

# Deliberative Methods for Complex Issues: A typology of functions that may need scaffolding

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## ABSTRACT

When a group of diverse stakeholders face a complex issue that needs to be managed skillfully, the group may need support in order to work effectively. A large number of methods for scaffolding group deliberation on complex issues has evolved over the last few decades, however little research has been conducted to date on what functions these methods actually perform. The study in this article differentiates between the functions that may need to be scaffolded, and the means used for scaffolding such functions. A literature review and interviews with eight experienced facilitators led to a typology comprising of 24 functions that various deliberative methods are assumed to perform. The typology also describes some of the risks associated with a neglect to scaffold each function. An inventory was made of techniques and facilitator actions used in different methods and by individual facilitators in order to scaffold the 24 functions. The typology of functions may be useful in empirical research on deliberative methods, for evaluation purposes, and for supporting further development of skillfulness among facilitators.

## KEYWORDS

Deliberative Methods, Scaffolding, Techniques, Group Facilitation.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This paper offers a useful conceptual framework that can both assist facilitators of group processes to reflect on and develop their practice, and be useful for comparative and evaluative research on facilitation and deliberative methods. Facilitators operate from a range of 'theories of change', which can mean that different facilitators facing the same particular group conditions can make quite different decisions about their process design. This article presents a useful inventory of functions that can be scaffolded in group processes, as well as offering potential risks for not scaffolding in certain situations.

## INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, a rich range of methods for working with complex issues has evolved. The need for such methods has been felt within organizations (companies, public administration, non-governmental organizations), in inter-organizational interactions, in local communities, and in many other arenas. Rosenhead (2006), while writing about Problem Structuring Methods (PSMs;

one of the families of methods for complex issues), captured a number of important features of the situations for which a large number of methods were designed:

PSMs are appropriate for situations characterized by multiple actors, differing perspectives, partially conflicting interests, significant intangibles and

perplexing uncertainties. They can operate in such contexts because they:

- are designed for deployment in a group format;
- permit the simultaneous consideration of alternative perspectives;
- are participative in nature, with interaction among participants, and between participant and facilitator(s);
- iterate between analysis of judgmental inputs and the application of judgment to analytic outputs; and
- allow closure when participants are satisfied with the progress achieved, rather than requiring commitment to a comprehensive solution of all the interacting strands that make up the problematic situation (p. 762).

The first sentence in the quote above describes the nature of complex issues well, but it might be added that complex issues are usually also dependent on many different types of conditions and complex causal relationships: social, psychological, economic, political, technological, legal, environmental and cultural, for example. Some complex issues are of vital importance for different stakeholder groups, for organizations, communities, countries and even for the global society, but are also difficult to manage. A straightforward difficulty is that for any single actor, it may be hard to get an overview and understanding of all the components, conditions, causal connections and potential consequences that may be relevant to the issue. Another difficulty is one Rosenhead points to: there are often many stakeholders with different perspectives and conflicting interests, which may make communication and agreement difficult (Rosenhead, 2006, p. 762).

Complex issues, it can be argued, require that actors have sophisticated capacities for managing different kinds of complexity. Where is this much-needed capacity to be found? It can be looked for in the skills of individuals - either searching for those individuals who have the capacities needed for very complex tasks, or developing methods for training individuals in the appropriate skills (Jordan, 2011). However, an interesting alternative is to turn attention to the possibility of generating collective capacities for managing issue complexity by means of skillful structured facilitation that enables groups to accomplish tasks that would be out of reach both of any individual and of groups working without the support of a method and a facilitator. A research question can be articulated as: *Is it possible to build capacities for the management of complex issues into external support structures in the form of methods and/or facilitation strategies?* The present study is intended to help address this question by developing a clearer understanding of how deliberative methods can serve a group of people grappling with a complex issue. The study is based on a review of

literature on deliberative methods and on eight in-depth interviews with experienced facilitators.

## ON THE USE OF METHODS

External support, in the form of a structured method and/or skilled facilitation, can be talked of in terms of *scaffolding* (Hlebo et al., 1976; Stone, 1993; Wood et al., 1976). This term has found widespread use in the study of learning and skill acquisition, in particular in child development. Scaffolding is the introduction of a support structure similar to what workers need when erecting walls of a new building and when doing other construction work. Metaphorically, the verb 'to scaffold' refers to the provision of the external support a person or a group may need in order to build skills, learn new things, construct a solution to a complex problem or develop a strategy for attaining a desired goal. The methods referred to above may be seen as scaffoldings; they can enable a group to master a task that would otherwise be out of their reach.

Most methods used for scaffolding group processes on complex issues have been designed by practitioners - often experienced consultants or group facilitators. In some cases, their designs have been informed by research-based theories, but mostly the methods are based on accumulated expertise from practice rather than on systematic empirical analysis. One consequence of this is that the theoretically articulated understanding of *how* (and *if*) the methods serve useful functions for groups of people grappling with complex tasks is rather poorly developed.

## Methods are different for various reasons

The richness of deliberative methods can be explained by at least two different types of reasons. One is that conditions vary from case to case and methods have been designed in response to the needs in the contexts in which they have evolved. For example, such variables as the number of participants, the time available for the process, the level of heterogeneity regarding backgrounds and roles among the participants, and the level of complexity of the issues imply constraints and potentials that methods have to be adapted to. The goals or purposes of the deliberative processes also vary considerably. If the goal is to generate a number of creative ideas, the method would need to scaffold creativity. If the goal is to develop a detailed action plan for a very specific problem none of the participants fully understand, the method needs to scaffold inquiry, collaborative learning and decision-making. If the purpose is rather to improve collaboration between different departments by increasing mutual understanding and building relationships characterized by trust, the method should use techniques that scaffold contact and dialogue. As these brief remarks indicate, conditions can vary along many different dimensions. However, a more comprehensive treatment of

which types of conditions are significant goes beyond the scope of this article.

There is an entirely different type of reason for the differences in method designs, though, namely the beliefs of the designers of methods about what needs to happen for a group to be effective when deliberating complex issues. Facilitators have more or less articulated ‘theories of change’ that guide their practice, which means that different facilitators facing the same particular conditions would sometimes make different decisions about process design. Little research has been conducted on consultants’ theories of change (however, see Argyris & Schön, 1992; Shapiro, 2005), even though a better understanding of the spectrum of theories of change would seem to be crucial for the further development of the field. The present author hopes that the typology developed in this article will be useful for future inquiry into the roles of theories of change in the practice of facilitating deliberative processes.

### Aims of the study

The aims of the study reported in this article are (a) to clearly differentiate between the *functions* served by deliberative methods on the one hand, and the *means* used for scaffolding the functions on the other hand; (b) to develop a typology of the functions performed (or assumed to be performed) by the methods and by the facilitator; (c) to elaborate on the evident risks of not scaffolding these; and (d) to provide examples from the study of means for active scaffolding of such functions. The intended outcome, a typology of functions, can be useful both for furthering group facilitation research and for developing facilitation practice.

### Terminology regarding methods for complex issues

Many different terms are used for designating methods used in supporting groups to develop strategies or decisions regarding complex issues. Some of these terms refer to only a subcategory of the broad spectrum of related methods and reflect the specific function or conditions of the intended application. *Change methods*, or *whole system change methods* (e.g., Holman et al., 2007), is a term often used in organizational settings when organizational change is a major concern. Several publications are devoted specifically to *large group methods/interventions* (e.g., Bunker & Alban, 2006; Bartunek et al., 2011) or *large scale interventions* (van der Zouwen, 2011), terms for methods designed to involve large numbers of participants in the management of complex issues. The terms *participatory* or *collaborative decision-making* (Kaner et al., 2007) have a slightly different emphasis, pointing to the intention to involve more stakeholders in actual decision-making. The term *problem structuring methods* (e.g., Rosenhead & Mingers, 2001) points to an important

property of many complex issues: because the issues are complex and because different stakeholders have very different perspectives, a major concern is to arrive at a formulation of what the issue actually is and what conditions are relevant to consider. The United Nations Development Programme uses the term *dialogical processes* (see Pruitt & Thomas, 2007); drawing on the role of dialogue in their development work and peacemaking. In the fields of community development and politics, names of methods often include the word *deliberative* or *deliberation*, such as in *deliberative forums*, *deliberative workshops* or more generally, *deliberative methods* (e.g., Gastil & Levine, 2005; Abelson et al., 2003). This term points to a quality that seems to be common to all methods: the group needs to intentionally deliberate the issues involved, i.e., to talk and listen, reflect and learn before they can develop well-founded actions plans or decisions.

