *The evaluation should take into account alternative interpretations.*

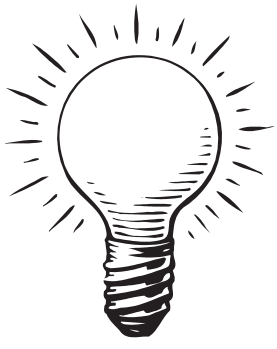
- *Things to consider when analysing.*
  Among others: the actual words used by participants and the meanings behind them; internal consistency (shifts of opinion); frequency and/or extensiveness of concepts (how many participants use them how frequently); intensity of comments (tone of voice, stronger feelings, quiet talkers speak loud, fast ones slow, slow ones fast); specificity of responses; main ideas.

Stage 4: Reporting

4. Reporting

- *Evaluation aims:*
  The report communicates results; gives the logical description of the discussion process; fixes historic record (especially where new aspects arise); examines whether the aims of the focus group have been achieved.
- *Key contents:*
  Statement of the problem; results/findings; summary of themes; limitations and alternative interpretations/explanations; recommendations.

4B.5 Yellow pages



We all know the Yellow Pages. Throughout the world they are usually the yellow part of our telephone directories, and they provide us with the addresses and phone numbers of experts of some sort – dentists and doctors, printers and plumbers, print shops and pet shops, etc.

Organising Yellow Pages of experts who are willing to offer their knowledge and experience to colleagues from co-operation partners, can be a very useful support for a network within a large company or across companies. Often a simple call and few minutes of talking with a colleague might give you the decisive hint to a problem. You may remember the person from some meeting where she presented a good practice or solution to a problem. Or perhaps you just talked to him in the break of a meeting where he mentioned he had an interesting solution to a problem that was not troubling you at the time.

YELLOW PAGES				Last updated: 01.09.2008
Logo	**Firm/Organisation**	**Photo**	**Name/Tel./email**	**Expertise offered**
	TU Dortmund sfs Dortmund		Dr. Hans-Werner Franz Evinger Platz 17 D-44339 Dortmund +49.231.8596.236 franz@sfs.dortmund.de	- Training: facilitating, communciation, lateral leadership - Consultancy: organisation development, Total Quality, learning organisation - Management: network organisations, market-driven research
				-
				-
				-

Of course, the expert directory does not need to have exactly the same structure as the example graph. Think of the information you need. Use a format which makes it easy to obtain a quick overview. Deposit the information in a location to which all possible users can gain quick access, perhaps in your intranet, on an internet platform, or using whatever resources for structured communication you have.

4C Planning and managing projects

4C.1 SMART
Five basic rules for planning a feasible project

SMART describes objectives and stands for

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Timely

SMART was originally a tool used in a Management by Objectives framework within enterprises. Its intention is making sure that people only make promises they can keep.

Projects are the pursuit of defined objectives in a defined time span with defined resources. Everything in projects depends on realistic planning of objectives and milestones, so SMART can be interpreted as the five basic rules for planning a feasible project. Projects which are not well defined in these terms may more easily be turned down in a priori evaluations, e.g., expert panels deciding on grants.

In a wider context, SMART can constitute the five basic rules of effective and efficient communication on co-operation, i.e., of planning collaboration in a context marked by a division of labour, something like the five commandments behind Tool 4A1 (To-do form).

Cf. Tool 4A1: To-do form

Specific

This means that the purposes and aims of a project should be well defined in their delimitation of what is and is not to be achieved and

done. Specific, as the opposite of general, means precise. A project whose main target cannot be formulated in one brief sentence or question is not well conceived.

Measurable

This means that objectives, and milestones on the way to achieving them, should be measurable in terms of quantity, distance, and frequency. Only a project providing such data will be well defined in terms of:

- how to plan actions and procedures
- how to design a sequence of milestones and deliverables leading to the final product/s or result/s
- how to monitor, measure, and record performance

If you cannot provide quantified achievement measures it is highly probable that the project's objectives are not precise and still too unspecific.

Attainable

(Sometimes also called "'achievable'"). This means that project objectives should be realistic, taking account of context conditions, and the resources and time available. Ambitious aims are welcome, but unrealistic planning will reduce your and your team's motivation very quickly. Therefore, project aims should be well founded and reasoned, and if possible should be based on analytical evidence.

Relevant

Cf. Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)

This means that the achievements and problem solutions announced by the project need to be well explained and reasoned regarding their importance and value to defined stakeholders in the project context, i.e., at least, in the view of the perceived objectives of those who are expected to provide resources for carrying through the project, be it management, a programme, a government department or whoever. However, other relevant stakeholders' views and interests should also be observed, bearing in mind that they are not necessarily congruent.

Obviously, the team or consortium implementing the project is also an important stakeholder. A project should consider the specific outcome expectations and input potentials concerning each consortium partner or team member. In terms of co-ordination or leadership for individual work packages as well as in terms of valorisation of the products and outcomes, the project structure should mirror these strengths and weaknesses.

Timely
This means, by definition, that any project is marked by a beginning and an end. The same applies to any sub-process within a project.

Any usable and performable objective must have a clear timeframe for when it should start and/or when it should end. If no timeframe is specified, it is practically impossible to say whether the objective/s and milestones have been met or not. Hence, scheduling a project in terms of time is a necessary correlate to fixing attainable measurements to specific aims.

4C.2 Countdown planning

Countdown planning enables rapid planning of projects or events. Basically it is a mind-mapping exercise with a time arrow as the central structuring device.

It frequently happens that spontaneous ideas come up in a meeting or gathering of people when planning some sort of anniversary event, a publication, an important meeting, certain projects, and so on. Usually, people then start planning what to do next. Then a time-consuming discussion usually follows on what else has to be taken in consideration.

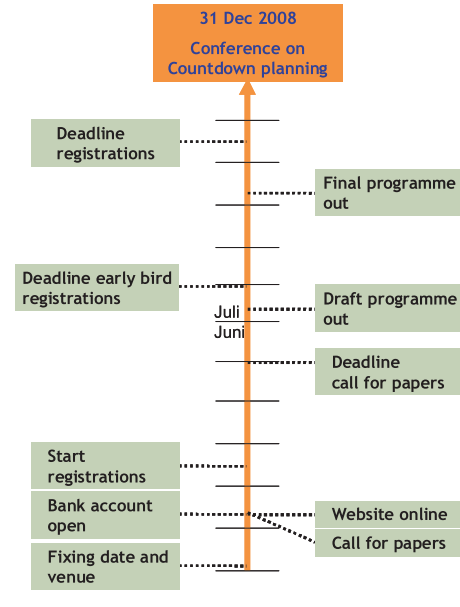
Assuming that the fundamental questions of who is the target group and whose need is to be satisfied are more or less clear, in order to render such an initial planning approach more effective and motivating, it is extremely helpful to structure the process using the following simple devices based on a diagram drawn on a display.

- The first is to start with the end. Fixing the end of a process, its result, and its product and date immediately structures the whole way of thinking.
- The second is to draw an arrow with a rough time structure adapted to the planning time you need.
- The third is to go back in time from the end to the present.

Furthermore, it may be helpful to collect different aspects of the process on each side of the arrow. In the example graph, the left side is for organisational issues, the right side for the content development.

This is similar to the situation when designing a machine. An engineer starting from the clearly

End-of-year conference planning



defined needs of potential customers will design a different machine compared to an engineer thinking how to realise the technically possible.

4C.3 STEPP – Specific Tool for Excel-based Project Planning

STEPP is an Excel-based project-planning tool specifically designed for the detailed preparation and planning of EU projects, mainly those carried out under the Framework Programmes. It reproduces the specific requirements of such projects as a matrix structure. It allows planning of work packages and tasks in work packages, with exact allocation of the required working time resources per partner.

Example from an EU project (extract)

	Partners		SFS	IBK	AMMMa	CM	SFEU	ECIPA		
	Status		CC	PC	PC	PC	PC	PC		
	Member state		DE	DE	DE	ES	UK	IT		
Work	Cost model		AC	FC	FF	FF	FF	FF		
package	Partner	Respon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	
WP 0	**Project & Exploitation Management**	**1**	**6**	**2**					**8,00**	6,9%
0.1	Overall project management	1	6						6,00	
0.2	Exploitation management	2		2					2,00	
WP 1	**Building the OLIVETO learning community of performance**	**1**	**1,75**	**0,75**	**0,75**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**6,25**	5,4%
1.1	Self-training of project team	1	0,75	0,25	0,25	0,5	0,5	0,5	2,75	
1.2	Reading, writing, preparing glossary or FAQ catalogue	1	0,5	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,25	1,75	
1.3	Start-off workshop for consent building on contents and procedures	1	0,5	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,25	1,75	
WP 2	**Needs analysis and review of existing products**	**1**	**1,55**	**0,75**	**1**	**0,8**	**1,2**	**0,8**	**6,10**	5,3%
2.1	Specification of organisational needs of total quality management (EFQM)	1	0,75			0,5	0,5	0,5	2,25	
2.2	Specification of training needs concerning the use of web-based training design	1	0,3			0,2	0,2	0,2	0,90	
2.3	Specification of adaptation needs of existing tools and training modules	5	0,25	0,25	0,25	0,1	0,5	0,1	1,45	
2.4	Specification of the requirements at the software level and for process coaching	3	0,25	0,5	0,75				1,50	
WP 3	**Content Adaptation & Development Phase**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**0,75**	**0,75**	**1**	**6,50**	5,6%
3.1	Adaptation of IQM to updated quality models (EFQM and ISO 9004)	1	1						1,00	
3.2	Adaptation of the existing C::Web tool to specific project context	3	0,2		0,2				0,40	
3.3	Adaptation of the existing GOA WorkBench tool to specific project context conditions	2	0,5	0,4					0,90	
3.4	Necessary adaptations of both software tools for their combined use	3	0,3	0,3	0,5				1,10	
3.5	Localisation of Knowledge Bases etc. to all partner languages	6		0,3	0,3	0,75	0,75	1	3,10	

Example of a cost summary from an EU project

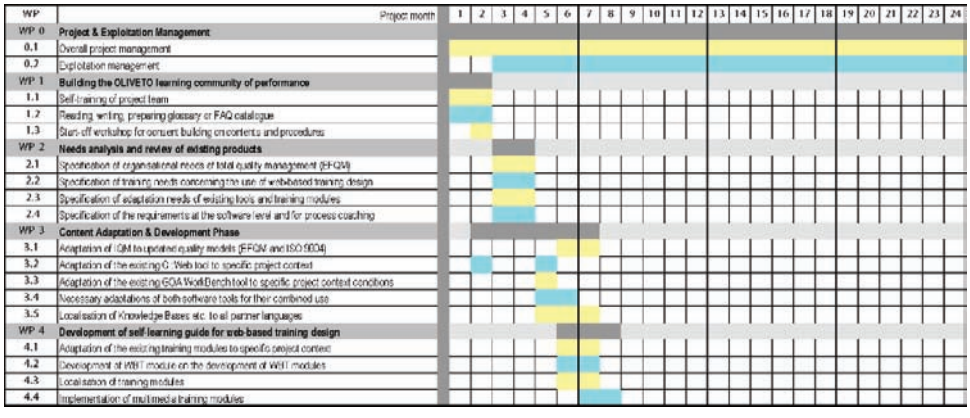
A routine at the bottom of the matrix sums up all time resources and converts them into salary costs needed for the project. Further entries of expenses in this part will produce a full picture of project costs.

Person/Months	28,60	18,80	17,90	15,85	17,00	17,00	115,15	100,0%
Person/Years	2,38	1,57	1,49	1,32	1,42	1,42	9,60	
	SFS	IBK	AMMMa	CM	SFEU	ECIPA		
Labour (EUR)/MM	6.800	12.000	6.000	7.800	6.900	6.000		
Overhead (EUR)/MM	1.360		4.800	6.240	5.520	4.800		
Total Overheads (EUR)	38.896		85.920	98.904	93.840	81.600	399.160	
Labour	194.480	225.600	107.400	123.630	117.300	102.000	870.410	
Equipment	2.000	3.000	3.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	14.000	
Consumables	4.000	3.000	3.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	22.000	
Travelling	14.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000	54.000	
Computing	2.000	6.000	6.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	20.000	
Services	15.000	5.000	5.000	6.000	6.000	6.000	43.000	
Sub-Total	231.480	250.600	132.400	145.630	139.300	124.000	1.023.410	
Other Costs	5.000	4.000	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500	19.000	
IPR Protection	2.500	2.500	2.500				7.500	
Overheads	38.896		85.920	98.904	93.840	81.600	399.160	
Total Cost	277.876	257.100	223.320	247.034	235.640	208.100	1.449.070	
EU Funding	277.876	128.550	111.660	123.517	117.820	104.050	863.473	
EU Funding %	100,00%	50,00%	50,00%	50,00%	50,00%	50,00%	59,59%	

These cost totals are automatically transferred into a separate sheet (Sheet 3) with an overall cost matrix in tune with the requirements of the European Commission.

All work package lines from the work schedule and time planning matrix are automatically copied into the second sheet used for producing a Gantt diagram - a working time schedule of the complete project.

Example of a Gantt diagram from an EU project (extract)



WP	Project month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WP 0	**Project & Exploitation Management**																								
0.1	Overall project management																								
0.2	Exploitation management																								
WP 1	**Building the OLIVETO learning community of performance**																								
1.1	Self-training of project team																								
1.2	Reading, writing, preparing glossary or FAQ catalogue																								
1.3	Start-off workshop for consent building on contents and procedures																								
WP 2	**Needs analysis and review of existing products**																								
2.1	Specification of organisational needs of total quality management (EFQM)																								
2.2	Specification of training needs concerning the use of web-based training design																								
2.3	Specification of adaptation needs of existing tools and training modules																								
2.4	Specification of the requirements at the software level and for process coaching																								
WP 3	**Content Adaptation & Development Phase**																								
3.1	Adaptation of IQM to updated quality models (EFQM and ISO 9004)																								
3.2	Adaptation of the existing G-Web tool to specific project context																								
3.3	Adaptation of the existing GOA WebBench tool to specific project context conditions																								
3.4	Necessary adaptations of both software tools for their combined use																								
3.5	Localisation of Knowledge Bases etc. to all partner languages																								
WP 4	**Development of self-learning guide for web-based training design**																								
4.1	Adaptation of the existing training modules to specific project context																								
4.2	Development of WBT module on the development of WBT modules																								
4.3	Localisation of training modules																								
4.4	Implementation of multimedial training modules																								

The STEPP Excel file can be downloaded from the book's website. Its individual sheets are protected without a specific password.

4C.4 GOPP – Goal-oriented Project Planning

Go to http://www.gtz.de/en/

The GOPP approach is used and promoted by the German Society for Technical Co-operation (GTZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit). The approach provides a systematic structure for identification, planning, and management of projects developed in a workshop setting, with the participation of the principal interest groups. The GOPP output is a planning matrix – the logical project framework – which summarises and structures the main elements of a project and highlights logical linkages between intended inputs, planned activities and expected results. The GOPP approach is used for practically all German funded projects in what formerly were usually called development aid projects, and is a prerequisite for funding approval.

The GOPP approach was initially called the "'Logical Framework Approach (LFA)'" when developed for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in the 1960s. It continued to be developed by various UN agencies, but the GTZ has strongly embraced the approach and developed it into a practical systematic tool. USAID has largely abandoned the use of its own tool kit, allegedly due to its complexity and inflexibility.

GOPP enjoys widespread use by larger donor organizations, partially because of the orderly structuring and documentation of information as

well as its demand for more skill in application. GOPP includes various subparts used for clarifying projects, and the logical project framework itself is often required by agencies in their project appraisal. The British Overseas Development Agency (ODA- now DFID) requires the "'Log Frame'" in research project proposals. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee is promoting its use among member countries, and the Nordic countries and Canada make use of it in development aid programmes and occasionally in domestic public investment. It is mandatory for DANIDA – the Danish aid agency – projects. Use at the community level is also noted but may be the exception.

GTZ recommends the GOPP methodology for all stages of project preparation and implementation. Experience indicates five logical levels of the GOPP method in a standard project cycle:

English, French and German versions of GOPP can be found in the SME ACTor web resource or ordered/downloaded at http://www.gtz.de/en/publikationen/7103.htm

- Pre-GOPP: an in-house exercise by agencies in preparation for a project.
- Appraisal GOPP: an in-house appraisal for preparing Terms of Reference of a project.
- Partner GOPP: prepared in the respective country; coordination of conclusions and recommendations with staff of project country.
- Take-off GOPP: prepared in the respective country; preparation of the plan of operations with personnel responsible for project execution in the local country authorities.
- Replanning GOPP: prepared in the respective country; adjustments during project implementation.

Other GOPPs are recommended annually in projects to update planning as needed. Although the GTZ outlines an elaborate systemisation of the approach, the approach is viable for community-based planning without the need for elaborate structuring of levels. Indeed, the Take-off GOPP and the Replanning GOPP are essentially community-based and participatory.

GOPP workshops last from 1 day to 2 weeks, with a typical session lasting 1 week.

Cf. SME ACTor Tool 4A4 on the Setting of Workshops

It is customary in some GOPPs to sequester the participants in remote locations to enforce unhindered focus on the activities. To mitigate participant dissatisfaction, the locations are invariably selected for their desirable features, and venues in distant resorts are not uncommon.

Participants are selected to represent all interest groups, including project technical staff as well as high-level authorities and community leaders. A basic premise is that the main interest groups must be represented from all levels, particularly top government officials.

A GOPP requires a moderator with a high degree of experience and skill. The GTZ often brings a highly trained and paid external consultant to moderate their GOPPs. To achieve moderator status a special course must be completed.

Cf. SME ACTor 2Messages 11 and 2M12 on Moderation and Visualisation

An elaborate custom-built toolkit is provided to GOPPs with markers, pins, glue-sticks, and paper strips with varied coloured shapes and sizes. A smaller "'refill'" kit is available when materials are exhausted in subsequent workshops. A typical session is led by a moderator with participants sitting facing large sheets of paper fixed on panels, walls, etc. As participants go through the exercises, the results are affixed to the sheets with pins to allow adjustment, and are glued permanently at the end of each day. This information is typed up at the end of each day and becomes part of the workshop record.

The GOPP has two phases: analysis and project planning. The analysis phase has 4 four sub-steps, with the identification of "'real'" problems as the driver for the exercises.

- Participation analysis: an overview of persons, groups, and organisations connected to a project, and also their interests, motives, attitudes, and implications of these factors for project planning. This is done in a chart form.
- Problems analysis: major problems are grouped into a problem tree with cause and effect and identification of the core problem. The problems are noted on cards - one to a card - and organised by smaller groups.
- Objectives analysis: a restatement of the problems into realistically achievable goals; this is often done by rewriting the problems into outcomes, often by reversing the cards.
- Alternatives analysis: identification of objectives and assessment of alternatives according to resources, probability of achieving objectives, political feasibility, cost–-benefit ratio, social risks, time horizon, sustainability, and other factors as decided by the group. Prepared on charts.

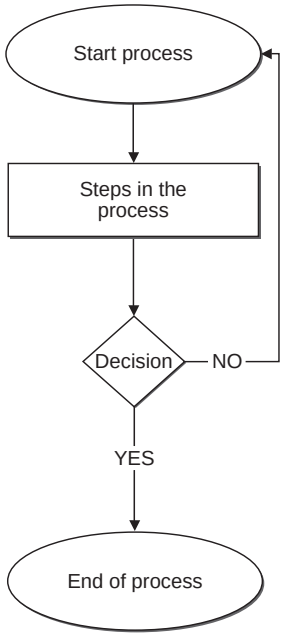
The outcome of the project planning phase is the Project Planning Matrix (PPM), sometimes called the project planning framework. The PPM is a one-page summary of why the project is carried out, what the project is expected to achieve, how the project is going to achieve these results, what factors are crucial for the success of the project, how success can be measured, where data are required to assess project success, and what the project will cost. All of this information is combined in a 4 × 4 matrix.

The GOPP method has been noted for its rigidity and rigor, and the need for all participants to actively take part in order for it to succeed. Overly directive moderators and disinterested local partners are some of the reasons why GOPP has sometimes failed to achieve its full potential.

