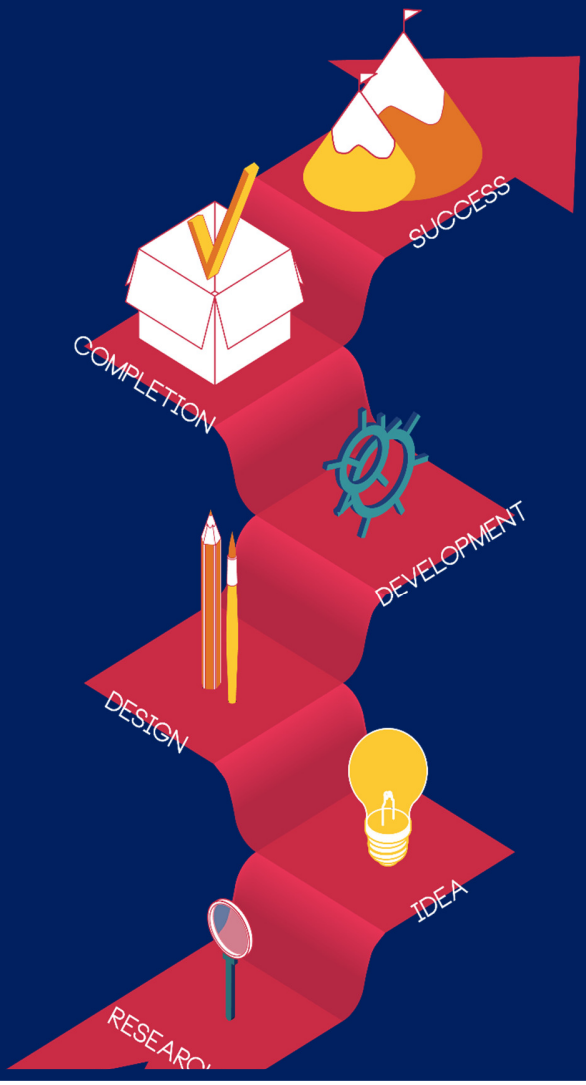

SOCS

IO2 Toolset for Team Development

Under Construction Tool (Face-to-face implementation)

Institute Polytechnic of Porto

2.9.2020

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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Title	*Under Construction*
Project result ***Intellectual Output 2 (IO2)***	The UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool uses symbols and a specific process to facilitate groups to visualize many uncovered aspects, as well as dealing with explicit tasks and goals. The symbols and resources of this tool give the team an additional language and a unique manner to interpret and communicate issues as: team's self-awareness, communication, recreation, co-creation, self-efficacy, empowerment, performance, or entrepreneurship, among others. This tool is adequate to: ▪ *Develop the team itself* Facilitating the team to work with all kind of issues, topics, problems, needs, potentials, such as team building; team conflicts; team roles; team communication; team workflow and work organization; team motivation; team goal setting; team cohesion; team engagement and commitment; developing new competencies within the team, cross-team cooperation; etc.) ▪ *Develop team work content* Facilitating the teamwork on specific and concrete work content issues/ tasks, such as creating a new product, generating new ideas, planning work, etc.
Description	After the definition of the topic to be dealt with in the session, with the materials (different types of symbols) the team should built their perspective on the defined topic, and then each member presents it. The self and team awareness and the open communication channel should lead to a joint agreement upon action.
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About the *Under Construction* Tool

Working with others is a natural feature of human activity. It's common in our daily life, both in formal and informal contexts, to collaborate with people, and to have common goals with others. However, this task is not always easy! Problems arise from several and different sources and reasons… functional, principles and values, emotions, perceptions… But even when there are no problems in team work, we do not always make the most of the full potential of each other, despite being in a collaboration and common focused mode!

This team development tool relies on the basic assumption that every team, notwithstanding the context, the moment or its development stage (forming, storming, norming or performing) is always UNDER CONSTRUCTION. New challenges stand up continuously both from teams' internal and external factors, both from direct and indirect factors. Moreover, these (positive or negative perceived) challenges appear not all times in an explicit way.

