Metaphorum

An online community platform for Metaphorum

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13 September 2023

Climbing

higher

and faster

together

What we are going to talk about here

1. **Identification of the need** for such a platform for Metaphorum
2. **An overview of our search** for an inexpensive and replicable platform to support **large-scale co-operation**.
3. **An example that can be applied immediately** at a very modest scale: Special Interest Groups in Metaphorum.
4. **An example of a more ambitious application**: supporting the metasystem within a larger organisation.
5. **An example of an even larger scale application:** how the platform might be applied as part of the metasystemic skeleton to support inter-organisational co-operation.

Background: Metaphorum

Metaphorum:

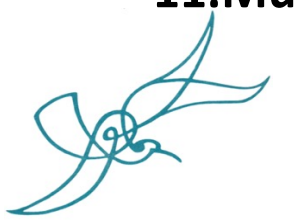
1. **Has a lot of simultaneous complex dialogues** for which email and social media do not provide sufficient capabilities
2. **Is an ethos cohered community**, with many different skill sets, experience levels, network connections amongst its membership and overall network
3. **Has developed a range of facilities** including conferences, webinars, case studies, presentations, papers. The membership would benefit if these were all connected coherently
4. **Is a prominent member of the wider cybernetic community**, all of which strive to bring cybernetics into the mainstream infrastructure to address the world problematique

We looked for a platform that could address all the above and more…

Background: Our search for a platform

We looked at many candidates through a set of key selection criteria:

1. **Easy to configure and customise** without deep technical skills.
2. **Recursive nesting** of categories/groups/dialogues.
3. **Moderation and administration**
   a) **Creating groups**, feedback, connecting members.
   b) **Codes of conduct** for members, moderators and administrators to enable consistent and fair moderation.
4. **Either an open-source** platform or one that includes close access to the developers.
5. **Migration – ability to** export content in a standard open format.
6. **Easy to find and join** – requiring no previous knowledge.
7. **Detailed user profile to include** interests, experience, activities, etc.
8. **Searchability** – topics, key words, capabilities, members.
9. **Messaging** within groups, mailing lists, global, targeted.
10. **Attachment/archiving** of media.
11. **Multi-community** support – an advanced feature we thought unlikely to be available.



Background: Place4Us

1. **An initial candidate** for our platform
2. **We fully support**, align and resonate with their vision and trajectory
3. **Is currently at early stage** of development and release
4. **We offered and do offer** to work with Place4Us and share our platform learning as we go
5. **We see P4U as having the strategic potential** we too identify as fully relevant
6. **We needed to find a platform that was ready to go** and met our key selection criteria, that is FUDforum

Background: FUDforum

1. **Is open source** and meets all the relevant standards to enable production of custom modules, integration with addons and the like
2. **Has a development group** working on it – latest release was earlier this year
3. **Has been around for a long time**
4. **Meets the core key** selection criteria
5. **Comprehensive configuration** functionality – is not just a single template
6. **Enables recursive** structures
7. **Provides the features** to enable members to Connect, Cohere, Amplify
8. **Can provide a tactical implementation** now at zero cost, other than people working to generate it
9. **Runs on** OSX / iOS, Android, Windows, Linux
10. **Provides the best functional fit** for us

Two forward paths…

Single community: Metaphorum

- **This is our initial focus** – it will use all of the key criteria to help Connect, Cohere and Amplify the great variety within the Metaphorum Community
- **We have configured** a starting structure for this, is ready to go

Multiple Communities: Metaphorum plus other communities

- **We have candidates** for this. They include The Schumacher Institute, H3Uni and OMdev
- **We have interest** from other cybernetic groups
- **Will include representation of recursive structures** to enable the communities to Connect, Cohere and Amplify together as an overall system

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Forward path One: Metaphorum

What will our platform do?

Enable individuals to find others:

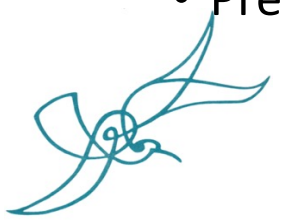
- With similar interests
- Who can add to their own knowledge
- Who may be able to help with a project
- Who may be doing similar work in different geographies or settings
- Who may be open to collaboration in research or projects

Enable groups to form and emerge

- With multiple dialogues and forums
- Special Interest Groups focused on a particular topic

Find helpful assets:

- Case studies
- Webcasts/webinars
- Reference materials: papers and articles
- Presentations



How will our platform do it?