Replacement

(*Text taken from the GTZ website and re-edited by HWF*)

4C.5 Flow chart



A flow chart is a tool which graphically represents the steps of a process from the beginning to its end. It can be used for analytical as well as planning purposes. An advanced form of a flow chart including the planning of time resources, is a PERT, a Programme Evaluation and Review Technique.

Three basic symbols (e.g., shown in PowerPoint slides or on cards when represented on a moderation board) are needed to represent a whole process with its fundamental steps:

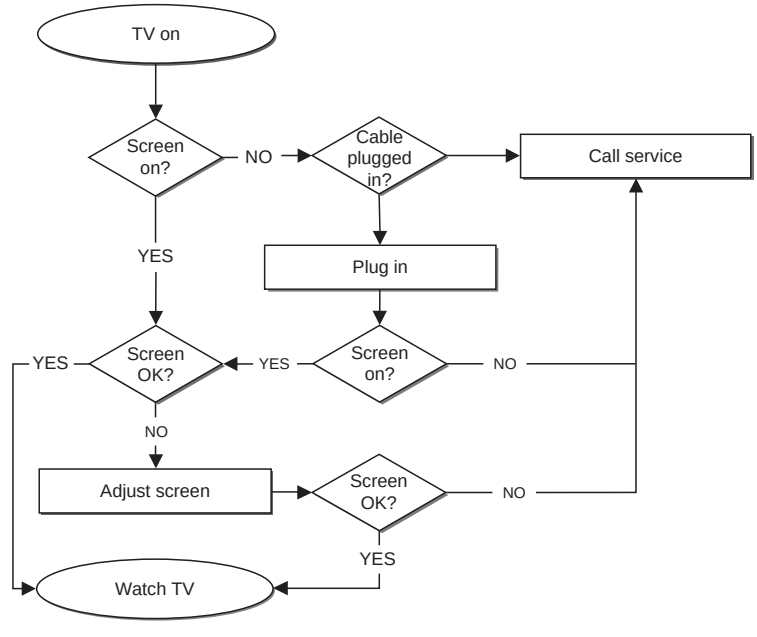
- an ellipse with rounded corners for the beginning and the end of the process
- a rectangle for all actions in the course of the process
- a diamond for all decisions to be taken
- arrows for indicating the flow of actions and decisions

The second graphic represents the process of decisions and actions when you turn your TV on.

The collective process of drafting such a process can be organised

- as a step by step process or
- as a brainstorming process to collect actions and decisions which is then followed by a structuring process.

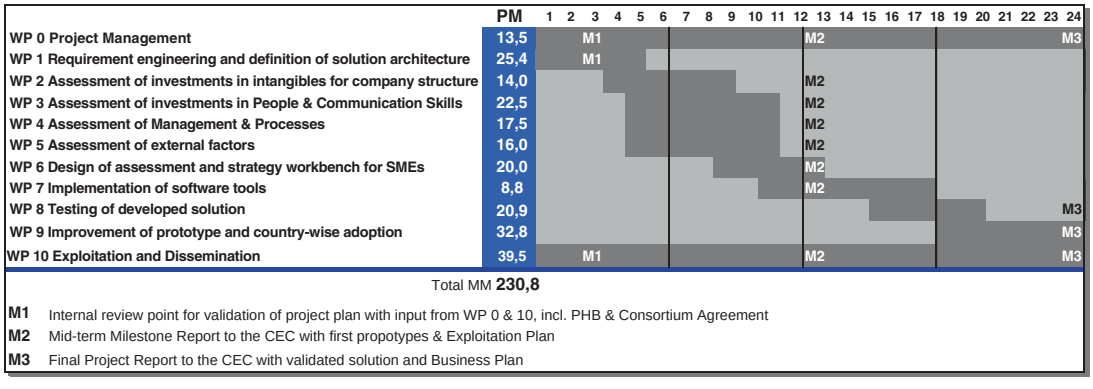
It is obvious that social or organisational processes, unlike most technical processes, may have more than one possible procedural structure.



4C.6 Gantt diagram

A Gantt chart or diagram is a tool for controlling the progress of a project and for planning the time available or needed for tasks associated with the project. The result is a work breakdown structure. It is called a Gantt chart because it was first published by the American business consultant Henry L. Gantt (1861–1919). It is similar to a critical path analysis and the PERT (Programme Evaluation and Review Technique) which are advanced project management tools. In the framework of the SME ACTor toolkit a Gantt charting device is integrated in the STEPP tool.

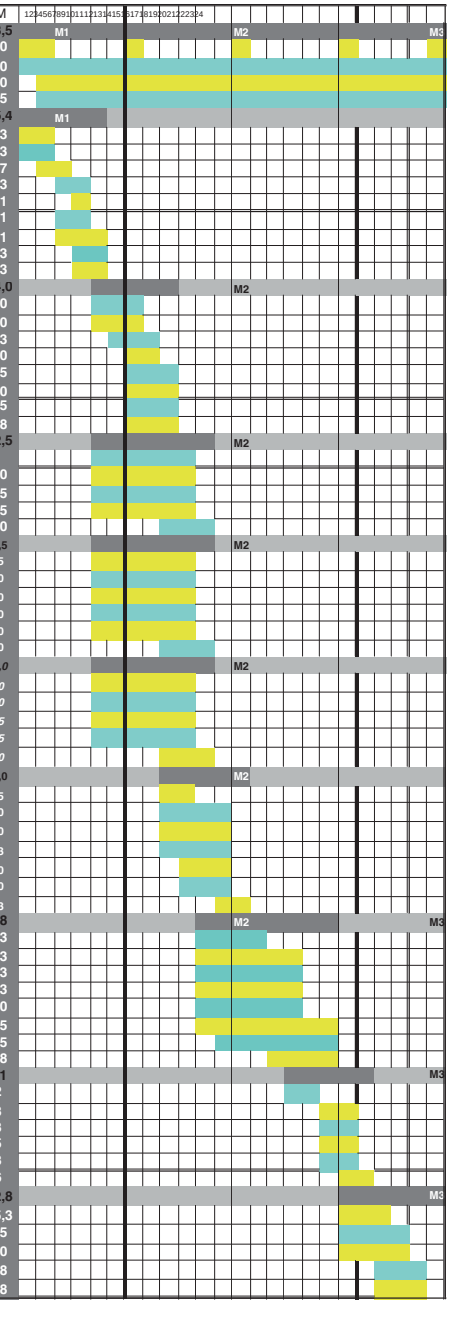
Cf. 4C3: STEPP



A Gantt chart requires the entry of the length of time available or needed for each task in a project. The normal outcome of such a way of scheduling a project is a bar diagram like the very general one in the first graphic. Tasks can also be much more detailed. The same chart but with tasks noted in detail appears as in the second bar diagram.

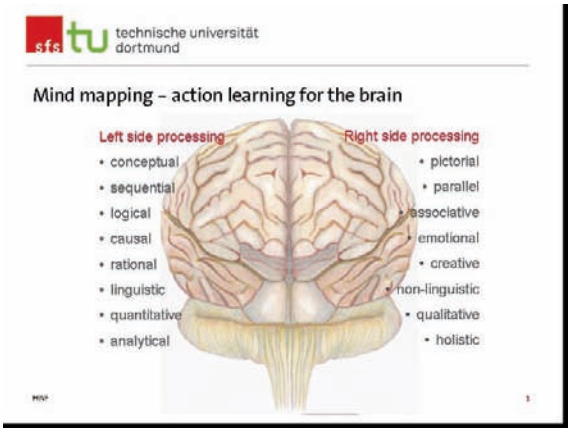
For implementation of the project, each planning bar is twinned by a controlling bar which is extended as the task proceeds until it is fully completed.

		PM
WP 0	**Project Management**	**13,5**
0.1	Financial & Contractual Management	**2,0**
0.2	Operational Project Management	**8,0**
0.3	Quality Management	**2,0**
0.4	Exploitation Management	**1,5**
WP 1	**Requirement engineering and definition of solution architecture**	**25,4**
1.3	Conceptual framework for requirement engineering	**2,3**
1.4	Design of requirement survey on assessment of intangible investments	**2,3**
1.5	Localisation of requirement surveys	**1,7**
1.6	Conduction of requirement survey (sample > 500 or ganisations)	**5,3**
1.7	Analysis of survey data & country specific Interpretation	**2,1**
1.8	Definition of assessment dimensions for impacts of intangible investments	**2,1**
1.9	Creation of application scenarios	**2,1**
1.10	Selection of methodologies and definition of high-level methodology & system design	**2,3**
1.11	Design of an assessment and strategy work bench solution for intangible investments	**2,3**
WP 2	**Assessment of investments in intangibles for company structure**	**14,0**
2.1	Enhancement of In noMan Culture towards an Innovation Climate & Maturity Assessment	**1,0**
2.2	Adaptation of EFQM Assessment regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept	**2,0**
2.3	Designing a Due Dilligence Analysis based on the EFQM Assessment Concept	**1,3**
2.4	Adaptation of EFQM Assessment Reporting in regard to Basel II rating demands	**1,0**
2.5	Assessing Intellectual Capital against Base II demands	**1,5**
2.6	Extending the existing survey catalogues to the new demands	**3,0**
2.7	Translation of EFQM-derivated methods into new functional requirements for GOA tools	**1,5**
2.8	Development of recommendation knowledge base concerning innovation maturity	**2,8**
WP 3	**Assessment of investments in People & Communication Skills**	**22,5**
3.1	Cooperation, Communication and Networking	
3.2	Team management	**4,0**
3.3	Coorporate Culture	**8,5**
3.4	Innovation Culture	**4,5**
3.5	Translation of developed methodologies into of knowledge bases for GOA	**4,0**
WP 4	**Assessment of Management & Processes**	**17,5**
4.1	Innovation Management (Structures and Processes)	**2,5**
4.2	IPR/-Management	**3,0**
4.3	Knowledge Management	**5,0**
4.4	Manufacturing know-how	**2,0**
4.5	Marketing, brandmanagement and market access	**2,0**
4.6	Translation of developed methodologies into software solution	**3,0**
WP5	**Assessment of external factors**	***16,0***
5.1	Politics & Regulations	***4,0***
5.2	Financing	***3,0***
5.3	Market (competition, customers and structures)	***2,5***
5.4	Environment/Ecology	***3,5***
5.5	Translation of developed methodologies into software solution	***3,0***
WP6	**Design of assessment and strategy workbench for SMEs**	**20,0**
6.1	Concept development for workbench	**5,5**
6.2	Design of arating tool for intellectual Capital	**1,0**
6.3	Design of a BSC for Innovation	**3,0**
6.4	Design of data interface with assessment tools	**3,3**
6.5	Design of data consolidation & grafical representation process	**2,0**
6.6	Design and development of a multimedia help and training interface for end users	**2,0**
6.7	Specification for software development	**3,3**
WP 7	**Implementation of software tools**	**8,8**
7.1	Implementation of English prototype of assessment tools on intangible infrastucture factors	**0,3**
7.2	Implementation of English prototype of assessment tools on HRM factors	**1,3**
7.3	Implementation of English prototype of assessment for knowledge and innovation management	**1,3**
7.4	Implementation of English prototype of assessment of external factors	**0,3**
7.5	Implementation of English prototype IC rating tool	**2,0**
7.6	Implementation of English prototype of BSC for the management of intangible	**0,5**
7.7	Implementation of a multimedia help and training interface for end user	**2,5**
7.8	Integration of tools according the system architecture	**0,8**
WP 8	**Testing of developed solution**	**21**
8.1	Design of test incident reporting forms and structure	**2**
8.2	Testing of self assessment solution	**3**
8.3	Testing of BSC for Intangibles	**3**
8.4	Testing of training solution	**5**
8.5	Validation of methodological integration	**3**
8.6	Definition of improvement for the developed prototypes	**6**
WP9	**Improvement of prototype and country-wise adoption**	**32,8**
9.1	Improving Methodology	**15,3**
9.2	Improving toolset	**1,5**
9.3	Improving training kit	**2,0**
9.4	Localisation of toolset contents	**5,8**
9.5	Localisation of trainingkit contents	**4,8**



4D Analysing problems and preparing decision making

4D.1 Mind mapping



Drawing maps of thoughts spontaneously linked to a chosen subject is a very effective way of picturing and structuring the results of individual or collective brainstorming processes.

Mind maps are a simplified representation of the synaptic structure of associative thinking in the human brain. Their effectiveness is based on the fact that they have several advantages compared to linear writing:

- They appeal to both sides of the brain; to the more analytical left side and to the more synthetic right side, notwithstanding that most complex processes such as watching and memorising use synaptic centres throughout the brain.
- They make it easy to jump from one item to the next, associating freely without the sequential discipline of a text structure, yet allowing for logical and hierarchical structuring.
- The result is a structured picture which is easier to remember than linear text lines.
- The result has a structure to which items can be added at any time.

Buzan, Tony (2000). The Mind Map Book, Penuin Books, 1996 http://www.buzancentres.com

For a detailed description of how the 5 Satisfactions work please see Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)

For mind mapping in a moderation context please see 2M3: Visualisation – why and how it helps you to understand and remember

Mind maps®, a registered trademark, were developed by the British learning researcher Tony Buzan as a way of both analytical deconstructing and synthetic reconstructing.

Starting from a core problem, idea or task, keywords associated with the core subject are linked as branches. Each of these keywords may become the node of origin of further branches of associations linked to them. Our Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis) is such a mind map structure.

Mind mapping can be used individually, e.g., for taking notes of a discussion or preparing and presenting a paper, but can also be used for collectively representing a visualised set of all the spontaneous contributions of a group, e.g., for analysing a common problem or planning a joint project.

A detailed description of how mind mapping works can be found in Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis).

Mind mapping can be used as a structuring tool in an ordinary moderation context, working with cards and a moderation board or paper on a wall.

Equally, or even better it can be done on a laptop, using a projector for visualising the building process of the mind map on a wall. Numerous mind mapping programmes are available; entering "mind mapping programmes" into any internet search engine will easily suggest up to 70 software tools. Most of them are not expensive, and some are even freeware.

Mind mapping can be used in an inductive as well as a deductive way.

The inductive way

This would be used when you start from scratch or very spontaneously in what you want to structure. The basic procedure is:

- You start with a card in the centre as the main node identifying the subject, problem, project or whatever you want to analyse or plan.
- Then you collect all major aspects belonging to the given subject and arrange them around the centre as sub-nodes.
- Next, you collect aspects detailing these sub-nodes.
- This continues until you can find no more meaningful details or aspects.

Of course, you can always jump from working on one node to another node in order to add something.

The deductive way
This would be used when a rough structure is already predefined, for example in the stakeholder analysis where the five stakeholder groups are taken from the EFQM Excellence model, or when you are going to structure your annual action plan or a balanced scorecard. The procedure is:

- You already know the major aspects that structure the subject, and group them as the first generation of sub-nodes around the centre.
- Then you detail each of the sub-nodes to form sub-sub-nodes if necessary (see the inductive way).

Mind maps also permit using colours, drawings or standardised symbols instead of writing. If somebody has to make a call to clarify something you may just note a ✆ and a name. If a certain aspect was the object of discussion a high tension symbol ↯ may remind you of this. A triangle ⚠ may mean "Attention, mind the cat" if the mind map is about mice.

Finally, mind maps help you to remember more easily what has been said or planned because you remember that "it" was "in the upper right corner" or the "node with the most branches to it".

Mind Mapping is a registered trademark by Buzan Ltd, Poole, UK, cf. http://www.buzancentres.com

4D.2 The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)

A stakeholder analysis supports the identification of objectives by structuring the analysis of the differing and coinciding interests and expectations of people or groups of people in your specific context.

The stakeholder analysis tool used here is based on the five types of stakeholders that any organisation or project, whatever its purpose, can identify. At the same time, it is in full concordance with the five stakeholders considered by the Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

The stakeholder mind map - a tool for analysis and planning

We call the co-operation structure, whether it is a company, an association, an institution, a sports club, a network agency, or simply a project, a *community of performance* because in order to survive they all have to function with two basic aims:

- fulfilling the practical purpose for which they were originally founded or which meanwhile has been defined as their *raison d'être*.
- making sure that they do not permanently spend more resources than they receive, i.e., warrant at least simple reproduction.

Analysing the give and take relationships of our organisation

Any such organisation has five types of stakeholders whose interests and expectations form part of the organisation's mission. The overall aim of any organisational performance resides in satisfying the perceived needs of these stakeholders. Any misconception about the specific mix of stakeholder expectations will lead to critical situations in the short or medium term or to existential crises in the longer term. Therefore, analysing the specific mix of each organisation's stakeholder context is of strategic as well as immediate practical relevance. It enables the identification of the specific relationship of taking and giving between the organisation and each stakeholder.

Investors

- Investors
  These are the people or groups of people providing capital or other resources (time, influence) without which the organisation would not exist.

Customers or clients (external)

- Customers
  These are the direct and/or indirect buyers of products and services provided by the organisation. Their demand is vital for the development of an organisation. A significant lack of demand for the products or services will lead to the collapse of the organisation.

- Workforce
  This is composed of those people, employed or in other contractual relationships with the organisation, who produce the products and/or provide the services of the organisation. The way that their work effort is transformed into useful work and products or services, i.e., the specific shaping of the internal co-operation, the actual organisation and processes and their material and cultural conditions, constitute the character and identity of the organisation.

Workforce

- Partners
  These are all those people and organisations who provide supporting material and information needed for manufacturing or rendering the organisation's services.

Partners

- The societal and natural environment
  This is constituted of the laws, standards and values the organisation must or wants to respect regarding the social and political context and the natural environment. These may concern production or services, e.g., the nature and quality of materials used or the safety of working conditions, as well as the culture of internal communication with and of the workforce, and of external communication, for example, the relationship with the media, the region, the local labour market, etc.

The societal and natural environment

The main stakeholder analysis question is:
How do we satisfy the expectations of our stakeholders?
In order to answer this question, it is important to pose a further question regarding the quality of the answer: Have we identified these expectations from hearsay or do we have documents, inquiries and surveys to confirm them? Are they just hypotheses or are they sound information? Do we really know or are we just assuming?

How do we satisfy our stakeholders?

The analytical and planning process can be structured in four basic steps:

First step
The stakeholder analysis clarifies who exactly are the specific stakeholders of "our organisation" that can be named under each of the five types represented in the mind map.

1. Who?

Second step
The stakeholders named under each type are ranked in order of importance to the organisation. This importance may differ depending on the purpose of the analysis; for a strategic analysis other criteria may count more than for a very practical process review. An intermediate step may include the following analysis:

2. What? Which expectations?

	WEAK INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE
STRONG INTEREST	Stakeholders in this segment may prove helpful if they become supporters of the project/programme.	Stakeholders in this segment must be accommodated.
WEAK INTEREST	Stakeholders in this segment will have little or no affect on the project/programme.	Stakeholders in this segment may become dangerous or very helpful to the project/programme if they become interested.

3. How important are they?

Third step

Following the ranking results, the question to be answered is, What are the expectations of each specific stakeholder with regard to the performance of the organisation? This closer view may influence the initial ranking and lead to modifications.

4. How good are we at meeting their expectations?

Fourth step

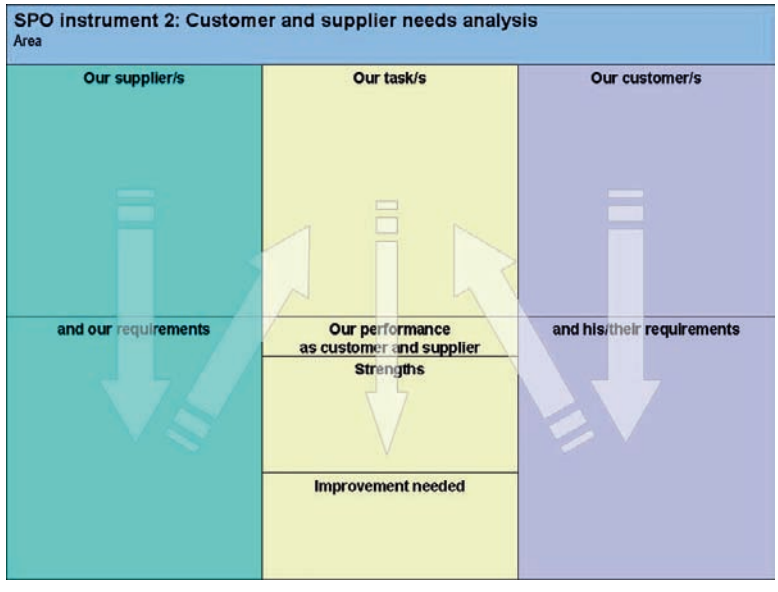
For selected stakeholders, the subsequent questions are, What do we do to meet the identified expectations? Do we know how satisfied the respective stakeholder is with our performance? What is good? What could be better? What will we do?

