

WALKING ALONGSIDE

Supporting people to dare to change

“It is not just how good the idea is, or how well it is packaged, it is also about those who are saying it, and how much they live it?”

– Ravi Gelati,

Changing the Way We Change the World video

How do you facilitate processes that seek to be more inclusive?

Excluded people express the desire to belong. In fact, everyone wants to feel they belong: to be me, just the way I am, but at the same time wanting to feel part of “us.” What is it that turns isolation, discrimination, marginalisation into belonging?

In this chapter, we will look at stories of practitioners that have facilitated inclusion, where people could regain the sense of belonging. This practice of accompanying fundamental change in individuals, organisations, communities and society runs through most of the chapters: we can all be facilitators of inclusion. Here we tease out what facilitation means: the frameworks and practices we can use to make sense of exclusion, to envision a more inclusive society, and to work towards it – together.

This final chapter studies a diverse set of inclusive practitioners: Ed, Victoria, Anouk and Jürgen.

Teacher Ed writes, “Many of my students felt they belonged to a kind of ‘them,’ branded as misfits and failures. My quiet being with their painful

memories made them less afraid.” His most profound learning is that, “Hope does not emerge in effortless, colourful Hollywood moments – it comes from a profound and costly process of change.”

Victoria, an artist, and her collaborator Woods, a businessman, started working together in 1993. New people arrive and others leave, but Victoria and Woods’ leadership fuels energy and spreads commitment time and again, so that everyone takes responsibility for the inclusion process. Everyone is an active change agent in the life of a person with intellectual disability.

Anouk is self-employed. She shares a practical example with us of how people with intellectual disabilities can be supported through a process of co-creating a more meaningful life, including their role in the family and society.

Jürgen is an agricultural development specialist who grew up on a farm where his father never tolerated anyone looking down on someone else. This is possibly where Jürgen developed the ability to relate to everyone as they are, which is one of the most basic capacities we need to cultivate as facilitators of inclusive development processes.

While these practitioners describe a number of different practices, they all bring “presence” to their work. Their stories illustrate what it means to “be the change.”



Reconnecting to hope

– by Ed –

As I walk towards my classroom, some of my less positive memories crave my attention. I know my classroom will be overfull, with too many adolescents present. A large number of students had to switch to my class during the middle of the term because of their rapidly mounting behavioural problems. The thing they cling to – the only positive thing, in their mind – is that once they successfully complete this “transition programme” they will be allowed to return to a “normal” class again.

Halfway through this lesson only a few students are participating. The more introvert ones try hard to remain invisible, while the more extrovert students make trouble. School policy dictates losing the inactive and the troublemakers, suggesting a fast track that leads to expulsion, but I am hoping to entice their cooperation and involvement. I’ve learned from my mistakes and I now have an inkling of how to achieve. Surviving here has depended upon finding solutions to new and unexpected problems.

I started this job feeling “streetwise,” full of energy and courage. I knew I would meet violence and opposition. I was used to dealing with violence in institutional settings, where my colleagues and I were expecting it and were trained to deal with violent behaviour. I felt prepared and able to work here: I would use everything I had learned previously. I would build an environment with the appropriate level of challenge for my students: giving them a chance to show themselves and grow as students. I thought I knew how to do this.

But I was used to dealing with adults who at least paid lip service to being in my class. The situation here was different. Some adolescents made no secret of the fact that they were here to avoid being cut off from social benefits. Others told me they were here against their will, or due to a fault in the system. No one wanted to be here. This created, what was for me, a new and stressful type of opposition that I needed to learn to deal with.

I thought I had succeeded in making the lesson plans and environment fit for most of my students. I had high hopes about the effects of the programme I had designed. After a while several groups began to show some difference, it was not the positive overall result that I had hoped for. Looking at the students as a whole, I could see they usually showed one of three types of reaction: yes, I can (students responding well and engaging); sadly, no (students failing to engage or attend); and the undecided (not engaging but present, barely hanging on, with bad results overall).

“No one wanted to be here.”



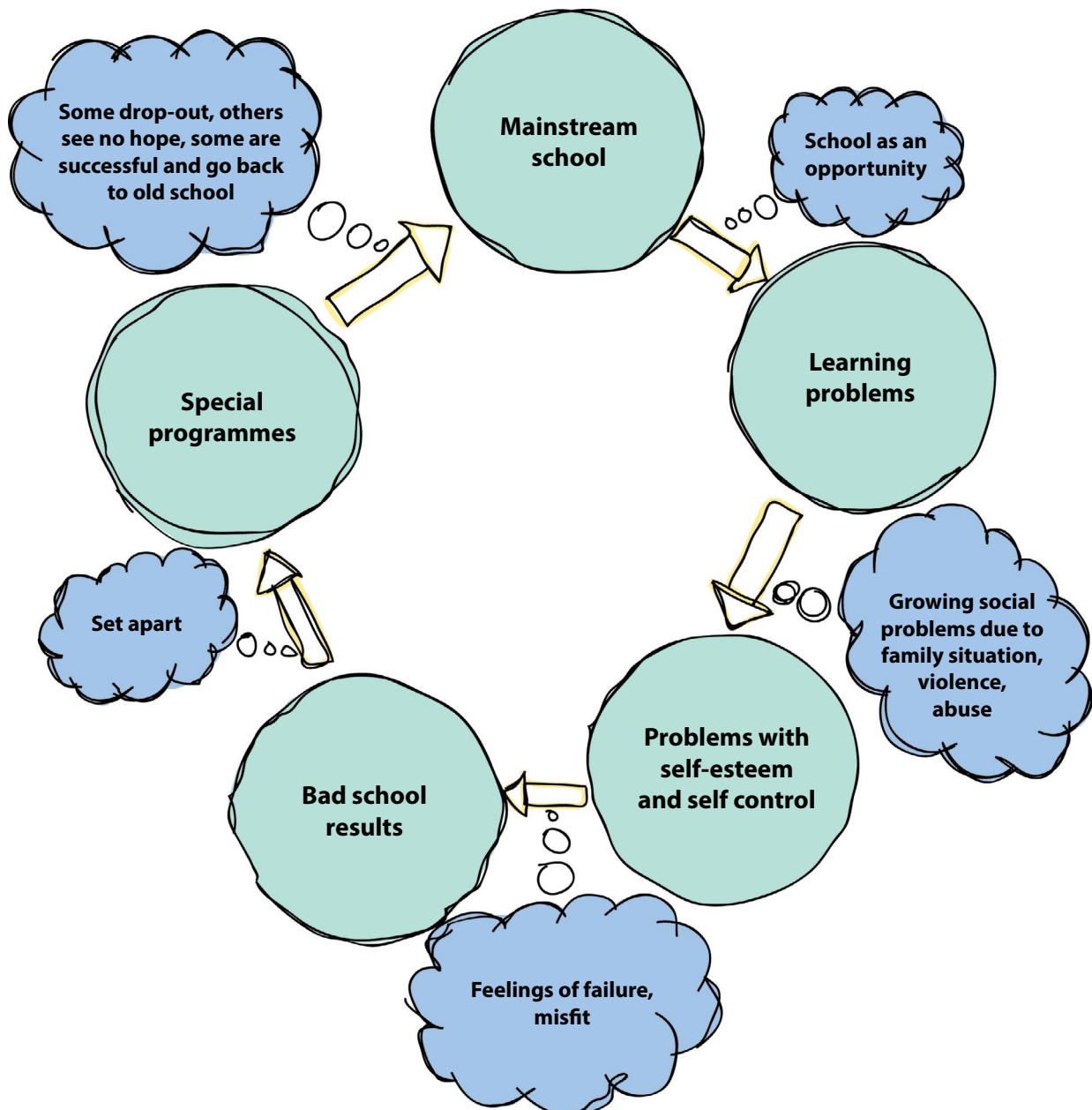
This third group puzzled me most: what was holding them back, and what was keeping them here?

I had completely used up my usual bag of teacher tools and tricks. This left me asking, how would I cope with this challenge: by starting to remove these inactive and troublesome students as school policy dictated? I wasn't yet ready for that. But nothing I did changed the situation for this third group, which made up the majority of the class. I had to find out more about them.

I organised moments outside the classroom to talk to these students, giving me a chance to learn more about their background and the educational programmes they had previously participated in. I started to understand the chain of events that lay behind their present situation. I discovered that what seemed to hold them back was a change that had taken place to their self-image.

what was holding them back, and what was keeping them here?

Typical chain of events that my students come into:



My students had been assigned to my classes through such a chain of events. Their previous misbehaviour was taken as proof of their incorrigibility. Their failure visible for all to see.

They faced social stigma in not living up to their parents' hopes. Though school can be a motivating force for the child who does "well enough," it can easily demotivate the child who fails to meet the expectations of others. Social stigma weighs heavily. Many of my students felt they belonged to this outsider group, branded as misfits and failures.

