Wageningen
Dialogue

A hands-on navigator to explore why, when and how to engage with dialogue in research for more impact in society.

Conversation purposes

- Connecting
- Creating understanding
- Differences & plurality
- Converging
- Evaluating
- Sharing insights

Conversation types

- Dialogue
- Deliberation
- Debate
- Discussion

Conversation tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent

- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all

Building blocks

- Mutual Respect
- Inclusivity, diversity
- Listening
- Transparency
- Critical reflection
- Dealing with conflict

List of References

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Introduction

This Dialogue Navigator is developed to truly navigate you through the potential of dialogue. It shows which purposes conversations can serve, it gives insights in the differences between dialogue and debate, and offers hands-on tools and insightful working principles to organise or participate in effective dialogues. So do you want to organise your own Wageningen Dialogue? Or do you want to find out what dialogue can mean for you? Explore this navigator or get in touch with wageningen.dialogue@wur.nl to discover the support in place to stimulate dialogue at Wageningen University & Research

From knowledge supplier to knowledge partner

This navigator helps you with hands-on tools to be a knowledge partner and not only a knowledge provider. Traditionally, researchers deliver evidence and provide valuable information to create solutions that society can use. However, many of today's complex challenges cannot be solved by experts alone. It requires co-operation between complementary scientists and with relevant stakeholders from society.

Dialogue increases science's impact

Bringing together cross-cutting evidence and contrasting viewpoints results in a more complete picture. **Interaction between different stakeholders invites us to build upon each other's expertise and often leads to new insights and knowledge.** Knowledge that no single expert could have developed on its own. By searching for answers together with others, science increases its impact and can better meet society's needs.

When is dialogue useful?

Scientists excel in convincing others and conveying your ideas or evidence. They typically use public engagement, seminars, or discussions for this. But what to do if you aim for active collaboration and interaction with different stakeholders? This requires a genuine interest in the other person's views. In addition, you must be prepared to identify new ways of approaching an issue. **If this is the case, dialogue is the way to go.**

So, before jumping in, ask yourself the question: *what is my intention to engage in dialogue?* And, second: *what do I want to achieve?*
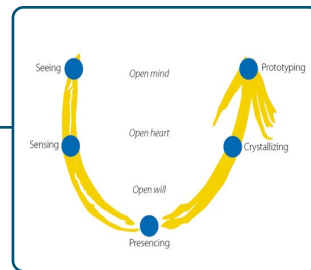
True listening, true understanding

In Theory U, Learning from the future as it emerges, Otto Scharmer (MIT) elaborates on the need for people to listen to each other. He points out the methods to develop the appropriate skills and attitude to do so. True listening, and true understanding, is a gateway to transformative change. Also for science.

Learn and develop dialogue skills

You can learn and develop dialogue and deliberation skills. Dialogue focuses on resolving a problem rather than to win a standpoint or to convince others. Deliberation is a meaningful exchange of arguments. Both are not easy, as former Wageningen University & Research professor Noëlle Aarts pointed out in her inaugural lecture The art of dialogue[1]. According to Aarts, people apply all kinds of rhetorical strategies to convince others, often with polarising effects. She argued that we need to develop 'conversational responsibility'. For you, it means to be sensitive about your assumptions and the consequences of the way you formulate sentences. **Your 'language' has real effects on decisions that are ultimately taken at different (governmental) levels.**

Dialogue as a process

There are many ways to interact with society. Large-scale multi-stakeholder processes can last months or years. But interaction can also be short – between two people or even in a 'inner dialogue'. Dialogue-based approaches often encompass more than a one-off event. They refer to ongoing processes of the construction of meaning and sensemaking. **Each dialogue-based intervention has impact on the situation** and may alter it. Length and frequency of engagement therefore need to match the goals of the process. Outcomes are highly dependent on the amount of time available, circumstances and context.

Methods and tools for every stage of the process

Fortunately, **there are dialogue-based methods and tools available for every stage of the research process** - from identifying new research topics to monitoring & evaluation and everything in between. Methods include almost always oral and written exchanges. But visual and creative techniques can also help you to explore what is needed.

Community of Practice

Do you want to bring science-society interaction to a higher level? Our Dialogue Community of Practice brings together all those who want to share and strengthen their expertise. Together, we generate new insights and knowledge and find new answers.

Wageningen University & Research has a growing group of experienced facilitators with complementary expertise in designing and facilitating dialogue-based processes.
They form a Facilitators Pool and are eager to share their experiences. Together with curious explorers and 'dialogue-skilled' colleagues across our organisation they form a true community of practice around dialogue. Do not hesitate to reach out wageningen.dialogue@wur.nl

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Dialogue Navigator Tool

You may be wondering if a dialogue-based approach is appropriate for your specific project or process. Based on this Navigator we have developed an online tool that can help you assess the situation and determine your next step.

Scanning through this Navigator first may help you to get an idea of the possibilities of dialogue.

Wageningen Dialogue

Conversation purposes

When does it make sense to engage in a conversation? And what type of interaction to opt for? The answers really depend on the entry-point or challenge at stake. In general, dialogues are most useful for topics characterised by[2]:

• multiple stakeholders and stakes;
• diverse interests, assumptions and perspectives;
• no single-bullet solutions;
• an unpredictable, uncontrollable and constantly changing context.

This chapter summarises the different purposes you could have with engaging in a conversation and can help you to decide when to use dialogue.

Long-term change processes

Are you dealing with a long-term change process? You can consider the following conversation purposes as a sequence of stages in which dialogue can be useful as a form of conversation. Consecutively: making the first connections, finding common ground, exploring solutions, converging for joint action, evaluating and – eventually – starting a new cycle.

Note: you can also consider different purposes as standalone reasons to engage in a meaningful conversation.

6 conversation purposes

Connecting

Creating shared understanding

Navigating differences & plurality

Converging for joint action

Evaluating & starting again

Sharing Insights

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Purpose 1: Connecting

Dialogue is a very suitable conversation form for connecting people from different backgrounds. Is the situation complex? Are relations polarised? A dialogue can be the first step towards mutual trust as a basis for further cooperation.

Many of the topics we work on are highly complex. Depending of the disciplinary angle, the stake or vested interest, or even the cultural background, people can have different views on the issue. A good example is the future of Dutch farming. Ask a farmer, a citizen, an ecologist, a livestock expert, and a supermarket manager what the problem is, and you will get five different answers. Their stories are all valuable, and none can claim to hold the only truth. Probably, these five persons do not fully understand each other's viewpoint. How to navigate in such a polarised landscape? How to do meaningful science?

