CHAPTER 3

THE ART OF FACILITATION

A small group of thoughtful, empowered and committed citizens can change the world.

1. Introduction
"The facilitator was as the director of a performance (theatre, music), where each participant played a central role. By the end of the workshop, so much synergy has been created that all the participants exploded in a rush of happiness and pleasure. It was such a fantastic experience of working creatively and collectively to achieve some goals. It is the similar feelings that football players experience after winning a match, where the victory has been the result of a combination of individual creativity, collective hard work and suitable facilitation".

This metaphorical description was written down by a journalist after the finish of a 3-days workshop that can be characterized as a success. One essential activity was the facilitation, support and guidance of the different social processes occurring during the workshop, this was art. In the last chapter, we characterised the role of the facilitator in a conference or a workshop as being two-fold: designer and planner, and a manager.

Facilitation as design was discussed in the last chapter. The main purpose of this chapter is to focus on facilitation as the management of social processes in groups. The essences of group facilitation will be introduced in this chapter as well as some guidelines for facilitators. This chapter will end with a discussion of the facilitation of community development.

Obviously, the type of mess or problematic situation the organisation or community is confronting, the experience and maturity of the work group, and the adopted strategy for change, will set the boundaries for the type of facilitation to be carried out. The academic world often focuses on abstract concepts, methods, and technologies instead of on the *context* in which they are used. But methods and technologies cannot initiate or create an organisational change process on their own. In community development the person or agent supporting this change process is usually called facilitator, animator, coach, catalyst or mediator. These different names express the different roles this actor is playing in the change process. We call this agent of change a *facilitator*.

In Section 2, a first introduction to the task of facilitating a group in a problem solving process and his/her different roles he/she can play as facilitator are presented. Thereafter, a real-life case study related to organisational development will be extensively discussed. This was the case of the establishment of the European Tapestry Forum at a workshop conducted in March, 2001, for a group of tapestry weavers from North Europe, and facilitated by the author of this book. In Section 3, the design and planning stage of this workshop is presented, then in Section 4 the conduction of the workshop is depicted focusing on the facilitation process and the achieved results. Then, in Section 5 this workshop is evaluated.

A more profound discussion of the art of facilitation and some guidelines for "good" facilitation will be presented in Section 6. In Section 7, further discussions of the task of facilitating communities and small organisations for change are elaborated. Finally, the last section adds some further remarks.

2. Group Facilitation

Webster's dictionary defines to facilitate as: to promote, to aid, to make easy, or to simplify. In other words a group facilitator is a person who supports the group (or team) during the task solving process. A team is a very experienced group where each individual can be the facilitator. In a workshop a distinction is made between *content* (the theme under discussion), *approaches* (the way a problem is tackled), and *social processes* (group interaction and communication). Facilitation focuses primarily on approaches and processes. That is, the facilitator does not need to be particularly expert about the theme being discussed. Too much or too little knowledge on the subject matter might actually hinder the process.

The task of the facilitator is usually compared to that of a football coach or the conductor of a symphony orchestra. As a coach, the facilitator sometimes knows very well the members of the group and he guides them to achieve some goals. As a conductor, the facilitator has to conduct an orchestra which he had not worked with previously and which will be improvising rather than performing a standard piece of music. It is precisely the need for flexibility and the unpredictability of the group processes which make the facilitation task as management so unpredictable and fascinating.

The facilitator is there to ensure fruitful group processes whether this a brainstorming session for getting new ideas or using some tool to structure a complex situation. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the group works as a constructive, collaborative, creative and cohesive unit. This task has three elements: leadership, referee, and neutral (Schwarz, 1994).

The *leadership* role usually demands the following activities:
- *Focus*: to provide a focus for the group.
- *Stimulate*: to encourage constructive debate between the participants
- *Support*: to bring out information from introverted participants and to allow new ideas to be submitted.
- *Participate*: when the group is interacting poorly or is going in the wrong direction, the facilitator must be willing to promote new discussions.
- *Team building*: to form a cohesive, interactive, dynamic and creative group.

The *referee* role usually demands the following activities:
- *Regulation*: to maintain order of the group discussion, discouraging participants from talking at the same time, or dominating the floor.
- *Protect participants*: to ensure that all contributions to the discussion are treated equally and that no-one is rebuffed for their input.
- *Deal with problems*: to control problem participants allowing everyone to participate freely.
- *Deal with conflicts*: to identify conflicts and to create space for a fruitful discussion.
- *Timekeeper*: to adhere to workshop timetable thus ensuring completion of the agenda.

The *neutral* role usually demands the following activities:
- *Pragmatic*: to take detached look at the discussion viewing each issue on its merits.
- *Encourage feedback*: to promote discussion of each selected issue, by all members of the group.
- *Impartial*: to be neutral to the discussions, this frees the facilitator to focus on the process rather than the content of the discussion and hence asking pertinent and stimulating questions.

A facilitator is *not* someone who:
- Is involved in the task or issue being examined
- Is clerical or errand person
- Is able to freely express his opinion on the issue or topic
- Has a stake in the decisions made
- Has decision making authority in the group
- Is an arbitrator or judge, the group is responsible for the decisions it makes
- Is a lecturer or a teacher
- Is necessarily an expert on the issue to be discussed
- Is the centre of attention
- Is the maid

Summarizing, we can say that a facilitator is a person who has the job of empowering the participants to learn in an experiential group. An experiential group is one in which learning takes place through an active and consciously involvement of the whole person. The facilitator has been appointed to this task by the organisers of the workshop to carry out learning and problem solving processes and the group members voluntary accept the facilitator in this role.

3. Facilitating Organisational Development – The Case of the European Tapestry Forum

From March the 2nd to the 4th, 2001, a three-day international workshop was carried out in Nykøbing Zealand, West Zealand, Denmark, supported by a facilitator. The experiences obtained during the facilitation of seventeen women, all of them tapestry weavers representing Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Island, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Poland, and Austria, are reported here. These weavers wanted to start an organisation for tapestry weavers in Europe. They met for the first time at this workshop entitled: "Back to Basics – Tapestry in the New Millennium". This workshop had three main purposes:
- To register "the state of the art" of tapestry weaving in Europe,
- To develop activities for the strengthening of tapestry weaving in the coming years, and
- To organise European Tapestry Forum and its work to enforce European cooperation.