And then there is the challenge of coping as a 15 or 16-year-old. Adolescence is a challenge for a large number of young people. Those in my class appeared to have adopted one of two strategies: to hide in plain sight (the inactive), or to become outwardly tough (the troublesome). Both having lost contact with their desire to achieve or to belong to "us." Most of all, it was their loss of hope and self-confidence that struck me.

So, what held them back? – The conviction that they were basically unfit to succeed. What kept them here? – Perhaps a lingering remnant of hope, still flickering deep within, regardless of their disappointments. There were many things that I needed to achieve if these students were to grow. The question I asked myself was, how could I help them become active once more and in contact with their real "self" and their surroundings?

I am glad I didn't quit

Although there had been moments that I had seriously considered leaving my position, I realised that I had slowly begun to learn to cope with the challenges I faced – ones that I had once thought too heavy for me. I now felt better equipped and stronger than I had been at the start of year one. That was a good feeling. Based on my experience from my first year, I now started holding talks with the new students early in the year, trying to pick out those who had most trouble connecting. Even though I now recognised the underlying dynamics, this sometimes did not make these talks any easier.

it can easily demotivate the child who fails to meet the expectations of others.



Angry Sara

After a good start, Sara fell back into anger, distancing herself from the class. So, I scheduled another talk with her. She told me that she would rather "just get a job." She admitted that her prospects were bleak for getting work that would provide sufficient earnings to support her, but she imagined something good would happen if only she would be allowed to leave school.

I tell her that I believe she can succeed at school and that she can make the required changes, even if these might only be small changes at first. She explodes: "You do not listen AT ALL!!!" The conversation ended with me repeating what had become demands upon her, with her repeating her objections. I was not being effective.

The point of no return

I have come to recognise situations like the one with Sara as the “halfway point.” Students are able to look at what has really happened, what they actually did. As long as you keep it fair and factual it seems doable. But move towards what students should do next, what they could do differently to benefit their situation, or talk about hope and my beliefs about how they can change, this can create a violent reaction in which they seek to switch the conversation to any other topic. Faced with this challenge, the students get angry, try to blame others, or talk about ways to escape the school situation they are in.

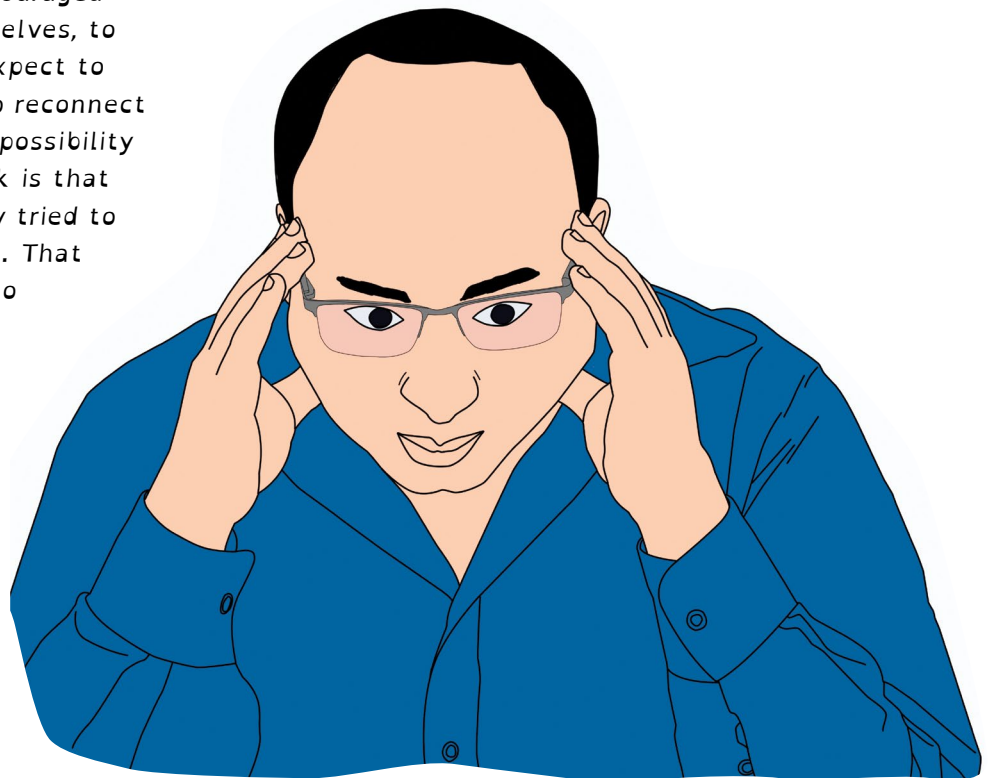
Experience showed that I was not able to end such conversations well, and the practical results were mixed at best. I plodded on. Time showed that the reason for their “fleeing” also held the seeds of the solution.

As life challenges us severely, our emotions and reactions seem almost too heavy to bear. When one reaches this point, where “things are just too much,” the instinctive (and mostly unconscious) process of disconnecting starts. Bit by bit, one disconnects from parts of one’s own experience. Many of the students “still hanging on” had shut away their feelings of hurt and disappointment. They took on the outward attitude of being tough and cunning, apparently not caring any more. The result was isolation.

The point of return

Why was it so hard for students to reject their isolation? After all, what was waiting for my students was the real chance of success. Admittedly, re-engaging would be challenging and stressful for them, but surely, they could recognise that this would also open up new possibilities? I came to see that the costs of their “reconnecting” are directly linked to the reasons for their self-isolation. When I encouraged students to say to themselves, to feel, “I really hope and expect to succeed,” this attempt to reconnect brings into view the real possibility of “failing again.” The risk is that all the hurt and loss they tried to shut away will come back. That is, unless they escape into blame, anger or fantasy. This conundrum leads them into a kind of stalemate. To them, their self-isolation is in some sense the better option.

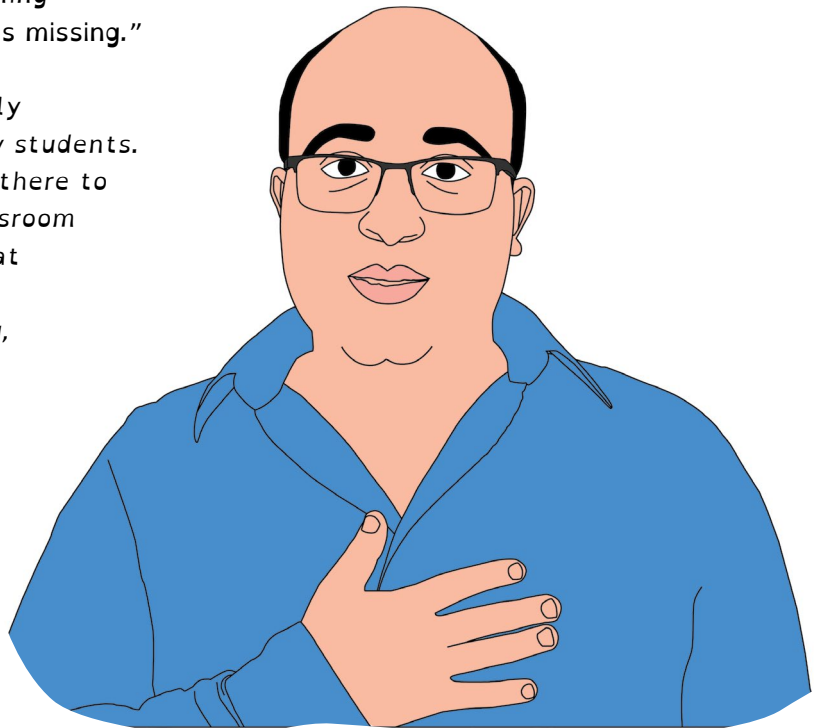
“Why was it so hard for students to reject their isolation?”



Something was missing – and it turned out to be me!

Me!? This still seems a frightening sentence for me to write: “I was missing.” I will hasten to explain.

As a teacher, I have a strictly functional relationship with my students. I am there to keep order. I am there to structure information, the classroom situation and their time, so that they can learn. I am there to correct things if they go wrong, to clarify choices, and to act upon those choices and their consequences. In short, “I provide the appropriate environment for learning.” As a mentor, my role in “correcting” things means that I must ensure I engage with the students, inviting the isolated student who has



“disconnected” (parts of) herself to reconnect and start meaningful work again. This requires my presence. Someone like Sara cannot possibly be alone when she makes the choice to face her sense of hurt and loss and to reconnect, rejecting her isolation. What is required by her is not me, personally, so much as my presence as another human being. It is the quality of that presence that matters most.

The quality of presence – One should be aware, when entering into a conversation about personal strengths and reconnecting to hope, of the potential for a moment of re-emergence of past harm. That moment signals the actual point of return, or reconnection, so to speak. When this happens when I am present, I am there as someone who can acknowledge what is true: acknowledging the emotions and being witness to all the emerging images and thoughts, whatever their content. There is no place for judgement. Any kind of “comfort” that might be offered at this moment is only likely to hinder the process: it is unlikely to be seen as adequate to the task. Maybe later on, one could invite the person to re-examine her experiences to see whether or not she still thinks her judgement of these to be completely true. But this is not appropriate at the moment of re-emergence from isolation.

