

## **FoAM's Hosting and Process Facilitation**

<http://fo.am/process-facilitation/>



As process facilitators, we guide groups of people to effectively work together. Facilitation is particularly valuable for tackling complex issues through dialogue and co-creation in participatory settings, such as workshops, meetings or collaborative projects. We take care of the "how" so you can focus on the "what" and "why" of a collaborative pursuit.

The creative process is at the core of our work. It encourages curiosity and guides people from the uncertainty of "not knowing" through creative leaps toward meaningful collective insights. We design immersive experiences including all senses. Our facilitation style draws on the art of improvisation to navigate through complexity, allowing us to adapt to unexpected situations and changing conditions.

The strength of our group lies in its diversity. The expertise of our facilitators includes the arts and sciences, futures and education, community- and organisational development. The transdisciplinary nature of our facilitation teams allows us to work across sectors. We custom design all processes with our clients and partners.

Our participatory processes are an embodiment of our skills and personalities. We understand the importance of alignment between personal and collective development, intellectual and embodied learning. We are process facilitators with a zeal for systemic transitions, where we can contribute to substantial transformations and generative long-term impact.

## About FoAM's approaches to Process Facilitation

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We live in uncertain times that call for inspiring alternatives to the status quo. As Einstein said, "A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels." Yet, as in all uncertain times, we also see the rise of conservatism, xenophobia, sectorial entrenchment and other forces of destructive fragmentation and resistance to change. We believe that such tendencies can be met by fostering emergence of diverse and inclusive cultures. Cultures able to invigorate and (re)generate the ecological, economical and social systems they interact with. Cultures seeking to find a dynamic balance between seemingly opposing opinions, systems and worldviews. Where rigid borders become fertile edges. Where individuals can deploy their full potential for the benefit of the collective well-being. Where each person can experience a sense of belonging to a larger whole, while also appreciate the richness of being unique.

*"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." R. Buckminster Fuller*

### What is Process Facilitation?

Process facilitation guides groups of people to effectively and creatively collaborate together in participatory situations, such as workshops, meetings or collaborative projects. Our focus is on bringing out the full potential of participants and systems in collective endeavours.

We generate space for authentic dialogue and co-creation, using participatory processes as our craft:

- We **research** complexity, flow, systems thinking, behavioural science and other fields that can help us understand the dynamics and emergence in collaborative situations
- We **practice** presencing, witnessing and noticing, as well as improvisation and anticipation
- We **design** event flows to maximise engagement, creativity and learning.
- We **facilitate** collaborative situations. We steward the groups to align their intentions and reach outcomes which can serve the individuals, the group/organisation, as well as their larger context.
- We record the conversations in text and (audio)visual media, thereby "**harvest**" and synthesise the group's collective insights and learnings.
- We **support** groups to translate their conversations into adaptive and responsible action.

Our **aim** is to attend to the emergence of inclusive, innovative and generative (organisational) cultures, while providing engaging, inspiring and meaningful experiences for the individual participants.

We emphasise the importance of working as a **team**, rather than individual consultants. We believe that stewarding collaborations (which involve complex topics and systems) requires a range of facilitation skills and profiles - from attentive guides attuned to group and systems dynamics, to energetic animators, non-judgmental observers or meticulous synthesisers, for example. We match the composition of the facilitation team to the groups, their context and their needs. We design a 'field' to hold a field.

Our members can facilitate processes in any context, organisation, sector or subject matter. As a group we have a few **key areas of interest**:

- **Transition processes**, especially connecting personal and systemic transitions
- **Multi-stakeholder initiatives** to address complex issues that cannot be resolved from one single discipline, worldview or sector
- **Unexpected alliances**, beyond professional and social silos
- Visioning, **futurecrafting**, strategic design and a pro-active engagement with the uncertainty of futures
- Designing **experimental frameworks**, to include multiple ways of knowing and learning
- Infusing contemplative and reflective practices in action-oriented endeavours, as well as **integrating making and thinking** practices, reflection and tinkering.



### **Why process facilitation?**

Most collaborative pursuits deal with issues that are complex, urgent and important. People involved tend to be pressed for time and resources. It is therefore crucial that the collaboration makes the most of everyone's presence and capacity. Facilitating participatory processes enables individuals and groups to learn from and with each other, tackle challenges from multiple perspectives and for multiple benefits.