Key descriptors used when searching for a name for the kinds of methods used for supporting groups working with complex issues seem to be *change*, *collaborative*, *participatory*, *structuring* and *deliberative*. In this article, I will use the term *deliberative methods* as a general designation for all types of methods referred to above.

### Problem analysis: key concepts

Most efforts to compare and analyze deliberative methods have been aimed at identifying key factors for attaining successful outcomes (e.g., Shmulyian et al., 2010; van der Zouwen, 2011). The purpose of the study in this article is much narrower. Terms are defined using the following formulation as a starting point:

In order to assist a group of people in their efforts to attain certain **goals** regarding a complex issue, facilitators use **methods** that combine different **techniques** in order to scaffold the performance of a number of **functions** in the group’s work **process**.

The *goals*, or hoped-for outcomes, of deliberative group processes can be quite different, with significant consequences for the design of the method used. Mingers and Brocklesby (1997) define *methodology* in a way that covers what is meant by *method* above: “A methodology is a structured set of guidelines or activities to assist people in undertaking research or intervention” (p. 490). Thus, a method has several steps or phases organized in a manner that reflect assumptions about what is helpful in order to scaffold the work process. Usually when using the word ‘method’, it is commonly thought of as name for a particular ‘structured set of guidelines or activities’ that is used in many different situations in a recognizable format.

However, many skilled facilitators do not strictly follow a standard recipe when designing and facilitating a group process. They adapt the format to case-specific conditions, drawing on a number of different methods and techniques. During the actual process, they also make new decisions about how to intervene or proceed, depending on what happens and what seems to be needed in order for the group to achieve its purpose. In a wider sense, 'method' can also be a name for a unique process as it manifests, as long as there is some kind of meaningful and recognizable pattern in the decisions and actions of the facilitator and group. *Technique* is a concept used here to designate specific activities prescribed by the method or actions performed by the facilitator in order to serve various functions. Methods and techniques can be seen as the *means* used for attaining the desired goals. *Function*, on the other hand, is a word that points to *how* the means contribute to an effective process. An assumption in this article is that certain functions may need to be scaffolded in order for a group of stakeholders to be able to work together on a complex task; they may need support to agree on what task to work on, to actually communicate productively with each other, to make decisions, and more. *Process* refers to the actual flow of the work the group performs. A group that deliberates a complex issue without a method and without a facilitator still goes through a process. The purpose of the method is to support the process so that it is more effective.

It is clear that the success of a deliberative method is not only dependent on how the actual process is structured and facilitated, but also, to a considerable extent, on the contextual conditions, such as how the process is prepared, to what extent high-ranking decision makers understand and support the process, and the level of maturity of the organizational setting (see van der Zouwen, 2011). These types of conditions will, however, not be subject to further analysis in this study, even though they may be crucially important in many situations.

The primary aim of this article is to make and organize an inventory of the *functions* that may need scaffolding in deliberative processes, as well as of the potential risks of not scaffolding these functions. If the different functions that *may* be relevant to deliberative processes are identified, we may then look into *how* they are scaffolded by turning our attention to the structure of methods and to the techniques used in the form of particular activities or actions by the facilitator.

#### Analytical frameworks on deliberative methods

The quantity of academic analyses of deliberative methods is still relatively limited. However, some efforts have been made to develop conceptual frameworks for analyzing and

comparing methods<sup>1</sup>. Van der Zouwen (2011) developed an evaluation instrument for assessing success factors and effects of large scale interventions. Her instrument comprises 42 items organized into seven sections: *Context/Task*, *Client*, *Consultant*, *Intervention*, *Effectiveness–Short term effects*, *Effectiveness–Sustainable effects* and *Risks*. Shmulyian et al. (2010) analyzed eight large-scale methods and identified five types of 'success factors', labeled *Issues*, *Individuals*, *Intentional process*, *Information* and *Infrastructure*. Both studies were primarily aimed at identifying conditions that contribute to successful outcomes of deliberative processes rather than discerning the actual mechanisms involved. Eoyang and Quade (2006) offered a typology of three categories of different *means* used to enable a productive group process: *the container* (psychological, physical, social); *significant differences* (diversity of participants); and *transforming exchanges* (connections). The framework was used to compare four methods: Open Space (Owen, 2008), Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010), Appreciative Inquiry (Ludema et al., 2003) and Whole-Scale Change (Dannemiller Tyson Associates, 2000) in terms of how each of the methods cater to the three factors in the framework. The authors argued that all deliberative processes depend on the nature of these three factors, but the techniques used by facilitators can vary considerably. Mingers & Brocklesby (1997; Mingers, 2001) developed a framework to allow a more discriminating understanding of the differences between methods, their purposes and their relative strengths, with the aim of assisting practitioners in skillfully combining techniques and methods in a more context-sensitive way. The authors argue that interventions to various degrees target the *material* world, the *social* world and the *personal* world. Their framework also incorporates a phase model of interventions comprising four different tasks that need to be accomplished:

*Appreciation* of the problem situation as experienced by the agents involved;

<sup>1</sup> A network of practitioners, The Group Pattern Language Project (see <http://groupworksdeck.org>), collaborated on identifying "patterns" that play a role in group processes. The project ended up with a framework comprising 91 patterns. The present author made a content analysis of the patterns in order to compare the Group Works patterns with the typology presented in this article. Many of the patterns describe general *attitudes* that are thought to be helpful on the part of facilitators and/or of group members. Other patterns describe *actions* by facilitators (and sometimes by group members) that might be helpful when need arises during the process. A third category are patterns that describe elements of *active scaffolding*, and a fourth category comprises patterns relating to *passive scaffolding*. These four categories are not mutually exclusive, as many patterns can come into expression, for example, both in the form of active scaffolding (as design elements in the method used) and in the form of facilitator actions prompted by what happens during the actual group process. The group pattern framework was used as an additional source for identifying relevant functions.

*Analysis* of the underlying structure/constraints generating the situation as experienced;  
*Assessment* of the ways in which the situation could be other than it is; of the extent to which the constraints could be altered; and  
*Action* to bring about desirable changes (Mingers & Brocklesby, 1997, p.494).

Pulling together the three domains and the four phases, Mingers and Brocklesby constructed a grid that can be used for assessing the properties of different methods in terms of what they aim for, and in what phase of a process their respective strengths are.

Whilst useful studies, none of these four analytical frameworks aim at identifying the functions performed by the various elements of methods and facilitator actions, even though they all offer useful perspectives on goals, conditions and means. The intended contribution of the present study is to offer a clearer differentiation between the *functions* on the one hand, and the *means* of scaffolding the functions on the other.

## METHOD

### Background

The present study grew out of a three-year research project on societal entrepreneurship (see Jordan, Andersson & Ringnér, 2013). A central part of the project comprised action research on groups working on complex issues using The Integral Process (TIP) for complex issues (Ross, 2006). TIP was designed to scaffold increased complexity awareness as a means of developing comprehensive strategies to deal with complex problems. During the course of the research, reflection was conducted continually on what actually happens in the process and how the method and the facilitator support the group in achieving their goals. One of the researchers in the project, Päivi Turunen, conducted a comparative survey of nine deliberative methods through a literature review, a questionnaire to facilitators, and a focus group interview (Turunen, 2013). Building on this, the present author started to develop a preliminary typology of the functions performed by methods for complex issues, drawing on two decades of immersion in the scholarly fields of conflict management on the one hand, and constructive-developmental theory on the other. Despite not being highly systematic, the initiative yielded a new typology of 16 functions. The typology seemed promising and led to the idea of developing the typology further through a more stringent study. The present study is based on two parts: a literature review and a series of interviews with eight experienced facilitators. The idea was to conduct a more systematic study of what methods and facilitators actually do in practice, in order to test whether the functions identified in the preliminary

typology were relevant, as well as to look for further functions not described in the preliminary version.

### Literature study

The literature review was conducted in order to identify a number of differently-conceived deliberative methods (and facilitation strategies) and to analyze which functions these methods are designed to scaffold. Five bodies of relevant literature were identified, partially overlapping but still with distinct cores.