In-depth analysis with Tool 4D3 and Tool 4A9

For a more detailed analysis of such a relationship, a further instrument is recommended. Tool 4D3, "Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning", supports critical task analysis in a customer supplier relationship or along a customer supplier chain. Tool 4A9, "Customer and supplier process analysis and planning",' can provide further support.

4D.3 Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning

The customer and supplier needs analysis supports a systematic process of critical task analysis, carried out by the owners and performers of a task, into the perceived needs of customers and into the expectations of suppliers. The specific aim is to detect the strengths and improvement potential of performing this task. As a second step, it allows for planning improved performance.



SPO stands for Sustainable Personnel and Organisation Development – a comprehensive grassroots toolkit published in German by Franz (1999/2003)

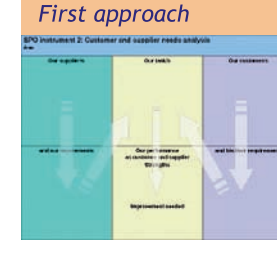
As mentioned above, basically the tool is a critical task analysis guided by the two fundamental questions governing quality management: *Are we doing the right thing?* and *Are we doing it right?* As such, it can be used for analytical as well as for planning purposes.

The logical construction of the sheet shows a supplier customer chain from left to right. It can be applied to the relationship with external customers and suppliers, placing the whole organisation in the centre; but it can also (as is normally the case) be applied to tasks in a customer supplier chain internal to an organisation. In that case it starts with one area in the organisation which must be identified and delimitated against previous and succeeding areas in the chain or against laterally neighbouring areas within the organisation (e.g., maintenance). In any case, the task performers in the centre column are customers to the suppliers in the left column, and suppliers to the customers in the right column.

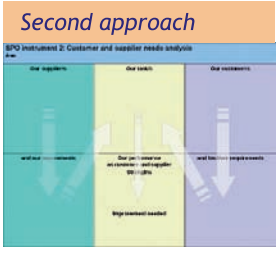
This is how the analytical process goes; from the perspective of the centre position of <Our task/s> we ask ourselves the following questions, following the arrows and noting the answers:

First approach

- Who are our customers? (upper right)
- What do they expect from us? (lower right)
  (How do we know? Have we ever asked them?)
- Who are our suppliers? (upper left)
- What do we expect from them? (lower left)
  (How do they know? Have we ever informed them well?)
- As a consequence of these first four questions:
  What is our task? (upper centre)



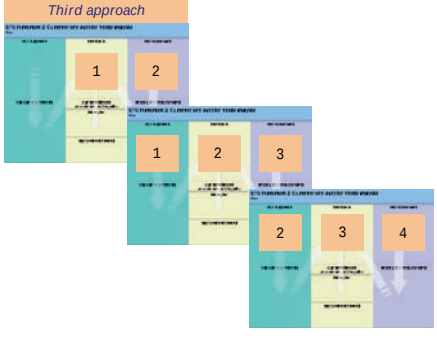
- How do we perform in fulfilling our task? Where are we good? Where do we have to improve? (lower centre)



The second approach

This considers the case of a more detailed analysis. It might sometimes be necessary to identify individual customers in the upper right. This can happen with an external customer and supplier needs analysis, e.g., as a continuation of a stakeholder analysis (see Tool 4D2, *The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)*), or in the not so rare case that your area in the organisation has more than one internal customer. Then the analysis starts with:

- Our customer is XY (upper right),
  and continues as with the questions in the first approach.
- What does he/she expect from us? (lower right)
  (How do we know? Have we ever asked him/her?)
- Who are our suppliers? (upper left)
- What do we expect from them? (lower left)
  (How do they know? Have we ever informed them well?)
- As a consequence of these first four questions:
  What is our task? (upper centre)
- How do we perform in fulfilling our task? Where are we good? Where do we have to improve? (lower centre)



The third approach

This is more comprehensive as it constitutes a larger project of process re-engineering for a whole production chain. In a defined chain of areas or tasks, it starts with individual task analyses of single areas. Subsequently, the results of these individual areas are sequenced and critically analysed for their degree of coincidence. In an ideal case, the analytical results of task owner 1 regarding his customer 2 coincide with the analytical findings of 2 as a task owner of the next step in the chain regarding his supplier 1, and so on. The result will be a more efficient process organisation.

4D.4 Flow analysis and planning

A flow analysis requires the mapping - in the original sense of the word, i.e., drawing maps - of the channels of information and materials within your company or area in the company. It helps to identify duplicated work, superfluous operations or pathways and intermediate stores or other buffers, sources of error, etc., thus, serving to organise optimal processes. It is highly recommended that the flow analysis is realised with the employees of the corresponding area.

What you need:

What you need

⌦ Do you have a current layout plan of your area or your company buildings showing the arrangement of the different workplaces (machines, rooms, desks, etc.)?

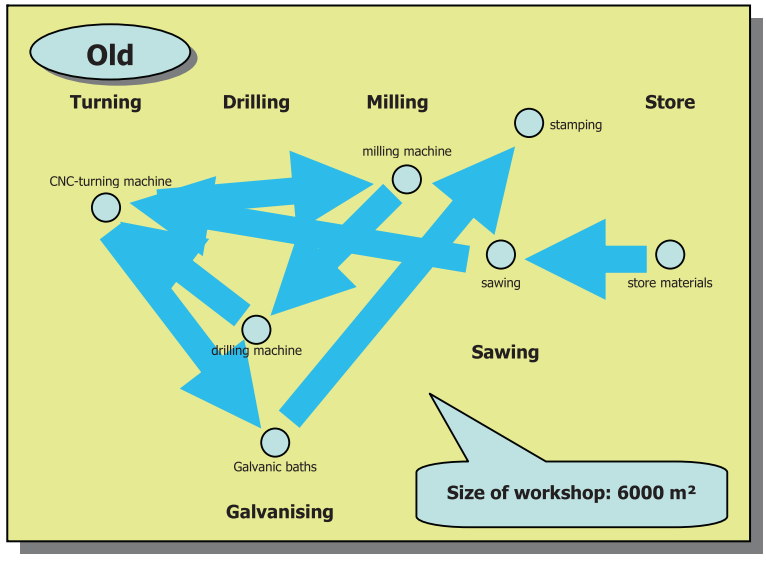
- If so, please copy it twice on a transparency or, better, scan it. If possible project the layout plan onto a wall or screen.
- If not, please make a layout outline that is roughly true to scale. It will also be sufficient to draw the outlines of the room(s) on a flipchart, a pin board or a board. Please now write the places of work belonging to your area on cards or self-adhesive slips of paper and integrate them into the outline in correspondence with the actual position they represent.

What you do:

What you do

⌦ Now sketch step by step the whole pathway of information and materials passing through the corresponding space, from interface to interface, i.e., from the entrance of your area or process right through to the exit, workstation by workstation. Follow this procedure:

- First make the sketch with regard to the information relevant to orders or issues of a discernible business process,
- Next, do it with regard to the materials belonging to the same process.
- Produce two separate flow drawings, one for information and one for materials, which you then lay on top of each other (ideally one transparency on top of the other) so that you can compare them.
- Please use different colours for marking information and materials.

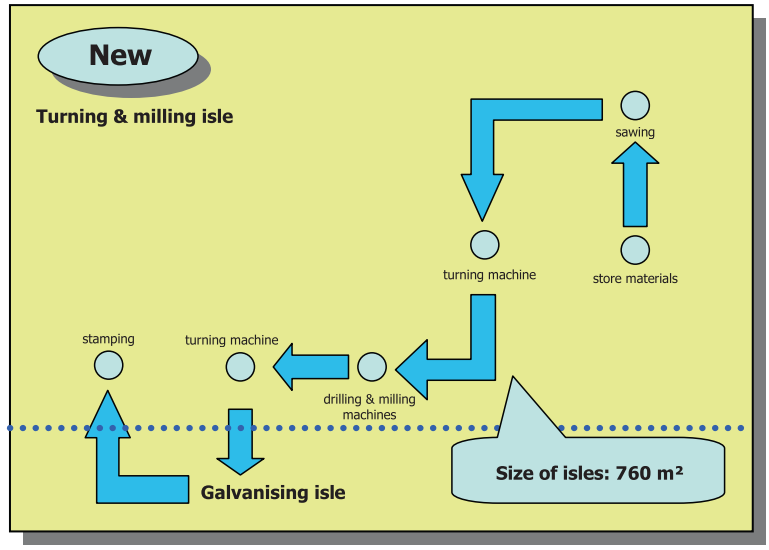


Example Old layout of a workshop: flow of materials

⌦ Analyse the paths from station to station of processing information or materials take. Are all stations necessary? Is the existing sequence logical? Are there superfluous deviations, loops, repetitions, buffers?

⌦ Compare the stations and channels of information and material with the previously determined demands of customers and suppliers.
What conclusions can you draw from the analysis?
What measures can be derived from your conclusions?

Example
New layout of the same process: flow of materials



Draw a new (target) flow scheme corresponding to the new conditions.

4D.5 Skill needs analysis and planning

The tool facilitates the analysis and planning of human resources for joint projects or other joint activities.

It was adapted from a training needs analysis tool which is part of a tool kit called Sustainable Personnel and Organisation Development in organisations (Franz 2003).

Analytic matrix

Skill Needs Analysis									Project.....			
Activities / Person	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12
P1												
P2												
P3												
P4												
P5												
P6												
P7												
P8												
P9												
P10												
P11												
P12												

The procedure is as simple as the tool's matrix structure suggests. The columns represent activities belonging to the project; the lines represent people of your organisation or department or whatever area you want to analyse. Always start with the whole team. It is most important to identify the specific mix of competences you need. If you want to do an individual analysis, say for the co-ordinator, do it in the second round.

- Step 1: Define the project; distinguish well between current activities of the people covered by the analysis and those needed for the project. Focus on the project needs.

1st step: Define the project

- Step 2: The tool can be used in two ways; you can apply it first for mapping the currently available people and then extend it to focus on the target composition of the team. Such a procedure helps to highlight possible differences and eventual training needs. Alternatively, you can start at once with the target team. Take a decision on whether to proceed in one or two steps.

2nd step: Decide, one or two steps

- Step 3: Identify the major activities belonging to the project. The focus is on activities, on what people have to do. So if part of the project is a survey you would not enter "social scientist" but "carry out a survey". If the success of the project depends on the good organisation and facilitation of meetings, make it a separate A heading: "organise and facilitate result-oriented meetings". If you also want to map specific attitudes add them among the last A columns.

3rd step: Identify activitiesth

- Step 4: The line headings are for people who are already there and for people you will have to find. Enter their names and, if needed, a few words on their formal or informal competence in respect to the project.

4th step: Identify people

- Step 5: Assess the competence of people regarding each activity. There is ample experience that people doing such an assessment or self-assessment in a group tend to be fair. So don't hesitate, don't be afraid.

5th step: Assess competence

Use a simple labelling system for this assessment, for example:

● = can do it well and train/familiarise others
○ = can do it well
□ = has done it but needs training
◇ = can easily learn it

- Step 6: Analyse the result. One of the aims of the analysis is to find out whether there are any bottlenecks for relevant activities. For example, if there is only one person in your project who can use mind mapping software or construct an EXCEL calculation sheet for important parts of the project planning, then you have to look for somebody else to learn it in order to achieve a higher degree of flexibility.

6th step: Analyse results

- Step 7: Develop a plan for recruiting the people you need or for training the skills you want to develop in your project.

7th step: Plan recruiting or training

4D.6 SWOT analysis Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

A SWOT analysis is a simple but powerful framework for analysing the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats that are faced by a company, an organisation, a network, an association, or a project. This helps to focus on strengths, improve weaknesses, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Strengths</th><th colspan="2">Weaknesses</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What do we do well?
What unique resources can we draw on?
What are our strengths?</td><td colspan="2">What could we improve?
Where do we have fewer resources than others?
Where are our weaknesses?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Internal view</td><td>External view</td><td>Internal view</td><td>External view</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Opportunities</th><th colspan="2">Threats</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What good opportunities are open to us?
What trends could we take advantage of?</td><td colspan="2">What factors can stop or hinder us?
What trends could harm us?
What is our competition doing?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

Analysis sheets and their questions like the above are no more than suggestions. Of course, all other relevant questions which can be made in the framework of each of the four criteria can be included. All these tools are no more than a systematic way of asking questions.

In an action learning context, it is important to note that sheets are individual forms of asking questions. For creating shared visions, the way that the analysis is shared among a group of people who are relevant for implementing the resulting strategy is just as important. Participation makes the difference. Therefore joint visualised analysis is vital for the process of sharing since it is a form of joint action.
The SWOT analysis should be carried through in two steps.

Step 1: Analysis

- Step 1
  This is exclusively an analytical approach, i.e., it only serves for collecting observations, facts, and information. It is helpful to do this first step following brainstorming rules, i.e., collection first, discussion afterwards. During the collection phase, all contributions are valid.

Strengths and weaknesses should be considered from both an internal and an external point of view.

- Step 2
  This serves for asking two standard questions:

  (a) What are we doing and what else can we do to turn our strengths into opportunities?
  (b) What threats do our weaknesses expose us to? What can we do to prevent weaknesses becoming threats?

Step 2: Options

From these two questions, a discussion on strategic options of innovation and improvement can start.

Another, more systematic way of turning the analytical part into a strategic discussion and planning process is the following TOWS matrix:

	Maximise strengths	*Minimise* weaknesses
Maximise opportunities	Maximise strengths and opportunities	Maximise opportunities, minimise weaknesses
Minimise threats	Maximise strengths, minimise threats	Minimise weaknesses, minimise threats

Strategic matrix

In a critical situation of an organisation, the SWOT tool can also be used the other way round, i.e., as TOWS. The process is the same as for SWOT but starts with threats, i.e., any external trends or incidents which are becoming critical and require urgent decisions and action.

TOWS

Both SWOT and TOWS, particularly when used analytically or for discussing options, can easily be combined with and structured by another instrument in widespread use: PEST analysis (see Tool 4D7).

Go to Tool 4D13

4D.7 PEST analysis - picturing the political, economic, socio-cultural and technical environment

A PEST analysis makes sure that all relevant context conditions of a project or a strategy have been duly considered. It depends on the project whether these four basic items are sufficient to depict the full picture. Hence, other acronyms are also in use for similar analytical approaches (see below), but PEST is the most effective "sticker".

A PEST analysis can be applied as a stand-alone tool but is normally used as an accompanying approach to SWOT analysis or within the framework of a GOPP process.

Cf. Tool 4D6: SWOT analysis and 4C4:GOPP (Goal-oriented Project Planning)

For carrying through this analytic task, it is recommended to visualise the process and use normal brainstorming procedures and rules resulting in four clearly defined steps:

- Step 1
  Collect all contributions of the assisting people under the headline of each of the four (or more) items.
- Step 2
  Structure these contributions according to criteria which are meaningful to the project you are talking about.
- Step 3
  Rank and relate important factors within each sector according to their relevance for the project.
- Step 4
  Draw conclusions from the visualised structure for what you want to do. Relate important factors to each other, across sectors.
  This last step is the decisive one as it is useless just to describe factors without thinking through what they mean. However, be careful not to assume that your analysis is perfect; use it as a starting point, and test your conclusions against the reality you experience.

Of course, which aspects might be of importance to depict a meaningful picture under each of the four (or more) headlines depends on the subject of analysis.

Here is a list of possible items assuming the case that a firm or a network of firms wants to start economic activities in a certain foreign country or region.

The example questions have been taken from http://www.mindtools.com

Political:

- Government type and stability
- Freedom of press, rule of law and levels of bureaucracy and corruption
- Regulation and de-regulation trends
- Social and employment legislation
- Tax policy, and trade and tariff controls
- Environmental and consumer-protection legislation
- Likely changes in the political environment

Economic:

- Stage of business cycle
- Current and projected economic growth, inflation and interest rates
- Unemployment and labor supply
- Labor costs
- Levels of disposable income and income distribution
- Impact of globalization
- Likely impact of technological or other changes on the economy
- Likely changes in the economic environment

Socio-Cultural:
- Population growth rate and age profile
- Population health, education and social mobility, and attitudes to these
- Population employment patterns, job market freedom and attitudes to work
- Press attitudes, public opinion, social attitudes and social taboos
- Lifestyle choices and attitudes to these
- Socio-Cultural changes

Technological Environment:
- Impact of emerging technologies
- Impact of the Internet, reduction in communication costs and increased remote working
- Research & Development activity
- Impact of technology transfer

Other variants of PEST

Some people prefer to use different variants of PEST analysis using other factors for different situations.

- PESTLE/PESTEL
  Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal, Environmental
- PESTLIED
  Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, International, Environmental, Demographic
- STEEPLE
  Social/Demographic, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, Ethical
- SLEPT
  Social, Legal, Economic, Political, Technological
- STEEPV
  Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental/Ecological, Political, Value-based issues

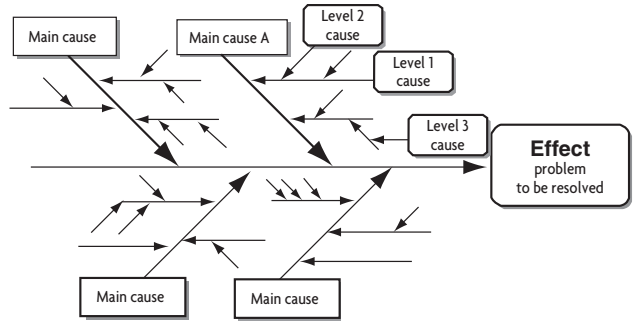
Choose what suits you best!

4D.8 Cause and effect diagrams

Cause and effect diagrams are effective tools for analysing problems and identifying improvement possibilities. Turned around, they are equally effective tools for the *a priori* impact analysis of solutions.

Fishbone diagram

The usual cause and effect diagram is also named a "fishbone diagram" owing to its form, or an "Ishikawa diagram" referring to its inventor, the Japanese quality management expert Kaoru Ishikawa. It is frequently used in quality management and continuous improvement.



Starting from a defined problem, i.e., the effect of origin, major causes are identified. Then for each of these causes sub-causes are identified on up to three levels.

Frequently used causes are:

- in a manufacturing context: Man, Machine, Method, Materials, Measurement, Environment. Environment includes the organisational environment. Where the environment is only organisational, it may be replaced by Management.
- an alternative version for manufacturing is People, Equipment, Process/es, Materials, Policies, Procedures/Products.
- in an organisational change context, the same cause headings can be used if applicable. However, it is definitely recommended to insert Management (man-made environment) and (natural) environment as separate influence factors.

Make sure that you draw the basic fishbone structure big enough to allow you to go into more detail where needed. As there is well-established software for this type of analysis called XMind, some facilitators may prefer to use a laptop and projector for collectively analysing a problem.