The workshop was organised by the Danish section of weavers, supported by the Development Centre Odsherred (DCO). DCO hired a well experienced facilitator of

workshops to conduct this event. The facilitator is also a professional visual artists being well acquainted with the problems of art and artists in modern societies. Let us first give some background of the problematic situation of the tapestry weavers.

Background
The craft and art of tapestry in Europe has a long history. Les Gobelins in Aubusson, France, are rather well-known. Tapestry weaving in the last century has been characterized by single outstanding artists but they are very few of them in Europe. This is the main reason why in most countries, they have not been able to develop their own national platforms and organisations to reproduce and develop the art tapestry profession. They have to rely on the schools of arts and crafts, the museums of decorative arts, the art halls, etc. The period 1990-200 had been very bad years for tapestry weaving in most Europe. Art schools, museums, galleries, art halls, etc. had completely disregarded this art form. They have been focusing more in design and applied art. To survive many tapestry weavers are moving to the borderlands of the craft exploring new expressions. The very few international exhibitions for textile art have moved to platforms for reflections on fine art. Moreover, two of the most important international events, the biennial in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the triennial in Helsinki, Finland, have been closed. These tendencies cause that the new generations and the public in general are not aware of the works of tapestry weavers. There is not doubt that to survive, the tapestry weavers as soon as possible have to start a process of renewal and visibility both national and at the European level.

The Danish section, a group of tapestry weavers in Denmark, decided to take the initiative for creating a forum to develop and implement a strategy that can give their profession a badly needed innovation and produce new impulses to give the profession visibility and better working conditions in the whole Europe. They wanted to create an organisation of tapestry weavers in Europe: The EUROPEAN TRAPESTRY FORUM (ETF for short), a European umbrella forum based on the national organisations. ETF should support both permanent and recurrent activities financed by the European countries and the EC. In the first letter of invitation send from Denmark by March 2000, the following activities were formulated:
- Establishment of a virtual newsletter and gallery for tapestry weavers,
- Establishment of an annual working seminar for tapestry weavers, and
- Establishment of a censored triennial exhibition for tapestry weavers.

The Danish section applied for the support of DCO. DCO should be a secretariat, adviser, sparring partner and economic liable for the cooperation. The Danish section also urges the national contacts in each country to appoint a national working group that will participate in the establishment of ETF. They also emphasized that these working groups should have "inclination and courage to be forerunner for an innovative reinforce of the profession". Finally, the Danish weavers enhanced that "their sophisticated craft must survive their generation and that they owe the future to pass it on a viable and innovative form"

The first event in this process was the organisation by the DCO of a workshop in Denmark in cooperation with the Danish section. Based on the feedback from the first letter and other contacts, twenty tapestry weavers were invited to a three-day workshop. The expenses were covered by Scandinavian and Danish fund sources.

Two weeks before the event, the Danish section contacted the facilitator after a suggestion of the director of DCO, to support the problem solving processes on one day (Saturday). It is rather unusual to contact the facilitator so late because usually the facilitator has to be part of the pre-planning process. The problem was that the organisers had no economic resources at the moment to pay the facilitator's fee. In normal circumstances the facilitator will have refused to take the job. But he became very interested in the task due to its crucial relevance to tapestry art. The facilitator, as a visual artist, is also very concerned about the situation of art in modern societies in general and visual art in particular. The facilitator decides to take the job and demands a meeting with the Danish section before the event took place.

Two Hours Planning
The facilitator had a meeting with the leader of the Danish section one week before the workshop. At this meeting the Danish section provided information about the objectives of the workshop and the background of the participants. The objectives of the workshop were formulated as:
- Diagnosis of the situation of the craft in each represented country,
- Design actions towards visibility of tapestry weaving, and
- Establishment of a European network for tapestry weavers.

It was also informed that this workshop will be the first time the weavers met in this network and that it will be very important to achieve some results in the form of an action plan and some projects that will provide the first step in the right direction towards the establishment of a strong organisation: EFT. It was also informed that the participants are the leading tapestry weavers in Europe with no previous experience in organisational or political work.

During this meeting, it was also agreed that the facilitator should be present during the whole workshop from Friday to Sunday, and not only on Saturday as previously proposed. The facilitator argued that you cannot be part time facilitator. Then, a discussion started about the program of the workshop. It was agreed that on Friday the representatives will present the situation of the craft in their country, this will give the background information to all participants and the facilitator, specially in what concerns the level of organisation and awareness of the weavers situation in each country. This will also be a nice way to introduce the participants to each other from the beginning. The facilitator suggested if it was possible to find a person that could give a pessimistic talk about the future of tapestry weaving in Europe if nothing was done, that is if things continue as the last two decades. Unfortunately, the Danish section was not able to find such a person.

At this design and planning phase, the facilitator suggested the following idea: on Friday, when the participants arrive and receive their keys for their rooms they will get a paper asking them to write down at most five objectives that they wanted to accomplish during the workshop. They should do it very fast using at most ten minutes time. The purpose of this inquiry is to obtain some background information that the facilitator will use in the planning of the sessions on Saturday and Sunday. Moreover, this inquiry will also tune the participants into the purpose of the workshop already from the moment of arrival: to create actions to achieve some common objectives.

It was agreed that on Saturday, some specific themes and objectives for the workshop will be clearly specified. These will be formulated by the facilitator and will be presented to all the participants at the beginning of the session for general discussion and approval. Thereafter, the participants will be divided in two groups. These groups will be facilitated to produce ideas (using brainstorming) to be carried out by the ETF. Thereafter, at a plenum each group will present their ideas/projects, afterwards a prioritisation will be done by all participants. After lunch, the four ideas/projects with highest prioritisation will be selected for further discussion in four groups (five persons per group each of them having an elected facilitator). The results of each workshop will be presented at a plenum by the end of the afternoon for discussions.

The same groups will work on their projects on Sunday morning outlining action plans and appointing responsible for the implementation of the projects. Finally, at the end of the morning session on Sunday an evaluation of the whole workshop will be conducted.