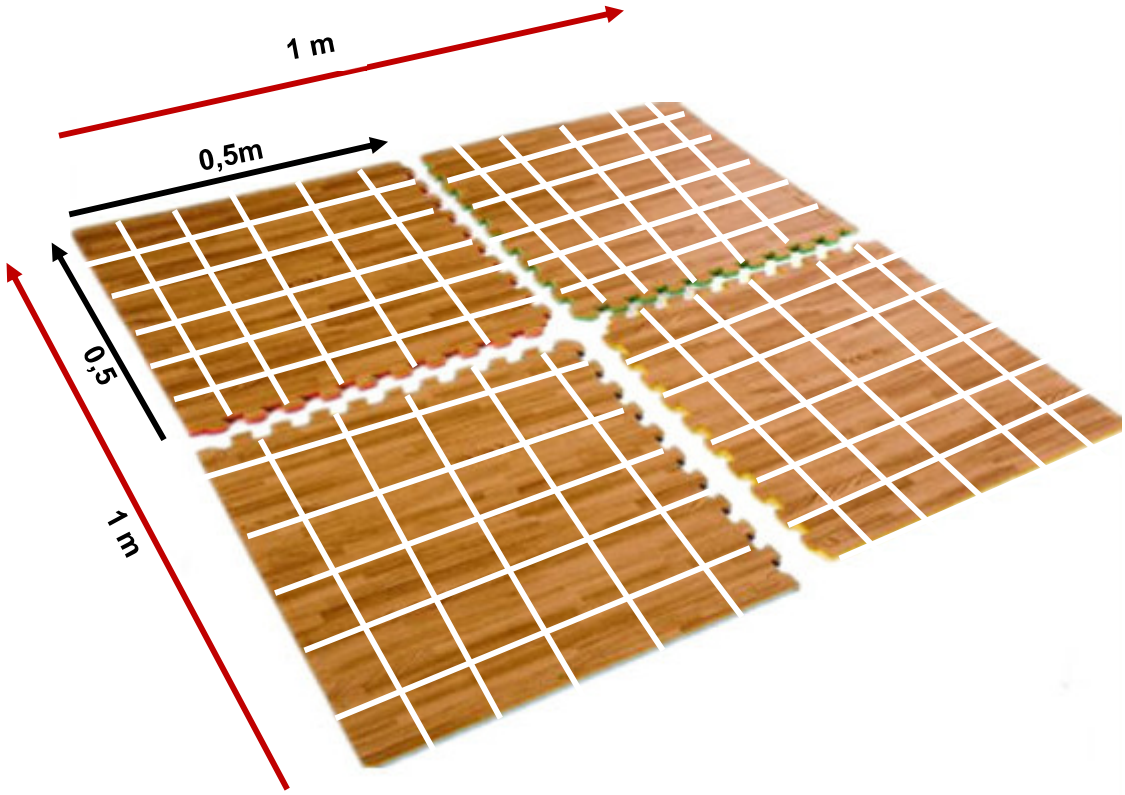
The UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool is a resource - which using symbols and a specific process – facilitates groups to visualize many uncovered aspects, as well as dealing with explicit tasks and goals. Teams' self-awareness, communication, recreation, co-creation, self-efficacy, empowerment, performance, or entrepreneurship are some of the issues that the UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool may exemplarily work with. Designed for use with all types of teams, this intervention set presents several alternative paths to better adapt to different situations. Materials enable all kinds of scenarios and enhance the co-construction and co-expression of different and shared perceptions, both evoking past elements and looking to the future. The symbolic field and resources of this tool give the team an additional language and a unique manner to interpret and communicate.