Impact analysis

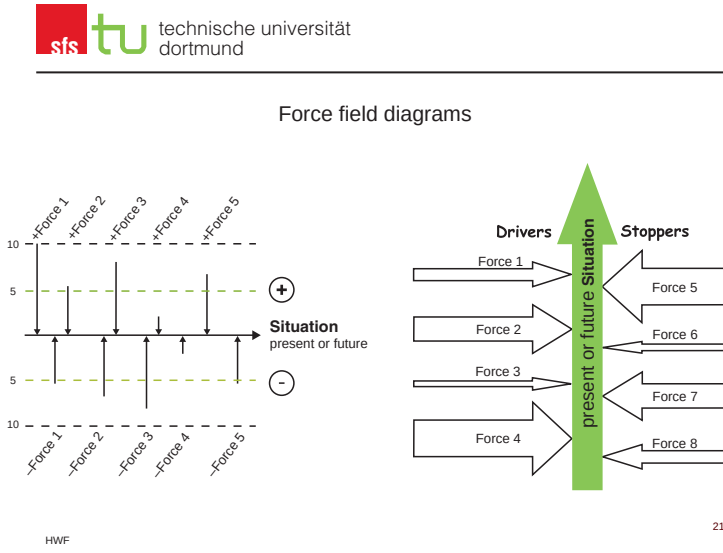
Once a solution to the problem is identified it might make sense to do the analysis the other way round. Starting from the solution found as the cause, you ask yourself what effects the implementation of this solution might produce on the formerly used cause factors. This impact analysis helps you to plan the implementation process and to identify possible effects or side effects you want to avoid. You would then try to improve your solution or implementation strategy.

4D.9 Force field analysis

A force field analysis is a simple but effective tool for analysing the field of supporting and adversary forces influencing a given or targeted situation. Based on this analysis, policies and strategies for strengthening the supporting forces can be developed.

The method was developed by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) who was also one of the fathers of action research.* He conceived an existing situation in an organisation as a precarious "equilibrium" of contradicting forces which can change or which you yourself might want to change. In order to understand these forces better and to anticipate future situations, Lewin suggested a critical analysis of the driving and inhibiting forces with the aim of influencing this critical balance in tune with development objectives and projects.

The two forms of force field analysis presented by the graph are our own interpretations of this tool.



The tool is easy to handle as it basically consists of a structured brainstorming process leading to action plans.

- Step 1: Identify clearly the object of your analysis. Is it the present situation you want to analyse? Then the question to be answered is: who (which association, institution, or person) is important as a supporter for the present state of affairs? Who is important as a problematic force?
  Or do you want to reach a future situation? Do you have a project change or a defined aim to be achieved? Then define this future situation and ask: Who will be the drivers and supporters, and who will be the stoppers or inhibiting forces?
- Step 2: Gather all relevant forces influencing your present situation or the situation you want to reach. Make sure you distinguish active or passive forces from mere advantages or disadvantages. One card, one force.

* Lewin, Kurt: Defining the "Field at a given Time". Psychological Review, 50, 1943, S. 292–310, newly published in: Resolving Social Conflicts & Field Theory. Social Science, American Psychological Association, Washington D.C., 1997

- Step 3: Add a degree of intensity to the positive or negative positioning of each of these forces (by length or width of arrow). Certain forces may have contradicting interests in your situation or project and appear on both sides. Picture them twice. It will be easier to find a balanced approach to each of the different aspects.
- Step 4: Never stop at Step 3. Make sure that you develop policies and strategies for strengthening positive forces and weakening or neutralising negative forces. Follow the basic routine of what to do - how (until) when, where and by whom - identifying the responsible person for each step (Tool 4A1: To do form). If helpful, develop separate plans for action and communication.

Cf. 4 A1: To-do form

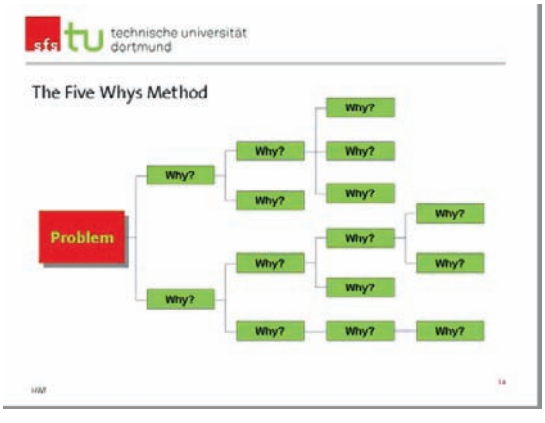
The tool is easily combinable with tools 4D2 and 4D7.

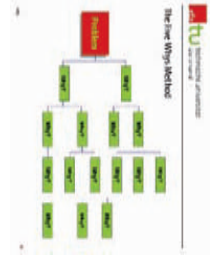
Cf. 4 D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis) and Tool 4D7: PEST analysis

An alternative to a force field analysis is Tool 4D6: SWOT analysis. The advantage over the SWOT analysis lies in the relative ease of application. SWOT is more complex and requires a higher degree of abstraction.

4D.10 The Five Whys

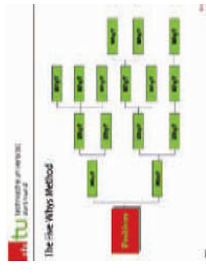
The Five Whys is a very simple but highly efficient tool analysing effect and cause as well as solution and effects. Simply asking "why?" up to five times leads to a very concentrated effort with rapid results in little time, as long as the method is used on clearly discernible problems and issues.





Starting from a defined problem you ask for the main causes leading to this problem. In a second step, for each of the resulting answers you ask again why it comes to this, and so on. The result is a hierarchical root structure of effects and causes leading to these effects.

Once you have identified the causes of a problem you can develop solutions. As we know, solutions that seem to be the best at first sight might not turn out so well in practice.



Choose the structure of visualisation which suits you best.

Therefore, the tool can also be used the other way round. Starting with a solution, you ask for the main effects. In a second step, you ask for further possible effects linked to the principal ones, and so on. The result is a hierarchical tree of possible effects created by the implementation

of your solution. It may turn out that not all effects are wanted. In that case you can invest in avoiding unwanted side effects by improving your solution or its method of implementation. Or you check through your seemingly second best solution in the same way.

The visual result is a deductive linear mind map which can run horizontally from right to left or vice versa, or vertically up or down. Try to choose the visualisation structure which best represents the problem. Of course, a non-linear mind map will lead to equally good results.

4D.11 3C – case consultation with colleagues

Case consultation with colleagues (3C) is a variation of coaching with the special advantage that you do not need an external coach because you can ask your colleagues to be your coaches. To be good coaches they just have to respect meticulously the specific procedural rules based on a strict separation of roles, time discipline and the visualisation of ideas and interpretations contributed by the colleagues who act as coaches.

Three basic roles and two more optional ones are defined and must be respected: *The roles*

1. *The case provider* *The case provider*
   This is the person who has a problem or a conflict to solve or is involved in a process in which he or she needs systematic back up.
2. *The coaches or consultants* *The coaches*
   These are colleagues that the case provider chooses to act as such. Naturally, the choice will depend on the case and its characteristics.
3. *The moderator* *The moderator*
   This person is appointed from among the colleagues acting as coaches, and has the role of moderating the consulting process and visualising the process on a flipchart, a whiteboard or a moderation board (no cards).
4. *The writer* *(The writer)*
   This role can be separated from the moderation function. Moderators sometimes tend to reduce complexity too much and to oversimplify. A concentrated writer will capture and note more details. This is important as these notes are the basis of all summaries which have to be made in the process.
5. *The process supervisor* *(The process supervisor)*
   This is an optional but sometimes, particularly at the beginning, a very useful role. This is the person who sits back and observes the process from an outside position, mirroring and monitoring possible role slips and shortcomings of the coaching process.

Excluding this first phase of identifying the roles of all participants, the coaching process has 6– to 7 clearly discernible phases or steps. We describe these process phases that should not last more than 90 minutes, focusing on the two main roles: case provider and case coaches.

Step 1: Case presentation

- Step 1: Case presentation 15 min

The case provider – we assume it is a woman - describes the coordinates of her problem or process, the conditions, the social field and her own involvement, role and actions.

The coaches can ask clarifying questions but these are to gain a better understanding of the problem context, not to obtain details or names. No discussion with the case giver is wanted.

Step 2: Analysis and hypotheses

- Step 2: Analysis and hypotheses 20 min.

Now the coaches reconstruct the case among themselves as they have understood it. They do this in their own words, expressing their own feelings and intuition. They also comment on the attitudes and actions of the case provider as they have perceived them from the presentation.

Sitting with her back to the coaches, the case provider is only allowed to listen, not to intervene. It is here that the case provider normally has her first key effect of "alienation".

Step 3: Focusing on the key hypothesis

- Step 3: Focusing on the key hypothesis 10 min.

After having listened carefully, it is now up to the case provider to decide on which key hypothesis the coaches should concentrate and elaborate.

The coaches should not try to convince the case provider to focus differently but help her to sharpen the key hypothesis she prefers.

Step 4: Development of solutions

- Step 4: Development of solutions 20 min.

Now the coaches rapidly and spontaneously express their thoughts on which solutions might help the case provider to tackle the situation. These possible solutions are not assessed or prioritised, just noted.

Once more, the case provider will silently listen with her back to the coaches.

Step 5: Assessment of solutions

- Step 5: Assessment of solutions 10-15 min.

The case provider will now evaluate and assess the solutions suggested by the coaches. In doing this, her aim is to concentrate on constructing the most favourable solution in her view, using details from any of the previously made suggestions. The most promising solution must include one or two decisions or measures to be taken which the case provider commits herself to implement. This phase may include testing the envisaged measures: What will happen, if …?

The coaches will concentrate on helping the case provider to develop her preferred solution. They will not argue; if necessary, they can ask questions.

- Step 6: Process reflection 10-15 min.
  Now the whole group reflects on the process, on each role, on the roles of the moderator and the writer, and on how contributions have been made.
  The process supervisor, who has sat back and silently observed the process, only intervening in the case of repeated infringements of rules and roles, will now give his or her external judgement. It is obvious that such an observing function is very useful during the first applications of the method. Once a group is experienced in using it the participants will be able to reflect on the process without an external supervisor.

Step 6: Process reflection

- Step 7: Follow-up meetings
  If this case consultation with colleagues was not a singular event but part of a systematic process coaching, follow-up sessions have to be agreed. Something must have happened by the next meeting, i.e., the case provider must have tried to act according to the commitments made and new facts or experiences should have succeeded.

Step 7: Follow-up meetings

3C is a method which is useful for a number of reasons:

- It helps to overcome conflicts between colleagues as well as conflicts of a hierarchical nature.
- It serves as a valuable method of accompanying complicated and conflict-prone projects or processes.
- It strengthens the individual and organisational capacity for problem-solving, learning and process reflection.
- It systematically provides participants with the experience of changing perspectives, which is relevant for many change and organisational development processes.
- It massively reinforces team formation and trust building (Franz/Kopp 2003).

4D.12 Six thinking hats

"Six thinking hats" is a strategy for leading difficult meetings to a successful end by activating different capacities inherent in people which otherwise are not normally active. It is based on research by Edward de Bono who developed the original tool which is presented here in an adapted way.

sis sozial forschungs stelle dortmund

Six Thinking Hats (based on method by Edward de Bono)

Analysis and evaluation of suggestions and alternatives

Colour of hat	White	Yellow	Black	Green	Red	Blue
This **Hat** now, please.						
Role Each to be played by all in this order!	Factual • a head for figures • data collector	Positive • optimist • realist • investor • proactivist	Negative • pessimist • hesitator • alarmist • darksider	Creative • lateral thinker • artist • dreamer	Emotional • softy • raging bull • nostalgic • futurist	• Moderative • chairperson • chief • focuser • promoter
Role Task and Aim	To state • figures • facts • information • details	To reason and reckon • advantages • benefit • effectiveness and efficiency	To consider • disadvantages and • risks • imponderabilities	To imagine • possible impacts • opportunities • cross-over effects	To allow feelings • your heart • your guts • your intuition	To control • overview • rules • objectives and targets

hwf

At one glance

When decisions have to be taken people frequently tend to think unilaterally. They may overvalue critical factors or be too enthusiastic for some reason, or they may instead follow micro-political context conditions, e.g., (a very condensed version) "X is in favour of this strategy, so I have to be sceptical". In order to avoid unbalanced decisions or to dissolve deadlock situations, de Bono suggests activating the different potentials of lateral thinking inherent in people. His suggestion is an open or disguised role play inviting people to slip into different roles by taking several perspectives on the subject. Taking these roles is symbolised by wearing different hats with varying colours.

Only two rules:
1. Respect the role up at the moment.
2. Respect other views while they respect rule 1.

The colours of the hats just help everyone to remember the different perspectives to be taken by each participant. The chairperson (blue hat) of a meeting will introduce the rules. When it is suggested for the first time, he or she will decide whether mentioning the hats and colours is helpful in the given situation. It is really important to persuade all participants to obey the two simple rules, i.e., to stick to the role or hat up at the moment and not to discuss the contributions of the others as long as they stick to rule number 1.

Then each participant will give his or her view according to the role currently active. The views contributed by everybody should be visualised because votes can be counted and weighed more easily on the basis of these notes. Obvious majorities will be more readily accepted.

Then the decision taken can be operationalised. As always, the final step consists of fixing the validity date of the decisions taken. On this date, an evaluation and review may confirm, amend or revoke the original procedure.

4D.13 Pen portrait

Pen portraits are a customer orientation technique for defining a specific audience of an action, a publication, a speech, a CV, and advert or yourself. It is an even more focused and individualised tool than *4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)* or *4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning.*

Cf. Tool 4D2: The five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis) and Tool 4D3: Customer and supplier needs analysis and planning

Especially before writing anything, such as an article, a speech, a presentation, an advert, a letter, an email to an important or large mailing list, or before preparing any other type of communication, you need to know who you are writing for, and must cater to their specific needs.

In some cases, it may be helpful to create a typical fictitious character – we assume, a man – and imagine you are having a conversation or writing a letter to that person. This will enable you to speak directly to him.

To create this pen portrait you simply have to imagine

- who the person is
- what he is like
- what drives him

Keep adding to and moulding the picture until you are happy that you can almost hear the person speak to you.

Some mostly very personal things to be considered in such a context are:

- What is he called?
- Who does he think he is?
- Who is he really?
- Who does he want to be?
- Who does he like?
- Who doesn't he like?
- Who form his peer group?
- Who does he not identify with?
- What are his their beliefs?
- Where does he live?
- Where does he work?
- Where does he learn?
- Where does he want to be?
- What are his needs?
- How old is he?
- How youthfully does he act?
- How conservative is he?
- What are his driving ambitions?
- What are his wants and needs?

- What are his pleasures?
- What are his pains?
- What does he love?
- What does he hate?

These questions help to identify better human individuals or groups of individuals, offering empathy and serving their needs in a way they will most accept and benefit from.

5
Growing experience - from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence

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The SME ACT or project

This chapter is basically devoted to reporting and analysing in a brief manner the main results and lessons learnt from the SME ACTor Project presented in the introduction. SME ACTor was a project developed in the framework of the European programme, Leonardo da Vinci, in which a group of partner organisations from six European countries developed and tested action learning methods supporting the networking process of SMEs.

In **Romania**, the project's host country, three networking processes took place. One was in the western counties of Timis and Arad, and was devoted to IT companies. The other two were in Bucharest, the capital, and in the northern boomtown of Cluj, and were devoted to companies working jointly in building up European projects with and without resources from the European Structural Funds.

In **Germany**, the project supported the networking process of a group of major local music event organisers in Dortmund who established themselves as "United Sounds" as a contribution to the development of the creative economy in this former industrial area.

In **Hungary**, the project organised a group of small companies and other stakeholders interested in planning and developing a new strategy for a major investment in a theme park in the county of Bekescsaba, which is situated in the far East of Hungary next to the Romanian border.

In **Italy,** two networking processes were launched and supported, one in the southern province of Potenza (Basilicata) focusing on companies in the hotel sector, and another one in the Italian North-West around Turin, directed at pooling consultancy firms with a focus on innovation in SMEs.

In **Poland**, IT-based SMEs and start-up firms originating from various academic spin-off initiatives of the University of Katowice (Silesia) were supported in the enhancement of their networking.

Finally, in Catalonia, **Spain**, the project supported the network building of a considerable number of ICT companies specialising in open source programming and products.

The chapter is divided into two parts.

Part 1

1. The first part deals with the learning path emerging from the overall project activities. It summarises the experiences gained in five sections:

   - the empowerment process of the facilitator group (i.e., the project partners)
   - how the context analysis and the strategic work plan were carried out
   - how the learnshops were designed and scheduled
   - how tools were used and learnshops managed
   - the results that were achieved.

Part 2

2. The second part highlights the project's distance working and learning experience, narrating how and to what extent web tools were used and supported the project development.

5.1 The SME ACTor project experience

5.1.1 Becoming a facilitator: an empowerment process

The SME ACTor project has been an impressive learning opportunity for a particular group of aspirant facilitators, that is, the individual project partners. The whole project was planned and managed as a real action learning journey combining the project's working aims with the need to acquire learning methods and tools based on particular approach to learning.

1st and 2nd tier facilitators in the SME ACT or project

Formalised action and learning sessions allowed the testing of large parts of the learning curriculum for becoming a facilitator and, at the same time, prepared the project's own team of what we called 1st tier facilitators to transfer, through a real cascading process, methodologies, tools and recommendations to aspirant facilitators from the different regions involved, whom we called 2nd tier facilitators.

In less than a year and a half, the 1st tier team of 16 professionals benefited from more than ten "training" days, and it directly applied what was learned in the field in 22 learnshop sessions scheduled to train more than 60 2nd tier facilitators. A senior facilitator led the learning journey of the 1st tier facilitators and also acted as a coach and supervisor in the "transfer" process in the participating regions, supporting the individual 1st tier facilitators in the learnshops who were working and learning with the 2nd tier facilitators.

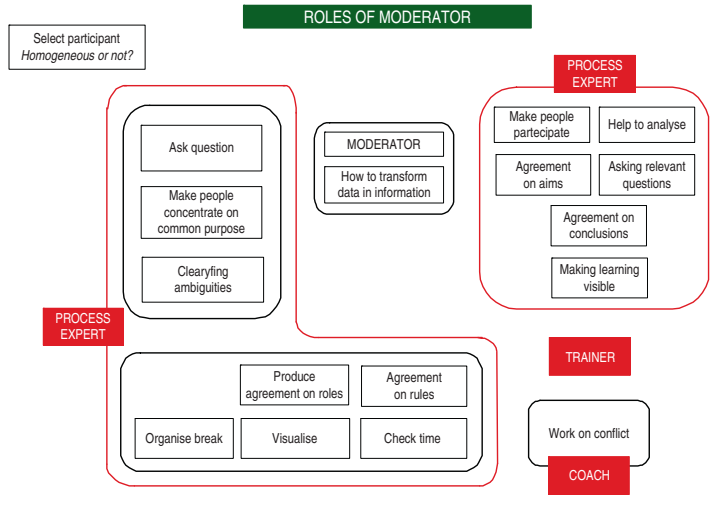
The process of growing awareness and appropriating the facilitator roles was quite visible and diligently documented. From the very beginning, all the project meetings were conceived and managed in the learnshop format (from scheduling to logistics; from the use of facilitation tools to the assessment and evaluation phase), and a 5-day full immersion

learning path during the intermediate phase of the project boosted the project team spirit.

Bewilderment, curiosity, protagonism, autonomy – through these phases the 1st tier facilitator team experienced its own empowerment journey.

From bewilderment to autonomy ...

During the initial stage, although most of the participants had already experienced some form of AL path, the proposed structured form caused quite a bit of bewilderment. A traditional project management process, particularly in projects financed and constantly monitored by external agencies – like the SME ACTor project – usually involves a detailed schedule of activities, milestones, roles and deliverables. The attitude of initial resistance to change, which was obviously adopted by many of the professionals forming the 1st tier facilitator team, is understandable. The proposed path, which put under discussion consolidated procedures and acquired roles, suggested a creative and co-planning journey.