I learned not to label things in connection to the school situation of the student, nor to spell out consequences, but only to acknowledge what is true. True to her sense of what are the facts (even though I might later try to help see the bigger picture, including facts that she might not previously be aware of) but also “true” in the sense that these are her personal reactions to her emerging images and memories: they are just as they are.

More “handling” than “coping” – for me, and the student, the work involved is not so much “coping” with these memories, in the sense of achieving decisive results or a change in the nature or meaning of what is seen. The work is staying in contact, “handling” them, in the sense (metaphorically) of touching upon these thoughts, feeling their “weight,” hearing what they have to say, and then letting them rest as they are, so we can visit them again another time – but with somewhat less fear than the first time.

I was previously unaware that this essential condition of “not being alone” at exactly this moment was what I had not provided the student. I was too busy wanting to change things, to influence, wanting so hard “to be effective.” There was no peace and quiet in my presence: I did not first let it be, allowing the other person to reconnect and to give time to get acquainted with what had been lost. Actually, the very act of my very trying to be effective had blocked their process.

Effects – as small as this change had seemed, I soon noticed fewer conversations “blowing up.” And if they did, I knew the way back, so that we could “land” together, back in what was present and here. I learned, against all apparent logic, that this quiet “being with” their more painful memories, without “working on them” made my students less and less afraid of confronting what they had shut away from. This way, they could begin to get past their point of return.

Sara, again

Sara (at last) sat down after nervously pacing up and down. I have taken her out of the classroom for a few minutes. Sitting next to each other, for a moment we just look outside at the rooftops. It’s a sunny day. She sighs. “Feeling better now?” I ask. “Suppose so . . .”

“Actually, the very act of my very trying to be effective had blocked their process.”



What have we learned so far about facilitating inclusion?

Enabling environment and quality presence

Ed's story describes his attempts to support students in a remedial schooling programme in the Netherlands. Initially, he focused on providing the right kind of school environment. He thought that this would of itself enable his students to start using their skills and energy. As it turned out, he was wrong. At the point of failing, he discovered that an essential kind of support was missing in his approach: a quality presence at the "points of return," when the pain of students' experience of exclusion could be held and could "just be."

We believe that the combination of these two kinds of support, "the enabling environment" and "the quality presence," which Ed discovered the hard way, has broader application. Some pointers:

Modelling a reflective culture – 'seeing yourself'

Starting alone? You can be a force for making a culture in and around you that helps you to be present. There is something very basic, even simple in the act of being present. The paradox is that simplicity is sometimes hard to attain. It helps to learn to stay quietly present with all that lives inside you. And it helps to seek out others who are likewise willing to learn to integrate this reflective culture into the way they work. Lastly, care must be given to develop safe ways of expressing identity if you are working in a society with different and maybe conflicting cultures, beliefs and religions.

You can be a force for making a culture in and around you that helps you to be present.

- **Internally, view yourself with kindness** – It does not help to be harshly critical and judgmental towards what you discover in yourself. The absence of self-recrimination will enable you to look longer and see clearer what lives inside of you. Tolerate mistakes if you discover them: do not make more of these than you need do.
- **View and react to others with kindness** – It works equally well for others. But you can only hope to do this sincerely if you have learned to be kind to yourself first. So, the first skill, of being kind to yourself, is a prerequisite.
- **Try to see as clearly as possible what is there** – Be clear in your inner observations and feelings. Stay patient with yourself and try to understand why you are the way you are, why you do what you do. Postpone making a verdict and keep looking: a quick and harsh judgement is often a way to avoid seeing what is actually happening within.



- **Try to “handle” rather than “cope with” your more difficult issues** – At first, let your own painful issues be, just as they are, without the reflex to immediately “fix” them. Take time to get acquainted. First-hand experience will show you how your fear subsides with every repeated encounter. Having become more at ease with yourself makes room for new ways to see and deal with what is difficult.
- **Set goals realistically** – You might make real discoveries about things you aspire to become or to do differently. Still, if you have a big distance to cross, small steps will take you there.
- **Release tensions where possible** – The more you feel oppressed by a situation, the less strength you will have to deal with it. Try anything that can relax you: beauty, music, cooking your favourite food, being in organised surroundings (even one organised corner if that is all you can manage), enjoying the tranquillity of a favourite place in which to just sit, whatever it is that helps increase your



wellbeing: small things can all add up to help release tension. Relaxing in this way might seem trivial in the light of all you are facing, but it can often prove crucial for survival because it directly lessens the impact of the burden you feel resulting from your experiences.

Modelling a reflective culture – ‘seeing others’

Reconnecting to one’s own hopes and personal strengths is also strongly connected to (re)discovering a more true identity in others too.

The group you work with might be in a minority position, or connect to an identity that is not accepted within the surrounding society: in such circumstances, the exploration of this identity can prove powerful for all concerned.

- **Organise safe opportunities for expression** – This involves enabling everyone to express themselves by speaking about their (more) true identity. Be aware that many situations are often not free and safe for certain individuals or groups. Give thought to setting up conditions and occasions for meetings that might, at least initially, be less public, so that people can safely learn again to express themselves freely. Be discrete.
- **Be clear about wise boundaries to behaviour and initiatives** – This involves expressing yourself through your behaviour, showing the person you aspire to be. Think about what amount of freedom you have and the ways of expression that will not immediately endanger you and your group. Though there may be inevitable tensions with the surrounding community, you can choose the best alternatives.

Why all this complication, when hope seems such a basic and simple force? Why would you give precious time to this exacting inner work and preparation? The lesson for Ed has been that practical hope when it is most needed often does not emerge in effortless and colourful “Hollywood moments”. Real hope is part of a profound and costly process of change that will require your “presence” in order to achieve it.

In all states

Understanding self-isolation

You have probably heard people say, "They are difficult, they just don't want to participate," when they refer to excluded groups. Perhaps you have also wondered at times, do they really want to change?

The following schematic explains different states of being. A chain of events that is too hard can lead to self-isolation, to a state where people no longer can engage, because they have somehow lost themselves. Some situations are too difficult or painful, for too long: however hard you try, you cannot cope. This can lead to (unconscious) self-isolation – you dare not be, or see, you. You have reached a point of no return, unable to engage with the possibilities and risks.

The practitioners' work is being there, touching upon the thoughts that emerge, feeling their "weight," hearing them and then letting them rest as they are, so that we can visit them again another time, but now with somewhat less fear.



		DIFFERENT STATES OF BEING					SELF-ISOLATION
		TOO LIGHT	RELAXING	MANAGEABLE	STRESSFUL	TOO HARD	
The nature of the situation:	No meaningful challenge, repetitive activities	At rest, at play	A known challenge, I can handle it with my present skills	An unknown challenge, but I can adapt my skills	The challenge cannot be overcome, despite all my skills and resourcefulness	Hesitant to engage, shielding myself from contact with people and reality	
How I deal with it:	Bored, killing time, what I do makes no difference	Recovering energy	Getting things done, sometimes in the "flow" of activity	Struggling, but still achieving (overall) success	Gradually giving up, not achieving and eventually failing	Merely reacting, no drive to achieve	
How I feel:	I shrink, feel useless and bad about myself	I feel ok	I feel good about myself, confidence increasing	I feel stressed, but still confident	I feel depressed, hurt, unfit and afraid	Outside: angry and strong Inside: lost all hope	

Strength in diversity

People with intellectual disabilities in the workplace and in wider society

Ed's story has given insights into the meaning of reflective practice. He has shown how this practice can help you stay connected to hope while finding new ways forward, often a tough task in the many difficult situations faced by those who are marginalised and discriminated against.

Our next story delves into inclusion in the workplace. Carolina tells us about an unlikely alliance between two people that has held strong for over twenty years, and that has added value to the lives of many persons with intellectual disabilities, their work colleagues, the company they work for, and the society they are both part of. At the heart of this story is a long-term commitment to the task, combined with a practical approach to working with companies.

Co-creating: dancing, acting and the fast-food business

– by Carolina –

I am driven by words: I love to write, I am committed to sharing stories, I am devoted to art, I love colours and shapes. I am honoured to be a facilitator in the Victoria-Woods collaboration, thrilled to be part of the DISCAR-McDonald's working teams and grateful for the opportunity to write about inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities within the workforce and in the workplace. I believe that any time, everywhere, each of us can have an impact: take a look at these two ordinary people that have shaped extraordinary social impact. I invite you to take a look and to find the inspiration to co-create in collaboration with others. It is possible, it is simple, it is worthwhile: good things can and will happen.

“ I believe that any time, everywhere, each of us can have an impact



Five bags – five jobs

Here we are, seated in a huge training room in one of the best-known companies on the planet: we are at Arcos Dorados, the McDonald's HQ in Chile! Through every window the Andes Mountains protect us and honour this blessed moment with their majestic snow peaks.

