



WORKSHOP

for the SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Fishbowl

Objectives

The fishbowl is a facilitation method designed to manage speaking turns during discussions in large groups. It allows participants to take time to consider their input before speaking, promoting a more measured pace of debate that encourages broader participation. However, this technique can be challenging for those who are not used to speaking in front of an audience. Therefore, it is best suited for groups that are already familiar with each other or where all participants feel at ease.

Implementation

Arrange the room with two circles of chairs: a smaller inner circle with three to five chairs facing inwards and a larger outer circle surrounding it. Invite two to four participants to sit in the inner circle, making sure that there is always one empty chair available, depending on the total number of seats. This method can be used with a group of **at least ten people**.

Begin by asking the group a question to spark discussion among the participants in the inner circle. Those seated in the outer circle listen attentively. Rather than taking turns to speak in a structured manner, **the conversation should develop organically as a dynamic exchange of ideas**.



Anyone who wants to join the discussion should move to the empty chair in the inner circle and take part in the exchange. At the same time, one of the participants already seated in the centre must stand up and move to an available seat in the outer circle. **There should always be one empty chair in the inner circle.**

Ensure that participants in the outer circle understand that they can only contribute to the discussion once they have taken a seat in the inner circle. When the discussion concludes, you may invite those who did not move to the centre to share their reflections if they wish.

You can set a time limit for the discussion (e.g., 20 minutes), making it clear that not everyone is required to take a seat in the inner circle. Another possible rule is to limit each participant in the inner circle to speaking no more than twice before they must give up their seat. This ensures that all participants have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

As the facilitator, it is crucial to establish the rules from the outset and ensure they are respected by all participants. You can also guide the discussion by encouraging participants to respond to one another rather than speaking independently. In practice, after a few minutes, the facilitator's role becomes minimal, as the conversation begins to flow smoothly on its own.

Example: During the Former pour Transformer seminar, we applied this discussion format to explore the following questions:

- *Are we all truly equal when it comes to participation?*
- *How can we engage more vulnerable individuals in participatory initiatives?*
- *How can organisations support and facilitate this process effectively?*

URL link of the article: https://atelier.fdh.org/en/take-action/our-tools/facilitate/article/fishbowl?lang=en&var_mode=calcul

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