Concept paper: Fishbowl/aquarium

The fishbowl tool is named in reference to an aquarium – an environment that is transparent and that can be openly observed while not interrupting the participants within. Implementing the fishbowl tool requires at least two small groups of participants. At the start, the first group enters "the fishbowl" to discuss while the others observe (this can be a separate room that can be observed either through glass, via a video feed, or simply chairs arranged away from the observers etc., - it is important that the observers are able to see and hear the people discussing). The fishbowl discussion can be led via talking points or a moderator and if necessary, a time limit can be set for the discussion, while keeping in mind that it cannot be too long so as to not tire the observers.

An alternative approach includes arranging a circle of chairs with one empty chair. The observers stand around the chairs and listen and if someone wants to join in the discussion, they sit in the vacant chair. This triggers another person from the circle to join the audience, freeing up one chair. This process repeats itself.

What methods/other tools/ techniques can be used while implementing the tool?	Main aims while using the tool
By definition, the observation and conversation tools are already integrated into the fishbowl tool. Additional tools that can be used are (parts of) deliberative mapping or photovoice (to discuss the pictures that have been taken). Hand raising, brainstorming, problem analysis, gaming apps**.**	The aim of the tool is to cultivate honest uninterrupted discussion while having others observe and take in the points that are being made. This can be used to introduce other viewpoints, e.g. have one group discuss one point while the other group discusses a contradictory point, etc.; or simply to generate and share new ideas.

How can the tool be used in each phase of the process (when developing age-friendlier and green mobility solutions)?
Planning stage – The tool can be used to generate ideas or to discuss pros and cons.   **Development stage** – The tool can be used to generate ideas or to discuss pros and cons.   **Implementation stage** – Not applicable.   **Evaluation stage** – The tool can be used to generate ideas or to discuss pros and cons, especially after an intervention has been implemented.   **Feedback** – The tool is suitable for getting feedback, e.g. having the group in the fishbowl discuss their reactions and thoughts on something.

What is the aim of engagement with this tool?
The tool is not that suitable for informing.   The tool is suitable for **consulting**, as it gives an opportunity to observe candid discussion on any given topic which will, in turn, provide the honest opinions of participants.   The tool is suitable for **collaboration**, as it gives an opportunity to both observe candid discussion on any given topic and to also provide your own topics for discussion, which will, in turn, provide the honest opinions of participants.   If the discussion and points made lead to actual interventions/change, this can be **empowering** as it creates a sense that the particpants' opinions are important and valuable.

For how many people and how is the tool suitable (for one-time use)?	How much effort is required from the participant and what influences that?
The optimal size of the group would be a few people (**no more than 10**) – so that everyone could participate in the discussion.	As the participants need to arrive at a physical location and spend time discussing and observing, **some effort** will be required from the participants.
Time needed to <u>prepare</u> using the tool and what influences the time needed?	**Time needed to <u>implement</u> the tool and what influences the time needed?**
Some preparation is required: inviting participants, compiling the groups, setting up the room(s) and if necessary, organizing taking minutes or recordings of the sessions as well.	Some set-up required: Depending on the number of groups and the number of participants, some time (**1 hour to a few hours**) is needed to conduct the fishbowl exercise.
Time needed to <u>summarize</u> using the tool and what influences the time needed?	**Price for the user of the tool and what influences the price**
Little to no summarizing required: Depnding on the needs of the organizer, the sessions may be recorded or summarized after the exercise. However, as this tool is mostly aimed at generating honest discussion and not for creating consensus or making decisions, little summarizing should be required.	**Free or low cost**: Provided that there is no cost for the room, the tool is free to use and can be organized at very low cost. However, as participants have to come to some physical venue, which might entail some costs, the organizer can consider covering these.
SWOT on using the tool	
STRENGHTS Helps facilitate honest discussion; provides the opportunity to observe discussions (that may have opposing viewpoints to those of the observer); by switching groups and discussing the same topic in serveral groups, it may help to get to the core of the issues; participants can take breaks from discussion which will reduce fatigue.	**WEAKNESSES** Each subsequent discussion will inevitably be affected by the previous group (unless topics are switched) and the general mood of the group; individual thoughts may be difficult to express in a group setting.
OPPORTUNITIES By switching groups from observer to discusser, participants will get a rare opportunity to discuss a topic in-depth by being aware of what was discussed before them – this multi-layered discussion process may prove very useful in case of some topics as it may help reveal possible conflicts before employing other methods.	**THREATS** If participants have any visual or hearing impairments, their participation may be more difficult; despite creating barriers or separating the observers and discussers, some people may not feel comfortable speaking candidly while being observed; the switch from observer to discusser may prove difficult to those who have trouble organizing their thoughts very quickly and would like more time to think about what was discussed in the previous group; without a good facilitator, some topics may cause disagreements.

2

How to use the tool?
How to prepare using the tool? • Invite participants, prepare the room(s) and setting, secure a moderator if needed • Consider possible ways of evaluations, e.g. preparing a feedback survey for participants **How to implement the tool?** • Ensure that the setting facilitates discussion and that the observers can comfortably see and hear the discussers while not being intrusive • Taking notes/recording, if necessary **How to follow-up using the tool?** • Summarizing the discussions, if needed (not a compulsory part) • Asking for feedback from the participants via surveys
Tips and hints for using the tool with people in silver age
• **The atmosphere of the fishbowl needs to be comfortable and inviting** – especially considering that participants are aware that they are being observed, which might make some of them tense up and unwilling to provide honest opinions. To overcome this barrier, the discussion needs to be engaging and a sense of seclusion and intimacy should be created (by placing the observers as far as possible from the fishbowl, creating barriers between them, etc.). • **Think of breaks and refreshments** – depending on the duration of the exercise, drinks or snacks and brakes may also be necessary. Especially to elderly people who are sitting in the chairs, the sitting may be tiring.

3

Fishbowl tool. *Photocredits: Matti Vuori (left), Unsplash (right)*