1. **By providing a common platform** accessible using all common hardware and operating systems.
2. **By being easy to navigate.**
3. **By being easy to adapt and change** as the need arises.
4. **By incorporating Special Interest Groups (SIG)** related to the intended identity and purpose of each organization.
5. **By enabling easy connection and communication** within and for group, forums, topics.
6. **And potentially by representing the structure of any organization**, including recursive relationships.

What can this do for Metaphorum?

1. **Metaphorum has a diverse community** – knowledgeable and experienced.
2. **This community would have the potential for higher agency** if it were more fully Connected, Cohered and Amplified
3. **There are opportunities and challenges** that Metaphorum would be better able to address if the community were well coordinated.
4. **The opportunity to Connect, Cohere and Amplify** the variety of this community – both individually and collectively.
5. **Given the emergent trends and uncertainties** we face right now and the future, maybe this really is the right time.

Where are we with implementation?

1. **Installed and running** at https://community.Metaphorum.org
2. **Initial architecture in place** demonstrating:
   - **Recursion** and nested dialogue.
   - **Special Interest Groups.**
   - **Curation** of VSM/TS materials.
   - **Member profiles** – fully configurable.
   - **Search** ability.
   - **Communication** to members, groups, forums, topics.
   - **Polls**.

A look at the Metaphorum platform

1. Is initial configuration only – for early testing
2. Overall structure will be developed as we go, during the 13 week trial
3. We will look at an initial SIG

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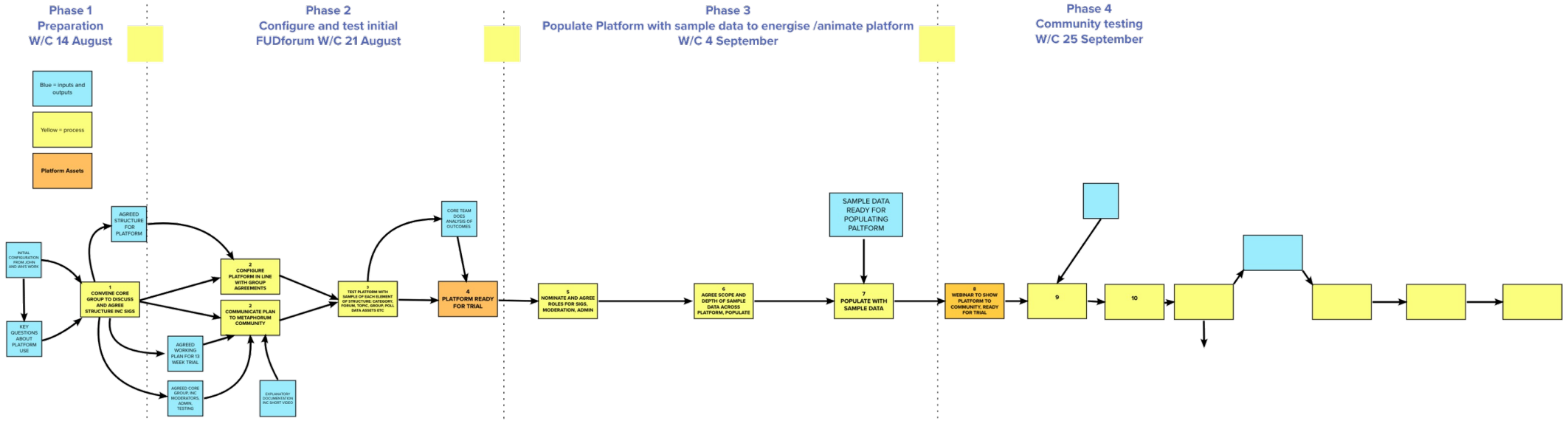
Timeline

Draft Metaphorum 13 Week Platform Trial Timeline
13 September 2023



Initial preparation using work done so far, including initial configuration, document on structuring FUDforum

Generate initial key questions for Core Group for first meeting

Nomination / selection of core team to do initial work. (4-6 people who will work on the trial throughout the process, on behalf of the whole community)

Convene core group to prepare decision agenda for configuration and trial. Group to represent relevant roles within community. Explain / explore process and roles with Core group

Core group agree initial structure for platform in line with Metaphorum needs

Produce agreed project map with clear process step

Core group configure / structure platform in line with group agreements

Communication to Metaphorum community to introduce platform, background, intended purpose, core team. Slide deck with voice over, screen shots of platform.