This program, shown in Box 1, was accepted by the leader of the Danish section, she had great confidence of the abilities of the facilitator. The facilitator felt very free to do whatever was needed to make the workshop a success. The facilitator had the impression that the Danish section was happy to place the responsibility for the success of the workshop in the hands of the experienced facilitator. This gave a lot of responsibility to the facilitator; the workshop has to be a success. This is a challenging and important task, he expected highly motivated participants and he has to convince them of the importance of the workshop and that they will be making history, the death or survive of the craft will be in their hands.

The facilitator also emphasised that his own objective was not only to conduct a successful workshop but also to show the participants the craft of facilitation (learning by doing), so that they could use the same approach back home when organising the tapestry weavers in their home countries. Moreover, the future ETF meetings could be organised as workshops. In other words the workshop should also contribute to the empowerment of the participants.

PROGRAM
Back to Basics
Tapestry in Europe in the new millennium
Workshop in Nykøbing Sealand, Denmark the 2.-4., March 2001

2. March
16.00-18.00 Arrival to DOC. Accommodation
18.00-19.00 Dinner
19.30-21.00 Presentations: The state of tapestry in my country
21.00- ?   Social gathering
3. March
08.00-09.00 Breakfast
09.00-10.15 Round table: Future of tapestry in Europe and European cooperation
10.15-10.30 Coffee
10.30-12.00 Workshops: Ideas about the future of tapestry in Europe. Quick plenum.
12.00-13.00 Lunch
13.00-15.00 Workshops: Continuation from the morning
15.00-15.30 Coffee
15.30-18.00 Plenum: Presentation of the results of the workshop. Development of an outline to develop ETF
18.00-19.00 Dinner
4. March
08.00-09.00 Breakfast
09.00-10.30 Plenum: Discussion of the content and structure of ETF
10.30-12.00 Plenum: Development of an action plan
12.00-13.30 Lunch
14.00   Departure to Copenhagen
16.00-17.30 Visit at the Danish Parliament. The artist Bjørn Nørgaard tells about his work with the newly exhibited "gobelins" at the parliament.

Box 1. The program of the workshop

4. Facilitating the Workshop
The workshop took place at the Theatre in Nykøbing Sjælland, West Zealand, Denmark. All the physical facilities were optimal. Meals, coffee, and drinks were available at a high quality level. Each participant got his own room near by the locals where the workshop was to take place. The Danish section and the DCO had really set up a perfect scene for the workshop.

Friday Evening
To the question:
Which objectives do you have with the workshop? List at most five; thirteen participants replied given in average four objectives per person. These are shown in Table 1, grouped in fourteen titles together with their scoring rate. This list shows that the participants had a great variety of motives and objectives, and that the group is rather heterogeneous.

After dinner representatives of nine countries presented the situation of the craft in their respective countries. The talks were not specifically focusing on the themes of the workshop. Much time was used to show slides of tapestries of their most well-known artists, but very little factual information was given about the situation of tapestry weaving in their respective countries.

The facilitator concluded that with exception of Norway, tapestry weavers were isolated, invisible, and had difficulty in exhibiting and selling their art in their country and Europe as a whole. Moreover, few education centres existed to train the next generation, the average age of the weavers is rather high and trade organisations do not exist.

Craft status/visibility/selling	6
Organisational development	6
Exhibitions	6
Internet	6
Socialisation/see friends	6
Inspiration/learn/hope/talk	6
Status/direction of the future	4
Define/discuss tapestry	3
Working seminars	2
Education	2
Ways to increase quality	2
Visibility/media	1
To find support/acceptance	1
Join projects	1
Total	52

Table 1. Objectives of the participants

The atmosphere of this first part of the workshop was very encouraging because most participants were very open, nice to each other, very concern about the future of their craft and many of them were convinced that something has to be done. When the facilitator went to bed, he was sure that what he has planned for the next day was not going to work. The weavers were not ready to work in a workshop to produce innovative ideas. Most of them had not participated in this kind of workshop and had no organisational experiences.

Saturday Workshop
Five o'clock in the morning, the facilitator waked up and he knew now what ought to be done. He replanned the workshop. He thought that it was needed to start in plenum to discuss and inform each other about their objectives and wishes to construct a solid basis for the new coming organisation, ETF. The idea is to attack directly the main issue. This suggestion was accepted by all the participants.

The day was started by the facilitator giving a short talk (10 minutes) about how he saw the situation of the tapestry weavers in Europe: lack of identity, lack of visibility, and lack of organisation. He concluded that the main objectives of the workshop should be focused on:

- How to develop ETF?
- How to become proactive instead of reactive? and
- How to become more extroverts in relation to other visual art professions?

In addition, the facilitator suggested that all the participants should reflect about the following question: What can I do to support the development of ETF?

Thereafter, the facilitator suggested starting in plenum with the first steps of a SWOT analysis, by enumerating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the new organisation, ETF. Only two of the participants knew a little about this method. The idea was to conduct this analysis in plenum from 9.15 am to 10.15 am supported by the facilitator, to ground some common basis for the later idea generation workshops. Then after a coffee break, the participants will be divided into two groups and a brainstorming session will be carried out to create ideas/projects that will develop a strong ETF. Then it was planned that after lunch the different ideas/projects will be prioritised and four will be selected for further elaboration. Afterwards, each participant will chose a project to work further on, in this way four action groups will be formed. Finally, it was planned that the results will be presented at plenum for further discussion and approval.

The whole plenum session run perfectly well but it took more time than planned. It took some time to warm-up, but thereafter it was an overwhelming engagement from most of the participants. After some discussion, consensus was achieved on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of ETF. These are shown in Table 2.