Anxious glimpses, firm hands, nervous sips of aerated soft drinks. The five have come a long way. They desire this moment and breathe triumphantly. They have been patiently growing towards this, with support from occupational professionals because of their intellectual disability. There is a world outside, the adult world. We are adults and we are heading for that world together.

Five bags have their names written in strong red ink: José, Mayckol, Felipe, Guillermo, and Andrés. Inside each bag rests a new uniform and a job contract that is ready to receive their signature. Those signatures have been rehearsed over and over again.

- Andrés is spotless: light blue shirt and striped tie. I am trying to guess if they are his, or if somebody has lent him the attire for the occasion.
- José has never met any member of his family. He has been living in an orphanage since the day he was born and now, aged 26, the Chilean state determines that he must earn his own living. This job means the world to José.
- No one can understand Guillermo when he talks, but his smiles tell it all.
- Mayckol, such a lovely guy, just like his name, is sitting in the very centre of the room. His eyes are dancing, embodying his energy.
- Felipe finds it hard to write, and takes a long time to sign his contract. We all cheer each at every one of his traces.

This is life: intellectual disability and opportunities brought together. Simple, real simple. Like five loaves of bread and thousands of fish. Abundance . . .

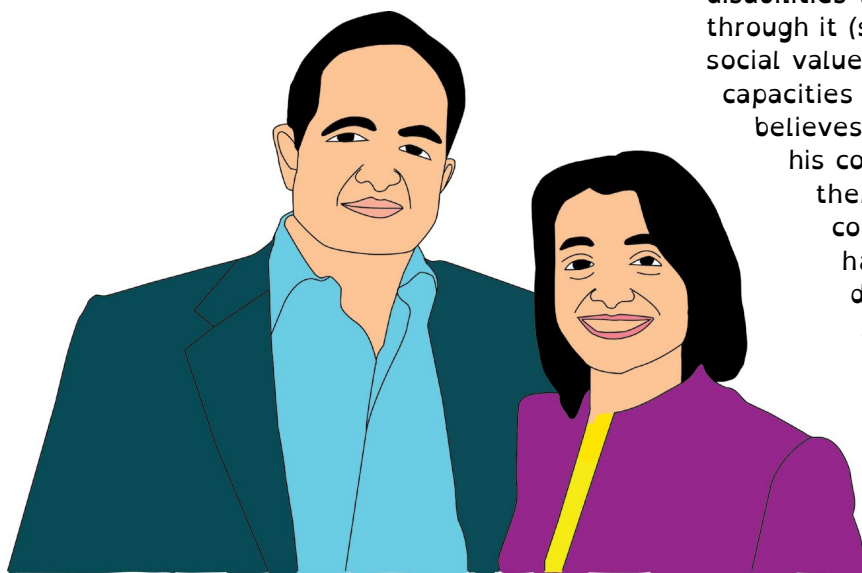
Anxious glimpses, firm hands, nervous sips of aerated soft drinks.



“Believe” is the most significant word that comes to mind when I reflect upon the alliance that I came to know ten years ago. How could two people, so very different and from even more diverse situations, get to know each other and give birth to an alliance that has been growing steadily for the last two decades?

Meet Mrs Victoria Shocrón from Argentina. She has always loved dancing and acting, and was a leading actress in musicals and a TV-show in the eighties. During a family holiday, Victoria invited an isolated little boy to play with her son. She discovers that the boy has difficulties in communicating with them. He only joins in playing when Victoria starts singing and drumming on sand buckets. She is moved to see her son and the little boy with intellectual disability play together and share the rest of the summer with each other. This ignites a spark in her to share her art with such vulnerable people.

Her dream comes true when DISCAR is born, the Centre for Arts for People with Intellectual Disabilities. It offers them theatre, music, art, and bodily expression workshops. After two years of experience and observation, Victoria realises that much more could be done. She sets her energies to develop a programme to include her students in the workforce.



She knocks on the door of the world's largest McDonald's franchisee, Arcos Dorados.

She knocks on the door of the world's largest McDonald's franchisee, Arcos Dorados. It has close to 2,000 restaurants in 20 countries and employs more than 90,000 people in Latin America and the Caribbean, with revenues of approximately US \$ 3.8 billion in 2012. Arcos Dorados began trading on the NYSE in April 2011.

Meet the owner of that door: Mr. Woods Station, a U.S citizen born in Medellin, Colombia. Woods is the chief executive officer, chairman of the board, and controlling shareholder of Arcos Dorados.

Victoria: Can you give jobs to our young people and adults with intellectual disabilities?

Woods: Yes, but you tell me how to do it!

This marked the beginning of a social employment model that had an impact far beyond the people with intellectual disabilities who have found employment through it (see the box on page 119 on social value added). Victoria believes in the capacities of these people, and Woods believes in her capacity to guide him and his company in this adventure. But there is more. Woods' motivation comes from his own experience of having a brother with intellectual disability. His brother thrives in life, when given the right opportunities. He works and lives on his own. This is what triggered Woods' reply to Victoria's question.

Since 1993, they have been working together professionally, with energy and a great sense of humour. It is this remarkable sense of humour that helps make things go smoothly, since the realities they work with – disability, lack of opportunities, poverty – are hard.

The programme that supports the employment of people with intellectual disabilities systematically tackles their inclusion in the workforce. It allows businesses to be part of the change and offers them an opportunity to help their communities, whilst improving their own working environment. The organisations benefit by hiring human resource professionals with expertise in disabilities and social inclusion. Each employee is assigned a professional who assures adequate and sustainable inclusion throughout their employment. Mr. Pedro Heredia (now 54) was the first employee with intellectual disability to work at McDonalds. After 20 uninterrupted years at work, Pedro will soon be retiring. The DISCAR professionals are giving support to Pedro, his family and his peers at work to thrive in his transition from being an active to a retired worker.

At the start of their programme, as leaders in their organisations, Victoria and Woods both gathered their teams and began to discuss the inclusion project.

In DISCAR-MacDonald's, Woods entrusted the whole programme to his Human Resources Department, a successful decision that is celebrated today. Human Resources are responsible in the company for hosting the social employment programme. This means that the inclusion of a person with intellectual disability is part of regular employment procedures, with support provided by DISCAR professionals.

Under the motto, "we need to take care of the company," Victoria and her professional team began with the design of the model, its various implementation steps, and the most important step: the follow up. The focus of the programme was on the needs and rights of persons with disability. It may seem obvious, but you might be surprised to learn how many social programmes often forget to put the beneficiaries centre stage – needless to say, their mission is seldom achieved.

Since the start in 1993, the teams in both organisations have changed. New people arrived, others left. But their leaders' commitment fuels energy and spreads the same commitment again and again, so that everyone takes responsibility for the inclusion process. Everyone is an active change agent in the life of a person with intellectual disability who is to be included in the workplace. Each person adds value to successful and sustainable inclusion. The invitation to all employees to keep the social employment programme alive is always remembered and celebrated.



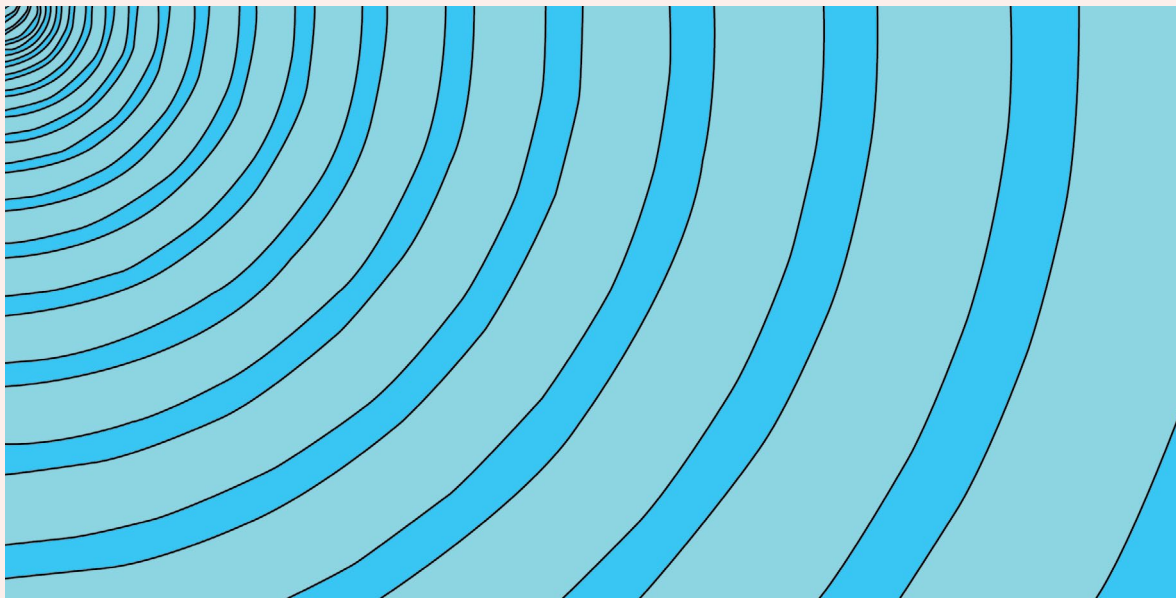
Each person adds value to successful and sustainable inclusion.