In situations like these, engaging in dialogue can initiate a first connection between different stakeholders. Exploring each other's viewpoints, experiences, and underlying values is a first step towards shared understanding and common ground.

Film as a tool for social dialogue

Under the title CineScience, Wageningen scientists select a film each month to be shown in the Heerenstraat Theatre. Based on this film, a scientist engages in a dialogue with the audience about his or her scientific domain and its social relevance. "It is a very accessible way to really talk with people outside your scientific bubble", notes Simone Ritzer, programme facilitator of Wageningen Dialogue.

"With CineScience, we offer a varied range of films together with the cinema. There are blockbusters among them, but also documentaries. Each film has a link to an area of science that the scientist wants to discuss with the audience. In *Goodfellas*, for example, it was about social relations and the role of food in this. In the Swedish film *Kitchen Stories*, it was really about consumer behaviour. And the documentary *Onder de oppervlakte (Beneath the Surface)*, the scientist highlighted the power struggle surrounding major infrastructural interventions such as the de-polderisation of Zeeland's Hedwigepolder.

Until COVID, we always had a sold-out cinema with Cine-Science. Some people come purely for the film, others are mainly interested in the theme the scientist wants to expose. And then there is the handful of loyal fans who come every month. Beforehand, the scientist explains the film and its interface with science. Afterwards, there is often an *aftertalk*. For researchers, this is the moment to really engage in a conversation with people who often look at the theme of the evening from very different perspectives. And science always benefits from being enriched by other perspectives."

Farm of the future

Imke de Boer: Circular agriculture, a good idea?

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True listening

True listening and appreciate the other's point of view is a pre-condition for establishing a connection. It brings a wealth of new insights that you could not have been achieved through conventional debates or seminars. A dialogue that aims to connect bypasses background conversations like 'find the flaw', 'right and wrong' and 'I already knew that'.

Read more about the building block Implicit hierarchy.

No need for agreement yet

In a dialogue that aims to connect, there is no need for agreement – yet. The purpose is to link, understand and connect. This can be at the level of knowledge, but also at the level of underlying values, emotions and experiences.

Marjan Wink,
teacher, skills trainer
and coach:

"A good dialogue starts with being honest with yourself"

"An important step prior to a good dialogue is: understand your own communication patterns. Do you want your opinion to be heard and do you stick to your own point of view, or are you prepared to suspend your opinion and take the time to really listen to another person? The latter is often difficult, especially for scientists who are experts in their field. The tendency to proclaim one's own opinion is often strong. Being a climate expert in conversation with a climate sceptic, you can easily be tempted to advocate your opinion as an expert. The question is whether you will achieve your goal by doing this.

A good dialogue starts with being honest with yourself about the intentions you have in entering the conversation. These intentions strongly guide your actions. If you take the time to really hear why the other person has arrived at different insights, this will ensure safety in the conversation. A sense of togetherness may arise. David Bohm, one of the founding fathers of True Dialogues, once demonstrated the beauty of dialogues he conducted on the border between Israel and Palestine. The groups on both sides of the border disagreed about where the border should be, but from the awareness that they essentially wanted the same thing, a common undertow emerged from which even friendships were born."

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Birgit Boogaard, Lecturer at the Knowledge Technology and Innovation Group (KTI):

"Dialogue should be about being truthful to yourself"

"The key towards an effective and respectful dialogue is the ability to truly listen to the other. This requires participants in a dialogue to let go of the desire to change or convince the other. Thus, a dialogue should be about being truthful to yourself about your own assumptions and primacies. An example that has inspired me in my work to date is intercultural philosopher Heinz Kimmerle (1930-2016). When he worked as Professor of Philosophy at Erasmus University Rotterdam, he was invited to teach philosophy at African universities. He responded to his African colleagues and students that he would like to provide lectures to them about Western philosophy, but first wanted to learn from them: about African philosophy. Subsequently, he engaged in intercultural dialogues with his African colleagues. He was highly aware of his European background and had a very respectful and modest position towards his African colleagues. In doing so, he showed respect, created an equal level playing field, and opened the way for an open exchange on philosophy that recognized the knowledge of African scholars, while he also gained new insights in his own work. To read more about Kimmerle's dialogical approach, read this: "Kimmerle (2012): Dialogues as form of intercultural philosophy"

Quote from interview with Birgit Boogaard, teaching African Philosophy at Wageningen University.

Resource-online

Two sides: a journalistic approach to promote dialogue

The answer to the big questions of our time is seldom clear-cut. WUR's independent medium for staff and students, Resource, therefore started the series 'Two sides' in which two people with different views on a complex issue engage in dialogue. The concept is simple: Two seemingly opposites converse on a specific topic within the Wageningen domain or on an issues at our institute and a journalists writes it up. The purpose of neither the conversation nor the article is to come to a clear cut solution, but to explore each other's viewpoints and find out what knowledge and values lie behind both side's arguments. Through this connection further dialogue may follow. Or you may agree to disagree.

Check out some of the articles on agricultural policy, bio-energy and the impact of collaboration with industry.

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Purpose 2: Creating shared understanding