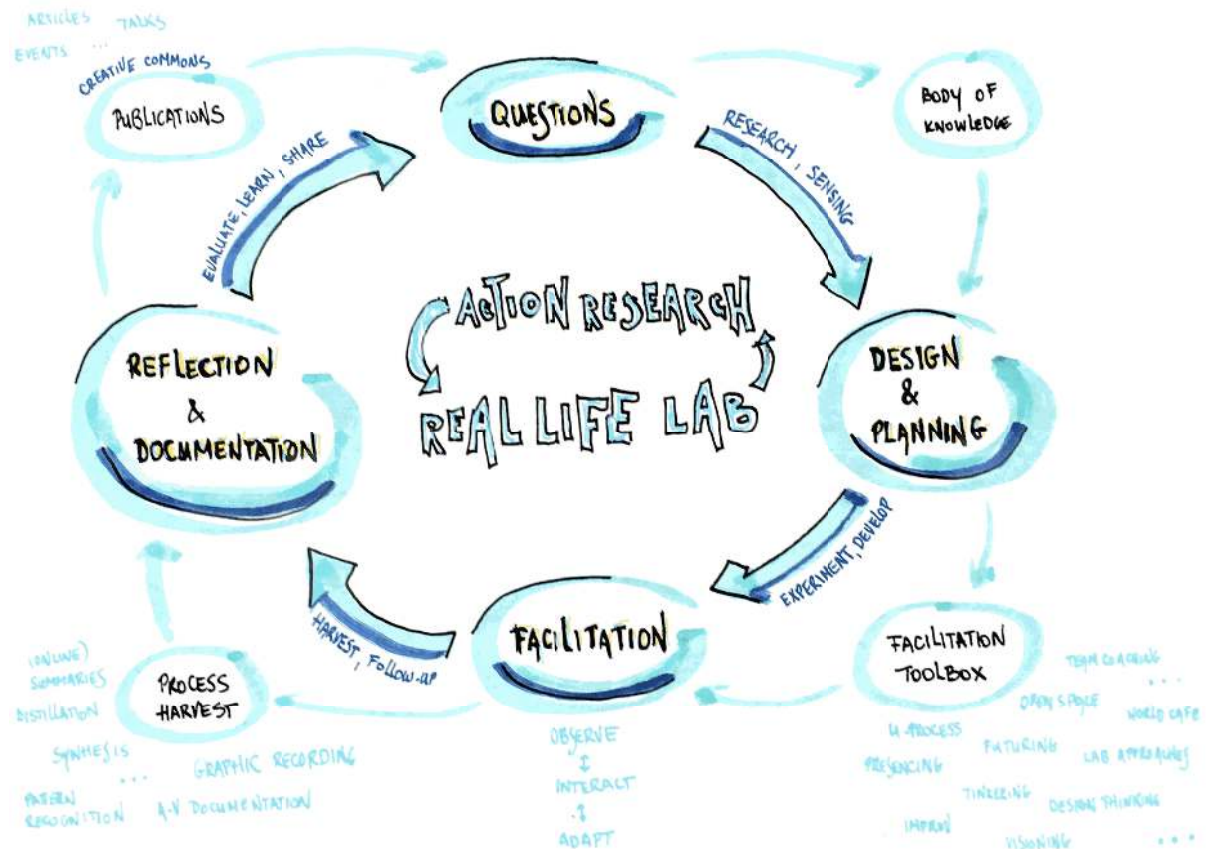
In a facilitated process, much thought goes into designing the most appropriate ways to engage everyone in the group, to include the collective knowledge and wisdom and to navigate towards their stated aims. When a facilitator takes care of the "how" a conversation will take place, the participants can completely concentrate "why" and "what" the conversation is about and what might emerge from it. They can focus on the issue at hand, knowing that there is someone who "holds the space" so that the group can move beyond individual differences and "business as usual", towards what really matters. A space to explore freely, trusting that someone is guiding them towards the intention they set for themselves.

## How do we work?

We custom design processes with our clients and partners. While we can facilitate one-off meetings, workshops and other types of gatherings, we aim to develop long-standing and long-lasting relationships, which allow us to contribute to substantial, systemic transformations and generative long-term impact. Therefore, series of gatherings and long-term programmes take precedence over one-off commissions.



Our process design evolves through recurrent cycles including questioning, planning, experimentation and reflection, also known as the "action research cycle". This approach works particularly well in longer-term initiatives with iterative cycles of development, allowing us to progressively adapt the process to the group, their context and their needs and to improve our practice with each iteration. We share what we learn using principles of Creative Commons.



Sketch of our cyclical working process

## Who do we work with/for?

Our clients and partners come from a range of sectors and professional contexts, looking to transform their work to become more inclusive, agile, creative, resilient and regenerative.



