

The World Cafe

Field of application	Guided larger group conversations and reflections
Resume / Brief description	<p>Making the informal formal and collecting joint knowledge of the participants is the objective of a World Café. Its logic is to encourage a reflection along 3 question rounds. The first round starts with a rather generic question and then is followed by more concrete ones that are oriented to find concrete common results.</p> <p>The methodology is used for group reflections that want to integrate all participants. It is a very interactive format in which participants exchange on the questions based on their knowledge. It assures that everybody gets a voice and that communication is assured in an egalitarian way. It takes out of the conversation hierarchies (e.g. between students and teachers, between R&D organisations and the community, between teachers) and focuses on the connection of ideas and suggestions.</p> <p>The World Café can be used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a smaller group (minimum 12 persons) as well as in large groups of participants (300 persons and even more) • internally with students or between teachers of e.g. a university • with members of the university and the outside community (e.g. with University departments and businesses, between the R&D activities and the locality or region e.g. for a more applied research orientation)
Target group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students and graduates inside the different courses 2. Researchers and teachers to align cooperation opportunities and organisational development improvements 3. With businesses and start-ups relevant for the research fields of the university 4. With the local community where the university is based to identify contributions of R&D, research projects or capacity building demands from local organisations and businesses
Group size	Minimum 12 - up to 300 people and more
Objectives	<p>The World Café aims to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create the hospitable atmosphere of a sidewalk café where people can feel at ease and engage in informal conversation • develop an interest in others, discover their knowledge and points of views • ensure that through the interactive exchange every participants gets a deeper knowledge on the topic that is chosen • collect opinions and exchange of concrete ideas (brainstorming) • connect the ideas towards a joint synthesis or the concretisation of concrete next steps and further networking opportunities
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small round or square tables with chairs, seating 4-5 people • Vases with flowers on each table • 3 different colours of markers (e.g. green, blue, red) according to the number of participants (ideally everybody should have access to each marker from the same colour. Alternatively, 2-3 markers from each colour for each table, where the participants at the table share the markers) • White sheet of large papers that covers each table as table cloth on which ideas can be written down • Menus for tables describing rules and roles of the World Cafe <p>In case of online realisation, the requirements need to be adapted. Working e. g. with Zoom break-out sessions and mural board documentation provide a good alternative.</p>
Time	20 minutes for each question round, minimum 1 hour plus the introduction and explanation of the purpose of the World Café, its methodology, rules and roles, and feedback of findings (altogether minimum 1.5 hours)



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)

Implementation -Overview

The methodology is realised in three main organisational steps.



The preparation has to be adjusted to the target group and the context in which it is applied. When working as university staff with external actors, official invitations and procedures should be applied. For internal reflection e.g. with university and department staff, the format can be applied in a joint meeting. In a student class it also can be applied as a didactical instrument. In all 3 application formats there is a sequence of preparation to be considered:

1. Preparation

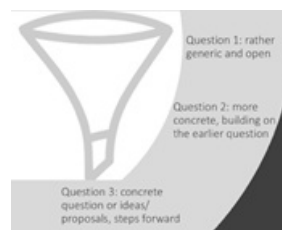
1.1. Clarification of the purpose

The World Café can be used for e.g.

- Brainstorming with students to collect their experiences and knowledge
- Reflection to reach a certain concrete objective (e.g. better coordination between the departments of the university or to identify concrete entry points for research projects with businesses)
- Promotion of communication on a certain relevant topic to align understanding (e.g. "What is the opinion of different professors and university staff to increase innovation orientation in their delivery of teaching?")

1.2. Phrasing of the questions

Phrasing suitable questions is key to reach the purpose of the World Café. The logic of phrasing follows a funnel logic. It starts with a rather generic question to get the communication going, then a more concrete question related to the purpose of the meeting, then a final question that provides the opportunity to get a concrete outcome.



1.3. Preparation of the event

This includes invitation but also setting up the space:

- Documentation of 3 questions on a pin board or a PowerPoint in three colours (first question in green, 2nd question in red, 3rd question in blue)
- Round table and table cloth organisation with vases or a flower drawing on the table cloth
- Placing markers (green ones for 1st question, red ones for 2nd question, blue ones for 3rd question) on the tables
- Preparing the menu card with the rules and roles of the exercise or preparing on a flipchart (or PowerPoint) the rules and roles
- Preparation of a mind map on a pin board to document final summary of findings

Implementation - Guidelines

2. Realisation of the World Café

2.1. Welcome speech and introduction to the purpose and sequence

One of the key questions that can be asked to the audience is: "Where do you have most informal exchange on an official event?" The answer in general is: "During the coffee breaks." The World Café has the logic to encourage informal communication and exchange in a formal structure. It is relevant to give a short overview of the structure of the World Café (3 questions, groups are mixing, and tables are changed after each question, each reflection on a question is e.g. 20 minutes). The explanation of rules and roles are relevant finally (in the first-round group at each table chooses one host who stays at each table through all question rounds, everybody takes the markers and doodles and draws on the table cloth, every comment is documented or visualized on



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)

the table cloth etc.). Then the group is asked to find themselves up at different tables before the first round of question starts.

