

The World Café is a collaborative facilitation method that enables participants to explore a complex topic through a series of small-group conversations. By moving from table to table and building on the ideas of previous groups, participants gradually develop a shared understanding and a collective vision.

Objectives

- Share ideas and experiences.
- Build a collective vision.
- Gather and connect shared observations.
- Move from individual reflections to collective intentions.

Context of use : Exploring a complex topic before moving towards concrete actions or collective decision-making.

Target group / Age range : 15 years and over.

Number of participants : 12–24 participants.

Duration : Approximately 75–90 minutes.

Materials needed : Four large tables, four large sheets of paper (flipchart paper or similar), coloured markers on each table, a timer, bell or other timekeeping device.

Step-by-step process

1. Prepare four tables, each with a different question related to the chosen topic (for example, public space).
2. Explain the rules of the activity to the whole group.
3. Invite participants to write, draw and discuss their ideas on the paper provided.
4. One participant remains at each table as the ****host****. Their role is to welcome each new group and briefly explain what was discussed previously so the conversation can continue and develop.
5. Every 15 minutes, all participants except the hosts rotate to a new table.
6. Continue until participants have visited every table.
7. At the end of the activity, the final group at each table presents the collective ideas that emerged (approximately three minutes per group).

Key points / Things to pay attention to

- Clearly explain the role of the table hosts. Their role is to facilitate continuity, not to lead or dominate the discussion.
- The first round may be slightly longer than the following ones.
- Keep a close eye on the timing to maintain a good rhythm.
- Make sure everyone, except the hosts, has the opportunity to visit every table.

What it creates / Why it works

Working in small groups makes it easier for participants to express their ideas. Each conversation starts from the reflections of the previous group, allowing ideas to evolve and become richer over time. Because participants move from table to table, they contribute to every question and remain actively engaged throughout the process, avoiding the passivity often found in more traditional discussion formats.

Possible variations

Instead of keeping the same table host throughout the activity, the host can change at each round. When a new group arrives, participants decide together who will remain at the table for the next discussion. This variation allows everyone to experience the host role at least once, although it requires clearer instructions and facilitation.

Keywords / Themes : Collective intelligence, Popular education, Facilitation, Design thinking, Co-construction

Reference person / Credits : The World Café method was developed by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs in 1995 and was adapted for the **Places Publiques 2026** programme by Emilie Perron and Nicolas Debaive.