Establishing a degree of mutual agreement requires an open conversation where participants listen to one another and open up to each other's perspectives. Dialogue and deliberation are suitable conversation types for creating better mutual understanding.
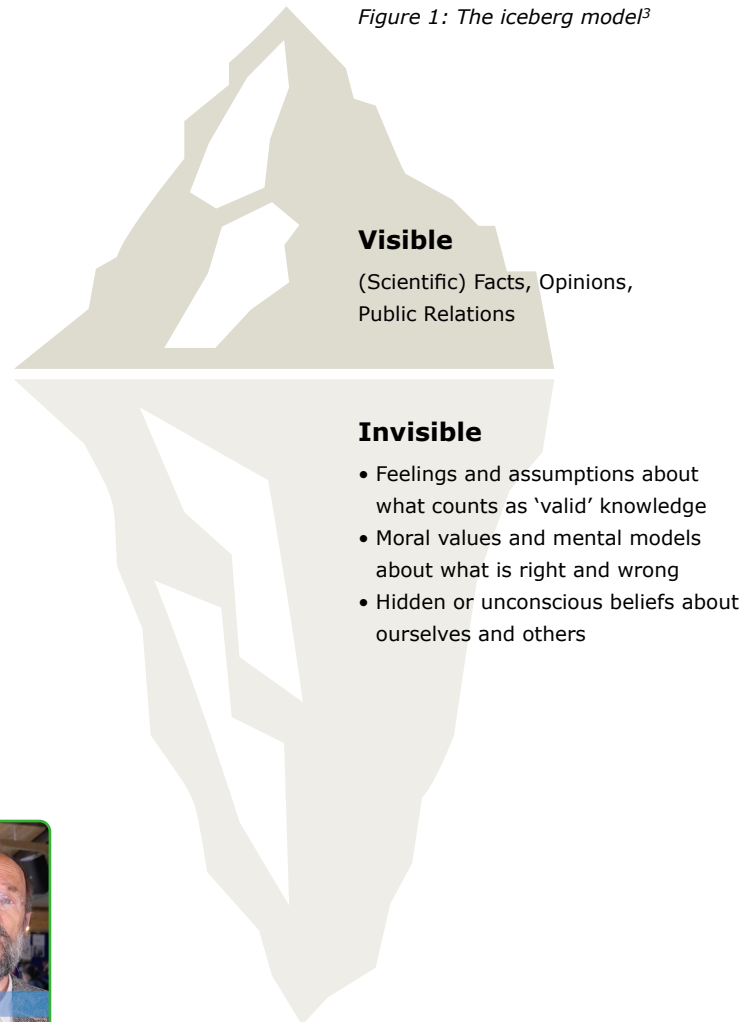
Connecting is a good basis to **build mutual trust**. Particularly between conflicting stakeholders. In the case of the future of Dutch farming: the conventional farmer and the ecologist. Once the first connection is established, the next step is to create shared understanding around the topic. Without this solid base of mutual trust and understanding, science risks to lose its legitimacy. This happened, for instance, in the case of GMO crops, the resistance against maga stables and the contestations on the future of the nature reserve *Oostvaardersplassen* in the Dutch province of Flevoland. These examples have in common that discussions about scientific facts and solutions are often underpinned by deeply rooted feelings, moral values and beliefs (see figure 1). When these underlying values are ill-understood or ignored, it is almost impossible to move forward.

Shared understanding can also be accomplished through **challenging assumptions** by people from different backgrounds, with different knowledge, viewpoints and stakes. It can avoid a continuous division between 'right' and 'wrong' and opens the door towards shared values.

In this clip a fellow scientist gives a testimony about what it can bring you if you open up to the viewpoints and underlying values of others.

Figure 1: The iceberg model[3]

Visible

(Scientific) Facts, Opinions, Public Relations

Invisible

- Feelings and assumptions about what counts as 'valid' knowledge
- Moral values and mental models about what is right and wrong
- Hidden or unconscious beliefs about ourselves and others

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Jeanne Nel,
senior researcher sustainable development:

"Don't ignore issues people raise"

Most of my work as a scientist has been around spatial planning in South Africa. This is about bringing people together. Not so much to learn from accumulated knowledge, but to think about joint roles, responsibilities and vision. One of the biggest issues in my work has always been bringing the water and biodiversity sectors together. In earlier days I was used to pack agendas of joint sessions full, so that we could show products when we came out. As a matured, I realised that – although results are important – the real value is about the connections you make and the relationships you build in the process. For that, one needs time. A wise professor once wrote about the importance of a certain kind of slowness. I have taken that to heart. I learned that oftentimes, the real connections and breakthroughs between opposing parties happen outside the formal agenda. That is why we used to leave a lot of space in the agenda. We made sure there was enough time to get together and connect.

In South Africa, the alignment of the water and biodiversity sector started with a small project wherein people just got to know each other. And then came a second project, built on the results of the first project. And so on. Some people moved along, where newcomers took their place and provided new momentum. Gradually, a core team of seven people had emerged, moving through the sector over the years and building new relationships. Over fifteen years, this network of trust has produced strategies that have been incorporated into both water legislation and environmental legislation. My advice to colleagues? First, be personal. Reaching out to people before the workshop, is paramount. It makes people feel special and you get heads up to what might be issues to facilitate in the meeting. Second, do not lazily stuff a workshop with speakers. Participants need so much time to really process thoughts. Third: the worst thing to do is to ignore issues people raise and just carry on. Be transparent on how you address these issues or why you do not address these. And last but not least: at the start of a project, a good framing is very important. Think carefully about who has to be at the table and who does not."

Energy Transition Dialogue

Question: How do we use social, technological and spatial knowledge to speed up the energy transition?

Process: Wageningen Energy Alliance invited more than 50 energy professionals – researchers, local and regional policy makers, energy providers, technology consultants - for an extended afternoon dialogue programme about this complex challenge. They day kicked off with a World Café with nine tables around three themes: build environment, electricity & agriculture and land use. In three rounds participants explored pressing questions, possible solutions and potential new collaborations for each topic.

Result:
- A **better grip** on the jumble of many different forms of infrastructure, generation and use.
- A **shared understanding** that not technology, but social acceptance is the biggest challenges to realizes the energy transition.
- Enhanced network and connections and more **clarity on the added value different parties have to offer**.

Source: Wageningen Dialogue

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Purpose 3: Navigating differences and plurality

Dissent can be as valuable as consensus: it reveals areas in which more research is needed. Dialogue, discussion and deliberation are useful conversation types to navigate differences and plurality in a safe space.

Dialogue, discussion and deliberation help to **explore unexpected concerns, dilemmas and unintended or unknown trade-offs** within a complex issue[4]. It may also provide access to new networks and entry-points for different knowledge. This knowledge would otherwise remain unknown or at least very difficult to access.

Open up to other fields of expertise

Navigating differences through dialogue is also relevant for those engaged in interdisciplinary research. This requires researchers to move beyond their own area of expertise and find common ground with other scientific disciplines to solve complex issues. Dialogue is an effective means to open up to other fields of expertise, as underlined by Philip MacNaghten (see next page). He demonstrates how focus group discussions with laymen can be used to explore citizen's concerns in relation to new radical technologies such as nanotechnology or synthetic biology.

Generate new solutions

Embracing diversity gives you an important advantage. By **combining existing opinions and viewpoints**, new, innovative solutions can arise. Solutions that would not have emerged by working in isolation. A dialogue can be seen as an open invitation to review one's own perspectives and assumptions in a safe way, without the risk of losing face or legitimacy. It is an open-ended reality check[5] that strengthens the original research idea, while also benefiting society.

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4] Welp et al. (2006).
5] de la Vega-Leinert A. (2003).

Philip Macnaghten, professor in knowledge, technology and innovation:

"Dialogue should happen before and during research"

"Scientists tend to think they know the answers. I encourage scientists to listen more carefully to people with other perspectives. Especially when it comes to important technological innovations that can have huge implications on our lives. Often, there is not much democracy involved in the early stage of these kind of innovations. I am particularly interested in the question of how to represent more layered voices from society in technological change. This does not mean that everybody must be involved, but I think we need to have a representation of social perspectives that together provide social intelligence.