During this stage of the workshop, it was a very good interchange of information, experiences and opinions among most of the participants. This was a very good exercise of total communication and focused dialogue, a very good learning experience for most of the participants and the facilitator. The facilitator register that 3-4 participants were rather passive and did not contribute very much to the discussions, it was like they were in another world. Probably this was due to the fact that they were not used to this collective and collaborative form of work; they felt alienated and they preferred to talk in small groups primarily about their tapestry art.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Enthusiasm/optimism	Too few men
Good expertise/experience	Lack of resources
Craft tradition/good teachers	The craft demands long processes
Hard working	Bad selling expertise
Creative people	Lack of organisational experience
Openness	The weavers have several jobs
Physically strong	Their work is hard for the body
International oriented	Different expectations
Visionaries	Lack of identification
Most women	High average age
Support of DCO	
Some organisational skills	

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Fund rising	Art critics
Internet/global communication	Museum and galleries
Changing markets	Lack of education (schools)
Exchanging experiences	Image
Cooperation with other artist groups	New Technology
Demand for creative people	Lack of interest in the craft
Interest in tapestry art	Lack of understanding of the craft
Master classes	No sale
Exhibitions (big, small)	Change view of the concept of "time"
Training/education/workshops	Academics do not focus on tapestry

Table 2. The SWOT matrix

The Idea Generating Sessions were conducted in two groups. It was a very slow process. The participants were tired and they were not used to brainstorm to produce ideas and be creative in groups. The processes were characterised as lacking fantasy and intuition to generate new ideas and projects. The groups had difficulty in "thinking the impossible", most participants were merely reproducing their own objectives, the ones they had at the beginning of the workshop, and the participants were not very cooperative in building up new ideas based on the ideas of the other participants.

It is well-known that brainstorming is a paradigm conserving technique. Probably other techniques were needed but lack of time and the desire of several participants to form action groups did not permit more experimentation. The facilitator was also convinced that the participants were not ready to utilise more advanced techniques. One group was more productive than the other; this is probably due to the fact that the facilitator of this group was guiding the group placing questions about more experimental projects. The other group did not brainstorm; the participants generated projects that obviously have to be started.

The next step was the presentation in plenum of the generated ideas. The facilitator clustered all the ideas in a group of twelve projects. Now the prioritisation of the ideas has to be done. The facilitator suggested a voting procedure; this was accepted by the participants. It was agreed to select four projects and to appoint an action group (4-5 persons) for each project. The four projects to be selected were those with the highest ranking. Table 4 shows the list of the twelve projects generated in the workshops as well as their ranking. Each participant had three votes to be placed in the projects that they gave highest priorities. Table 3 also shows the result of the rankings.

Exhibitions (small tapestries, with other artists, post cards)	13
Fund rising	11
Internet (database, chat rooms, homepage, etc.)	10
Organisation design (ETF)	6
Catalogues (no-IT)	4
More visible (contact writers)	4
Education (schools, craft schools, adults)	3
Commissions/art agency for sale	3
Cooperation with sales/marketing people	2
More members (national/European)	1
Local historical events	0
Open door system	0

Table 3. Ideas/Projects generated

The four selected projects were: exhibitions, fund rising, internet and organisation design. The participants were free to choose witch group they wanted to work with under the restriction that each group should have at least four members and at most five. The director of DCO was assigned to support the second and third groups. Most of the participants selected their action group very fast, three were not fully engaged in the process and they selected a group more as an obligation than a whish, because it was never suggested the idea of belonging to no-group.

Obviously, due to the heterogeneity of the group there were 3-4 more experienced participants that felt that the workshop went too slowly and they preferred to formulate a strategy from the very beginning. Self-organisation and empowerment is a time-consuming process because together with the problem solving process you are also learning a new way to work with other people. The facilitator felt that this learning aspect was very important because each participant has to go back to her own country to organise workshop to be carried out at national levels.

Each group elected a facilitator or leader and a reporter and they continue working independently of each other about the contents and context of their projects during the rest of the day.

Sunday workshop
After breakfast each participant worked in their groups elaborating an action plan for the implementation of each project. These action plans were to be reported at the end of the morning before lunch. Many ideas were generated at the beginning of the group work. The participants continued to brainstorm, without the facilitator.

The exhibition group worked with the idea of organising a Triennial at European level to be shown in different countries in Europe. They also worked with the ideas of conducting smaller exhibitions at national level.

The fund rising group decided to work trying to make applications for economical support from the EC. Other kinds of sponsorships were also suggested from the public and business sector. A list of firms that could be potential supporters was also elaborated.

The Internet group had already specified the demands to be made to this technological support in a form of homepages, galleries, news page, and a space for fast communication and dialogue. Sponsorship from firms was also considered.

Finally, the organisation design group proposed to appoint a coordination/leadership group of six persons that will organise ETF as a project organisation. This organisation had already three projects going on: exhibition, fund rising, and Internet. As more members will be joining ETF other projects could be started. This coordination group was also going to give support to the organising of national tapestry forums at each European country.

All these ideas were approved at the last plenum meeting with acclamation. The last words of the facilitator were: TAPESTRY WEAVERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! The last talk was given by the leader of the Danish section. After lunch, a bus brought the participants to Copenhagen to see the tapestries at Christianborg.

5. Evaluation of the Workshop
Unfortunately, it was no time to conduct a systematic evaluation of the workshop by the participants. But at the closing session the participants expressed that the workshop has been a very fruitful event and that without the support of the facilitator it could not have been possible to achieve so many positive results. This was also expressed by some few participants that were very sceptical at the beginning of the workshop. This was more warmly formulated by the leader of the Danish section, obviously as organisers they were at the beginning very insecure about the results of the workshop. During lunch time, several participants expressed personally the same positive opinion to the facilitator. This feedback was very much appreciated by the facilitator. At the last meeting he said that his job was only to create a space for creative processes, the results of these processes are the work of the participants. The facilitator was completely convinced that for all the participants the workshop has been a positive and enriching experience with good social and learning processes.

Some days later, the director of DOC communicated to the facilitator that many participants has written to him giving a positive feedback and the thanks for a well-organised and fruitful workshop. He and the facilitator agreed that this workshop was history; it was the first solid step towards the development of a strong and active ETF.

Two weeks later the facilitator delivered a report of the event (Vidal, 2001). In the conclusion he remarked metaphorically that "facilitation, as weaving, is an art and a craft, the facilitator has some knowledge and expertise about learning processes, some methods for problem structuring and some creative techniques for idea generation. These are the elements of facilitation as a craft. His raw material is the people to be facilitated through a guided social process. The art resides in the way how the craft and the raw material are interwoven. The facilitator creates a stage for a performance and instructs interactively the actors to play their own roles as a part of wholeness: the overall problem solving process. The workshop is like a play in a theatre (the workshop took place in a theatre!) where the instructor (the facilitator), the actors and the audience (the participants) are part of a dynamic total performance".