Inclusion adds social value

The employment of people with intellectual disabilities has had a tangible impact beyond the individuals involved, namely for their colleagues at work, the company, and the wider community. Inclusion creates ripples of change – you can see other examples of this in Chapters 3 and 4. The table below shows how we may understand these ripples from the value added in employing persons with intellectual disabilities.

Value added

Person with Intellectual Disability (PwID)	Colleagues	Company	Society
Social and work inclusion	Being a change-maker	Support from social inclusion specialists	Awareness about PwID and their contribution to society
Trained to be employed	Feeling good about positively affecting the life of a PwID	Collaboration with civil society	Positive impact through inclusion of PwID
On-the-job training and support	Fears, prejudice and indifference decreased	Reduced turnover in positions that are now taken by PwID	Research on the evolution of disability in society
Enhanced commitment to work	PwID bring joy to the workplace and make you re-value your own job	Positive impact on the whole value chain	PwID taken up in public policies
Autonomy and respected citizens	Virtues developed like patience & acceptance of the other	Diversity as a value	Participation of all
Dignity – rights and obligations adhered to	Open mind and heart through diversity	Good will – “mouth-to-mouth” advertising	A path to inclusive living and working



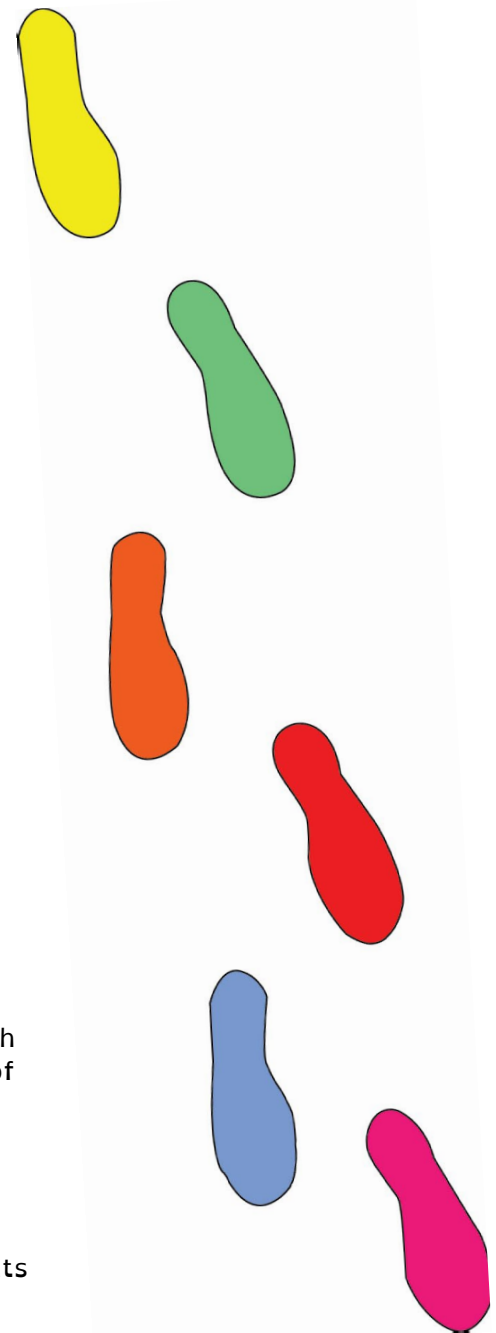
How does the inclusive employment model work in practice?

In 2010, after 20 years of including people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace, Arcos Dorados took this model to its other Latin American markets. The DISCAR inclusion professionals describe their five-step approach to accompaniment of a company as follows:

- **Step 1: Contact the company** – We work with each young person with intellectual disability on their responsibilities, presence, habits and the virtues of work beyond their specific job. We support them to prepare for a position in the company. They have proven to be very reliable and loyal, and have brought staff turnover down.
- **Step 2: Survey jobs** – We identify tasks that could be undertaken by people with intellectual disabilities, and develop a mutual understanding of the best position within a team.
- **Step 3: Evaluate and select applicants** – We identify people that will be a good fit with the company, the position and the team they will become part of.
- **Step 4: Train the company** – We make adaptations together, making the best of the work environment.
- **Step 5: Monitor systematically** – We continue to work with the employee and the company throughout the duration of employment, throughout their career.



DISCAR encourages all companies to use its social employment model – see more at <http://www.fundaciondiscar.org.ar/>



Victoria and Woods have a personal drive to wholeheartedly engage with their work on inclusion, which Caroline summarised in the inspiring word cloud below. What drives you?



Realising a meaningful future

Co-creating an inclusive process

The following story reinforces Victoria and Woods' approach. It is a practical example of how people with intellectual disabilities can be supported through a process of co-creating a more meaningful life and role in the family and society.

The story of Fynn

– by Anouk –

In 2011, I was self-employed and collaborating with Perspectief, a centre for know-how on inclusion and self-determination. The organisation wanted to shift from evaluation research in social services to working directly towards an inclusive society.



“Most of his days are spent sleeping in his bed box at home or at the day-care centre.”

The Dutch alliance for support organisations (that is, social services) had discovered that clients only saw an average of five people a year from outside the support organisation. Perspectief was asked to change this in co-creation with clients, their families, and five support organisations. The clients were in the lead. The purpose of the programme was to support the clients and to give shape to their lives, according to their interests and talents. The support organisations would learn to work in a client-centred way.

Four months later, in November, we sat down with Fynn. He sat in his chair, his mother next to him. Today, she was his “putting-into-words-person.” She knows more about him than anyone else. Fynn is 51-years-old. He loves to feel the wind in his hair when he goes out for a short walk in the street. There isn't much happening in his life. Most of his days are spent sleeping in his bed box at home or at the day-care centre. When his father heard about the idea of Fynn joining the project he was enthusiastic, because “there's never anything going on for Fynn.”

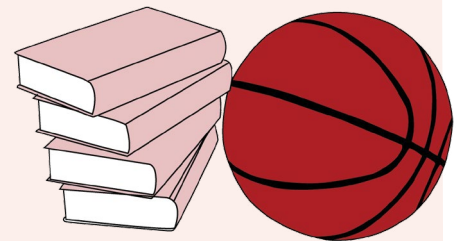
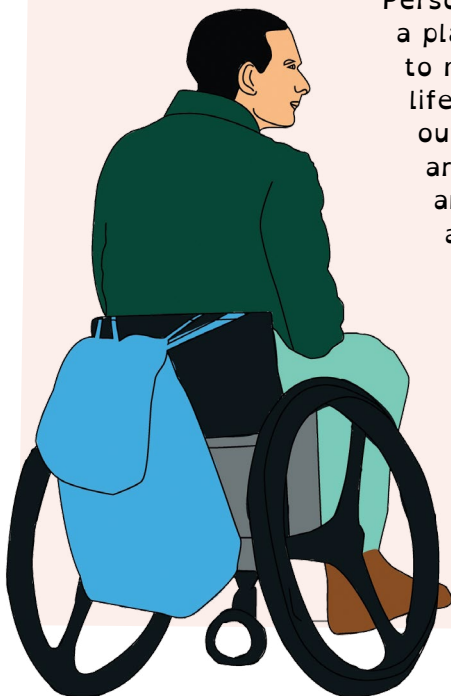
Together, we talked with Fynn about his future, his parents and sister, support assistants, and a board member of the support organisation. We used two imaginative approaches to help Fynn envisage his life: social role valorisation and personal futures planning (see boxes). We talked about his life until now, about his interests and talents, and about the roles he would like to fulfil in society. Together we made a plan for action. A graphic facilitator recorded everything in images.

Social Role Valorisation

Social role valorisation is a comprehensive theory about the cultural dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. The extent to which people experience inclusion or exclusion in their lives is related to the roles they fulfil in society. Examples of roles are sportsman, literature lover, friend, colleague, coach, painter, musician, and gardener. By fulfilling socially valued roles, according to your interests and talents, you can live your life to its fullest. You can use the insights of social role valorisation for building neighbourhood initiatives that contribute to an inclusive society.