One of the technological innovations that has a great impact on our university is the genetic modification of crops. As a university, we thought it was our role to convince society that new technology would be the solution for a lot of problems in the world, such as food security. This turned out to be a totally wrong-headed way of thinking, which led to social mistrust and alienation. It underlined the importance of engaging in dialogue with society at an early stage and recognising the legitimacy of concerns. To this day, this theme is causing tension in our university: Is it our role to convince society that we are right, or must we genuinely listen to others and be responsive to what is being said?

My advice to colleagues who want to organise a successful dialogue with societal actors? First: co-design. Do not just organise for society but involve society even before the dialogue starts: in defining the questions to be discussed. For a dialogue on genetic modification of crops, the typical way scientists tend to frame the issue is: 'Can it feed the world'? Key questions for society are: Can we prevent large producers from profiting from GM at the expense of smallholders? Will it drive agriculture into the hands of a few mighty companies? In short: can it be accomplished within democratic governance? By involving society in defining the problem, the wider questions of society can be integrated in the dialogue. And therefore, in science. Dialogue is not something that happens after research. It should happen before and during research. I always ask scientists: does dialogue change the science? If not, dialogue is just window dressing."

Focus group discussions to explore citizen's concerns about technology

As a counterweight to technocratic decision-making, anticipatory science makes active use of citizen's input to decision-making processes on contested issues related to new technologies. Phil Macnaghten, associate professor at Wageningen University, developed the 'upstream' model for public engagement. This model helps scientists to engage in exploratory conversations with citizens at a relatively early stage in the innovation process. The purpose of the dialogue or deliberation here is to scrutinise how an emerging technology is imagined by societal actors, to explore possible worlds, the social and ethical issues associated with them, and the factors that shape public concern. Examples of these technologies are nanotechnology, synthetic biology and climate geoengineering.

Read more
- Macnaghten, P. (2020). The Making of Responsible Innovation. *In Elements in Earth System Governance*. (especially chapters 3 and 4). Cambridge University Press.
- Stilgoe, J., Owen, R., & Macnaghten, P. (2013). Developing a framework for responsible innovation. *Research Policy*, 42(9), 1568–1580.

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Walter Fraanje, researcher and communications officer:

"We need to get to grips with the role of evidence and values in today's polarised discussions about food"

"TABLE is a food dialogue platform by Wageningen University & Research, Oxford University and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the successor of the Food Climate Research Network of the University of Oxford. Our aim is to stimulate a constructive dialogue on how food systems can become sustainable, resilient, just and ultimately "good". In a context where discussions about food tend to be polarised, we hope to facilitate more nuanced and more self-reflective dialogue across sectors and disciplines. Rooted in academia, we bring in the latest scientific insights to understand the complexities around food systems change. But science alone cannot tell us how to act or decide what a good and ethical food system is. We therefore combine our exploration of scientific evidence with attention to the values that inform different perspectives on the future of food. For example, a person's opinion of whether we need to eat less meat may depend, among other things, on what he or she believes about the malleability of human nature, what landscapes should look like, and the moral standing of animals. And there are obviously more perspectives."

With TABLE, we want to bring stakeholder groups - sometimes with diametrically opposing standpoints - into dialogue. In our work, we take a global perspective and try and involve stakeholders from across the globe. We do this in various ways and mostly online. At the heart of TABLE is our website tabledebates.org which hosts an extensive research library and through which we publish our events, invited blog posts, as well as our explainers of complex food systems concepts and a podcast with food systems experts from different backgrounds. Through these resources and activities we try and create an environment that fosters nuanced and in-depth engagement with food systems debates. TABLE is a new initiative and our activities, resources and discussion mechanisms will evolve over time. We really hope for WUR staff and students to become increasingly involved in our work. If you want to be involved in TABLE or have suggestions for topics or discussions we should focus on, please get in touch with me. By conducting dialogue in a nuanced way, we hope to find out what we don't know yet and which questions we still have to answer."

TABLE initiative

Question: What is a sustainable, just, and ultimately 'good' future food system?
Process: This project aims to take a closer look at the arguments, evidence, and assumptions that underpin debates around globalisation and localisation in the food system, doing so through numerous conversations with a wide range of food systems stakeholders from within and beyond the academic community.
Result:
- **Building Blocks:** short, peer-reviewed, foundational explainers of key concepts relevant to food systems and sustainability. For instance: What is agroecology?; What is sustainable intensification?; What are nature based solutions? Their function is to foster greater basic food systems literacy within the stakeholder community and ensure that debates do not simply arise from misunderstandings.
- **Debates Dissected reports:** analytical, peer reviewed reports, drawing upon our dialogue process and describing the debate. The goal is to help stakeholders reach a better mutual understanding of the reasons for agreements and disagreements, while highlighting areas that hold promise for more collaborative thinking and agreement.
- **Podcasts:** each series will focus on a particular theme and comprise 6-12 episodes, involving a range of speakers and perspectives on a particular question within the theme.

Source: https://www.tabledebates.org/

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Purpose 4: Converging for joint action

At some point, ideas and problem statements need to be translated into tangible actions. It requires conversations that generate joint energy and urgency among participants. Dialogue and discussion are powerful conversation types for transforming possibilities into action.

For any process or coordinated action to go well, it is essential that all players recognise they are co-creating a future in a network of conversations. At the end of the day, they are all responsible for the results.

Finding answers together

With even the title of Wageningen University & Research's current Strategic Plan being 'Finding Answers Together' the organization calls upon society and partners to, together, explore the potential of nature, to participate in defining and understanding the challenges facing us, to engage in discussing and navigating trade-offs, and to work together on evidence-based and socially inclusive answers that drive transitions.

When different parties are involved since the start, chances for successful implementation or follow-up increase. And to involve all these stakeholders, open discussions and dialogues may help.

See also: WUR Startegic Plan 2019-2022

Joint action for *Integrated water resources management* in Mozambique

Question: How do we sustainably make use of the water resources in the Zambezi Valley?

Process: Seventy diverse stakeholders gathered for a three days Future Search conference near the Zambezi river in Mozambique in May 2017. They had a deep dialogue with the purpose of developing a common vision for integrated water resources management in the Zambezi Valley. Participants came from industry and mining, government, agriculture, fishing and tourism, education and research, gender groups and local communities, water suppliers and regulators, as well as development partners. Their interests varied immensely.

Results:

• Increased insights into what is happening in water management in the Zambezi valley.

• Shared vision on how to sustainably manage the water resources in the region.

• Targeted and widely supported actions for integrated water management by local stakeholders.

