

## Concept paper: World Café

A world café is a structured conversational process in which small groups of participants discuss one or more topics at several tables. The main idea of this tool is to recreate the relaxing and creative café ambience (complete with tables and chairs and a pen-friendly “table-cloth”) which would enable fruitful conversations. The expectation is that joint discussion in such an environment relaxes participants and encourages collective action.

What methods/other tools/ techniques can be used while implementing the tool?	Main aims while using the tool
Very useful tool in the framework of a workshop. During world café, different methods can be used in tables, e.g. mindmapping, photo collage, case studies or videos to open up the topic.	To get a large amount of input into/feedback for a project, issues, development ideas, etc. in a resource-efficient manner. Another benefit is that world cafes allow people to get to know each other and share ideas in a casual, relaxed and potentially fun environment.
How can the tool be used in each phase of the process (when developing age-friendlier and green mobility solutions)?	
The tool <b>can be used in most of the phases</b> of a participation process. In the planning stage, it can be used to get ideas to develop green mobility, e.g. by having different problems to solve at each table. In the development stage, it is possible to focus on certain potential solutions and develop these further. It can be very useful in the beginning of a process or even at a workshop as an “opener” for further discussions. It is also somewhat useful when evaluating some solution or service and collecting feedback from the user group, for example in a pilot.	
What is the aim of engagement with this tool?	
As the tool allows to bring together a wide range of people for engaging them in the planning process, it is well suited for <b>collaboration and empowerment</b> . As it is a rather informal setting, it is important to really pay attention to how to collect the data, which is why it is less suited for evaluation – it would be difficult to record all the points brought up, and the informing and consulting functions also suffer from the same drawback.	
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?
It is recommended to have <b>more than 12 persons</b> in order to form groups that are diverse and representative enough to obtain a good flow of ideas and information. <b>The whole group has to be divided between tables, into smaller groups.</b> Generally, the size of a world café is more constrained by the size of the venue than on the ability to host it.	The <b>people only need to join an event</b> and bring curiosity and openness in their interactions with other people and to the topics discussed. As world cafe requires being in one place with other people, transport questions should be considered.
Time needed to prepare using the tool and what influences the time needed?	Time needed to implement the tool and what influences the time needed?
Depending on the scale and the usage of the tool, <b>some up to considerable preparations</b> are required. The main preparations include: find a	Depending on the number of tables and the difficulty of the questions, you may need at least 15-30 minutes for one roundtable (in case of 3

venue and create the café atmosphere, prepare questions and background information, invite and pre-register participants, inform the media, etc.	rounds, 45-90 min) and some time for introduction and conclusions. Therefore, <b>some to considerable set-up</b> is required.
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
As summarising is done after every roundtable, there is <b>not much time needed to summarize the results</b> of the tool. However, all participants should be given the opportunity to get an overview of all topics that were discussed, as not all of them may have discussed every topic in every stage of the world café. The summary can be presented in the participating group but also to decision-makers, planners etc.	There are <b>no fees</b> to use this tool. It is necessary to have a good place and setting for the method, so there might be expenditures for room rent, equipment and evtl. some catering. Also, a professional facilitator is helpful.
SWOT on using the tool	
<b>STRENGTHS</b> Insights into different perspectives and opinions of the participants. The tool can bring people together and enhance the process of getting to know each other in the group. The café atmosphere helps relax the participants and make them more comfortable with speaking up.	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> Not suitable for making decisions in the group. People with hearing disabilities may struggle and have difficulties to take part in the discussion. Time limitation – e.g. if you have a lively and informed discussions but then it needs to stop because it is time to change tables. Creating the café atmosphere requires extra effort.
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> Informing participants of a new discussion round about the results of the previous discussions may give a good starting point to develop ideas further or to bring out objections to earlier mentioned ideas/facts, etc.	<b>THREATS</b> Difficult to ensure proper and adequate data collection during the world café/after it. Participants may get off track if the facilitator is not experienced or capable. Learning about the discussion results of other tables may bias the new group. Not all suitable venues may be accessible, e.g. to people with limited mobility.
How to use the tool?	
<b>How to prepare using the tool?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for the topics and questions for discussion</li> <li>• Preparing the agenda, opening remarks, introduction of the topic</li> <li>• Preparing and sending the invitation to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders</li> <li>• Preparing the venue and the setting</li> <li>• Organising hosts for every table and briefing them</li> <li>• Material: large paper sheets as “table cloth” to write on, markers for each table (different colours), eventually more material when further methods like collages are used, pinboards for presenting the results</li> <li>• Think through how to evaluate using the tool</li> </ul>	

### How to implement the tool?

- Introduce the topic, the questions and the rules of the world café
- Form groups with a host at each table
- Keep time (15-30 min per round), giving a signal when it is time to change tables (the host stays)
- At the tables: introducing the question in detail, giving an overview of the discussion so far, ensuring that every participant gets the chance to participate in the discussion; take notes on the “table cloth” and/or on paper
- Eventually structure the discussion and the notes
- Ensure that there is a presentation of the results
- Include ways to collect information needed to evaluate using the tool

### How to follow-up using the tool?

- Document the results of the discussion
- Evaluate using the tool
- Forward the summary to the participants and stakeholders, planners, authorities, decision-makers etc.

### Tips and hints for using the tool with people in silver age

- **Choose an overall topic and subtopics for each table** – for example, the tool was used in Finland, by Valonia to discuss better public transportation for seniors. Its aim was to collect the user group’s views on local PT. Each host had a different topic: PT digital services/accessibility/service and help/network. This approach helps get a comprehensive overview of user feedback on the whole topic and on its separate parts.
- **The groups should not be too large** – it is not recommended to have more than 8 people at each table. This ensures people with visual and hearing impairments can still participate but if they need additional assistance, be prepared to offer it.
- **Keep an eye on the noise level** – as venues are different and discussions are ongoing at each table, make sure that the noise level does not become too high – be prepared to ask participants to be mindful of this as well, as it may make it hard to hear or speak in groups.
- **The instructions should be simple and clear** – use simple phrases and avoid technical terms, unless the method is used for a discussion with seniors who are experts in a certain field. But as the world café is rather suitable for heterogenic groups, simple phrases are preferable.
- **A useful World Café toolbox:** <https://www.user-participation.eu/planning-the-process/step-5-participatory-methods/planning-the-future-visions-strategies-projects/world-cafe>



World-Café. Photo credits: Institute of Baltic Studies (left), Heta Laiho (right)