This tool is adequate to:

- *Develop the team itself*
  Facilitating the team to work with all kind of issues, topics, problems, needs, potentials, such as team building; team conflicts; team roles; team communication; team workflow and work organisation; team motivation; team goal setting; team cohesion; team engagement and commitment; developing new competencies within the team, cross-team cooperation; etc)
- *Develop team work content*
  Facilitating the teamwork on specific and concrete work content issues/ tasks, such as creating a new product, generating new ideas, planning work, etc

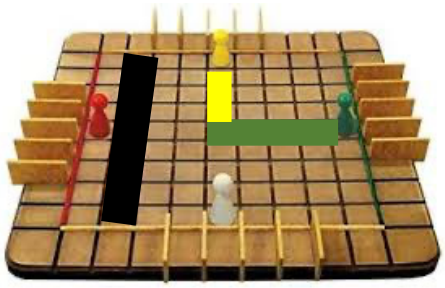
Materials needed

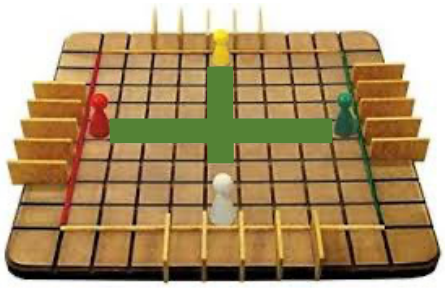
- **4 ultra-light checkered square boards** (each 0,5m x 0,5m = total 1m X 1m, 1 cm high) made out of balsa/cardboard**,** which may be combined in countless ways to guarantee a high potential of symbolic representation for the client: a single square, two, three or four separate squares, some interlinked and some separated, in sequence or any other configuration. Each square itself is divided into small squares, which may be valued for the figurative image or not. The big 1m x 1m square, each medium square or each small square may stand for different physical or virtual spaces, areas, rooms, organisations, systems,…). The dimension is ideal to be built in the floor and to sit around it.

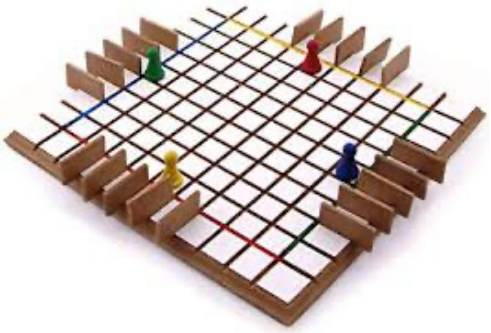


- **Different types of floors** (smooth, rough, slippery, regular, irregular, and of more neutral colours and others more vivid and shinning), which may be placed in the board with velcro fabrics (in all board or in small parts of the board)

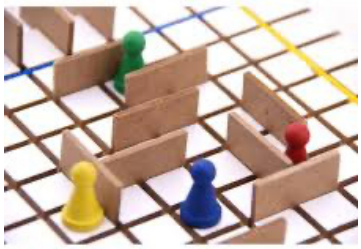
Preschool







- **48 wooden planks (or domino pieces or others pieces of games that can stand)** that fit anywhere on the board and can be placed downwards or upwards or just lying down. Planks may stand for spaces, limits, connecters, and they may represent a room, a wall, a door, a bridge, a road, …)



- **Tokens standing for people** (20 in total – 5 of each color: 4 smaller and 1 bigger)

- **A set with a variety of small symbols** to add additional richness to the tool language and wider the expression potential.

- **Hourglass or chronometer (20 minutes)** to facilitate time management in the symbolic construction phase.

Session facilitator

This tool can be used by both professional consultants or by the team by itself. In this case, the team has to select a team member to facilitate the tool dynamic.

In the case of professional consultants, it is highly recommended to work with 2 facilitators, mainly if teams include more than 3 people. One facilitator assumes the session dynamic actively and the other observes and intervenes in the factual questions, perception and interpretation phase 7.

Presetting (for the session facilitator)

- *Ensure a comfortable space where the tea fits conveniently;*
- *Set up an informal environment (for example, with cushions, puffs, tatami, carpets) with no barriers (like desks or tables), in order to allow to use the floor as the working basis;*

Steps to follow

1. Team Onboarding (up to 10 minutes)

- ***Team Welcome***

Settling in and arrangement: forming a sort of circle in a way there is eye contact between the team members and the consultant/s.
People should be comfortable and feel cozy.