Several modes of facilitation have been used in the workshop. At the beginning *a hierarchical mode* was used where the facilitator planned and directed the whole social process (SWOT analysis). Thereafter *a co-operative mode* of facilitation was used where there was an interaction processes with the group members at the workshops and at plenum. Finally, *an autonomous mode* of facilitation was used where the action groups work without the presence of the facilitator (Heron, 1999). In the workshop presented above the positive and satisfactory results are due to a sound organisation and the devoted motivation of most of the participants.

In the above mentioned report, the facilitator added some additional comments grounded on the ideas, thoughts and self-evaluation conducted by him some days after the workshop. Let us briefly discuss some of them.

During the workshop a strategy for ETF has been elaborated in an implicit way, this is called an *emergent strategy*. This can be seen by looking at the SWOT matrix where the four prioritized projects can be localised. The first three projects are taken from the opportunities being matched to the strengths of the organisation, while some of the weaknesses and threats are being taken account of in the fourth project, organisation design. Obviously new projects should be reflected strategically on the SWOT matrix, but it is important to be aware that this matrix will change as ETF develops, therefore the need to update the SWOT matrix every time a new workshop is going to be conducted. Tapestry weavers in all the countries members of ETF should try to elaborate a similar matrix for their national organisations.

In spite of their many differences, the participants had something in common: their worry about their craft. They are highly skilful weavers, very introverted, having devoted their life to their profession, living an isolated life relying very much on themselves. Their strengths are also their weaknesses. Their own isolation has been the basis for the situation of their profession now as it has been outlined previously. This was clearly

reflected during the workshop where the ladies preferred to talk about tapestry, under very cosy atmosphere, being nice to each other, but being difficult to motivate them about the need of getting organised, and to discuss conflicting areas and politics. In practice they prefer to socialise even though they are aware of the need to organise the tapestry weavers at national and European levels to survive and to secure the continuation of the profession for times to come.

There were several conflicting themes that were not discussed at all, but formulated as strong opinions by some of the participants and commented by silence by the majority of the other participants. Probably the general attitude of the majority of the participants was to give high priority to positive themes to be able to go a step forward in the design of ETF. No doubt the participants have learned the possibilities of creative problem solving in workshops and most of the returned home empowered ready to contribute to the development of ETF and their profession.

The conflicting areas that at sometime the ETF has to create a space to go through enriching debates are related to three themes: What is tapestry art? Is ETF going to be an elite club or it is going to be a mass organisation? Which are the requirements to become a member of ETF? Difficult questions but much can be learned from other visual art organisations, they had also been confronted with such dilemmas.

At the end of his report the facilitator wrote:
"The facilitator has experienced a very fascinating and fruitful process at the workshop. As a teacher he was proud of such good motivated participants. He used in this workshop the following qualifications:
- His experience and knowledge about the facilitation of creative problem solving processes, as a craft and as an art,
- His experience in working in a participative way with people towards self-organisation and empowerment,
- His sociological knowledge about the contradictions of visual arts in modern societies, and
- His experience as a visual artist organised in a small organisation"

6. The Art of Facilitation
Based on the above described case study as well as other conferences/workshops we have conducted; we have identified and defined a core set of conditions that are fundamental to the process of successful facilitating group work. The competency and skills of a facilitator are measured by his/her ability to create and maintain these core conditions. But the context in which the facilitation takes place is of fundamental importance.

The facilitator may adopt different roles; even switch roles during the intervention. Some of these roles can be: educator, guide, coach, and leader. The *educator* teaches by showing how things are done; the primary intention is to teach the participants how to learn for themselves using their own experience as a benchmark. The *guide* provides wise counsel and appropriate advice; the underlying intention here is to enable the participants

to become able to guide themselves and to welcome responsibility. The *coach* gives direct instruction to fine tune the performance of single individuals; the underlying intention is to set high standards and to enable the participants to become self managing. In the role of *leader*, the facilitator conducts by example, exemplifies the values of the organisation and the group, and is a model of good group practice; the intention is to promote the ideal group work environment where creativity and initiative thrive. The art of facilitation resides in choosing the appropriate role at any given time. The final test of a satisfactory facilitation process is when at the end of a workshop the facilitator disappears and the group continues working, the group has become autonomous.

After deciding which of these roles to choose, the facilitator must now decide how authority will be used. In principle there are three modes of authority and power: hierarchical, co-operative, and autonomous (Heron, 1999). In *hierarchical mode*, the facilitator is in absolute control and all the participants know and accept this. The facilitator makes all decisions and decides on the suitable course of action. In *co-operative mode* the facilitator and the group make decisions together. Essentially they make decisions as peers, everyone has an equal say, and responsibility is shared and owned by all participants. In *autonomous mode*, the facilitator gives authority and responsibility to the participants to make decisions, and agrees to abide by the decision the group makes. There is not "right mode". The operating mode is dictated by the situation and context. The skilful facilitator should be able to switch between all modes easily, depending on the needs of the situation. To guide effective and for all participants satisfying group work, the facilitator must be clear about his/her intention, choose the appropriate role, option and operating mode. Many of these intentions cannot always be planned in advanced, as an artist the facilitator many times has to improvise during the performance. This is the art of facilitation.

All group work means engaging in task, procedures and social processes. The task is the activity that the group engages in, such as designing a new organisation. To achieve this task the will employ some procedures, such as budgeting, planning, resource allocation, marketing and so on. The participants, who employ the procedures to achieve the task, engage in interactive social processes with each other. An understanding of these social processes is crucial to group work and the facilitation process. The skilful facilitator supports the group to identify and tackle these processes. Box 2 shows some behaviour that the facilitator can do to support social processes in group work (Schwarz, 1994).

In connection with the group work, there are two central social processes to be managed: the problem solving process and the group process. The first process is how the work group essays to solve the task of generating ideas and visions of how the problem could be solved. The second process is related to the manner how the individuals in the group work together, how they learn, how they communicate, their social and power relationships, and how they deal with conflicts, etc. Obviously, these two processes are interrelated in various degrees; the ideal group work is the one where these two processes support each other. We talk about *group dynamics*, when energy and synergetic effects are created in the group work as a result of well-balanced processes where the task is just as important as the group's trust and identity.