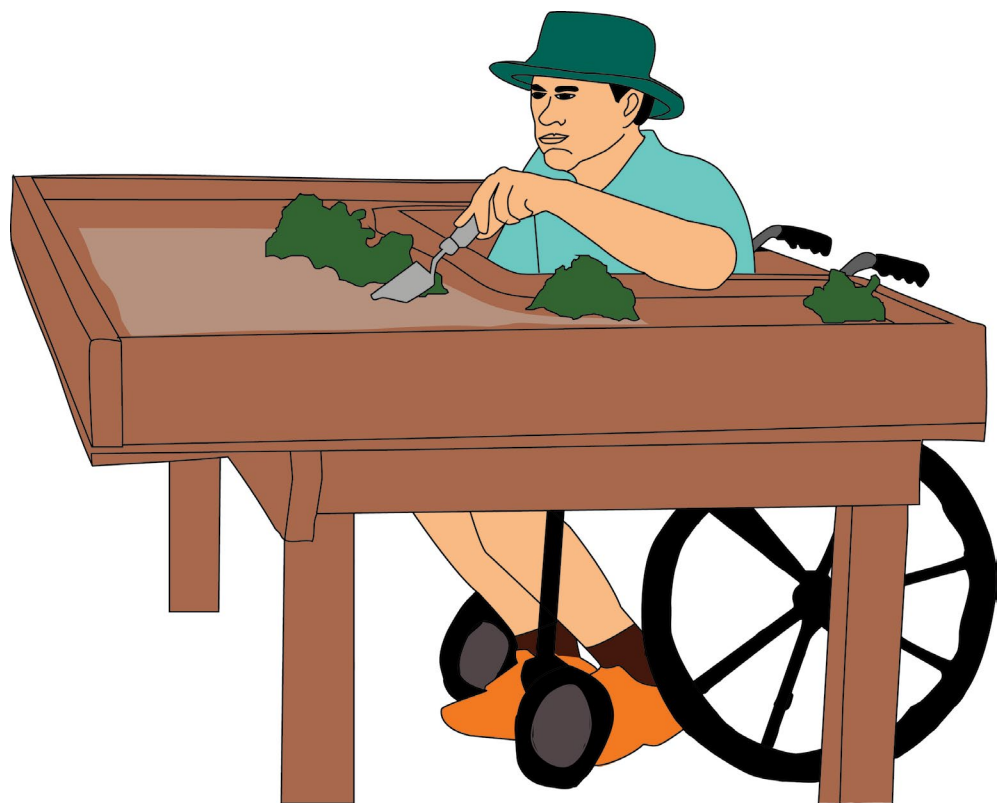
Personal Futures Planning

Personal futures planning is a playful and flexible way to make new plans for your life – and to carry them out. You gather your family around you, along with friends and professional assistants, and work your way through a visualisation process. At first, you map your current situation: what your interests and talents are. You then elaborate on these using creative thinking strategies. What could your contribution to society be? What are the socially valued roles you would like to take up? Who would you like to invite to your plan? A graphic facilitator records all the information graphically on a big piece of paper. You are always in the lead: the plan will only include what you think is important.



After five months, Fynn became a member of the community garden. Another member of the community garden wanted to share his garden with him. Other gardeners helped to make the garden accessible for Fynn's wheelchair. He also became a member of the library. He doesn't read children's books anymore, but selects beautiful, large books about trees, those with nice big photos in. He became a teacher-assistant in the drama club and a supporter of the sports team of his niece. Now his niece visits him at home very frequently, and her team likes him very much. When a new sports hall was built, they didn't take into account that Fynn also had to sit up in the galleries. Now all supporters join him downstairs when the teams are playing.

Fynn told his story at the project meeting where all social service clients, their families, assistants and support organisations see each other to share their stories, knowledge and dilemmas. Though he couldn't tell it in spoken words, his appearance spoke for itself: he looked right into the audience, smiling. Everyone had assumed Fynn didn't like big groups, or too much noise, or too much attention. But his countenance showed this was far from true: the happiness on his face spoke volumes.



Though he couldn't tell it in spoken words, his appearance spoke for itself

Inclusive agricultural development

Being regarded as real farmers

Ed has shared reflective practice principles that help us to see our true identity, express it, and find ways forward towards an inclusive community. Caroline has emphasised the long-term commitment that lies behind change that truly “rewires the system,” from work colleagues, to company, to community and wider society. Anouk complemented this with her description of a co-creative process towards inclusion. This final story about facilitating inclusion comes from Jürgen’s work with agricultural extension and innovation. We again see the importance of reflective practice and personal drive (the importance of “me”), as well as co-creation, but here we also review how institutions and society “exclude” and what this means for practitioners who want to support people who dare to change.

I am really serious, and I learned that this is special

For eight years, I worked with two special colleagues in Zimbabwe to develop our “facilitation for change” approach. In the beginning, we had no clue how to do it. How do you help extension officers become more inclusive and supportive of innovation? We started by just using our common sense.

I grew up on a farm and my father never tolerated anyone looking down upon him. I think this is where I developed the ability to relate to everyone just as they are. This is one of the most basic capacities we need to cultivate and develop as facilitators of inclusive development processes.

When we distilled the essence of the approach that was successful in Zimbabwe, we took it to South Africa. You will read about that in a moment. What surprised us was that we managed to replicate the approach in just two years.

“you have to invest in people, in the facilitators, over an extended period

We worked intensively with extension workers: we helped them to reflect on the effects of their actions and to study the social dynamics. There is something very basic about how humans organise. I have taken this approach to many other places in the world and it just works everywhere, again and again. The thing is: you have to invest in people, in the facilitators, over an extended period. Stay away from short-term training interventions.

I also realise that part of the success is related to “me.” I now work mainly with senior managers and directors of large public organisations, including pan-African and global organisations, basically using the same approach described below. The other day one of them told me: “You are really serious!” “What do you mean,” I asked? “No, you are really serious. You really want to help us,” he replied. I learned that it is apparently not normal to be serious about social change. I am very serious about it. I want to see communities, organisations, societies deal with unfair situations and progress together. You cannot achieve this if you do not have a deep drive.



Facilitation for change

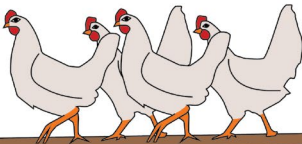
– by Jürgen –

The agriculture extension officers in Limpopo province, South Africa, used to work mainly with a few better-off farmers, while the majority of small farmers were left largely untouched by their services. With the introduction of the process known as “facilitation for change,” the many different needs of farmers are now taken into consideration, including those from both small and better-off farms.

Facilitation for change has energised the farmers into starting interest groups. These have come into being because individual farmers felt that they could not tackle the range of issues they face on their own: challenges such as high chicken mortality, low maize yield, soil erosion, and difficulty in accessing inputs and markets. Most farmers in Limpopo have a mixed farming system, so one farmer can belong to several groups, according to their need.

Poultry interest group

An indigenous poultry farmer in Mbahela explains how the poultry group came to be formed: “Chicken mortality rate was very high, with some farmers left with just one or two chickens. We did not know the cause of death. The extension officer, together with the farmers, took one of the dead chickens to a veterinarian for examination. It was then discovered that the disease was New Castle and we were given the proper medication. We then felt that we needed to come together to deal with this problem jointly. When we started we were only nine, but now we are so many.”



“Traditionally, women were not taken seriously when it comes to decision making. Now we have changed, we give them the respect they deserve and we do not mind to be led by them.”

– male farmer from Limpopo

Experiments on new farming technologies used to be carried out by outsiders. Farmers were not even asked whether the technology was suitable for their conditions, or if they could afford it. The

farmers often did not understand what was done and why it was done. The results of the experiments were not shared with them. Now, farmers have become more self-reliant in solving their problems. They also allow them to plant crops of their choice at the time they think suitable, rather than when set by the extension services.

The changes also benefit the environment. Extension officers encourage the farmers to use organic farming methods, which they (the extension officers) used to regard as primitive. Farmers are also encouraged to practice intercropping, which was earlier discouraged by the extension services.

“That man over there is one of the extension officers who did not allow us to use intercropping, but he has changed.”

– Limpopo farmer, pointing out an extension officer in the audience

The interests of individual farmers are now also expressed and heard in the One-Extension Committee: each interest group selects two or more members to be part of this umbrella organisation. In the past, the farmers used to be dependent on the extension officer for providing help. Now, they can link up directly with external service providers through their own elected local leaders. The On-Extension Committee umbrella organisation can connect to agriculture experts, cooperatives and the local government to provide support, advice and assistance for the interest groups.

Another change is that women have also taken the opportunity to take up leadership positions.

How facilitation contributed

Because agriculture's challenges are complex they need to be dealt with in a sophisticated manner. This means we aim to enhance people's adaptive capacities and to address all the factors that contribute to their challenges, including those that are social in origin (behaviour and practice), economic (markets and resource mobilisation), ecological (natural resource conservation) and organisational (leadership). We facilitate what is in effect a long, systemic, learning process. The key to facilitation is the successful integration of technical advice and research into a social innovation process that is inclusive of all farmers.

What matters most, however, is how this complex facilitation approach to inclusive development is put into practice.

Facilitation for trust building

In Limpopo, prior to the intervention, only a select number of farmers used to benefit from the extension services, namely those who could afford to buy fertilisers. This created resentment and hostility towards the extension officers, as well as to the minority of farmers who benefitted. One of the farmers who did not belong to any of the extension projects reflects the common perception of these marginalised farmers: "We were not regarded as real farmers, only those in projects were." In the past, not only were few farmers reached by extension but many community development initiatives failed to achieve the desired impact. This has made the communities sceptical and pessimistic about such initiatives. As one farmer observed, "We have seen many projects being introduced, year after year, but what have we benefited from them? – Here we are, we are still poor."