- ***Intervention framing***
  a) Explain why the team is all there, the purpose and the terms of the consultancy request/invitation;
  b) Explain to the group that the intervention process is based on symbols and symbolic representation;
  c) Clarify that it's a client-centred approach, so it relies on the team what they want to express, to say, to decide
  d) The process requests trust, confidentiality, respect, and active listening;
  e) the intervention has an expected duration of one hour (depending on the number of team members).

> *The team is the "client" and therefore the ownership of the content and team dynamics is theirs, the power and the limits are the ones they establish*

- ***Tool presentation***
  Consultant presents the tool, explaining that the team has at their disposal these materials as resources to develop the intervention (the consultant should include himself in the process, using the term "we" as the referent. For example, "this is the material we will have as our main resource to work throughout the session…").

2. Topic Clarification (up to 15 minutes)

- Recall on the initial motive of this intervention presented before, and explain that this is only a broad scope that should be viewed just as a starting point for the concrete work of that session.

- At this moment challenge the team to think on a specific topic/ goal/ theme/situation within this starting frame, which they would like to work in this particular session, that is limited by time.

  During this phase, all team members are welcome to propose the topic/ goal/ theme/situation to use in this intervention, and the team should discuss in order to agree upon / understand what the topic/ goal/ theme/situation is going to be.

> *Highlight that there are endless issues that may be explored within the defined scope. In this phase, the team should decide one topic to be worked on today; it is not to determine what is the central issue within the topic initially mentioned. Tomorrow is another day…*
>
> *The facilitator gives space to the team, lets the team dynamic flow, and at a certain point, he/she facilitates pragmatism, specification, delimitation, boundaries, and limits settlement till achieving a very specific and limited topic/ goal/ theme/situation.*

- In the end, enunciate the topic out loud and validate it before going forward. *It is very important that the topic/ goal/ theme/situation is clearly defined and globally understood.*

3. Construction of the Team View on the Topic (up to 30 minutes)

- ***Guidelines***

a) Invite the team to represent the defined topic using the symbolic materials of the UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool, not words.

b) *They may use all the materials at their disposal:*
- regarding ground UNDER CONSTRUCTIION: the 4 ultra-light checkered square boards, the ddifferent types of "floors", the wooden planks (or domino pieces or others pieces of games that can stand), and the tokens (standing for people).
- and can also use the small symbols.

> *The intention of the construction is to facilitate interaction, discussion and not to have a "beautiful and perfect construction"!*

c) Ask to set the hourglass/ chronometer on (*(about 25 minutes)*.
.

OPTIONAL: You may consider limiting the number of symbols to be used to add some pressure on the team debate.

- ***Construction***

The team is for this period UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

Professional consultants should leave the room (with the other consultant) while the is in the UNDER CONSTRUCTION period.
A team member in the facilitator role should act as normally would in any other team meeting.

4. “Team Presentation” (up to 10 minutes)

a) Ask the team to verbalize the topic that was UNDER CONSTRUCTION during the last 25 minutes;

b) The team (through a spokesperson or in a shared manner, as the team freely decides) explains the CONSTRUCTION developed, describing the symbolic material disposition.

c) During the presentation, observe and listen very carefully to the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the presentation and the team dynamic. All the facts that occurred during the presentation stage (and only then!!) matter!

Professional consultants should not intervene in any way while the team is in the *PRESENTATION* period.

A team member in the facilitator role should act as normally would in any other team meeting.

5. (OPTIONAL) Extra CONSTRUCTION (up to 10 minutes)

a) The facilitator can invite each member of the team to choose one symbol by him/herself, to add to the team CONSTRUCTION

b) Then invite one person at a time to place his/her symbol in the team construction and to briefly explain the symbolic meaning (so brief as four sentences or half a minute);

No further instruction is given to the participants, the counsellor should keep this instruction general.

c) The consultant explains how the next phases will be for the client.

6. Analysis and Feedback (for professional facilitators) (up to 30 minutes)

- ***Factual questions***

a) These 'factual questions' regard step 4 "Team Presentation" and step 5 (optional) Extra CONSTRUCTION

b) Ask if someone "didn't hear", or "didn't understand", or "would like to hear again" the explanation of any other member about the added symbols
These questions are only factual questions
Only questions about what was precisely said are allowed. Questions are asked directly to the team member who talked and only him/her answer.