The *first* group is the most heterogeneous, comprising texts on 'change methods.' Much of the literature in this group has been written by practitioners who have developed methods based on their own accumulated know-how. There are books about specific methods, such as Open Space (Owen, 2008), Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010), Future Workshops (Jungk & Müllert, 1981), WorkOut (Ulrich, Kerr & Ashkenas, 2002) and Appreciative Inquiry Summits (Ludema et al., 2003). Some books and articles offer descriptive overviews and, in some cases, comparative analyses of different methods (Holman et al., 2007; Bunker & Alban, 2006; Eoyang & Qyuade, 2006; Shmuliyan et al., 2010). The volume of empirical research on this kind of methods is, however, small and often exploratory (van der Zouwen, 2011; Shmuliyan et al. 2010; Manning & Binzagr, 1996; Worley et al., 2011). It is fair to argue that quite a few of the practitioners in this group present value systems inspired by humanistic psychology, emphasizing not only goals related to enhancing the performance of operations, but also to broader values, such as personal growth and satisfaction, finding meaning, empowerment of individuals, and increased respect and trust.

The *second* group comprises texts on 'problem structuring methods' developed by researchers and practitioners with a background in operational research and systems engineering, most of which are based in the UK (for an overview, see Rosenhead & Mingers, 2001). The most well-known methods in this group are the Soft System Methodology (Checkland & Poulter, 2006) and the Strategic Choice Approach (Friend & Hickling, 2004). In this category, academic researchers-practitioners have played a leading role, and consequently there is a considerable body of articles and books in the field (see the *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, *Omega*, and the *International Journal of Management Science*).

The *third* group is the literature on 'deliberative democracy' (for an overview, see Gastil & Levine, 2005). Authors writing about deliberative democracy fall into two main categories: practitioners (e.g., Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002, 2005), often with a personal commitment to community development, participatory democracy and social development; and researchers (e.g., Bobbio, 2010;

Ross, 2007), mainly with a background in political science. There is a dedicated academic journal in this field, the *Journal of Public Deliberation*.

The *fourth* group of relevant literature is a subfield of conflict management, in the USA generally called 'management of public disputes.' Most texts in this field are manuals on methods, written by experienced mediators (e.g., Carpenter & Kennedy, 2001; Susskind & Cruickshank, 1987, 2006; Mindell, 1995, 2002; Saul & Sears, 2010). There are also some books by academic scholars (see e.g., Dukes, 1996; Forester, 2009; Schwerin, 1995), but these are mostly discussing the potential of using alternative methods for managing public disputes, rather than offering theoretical or empirical analyses of the methods employed.

The *fifth* group comprises textbooks on group facilitation, written by facilitators for facilitators (Bens, 2005; Ghais, 2005; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2006; Hogan, 2003; Hunter, 2009; Kaner et al., 2007; Schuman 2005; Schwarz, 2002; Wilkinson, 2004). In comparison with the other four groups, these texts are less concerned with named methods with specific steps or principles, and more on group facilitation skills and approaches relevant to shifting conditions.

Since the purpose of the present study is to identify what functions various types of scaffolding of deliberative processes have, the literature review focused on texts that in some detail described methods and facilitation strategies. The following methods/approaches were chosen for closer study: Open Space (Owen, 2008), Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010), Future Workshops (Zukunftswerkstätte, Jungk & Müllert, 1981), Appreciative Inquiry Summits (Ludema et al., 2003), World Café (Brown et al., 2005), WorkOut (Ulrich et al., 2002), Soft System Methodology (Checkland & Poulter, 2006), The Strategic Choice Approach (Friend & Hickling, 2004), The Integral Process for Complex Issues (Ross, 2006, 2007), The 21st Century Town Meeting (Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002, 2005), management of public disputes (Carpenter & Kennedy, 2001), the Consensus-Building Approach (Susskind & Cruickshank, 1987, 2006), Deep Democracy (Lewis & Woodhull, 2008; Mindell, 1995, 2002) and Transformative Mediation/The Relational approach (Saul & Sears, 2010). In addition, I have a more superficial insight into dozens of other methods, primarily through the overviews in Holman, Devane & Cady (2007), Bunker & Alban (2006) and Rosenhead & Mingers (2001). The method descriptions were in each case read in order to find explicit references to functions that the authors believed as important to scaffold. However, often the functions were not clearly articulated, but could be inferred from descriptions of specific techniques and steps used in the respective processes.

## Interviews

For the interview series, eight experienced facilitators representing different types of deliberative methods were chosen. Different pathways were used to locate active practitioners working with the most well-known deliberative methods, and the authors conducted interviews with five facilitators working with Open Space, Future Search, Future Workshops (Zukunftswerkstätte), the Strategic Choice Approach and TIP. A further three interviewees were with experienced facilitators working with deliberative processes drawing on several approaches and techniques. In addition to the five methods mentioned above, one facilitator referred to the technique Opera (Mantere & Slåen, 2001) as an important method they used, one incorporated elements of WorkOut, and one was trained in a proprietary framework of their consulting company in the organizational development field. Seven of the interviewees were Swedish and one was from the USA. The latter was the designer of TIP, Sara Ross. It was deemed important to include TIP in the study because of the method's thorough grounding in a particular scaffolding theory, and while there were TIP practitioners in Sweden, they were less experienced than Sara Ross.

The purpose of the interviews was to look for previously unidentified functions that different elements of methods might have, and to collect examples of techniques used to serve the functions. The interview format was therefore designed to minimize the interviewer's direction of the respondent's exposition. The interviewer asked the respondents to choose one reasonably representative group process they had facilitated, and describe very concretely and in chronological order each step in the process, including the preparatory and follow-up phases. The interviewer continually asked for more specific details and the reasons for designing the process steps in the particular manner described. Sometimes the interviewer also asked about what might have happened if the particular process step had been omitted. After having concluded the scrutiny of the case process chosen, the respondent was asked to comment on the preliminary version of the typology of different functions comprising 16 items, and in particular, to think of techniques used in their preferred approach for performing the functions. The duration of the interviews was between 1½ to 2 hours.

Cultural differences might be an important source of differences in group dynamics, and therefore also differences in what needs to be scaffolded. Most of the literature reviewed for this study was written by North American and European authors, and all but one of the interviewees was Swedish. There were no discernible salient differences between the approaches used by the Swedish facilitators and the practices described in the literature on deliberative methods. However, it is to be

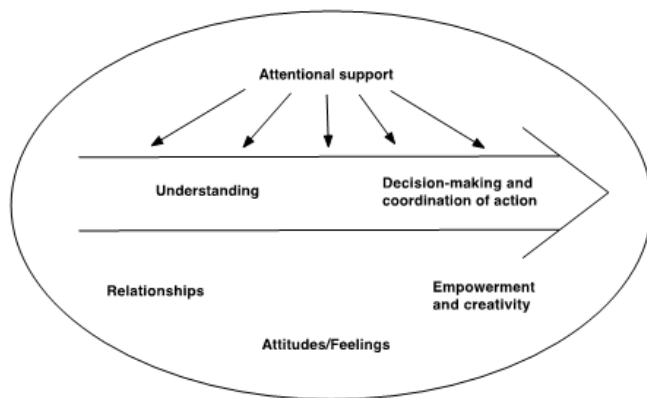
expected that a comparative study of facilitation strategies in different cultural contexts would yield additional insights into the functions of methods and facilitation.

**Analysis**

The approach used in this study is inductive rather than hypothetical-deductive, and hermeneutical rather than quantitative. Thus the results are inevitably dependent on the properties of the researcher's own pre-understanding, not least, in the form of concepts and frames of reference picked up from different theoretical traditions. In an iterative process, the typology was developed by going back and forth between conceptual frameworks and the descriptions of elements of methods provided in the literature and by the interviewees. The final version of the typology was presented in three workshops with 60 group facilitators in total. The participants found the 24 functions highly meaningful for reflecting on their own facilitation practice<sup>2</sup>.

**FUNCTIONS OF GROUP WORK ON COMPLEX ISSUES**

The study resulted in the identification of 24 different functions that elements of methods and/or the overall structure of the method and/or real-time facilitation are assumed to have for enabling a group to become effective in working with complex issues. I have organized these 24 functions into six broader categories.



