

Facilitation in depth.

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Facilitation – what?

To facilitate = “to enable, the act of making something easier” (facilis = easy, in Latin)

Multiple meanings in various contexts

In organizational contexts facilitation is connected to collective meaning making, decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution, learning, experimentation, ideation, development, change, transformation, reflection...



Wide variety of situations and settings

From enthusiastic and highly positive innovation workshops to challenging organizational renewals with strong emotions involved

From teams of few people to very large groups of several hundred people

From professional practice to everyday conversations



Facilitation as helping


- **Neutrality**
- **Keeping participants responsible for their own questions**
- **Facilitator guides and enables the collective conversational process from a neutral position – purpose, boundaries, dialogic interaction, and appropriate involvement**
- **Related concepts: coaching, mentoring, counselling, process consultation**



Your experience

Let's have a poll! – diversity of experiences in facilitation

Have a chat in four-five person groups – what makes facilitation successful?

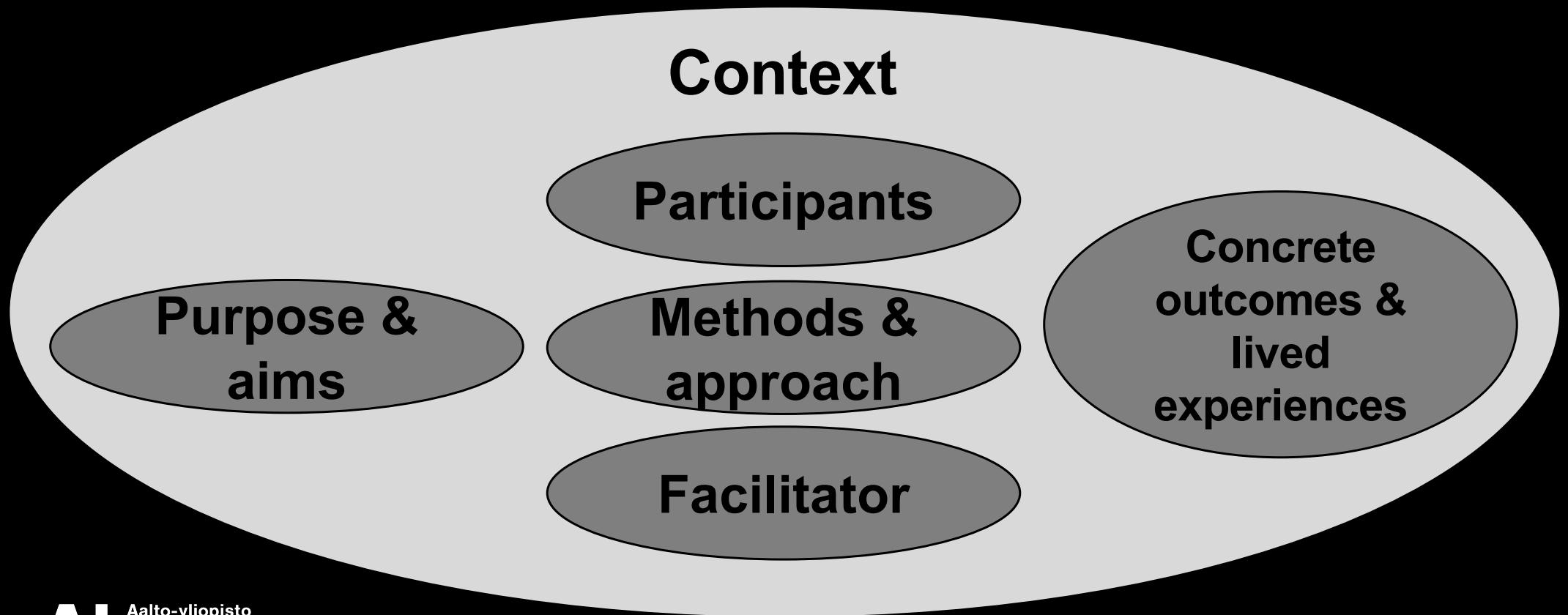
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1. Introduce yourself shortly
 2. Tell others your basic experience as a facilitator or as a participant
 3. Share your views and ideas – what (all) makes facilitation successful?
 4. Write a short summary to chat

