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# the *facilitation* edge

The newsletter of friends or associates of [Daryl Cook](#), [Gillian Jones](#) or [Kimbra White](#).



## An Architects view of creating space

Martin Butcher

Most facilitators have a background in something else, and for me that something else was architecture.

The reasons for this career change are many, but I also see many parallels between the two activities. As an action learner, there is the connection between creating physical spaces, and experiential spaces. Both require a design approach, and both provide a personal learning opportunity. There are though, other connections. As a built environment consumer (as opposed to creator) there are some places and spaces that are just amazing to experience, and others that we don't really notice, except that it has been pleasant (or unpleasant) being there for a period of time.

It is this shared activity of creating space that others will experience that creates the further link between architecture and facilitation. To a degree this link is also shared with performers and entertainers, but it is not as strong. A park can be transformed by a wonderful performance artist, or a vandal. In both cases that persons being will effect others experience of the park. There is though a difference between performance and facilitation.

There was a time where all theatre occurred behind a proscenium arch, but more recently many artists establish situations to set up a dialogue between themselves and the audience. Facilitation though sets out to enable dialogue between the audience itself. In this respect, the role of the facilitator is more akin to the

architect than performer, in that the structure is always there, but not usually or necessarily the subject of the conversation.

Just as the architect creates a physical space to enable conversations and life progress, a facilitator creates a framework to enable others hold their conversations. Sometimes that framework is understated and almost invisible, sometimes almost the driver of the conversations themselves. In both instances what is ordinary or amazing for the participants is dependant on a wide variety of factors, including both the skills and the values of the designer. Thus for me, facilitation is about creating a space for others to find both enjoyable and useful, and in this respect there is a strong correlation between the two arenas of endeavour.