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Purpose: This work investigates the dynamics of interaction between stakeholders of Facilities Management (FM) innovation and improvement processes. The aim is to understand how the complex value chain of FM services influences innovation processes within this field.

Theory: This study combines theories on innovation in services with research focused on the empirical field of FM. More specifically, the analytical framework for this study applies the differentiation between reactive and proactive innovation processes by Toivonen and Tuominen (2009) to the value chain identified by Coenen, Alexander, and Kok (2012) and, by doing so, it emphasizes the dynamics of interaction between stakeholders.

Design/methodology/approach: This work applies a qualitative methodology based on abduction. The data collection was carried out in the Danish FM field through an explorative study, which included 14 semi-structured interviews and archival data, along with three in-depth interviews. The data analysis was carried out during and after the data collection, and was aided by the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti.

Findings: The findings suggest that the complex value chain that characterizes FM has a threefold impact on the nature of innovation processes within this field. Firstly, end-users of FM services are usually not involved in innovation processes, although they might sometimes play a role as initial drivers. Secondly, FM services are intangible but more easily reproducible than other services, which impacts on the diffusion of innovation. Finally, the evaluation of the added value derived from innovation depends on and changes according to a heterogeneous set of internal and external stakeholders, of a higher complexity as compared to that of other services.

Originality/value: This work aims at contributing to the literature on innovation in FM, by combining two frameworks from the different research areas, i.e. innovation in services and FM. The originality of the findings stands in depicting the distinguishing characteristics of FM, and their impact on how innovation is characterized within FM as compared to other service contexts.