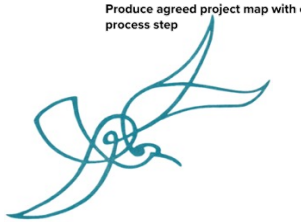
Populate examples of structural elements and test collaboratively in real time - report on progress and review

Agree roles and responsibilities for Admin, Mods, SIGs and personnel to act in the roles

Agree amount and nature of sample data to animate the platform and produce it

TBD by Core Group

Host webinar for community to show work done and invite community to use the platform



Online community platform for Metaphorum

The potential for multi community platform

For *other interested organizations*

1. **Same structure possibilities for each separate community** – they can configure how they wish
2. **Configure** the nested SIGs (Special Interest Groups).
3. **Recruit and organize a moderation team**
4. **Start using it**

Q&A

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FUDforum is Open Source: FOSS

- *FUDforum* is *Free Open Source Software* (FOSS) released under the *GNU General Public License* [sic] (GPL) version 2.
- This means that it can be copied, forked and modified with no restrictions.
- However, it also means that it comes with no warranty and no implication of any liability on the part of the developers.
- This is nothing unusual. The whole internet runs mostly on-GNU-licensed software or some other licence (https://opensource.org/licenses) approved by the Open Source Initiative (an organization with a large number of affiliates - listed at https://opensource.org/affiliates/). The software at the core of your *Android* or *iOS* device is built on FOSS of one sort of another, as are the entire business of countless organizations (including such giants as *Google* and *Facebook)*.
- The source code for *FUDforum* is available for anyone to download, fork and modify. It is hosted at https://github.com/fudforum/FUDforum
- *FUDforum* is currently maintained by a team of 11 developers and the most recent release was on 23rd April 2023

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Extending FUDforum

- Although *FUDforum* has capabilities not found in other software of this category ("bulletin boards") it could be extended to do far more than at present - significant extensions probably far beyond the capabilities of its plug-in system.
- *FUDforum's* source code appears to be clearly structured and quite well annotated. Therefore it should be well within the capabilities of a motivated team to develop this into a far more powerful system.
- There may be sufficient motive for such a collaboration simply in helping to develop a powerful tool for large-scale collaboration.
- However, the same motivation may also be expected to attract funders to ease the burden of the development team's members.
- *FUDforum* is written in PHP, the language on which *WordPress, Drupal, Wikipedia* and the overwhelming majority of other Web applications has been built.
- There is no shortage of co-operatively-minded, ethically-aligned PHP developers - but most are quite young and can afford to spare only limited time for free, so an ethically-aligned funder would be able to achieve a lot through such a collaboration.

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Developing FUDforum

- The better such a platform meets its users' broad range of needs, the greater the number of users that will be attracted.
- This will increase the diversity of user types to be accommodate and therefore (far more than linearly) the burden upon the teams of moderators, administrators and other support staff.
- Some of the burden may be mitigated by judicious use of technology (including possibly AI) to provide algedonic alerts, but sooner or later the point will be reached (probably sooner) when a full support team would be needed. At this point, the need for seed funding and, subsequently, a sustainable approach to funding will become unavoidable.
- We believe the only way to nurture and sustain such a project, and to keep it aligned with its espoused ethical objectives, is through the use of the VSM.

Immediate next steps

For *Metaphorum*

1. **Configure** the nested SIGs (Special Interest Groups).
2. **Recruit and organize a moderation team**
3. **Start using it**

Further immediate next steps

For *other interested organizations*

1. **Configure** the nested SIGs (Special Interest Groups).
2. **Recruit and organize a moderation team**
3. **Start using it**

Near future steps

For all *participating organizations*

1. **Configure** the nested SIGs (Special Interest Groups).
2. **Recruit and organize an administration team (S3)**
3. **Continually review and refine the rules of use (S2)**
4. **Recruit and organize a meta-moderation team (S5)**
5. **Recruit and organize a development teams to extend the software's capabilities, to improve ease of use and to reduce the burden on moderators.**
6. **Use it even more**