The mistrust towards extension officers and the development initiatives necessitated that our first action should be to (re)gain the trust of the people. This was the first important step towards engaging them in the process of social inclusion.

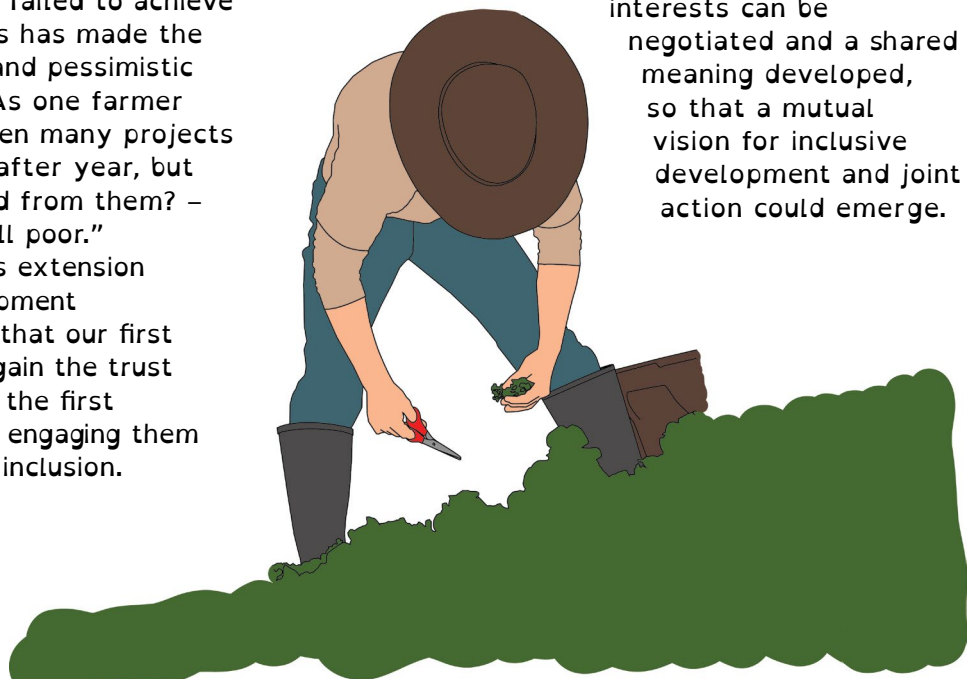
We were not regarded as real farmers, only those in projects were.

The challenge was to find ways of convincing the communities that the new approach is somehow different – and to convince the extension officers that they have to change their attitude towards the farmers who are marginalised, so that they can begin to work with everybody in a more inclusive manner.

Facilitation for an inclusive development vision

Once a certain level of trust had been achieved, the farmers were then helped to acquire a new sense of direction and orientation. We supported the gradual development of a joint vision: imagining how change can be brought about. It is a vision about what inclusive development means. This process was also about what the different actors might do differently. Through critical questioning, probing, discussion and the use of a range of facilitation tools, their divergent views were explored and (controversial) perspectives debated. This process produces a "constructive controversy,"

in which the different interests can be negotiated and a shared meaning developed, so that a mutual vision for inclusive development and joint action could emerge.



Facilitation for self-organisation

The backbone of the change process is to mobilise the energy of the local people to collectively organise and take action to address the broader development challenges they are faced with. The emphasis on “self-organising” is critical here, as this helps to ensure that process is oriented to making things happen (actions) rather than to thinking about what should happen (planning). The emphasis of this process is not focused on creating the structure of the organisation, but towards building the foundations upon which the organisation will be based, from where it will take action. There are two critical facilitation processes here:

- **Facilitation for differentiation –**

A community is not a homogenous entity, but comprises various social units with different and sometimes conflicting perspectives, values, and interests. The interests of men and the rich often dominate, and the voices of the women (despite their large numbers), the poor, and youth remain largely unheard. When we consciously make their social exclusion a topic of discussion, this creates the foundations from which these issues can be debated, and from which the ways forward can be found.

The different interests of the farmers, based on the challenges they faced, became the basis for creating local organisations. This gave the different social groups their individual space in which to freely express and discuss their perspectives on these issues, something which they would be more reluctant to do in the wider community. The interest groups enabled them to explore the nature of the social exclusion they face, and the causes and the consequences of that exclusion for them. With facilitation, people can analyse what helps them work better together and what impedes this. This awareness can help trigger the energy required to deal with the issues they face – and for them to do so in their own way.

“*The capacity to self-organise is evident in African societies.*”

- **Facilitation for group formation –**

The capacity to self-organise is evident in African societies. People organise for funerals, weddings and other events. With facilitation, people can draw lessons about the patterns of successful and unsuccessful forms of organisation. Agricultural development organisations are often male dominated and dysfunctional. The structures of these organisations are analysed, and a space for strengthening them, or for forming new ones better geared towards dealing with different interests of farmers, negotiated. The choice of whether to strengthen the existing organisations or to form new ones is based on deep analysis by the farmers. Often those with similar interests choose to come together to form a new group, as in the case of the poultry interest group (see box above).



Facilitation for leadership to emerge

Traditionally, the selection of leadership is often based on politics, ethnicity, personal relations or status, rather than the individual's leadership qualities and record of action. In many cases the leaders hold multiple positions. This may lead to them dominating a community. Over the centuries, rural communities have developed complex systems of norms and values: these have become so "normal" that people are not even aware of them. Modern society and its values may contradict or challenge these traditional ways of doing things, and this often creates serious conflicts that affect participation and cooperation. This is often the underlying cause of why many situations become "politicised," where all is seen in the light of who says what or does what.

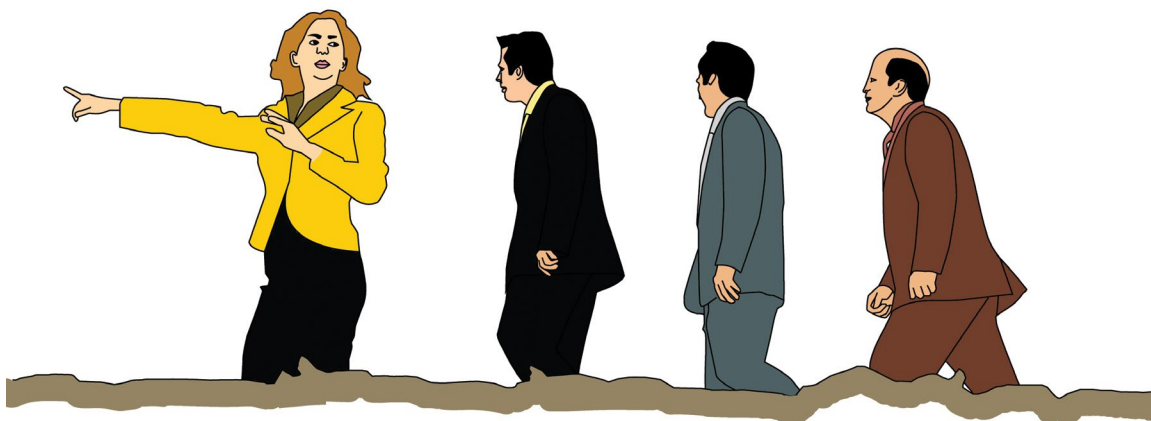
Facilitation can make a significant contribution by challenging people to depoliticise issues, engaging them in negotiation processes where they focus on tasks, roles and functions, rather than on the individuals and their ethnic group or political affiliation. The basic principle for process design is that "who should do it, comes last." Left without facilitation, people often first address who should do it and then the structure for doing it – and only then look at what needs to be done! Facilitation can depoliticise this by taking people, one very small step at a time, through the process required to tackle an issue, starting from "what do we want to achieve?" then moving to "how do we achieve it?" and "how do we organise ourselves?" to "what capacity do we require?" before finally addressing "what functions do we require to make it work?"

The goal is to use facilitation to unblock the debate and enable dialogue and negotiation to take place.

Only when the criteria and terms of reference for the positions and functions are clear and transparent – including the criteria for how to remove people/leaders if they do not perform – should you then address the "who should do it?" question. This approach can help people to accept each other in their roles in the group, irrespective of who they are and where they come from, as long as they meet the criteria and can contribute to the common vision.

Women in leadership roles

In many rural communities, women are not supposed to be leaders. In Limpopo province, women were not allowed in the chief's kraal, the highest decision-making body in the village. Yet modern society (and government policy) promotes equity and a move towards more women in leadership roles. Facilitation for change can help people to analyse the origins and impact of the issues, taboos and power structures that block women from taking up leadership roles. The goal is to use facilitation to unblock the debate and enable dialogue and negotiation to take place. In the process, new norms and values (such as unity, inclusion, learning through self-reflection, sharing, trying) were created by the different interest groups. This has resulted in men accepting women in leadership roles.



Facilitation for ownership and creative self-reliance

Earlier, the extension officers used to use a supply-driven, top-down approach, addressing the needs of a small number of farmers, who were expected to more-or-less blindly follow their instructions. The smallholder farmers assumed a passive role and, as a result, were excluded from the mainstream economy. They felt they were “victims” in this situation. Behind such behaviour we can observe common cultural patterns, including “the culture of silence,” “the blame culture” and the “wait and see culture,” all of which suppress people’s potentials and strengths, and hinder development efforts.