In praxis, there is a third social process: the facilitation process. The facilitator is the manager of the other two processes and his main mission is to create and support group dynamics. By focusing and guiding group members' communication and decision-making processes in a structured form, the facilitator can reduce the chances of engaging in faulty processes and harness the strengths of the group.

The facilitator is constantly thinking (reflection) and (actively) listening to the deliberations in the group work in order to make suitable interventions (decision making). Interventions mean communicating with the group, given information and knowledge, and encouraging the participants to think about important topics. The facilitator should possess the following competences: Able to create empathy, being specific and concrete, being genuine, able to create respect, effective listening and hearing, and able to communicate non- verbally.

It should now be clear that the facilitator could play a crucial role in working groups. By understanding the social processes, the facilitator can intervene to support the group to maintain a problem solving orientation to its work. Understanding is based on emphatic observation of both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The facilitator has to observe participants' roles, the manner how the members of the group communicate, and the emotional life of the group. The facilitator should be able to make inferences about issues that are not being addressed directly; this can be achieved by being attentive to overt and symbolic content, and by considering what is not said in the group. The facilitator should be sensitive to group climate and aware of his or her own feelings and reactions with the purpose of adopting an impartial role.

Let us elaborate now more theoretically about the essence of the facilitation process as opposed to its existence or its accidental qualities or in other words the attributes by means of which facilitation as management can be qualified or identified. As we have seen, facilitation is a purposeful process carried out by one or several persons that goes forward between two interacting processes:
- First, the logical/rational process carried out by a purposeful group (the problem solving group) that wants to achieve some goals. This process has been denominated as the problem solving process; this is the scene of *objectivity*.
- Secondly, the intuitive/irrational process that refers to the chaotic social process provoked by each single participant, by the participants relations to each other, or by the participants relations to the facilitator of the purposeful group, these bring into the participants own subjectivity, intuition, fantasy and feelings. This process can be denominated as the problem destruction process; this is the scene of *subjectivity*.

Reflect on experience
Learning follows action. It occurs when experience is transformed through reflection into action strategies. Time for reflection is one of the most crucial conditions for effective group work
Recognise the needs of the participants
Social needs are the demand of the participants to be seen and heard as a human being and colleague, to be treated with respect, to give and receive support, as well as fulfil the task.
The facilitator has to support motivation, commitment and loyalty of the participants.
Create a clima of co-operation
The group has to be "greater than the sum of its parts". The facilitator should seek that the group develops to a collaborative team. Perceiving and responding to the group's dynamic is essential.
Welcome conflict and work towards resolution
Satisfying ways to tackle conflicts leads to greater commitment and can release a great deal of initiative and creativity. The facilitator should know who to deal with conflicts.
Value communication and dialogue
The facilitator should create a space where the participants share their thoughts, views and ideas, creating a culture where people can freely speak.
Share ownership of the vision
The facilitator should commit regular time to develop and enhance with the participants the vision of the workshop, to reflect upon, to review and to refine the vision collectively and co-operatively
Create trust
Trust is a reliance on truth. The facilitator creates trust by being truthful with your group and being sensitive to the feelings of individuals. Effective and empowered groups have a very high trust factor.
Work in the open
Decisions, values, and outcomes should be public knowledge. Good and bad news should be shared. Assess areas where interaction and collaboration can be increased. Plans can be changed according to development of the work, but do it openly.
Timing
This is the "sixth sense" of the facilitator. This is the ability of the performer who knows when to stop a process, and when to start a new.
Active listening
It is important to listen to the explicit meaning of the words and their tone and implicit meaning. The facilitator usually speaks less than anyone in the group.
Use appropriate tools
The facilitator should use approaches, for example creative, visual and mapping techniques, to co-ordinate members' thinking.

Box 2. Supporting social processes

The facilitation process will move in the grey zone between the scene of objectivity and the scene of subjectivity. The rational and the irrational processes are fighting one to another; the one wants to impose over the other. They are in conflict to each other, but they need each other because while the problem solving process seeks to achieve realistic

solutions, the irrational process will be the basis for the production of new ideas. Rationality needs chaos, and chaos needs rationality. Due to this contradiction, rationality versus chaos, we can stipulate that facilitation is a *dialectical process*.

Let us also emphasise that facilitation is a purposeful intervention in a social process, a designed process. Facilitation is not a necessity for the evolution of the problem solving process but it is designed to support the problem solving process. The facilitation evolves very dynamically in a grey zone essaying to construct a bridge between the traditional/conservative problem solving (business as usual) and the new/revolutionary power to change. The purpose of facilitation is to seek that the two above-mentioned processes do not destroy each other, but on the contrary support each other. In this way, traditional problem solving develops to creative problem solving. This dialectical conceptualisation of group creativity is a generalisation of a neuro-psychological model of the brain's function while thinking creatively; see further (Damasio, 1995).

The facilitation process can be managed in different manners, as there are several management styles. The facilitators are the managers of this process. Note that if the group can manage itself, there is no need of a facilitator. That is the group can learn to facilitate itself. As in any management process, it is a good idea to develop a strategy and design an action plan for the facilitation process and the whole problem solving process.

Management also involves three other central factors: *Power*, *communication,* and *learning*, (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). These aspects are always present in any facilitation process and should be reflected and articulated before, during and after the intervention. Facilitation becomes an art when a synergetic effect is achieved due to the constructive interaction between the rational and the irrational processes. The facilitator then becomes the director of a performance, where each participant plays a central role.

Summarising, we can state that the purpose of facilitation as management is not only to solve the task, but other additional goals could be:
- Each participant is a potential facilitator, therefore the importance of the learning dimension;
- Empowerment and self-organising, the participants learn to be more self-confident and learn to work creatively in a group (creativity is an act of liberation from the jail of our own routines); and
- Praxis, the facilitators should be able to learn from the experience therefore the importance of the evaluation of the processes and the systematisation of praxis, see further (Vidal, 2004b). In addition learning from failure is a good principle for any facilitator.