**Figure 1. Overview of the Six Categories of Functions**

Figure 1 gives an overview of the six categories. Two of them, *Understanding* and *Decision-making and coordination of action* refer to the actual work the group does in inquiring into the issue complex and developing action strategies. One, *Attentional support*, refers to the structuring of the work process, either by the structure of

<sup>2</sup> This is only a validation of the meaningfulness of the typology to the practitioners who would be unlikely to identify missing elements in the typology.

the method used, or by interventions of the facilitator. The remaining three categories, *Relationships*, *Attitudes/Feelings* and *Empowerment and creativity*, refer to different aspects of the creation of favorable conditions for an effective group process<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 1. 24 Functions Performed by Deliberative Methods and Facilitator Actions**

Function	Risk if not scaffolded
<b>I. ATTENTIONAL SUPPORT</b>	
<b>1. Issue focus</b> Focus the attention of the participants (whole group or subgroups) on the same issue/topic or supporting the group in clarifying priorities and selecting issue(s), in order to have a common focus for the participants' work.	People talk simultaneously about very different issues and therefore get nowhere.
<b>2. Structure work process</b> Structure the attention of the participants on one task at a time, e.g., making inventory of relevant issues, formulate goals, issue analysis, development of action plan, coordination of implementation, assessment.	People mix thoughts, ideas and suggestions referring to different tasks, and do not penetrate and reflect deeply on each task.
<b>3. Learning</b> Reflect on insights and learning during the process in order to support long-term skill development.	People do not notice their own learning, and therefore do not transfer their learning to new situations.
<b>4. Decongealing</b> Making unreflected assumptions and interpretations visible and opening up (even disrupt) the participants' mental frames in order to open space for new approaches and ideas.	Discourse remains confined to pre-existing conceptions. Restricted range of new ideas.

<sup>3</sup> There are legitimate objections to this particular way of grouping them, since the categories and functions overlap to some extent. Other ways of organizing the functions into categories may also be perfectly relevant.

<b>II. RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
<p><b>5. Safe space</b> Create safe space: a sense of being welcome and establishment of basic trust that lowers the threshold to engage in conversation and collaboration.</p>	Participants feel insecure, are reserved, and hold back.
<p><b>6. Rapport</b> Create favourable conditions for establishing rapport (short-term) and personal relationships (long-term) between people who did not know each other personally before.</p>	Conversations remain on a superficial level due to lack of rapport and trust; failure to establish lasting personal relationships that might ease communication in future interactions.
<p><b>7. Open up communication</b> Supporting participants to be open about their experiences, evaluations, opinions and ideas; make more things speakable; transform norms for what one talks about in public.</p>	People do not express their personal experiences; there are topics that are unspeakable even though they might be crucial to include in deliberations.
<p><b>8. Dialogue in diversity</b> Release energy locked in conflictual relationships in order to enable a sense of community to emerge, and to enable creative and productive use of differences in perspectives and interests. Pre-empt debating and positional bargaining.</p>	Conversations are permeated by debating, lack of openness; thinking remains restricted to pre-existing perspectives.
<b>III: ATTITUDES/FEELINGS</b>	
<p><b>9. Management of energy levels</b> Support appropriate energy levels; counteract boredom.</p>	People get bored and become distracted and/or passive.
<p><b>10. Commitment</b> Mobilize commitment and hope that common efforts might lead to meaningful outcomes.</p>	Sense of powerlessness; expectation that someone else will take action.
<p><b>11. Focus on possibilities</b> Shift focus from obstacles, frustration, and blaming towards possibilities.</p>	Fixation in position of frustration and blaming; lack of creative and realistic ideas about action.
<p><b>12. Expansion of scope of care</b> Support expansion of identification to a larger whole.</p>	People remain identified with partial interests and have a narrow focus of attention.

<p><b>13. Accountability</b> Strengthen the participants' feeling of accountability for actions and outcomes.</p>	No action ensues because no one feels accountable.
<b>IV. UNDERSTANDING</b>	
<p><b>14. Self-clarification</b> Develop clarity about participants' own needs, values, and preferences.</p>	Weak commitment to process and outcome because proposals and decisions are not anchored in true needs.
<p><b>15. Complexity awareness</b> Support participants in developing a keener awareness, articulation, and understanding of distinctions, conditions, causal relationships, and systemic interdependencies relevant to the issues.</p>	Low quality of proposals and decisions because significant aspects of the issue complex have not been considered.
<p><b>16. Whole system awareness/Context awareness</b> Support awareness of the whole system and its environment, as well as long-term change processes in the context.</p>	Need to adapt to changing conditions is ignored; focus remains narrow and strategies only address parts of the system; time horizon is short.
<p><b>17. Stakeholder awareness</b> Support increased awareness of relevant stakeholders and their respective interests and views.</p>	Significant stakeholders are not considered in strategy development.
<p><b>18. Perspective awareness</b> Increase awareness of the properties of diverse perspectives, enabling the participants to make creative use of the tensions between different perspectives on causality, values, and desirable measures.</p>	Participants remain embedded in monological perspectives; measures do not draw on the richness of different perspectives; conversations tend to develop into debates between fixed positions.
<p><b>19. Common ground</b> Develop a shared narrative of the situation and a common strategy.</p>	Not necessarily a problem, but can be if tight collaboration is necessary; communication breaks down because of disparate narratives of the situation; action is impeded by unresolved conflicts about appropriate strategy.



V. EMPOWERMENT AND CREATIVITY	
<p><b>20. Mobilize individuals' resources</b> Create favourable conditions for the mobilization and activation of participants' knowledge, skills, creativity and other resources.</p>	Suboptimal outcomes because available resources are not mobilized in the process; failure to surface creative ideas; unintended negative consequences of measures taken because significant factors were not considered.
<p><b>21. Creativity</b> Support the generation of creative ideas and visions.</p>	Suboptimal outcomes because creative ideas fail to surface.
<p><b>22. Pre-empt domination</b> Neutralize asymmetrical power relations that obstruct effective collaboration.</p>	Persons with high rank or expansive personalities dominate conversations while others remain silent.
VI. DECISION-MAKING AND COORDINATION OF ACTION	
<p><b>23. Decision-making</b> Develop, select, and make decisions on actions that integrate relevant values, interests, concerns, and ideas.</p>	People talk a lot and generate ideas, but firm decisions are not made.
<p><b>24. Support implementation</b> Coordinate implementation of a strategy through planning, management, and evaluation.</p>	Agreed measures are not implemented because accountability is unclear, or implementation is poorly organized.

Table 1 above gives an overview of the 24 functions within the six categories by describing each function briefly and the potential risks, i.e., suggesting what might happen if the function is not scaffolded. The table in Appendix A offers examples of specific methods, techniques and facilitation interventions that may serve each function. In the following sections, I will describe each of the 24 functions.

*1. Attentional support*

The first category is called *Attentional support*. The term 'attentional support' (Basseches & Mascolo, 2010) refers here to how a facilitator supports a group by directing their attention towards certain objects or tasks. Without this support, the attention of the group members might be scattered or unfocused, making an effective group dialogue difficult to conduct. Attentional support might also be needed in order to draw group members' attention to potential conditions, causes, consequences, and tasks that they would otherwise simply fail to notice and reflect upon, which means that this category overlaps with the category

*Understanding* (see below). The category *Attentional support* comprises four functions.

*Issue focus* (1) refers to the function of focusing the participants' attention on a shared issue or task, thus preventing progress that is impeded by a fragmentation of attention on a broad diversity of issues. Issue focus can be achieved in a number of different ways. One path is to clearly formulate a set issue or task before the group convenes, taking care to communicate before and during the process what task the group is called to work on. Another path is to scaffold an issue discovery process with the group, making an inventory of all possible issues participants can think of, and then gradually inquire into and select a strategically important issue to work with (as in TIP). A third path is to allow participants to self-organize by forming different groups around the different issues group members feel are important to engage with (as in Open Space).

*Structure work process* (2) refers to the temporal or functional division of the group's work into clearly distinguished types of tasks. The group is thereby supported in focusing on one task at a time - rather than mixing tasks - such as making an inventory of issues, inquiring into causes and consequences, generating solutions, evaluating proposals, and making decisions. Most methods have a certain structure in the form of a sequence of work sessions where each session is centered on a specific task. An alternative to doing this, used in the Strategic Choice Approach (SCA), is to have a terminology for different types of tasks (in SCA: the shaping, designing, comparing and choosing modes), and be clear about how the group moves between these different tasks as the conversation's focus spontaneously shifts.

*Learning* (3) refers to the function of directing attention towards the learning going on during the group's process. If this function is not scaffolded, participants may fail to notice the insights they gain, the way they go about when grappling with the group's task, and other types of learning. If participants reflect on their own learning, the chances are better that the experience will have lasting effects on their cognitive and interactional strategies in future work on similar tasks.

*Decongealing* (4) points to the potential need for loosening up the perspectives, accustomed points of view, and value sets that participants may be embedded in. Their meaning-making may be 'congealed,' and they may lack awareness of the extent to which they view the issues in ways conditioned by the properties of their perspectives. Scaffolding decongealing can take many different forms. Milder techniques include using non-verbal means of representation, such as associating about how postcards depicting different situations might have a meaning in

relation to the chosen issue, or drawing images of a desired future. Techniques can also be more directly challenging and disruptive, for example by confronting participants with the task of assuming the role of a stakeholder with a very different perspective than one's own.

