

Tool 50: A Change of Scene

Aim of the tool

To foster reflection, productivity and the collaborative capacity of a diverse group.

When to use it?

Convergence stage, when decisions need to be made about which ideas could work, but is also suitable in other stages. This tool is especially useful at times when the positive group energy and input diminishes.

Why propose a Change of Scene?

Working together for hours asks a lot from participants. To stay inspired and keep up the good energy, it can be fruitful to look for formats which shake up the routine and add novelty to the process. By taking people out of the meeting environment, changing the setting and bringing in new elements, 'a change of scene' is a tool which internalises the power of a refreshing break.

Especially before major decisions or breakthroughs are made, it can be useful to do something completely different like going on an excursion, field visit or do reflection walks. It refreshes the mind and gives people time to ponder over the implications of decisions.

Change of Scene - Step by step

An interesting example of changing the scene is to organize a 'walkshop'. IDS introduced this concept to refer to the process of 'taking a workshop outside and on the move'. They found out that leaving the table - as well as letting go for a moment of the coordinating roles and hierarchies - often leads to astonishing results. In different forms it also seemed a tested approach worldwide.



By taking people outside and encouraging them to walk or wander in small groups, participants seem to feel inspired to open up their mind and dare to come up with innovative and radical ideas. Besides the anecdotal evidence, there is also scientific proof that (even indoors) walking increased creative thinking up to 60%. On top of that, participants at the IDS walkshops also acknowledged inspiration by walking in a beautiful landscape.

A facilitator can prepare a change of scene by putting five or six questions for discussion on laminated cards which small, loosely defined groups can take with them on a predefined route. When a line of thought or interaction has run its course, group composition can be adjusted and discussion cards exchanged.

Depending on the aim of the tool and time constraints, a change of scene typically lasts between 20 minutes and half a day. Even a change of scene of 20 minutes can drastically improve the decision making process.

When the schedule allows, a half or full day excursion can be organised to visualize and share reflections on the characteristics and possibilities of the issue at stake.

Learn more

Leach, Melissa (for Steps Centre/IDS, 2014). The Wonders of Walkshops. [blogpost](#)

Original: Stanford study finds walking improves creativity: <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/xlm-a0036577.pdf>