• Enhanced trust and cooperation between the different stakeholders.

Read more: Paradigm change for water supply in Mozambique **Source:** Perspectivity

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Simone van Vugt and Jan van der Lee:

"You need an antenna to initiate change"

Knowing who the drivers of change are. Feeling what form of dialogue is effective at which moment and which information is needed. And being able to collaborate with good local people. According to Simone van Vugt and Jan van der Lee, these were important success factors in the 3R Kenya research project.

Robust, resilient, reliable. These were the pillars of the 3R Kenya, a research project for sector development, which was completed in 2020. Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation was lead partner in the research consortium. It targeted three subsectors in Kenya: the dairy, horticulture and aquaculture sectors.

Jan van der Lee worked as senior advisor *sustainable livestock systems* in the project. His work focused on the dairy sector: "Milk quality has been under pressure in Kenya for decades. Milk processors compete with the informal market but do so purely on quantity and not quality. As a result, their market has been severely affected by milk from Uganda, which offers better value for money. In time, the survival of the sector will be threatened by the high cost of production

and substandard mil quality in Kenya. The milk processors themselves are aware of this, but if they continue to earn more money from poor milk than from good milk, there is no acute need for them to act. An important result of the dialogue with stakeholders was a successful pilot with a milk quality assurance system, carried out by one milk processing company. The sector then had to pick it up, so that joint action arose. That went better than I had hoped beforehand."

"You have to be able to see opportunities for change and which people are the drivers of change," emphasizes Simone van Vugt, *multi-stakeholder process, monitoring and evaluation specialist* at Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation and project leader of 3R Kenya. "It is a constant game of who you bring into the dialogue at what time and what information in which format you share with policymakers and other sector parties. To-the-point information from action research can easily be shared broadly in a large-scale inter-active workshop with all stakeholders present. The action research is also done with the different stakeholders. But before the start of such a workshop, there are a lot of prepara-tion activities to be done. For example, formal and informal bilaterals with different sector players. And if you want to get policymakers on board, you should not just expect them to make a stand or commit to something. As a facilitator, you need to organize one or more small-scale meetings and field visits before-hand and afterwards. Preferably, at the same time, you bring another local party forward to emphasise the need for change. It is a combination of providing the right informa-

tion at the right time, choosing the most appropriate form of dialogue, and involving or bringing forward the right drivers for change. Giving sector players a voice at certain moments helps the process enormously. You cannot learn this from a manual. You need an antenna to initiate change. This antenna is a combination of many things, such as intuition, factual knowledge, local experience of the way how the sector players relate, flexibility with the objective in mind, strategic insights and knowing when to ask for support."

This antenna is also needed in the prelimi-nary phase to assess whether investing in a dialogue is worthwhile, believes Jan: "Some-times there are such political blockades in a system that ask for 'massaging' and prepara-tion. These are also elements of the dialogue, which cannot be diminished before the end of the project. These must must first be removed before people can see the added value of collaborating and building. And sometimes, from an ethical point of view, the only correct conclusion is that a dialogue makes no sense. For instance, because we are not the correct party to support or facilitate the dialogue, or it is not the moment yet." "The trick is to find this out as quickly as possible", Simone adds. "Then it is up to us to convince the client that it is wiser to leave certain areas of research and dialogue alone and put the energy into more promising tasks."

A final condition for change according to Jan and Simone": "Invest in and collaborate close with capable local people. Because you are not always there. And however good your rep-utation may be, you remain an outsider."

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- Sharing insights

Purpose 5: Evaluating and starting again

As projects end, it may be desirable to reflect, honour contributions and identify lessons learned. It is also a good moment to create urgency for a new way forward. Conversation and – especially – dialogue are well suited for this purpose.

'Complete' does not mean finished. People often 'finish' a project and leave a great number of items incomplete and a great number of lessons unlearned. Completing a communication, a meeting, a project is a sacred duty. It transforms communication, the meeting, the project from a mass of work, into an accomplishment upon which the future can be built.

Conversations for completion allow for new work to be launched on a firm foundation and with obstruction from previous events or projects. Conversations that generate completion include sharing insights, reflections, lessons learned, apologies, thank yous, and expressed upsets.

Particularly important and often overlooked are:
- **Conversations for generating accomplishment**
  = a result that gives a new future
- **Conversations for generating acknowledgement**
  = honouring the highest potential of everyone involved.

Example Jeanne Nel

Question: What knowledge is needed to scale up our initiatives for a circular and climate neutral society?

Process: Around 40 carefully selected stakeholders, from farmers to companies, environmental organisations and policy makers came together to provide input for the knowledge base programme Circular and Climate Neutral Society. The ambition to realise such a society is clear, but how to translate small successes into big transitions? And how can different stakeholders collaborate and play a role in speeding up this transition? To sharpen the research programme for the coming years, the invited stakeholders conversed over dinner around the questions "What trends and innovations do you see in and around your organisation and domain?" and " What is needed to speed up the transition?" This was done around five themes that form the basis of the knowledge base programme.

Results:
Researchers got the chance to listen to the needs in society. The need for novel knowledge, useful for different stakeholders, is identified and elements are added to projects based on these needs. Connections between stakeholders, within the same domain but with different interests, are strengthened.

Read more: Saskia Visser tells more about her experience.

Purposes

Connecting

Creating understanding

Differences & plurality

Converging

Evaluating

Sharing insights

Purposes | Types | Tools | Building Blocks | Home

Purpose 6: Sharing insights

Sometimes the main purpose of a conversation is to share relevant insights with participants. For instance, when a research project has gained significant and relevant results. If the purpose is 'sending only', seminars, conferences or policy meetings are effective forms for sharing insights. Do not confuse this with dialogue or deliberation, which are built around two-way interactions and for which the outcome of the exchange is not fixed in advance.

Not every situation asks for dialogue

In some situations, we do not advise you to use dialogue. For instance, when you are elaborating the practical details of your research or experimental design[6]. Or, when your project is almost finalised and the priority is to share findings rather than collecting new ideas. If this is the case, it may be more useful to engage in public outreach (lay public) or a seminar (fellow researchers).

You can also always contact your communication advisor or reach out to others who inspire you in their way of sharing insights with other scientists or with the general public.

Read more about different conversation types in chapter 3.

Purposes

Connecting

Creating understanding

Differences & plurality

Converging

Evaluating

Sharing insights

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Conversation types

Dialogue is used interchangeably for many types of conversation. This may be confusing. We refer to spoken interaction as 'conversation' of which dialogue is one of many forms. Other commonly used forms are debate, discussion and deliberation. Let's briefly clarify these forms and give examples. Important to realise: dialogue and deliberation are not always the most appropriate form of conversation to use.