## II. Relationships

The second category comprises the functions related to *Relationships*, e.g., how the facilitator can support a climate of open communication among the participants. Open communication is a condition for learning about the situation, and for creativity in developing solutions. The category refers to the nature of interactions among participants during the actual event, but also to the process of establishing personal relationships that may in the future lower the thresholds to open communication among stakeholders.

*Safe space* (5) refers to the task of designing the physical environment of the event, as well as the way participants are greeted and introduced to the process and its format. This is in order to invite a sense of being welcome and developing trust and a relaxed atmosphere among the participants. Clarity about what is expected of participants, agreement about norms and roles, and information about what is going to happen are important ingredients in building safe space.

*Rapport* (6) is the subtle process of people personally connecting with each other and starting to establish relationships. Before rapport has emerged, participants are likely to be a bit reserved, keep conversation to 'safe' topics, and avoid exposing their personal convictions, values and ideas. By breaking the ice, and creating the experience that other participants are friendly (or at least civil), it makes it easier to interact in a freer and more personal manner.

*Open up communication* (7) builds on the preceding function. *Rapport* and refers to the establishment of interpersonal contact, while this function refers to the potential need to go beyond 'safe' topics and arguments, and also talk about issues that might be more sensitive, in the sense of evoking emotional reactions. Voicing views that might provoke controversy, talking about failures, and exposing deeply personal values and opinions may feel like taking a risk that might result in negative consequences for the climate and for relationships. Groups quickly, often tacitly, establish norms about what one talks about and what is not talked about. Sometimes conscious intervention by a facilitator is needed in order to change established norms about what issues are speakable. Eoyang and Quade (2006) furthermore point out that the modes of communication that become possible through the scaffolding may also have durable effects: "The special conditions that are set during the event help groups discover new patterns of interaction"

(p. 358). An intervention to open up communication may therefore not only be useful for the group process, but may also be a desirable lasting outcome.

*Dialogue in diversity* (8) refers to situations where there is latent or open conflict among participants, possibly in the form of opposing 'camps'. If there are marked differences of opinion and of values among the participants, in particular if there is a long history of tension between perspectives, there is a risk that communication will slide into debating and positional bargaining. Such forms of communication are usually far less creative and productive than dialogues and discussions. Scaffolding dialogue in diversity means supporting the group to explore the underlying interests, needs, and narratives of different stakeholders. This is to enable the participants to productively use the contrast effect between perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at stake, as well as to develop more well-founded proposals for action. (See also the closely-related function 18, *Perspective awareness*.)

## III. Attitudes/Feelings

The third category focuses how both individual participants and the group as a whole feel during the group process. Attitudes/feelings include various aspects of the subjective experience, e.g., the extent to which individuals feel comfortable in the group, the attitudes towards the task and the process, and not least the collective dynamics of energy levels.

*Management of energy levels* (9) is a rather concrete function of the method as such and of the facilitator's interventions during the work process. People may simply get bored and lose concentration if they have to sit passively and listen for extended periods of time, and if there is no variation in the type of activity going on. Some methods are specifically designed in order to get people physically moving and others designed to maintain high energy levels. Many facilitators point out how they mobilize their own energies in order to energize the group and the process, e.g., by the way they modulate their voices, by the use of humor and lightness, by expressing enthusiasm, or by moving about a lot.

*Commitment to engage* (10) refers here to strengthening the sense of hope that positive change is possible, and that active participation may lead to something desirable. Participants may come to the gathering with accumulated experiences of being ignored, discounted, scapegoated, and have the belief that they cannot influence significant issues or outcomes. The function points to the potential need of scaffolding the development of hope and commitment to work with other participants to develop ideas and strategies. (See also function 13, *Accountability*.)

*Focus on possibilities* (11) refers to the common tendency of people who are frustrated about certain problems to remain in a state of complaining and blaming others for their failure to take appropriate action. Groups may need assistance in shifting from a complaining mode to a mode of focusing on how the participants themselves can identify and use possibilities for constructive action. This function is a core preoccupation of *Appreciative Inquiry* (Ludema et al., 2003).

*Expansion of the scope of care* (12) is related to function 16, *Whole system awareness*, described below. If the participants' commitments are more or less exclusively absorbed by personal issues, they may fail to attend to the plight of other stakeholders and of the larger system that they are an interdependent part of. 'Scope of care' goes beyond an intellectual understanding of the big picture into feeling responsible for the fate of the larger system in which one's own roles and responsibilities are only a small part.

*Accountability* (13) here refers specifically to the personal sense of responsibility for seeing that the agreements made about actions to be taken are actually implemented. It is one thing to generate ideas about what should be done, but if no one feels accountable for taking needed action, the risk that nothing happens is large. The feeling of accountability is often related to the experience of having inquired into the issues, their causes, consequences, and appropriate measures. Experience shows that a sense of personal accountability is strengthened by understanding causal connections, but also by understanding why other stakeholders may not feel responsible for taking action. Accountability is therefore intimately linked to and supported by other functions in this typology, such as function 15, *Complexity awareness* and function 17, *Stakeholder awareness*.

#### IV. Understanding

The fourth category is at the core of the actual work process that groups go through when using various methods. It focuses the cognitive aspects of inquiring into the relevant aspects of the chosen topic, and developing an understanding of conditions, causality, potential consequences, interests of different stakeholders and different possible ways of interpreting the issues involved. The first category, *Attentional support*, describes the functions related to the focus and pacing of the discovery process, whereas the category *Understanding* comprises the functions related to various fields of inquiry<sup>4</sup>.

*Self-clarification* (14) points to the potential need to assist participants in exploring and articulating their own needs,

<sup>4</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of complexity awareness, context awareness, stakeholder awareness, and perspective awareness, see Jordan (2011).

interests, values, and preferences. Doing this may be important in different ways. One aspect is that if participants are not clearly aware of what the issue means to themselves on a personal level, they may not feel particularly motivated to invest energies in the group's work. Self-clarification therefore supports the aforementioned functions of commitment and accountability. Another aspect is, of course, that learning about the interests and needs of the participants (who may be representing different stakeholder groups) and how they can contribute to a keener understanding of the issue complex.

*Complexity awareness* (15) is a major function in most group processes. In order to select strategically-central aspects of the issue complex and develop effective action plans, the participants usually need a thorough understanding of conditions and causality. Complexity awareness may imply noticing the variability and compoundedness of the issues at stake, rather than having an undifferentiated image. Methods may assist participants in discriminating causes and conditions in order to identify significant sources of variation. Complexity awareness also refers to developing an awareness of, and knowledge about, relevant causal connections, both in terms of direct cause-and-effect relationships and of more complex interdependent and systemic causation. Increased complexity awareness may allow participants to discover previously ignored potentials for effective measures.

*Whole system awareness* (16) is a function that is stressed by many practitioners, in particular those of so-called large group methods (such as Future Search and Open Space). The assumption is that participants may have only a very partial understanding of the system they are a part of, and may therefore fail to see how other parts fit together. Inviting representatives of the whole system into the room is a common prescription in order to support whole system awareness. Some methods also use more specific techniques for strengthening the awareness and understanding of the whole system. A closely related concept is *Context awareness*, which not only points to the whole system, but also to the environment of the system, however that is defined. As soon as a boundary is drawn in order to define what system is relevant to the process, there is also an external environment where significant conditions can change processes, and other influences may be present.

*Stakeholder awareness* (17) is a function with several layers. The first layer is simply to make an inventory of which stakeholders exist. Stakeholders may be of interest in very different ways. Some stakeholders may control relevant resources, such as knowledge, decision-making power, work time, or money. Other stakeholders may behave in ways that contribute to the problems the participants are concerned about. Still other stakeholders

may react in various significant ways when the group takes initiatives, for example, by trying to obstruct certain measures from being implemented. A second layer of stakeholder awareness, beyond simply identifying stakeholders, is related to developing an understanding of the interests and needs of different stakeholders. A third layer, overlapping somewhat with the function perspective awareness described below, is to develop awareness about the meaning-making patterns of different stakeholders, so that their reactions, standpoints and behaviors can be anticipated. This may allow participants to develop more effective strategies for how to relate to different stakeholder groups.