Recently, (Rough, 2002) has introduced the concept of *dynamic facilitation*. He asserts that rather than seeking to manage change, the facilitator should elicit, sustain, and enhance the self-organising dynamic of change. The dynamic facilitator works more completely with self-organising change than the traditional facilitator.

The dynamic facilitator supports people make progress in jumps, creative insights, and spontaneous changes of heart, in few words, the dynamic facilitator supports people to do transformational changes using some of the following principles: Assures choice-creating rather than decision-making, supports people attend to the problem, supports the group assume ownership of the problem, listen and reflects actively, supports the structuring of the conversations, protect people from all forms of judgement, go with the flow, supports divergent and convergent processes, supports group creativity, creates a positive atmosphere, and summarises progress.

7. Community Facilitation (Vidal, 2004a)

We have seen that he role of the facilitator is manifold and subtle, but nevertheless significant. During initial discussions, the facilitator attempts to draw out community members – to encourage full expression of ideas and opinions without imposing his agenda. If community statements are recorded, if he is the interviewer, he agrees on the parameters set by the community spokesperson and avoids asking leading questions. He acts as a resource providing information to the community about whatever decision making processes are relevant, making them aware of sources of power and points of influence.

Most importantly, the facilitator strives to bolster the self-confidence of the community by focusing on its competencies instead of how his expertise is going to compensate for what is lacking in the community. The person assisting the community is a "social inventor" rather than an "interventionist". After more than three decades of working as a practitioner, teacher and researcher in community facilitation, I have developed some general principles that I use to provide a theoretical framework to my work.

The focus of community facilitation is on organising and mobilising the competencies of the community members with the purpose of enabling them to act on their own behalf. It promotes the development of decision making skills along with the necessary changes of attitude that make the community better able to use those skills (learning). Community facilitation focuses on the process of change, on organising and mobilising the competencies of people, instead of the resolution of an issue or a task as an end in self.

Most professional consultants focus on the short-term resolution of specific problems or issues. Once the problem is corrected through the institution of a programme or successful political action, they have done their job. While specific programmes may result from the co-operative efforts of the facilitator and the community, they are not seeing as ends in themselves – only the means to an end. The end or goal is for people to gain a sense of their own collective strength. The experience of developing the power of the group and exercising that power is the ultimate product of the community facilitation process (empowerment) (Freire, 1981). The process itself is the "product". There may be a need for outside assistance, but it will be a collaborative rather than an expert-client relationship.

From the very beginning of the social facilitation process, the facilitator makes a formal commitment to be accountable to the community during each stage of the planning,

implementation, and evaluation processes. He agrees that it is the community (not himself, or employer, or decision makers) that will identify priorities, determine solutions, and establish time frames. This will be enacted through open-ended community spokespersons, and individual and community editing rights. Because the facilitator's commitment is spelled out so clearly, any attempt to manipulate the community or impose an agenda will be more easily recognised. He will lose credibility at a more profound level than would a consultant who never made such promises.

The accountability of the local leaders is established and maintained by the democratic selection of community "opinion leaders" and by community review an approval of the "opinion leaders" statements. These mechanisms prevent leaders from getting too far ahead of the general community or straying too far from the initial community position.

The process respects people and responsible decision makers by giving both parties the opportunity to present their views in a direct manner, without the distortion that often results from the use of an intermediary, a consultant. The community facilitation process is founded on a respect for the potential of people and decision makers that avoids the convenient stereotypes. Giving people the opportunity to communicate directly with decision makers conveys a strong belief in their ability to express themselves, to listen and understand the decision maker's point of view, to differentiate between the responsible decision maker and the manipulative decision maker, and to respond accordingly.

For decision makers, direct communication with their constituents humanises the sometimes abstract issues, provides a richer and more complex picture of people opinions, encourages accountability, and offers a mechanism for unencumbered expression of their viewpoints. It acknowledges their potential for responsible action, rather than assuming they will automatically greet people input with hostility. It would be naïve and presumptuous to imply that direct communication between people and decision makers will always lead to positive change. It does, however, make both parties less vulnerable to distorted interpretations and provide the best opportunity for mutual understanding (communication).

Encouraging a sense of collective power
Communities seeking outside support are usually all too aware of the unequal relationship between themselves and government decision makers. They realise that the decision maker's access to the elements of power – information, organisation, and resources – is much greater than their own. This knowledge frequently results in a debilitating sense of powerlessness and frustration, which inhibits effective action.

Without denying the inequalities of the situation, the community facilitation process helps communities to discover their own sources of power by giving them the experience of exercising control over the facilitation process itself. Exercising collective power within the community through a series of progressive stages, beginning with the process of transcending factions, established priorities, and selecting opinion leaders, builds the self-confidence necessary for the community eventually to act outside itself.

When the community moves to the stage of proposing solutions, it identifies and exerts control over the local elements of power. Previously unrecognised sources of information within the community are acknowledged and utilised. The community learns that its existing organisational structures – be they families, clans, or interest groups – can serve as the foundation for co-operative efforts. The community identifies local resources in the form of funds, individual skills, or materials, and determines how these can be applied to the problem at hand. The entire process provides a visible and unambiguous experience of collective power that transcends the inequalities or limitations of individual community members.

Methods and technologies, when sensitively used, enhance the feeling of collective power. The community has not only access to them, but more important, it controls the methods and technologies as well as the professionals associate with them. For example, the experience of learning to use and control information and communication technologies in practical problem solving empower the community's capability to deal with the extern world, a case study is presented below.

Building coalitions with other communities
A successful community organisation always begins at the local level, with the needs and problems an individual community has identified. Even when an issue has broad regional or national implications, the facilitator must proceed slowly and cautiously, allowing the initial community to develop a clear focus on the problems and potential solution and avoiding the temptation of overwhelming the community with his global insights. A significant amount of time must be spent in developing the high degree of mutual trust and respect, which underpins the community facilitation process. Any attempt by the facilitator to speed up the process or to introduce someone else's agenda will only result in a dilution of the community's energy and action plans.