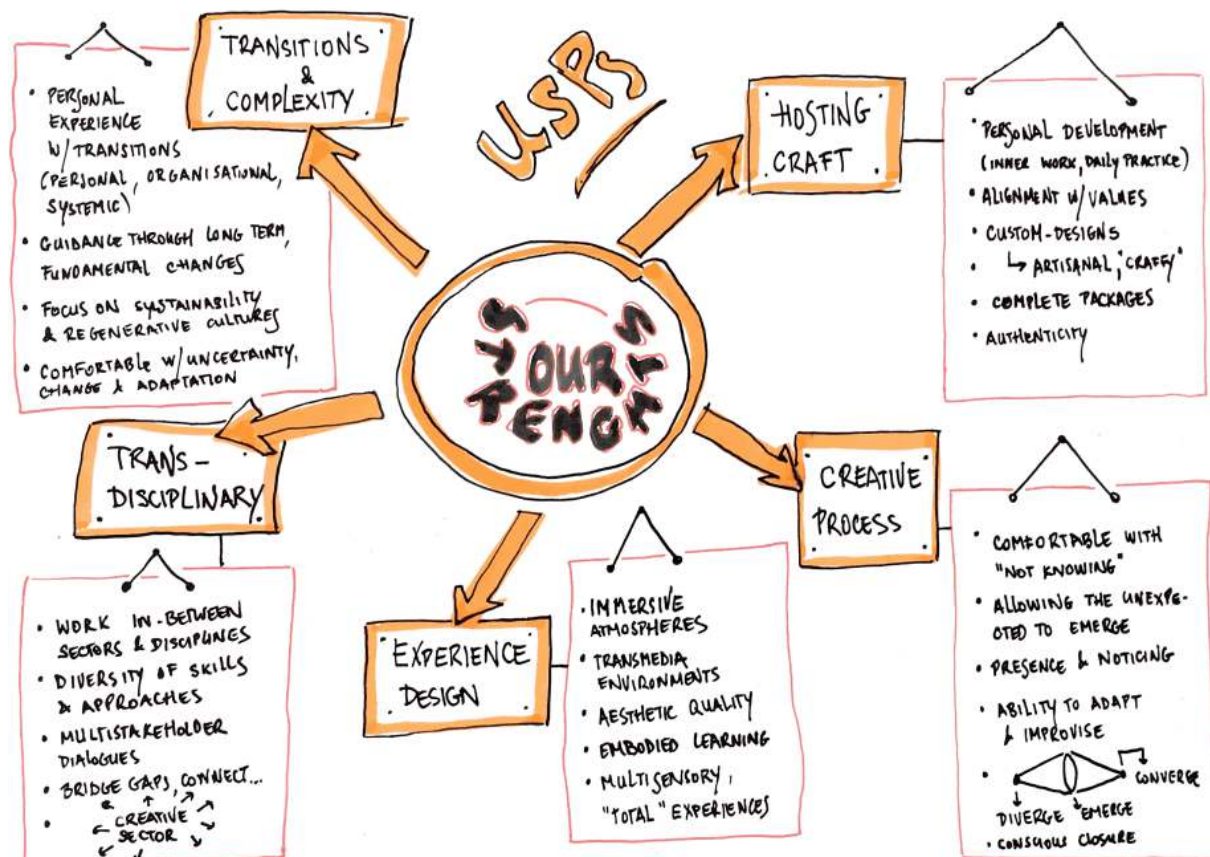
- **Networks:** multistakeholder initiatives, public-private partnerships, supraorganisational networks, regional networks
- **Social, cultural and non-profit sector:** NGOs, cultural centres, community centres
- **Educational sector:** schools, universities, research institutes, P2P learning platforms
- **Corporate sector:** businesses, startups, corporations, co-operatives, (social) entrepreneurs
- **Public sector:** governments, administrations and other public bodies
- **Communities:** creative collectives, communities of practice, intentional communities, student groups, community of communities...



## Who are we?

Our process facilitators have diverse backgrounds, including the arts, science, engineering, community- and business development. The transdisciplinary nature of our group allows us to work across sectors, taking advantage of our complementary skills, expertise and knowledge. We find common ground in our experience with the creative process in collaborative settings, such as artist collectives, maker spaces, design studios and (social and technological) innovation labs.

The majority of our practitioners live in Belgium, Malta and Switzerland, with Europe as our usual operating sphere. Several of us are able to work anywhere where we're called to.



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## Contact

Ingrid Vranken, [ingrid@fo.am](mailto:ingrid@fo.am)

Greta Muscat Azzopardi, [greta@fo.am](mailto:greta@fo.am)

Maja Kuzmanovic, [maja@fo.am](mailto:maja@fo.am)

Michka Melo, [michka@fo.am](mailto:michka@fo.am)