2.2. First round of questions

The first round of questions is beginning, and answers are getting documented in one colour (e.g. green). Answers to the questions get exchanged and documented on the table cloth (using symbols and graphics, not only words is encouraged). At the end of the 1st question round each participant is asked to look for a new table with a new group of participants (e.g. students). Only the selected host stays at the same table to brief the newcomers.

2.3. Second round of questions

Before the second question is presented, the host presents the main answers from the first round of reflection (only 2 minutes to wrap up). Meanwhile, moderators take the green markers from the table and exchange it with a new colour (e.g. red). Then the second question is presented to the participants. The reflections on answers related to the second question get then documented by the participants in a different colour (e.g. red). At the end of the second question round each participant is asked to look for a new table with a new group of participants. Only the selected host stays at the same table to brief again the newcomers.

2.4. Third round of questions

Before the third question is presented, the host presents the main answers from the second round of reflection (only 2 minutes to wrap up). Meanwhile, moderators take the red markers from the table and exchange it with a new colour (e.g. blue). Then the third and last question is presented to the participants. The reflections on answers related to the third question get then documented by the participants in a different colour (e.g. blue).

3. Reflection of findings

3.1. Summarising main findings

The hosts at each table are asked to give a synthesis of the main answers on each question at their table. The results are documented in a mind map (on a pin board or flipchart).

3.2. Reflection on main steps forward

It is important to reflect on how to make use of the information collected or how to move forward as a next step. The momentum that is created provides the opportunity to become well documented and to make use of (e.g. through the realisation of the ideas or further planning steps).

Local Economic Development Forum in a city (and in a Student) for a reflection on Local Economic Development

The following examples come from a Summer Academy on Economic Development in Germany for experts and practitioners and from a student course at the SEPT Master Course in Germany. In both events the main topic to reflect on is local economic development (LED). The logic of the World Café was oriented to

- 1) Identify common knowledge on what LED is all about
- 2) Reflect about key challenges in LED in a respective city/place
- 3) Identify key success criteria for LED

Designing a pin board with main objectives of the World Café and application of examples (if existing)

Students and local practitioners were provided examples of the use of the World Café in different projects and local events in the world. Along this board also the objectives of the world café logic were explained. Stressing out the logic of making the informal talk formal is a key aspect of the World Café as well as making use of common knowledge and getting to know each other through discussing and reflecting on concrete targeted questions.



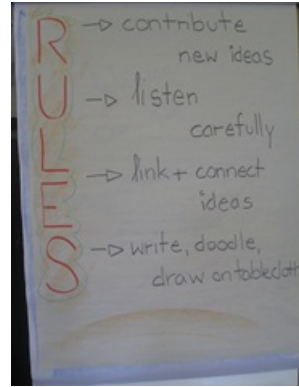
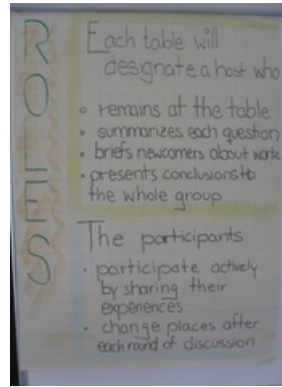
Description of the rules and roles of the World Café sequence
In the local city workshop/training the description of the main rules and roles were provided. This can be done on a pin board, flipchart or on a



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)

PowerPoint. Presenting it in a nice visualised way encourages the participants to also visualise on the table cloths and to make use of symbols while jointly reflecting.



Presentation of one question after the other in the sequence



World Café exercise with students at SEPT

1. What are key differences in the prerequisites for an SME from your region compared to an SME in Germany?
2. Which support structures & organisations play a decisive role to enable or disable the economic development of a business/sector in countries?
3. What is required to promote creative local economic development for SMEs in your location of origin?



In a local economic development event with stakeholders a pin board to demonstrate the questions was used while in a student class a PowerPoint was used to present the three questions in a sequence.

Summarising the discussions from the different round tables

A mind map is a good way to document the main findings of the discussions. The hosts are asked to come up with their main important findings which are then documented directly on the mind map. It provides a good joint reflection of the large group.



Example of application



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)



The summary reflection provides a good overview of the overall discussion. But each tablecloth table also entails many additional information. In a conference, these additional findings can be documented in a written format or photographed as documentation.



The events with the World Café are organised by very different stakeholders in very different communities. In large public events, the core group who organises the World Café should make sure to have a number of moderators with them who visit the different tables and who make sure that people are not only talking but also documenting their reflections on the tablecloths.



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)

Templates, Graphics for download	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The web page for the World Café Community provides many detailed information: http://www.theworldcafe.com • A short description of the World Café - Handout Mesopartner: Handout World Cafe.pdf • An LED Café Handbook in which the World Café format is used in the context of promoting local economic development with local stakeholders: https://de.scribd.com/document/158640382/The-LED-Cafe-and-Stone-Soup-Tale-English
Additional format/references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good video on key criteria and sequence for a World Café: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0d0Gybq-l0 • An application of the World Café in class: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ODLvTBvKow • Recommended blogs can be found on theworldcafe.com page http://www.theworldcafe.com/blog with the provision of deeper insights and application examples. • Accessible professional graphics can be find here: http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/image-bank/book-images/

🕒Revision #2

★Created 9 September 2021 09:00:49 by Petra Riedinger

✎Updated 5 August 2022 06:47:12 by Admin



African Centre for Career Enhancement & Skills Support (Access)

[Terms of Use](#)