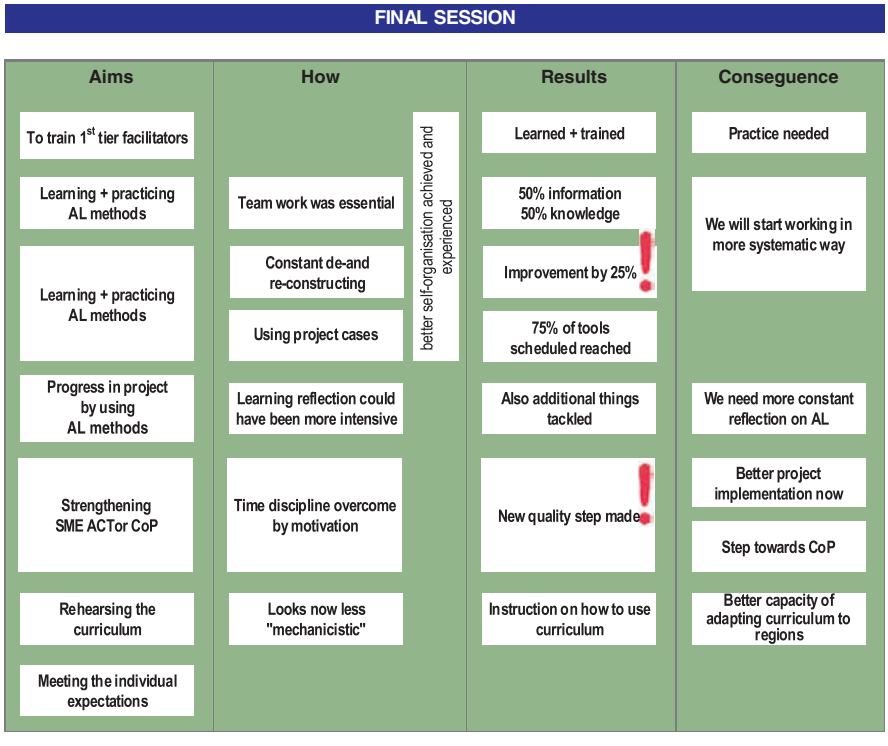


Role awareness: the result of a brainstorming on the moderator's role

Step after step, involvement and commitment became increasingly evident. Nearly halfway through the project, a real turning point was reached with a full immersion learnshop week in a former monastery situated in Labro, a half deserted village up in the hills north of Rome. Five long, intense, and valuable learning and action days provided the individual participants with:

- a strong awareness of the facilitator's role (see graph on the roles of a moderator),
- total sharing of the project's journey to be accomplished,
- consolidated skills regarding tools and facilitation techniques, self-assessment, and sensitivity
- mutual awareness of being a real community of performance.

A stronger reflective and self-assessment attitude: the result of the final evaluation session after five full learnshop days (40 learning hours, excl. breaks)

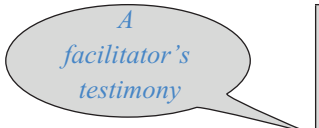


A growing consciousness concerning the role and a growing ability in the use of tools led to an evidently self-driven path in that:

- the last project sessions organised as usual in the form of workshops were almost completely self-managed
- different participants played the role of facilitators without having planned it
- everybody exercised the role of facilitator in the field
- even the use of several tools became progressively more natural.

"Now I always use the to-do list and the contract with myself; you can say that they have become a part of my small daily tool kit" (a project participant)

Cf. 4A1: To-do form and 4A2: Contract with myself



Testimony of one of the participants

"*During the five full learnshop days I was really concentrated and committed: I was able to understand the coherence of the learning journey, indeed to appreciate the usability of different tools. I felt I would be able to carry out the role of facilitator in my regional context*.

But the reality was quite different; more than 3 months after the five full learnshop days, I was supposed to act as facilitator for my first regional workshop. Meanwhile I had worked on other projects; I had focused on other priorities and other deadlines. Now the date of my first regional workshop had arrived; it had been such a long time since I had used the tools and "practiced" as a facilitator! I was so rusty and insecure. I felt like a pilot without a parachute; I was very much aware of my weak points and of the countless differences that could turn the learnshop into a failure.

Right after the icebreaking session I felt the participants' growing interest, I achieved self-assurance and, in the end, everything went well! Actually, I was no way a "pilot without a parachute". We had done such a detailed and accurate job planning the learnshop: the scheduling was precise and coherent; the briefing with the senior facilitator carried out the day before had been useful for clarifying the journey, for achieving a better focus on the learning aims, and for prefiguring the organisation of subgroups.

Also the de-briefing had been fundamental: weak and strong points stood out with great clarity. For sure, what also stood out was a fundamental lesson I learnt: you have to "practice" the role of a facilitator in order to become one. After that first learnshop, every occasion has been good for practicing, for instance, using action learning and its tools even for the periodical meetings with colleagues. Now, after almost one year, I realise I automatically use many of the tools, with no need of previous planning".

The organisation and management of the 2nd tier facilitator learnshops was the first real opportunity to carry out the role of facilitator in complete autonomy. In this case, each project partner carried out the role of "facilitator-trainer" for a group of facilitators belonging to their own region, the ones defined in the project as 2nd tier facilitators.

The organisation of the second tier facilitator learnshops was not only an occasion to practice and experience in the field newly acquired skills concerning the appropriate use of tools, but was also a valuable opportunity to refine self-reflection and self-assessment capacities and thus put in motion a constant and continuous improvement process.

Using the curriculum

But how was the SME ACTor curriculum used for designing the learning path for the 1st and 2nd tier facilitators? Which modules were most often used for sustaining the empowerment process?

See Chap. 3: The curriculum

- First of all it is necessary to remember that the planning of a learning and action path has to be strongly "contextualised". In other words, the starting conditions of the facilitator, the group composition, and the learning aims compared to the requirements and opportunities of co-operation and networking of the local SMEs will be different in each single case and must be diligently considered. Hence, the curriculum must be used with extreme flexibility, beginning with the need to "contextualise" the training path with regard to the composition of the group of learners and practitioners and to the characteristics and requirements of the region and its SMEs whose networking is to be activated.

See Sect. 5.1.2 on context analysis

- The first common need that became evident was explaining the significance of being a moderator, and why and how a workshop moderating function is different from that of a chairperson or a traditional trainer. Above all, the moderator's function consists of facilitating communication.
- After having worked on building awareness of the role of a moderator, clarifying the role of visualisation became necessary: why is visualisation so essential? Why does it change the whole process?

See 2M1 and 2M2 and 4A3: Chairing vs. moderating
Cf. 3M3: Visualisation - why and how it helps you to remember

- Also, which tools are available for analysing problem setting and problem solving? And how should moderating techniques and tools be used to define and solve problems?

See 4D

As far as the overall duration of such learnshops is concerned, we experimented with different options: from a few full-day sessions to a series of half-day sessions in a short sequence. We also tried sessions of a few hours that extended over a longer period of time (for example, a monthly 4-h session over a total of 3/4 months). This last option proved to be the least effective: sessions of a few hours and with longer time intervals make the journey of competence building and empowerment harder. Conversely, having few but full immersion and continuous learning days proved to be particularly effective.

The following testimony of a participant in the 2-day learnshop in Catalonia provides some evidence of this observation and experience gathered during the project.

A facilitator's testimony

"Three months after participating in the Viladecans learnshop I had the opportunity to put into practice the methods learnt. I applied them during a European integration course that my own organisation had prepared for elected politicians and civil servants from a number of Catalan city councils. The methods I had learned were really fruitful for me. I used them for preparing the workshop (contents, speakers) to better facilitate both the learning of participants and the networking among them, also to process in a better way and take into account their feedback (personal interests and concerns).

The feedback given by the participants was also very positive; they thanked me for the opportunity to interact with actors from other cities and to learn in such an original manner, appreciating the knowledge generated in a collaborative way".

Joaquim, participant in Viladecans Learnshop

Lessons learned

- **Facilitator training**. The experience in the field highlighted the need to ensure that, even if they were few in number, there were long and full immersion learning sessions. For example, two consecutive days of 7 or 8 h (plus breaks). A sequence of 3 or 4-h learnshop sessions with long intervals (for example, a half-day session every 3 or 4 weeks) risks yielding few long lasting effects.
- **Basic modules**. Although the different contexts must be respected, the basic modules that should never be missed are:
  - facilitating communication
  - moderating, visualisation, problem setting and problem solving
  - in order to ensure effective learning for these basic modules, two consecutive days of 7 or 8 h (plus breaks) of full immersion can lay good foundations.
- **Practice the role**. In order to become a facilitator, the dedicated training days are fundamental but by no means sufficient. One becomes a good facilitator by practicing the facilitator's role and in order to do this, every opportunity, even if not planned, must be taken: for example, informal meetings with colleagues, etc.
- **Time and reflection are essential**. Becoming a facilitator requires time, and during the empowerment process seizing all the opportunities to "practice" the role of facilitator is fundamental, as is reflecting on the facilitator's role. Reflective comparison with the performance of other facilitators or, even better, with a senior facilitator is vital.

5.1.2 Starting a networking project: the context analysis

An SME networking project can be promoted or launched by local actors of varying types; they may be public, semi-public or private organisations interested in sustaining SMEs and their competitiveness. Whatever the background and authoritativeness of the local actor promoting the networking process and whatever its knowledge and awareness of the opportunities and requirements of pushing or enhancing networking, it is always useful to sum up existing information or knowledge, extending and refining it by gathering new information with the aim of understanding better the challenges and opportunities.

See 2M13: Basic concepts of SMEs

The aim of the context analysis, usually conducted as a case study, is to tailor the co-operation and learning path to the specificity of the local context. In this phase - that is, when the networking path has to be defined in some detail and launched - the facilitator acts as a process manager whose main responsibility is to examine the journey's feasibility and thereby support the sponsor organisation in defining a strategic and operative work plan.

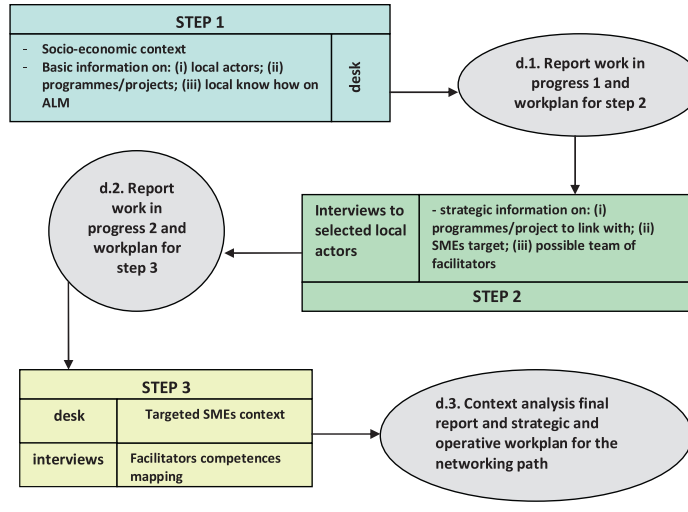
For example, the context analysis as it was conceived in the framework of the SME ACTor project was used to describe the main socio-economic characteristics, map relevant local actors, understand the local SME target group better, identify available action learning competencies and, on this basis, evaluate a viable networking configuration. In other words, the purpose of the context analysis was to answer the following key questions:

See 2M14: Basic concepts of networks and clusters

See 4B3: Case studies - methodical guidelines of context analysis

- What are the possible aims of the network?
- Which companies are to be involved or invited?
- How is it possible to create visibility among the other relevant local key-players and, in doing so, ensure a higher added value and impact for the networking path?
- How can we build up and integrate a team of facilitators?

Starting from a common methodological guideline (see diagram on next page), each partner adapted the context analysis process to the specific conditions of the regional context.



In the cases where the partner acting as a sponsor organisation had neither specific competencies in SME networking nor a particular visibility among the target enterprises, context analysis was most valuable in identifying an alliance network with the regional key players (public, semi-public and private organisations). In this case, a proper and deeper understanding of the overall socio-economic context was most relevant as well. In the SME ACTor project, this was the case, for example, in the context of our Catalonian partner where the context analysis led to the identification of the key actors and, with their help, to the involvement of a greater number of relevant enterprises in the corresponding IT sector, i.e., programming and development companies operating with open source software.

Using guidelines in a flexible and creative way

In cases where the project partner was directly involved as a key player in the regional context and where the overall framework was already perfectly known, the context analysis focused mainly on defining the networking aims and the specific objectives to be achieved by the group of companies involved. This was the case in Dortmund's context analysis. Here is an excerpt from the introduction to the report:

A facilitator's testimony

> *"The context analysis is of great importance for determining the right networking and co-operation strategies. But what are you going to do when, as in our case, all these analyses are already there? What if networking and cluster policies are already in place and perfectly well installed?*
>
> *Paraphrasing all these reports, papers and sources and their data will not provide any useful insights for anybody we are approaching here in Dortmund in the framework of this project. They know all this. And writing a report just for the sake of reporting to a project or programme administration is definitely not the destination of this context analysis report written in the framework of an action methodology project.*

Therefore we had to make a choice. We retained the most important data and development features of Dortmund (Template 1), and more or less skipped Template 2 except for providing reasons for the choice of the specific action fields which are subsequently the focus of observation and activities. These action fields were identified in talks with the heads of the sector development division of the Dortmund Economic Development Agency, with relevant network managers from the main co-operation institutions in Dortmund and with networkers from the sectors chosen.

We selected "United Sounds" as the network to focus on. United Sounds is a Dortmund-centred network being made for a large number of music-related stakeholders, supposedly about 600 if we include the bands as well as the event organisers. It is an unusual choice in the project context since most of the networkers are not SMEs in the usual sense. However, they are stakeholders with their own (often divergent) interests who now seek to co-operate In order to benefit both on an individual basis but also as a whole group with a number of shared goals.

As already indicated, the network has not gone public yet but is planning to do so. During the first meetings carried out during the context analysis, targets, content, marketing, potential protagonists and other topics have already been discussed".

Hans-Werner Franz, Christoph Kaletka, TUDO/sfs, Dortmund case

In order to be effective, the context analysis should also be considered as a starting point. In addition to the given guidelines, the facilitator-process manager could discover that he/she may need further information or a different type of information concerning certain issues, thus enriching the analysis. This was, for example, the case with the Katowice context analysis.

A facilitator's testimony

"The competence evaluation of potential facilitators was held as a detailed questionnaire analysis. The questionnaire was prepared as an extension of the original format delivered in the project. The testing phase of the original format was held with a group of chosen facilitators. Unfortunately, it was not very well accepted and there were complaints that it focused too much on theoretical aspects. Thus, the interviews were repeated in a different form and with more orientation towards practical aspects".

A. Ochojski, M. Baron, M. Chajkowski, University of Katowice, Silesia Case

An example to be followed

Last but not least, in the SME ACTor project, the context analysis and its main output, the strategic work plan, were tackled as a work-in-progress task; in other words, even though new information and strategic orientations for the network development turned up after the kick-off workshop with the enterprises involved in the networking, these were integrated and the strategic planning was revised if necessary. For example, it was necessary in the case of the context analysis of Potenza. Here, the context analysis verified the coherence and feasibility of a networking project devoted to the tourist sector, focusing on quality improvement; but during the kick-off workshop, unexpectedly, the participants who were strongly motivated to activate a network, decided to concentrate on completely different "aggregating" topics than the originally assumed and suggested ones.
The same applies to other context analyses and strategic work plans developed by SME ACTor partners:

A facilitator's testimony

"As for facilitating the process itself, the facilitator must carefully use his/her time for systematic planning and constant revising of activities if he or she wants to achieve positive results. The scheme planned for Silesia proves this perfectly. The initial plan was fully implemented. Nevertheless, several rearrangements were introduced allowing easier cooperation with 2nd tier facilitators and SMEs. You simply feel more confident adapting the plan to what you want to achieve. So you cannot just stick to the original plan".
A. Ochojski, M. Baron, M. Chajkowski, University of Katowice, Silesia Case

An example not to be followed

The context analysis must involve a proper mix between desk analysis and field work accomplished, for instance, through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In the various regions involved in the project, the field work should serve to sensitise stakeholders, establish alliances, determine the network aim and formalise a reliable work plan. In one case, the partner-sponsor organisation, confident in the authoritativeness and visibility of its own role in the territory, conducted context analysis substantially through office-based desk work, considering field work as totally unnecessary. In this case, during the network launching phase, the strategic work plan proved to be totally unfeasible, setting in motion a vicious circle of problems which soon became ungovernable (e.g., delays, lack of commitment from the enterprises, lack of clarity about objectives, etc.)

Lessons learned

The context analysis serves to identify the feasibility conditions of an SME networking journey. In order to achieve this aim a few basic elements of analysis are indispensable:

- A diligent and critical analysis of the field work ahead. It is essential to examine the key actors (local development agencies, SME representative associations, etc.), even if the sponsor organisation is one of the most relevant and reliable regional actors.
- The methodical guidelines suggested here for carrying out the context analysis should be considered as an outline which should be adapted/personalised according to the specific characteristics of the respective context.
- The strategic work plan developed on the basis of the context analysis results should be considered as work in progress; if new inputs and strategic information come up, the document should be revised.

5.1.3 Planning a learnshop

A key element in the action learning process has proved to be planning; that is, designing the learnshop and scheduling it by identifying:

- the overall aim and context conditions
- the learning or working aim
- the content of each aim
- the method(s) of working
- the instruments and materials needed and to be used
- the roles to be taken by the participants

See 4A5: The planning of workshops

Diligent planning and preparation of workshops is often considered as a secretary's task or something which can be done "on the fly". At the beginning, most of the SME ACTor partners underestimated this task, but it turned out to be essential for the success of work and learnshops.

We learned that, as a rule of thumb, planning is as time-consuming and complex as the workshop itself, especially for an inexperienced facilitator since it requires establishing a sequence and hierarchy of goals, associating them with the desired results, defining the corresponding contents, selecting the most suitable methods, tools and materials, and, finally, calibrating the time requirements for each of the steps.

In most cases, the first attempts at planning learnshops carried out independently, i.e., without the support of the senior facilitator, led to unsatisfactory outcomes. In some cases the working goals proved to be unachievable, in other cases the choice of tools proved to be inadequate, and in numerous cases realistic timing of the different sessions turned out to be a high threshold.

We also had to learn that the preparation of a workshop needed careful briefing: at the beginning with the senior facilitator and during the subsequent steps with other colleagues and, if there was one, with the

representative of the sponsor organisation, i.e., the organisation that could be interested as a partner for the local networking project (the local development agency, the sectoral SME association, etc.). Careful preparation and previous briefing are key elements not only for appropriate workshop scheduling but also for ensuring a shared vision within the co-ordinating and organising team.

Moreover, careful planning and consideration is indispensable to permit flexibility during the workshop when the timing turns out to be insufficient or, as is more likely, when the participants decide to put in additional or different steps due to requirements that turn up during the work process.

The planning is just a proposal to start from. It was another potential critical variable for most of the partners who, for the first time, experienced the role of facilitator and who would have preferred the safety of a definitive conference programme.

A facilitator's testimony

But action learning is not conferencing:

"It is the learners who decide what they want to take away from a learnshop. The facilitator is just the person who organises possibilities of learning and who knows more or less what is possible in a given time. But he does not decide which opportunities are taken into consideration. In order to be reasonably sure of being able to offer possibilities, it is important to do the scheduling in as detailed a fashion as possible to be well prepared for any eventuality. It is the learners who make the choice".
Hans-Werner Franz, TUDO/sfs, senior facilitator

Planning does not only include the detailed scheduling of the workshop process itself, it includes all context conditions concerning the room or rooms, the chairs and (a few) tables, the catering, the breaks, even the leisure time activities in workshops lasting several days, i.e., it includes logistic planning.

See 4A4: The setting of workshops

One of the major difficulties nearly everywhere is the fact that there are not many rooms that have the conditions a workshop needs. Most meeting rooms have fixed seats or large and massive tables. It can be difficult to find a room where an open circle of chairs can be formed and where several walls are free for fixing posters showing work results.

The same can be said for the type of food for such working events, although this is also true of thousands of traditional conferences. Rich, heavy food slows down the brain and makes you want to sleep when you are supposed to work. The rational choice of light drinks and buffets, at least at the beginning, seems to stand no chance against national

preferences for sweet drinks and cookies, or rich, heavy lunches with beer or wine.