**Single event, session,
workshop point of view!**

**Large transformations
are advanced through
single (good) events and
encounters**



Facilitation process - elements



Meaning making

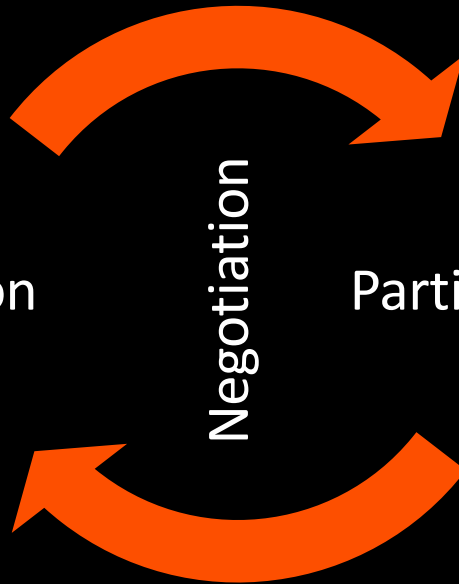
Outcome

Reification

Negotiation

Participation

Experience



Outcomes vs. experience

- Participation -> lived experience
- Reification -> concrete outcomes
- We later give meanings to both but personally the experience tends to produce more powerful memories

What characterizes a good facilitation experience?

- Appreciation, inclusion
- Connection, relatedness
- New shared understanding
- Feeling of accomplishment
- Meaningfulness
- Emancipation, empowerment
- Feeling of self-efficacy, being more competent/capable
- Supportive atmosphere, even in the moments of confusion
- Willingness to continue



Adding probability for success in facilitation

The transformational workshop or session must express the culture and values it is aiming to promote.

Dialogical culture cannot be promoted by monologic means!

Facilitated process

– adding probability for success

1. Preparation
2. Getting started
3. Maintaining the flow
4. Closing and reflecting



Preparation

- Knowing the context – situation, culture, why the session, tensions, touchy issues, dependencies, owner of the process, expectations
- Participants – situation, pre-experience, pre-knowledge, expectations, preparation and pre-info
- Yourself – pre-assumptions, expectations, worries, being prepared
- Methods and process – flow, stages and rhythm, critical moments, options, designing the aimed experience, simulating
- Arrangements - Site, equipment, technology, pre-testing, being in place early enough



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Getting started – setting up the stage, building trust and connection

- Taking adequate time for starting
- Introduction and warm up – noticing others, becoming personally present
- Agreeing on the purpose and aims – why are we here?
- Agreeing on the ways of working – methods, values and principles
- Agreeing on the roles and boundaries
- Connecting to the previous knowledge and experience
- Connecting to the organizational context as a whole

Maintaining the flow

- Keeping up the rhythm – action vs. pauses
- Involving and including people in an appreciative way
- Being sensitive with concerns and issues of interest
- Redirecting or interrupting unfruitful/unconstructive debate or interventions
- Helping the participants to move forward if getting stuck
- Channeling emotional energy to serve the purpose – frustration and agony as well as enthusiasm and joy
- Supporting the leadership in place
- Maintaining the feeling of competency among the participants

Closing and reflection

- Reserving time for closing
- Assessing the outcomes – comparing to the expectations
- Reflecting on the experience - personally and collectively
- Agreeing on the next steps – next workshop, next actions, who and when

Personal consideration

Take a moment by yourself to think what would you like to emphasize or highlight in your forthcoming sessions/workshops as a facilitator or as a participant to ensure good experience for all!



Weekly exercise:

Have reflective dialogue on your course experience so far.

- Prepare by making your personal recap on the course experience so far
- Have two 15 min sparring/coaching style discussions in which the other will serve as listener/helper while the other will reflect on the personal course experience and insights so far
- As a coach: Concentrate on listening and making supportive questions, do not share your own experiences when listening the other
- Change roles and have another conversation
- Have a reflective discussion and share your experience – assess how were you able to have a helping conversation
- Write a personal memo (max one page) of your discussion experience – how was it to be a coach, and how was it to be a client?
- Return your reflection texts to facilitating@aalto.fi
- More detailed instructions through email.