No interpretation or explorative questions like: why, or can you talk more about, etc.

c) During all this process, the external facilitator should never touch the construction and its symbols.

d) Sometimes, there is no need of this step, because there are no doubts.

- ***Perception***

Perceptions regard exclusively to what has been heard and observed (verbal and nonverbal aspects). Only facts matter! (E.g. "I saw…", "I heard that…", "I noticed that…")

Address the team directly, saying what you've perceived from the (team and individuals) CONSTRUCTION presentation, as well as from the team dynamic during the presentation.

During the duration of this process, team members just listen and are not permitted to intervene in any sense.

- ***Interpretation***

Include perspectives on reasons, on facts, on consequences and impacts, on solutions, on emotions, on difficulties,… of what you saw and heard before.

One professional consultant
Adress the team directly, saying what you interpreted from what you saw and heard during the CONSTRUCTION(s) and presentation(s) steps, including the team dynamic.

This step is after the perception. The facilitator first says what he/she perceived and then interpret – do not mix!

Two professional consultants

Talk to each other as if the team was not hearing you. Do not address the team or any team member (verbally nor seeking eye contact)

During the duration of this process, team members just listen to colleagues and don't explain or justify what others are saying about them /the team dynamics, including the facilitator.

- ***Feedback and potential changes***

a) Ask the team members for feedback about how and what they felt when they heard those comments.

b) Help the team to (re)conceptualize the process, by rephrasing their ideas, supporting them to get to a clearer picture of the situation under analysis.

At this point, the team achieved a higher level of clarification on the topic.

c) Ask the team if they would like to make any change to their CONSTRUCTION (and when the individual symbols option is being applied, also to the individual symbol or the placement of the symbols). If they do, they should explain.

6. Analysis and Feedback (for team member facilitators) (up to 30 minutes)

- ***Factual questions***

a) These 'factual questions' regard step 3 "Construction of the Team view on the Topic", step 4 "Team Presentation" and step 5 (optional) Extra CONSTRUCTION

b) Ask if someone "didn't hear", or "didn't understand", or "would like to hear again" the explanation of any other member about the explanation of the individual added symbol
These questions are only factual questions
Only questions about what was precisely said are allowed! Questions are asked directly to the team member who talked and only him/her answer.

No interpretation or explorative questions like: why, or can you talk more about, etc.

c) Sometimes, there is no need of this step, because there are no doubts.

- ***Perception***

Perceptions regard exclusively to what has been heard and observed (verbal and nonverbal aspects). Only facts matter! (E.g. "I saw…", "I heard that…", "I noticed that…")

Ask the team what they "saw", "heard", "noticed" from the (team and individuals) CONSTRUCTION presentation, as well as from the team dynamic during the presentation.

During the duration of this process, team members just listen to colleagues and don't explain or justify what others are saying about them /the team dynamics, including the facilitator.

- ***Interpretation***

Include perspectives on reasons, on facts, on consequences and impacts, on solutions, on emotions, on difficulties,… of what you saw and heard before.

Ask the team to try to explain what they saw and heard during the CONSTRUCTION(s) and presentation(s) steps, including the team dynamic.

The team facilitator can either be the 1st or the last to speak his/her mind. Whatever flows!

This step is after the perception. Both the facilitator and the team first address what you perceived and then interpret – do not mix!

- ***Feedback and potential***

a) Ask the team members for feedback about how and what they felt when they heard those comments.

b) Help the team to (re)conceptualize the process, by rephrasing their ideas, supporting them to get to a clearer picture of the situation under analysis. Ask the team if they would like to make any change to their CONSTRUCTION (and when the individual symbols option is being applied, also to the individual symbol or the placement of the symbols). If they do, they should explain.

At this point, the team achieved a higher level of clarification on the topic.

7. Agreement on Actions (up to 10 minutes)

Discuss and agree on which actions / steps to take to support the team to reach its goal.

The consultant/ team facilitator and team should agree on very concrete actions.

In the end, the team should be committed to the agreed actions.