After the community moves to the action stage, forming coalitions with other communities having similar interests and needs comes naturally and is encouraged – provided that such coalitions are strategically necessary in order to strengthen the community's impact on decision makers and are not merely ends in themselves. The use of methods and technologies are particularly helpful in the coalition-building stage. When shown to interested communities, the initial community achievement becomes the focus and point of departure for discussion. Each interested community is encouraged to add its views and opinions using these new approaches, thereby increasing the strength of the initial community's statements.

Alliances with decision makers can also work to the community's benefit and are an integral feature of the community facilitation process. Such alliances can take several forms. For example, if local decision makers are responsive but unable to satisfy the needs of the community or coalition, they can form an alliance with the community to influence state and national decision makers. If the local decision makers are un-cooperative, the state and national decision makers can be approached directly by the community, and together they can exert pressure on the local officials.

This approach fosters the development of community-initiated solutions, not just descriptions of problems or complaints, thus providing mature and constructive information to respond to. By generating its own solutions to problems, the community derives several benefits. It enhances its credibility in the eyes of decision makers who have neither the time nor the energy to come up with creative solutions to all of the problems they are confronted with. The chances of obtaining an acceptable plan of action are increased since many bad programmes result from lack of knowledge of the local situation, rather than malicious intent.

Finally, the community is better equipped to enter into process of negotiation and compromise on which governmental agencies are founded. By taking the time to consider a variety of solutions, community members learn to appreciate the complexities of problem solving that decision makers must deal with and thus are less likely to take an all-or-nothing stance. The community facilitation process acknowledges the many layers and forms of leadership existing in the community. While it strives to allow the opinion leaders to emerge, it does not ignore or circumvent the formal leaders, such as council members, mayors, etc. The formal leaders, whether or not they are also opinion leaders, have numerous levers of power that can be used for or against the facilitation process.

For this reason, the community facilitator must thoroughly explain the open-ended nature of the process to the formal leaders and obtain their approval and maybe their co-operation. Once they have understood the process, they are less likely to be threatened by the emergence of opinion leadership and will be less likely to interfere when events move beyond them. One can assume that they will try to control the process initially, but having agreed to the terms of community consensus, they can pursue their own agenda only at great expenses to their political status. Faced with a difference of opinion over community priorities, they will usually succumb to popular consensus and seek to maintain their power by taking credit for introducing the process to the community.

The role of professional experts
When professional experts are called into a community, the relationship is frequently one-sided. The expert defines the problem according to the narrow limits of his particular discipline and proposes solutions that utilise the tools he is familiar with. The engineer sees bridges to be built, the doctor diseases to be cured, the agricultural expert new crops to be introduced, and so on. If citizen input is sought, it is usually obtained on the expert's terms and is of secondary importance to the expert's opinion.

The community facilitation process recognises the important contribution that professional experts can make to the solution of community problems, but it allows for the contribution to be made within the framework of a collaborative relationship between community and expert. Instead of the expert driving the system, the community to meet its self-defined needs uses his expertise. For this reason, experts are not brought in until the community has had time to work out its own definition of the problem and to discuss possible solutions.

The community decides if it requires specialised assistance and how that assistance will be used. Discussions with the expert may result in a redefinition of problems and may generate additional solutions, but these adjustments will be made within the larger context provided by the community facilitation process – looking at the community as a whole instead of viewing it as a series of discrete problems.

A collaborative relationship between community and expert requires alterations in typical patterns of behaviour. The expert must spend more time in a community and be willing to open himself up to the give and take of a dialogue between equals. He does not need to denigrate his expertise in order to obtain acceptance by the community. Nor is he required to forfeit the attainment of professional objectives. For example, a participatory action researcher can still have his research published, but he alters the way in which the research is conducted. Community members have to assume a more active role instead of relying on the expert to produce a magical cure. They must acknowledge and articulate their own competencies and give equal recognition to the expert's specialised knowledge. The facilitator's responsibility is to provide a forum that will allow such an exchange to take place.

The flexible nature of the community facilitation approach lends itself to a variety of applications – as an alternative to the public hearing process, participatory research, organisational development, conflict resolution, urban-rural development, and development communication. While this approach can be learned, it is not an ideology or technique that can be memorised and then applied universally in a series of rigidly defined steps. It is not a formula. It is a process, in time, to be used in an open-ended and responsive manner according to the requirements of varying circumstances. Adaptation and evolution are inherent to the community facilitation approach and remain key determinants of its success.

8. Final Remarks
Group work to deal with problematic situations has become a central activity in modern societies. We have seen that group work is not only a problem solving process but also interrelated to communication, learning and empowerment processes. These processes can be suitable conducted by a facilitation process. Effective and rewarding group work needs facilitation. Especially in situations where the participants do not know each other or are not very experienced in group working.

To become a good facilitator is like in sport or art; you have to practice and to train your self. You will not become a good sportsman or artist just by reading books. If you are in a meeting at your local club, at your community, at work or any other organisation you belong to, try to convince people to organise those meetings as facilitated conferences and workshops.

In my teaching activities related to creativity, problem solving, and systems thinking, the students have to be a member of a group to follow the course. By the end of the course each student should be able to work in groups, to facilitate groups and to use some tools and methods. The results obtained in these courses are overwhelming positive for all the

students and myself, especially taking into consideration that for most of them it is the first time they are working in groups.

Facilitating communities is also an important activity in the poor regions of the World (Freire, 1972). The facilitation expertise can be a suitable support to the already going work on participative action research (Whyte, 1991).

Let us end this chapter by continuing with the story of ETF. The ETF steering committee has now been working together for four years and they are about to realise many of the goals outlined in the workshop. The structure of the ETF has been set up, a pan-European forum for professional tapestry artists. This organisation has been set up by tapestry artists for tapestry artists to encourage the continuing development of the art of tapestry weaving in Europe. ETF is becoming strong and has many members.

In 2005-2006 ETF presented, ARTAPESTRY, a juried international exhibition of contemporary tapestries from Europe to be shown in Ålborg, Denmark, and Krefeld, Germany, (Cronenberg, 2005). This is ETF's first large exhibition. Next, the website with the showcase gallery TAPESTRY MASTERS will be improved. The first full meeting of EFT members will be held in Denmark in the summer of 2006: Plans are also underway to give ETF a home base where seminars, workshops and artist-in residence programmes can be held.

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