As far as time scheduling is concerned, the field experience showed the need to pay particular attention to a number of context and scheduling conditions:

- Learnshops need space, learning needs movement, tables are a barrier to movement.
- Learning needs light food and sufficient light drinks.
- Time must be allowed for the participants to arrive and get settled; learning needs pleasant framework conditions and company. Let people present themselves and get acquainted. Ice-breaking or warming up is a must.
- The last session is devoted to evaluation, or at least to some sort of feedback from the participants. Often time runs out and time keeping becomes difficult. In some cases learnshops ended up skipping the evaluation session, but this made the planning of the following workshop much more difficult.
- As breaks are an essential part of work they have to be planned as carefully as the work itself, and they should be meticulously respected.

See 4A8: Warming up or ice-breaking methods

Lessons learned

- **How to plan**. Planning a learnshop takes time and concentration and, especially for a beginner, carrying out the task with colleagues and the direct contribution of the sponsor organisation makes it easier to identify the aim and choose the right tools. In synthesis: briefing and de-briefing (evaluation briefings after the event) are essential. Furthermore, fieldwork shows that when designing the scheduling, the time for ice-breaking and the final evaluation session should be slightly overestimated in order to compensate for late starting and the working enthusiasm of the participants. Moreover, breaks need to be carefully planned and meticulously respected. It is also vital to get a good understanding of the context, logistics, and the available equipment early enough to find replacement solutions if necessary and avoid too much improvisation.
- **How to use the planned scheduling**. The scheduling is no more than a proposal for the participants; it cannot be imposed. The facilitator should be ready and have the capability to adapt and continuously revise the scheduling. The task is to achieve the objectives - everything else can be changed (contents, methods, tools, roles). Sometimes the result of work might be that even the objectives are modified or split up in a different sequence of learning steps.

5.1.4 Moderating a learnshop

Moderating a learnshop is one of the key tasks of the facilitator. In the SME ACTor project, partners scheduled, moderated and evaluated learnshops in their own regional areas for two main target groups:

See 2M2: Moderation as a role

- the so-called 2nd tier facilitators: i.e., professionals interested in becoming facilitators
- a group of managers and/or entrepreneurs of SMEs interested in building up a networking project.

During the learnshops, each partner directly experienced the multi-faceted and complex role of the facilitator/moderator. He/she proposed and used tools, and reflected on processes and results achieved. This section contains the main comments, feedback and reflection inputs from the learnshop fieldwork.

The participants' arrival: the launching session

In the kick-off learnshop, the starting session proved to be one of the most critical and important ones. Participants need to understand what a learnshop is and what the basic notions of action learning are. Roles should be clearly explained and the trust-building process should be carefully supported. This takes time and concentration but it can really be a crucial phase. The icebreaking session is fundamental, especially for SMEs. If during this phase "tension is eased off" and participants start sharing experiences and knowledge, the subsequent stages are much easier to manage. Although different ice-breaking tools have been proposed, the most common one was the simplest: self-presentation, with key information and main expectations visualised by the moderator who wrote them on a poster which was later placed on a wall clearly visible to everyone during the whole learnshop.

See 4A8: Warming up or ice-breaking methods

A facilitator's testimony

"The 'ice-breaking' period is needed in order to create a common understanding of the process and a trusting environment".
Mariana Lodroman, Unimpresa Romania, Bucharest case

The use of tools

What is the right tool to select for each session of the learnshop? How long can you use a selected tool during a session? Could it be better to work in subgroups? And if so, how can the subsequent plenary session profit from this work? How is the tool introduced and used correctly and effectively? These questions were the leitmotiv of most of the partners' experiences while scheduling and organising their

own learnshops. The important thing in a workshop is to achieve the predefined aims, independently of the tools employed, although keeping to this key rule of action learning can certainly be daunting for a beginner facilitator! Therefore, it is understandable that most of the partners decided to use the tools they were most acquainted with, that is, tools mostly used in project training/learning sessions: brainstorming, stakeholder analysis/five satisfactions, and mind mapping. In a few cases, six thinking hats and the Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram were also employed.

See 4A10: Brainstorming

Brainstorming, or more precisely, visualised brainstorming proved to be a really helpful tool that ensured immediate, broad participation and commitment, and that was very effective for leading the group towards a shared path and "vision", although it proved to be much more complex and potentially critical than expected. Actually, apart from requiring a great deal of concentration from the facilitator, this tool calls for a capacity of continuous and rapid de-constructing and re-constructing. The risk of "getting lost" without being able to cluster the ideas and contributions of the participants effectively is very high and not at all remote. For a beginner facilitator there can also be the risk of leading a discussion that develops into "scenario" analyses with little or no grounding in terms of concrete items and activities. People tend to talk about "what could be done" instead of "what will we do".

A facilitator's testimony

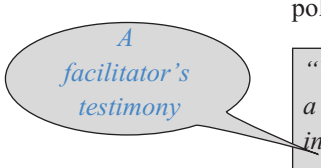
"Not so easy was the second part of the workshop when a brainstorming session was proposed. While the presentation of the Observatory aims and its foreseen outputs attracted the participants' attention, the following brainstorming session on the issue of innovation proceeded at a general and abstract level. In other words, participants did not enter into deeper practical considerations, e.g., starting with drawing up a first map of the capabilities in innovative SMEs, as suggested by the moderator. Keeping people anchored to concrete items (actions, experiences, specific knowledge) and not getting lost in scenario analyses, demands a good mastery of the action learning process by a facilitator, especially if he wants to help the group share a common identity and practice".
Enrico Rovida, Benedetta Sella, Team, the North-West Italy case

Although it appears to be one of the simplest tools, the experience in the field proved that brainstorming should be proposed and employed with caution. Proposing a brainstorming session making use of a deductive (pre-structured) approach instead of an inductive (open) one was a solution which emerged from the learnshops.

Regarding deductive and inductive approaches see 2M2: Moderation as a role

This turns out to be reassuring for the beginner facilitator and definitely decreases the risk of failure. In any case, the deductive approach should be defined in detail in advance; that is, planning the briefing session leading to the learnshop planning is fundamental (SEE).

Some of the SME ACTor 1st tier facilitators adopted a peculiar strategy based on using very basic tools repeatedly in order to create methodical understanding among the participants: to-do minutes, countdown planning, etc. Although simpler, some of these tools proved to be very insightful, contributing to the definitions of the network's policies and operative lines.



"When we as 1st tier facilitators contacted United Sounds it was a loosely woven and fairly young network of music event managers in Dortmund. From my experience, many networks which have only recently started working are based on a short-term planning perspective: the next event, the next press release, the next flyer to be published. They want action. They do not ask very precisely: What for are we doing this? And only if the network survives long enough to do so, they arrive at this basic question. The use of countdown planning as a tool for defining a long-term goal or vision (2 years ahead in this case) and setting out the action steps to reach it, is a good option to give these networkers a good perspective and a better reason for the time they invest, and to provide the network with a coherent 'evolutionary' timetable. In Dortmund, the response to this tool was very positive".
Christoph Kaletka, TUDO/sfs, Dortmund case

Also the "right" time for using the tools proved to be a relevant variable. It is better to apply the most complex tools – such as customer and supplier needs analysis and planning or an Ishikawa diagram – only when participants are more aware of their own action learning process. In short, avoid their use at the very beginning.

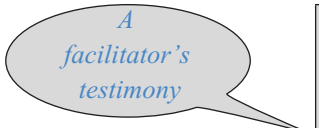
A facilitator's testimony

"In order to face the challenge of identifying all the actors relevant for encouraging academic start ups in Silesia (which was the scope of the Silesian regional laboratory), we introduced the two tools: 'the five satisfactions (stakeholder analysis)' and 'customer and supplier needs analysis and planning'. The 2nd tier facilitators could not fully benefit from the tools because they were applied too early. At that moment, the participants' involvement in the process was still fresh and they could not entirely make use of the context they were aware of. Even though the application of the methods partly failed, the participants understood that 'changing roles with client/partner may result in better communication and finding common benefits.' Anyway, it is recommended that the facilitator is absolutely sure when introducing these particular tools that the participants have relevant knowledge of and involvement in the process (either through their experience or from the case/issue/project description).

To encourage the 2nd tier facilitators to focus on a possible problem they might face in the process of facilitating academic start ups (i.e., lack of interest and involvement of students and young academic staff), we applied the 'Ishikawa diagram'. Immediately, the 2nd tier facilitators widened the horizons of their thinking. They approached the issues strategically and horizontally. Thanks to this, they managed to find 'reasons in areas they had never explored before. The Ishikawa or fishbone diagram allows looking for and dealing with distant reasons of problems instead of results of problems.' Anyway, the 'Ishikawa diagram' is a very useful tool but it requires excellent knowledge of the process that is the subject of the analysis. So the Silesian experience of putting the tool at the end of the learnshops scheme proved successful".

A. Ochojski, M. Baron, M. Chojkowski, University of Katowice, the Upper Silesia Case

The facilitator's skill in "making tools fit" into the context and, if pertinent, even to adapt the available tools in a creative way, is an important asset for the facilitator. Most of the SME ACTor 1st tier facilitators directly experienced this in the field.

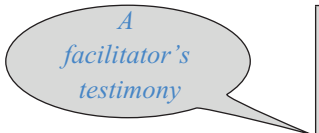


"Initially, de Bono's ***'six thinking hats'*** *was quite successfully used to structure the knowledge and experience of the 2nd tier facilitators in a more systematic way. As an added value, the participants found that it was not necessary to 'cover' all the hats, as sometimes it may be more useful to use various combinations of selected hats for prompt solutions in:*

- *quick idea assessment: yellow-black-red*
- *pursuit of solutions: white-green*
- *identifying the reasons and results of mistakes: black-green*
- *progress assessment: blue-yellow"*

A. Ochojski, M. Baron, M. Chojkowski, University of Katowice, the Upper Silesia Case

Explaining the rules in a clear and comprehensible way is of paramount importance for all tools. Some of the partners directly experienced how a deficient explanation could affect the whole process negatively.



"During the learnshop we had planned to use the 'customer and supplier needs analysis' tool on the basis of the first learnshop's outcomes (stakeholder analysis). So we divided the participants into three groups. However, the instructions we supplied on carrying out the analysis were not clear and the subsequent discussion was rather unfocused".

Saverio Primavera, Forim, the Potenza case

Securing results

Whatever tool or set of tools is used, the learnshop must end with clear and tangible results. At the end of each learnshop,

- participants should be able to clearly perceive the progress made and,
- at the same time, they should be aware of the following steps to be undertaken and, consequently,
- they should have identified the main objectives of the learnshop that will follow.

Failure to achieve these aims will directly impact on the level and quality of the participants' attention and commitment. In the SME ACTor project, some partners directly experienced how an unclear result that did not add value at the end of a learnshop session affected the quality of participation of the subsequent learnshop.

In most cases, the SME ACTor learnshop cycle ended up with clear and consistent results, for example:

- new shared concepts as a basis for the co-operative path
- the launching of common websites
- the preparation of joint steps of action (events, projects, press campaigns, etc.)
- the design of training programmes
- detailed multi-annual work plans
- project proposals presented in the framework of local or international bids.

Besides shared co-operative projects, one of the key results to attain is the ability of the participants to become a self-driven team able to use the facilitating tools and techniques in autonomy:

A facilitator's testimony

"*In my opinion, this was the ideal meeting to take a step back and let the United Sounds networkers decide on the next steps alone. I have offered help if needed in the future, but this is a good time to acknowledge that both the contents and the basic methodical know-how are sufficient for United Sounds to proceed without me".*
Christoph Kaletka, TUDO/sfs, Dortmund case

After and between the learnshops

"Facilitating does not end with the end of the learnshop!" This partner statement describes well the need to envisage a much longer and articulated development path. The following points should be remembered:

- *Debriefing* with other facilitators when the learnshop has been co-facilitated in pairs, or with the reference person of the sponsor organisation, is indispensable.
- *Reporting* (also as part of debriefing) comes next, using the appropriate tool, i.e., the evaluation format. This tool proved to be very useful; it is able to record the main working and learning aims achieved as well as create an immediate link with the developed visualisation process. All partners made use of it extensively. The only criticism that emerged was one concerning time: posters and pictures of the posters offer a reduced vision of the richness of ideas and exchange that this kind of working yields. In order to avoid losing all this richness of concepts and ideas the core of them should be transformed into a written report within one week at the most. After three or four days the early memories tend to start fading away.

See 4A15: Learnshop evaluation

While the main goal of the evaluation report is to help participants record the learnshop achievements, transforming them into working instruments for subsequent measures and actions, its narrating section proved to be a powerful tool for supporting the facilitators' empowerment process. Narrating stories and cases and identifying lessons learnt strongly encouraged the self-assessment and reflective process and, as

a consequence, contributed to the continuous improvement of 1st tier facilitators' competences.

Lessons learned

- **Arrival.** The learnshop launching session can be a really crucial point. It should be carefully prepared and managed. Clarify roles and specificities of the action learning methodology and schedule sufficient time for the ice-breaking session.
- **Tools.** For a beginner facilitator, it is better to choose a deductive approach while using tools such as brainstorming. The proper and effective use of tools for participants is part of their own learning process; it is better not to use some of the more complex tools in early stages of the action learning process. Tools should be clearly explained and introduced so that they can easily be adapted to the learnshop's or the participants' particular context.
- **Securing results.** At the end of the learnshop, participants need to have a clear perception of the result(s) achieved. This is really important, not only for the success of the learnshop but for making the whole action learning path a success. It also ensures the participants' attention and commitment.
- **After and between the learnshops.** While the debriefing and the evaluation report are essential steps for action from learning and for the networking path, narrating and thus reflecting experiences gained is effective and useful for supporting the facilitator's empowerment process. It can be done individually or as a team.

5.2 e-Facilitating networking in distance co-operation contexts

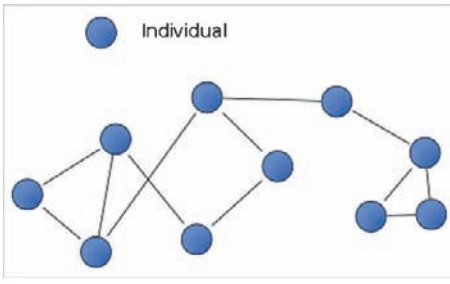
5.2.1 Facilitation of networks and communities in times of Web 2.0

In this part, based on our own experience in the framework of SME ACTor as well as other projects, and the review of other documented experiences and related literature, we will analyse how the facilitator role can be supported or even enhanced by electronic means when a face-to-face encounter is not possible or its frequency is insufficient for the purposes of the "facilitated" network or community and when, as a consequence, distance co-operation processes need to be activated for the benefit of the joint work. This part will conclude with a narration and evaluation of our own virtual experience in SME ACTor, providing the reader with a concrete case to better understand how to benefit from new technologies and also to illustrate the flexibility required for adapting online tools to the facilitation process on a one-by-one project basis.

We will start by situating our subject of web-based facilitation in the context of social networks and Web 2.0, as the contemporary internet generation is commonly referred to. In doing so we will also benefit from information contained in one of the most popular Web 2.0 websites, Wikipedia, which in our view can be considered a sort of internet "field book".

Social networks

When we speak about social networks we are referring to social arrangements of individuals (or network members) whose relations with other members prevail over their individual attributes. Those relations can be of different types, ranging from sharing values, visions, and ideas to friendship or commercial exchanges. In the internet world, the concept of the social network is also used to refer to human interactions in virtual environments (online games, chats, forums, etc.).



A social network can be represented by means of graph-based structures used in graph theory, where nodes correspond to individuals or organisations (sometimes denominated actors) and arcs to relations among them. These social network diagrams serve to map all relevant links (represented as lines, sometimes of different colours to differentiate the diversity of relationships) between the nodes (represented as points or circles) of a social network and can be used to determine the social capital of individual actors.

Social networks operate on many levels – from an interpersonal to an international scale – and research suggests that they can be crucial in determining how problems are solved or organisations are run, as well as in establishing the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals. In accordance with Freeman, who in The Development of Social Network Analysis (2006) summarises the progress of social network analysis, its approach from whole to part, from structure to the individual, brings an alternative vision where the attributes of individuals are less important than their relationships and ties with other actors within the network.

In this line of thinking, the profile of a social network helps to determine the utility of the network for its members. The more networks are open to other networks, the more they will probably introduce new ideas and opportunities to their members as compared to closed ones. In other words, a community whose members are connected to other social networks seems to be in a better position to access a wider range of information and opportunities than those whose members only interact internally (Scott 1991).

From the individual perspective, individual power within organisations often comes more from the degree to which a person within a network is at the centre of many relationships than from his/her actual function. His/her position in the intersection of many "human being webs" allows a person to exercise influence or act as a broker within his/her social networks, also bridging networks which are not directly linked. Nowadays, professionals are increasingly aware of this trend and adhere strongly to it in response to the observation that social networks have extended their influence and play a key role in different fields of interest, from recruitment of qualified professionals to international affairs.

ICT and social networks

It is worth mentioning that the internet in its current level of maturity is making an enormous contribution to the development of social networks. The support of the online world for these networks goes back to the times when internet access started to be commercialised on an international scale. In 1995, the web site *http://www.classmates.com* was created to

help people recover or maintain contact with old friends from school or university. In 2002 some web sites began to appear that promoted online networks of circles of friends; the term "social network" was at that time used to describe the relations inside the virtual communities, and its use started to extend the following year with the arrival of sites such as MySpace or Xing. The popularity of these sites grew quickly and large companies entered the space of the social networks on the internet, such as Google in 2004 and Yahoo in 2005, making the term fashionable.

Today there are hundreds of social network websites and social networking is actively promoted by different specialised sites. Some of them, such as the professional networking site Linked In, have developed sophisticated systems based on the theory of the six degrees of separation, whose main concept is that the number of contacts grows exponentially with the number of connections in the chain, and only a small number of known connections (from 5 to 7 in experiments) is necessary to reach anybody in the world, even the US President (Watts 2003).

In general terms, social software, i.e., online tools used to exploit the effectiveness of the social networks, operates in three areas which are often combined: community (find and join peers), communication (share knowledge) and co-operation (make things together).

Blended networking

Blended networking is an extended approach to the social network, which normally combines elements or contacts from the real world (through face-to-face events) and the internet (through virtual communities), creating a mixture where both elements complement each other. As we will see later, a sort of blended networking modality was adopted in our project SME ACTor where regular transnational meetings were complemented with daily communication and co-operation through a customised Moodle space. The same model would also be appropriate to the many transnational co-operation projects running at present in Europe and beyond.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is a new concept introduced by O'Reilly in the title of his famous conference in San Francisco in 2004 just when web-based interconnectivity and interactivity were mature enough to be generalised. This concept emphasises the evolution of the internet into a platform where creativity, communications, information sharing and collaboration dominate, and an architecture of "participation" (as opposed to "information", the central value of Web 1.0) allows users to take an active role and contribute to enrich online content, creating multiplicative network effects. In fact, this idea of Web 2.0 has led to the development and evolution of web culture communities, social networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs and folksonomies (bottom-up classification systems that have emerged from social tagging or categorisation with simple words, and have become a common collaborative practice under the Web 2.0 paradigm). It has also popularised the

Open Source software model, which is perceived as an enabler of software democratisation and an accelerator of Web 2.0 deployment.

Typical Web 2.0 features are synthesised by Andrew McAfee (2006) with the SLATES acronym: Search-Links-Authoring-Tags-Extensions-Signals.

Web 2.0 offers social networks and communities a wide range of resources and possibilities. These range from collaborative content production (thanks to wikis where people undo and redo each other's work, or blogs where posts and comments of individuals are accumulated over time) to easy location of information (tag/keyword-based searches, intelligent links organisation) or automatic news/updates communication (RSS, e-mail alerts) and enhancement of decentralised decision-making processes (power democratisation, collective intelligence) (McAfee 2006).

Needless to say, the Web 2.0 phenomenon has also reached the education field. Universities attract young students by using Web 2.0-based strategies such as promoting student blogging or virtual meetings in social networking websites (YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, etc.) which are sometimes additionally customised for student communities of selected (private) universities. Secondary and tertiary level institutions are, in their turn, oriented to a massive use of Moodle, the most popular open source e-learning platform these days, and also the platform we have chosen to support distance collaboration in the SME ACTor project.