*Perspective awareness* (18) is perhaps the most sophisticated function in this typology. It refers to the development of a stronger awareness of the properties of different kinds of perspectives that may be used to make sense of the issues at stake. Perspective awareness not only refers to awareness of how different actual stakeholders reason, but to awareness of all kinds of perspectives that may be relevant for understanding causes, anticipating consequences, and developing proposals for actions. Most adults have a weak or moderate perspective awareness, which means that they tend to operate in a monological way: they perceive, interpret and evaluate issues embedded in only one perspective, and regard other perspectives as wrong, misguided or irrelevant<sup>5</sup>. Perspective awareness can be seen as a particular form of complexity awareness, also implying that people become aware of the validity of several perspectives within themselves. There is a considerable potential involved in scaffolding perspective awareness, since an approach that draws on the insights of several perspectives simultaneously may allow a group to discover more potential courses of action and to identify potential unintended negative consequences of proposed measures.

Establishing *Common ground* (19) is a central concern in some methods. In many cases, it is helpful that participants develop a reasonably consistent shared image of the properties of the issue complex, and in particular a consensus on the need for action and on some range of actions to address the issue(s) of concern. But several methods do not aim at focusing on common ground. Rather, they assume that a process that leads to a better understanding of conditions, causes, and possible consequences will assist participants to make more sensible decisions about how they will act, and it is not necessary that all agree or align on the same agenda.

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<sup>5</sup> See the empirical studies reported in Kuhn (1991) and King and Kitchener (1994).

## V. Empowerment and creativity

The fifth category, *Empowerment and creativity*, focuses the functions related to making the participants' resources, like knowledge, skills and creativity, available to the group process. The category overlaps with the second category, *Relationships*, which addresses the issue of opening up communication among participants. However, the focus here is more specifically on how to ensure that optimal use can be made of the individuals' and the group's resources.

*Mobilize individuals' resources* (20) refers to creating a climate and a process where individuals feel invited and have space to contribute their knowledge, skills and creativity. This might imply removing obstacles to free contribution, as well as using techniques that actively encourage participants to share anything that might be helpful. (The function is closely related to the functions in the category *Relationships* and function 22, *Pre-empt domination*.)

*Creativity* (21) points to the potential need for using techniques that stimulate the generation of creative ideas, such as brainstorming sessions. Using non-verbal modes may be one way of freeing imagination from customary lines of reasoning. Supporting creativity is closely linked to function 4, *Decongealing*, i.e., opening up or disrupting prevailing mental frames in order to approach issues from new directions.

*Pre-empt domination* (22) can be a relevant concern, particularly in groups where participants have different status or where some participants have a tendency to dominate by talking very much or using communication behaviors like dismissing, debating, monologizing and making ironic remarks. Preempting domination is a concern for the moment-to-moment facilitation, but the function can also be served by using formats that do not leave room for anyone to dominate, like working in small groups or using a talking stick.

## VI. Decision-making and coordination of action

The sixth and final category, *Decision-making and coordination of action*, focuses the last part of the group's work, ensuring that the process leads to firm decisions about what ought to be done, and organizing whatever implementation actions that are necessary in order to achieve desired outcomes.

*Decision-making* (23) refers to supporting the group to forge concrete proposals, develop agreements by making choices, and actually decide on whatever matters need decisions. There are several challenges here: being specific, making hard choices, dealing with disagreements, avoiding cheap closure, and actually *making* decisions rather than just talking and procrastinating. Different group objectives

require different processes for reaching agreement and making commitments. Sometimes the group does not have a mandate to make actual decisions, but still may need to agree on proposals and recommendations to forward to decision-makers outside the group. Scaffolding decision-making does not necessarily require reaching consensus. Different stakeholders may make independent decisions for themselves about what actions to take, on the basis developed during the group process.

*Support implementation* (24) entails ensuring that the group plans the implementation of whatever decisions have been made and coordinates actions among concerned actors. This is often a crucial challenge, involving specifying who is responsible for what, deciding when different actions should be taken and how to follow up, evaluating, and taking corrective action if the need arises. Many facilitators stress that even if the group recommends actions that non-participants need to make, it is important to delegate responsibility among the group participants about who is going to champion the recommended actions in relation to other actors.

## PASSIVE AND ACTIVE SCAFFOLDING

In the preceding section, each of the 24 functions was described briefly. The literature study and the interviews with facilitators generated many examples of *how* the functions can be scaffolded. I believe it makes sense to talk about three types of scaffolding: *passive scaffolding through structure*, *active scaffolding through structure*, and *active scaffolding through facilitation*.

### Passive scaffolding through structure

It is clear that in several methods, it is assumed that the general format used will serve several of the functions in the typology above, without further specific activities or prompting by facilitators. Five types of passive scaffolding turned up in this study (but further inquiry is called for to identify more types):

1. *Selection of participants*. By being careful to invite participants that represent all major stakeholders and/or parts of the relevant system, it is assumed that several of the functions will be scaffolded, just by making different perspectives visible and having people with different roles talking to each other. The functions related to increased awareness are particularly relevant: 15, *Complexity awareness*, 16, *Whole system awareness*, 17, *Stakeholder awareness*, and 18, *Perspective awareness*. Functions 4, *Decongealing* and 12, *Expansion of the scope of care* may also be served simply by hearing people with other perspectives than one's own talk.

2. *Choice and design of premises*. By selecting a venue in beautiful surroundings and with a cozy atmosphere, and by arranging for a relaxed, welcoming ambience through provision of refreshments and appropriate decorations, participants may feel welcome and positive. It will also take them out of their normal surroundings and create new possibilities for change. This may serve function 5, *Safe space*, and possibly also functions 9, *Management of energy levels* and 10, *Commitment to engage*.

3. *Overnight event*. Inviting participants to a venue quite far away from their ordinary workplaces and asking them to stay overnight is a common way to create favorable conditions for people to get to know each other more informally, thereby serving functions 6, *Rapport* and 7, *Open up communication*.

4. *Seating arrangements*. Most methods recommend (or prescribe) that participants should sit in a circle (or several concentric circles if they are many) when convening in plenum, and in small groups around a table when working on tasks demanding much interaction. Such seating arrangements are assumed to serve several functions, such as 5, *Safe space*, 6, *Rapport*, 7, *Open up communication*, 10, *Commitment to engage*, 20, *Mobilize individual's resources* and the awareness functions in the category *Understanding*. Seating arrangements also serve function 22, *Pre-empt domination* by making it more difficult for individuals to dominate the interactions and decision making.

5. *Rules and guidelines*. It may be debatable if the introduction of rules and guidelines should be seen as passive or active scaffolding. In particular, the method Open Space is well-known for the central importance of a few basic rules, e.g., 'the law of two feet', which says that each participant is perfectly free to leave a group if he or she wants to and go to another group. This rule supports functions 9, *Management of energy levels* and 10, *Commitment to engage*, since it gives the individual full freedom to do what they feel inclined to do.

### Active scaffolding through structure and facilitation

What is meant by active scaffolding through structure is that the structures of the methods are designed to support certain functions, and that techniques are used that are specifically intended to serve one or several functions. The scaffolding of functions is purposefully built into the design of the method. However, as has been pointed out before, much of the scaffolding going on during a group work process occurs through the real-time actions of the facilitator when he or she feels that the group needs facilitation interventions.

Appendix A offers examples of forms of active scaffolding through structure and through facilitation. These examples have been compiled from the literature study and the eight interviews with practitioners. Where techniques are typical of certain named methods, this has been indicated through abbreviations for the methods (see the bottom of the table).

### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DIFFERENT METHODS

Based on the interviews, practitioners seem to have a tendency to feel that their own preferred method is effective in scaffolding practically all the functions in the typology. However, when comparing deliberative methods in terms of how actively and effectively they scaffold different functions, it is apparent that methods (as they are described in written sources) usually emphasize the importance of scaffolding some functions, while other functions are only weakly or only passively scaffolded. For example, TIP meticulously scaffolds complexity awareness through a very structured work process that also includes a careful and progressive development of an issue focus. However, less attention is devoted to supporting the establishment of safe space, rapport, and other aspects of the interpersonal relationships in the group. Open Space is an approach that strongly empowers participants, which stimulates commitment, supports energy levels, and creates safe space. The method seems less well equipped to scaffold dialogue in diversity, complexity awareness, and perspective awareness. The Strategic Choice Approach actively supports problem structuring, which in turn facilitates finding an issue focus and developing complexity awareness. SCA also emphasizes the scaffolding of the decision-making process. Not as much active scaffolding is made regarding the functions related to relationships and attitudes/feelings. Future Workshops include a number of techniques for creating safe space and rapport, for managing energy levels, and for stimulating creativity, but seems to be weaker in supporting decongealing, dialogue in diversity, complexity awareness, and perspective awareness<sup>6</sup>.