Facilitation is about unearthing and breaking these patterns and challenging people to realise that the solutions to the community’s problems lie within the community itself. To achieve this, examples are analysed, and patterns explored.

Sometimes, the facilitators need to take a provocative stand in order to challenge what remains unspoken. During the course of the facilitation, the patterns that begin to emerge reveal themselves to be detrimental to the wellbeing of the community. People start to explore how they can escape from this trap and to discover their “sources of power” to change things.

Encourage people to see opportunities instead of finding reasons why things cannot work or why they cannot do things.

Taking a provocative stand

When people say they feel like the victims of a situation, the facilitator challenges them: how does it feel to be a victim, does it feel good? Does it make you proud? Does having good excuses for your situation make you feel proud? Then what does make you proud?

So . . . if all these issues were not there, what would be different?

In a problem-focused development approach, “a problem” is often seen as a stumbling block, with very little that one can do to overcome it. This blocks people’s ability to think clearly and reduces their positive energy. Facilitation focuses on stimulating people’s thinking in a solution-based manner. Encourage people to see opportunities instead of finding reasons why things cannot work or why they cannot do things. Looking for opportunities makes people more creative and entrepreneurial in trying to seek out alternatives and potential solutions.



Facilitation for horizontal learning and vertical connection

Top-down approaches to agricultural extension do not take into account the farmer’s ideas and solutions. Yet each community has innovators, people who have the curiosity to try out new ideas based on their own knowledge and own resources. Many development practitioners are advocates of recognising and utilising

the innovations and knowledge of such farmers in order to ensure the sustainability of agriculture.

The facilitator needs to find ways to identify these innovators and to support them in exposing their innovations to the broader community. Once again, first building trust is essential because innovators do things that are not in the mainstream, and their practices are not always accepted locally.

For instance, in Limpopo, the innovations the innovator farmers introduced were regarded by many as “primitive.” This made the innovative farmers uncomfortable with sharing their experiences freely. In this circumstance, the challenge for the extension officers was to show genuine interest and to express their desire to learn from the farmers’ experiences.

Developing an innovation system, in which people can learn and respond freely, depends on ensuring successful collaboration between the different actors involved. This includes those who share an interest within the group, as well as those from other groups, those from outside the community, and experts. The goal should

be to create a platform where the different actors can come together, negotiate their interests, and learn to collaborate. Achieving this was one of the success factors in Limpopo province.

The process is to first identify whether or not there is a need to link up in this manner, and to then identify relevant actors and bring them together. They should then be allowed to negotiate their interests and helped to establish a common goal. From the outset, the platform should provide the actors with clearly defined benefits and roles. With this level of clarity, each of the actors will learn along the way to make the innovation system work for them.

Mrs Mulaudzi of Mbahela explains her zero-grazing innovation

“I started practicing goat zero-grazing before 1998. When I started I only had two goats, which I kept in my kitchen. No one in the village knew about my practice because I was hiding it from them because I did not want to be called names. In 1999, an extension officer who was walking around the village identifying local innovators and innovations spotted me and wanted to know more about what I was doing and why I was doing it. At first, I did not trust him, so I did not open up to him, but after a while I realised that he was well meaning and I then developed trust and was free to share with him.

“The extension officer then encouraged me to build a kraal outside my house. This helped to free up my kitchen. I feed my goats with green Napier grass and legumes, which I get from my fellow farmers, and use the maize bran that remains after milling my maize, as a supplement. I make sure that I feed my goats twice a day and give them water to drink in the evenings. I mix the local herbs with water to treat their internal parasites. Now I feel free to share my experience with other farmers, and I am happy to know that there is another farmer in our village who has also started practicing zero grazing as well.”



Facilitation for feedback and reflection

The “culture of silence” is prominent in rural communities. People tend not to challenge things even when they see that they are detrimental to the individual or the community’s development. It is normal to think in terms of “either you are for me or against me.” What is lacking is a third way of engaging without dividing. Facilitation for change can challenge this in a subtle manner by promoting openness and transparency, both of which are fundamental to constructive criticism, shared responsibility, and promoting social inclusion. In a culture of feedback, sharing and reflection, it is normal for people to ask why certain things are happening the way they are, in order to get to the crux of the problems. This is core in helping people to differentiate between facts and personal attacks. The feedback culture creates space for individuals to use their potential to move forward.

The deeper meaning of facilitation in this chapter

“We are inclined to think of reflection as something quiet and personal. My argument here is that reflection is action-oriented, social and political. Its ‘product’ is praxis (informed, committed action), the most eloquent and socially significant form of human action.”

– Stephen Kemmis

Facilitation plays an important role in triggering the process of social inclusion. Its deeper meaning is often underestimated. In the context of inclusive development, facilitation is a means for stimulating fundamental change in individuals, organisations, communities and societies. This kind of facilitation is inspired by action learning and organisational change theories (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Schein, 1992); systemic approaches (Bateson 1972, Senge, 1990; Midgley, 2002) as well as training for transformation (Hope and Timel, 1984).

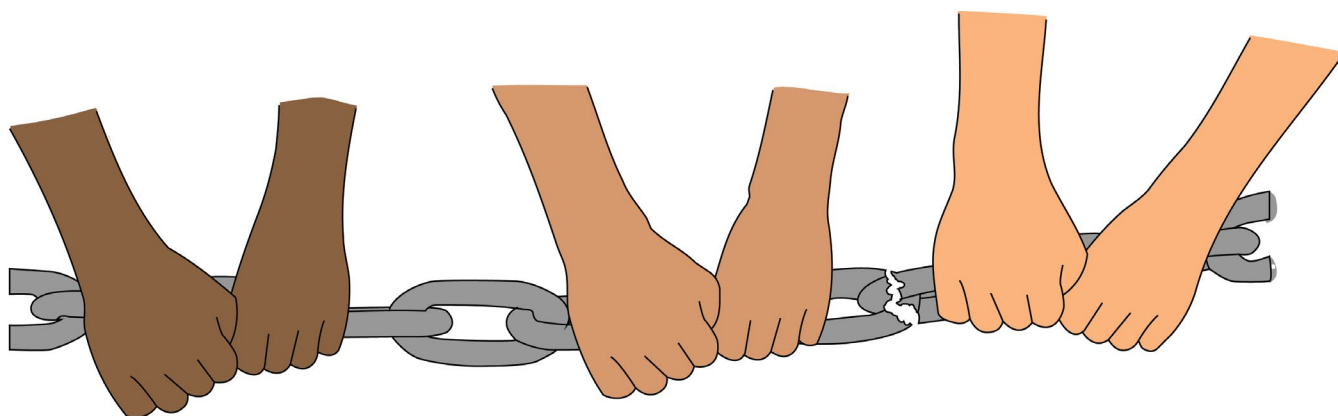
This chapter has highlighted the dimension of inclusion in these facilitation theories. The dynamics in society means that some people are left out, and feel left out. The risk is that those so excluded can lose hope, isolate themselves, and lead unproductive, or angry and violent lives. In order to accompany people who dare to change, it is not enough to create an “enabling environment” – you have to be fully present to them in their journey. This requires looking deep within yourself first, before you can accompany others on their, often painful, path to reconnect to hope.

People with intellectual disabilities will need ongoing accompaniment throughout their working life, and this calls for a long-term, personal commitment.

What motivates you? Perhaps you deeply want to see communities, organisations, societies deal with unfair situations and desire to co-create progress. What drives you to accompany others on the long path to a more inclusive society?

In all the stories in this chapter, marginalised people have been given space to express their identity and to discuss their issues. This is all about strengthening people’s confidence through action, in their own sphere, where they know something, and can do things. The crux is in making people feel proud again, believing that they can do things and can be successful: that they are needed and necessary. This is the “point of return,” where the hurdles to be crossed start to become lower and lower with each little success: it is then that people dare to tackle the bigger hurdles and start to feel competent to do so.

One common challenge in helping others regain confidence in this way, is that, once the person has tasted the feeling of success, they can overreach themselves, tackling a hurdle that is still too high for their present capabilities – they then end up terribly disappointed. Managing their disappointment is a critical part of managing their “staircase of confidence.”



An inclusive facilitation practice can unearth and break the patterns of exclusion – by helping people to make progress together and by helping them to recognise and make the most of their diversity. To be effective in this requires a critical perspective on oneself: do you have the openness and boldness to really look at your intervention honestly, without just wanting to look good (to yourself or others) or to do good? It's this depth of honesty which enables the writers in this chapter to really challenge themselves and, ultimately, to go deep enough to help find the ideas and solutions to the situations that exclude.

Though the short-termism of the present environment works against such longer-term investment in developing deeply reflective practitioners, we need to have the courage to keep working on this together. The tide will turn eventually, and when it does, we will be ready to support ever more inclusive development practitioners.