The creation of new opportunities of networking and collaboration for SMEs and professionals (i.e., facilitators) in this context has increased enormously, but it is necessary to reflect on how networking, facilitation and lateral leadership can be properly enhanced by online tools and services, and also on identifying the constraints of the virtual medium for the distance facilitation task.

5.2.2 What does (e-) facilitation mean?

Before analysing how to take advantage of the collaborative e-learning environment for facilitation tasks in the context of geographically distributed networks/clusters and during a whole project life cycle, we want to review briefly what facilitator, community, learning, and teaching mean from the perspective of the action learning paradigm. (Those who remember these approaches and definitions may skip this passage and go directly to the following "Set of practical recommendations…").

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Subsequently, we will examine how to contextualise these concepts in virtual learning environments (VLE) as they introduce a disruptive element, distance, which is normally seen as an obstacle. However, if properly treated, this can be converted into an opportunity to enhance co-operation. We will refer to VLEs in general and to the concrete case of SME ACTor VLE.

- A *facilitator* (1st approach) can be defined as a developer of social capital, that is, of trust for co-operation between potential competitors (co-opetition networks). A facilitator also develops a true culture of co-operation (i.e., among the members of a cluster), where social capital is the result of social interaction based on reciprocity and trust. Co-operation is the sum of joint/co-ordinated action for achieving common aims and is a key element, making a real difference in the development of a cluster. Co-opetition networks are kinds of community where instrumental relations prevail, so network management, i.e., the facilitator, needs to focus on incrementing cohesion, that is, growth of mutual reliability, to enhance co-operation.
- A facilitator can also be defined (2nd approach) as the professionals giving support to aggregation processes of SMEs by promoting and facilitating activities of inter-organisational non-formal and informal learning, networking and animation of local communities. Such a definition implies consideration of the four facilitator sub-roles (moderator, expert in process management, teacher and coach) and the professional profiles that normally play the facilitator role among SMEs (consultants supporting groups of companies in co-operative projects; professionals/managers from sectoral/employer associations or from local development agencies; trainers from the local VET systems).
- In the context of action learning, that is, of learning by doing and doing by learning, the orientation to common results is what really makes the difference. For this reason, when we speak about communities later we will be thinking of communities of performance, which are an advanced form of communities of practice with a consolidated culture of learning and change, explicit common goals, and strategies to achieve these goals. Part of the mission of an engaged facilitator is to help a community of practice become a community of performance, and in most communities this can only happen on the basis of a well organised process that combines regular face-to-face meetings and strong distance collaboration processes.
- Finally, if learning is seen as an appropriation process based on constructing new competence or de- and re-constructing existing competence, teaching will be considered here as a facilitation process of creating learning opportunities rather than a process where knowledge is transferred from somebody who knows to somebody who does not. On the contrary, we hold that knowledge cannot be transferred.

Basic concepts of action thinking are explained in detail in Chap. 1 Messages

It is in this rough conceptual framework that we want to analyse how to e-facilitate networking and make communities of performance develop at a distance in geographically distributed co-operation contexts and

from the perspective of action learning methodology. In other words, to analyse how electronic means, appropriately selected and administered, can become a powerful resource that enriches the set of methods and instruments facilitating learning and action, i.e.,

Cf. 2M1: The functions and roles of network facilitators

- facilitating dialogue, reflection and the construction of common sense (shared meanings or shared models)
- facilitating processes of co-operation and trust building
- facilitating active learning in such processes
- facilitating personal involvement (participation) of regional actors from companies and institutions in all activities and processes developing social capital.

5.2.3 The ten commandments of VLE facilitation: a set of practical recommendations

The following set of practical recommendations can serve as a guide for taking advantage of the collaborative e-learning environment for facilitation tasks during a whole project life cycle. In any distance learning process the initial design and appropriate set-up of the virtual learning environment (VLE) is crucial. Its importance can be compared with that of preparing a workshop: "One of the central tasks of facilitators consists of organising such workshops for their networks or for parts and projects of such networks creating conditions which ease contact, common learning, working experience and the growth of trust and mutual understanding. The planning of the working and learning arrangements includes detailed consideration of which tools, media and materials are needed" (Message 2M1).

Cf. 4A4: The setting of workshops

Recommendation 1: Consider context conditions

Recommendation 1:
The virtual learning environment must be adapted to the specific context conditions of the network

In a similar way, a virtual learning environment (VLE) focused on collaboration among geographically distributed network members and addressing a common purpose requires consideration of technical choices, organisational measures and detailed environment design in order to activate the autonomous learning and collaboration of participants. In addition, if this collaboration is produced across country borders and the group is multinational (as it was in the case of SME ACTor) it is important to reflect in advance on the multicultural factor, as this can be a potential obstacle for community building unless community members are encouraged *to learn from the cultural differences and build together something stronger than what they could build with*

fellows from their same cultural groups (which is a concept that is at the root of intercultural pedagogies).

Recommendation 2: Agree on rules

Recommendation 2:
Any virtual learning environment serving as a platform of co-operation needs a real agreement, taken face to face, on structures, procedures and rules of communication, at least by an initial group.
A VLE is a tool and does not guarantee by itself that effective communication will take place. So the first thing to do is to establish clear project team agreements on the structure – on the what, how, who and when of using the facility.

Recommendation 3: Select the tool considering the purpose and existing skills

Recommendation 3:
Select the tool or platform considering the purpose as well as the existing skills of the networking group.
Making technical choices and decisions implies first of all a clear understanding of the purposes of the community as well as of the previous experience in "virtual" environments of both the community (existing virtual group dynamics) and individuals (in other virtual collaborative environments). Unless we deal with a community where members tend naturally to accept learning and applying new tools that can improve their common work, which for example would apply to technology or innovation clusters and networks, average groups are normally reluctant to adopt any new technical instrument that requires a learning effort but does not always have obvious benefits. This observation leads us to suggest that, in most cases, it is advisable to recycle/adapt tools that are already known by most of the community members or are at least popular enough to be accepted by the majority. This is just a way of minimising the "learning cost" which can be a high threshold, and to encourage active participation from the very beginning. Of course the variety of tools available nowadays is enormous and heterogeneous. Currently, at the end of 2008, we can find mature communities using tools as diverse as Google Groups, Linked In or Facebook, but it may still happen that you are confronted with a group of people who are not at all or hardly familiar with collaborative tools and where only e-mail is naturally accepted by members as an electronic distance collaboration tool.

Nevertheless, this general premise can be sidelined as soon as certain favourable conditions of creating an improved, customised virtual framework are given – basically when the facilitator feels comfortable using Web 2.0 tools and the community members (most of them) appreciate the benefits of learning and working within a tailored virtual platform. When this is the case, the facilitator (sometimes with the help of an IT specialist) can evaluate the state of the art of electronic tools and

make a selection oriented rather towards the community development perspectives than on the initial learning difficulties its use may imply.

Just to illustrate this case, in the framework of the SME ACTor project we noted a heterogeneous level of confidence and knowledge regarding electronic tools among the 1st tier facilitator's group but a strong interest on the part of the more active member of this transnational group of facilitators in innovating and learning from experience. From this perspective, our analysis of the state of the art led us to select Moodle as the platform for building our own VLE. Moodle is a popular learning management system based on an "open source" philosophy. It is extremely versatile and admits different combinations of training and collaborative processes (from knowledge sharing to joint writing); moreover, it is cheap.

Another, more sophisticated option would have been to adopt a platform already prepared to allow shared editing, visualisation and manipulation of contents (normally "cards" as in a face-to-face workshop), but we failed to find an appropriate facility already available in the market. Unfortunately more sophisticated tools such as Adobe Acrobat Connect Meeting were launched after our Moodle platform had become operative.

Recommendation 4: Customise your VLE

Recommendation 4:
Customise the VLE according to the specific needs of your network.

Just making a technical choice is not enough – it must be followed by a proper customisation process. Designing virtual learning networks involves a complex balance between the organisation of the content and the spaces for participation. In each case must be carefully defined:

- how instructional activities (if there are any) are sequenced
- how collaboration is promoted
- how the tools themselves offer a solution to (self) structure the results of such a co-operative process
- how the interactions between participants, tasks and materials are structured
- how the whole process is evaluated

In other words, the selected tool must be submitted to a configuration and tuning process which is strongly dependent on the needs of the community and the features of the tool itself. Of course, the confidence, knowledge and skills of the facilitator and/or his/her technical support staff regarding the features of the tool are of key importance for taking maximum advantage of it.

It is recommended that the facilitator

1. define the way that participants, contents/resources, communication, etc. will be managed in accordance with the tool's capabilities
2. implement these
3. conduct brief experimentation (e.g., between the facilitator and a technician)
4. refine the instrument, going slightly more into details and implementing some of the more sophisticated features of the tool, but only if they will probably be useful in the first stage of the community life
5. repeat steps 3 and 4 until comfortable with the result, but at the same time avoiding too much complexity. Remember that a VLE is a living organism which will evolve in accordance with the needs of the community.

For the same reasons as above, we give here a recommendation for the delivery process. Even when a wide range of features is offered by the tool (as normally happens), they should be delivered in small doses in accordance with the learning rhythm and increasing demand of users. As customisation can only be produced on a one-by-one project basis, we describe our own learning experience with Moodle as an illustrative case for the reader at the end of this chapter (developed under *Lessons learned from the SME ACTor experience*…).

Recommendation 5: Procure user care

Recommendation 5:
Offer users online and direct help.
As the last preparatory task, we would like to recommend the provision, from the very beginning, of some common user care resources which will help the customer feel more comfortable and relaxed, such as:

- standard contents about the use of the platform (i.e., online guidelines or handbook)
- an on-demand service for resolving doubts, questions, etc. about how the platform works (i.e., online/offline help desk or intelligent help systems)
- frequently asked questions (FAQs) to provide answers to repeated doubts, remarks or problems pointed out by users of other communities (this is expertise the facilitator can obtain from personal experience or directly from online forums and knowledge databases related to the selected tool). This can later be complemented with the experience produced inside the community
- finally, we want to mention an aspect that is normally forgotten in VLEs: We know from experience that coffee breaks in a workshop provide the momentum for informal networking, but can breaks be emulated in a virtual environment? Think on that and offer the participants a space to meet informally. Some pleasant surprises will definitely emerge from such informal exchanges of contacts, ideas, and knowledge.

e-Facilitation in action

Once the VLE is structured and implemented, the facilitator is the person responsible of guiding the whole process. To be properly played, the e-Facilitator role requires combining the four sub-roles already defined (moderator, trainer, coach, expert in process management) in different proportions, and the share of the different roles will probably vary during the life cycle of the community.

Recommendation 6: Learn from what you know about your participants

Recommendation 6:
Know your participants and draw conclusions for action from what you know.

We will skip the selection process of participants because the e-facilitator normally supports networks or communities where the participants join simply by a self-adhesion process with few filters. Either they are attracted/accepted by the community itself or by its promoter, sponsor, etc. However, once the participants join the community, the e-facilitator must analyse their profiles in terms of fields of domain, interests, motivation and e-skills, and plan activities taking into account their diversity inside the network.

Recommendation 7: Revise operative aims and rules

Recommendation 7
Revise operative aims and rules from time to time and make sure that they are visible to all participants.

Our vision is to orient action towards common goals and strategies which the community has established in the real world. In order to make communication work properly from the very beginning in accordance with these objectives, we recommend revising at regular intervals operative aims and rules of dealing with them in the virtual environment. We explicitly want to encourage facilitating the agreements on operative aims and rules by using the facilitation tools presented in this book. These may also be helpful in the virtual world of the internet.

It is very important to make agreed aims and rules visible and remind participants of them (individually or as a whole group) as frequently as needed during the life cycle of the community or project, until the participants have fully accepted them. Aims and rules are normally agreed in a face-to-face initial encounter with all the participants, but if it is necessary to organise this first session at a distance or if any other online conferences are needed, try to organise them with the whole group connected simultaneously or divided into subgroups that are as large as the communication tool can support (i.e., Skype already accepts up to ten simultaneous speakers in a conference call, whereas one and a half years ago it was only accepting up to 5). At a distance, shared visualisation is more difficult, but sometimes it can be produced thanks to software tools such as Buzan's iMindMap or MindManager (or open source products like FreeMind or others)

List of mind mapping software: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mind_mapping_software

which can be simultaneously shown to participants through an application sharing facility (normally provided by virtual classroom tools or certain popular communication tools).

Recommendation 8:
Stimulate interaction and insist on the use of the VLE for distance communication, particularly at the beginning.

Recommendation 8: Stimulate interaction. Be an e-moderator.

Often people keep using email for many communication purposes which could and should be operated via the central networking environment. Stimulating interaction via this central resource in the execution of the decisions taken and reminding people who use other communication channels is an important task of the virtual side of facilitation, particularly at the beginning of a project or in other co-operation contexts.

Making people participate, concentrating communication flows on common purposes, asking relevant questions, clarifying ambiguities, helping to analyse and produce agreements – all these are tasks a good moderator knows how to perform in a face-to-face session, but perhaps the electronic means inhibit him/her from operating the same way at a distance. The only valid recommendation for such a case is to practice, practice and practice moderation at a distance by making intensive use of the communication tools accepted by the community: forum, chat, voice over IP, etc.

We have mentioned the importance of considering the different sub-roles of facilitation for a better analysis. Moderation of online communication processes is definitely more important when the community starts operating virtually than when it becomes a common practice. It manifests itself in care for the whole environment - which should be comfortable and well equipped, easy to access and use, in the communication of participation rules, in the regular collection and integration of feedback, in animating people to participate and by encouraging debate, knowledge sharing or simply networking.

When sub-groups are required they should be organised under the common goal-oriented approach already mentioned, but at the same time an effort should be made to mix people. For example, if two persons participate in two groups each, it might make sense to have them coincide in one only. Produce more links among the members of the network, avoiding isolation of members or sub-groups.

Recommendation 9:
Make communication successful by establishing visible links between agreements and working processes communicated electronically.

Recommendation 9: Structure and visualise collaborative production processes

Unfortunately most of the tools presented in Chap. 4, which could help in visualising and structuring the collaboration processes, are not available

electronically at the present time. Nevertheless despite the scarcity of pre-formatted electronic tools for visualising and structuring such working and learning processes, much can be done to make work progress visible.

Structuring and visualising the common production process of the group relies on a more basic process that operates at a more general level. It consists of:

- transforming data into information, that is, putting into context any data provided by the participants
- transforming information into knowledge, that is, selecting information which is relevant for the prosecution of the common goals and making the links evident.

This is a process a moderator can only facilitate by promoting agreements among the participants on conclusions, thus making successful working and learning visible.

As an expert in e-process management, the facilitator's global observation of what is going on in the community and his/her deep knowledge of the available instruments are the main resources a facilitator has for structuring a flow of tasks and activities. As such his/her three main tasks consist of:

- pursuing and documenting the attainment of general and operative goals by monitoring the work flows for each operation strand
- documenting goal attainment by consolidating the work results, i.e., deliverables, pieces of collaborative knowledge in different stages of development, etc.
- monitoring the level of protection the documents and deliverables are supposed to have, i.e., confidential, restricted to certain defined groups, public.

Recommendation 10: Be an e-trainer and become an e-coach

Recommendation 10:
Be an e-trainer and become an e-coach.

Some *training* will probably be required by the network members at the very beginning when the collaboration platform is introduced and customised step by step. At the outset, some people will probably feel disoriented by the tool. Systematic skill development is required, as well as an accurate explanation of the way in which the platform is supposed to match the community needs. This should include:

- how information is organised
- where to upload documents to share
- where to discuss openly or privately
- how to collaborate in the creation of common pieces of content, etc.

Also later on, every time new features are introduced, a new tool or resource is incorporated or new agreements are taken which lead to practical changes, a new training action may be necessary.

Training is understood as "facilitating learning". The e-training role will be user-centred by definition and will consist of making it easier for the participant to learn how to use the tools and resources that are relevant for his/her own participation, and how to take full advantage of them. Training in this context is frequently an on-demand task which tends to be confused with coaching as it is often highly personalised. In fact, aspects of coaching will start to manifest themselves in a variety of ways when the process matures, ranging from true mentoring or asking an expert, to tutoring and peer to peer support, and of course, working on conflicts.

5.2.4 Lessons learned from the SME ACTor experience: the collaborative virtual learning community (CVLC)

Here we will expose the virtual co-operation process among European facilitators initiated in the framework of the SME ACTor project. The project had several levels of co-operation that had to be organised and linked by a transparent working and learning context.

A more detailed description of the project and its organisation can be found in the Introduction (Chap. 1)

- Level 1:
  International co-operation of the project partners in the management and administration of the project
- Level 2:
  International co-operation of the 1st tier facilitators, i.e., those belonging to the immediate project partners.
- Level 3:
  Regional/national co-operation of the 1st tier facilitators with their regional, in one case national, co-operation partners whose networking was supported and who were to become 2nd tier facilitators.
- Level 4:
  Regional/national co-operation within the newly developed regional networking contexts, i.e., among the 2nd tier facilitators and their specific networking context.
- Level 5:
  International co-operation among all 1st and 2nd tier facilitators safeguarding access to the Messages and Tools developed or collected in the course of the project and exchanging information on experiences gained during the implementation of the regional processes. The final

goal of this level was to become the website of an international, at least European, network of network facilitators.

It was this multi-level setting that required the drafting and implementation of an appropriate framework for distance co-operation, built and managed according to action learning principles.

Cf. 4A15: Learnshop evaluation

As we did in the evaluation process of the regional learn- and workshops developing the respective networks, we will offer here two different ways of learning:

- an evaluative one (*Evaluation* or *Self Evaluation*) presenting a sober analysis of the achievements in terms of preparation, contents and methods used.
- a rather descriptive one focusing on relating experience to individual or collective learning processes which we called *Narration,* as we wanted stories. The facilitator testimonies in this chapter have been taken from these narrations.

5.2.4.1 The SME ACTor collaborative virtual learning community (CVLC)

This virtual community was born with the aim in mind of becoming in the future a relevant European virtual community of learning facilitators operating in favour of SME aggregation and networking. It was developed in three phases.

Phase 1: Setting up the project management and administration environment

Phase 1:
During the first project team workshop in Dortmund/Germany (March 2007) we took the fundamental decision of working with two tools:

- one for the project management, co-ordination and administration: TasksPro which was immediately implemented in order to monitor and supervise the progress of the project implementation.
- another one to be selected for the co-operative work process that was not yet identified.

Phase 2: Selecting and customising the software

Phase 2:
After a period of assessment and selection of tools available in the market according to a number of criteria defined in line with the working requirements of the project partners, aims and tasks, we presented a first version of the virtual collaborative platform for facilitators based on Moodle, the popular online, open-source, learning management tool. This was done at the second project team workshop in Viladecans/Spain held in June 2007. After a trial period and feedback/discussions during a one week learnshop in the wonderful monastery of *Labro*, high up in the mountains north of Rome, the platform design was redefined and communication rules established in accordance with the experiences gained during the work in Phase 1 with TasksPro and during the trial period with Moodle. They were

- on the one hand, in tune with the main tasks and work processes of the SME ACTor project
- on the other hand, in line with the co-operation path to be developed by the 1st tier facilitators, later on with the 2nd tier facilitators, and finally as an open platform for facilitator throughout the world, although mainly in Europe.

Phase 3: Reshaping the learning environment and virtual collaboration among 1st tier facilitators

Phase 3:
As a result of this clearing process, the following areas were created. These were mainly built on the structure of final products and deliverables promised by the project, or "courses" in the Moodle terminology:

- State-of-the-art report
- Context analysis reports
- Facilitator curriculum
- Regional Labs
- Benchmarking paths
- Templates and resources
- Fieldbook preparation (added later)

SME ACTor Moodle homepage

After the platform was reshaped in this way, it began to be effectively used by the end of 2007. Its scope in this phase was to serve as a space for knowledge sharing and discussion among the 1st tier facilitators - the transnational group of facilitators trained in Labro according to the facilitator curriculum.