However, the individual facilitator may well adapt his or her on-site actions to scaffold functions not explicitly emphasized in the manual for a particular method. The variability in how the methods are implemented by practitioners implies that it is unlikely that practitioners and researchers could reach agreement about how to assess strengths and weaknesses of particular methods. Nevertheless, the typology might support a more penetrating reflection on methods and habits of practice,

<sup>6</sup> It is likely that some practitioners of the methods mentioned here may dispute the validity of these characterizations. A comprehensive, penetrating, and comparative dialogue may be needed in order to develop a consensus on how to assess weaknesses and strengths.

eventually leading to a more skillful adaptation of intervention strategies to the particular conditions of specific cases.

### CONCLUSION

In relation to previously published analytical frameworks for deliberative methods, the contribution of the present study is (a) to differentiate between the functions performed by the methods on the one hand, and the means (techniques and facilitator actions) for scaffolding the functions on the other; and (b) to offer detail regarding risks associated with not scaffolding the functions, as well as examples of techniques used in different methods and by experienced facilitators. The typology of functions can be useful for different purposes, four of which are outlined below.

First, a typology of functions may be useful in designing empirical research on deliberative methods. A differentiated understanding of the functions performed by methods and by facilitators may allow a more detailed analysis of causal relations behind various types of outcomes of interventions. It may also be useful in comparative analyses, for example when assessing strengths and weaknesses in different methods. Secondly, a typology of functions may serve as a platform for designing evaluation instruments for interventions. Thirdly, facilitators may find a typology useful when designing a particular process, because the typology allows for more clarity in identifying what the specific needs are, considering the circumstances<sup>7</sup>. Fourthly, a clearer understanding of the functions served by methods and by facilitation may be valuable for the purpose of skill development among facilitators. The typology may be useful when designing training for and coaching of novice facilitators. It may also serve as a starting-point for practicing facilitators' own reflections and self-assessments. Facilitators have theories of change, i.e., concepts about how desirable change processes occur. The typology of functions presented in this study may assist in reviewing, and possibly expanding, the range of the practitioner's own theories of change.

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<sup>7</sup> A checklist intended for facilitators is available for downloading here: [thomasjordan.se/eng.html](http://thomasjordan.se/eng.html)

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APPENDIX A - EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVE SCAFFOLDING

	Examples of active scaffolding through structure	Examples of active scaffolding through facilitation
<b>I. ATTENTIONAL SUPPORT</b>		
<p><b>1. Issue focus</b> Focus the attention of the participants (whole group or subgroups) on the same issue/topic or support the group in clarifying priorities and selecting issue(s) in order to have a common focus for the participants' work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careful process of formulating purpose and issue before group convenes. [FS]</li> <li>• Prominent posting of purpose/task in invitation, in workbook, on walls. [FS]</li> <li>• Participants are free to formulate their own preferred issue and form work groups based on interest. [OS]</li> <li>• One or several process steps are used to analyse the issue complex and carefully select what issue to work with. [TIP]</li> <li>• Procedure for generating themes/issues in small groups, and then stepwise in larger groups select the most important ones. [O]</li> <li>• Issues are posted on wall, participants agree on 'decision area' by drawing a boundary around the issues to be worked with. [SCA]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions about formulations and terminology, to make sure people understand each other and talk about the same thing.</li> <li>• Draw mind maps of issues on whiteboard.</li> <li>• Let each participant distribute three dots on the issues they find most important.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Structure work process</b> Structure the attention of the participants on one task at a time, e.g., making an inventory of relevant issues, formulate goals, issue analysis, development of action plan, coordination of implementation, assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Method has a distinct sequence of process steps. [TIP, FW, FS, SSM]</li> <li>• Different types of tasks are named and referred to as group process shifts between types. [SCA]</li> <li>• Participants are thoroughly briefed about the structure of the process (e.g., by a written agenda) so that they can contribute to focussing on one task at a time. [FS]</li> <li>• Participants are provided with a workbook with predesigned work sheets for different parts of the process. [FS]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator structures ideas and other statements during and in-between meetings, e.g., by using different flipcharts, drawing figures and writing up summaries. [SCA]</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Learning</b> Reflect on insights and learning during the process in order to support long-term skill development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process step(s) for reviewing learning. [TIP, OS]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator names insights and learning.</li> <li>• Facilitator invites participants to reflect on insights and learning.</li> <li>• Facilitator summarizes each step before proceeding to the next step.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Decongealing</b> Making unreflected assumptions and interpretations visible and opening up (even disrupting) the participants' mental frames in order to open space for new approaches and ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw cognitive maps of existing concepts to enable reflection. [SSM]</li> <li>• Use of non-verbal creative activities to open up mental frames to new patterns. [FW]</li> <li>• Use sequence of first reflecting individually, then talking in pairs, then talking in the larger group, in order to make a variety of points of view visible and reflect on diversity. [FS]</li> <li>• Have participants consider how different stakeholder groups view the issue by moving between tables marking different stakeholder groups. [FS]</li> <li>• Describe meaning-making through different perspectives and deliberating the issue through the perspectives. [TIP]</li> <li>• Meticulously map aspects of topic, differences in conditions, causal relations, and systemic properties, thereby disrupting assumption that the issue is simple. [TIP]</li> <li>• Explicitly reflect and reassess on own motivation and intentions regarding the issue. [TIP]</li> <li>• Formulate, clarify, and select a range of criteria and use them for evaluating alternative options. [SCA]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator points out and asks questions about assumptions and mental frames.</li> </ul>

<b>II. RELATIONSHIPS</b>		
<p><b>5. Safe space</b> Create safe space: a sense of being welcome and establishment of basic trust that lowers the threshold to engage in conversation and collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication of purpose, format, roles, guidelines for participation. [FS]</li> <li>• Negotiate communication rules. [MPD]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome participants with warmth.</li> <li>• Facilitators center themselves in a mode of confidence and clarity.</li> <li>• Formulate norms and expectations regarding behaviour, communication, and attitudes towards diversity.</li> <li>• Use appropriate jokes and humour to create a light atmosphere.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Rapport</b> Create favourable conditions for establishing rapport (short-term) and personal relationships (long-term) between people who did not know each other personally before.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that include moving about, being active, having to talk with other participants about different tasks. [FS]</li> <li>• Playful icebreakers and other activities, such as giving groups the task of presenting their ideas in the form of a sketch or non-verbal presentation. [FW]</li> <li>• Participants form groups based on their own preferences, therefore meet people with similar concerns/ideas. [OS]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of icebreaker activities, e.g., asking participants to find someone they don't know and start talking to them.</li> <li>• Ask participants to pairwise interview each other and present the other person to the group.</li> <li>• Have participants give each other a shoulder massage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Open up communication</b> Supporting participants to be open with their experiences, evaluations, opinions and ideas; make more things speakable; transform norms for what one talks about in public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are asked to bring along a physical object that symbolizes some aspect of the issue for them; they tell other participants about the meaning of the object. [FS]</li> <li>• Invite storytelling, e.g., appreciative inquiry into personal experiences of success. [FS]</li> <li>• A round is made where participants are invited to tell the group in what way the issue is personally relevant to themselves. [TIP]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator invites participants to disclose their personal experiences, feelings and views.</li> <li>• Facilitator speaks of his/her own personal feelings and commitments in order to set a precedence.</li> <li>• Introduce guidelines for dialogue.</li> <li>• 'Doubling'/'Ghost roles': facilitator takes the role of a participant and expresses what he/she thinks the participant feels or thinks but is unable to say. [TP; DD]</li> <li>• Use of icebreakers, such as having participants form pairs and draw portraits of each other without looking at the paper. [FW]</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Dialogue in diversity</b> Release energy locked in conflictual relationships in order to enable a sense of community to emerge and to enable creative and productive use of differences in perspectives and interests. Pre-empt debating and positional bargaining.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite storytelling, which makes dissimilar participants more intelligible and human.</li> <li>• Take perspectives as object of inquiry and reflection. [TIP]</li> <li>• Explore meaning of different types of criteria for evaluating options. [SCA]</li> <li>• Clear instructions about no debating; focus on understanding and reflection. [FW]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator may talk to individuals or groups about their tendency to use debating mode rather than dialogue.</li> </ul>