Types

Dialogue

Deliberation

Debate

Discussion

Everyday conversations matter

Whether it is food production or the refugee crisis: when an issue becomes really complicated, people quickly call for dialogue. But dialogues are complicated. A dialogue can't be won, like a debate. Rather, it is based on the idea that all participants contribute to the answer and thus come to a solution together.

Prof. Noëlle Aarts conducts research into the course of discussions between stake-holders on complex and controversial issues in the field of life science. She search-es for patterns that explain why these conversations so often lead to nothing and why the relationship between opponents deteriorates rather than improves.

People apply all kinds of strategies to convince others of their own right, says Aarts in her speech The art of dialogue. These strategies, often unintentionally,

have a polarizing effect. "For example, we use suggestive and intensifying language - think of 'a tsunami of refugees flooding our country' - or exaggerations, impose our own norms and values and force our-selves and each other to think and reason in dichotomies: the wolf belongs here, or it doesn't, it has spontaneously come here, or it hasn't. Such antagonisms help to make decisions on complex issues in a relatively simple way, but do not bring the parties closer together".

On top of that, people are more inclined to talk to like-minded people about complex and contentious issues. In those conversa-tions they confirm each other, and opinions soon become shared truths. In this way, opponents become more and more distant from each other.

At the same time, conversations between dissenters remain necessary to come to

an agreement. "In principle, conversations are an important mechanism for initiating change and renewal, because they enable people to get a different view of the world," says Aarts. "That's why it's very important to encourage meetings between people with different ideas.

However, most people do not have the right skills to be able to have a good conversation with dissidents. Aarts finds it astonishing that we pay so little attention to the art of dialogue in education when so much depends on it. "We must be careful that society does not become fragmented and made up by groups of people who live with their backs against each other. It is not our differences, but the idea that there is only one truth that leads to conflict".

Source: https://www.wur.nl/nl/nieuws/
Inauguratie-prof.-Noelle-Aarts-Ook-
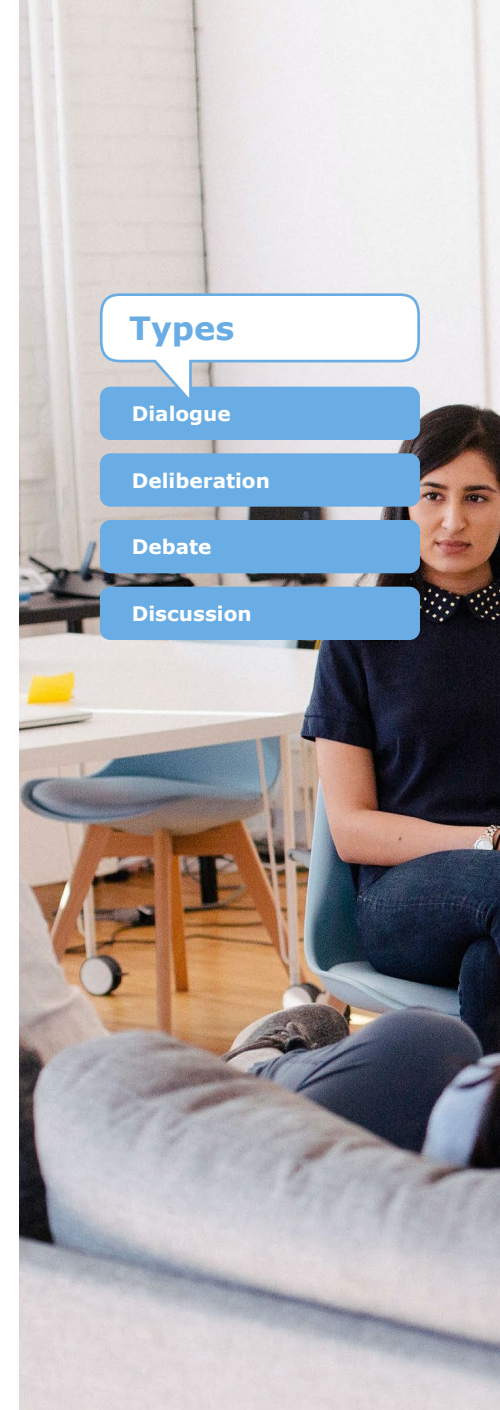alledaagse-gesprekken-doen-er-toe.htm

An overview of conversation types

	Dialogue	Deliberation	Debate	Discussion
Most useful	When there are multiple stakeholders, assumptions and perspectives. When there is no single-bullet solution. Or when the context is unpredictable, uncontrollable or constantly changing.	When a decision is needed about the best way to approach an issue or a problem.	When a position or course of action is being advocated and winning is the goal.	When people want to talk together about something without desiring any particular outcome from the conversation.
Attitude towards differences	Collaborative: two or more sides work together towards shared understanding.	Emphasising the importance of examining options and trade-offs to make better decisions.	Oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove the other is wrong.	Analysing the different points of view through open and informal exchange.
Attitude towards 'truth' finding	There is no right or wrong. Neither is there a single universal truth to be found. The point is to understand each other and use that as a basis for further collaboration.	Exploring the right course of action. It is about finding closure, finding a way forward, but not necessarily consensus.	There is a right answer, and someone has it. Creates close-minded attitudes, a determination to be right. Individuals are autonomous and judged on individual intellectual might.	Discussion is an umbrella term. There is no single attitude towards truth finding; it depends on the nature of the discussion.
Identity, status, power	Explicit attention for identity and status is common. Exploring experiences and identities are a key element of the conversation.	Explicit attention for identity and status. In a deliberation, people often feel treated fairly, even though they may not agree with the outcome.	Assuming an equal playing field with little attention to identify status and power.	Assuming an equal playing field with little attention to identify status and power.
Self-orientation	• One submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it. • It calls for temporary suspending judgments. Dialogue reveals assumptions and biases for evaluation. • It also causes introspection on one's own position. Personal experience is a key avenue for self-awareness and political understanding.	• In deliberation people explore what's important to them and others by asking questions. • Deliberation presents assumptions for re-evaluation. • In deliberation, personal experience is measured against that of the group as a whole and subject to consensus.	• In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right. • Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs. • Debate defends assumptions as truth. • Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions. • Debate affirms a participant's own point of view. • In debate, personal experience is secondary to a forceful opinion.	• Discussions are often conducted with the primary goal of increasing clarity and understanding of the issue with the assumption that we are working with a stable reality. • In discussion, individual contributions often centre around "rightness" and be valued for it. • In discussion, the impact may often be identified and processed individually and outside of the group setting.
Other-orientation	One listens to the other sides to understand, find meaning, and find points of connection. It involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate but to speak what is true for oneself. In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions. It creates an openness to learning from mistakes and biases.	One listens in order to reach a consensus. It may be done collaboratively or individually. A common approach is for one person to have the final choice, with others providing support, for example by pointing out risks or suggesting alternatives. Deliberation assumes that many people have pieces of an answer and a workable solution.	One listens to the other side to find flaws and to counter its arguments. Debate causes critique of the other position. One searches for glaring differences and for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.	One listens only to be able to insert one's own perspective. Discussion is often serial monologues. It tends to encourage individual sharing, sometimes at the about others' perspectives.

