Study Visit

A Study Visit is a guided visit to a location outside the participants' usual environment, allowing them to explore new approaches, projects, or solutions firsthand. Participants experience real-world examples, exchange observations, and discuss how ideas or measures could be adapted to their own context.
Study Visits are particularly effective for making complex topics more tangible. Instead of discussing plans or concepts in theory, participants can experience existing places directly and reflect on them together.
The method is commonly used in urban development, mobility, public space design, and climate adaptation projects.

Participation Depth	Participate
Project Phase	Concept Development
Goals	Exchange & Discourse
Format	Analogue
Duration	1 - 3 Hours, 1 Day
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public
Group Size	Small Group up to 15
Characteristics	Playful, Activating

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of a Study Visit is to explore new perspectives, approaches, and examples while reflecting on them collectively. Experiencing places firsthand often leads to more concrete discussions and generates new ideas for participants' own projects or planning processes. The method encourages knowledge exchange and establishes a shared basis for further discussions and decision-making.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Materials

- tickets or transportation (if required)
- information materials
- notebooks and writing materials
- cameras or tablets for documentation (optional)
- audio systems for larger groups (optional)
- refreshments for longer study visits

2. Define the objective and select the location

Begin by considering:

- What should participants learn or take away from the visit?
- What is the central question?
- Which location best illustrates the topic?

Examples include:

- successful traffic calming measures
- the redesign of a public square
- a participatory project in another neighbourhood
- innovative mobility solutions

3. Appoint a Study Visit Leader
Assign a person who will:

- accompany the group
- provide information
- answer questions
- facilitate discussions

Ideally, this person has:

- subject-specific expertise
- knowledge of the location
- experience facilitating groups

4. Plan the itinerary
Define:

- the route and meeting points
- the schedule and breaks
- discussion sessions

Ensure that:

- sufficient time is available for discussion
- walking distances are realistic
- the programme does not become overloaded with too many stops

5. Check accessibility
Review the following:

- accessibility of routes
- availability of seating
- access to restrooms
- accessibility by public transport

Important:

All participants should be able to take part in the Study Visit without unnecessary barriers.

6. Prepare background information
Prepare concise and easy-to-understand information about:

- the location
- the project's objectives
- key characteristics or challenges
- central discussion questions

Helpful materials include:

- site maps
- photographs
- before-and-after examples

Execution

1. Welcome and Introduction
At the beginning of the visit, the facilitation team explains:

- the purpose of the Study Visit
- the itinerary and route
- guidelines for discussion

Helpful prompts include:

- "Pay attention to how this place is used."
- "Which aspects could be relevant for your own project?"
- "Where do you notice similarities or differences?"

2. Guided Site Visit
The group visits the different locations together.

During the visit:

- background information is provided
- observations are collected
- participants ask questions
- experiences and impressions are shared

The facilitation team can encourage discussion with prompts such as:

- "How does this place make you feel?"
- "Which user groups seem to have been considered here?"
- "What works particularly well from your perspective?"
- "Where do you see challenges or opportunities for improvement?"

3. Exchange and Discussion
During or after the individual stops, participants have time to discuss their observations.

Possible discussion topics include:

- transferability to their own project
- potential challenges
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opportunities

- different perspectives

Depending on the group size, discussions in small groups may be beneficial.

4. Closing Reflection
At the end of the visit, the group reflects on the key insights.

For example:

- What did you find most interesting?
- Which ideas should be explored further?
- Which questions remain unanswered?

The results can be documented immediately using maps, flipcharts, or other visual materials.

Evaluation

1. Document the Results
Document:

- key insights
- discussion points
- photographs
- ideas and proposals

The documentation should be made available to all participants.

2. Use the Findings
The results can:

- inform future participation processes
- provide the basis for workshops
- support political discussions
- inspire new project ideas

Source: https://mobilitaetsplanung-hessen.de/methodenkoffer-partizipative-planung/

WHEN USEFUL?

- practical examples should be presented
- inspiration for future projects is needed
- addressing spatial or design-related topics
- making discussions more concrete and accessible
- different stakeholders should gain shared experiences

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- no suitable examples or locations are available
- the sole purpose is to make decisions
- there is insufficient time for discussion and reflection
- the organisational effort cannot be accommodated

TIPS

- Allow sufficient time for discussion and spontaneous questions.
- Fewer stops with more in-depth discussion are often more valuable than an overloaded programme.
- Ensure that participants—not only experts—have the opportunity to share their observations.
- Use real places and practical examples rather than abstract presentations.
- If appropriate, combine the Study Visit with other methods such as workshops or discussion sessions.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- rapid decision-making processes
- topics without a spatial or practical context
- groups with significantly limited mobility if suitable arrangements cannot be provided
- projects where no discussion or reflection is intended

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/exkursion