<b>III: ATTITUDES/FEELINGS</b>		
<p><b>9. Management of energy levels</b> Support appropriate energy levels; counteract boredom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities that include movement, humour, variability. [FW]</li> <li>• Alternating types of activity in order to stimulate engagement. [FS]</li> <li>• Consistently work in small groups, even when presenting action plans. [GE]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator uses own energy level to energize atmosphere.</li> <li>• Facilitator uses 'energizers' when needed: activities with physical movements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Commitment</b> Mobilize commitment and hope that common efforts might lead to meaningful outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular sessions of reflecting on learning. [TIP]</li> <li>• Sharing round where participants are invited to articulate how the issue impacts them. [TIP]</li> <li>• Only individuals who are known to be engaged and constructive are invited to participate. [FS]</li> <li>• Have high-ranking persons talk about the importance of the topic and the process at the beginning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize that participants are invited because their experiences and competences are expected to contribute to desired outcomes.</li> <li>• Ask participants early on to formulate their own hopes and expectations for the process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Focus on possibilities</b> Shift focus from obstacles, frustration, and blaming towards possibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Session on critique and problems before proceeding to visioning and action planning; frustration is expressed, then left behind. (FW, CBA)</li> <li>• Group make a sketch of their vision showing what it looks like when it is functioning well. [FW]</li> <li>• Brainstorming sessions using the rule that critical comments are not allowed.</li> <li>• Session with individual, pairwise and group reflection on what I/we are doing well. [AI]</li> <li>• Careful formulation of the purpose in terms of a positive vision/value for the future. [FS]</li> <li>• Clear formulation that the purpose is to make decisions. [SCA]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator asks participants to formulate concrete and practicable suggestions about actions.</li> <li>• Consistently use appreciative inquiry philosophy in asking for what works well.</li> <li>• Using a language that talks about challenges and improvement areas rather than about problems.</li> <li>• Celebration rituals for successes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>12. Expansion of scope of care</b> Support expansion of identification to a larger whole.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making timelines of significant events on the individual, local and global scales. [FS]</li> <li>• Make graphic models of the whole system. [SSM]</li> </ul>	
<p><b>13. Accountability</b> Strengthen the participants' feeling of accountability for actions and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Templates for action plans with clearly assigned responsibilities. [OS, FS, SCA]</li> <li>• Invite participants to choose what kinds of actions they are willing to engage with: immediate voluntary actions; actions requiring policy decisions; actions requiring further deliberation among several stakeholders. [TIP]</li> <li>• Explore stakeholders' views and interests, thereby gaining insight into the reasons that others will not take action to resolve the issue; nothing will happen if we don't act. [TIP]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear message from facilitator about individual responsibility and role.</li> <li>• Using direct questions about 'what you want to do.'</li> <li>• Insist on deciding who is responsible for proposed actions.</li> </ul>
<b>IV. UNDERSTANDING</b>		
<p><b>14. Self-clarification</b> Develop clarity about participants' own needs, values and preferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sessions where participants are asked to reflect individually on their experiences, values, and ideas. [FS]</li> <li>• Process for articulating each party's interests. [MPD]</li> <li>• Sharing round about how the issue impacts each participant. [TIP]</li> <li>• Process step focussed on formulating and deliberating evaluation criteria for selecting among action options. [SCA]</li> </ul>	

<p><b>15. Complexity awareness</b> Support participants in developing a keener awareness, articulation and understanding of distinctions, conditions, causal relationships, and systemic interdependencies relevant to the issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Categorize issues/concerns into Attitudes/ Behaviours/System properties. [TIP]</li> <li>• Explore how issues are causally or otherwise interconnected by drawing arrows between map of issues. Identify causes and consequences. [TIP]</li> <li>• Formulate a condensed issue portrait, pointing out issue, causes, consequences, and conditions. [TIP]</li> <li>• Post reports from groups on the walls, and give time for participants to read and reflect. [OS, FS]</li> <li>• Consideration of different types of uncertainty. [SCA]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator conducts fact-finding between meetings and presents reports to participants.</li> <li>• Facilitator assists participants in inquiry into underlying causes of presenting problems.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16. Whole system awareness/ Context awareness</b> Support awareness of the whole system and its environment, as well as long-term change processes in the context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw 'rich pictures' of the whole system. [SSM]</li> <li>• Construct long-term timelines on the wall with significant global and local events. [FS]</li> <li>• Develop a 'portrait' of the issue, including attitudes and behaviours that sustain it. [TIP]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe background and context to participants.</li> <li>• Use metaphors for the whole system: e.g., a ship, a journey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>17. Stakeholder awareness</b> Support increased awareness of relevant stakeholders and their respective interests and views.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an inventory of stakeholders relevant to the issue and explore their interests and concerns.</li> <li>• Review which categories of stakeholders are present in the event, and which are not represented. [FS]</li> <li>• Have participants move between tables, where each table represent one type of stakeholder, and talk about what is important to each type.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions about different stakeholders' views, interests, needs, expected reactions.</li> <li>• When participants get to mark what they think are important issues, different types of stakeholders have differently coloured dots, so that it becomes apparent which issues are important to particular stakeholder groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. Perspective awareness</b> Increase awareness of the properties of diverse perspectives, enabling the participants to make creative use of the tensions between different perspectives on causality, values and desirable measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue frame by describing properties of 3-5 different perspectives on the issue and deliberate on the perspectives. [TIP]</li> <li>• Build conceptual maps of how 'systems of purposeful activity' are assumed to work and compare map with reality. [SSM]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate story-telling in order to have participants really listen and consider others' experiences and views.</li> </ul>
<p><b>19. Common ground</b> Develop a shared narrative of the situation and a common strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work out a condensed portrait of the issue/a 'rich picture'/a 'root definition': describe why the issue is significant, its causes and consequences. [TIP, SSM]</li> <li>• Engage participants in making timelines of significant events on individual, local, and global scales. [FS]</li> <li>• Focus on and formulate actions participants can agree on; notice but set aside disagreements. [FS]</li> </ul>	
<p><b>V. EMPOWERMENT AND CREATIVITY</b></p>		
<p><b>20. Mobilize individuals' resources</b> Create favourable conditions for the mobilization and activation of participants' knowledge, skills, creativity, and other resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use techniques where participants work in small groups with changing composition in order to cross-fertilize ideas. [WC, FS]</li> <li>• Set aside time for individual reflection before participants start talking with each other. [FS]</li> <li>• Make an inventory of who has needed competence/knowledge. [WO]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take care to listen to and affirm individuals' statements, using their own languaging.</li> </ul>

<p><b>21. Creativity</b> Support the generation of creative ideas and visions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming session.</li> <li>• Session where participants are invited to freely create visionary future scenarios. [FW]</li> <li>• Use contrast between different perspectives in order to identify and refine ideas for action. [TIP]</li> </ul>	
<p><b>22. Pre-empt domination</b> Neutralize asymmetrical power relations that obstruct effective collaboration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule that participants can leave and join whichever group they fancy. [OS]</li> <li>• Use of talking stick (or similar device) and sharing rounds: only one person at a time can speak. [OS]</li> <li>• Use a procedure where valid arguments have to be presented in support of proposed actions. [SCA]</li> <li>• Take different perspectives as objects of reflection, thereby pre-empting perspective hegemony. [TIP]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator intervenes when some participant(s) dominate conversations or use manipulative communication behaviours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VI. DECISION-MAKING AND COORDINATION OF ACTION</b></p>		
<p><b>23. Decision-making</b> Develop, select, and make decisions on actions that integrate relevant values, interests, concerns and ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop criteria for evaluating alternatives. [SCA, MPD]</li> <li>• Draw decision-trees or decision matrices (e.g., dividing decisions into categories: decide now, decide later, postpone until further inquiry has been made). [SCA]</li> <li>• Use the 'single text method,' iterative working with one single draft of agreement until consensus is reached. [CBA]</li> <li>• Use forms to specify what actions will be taken when and who is responsible. [FS, OS]</li> <li>• Let group develop proposals, and have decision-makers make decisions at the end of the session in the presence of participants. [WO]</li> <li>• Formulate criteria, use a table to evaluate each option against all criteria, and then make decisions. [SCA]</li> <li>• Process step where uncertainties (about environment, values, and related agendas) are explored. [SCA]</li> </ul>	
<p><b>24. Support implementation</b> Coordinate implementation of a strategy through planning, management and evaluation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use forms to specify what actions will be taken when and who is responsible. [FS, OS]</li> <li>• Plot planned action on a timeline posted on the wall. [FW, FS]</li> <li>• Form project groups which develop implementation plans. [OS]</li> <li>• Include formation of coordination group in the preparatory phase, which has the role of following up the implementation phase. [FS, WO]</li> <li>• Make agreement about a procedure for managing disagreements and unforeseen complications in the implementation phase. [MPD]</li> </ul>	