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Dialogue

'Dialogue' has a diversity of purposes and a variety of meanings. Originally, it is derived from the Greek *dialogos* where dia means 'through' and logos 'the world' of 'meaning of the world'. In that sense, dialogue can be understood as **a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us**, as described by philosopher David Bohm, one of the key thinkers on dialogue[7].

Key thinkers

Most work by dialogue scholars and practitioners builds on the understanding and ideas of the following key thinkers:

- **Bakhtin:** The nature of human life is dialogic (relational). Our selves and social worlds are made up of multiple voices that constantly shape each other[8].
- **Buber:** Dialogue is a special type of human relationship that requires high quality contact[9].
- **Gadamer:** Knowledge is co-created in conversation. In dialogue, the exchange of ideas is mutually transformative and enhances understanding of selves and others[10].
- **Freire:** Dialogue is an educational process that involves transformational learning oriented towards socio-political empowerment[11].
- **Bohm:** Collective intelligence is the antidote to social fragmentation. Dialogue helps participants to become aware of implicit knowledge and ways of thinking, and enables the co-creation of shared meaning.
- **Rogers:** Dialogue requires unconditional positive regard of the other[12].

We embrace these different notions and refer to dialogue **as a structured open form of interaction, whereby participants have an openness towards new insights and perspectives[13]**. We regard dialogue as a process of exploring and reflecting on one's own values and those of others in relation to a certain topic (Burgess & Chilvers, 2006; Chilvers, 2008; Einsiedel, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Therefore, dialogue is an interactive, multi-facetted, and multi-stakeholder process (Rowe & Frewer, 2005).

Conversation method and interaction process

Listening and observation while suspending culturally conditioned judgements and impulses offers a creative approach that is helpful in the context of our scientific work (see chapter 2). This applies both to dialogue as conversation method, as well as dialogue as science-society interaction process.

Types

Dialogue

Deliberation

Debate

Discussion

7] Bohm (2003). 8] Bakhtin and Holquist (1981). 9] Buber (2004).
10] Gadamer (1982). 11] Freire (1996). 12] Buber et al. (1997).
13] Bucchi and Trench (2008); Chilvers (2012); Goven (2006); Welp et al. (2006).

Purposes Types Tools Building Blocks Home

Saskia Visser, Programme lead circular and climate neutral society:

"A dinner provides a relaxed atmosphere for conversation"

In our society, most raw materials are still used for products that we throw away. There is broad agreement that this linear system is no longer tenable. A transition to circular use of water, nutrients and carbon, combined with minimal loss of natural resources, is necessary. Saskia Visser is programme lead of the knowledge base programme Circular and Climate Neutral Society. The programme focuses on the development of future production systems for food and feed. "For this, we have to be able to address questions society will have in the near future", says Saskia. "Since I don't have a crystal ball, I engage with stakeholders. In 2019, I organised the first Dialogue Dinner. A year later, at a time when corona measures were temporarily relaxed, the second dinner took place, in a modified form.

"I spent the first dinner explaining the structure and challenges of the programme. Then we continued a discussion in smaller groups. Together, we sketched a picture of the future. We mapped out the barriers blocking the transition to a circular and climate-neutral society. And we considered the knowledge questions that arise. In the second year, we zoomed in on initiatives that are already taking place and discussed what is needed to scale them up. We also addressed stakeholders' expectations from us as a knowledge institution.

For me, a dinner is a suitable form of dialogue to deepen my research programme together in an informal way. In these busy times, it is difficult to gather people from all sorts of organisations for a full day. By offering them a dinner, the threshold lowers and a more relaxed atmosphere is created which eases the open discussion.

Above all: when you are facilitating a dialogue, make sure you let stakeholders have their say. It is primarily about listening to other people's perspectives and be open for these perspectives. Make sure you provide a safe setting in which they can express their personal opinions. And further: consider working with a facilitator with a certain distance from the subject matter during dialogue forms such as a dinner. Someone with good workshop techniques who can easily put together the input provided during the evening. Properly conducting a dialogue is more difficult than you might think."

Types

- Dialogue
- Deliberation
- Debate
- Discussion

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Deliberation

By deliberation, participants exchange arguments or reflect on different interpretations for better informed and credible decision-making. Inclusivity, decisiveness, and reciprocity are central elements of this conversation type. In a deliberation, all participants have equal speaking time and equal enforcement power[14]. Deliberation results in reasonable and representative decisions. Through deliberation the expertise, experience, interpretations and interests of other societal actors are better represented and included in decision making, or knowledge production in general[15].

Read more
- **Habermas, J.** (1990). Discourse Ethics: Notes On A Program Of Philosophical Justification. In *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. MIT Press.
- **Gutmann, A., & Thompson, D. F.** (1996). *Democracy and Disagreement*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- **Dryzek, J. S.** (2000). *Deliberative democracy and beyond*. Oxford University Press.
- **Karpowitz, C. F., & Mansbridge, J.** (2006). Disagreement and consensus: The need for dynamic updating in public deliberation. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 1(1).
- **Mansbridge, J., Bohman, J., Chambers, S., Estlund, D., Føllesdal, A., Fung, A., Lafont, C., Manin, B., & Martí, J. L.** (2010). The place of self-interest and the role of power in deliberative democracy. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18(1), 64–100.

Who is responsible for your health?

Question: Who is responsible for your health?
Process: This question can be 'fought out' in a debate, but the chance of arriving at a well-considered answer to this question is greater with deliberation. In a deliberative manner, students therefore engaged in a discussion at the Veer Event in Wageningen on the theme Who is responsible for your health? In the preparation phase, it was important to have a good picture of the different arguments, interests and stakeholders. Based on that, three speakers were asked to share their answers and reasoning with the group - three different answers came out. Each participant already had an answer to the central question. But after the visionary speakers, the participants entered into a discussion with each other, further exploring the various arguments. Not to come to an immediate answer, but to reconsider your own point of departure. The aim was to arrive at 'wicked questions': an apparent contradiction, formulated in a question.
Results: Fortunately, the students did not have to formulate a conclusive answer to the question at the end of the meeting. That was impossible for a two-hour session. But reconsidering different arguments in a safe and inclusive environment did make everyone aware of how many different sides this one question can be viewed from, which would help to make better decisions.

