



ISPSO 34th Annual Meeting, Copenhagen 3rd - 9th July 2017: Dreams always take place: Spaces, Places, Rooms, and Furniture, inside and around us

PARALLEL PAPERS III
SATURDAY 8th JULY 1100-1215
ROOM II - 7.0.08

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Location, location, location: How a high flying British civil servant claims his leadership learning was transformed and accelerated, because he was coached in different places, spaces, rooms and cultural reference points.

This Thought Leadership Paper was inspired by a coaching client who chose to have his next coaching session at the National Portrait Gallery in London, UK, 'because I'm all about people.' He then failed to turn up.

Through an in depth interview with a former lawyer, now civil servant for the British government, this paper examines the experience and outcomes of coaching in 5 different non-office based public spaces, in London. It takes both a client, coach and a psychoanalytic perspective.

The case study explores how each location contributed significantly (according to the client), to him achieving greater authenticity as a leader. The spaces - art galleries, a riverside view, a public library, green open space - revealed almost without means of escape, deeply held patterns of destructive behaviour. They enabled connection for the client with his 'wild side' and self-analysis about unhealthy attachments he and others around him may have.

The paper builds on a body of empirical work spanning 10 years, coaching clients in multiple locations.

I argue that coaching in different locations, including walking-and-talking sessions, has the potential to stimulate more creative, challenging, deeper self-reflection for leaders and their organisations. It could also be said that coaching in multiple and public locations, risks distracting from the task of business coaching; it could compromise the professionalism of the coach-client relationship;

it could also serve to cover up poor coaching technique.

Coaching in interesting spaces may serve or even accelerate the client's learning but what are the potential considerations for the coach? This paper examines the unconscious drives for both client and coach, stimulated by location e.g. power, avoidance of boredom, notions of incoming love, sexual risk, and risk to the degree of challenge offered by the coach. It considers how location could compromise ethical best practise and how the choice of location is made.

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