Phase 4: Enlargement to 2nd tier facilitators and SME representatives

Phase 4:
In order to avoid confusion about the use of different electronic resources which was reported by several participants:

- Moodle was reserved as the collaborative space where the evaluation of the learnshops was reported, experiences made in such learnshops were exchanged, and the production of the fieldbook could be observed and evaluated by the partners and their facilitators
- While the TasksPro resource, already in use before Moodle was set up, was defined as the tool for monitoring the accomplishment of project tasks and deliveries and the project progress in general
- The project website http://www.smeactor.eu was left as the space for project dissemination and marketing.

In a later stage, access to the platform was progressively enlarged to include the participants of the learning laboratories, that is, the 2nd tier facilitator groups (local experts) and the SME representatives. It is worth mentioning that there were notable differences in the way that 2nd tier facilitator groups made use of Moodle (and other tools) in the different local communities, demonstrating a heterogeneous level of engagement and participation at local level (see evaluation below for three relevant examples).

At the end of the project, the Collaborative Virtual Learning Community was formed by more than 130 qualified professionals/managers dealing with the project. Individual facilitators or networks who were not participating in the SME ACTor project also had the opportunity (and still have, at the release date of this book) to spontaneously join the virtual community by sending an email to the co-ordinators.

5.2.4.2 Self-Evaluation: the use of electronic resources by the main target group (1st tier facilitators)

With reference to the phases presented above, we will undertake a brief assessment of the virtual experience in the SME ACTor project.

Phases 1, 2 and 3:

Setting-up, customising and re-shaping the VLE

The most notable aspects of these first three phases were:

- the fact that discussions about the scope, use and limits of the VLE were sustained by a reduced group of the 1st tier facilitators with a certain experience in using such facilities and with a certain inclination to accept that such technology can help make things easier
- that thanks to the action learning methods used actively throughout the project, agreements on this issue were reached in a productive way
- that visualising the decision-making process and its results is a very useful method for reducing the threshold of access for those less experienced in the use of virtual environments, as well as for reflecting and re-defining VLE spaces and modalities of use.

Phase 4:
Virtual collaboration among 1st tier facilitators, 2nd tier facilitators and SME representatives
After 1 year of Moodle experimentation by the 1st tier facilitators group, we could clearly identify different levels of use intensity for the project.

- The context analysis, the activities of the regional labs and the virtual practices (under "Benchmarking paths") were completely reported through the platform
- A full action learning curriculum was documented and shared there
- A set of templates and other resources was put at the disposal of the user community
- It is remarkable that the facilitators hardly took advantage of the opportunity to experiment with some typical Web 2.0 resources such as fora and wikis. The possibilities of active exchange were much less appreciated than the documentation of work progress, deliveries, evaluations and narrated experiences. In this sense we have not been successful, despite repeated reminders and insistence on using Moodle as our project's favourite tool for communication, sharing and developing common knowledge at distance. One of the reasons may be the extensive use of email during the first phases of the project until Moodle could be used.
- We also noticed that the level of involvement varied significantly between facilitators, due to barriers of various kinds: technical, cultural or attitudinal.
- Still more important was the observation that the virtual participation of 2nd tier facilitators and SME representatives significantly relied on how active their local (1st tier) facilitators were.
- In 3 out of 9 participating regions, experimentation with the VLE was practically non-existent.

Attitudes towards new e-tools

A deeper analysis of our apparent failure in preparing and encouraging 1st tier facilitators to take advantage of the electronic means led us to some important conclusions:

- Average users are not confident enough with the technology and prefer personal contact whenever possible. Moreover they tend to avoid incorporating new tools which can make their digital world more complex than before. Unless the benefit is obvious (and sometimes not even in this case), they will not make any effort to adapt to the VLE.
- There are no tools available in the market that completely fulfil the methodical requirements of action learning; this is a clear disadvantage for implementing virtual collaboration under its principles. Action learning methods can only succeed with equal, simultaneous, synchronous, bottom-up participation in a visualised working

Tools for online action learning are very restricted

and learning process. At present, this situation cannot be produced online, in particular synchronous activities reproducing real interaction in a learnshop space can hardly be carried out virtually; there is no tool for creating an online space in which to interact, listen to and look at co-workers and co-learners while discussing, writing and presenting or moving cards on a commonly perceived surface. Real-time visualisation of simultaneous and synchronous working and learning is not reproducible. Even in the very advanced virtual classroom environments the communication shows a star structure concentrating on a teacher or tutor. Action learning instead needs the possibility of spontaneous contributions without showing up and being admitted by a teacher or tutor; it requires a network structure of communication allowing everybody at any time to see, listen and act or react at ease. If this is true, action learning methods can hardly be used for distance working with state-of-the-art technologies. We would have needed tools developed ad hoc for that purpose, but this should be the subject of another dedicated project.

- Another important conclusion we extracted from our experience which is perfectly in line with the action learning philosophy, is that facilitation mediated by technology is an adaptive, learning-by-doing process where the tools have to be chosen and customised in accordance with the user community's (and the facilitator's!) needs, backgrounds, purposes and reluctance/permeability to technology.

This last conclusion emerges from the following three testimonies of 1st tier facilitators about the way in which they adapted the use of available electronic means to their facilitation task when the local context required its use for enhancing distance co-operation among local beneficiaries:

A facilitator's testimony

The use of Moodle for the 2nd tier facilitators training

The use of Moodle for the 2nd tier facilitators' training in Poland was initiated during the first learnshop. The participants were informed about the possibility of sharing ideas and experiences as well as exchanging files via Moodle. The virtual learning function refers to a regional and international dimension. The repository function of Moodle was linked to a series of eight learnshops in Silesia, Poland. 1st tier facilitators in Poland regularly prepared action learning evaluation forms of the learnshops as well as other resources related to the learnshops. All the materials were uploaded to Moodle shortly after each learnshop as it was seen as a basis for improving the action learning process of all the participants. The usage of Moodle shows that 2nd tier facilitators were not interested in building a Virtual

Learning Community. It was observed that they preferred personal and email contacts. On the other hand, the server statistics show that using Moodle as a file repository proved quite successful for Polish 2nd tier facilitators.
Reported by the Silesian team (Poland)

A facilitator's testimony

Web-based collaboration by SMEs and facilitators at Dortmund
Why did the Dortmund network "United Sounds" NOT use Moodle as a tool for network facilitation?
Every cluster or network initiative in the respective SME ACTor regions is supposed to use Moodle in order to activate communication, to facilitate network planning processes, and to meet and share experiences with other community members. Right from the start, the Dortmund networkers did not use Moodle; they simply were not asked to do so by the 1st tier facilitators, and this was not a mistake or ignorance but an intentional choice. After having been part of a heterogeneous alternative music scene for many years, event organisers started co-operating closer some time ago. The first identifiable steps were taken in 2006; sfs [SME ACTor partner in Germany] became involved in 2007. When this happened, the loose network had just managed to channel internet activities onto one site, http://www.dortmund-rock-city.de. With an event calendar and several communication tools integrated; it was a success having achieved this website and that people were using it. Secondly, it became clear during the first learnshops with United Sounds that another website will have to be developed that serves the needs of the public interested in alternative music. With these two "website projects" running, the 1st tier facilitators decided not to split up the network's attention further by introducing Moodle just for the sake of fulfilling a project need that was external to the local community.
Reported by Dortmund team (Germany)

A facilitator's testimony

Use of an alternative platform by the Innovation Observatory community
The pilot experience of a survey on innovative capabilities in SMEs of the [Italian] North Western regions needs to be supported by a simple tool with two parallel aims: to facilitate communication and exchange information among partners (1st and 2nd tier facilitators) and to assure its external visibility from the perspective of the activities that the Observatory will be developing in the near future.

A facilitator's testimony

With regard to both these aims, in its first sessions the lead group agreed on setting up a web site: http://www.nordovestinnovazione.it, which could help participants in sharing information, news, documents, agendas, etc. This "virtual desk" (each partner has his own page) uses the content management system Plone. The website design has been a significant step in the growth process of the group that was supported by the 1st tier facilitators.
(Reported by North-West Italy Innovation Observatory team)

Case-by-case reasoned e-strategy

These testimonies show in a remarkable way how the 1st tier facilitators, by applying action learning principles of fostering active participation and participative approaches, chose different "e-strategies" according to their beneficiaries' background and interests. Moreover, in only one out of three cited experiences did the facilitation team prefer to use the ready-to-use platform of the SME ACTor project for their facilitation purposes. Nevertheless, each of them adopted a well-reasoned e-strategy according to the aims and resources of their beneficiary group. In a situation of conflicting aims, they chose the strategy that in their view was more suitable for the goal-oriented action of their local community instead of their project's strategy. This is just what a facilitator is expected to do.

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The references used in the SME ACTor context only mirror the range covered by those who have written the texts. No efforts have been made to take in consideration the complete, partly very rich literatures on the themes referred to, available in the partner countries and languages of the whole SME ACTor project, i.e. German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Romanian.

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Glossary

The glossary defines all relevant notions and concepts used in the SME ACTor context. It follows an alphabetical order. Each of these definitions is only supposed to be consistent referring to other concepts within the SME ACTor context. Although formulated with a scientific foundation, none of them pretends to be true or correct in a scientific sense, whatever truth or correctness in a scientific sense may be

Action learning methodology

All those methods and instruments facilitating learning and action, i.e.

- Facilitating dialogue, reflection and the construction of common sense (shared meanings or shared models)
- Facilitating processes of >>co-operation and trust building
- Facilitating active >>learning in such processes, and
- Facilitating personal involvement (>>participation) of regional actors from companies and institutions in all activities and processes developing social capital.

Action research

The concept was introduced by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin who in 1933 had to flee from Germany to the USA. Action research is a process wherein people having common interests actively participate in a research activity with the explicit intention of bringing about change through the research process. Action research consists in an intervention guided by a team of researchers-consultants who interact with organisation members on the basis of cyclical steps including planning, action, and evaluating the result of action. Starting from a specific problem to be solved in the given context, the experts continually encourage actions (data collecting, interviewing, etc.) and reflections on actions (through self-observation, discussion, etc.) by the organisation members. The activities carried out at each step are monitored in order to adjust as needed (Dickens and Watkins 1999).

Case study

Case studies constitute a research strategy, an empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research can mean single- and multiple case studies; it may include quantitative evidence and it always relies on multiple evidence sources benefiting from prior development of theoretical propositions (Yin 2002). Rather than using large samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods involve an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event - a case. They provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information, and reporting results. As a result, the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might need more extensive examination in future research. Case studies lend themselves to both generating and testing hypotheses (Flyvbjerg 2006).

In the framework of a networking programme fuelled by the Action Learning approach, a case study supports the facilitator as well as the community as a whole, providing a better understanding of the overall context in which the networking path will take place. Data collected and analysed in such a case study constitute an empirical foundation for designing the strategy and the operative planning. In this case, the facilitator acts as an expert consultant for the institution or organisation promoting the co-operation or networking path.
>> Tool 4B3

Clusters

Clusters are regional aggregations of mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with varying forms and intensities of co-operation. According to Porter (1998) they are labelled as a "cluster" when they take on the form of "a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities". In this particular context, companies compete but also co-operate, interacting with their external environment and creating dynamic mechanisms of knowledge creation and use.
>> Message 2M14

Coaching

Coaching is a concept of consultancy directed to an individual and his or her personality with the aim of developing existing potentials and resources of this individual as a member of an >> organisation or a group within an organisation.
>> Messages 2M1 and 2M2

Communities of performance (CoPe)

Communities of performance are very advanced forms of >>communities of practice; they typically are or exist in >>learning organisations. They represent the social spirit of organisations and networks with a developed internal culture of >>learning and change, and they exist in a framework of an explicit common purpose and strategy and continuously managed or co-ordinated action to implement this strategy. If they are institutions, they usually have a self-image of being service agencies to their clientele. Professional organisations or associations of companies within an industrial sector tend to develop from mere initial communities of practice to such communities of performance with semi- or fully institutionalised agencies.
>> Message 2M9

Communities of practice (CoP)

A community of practice is a congregation of people with mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire of meanings (Wenger 1998:45ff); and somewhat more explicit, CoP show three fundamental elements:

- sharing a domain of knowledge which creates common ground and sense of common identity and, as a consequence, legitimises the community
- caring about this domain continuously re-creating the social fabric of >>learning
- sharing practice that people are developing to be effective in their domain

Such CoPs have a life cycle and may show varying stages of maturity, from their beginnings to their decline and decease.
>> Message 2M9

Competence

Competence means being able to decide, act and learn adequately with respect to the functional and situative context.
>> Message 2M5

Competence management

Competence management is the management of the development, use and maintenance of the growing and changing competence incorporated by the individual people belonging to a group of people, organisation or network and by the whole functioning body of such a co-operation.
>> Messages 2M9 and 2M10

Co-operation

Co-operation means working together to achieve individual and common advantage. In more detail, co-operation is defined as joint or jointly directed, co-ordinated action of people for achieving individual and common aims, purposeful interaction.
>> Message 2M7

Focus group

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of selected persons with a specific expertise related to the research topic are asked, according to a pre-defined set of questions, about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting in which participants are free to talk with other group members. The aim of the focus group is to identify and analyse research findings, perceptions, feelings, opportunities or shortcomings. Its purpose is not to develop a consensus, to arrive at an agreeable plan or to take decisions concerning the course of action.
>> Tool 4B4

Interviews with experts

Interviews with experts are semi-structured personal interviews on the basis of an interview guide containing all relevant items and questions. Experts are all those people in the region who are supposed to be able to provide valuable expert information and assessment. Supposed to be able means, they are experts in the view of the researcher/interviewer or in the view of other relevant actors.
>> Tool 4B2

Leaders

Leaders are people who take responsibility in building common sense for common action and for developing >>communities of practice into >>communities of performance.
>> Messages 2M8, 2M9 and 2M10

Learning Learning is an active process of appropriation (making one's own) of knowledge, abilities and skills in order to enhance the personal or collective control potential (>>competence) of shaping reality in a given context or situation.
>> Message 2M5 and Chap 3.1 on the didactics of action learning

Learning organisation "A learning organisation is a group of people who need one another in order to achieve something and who in the course of time continuously extend their capacities of achieving what they really want to achieve" (Senge 1996:500). A more elaborate approach would define a learning organisation "as a processing structure determined by purposes, rules and values which conceives itself as improvable. It wants and enables its members to learn with this end in mind and considers this capacity of learning for improvement as a necessary characteristic of survival." (Franz 2003a:55)
>> Messages 2M7 and 2M15

Learnshop A learnshop is a >>workshop with the intention of learning or reflecting on common tasks or purposes in order to improve the collective >> competence of accomplishing some common purpose or task.
>> Tool 4A6

Management Managers can be seen as people responsible for transforming the knowledge and competence of their personnel into products and services useful to other people and economic success for the >>organisation. Managers can also be >>leaders.
>>Message 2M8

Moderation A moderator is a person who helps a group of people to solve a problem by supporting their communication, rendering it more effective and efficient. Any person with some basic >>competence in moderation methods and techniques can assume this role. The role requires impartiality and basically consists of securing agreed rules of communication and the visual safeguarding of the communication results.
>> Messages 2M1 and 2M2

Network facilitator A network facilitator is usually a formal network function or one of the roles of a network manager. In the framework of networks a facilitator is a person with specific competencies who is directed to develop trust to facilitate >>co-operation between >>organisations (in our case mainly SMEs) in a given regional or industrial context, despite and beyond their ongoing competition. This trust, if constituting a culture of co-operation, can also be called social capital. So, from a very general viewpoint, they may be called developers of >>social capital.

More specifically, network facilitators are those professionals involved in supporting and valorising aggregation processes of SMEs by promoting and making easier (i.e. facilitating) networking activities and animation of local expert communities and within this framework activities of inter-organisational non-formal and informal learning.

In this role as network facilitators they have four different sub-roles referring to both the action and the learning side of their role. They are

- >>moderators with the task of shaping successful communication in the network in general as well as and in its events, meetings, workshops etc
- experts in process management not only for communication processes but also for projects and other joint network endeavours
- trainers of facilitating methods and techniques, responsible for systematic reflection with all participants on common learning in such processes as a means of rendering them more effective and efficient and as a central mechanism of creating reflective co-operativity
- >>coaches, since they pursue a specific way of shaping enhanced communication avoiding conflict while, at the same time, they are experts at settling conflicts if they arise in such processes

Facilitating then means supporting and structuring the perception and communication of a number of people who have a common interest in order to lead a common process of analysis, design, planning, implementation and/or evaluation to become a success.
>> Messages 2M1 and 2M2

Networks (of companies) Networks represent a specific, relatively open and flexible form of loosely coupled, yet purposeful >>co-operation between individuals and individual >>organisations on the basis of shared structures, rules, interests and values.
>> Messages 2M14 and 2M15

Organisation Organisations are the distinctively structured and regulated form of purposeful interaction of individuals and groups. Put another way, organisations represent purposeful >>co-operation of (groups of) people based on shared structures, rules, interests and values. The first and foremost objective of organisations (as of all systems) is striving for survival by fulfilling their purpose. Economic organisations must fulfil a double purpose; they must produce the product or service they have been created for, and in doing so they must produce an economic yield that allows extended reproduction.
>> Message 2M7

Organisation development Organisation development is the way how >>organisations master changing framework conditions by changing themselves according to new requirements and with the active >>participation of all those organisation members affected by such changes. Frequent examples of OD are the introduction of team concepts, process reengineering, introduction of >>quality management.
>> Message 2M7

Organisational culture Organisational culture is the way how we treat each other in working together.
>> Messages 2M6–2M11

Participation. All those who are immediately affected by a problem or its solution are informed and involved in the process of problem solving in a way that respects their interests and responsibilities. This implies a non-hierarchical approach to improvement and >>learning processes.
>> Message 2M7

Private institutions Private institutions are those >>organisations that are overly or entirely privately-owned and that provide private goods that are customised and sold. These institutions are firms, including consultancy firms, selling highly customised services to other firms.
>> Message 2M14

Public institutions All those >>organisations that are totally or overly publicly owned, operate in the targeted area by providing incentives, services and/or control mechanisms to the firms, and follow general goals for the development of the territory. Examples of public institutions are: local government, local development agencies, public research centres, etc.
>> Message 2M14

Quality (management) Quality is the intersecting quantity of satisfaction and perfection. Quality management consists of all activities safeguarding the quality of management of an organisation or a network.
>> Message 2M12

Responsibility Responsibility, in our context, is understood as the individual and organisational ability of responding actively to perceived questions and problems. Accepting responsibility is the aim of learning and working together. Leading people to responsibility is the main objective of facilitating. Sharing responsibility defines the difference between communities of practice and communities of performance.
>> Message 2M6

Self-organisation Self-organisation related to groups of people or >>organisations means that a number of individual group factors such as >>competences, attitudes, methods used, and certain processes with good or bad results, through their interaction (basically attraction or repulsion in common experiences) spontaneously lead to the emergence of a new, relatively stable structure, method, process or logic of action that is perceived as more effective and/or efficient. For example, Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia that grows according to this principle of self-organisation, which is characteristic of open systems.
>> Message 2M9

Semi-public institutions *Semi-public institutions* are those >>organisations that are privately owned and operate in the area involved by the project by providing general incentives and services. Despite private ownership, services provided by semi-public institutions have a public/collective nature. Semi-public institutions might require payment for their services, but the most important features are those services that normally *have a general (non-customised) character and require a rather limited payment*. Examples of semi-public institutions are: associations of firms providing non-customised and collective goods such as information or technical support to firms, non-profit organisations for economic development (foundations, etc.), industry education and training associations, technological institutions.
>> Message 2M14

Social capital Social capital is the result and agent of social interaction of individuals in groups, >>organisations and networks based on reciprocity and leading to trust (Schechler 2002).
>> Message 2M15

Teaching Teaching is a social interaction in the course of which the teaching person can help the student to learn offering certain knowledge, ability or skills in a way which makes learning easier.
>> Chap 3.1 on the didactics of action learning

Visualisation Visualisation means making visible spoken or written information by using a different set of symbols, i.e. pictures, structures, graphics. Usually visualised information is provided for making understanding easier and more easily memorable.
>> Message 2M3

Workshop A workshop is a gathering of people with the intention of working or reflecting in order to produce results which are meaningful for action directed to accomplish some common purpose or task.
>> Tool 4A5

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