Social processes

Whereas deliberation is convergent and uses advocacy dynamics, dialogue is divergent and uses inquiry communication patterns. And where deliberation is oriented at decision-making and seeks closure, dialogue is more about exploring diversity and options. Deliberations are often employed in societal processes. In such cases, **the outcome may not be a consensus, but it will at least be clear where people 'agree to disagree',** and all participants will feel treated fairly.

Types

Dialogue

Deliberation

Debate

Discussion

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Debate

Debate is a regulated and formal conversation on a particular topic or proposition. It is combative and assumes there is a right answer and the opposition needs to be convinced of that. There is an emphasis on the outcome and mainly serves to affirm a participant's own point of view.

The main difference between debate and dialogue is that the former is oppositional while the latter is collaborative. Debate is more closed-minded and assumes a winner while dialogue remains open-ended and aims to find common ground.

Agri Food Debat Netwerk

Agri-food debate network

In the Agri-food debate network, participants learn to listen critically, formulate convincingly, speak with impact, think clearly, argue strongly and speak inspiringly. In short: the communication techniques that convince.

The network consists of a mixed group of participants, working in business, farming, government and research. By actively working on debating skills every month, they are stronger in various discussions around the themes of livestock farming, food and nature. In short: they learn to connect content with form.

Types

Dialogue

Deliberation

Debate

Discussion

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Discussion

Discussion refers to any open and informal conversation where there is an interactive exchange of experiences, knowledge and opinions. It is mostly used in situations where people want to talk about a certain subject without a particular outcome. It differs from dialogue because dialogue is about creating a new understanding while discussion analyses the different points of view[16].

Discussions can also be useful for the dissemination of research results in interactive ways, e.g. via seminars, conferences, or other outreach activities after research findings have been finalised and need to be shared with the general public or certain groups of stakeholders or end-users.
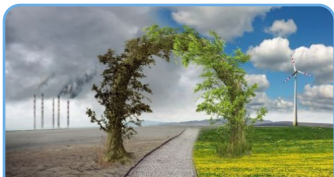
Examples of discussion

Otherwise foundation
Mansholt lectures
Science Cafe Wageningen
Tegenlicht meetups

Types

Dialogue

Deliberation

Debate

Discussion

Otherwise foundation

Mansholt lectures

Science Cafe Wageningen

Tegenlicht meetups

Purposes   Types   Tools   Building Blocks   Home

Methods and tools

Many different methods and tools facilitate interactions and new ones are invented every day. Some can be arranged on the spot for use in small groups. These tools are often simple and intuitive. Even if you have little dialogue experience, you can easily experiment with these.

Other tools are designed for interactions with large, often multi-stakeholder groups. They may last several days or even months. Careful preparation and an experienced facilitator are needed to help you design and facilitate the process. Explore what is the most appropriate tool or method for your situation.

Tip: When you use a new tool for the first time, just follow the rules. When you trust the process, this allows you to concentrate on the dynamics and on the content of the conversation. Next time you can start experimenting if you want.

More tools: The internet is full of methods and tools that foster interaction, both for online and physical settings. Take a look and compare them with the ones proposed here. Many tools and methods can also be found in the MSP guide for multi-stakeholder processes.

You can always contact the WUR Dialogue Community of Practice for support in choosing the appropriate methods and tools for your purpose. You may also want to fill out the Dialogue Navigator Tool.

Classification

All methods and tools are classified on four aspects:

1. **Format:** face to face, online;
2. **Group size:** up to 2 (small), between 3-10 (medium), between 11-50 (large), more than 50 (XL);
3. **Level of difficulty:** ∗ (simple, does not require facilitation skills) to ∗∗∗∗ (complex, needs preparation time and skilled facilitation);
4. **Time required:** up to 2 hours, half a day, full day, several days/weeks, several months/years.

Alphabetical overview of methods and tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Appreciative Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all (Liberating Structures)

Simple tools

Experience level facilitator: ∗ and ∗∗

Talking stick

Promotes cooperation and harmony. Only the person who holds the stick talks until this person feels he or she is understood. Others may only ask clarifying questions. It stimulates participants to listen more carefully. The stick is passed around; everybody gets a chance to speak. In a second reflection round, the stick can be picked up in the middle by the person who wants to contribute a new thought.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** S, M, L
- **Level of difficulty:** ∗
- **Time needed:** 30 minutes or more

Watch more:
Dr. Steven Covey Indian Talking Stick
Source: Indigenous communities

1-2-4-all (Liberating Structures)

Participative method to include everyone, regardless of how big a group is. You ask everyone to think about a question silently for 1 minute, then ask them to brainstorm for 2 minutes in pairs, followed by 4 minutes in foursomes (noticing similarities and differences), and then plenarily harvest what stood out in each group (one important idea per group; repeat cycle as needed).

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ∗
- **Time needed:** 15-20 minutes per question

Read more:
1-2-4-all
Source: Liberating structures.

Timelines

Used to kick-off a dialogue session or trajectory. Especially with people who do not know each other and with different backgrounds. All participants write down key events, for instance on the topic of the meeting. These events are placed on huge timelines on walls. Next, mixed groups study one timeline to talk about where this group has been, how they got there and what this means for their work together.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ∗∗
- **Time needed:** 1-2 hours

Agroforesty Dialogue

Question: There are many different images about agro-forestry, complementary, but also conflicting views. Are we talking about food forests or about highly profitable mixed crops? Do we look at it with 'nature glasses' on or from an agricultural point of view? How and where can we meet?

Process: An exploratory meeting with – in some respects – opposing stake-holders in the field of agro-forestry, was kicked-off with Timelines to discover who is who and where does every-body come from.

Result:
- Participants connected on a personal level and discovered a shared past
- Participants developed a shared image of the history of agroforestry
- All participants felt that their perspective and knowledge was valuable

Read more: Future Search

Tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all

Simple tools

Experience level facilitator: ∗ and ∗∗

6-3-5 Brainwriting

A group-structured brainstorming technique for aiding innovation processes by stimulating creativity. It consists of 6 participants supervised by a moderator. The participants write down 3 ideas on a worksheet within 5 minutes (6-3-5). In the following 6 rounds, participants sweep their worksheets, passing them on to the team member sitting at their right. Participants are asked to build upon the ideas on the sheets.

● **Format:** face to face & online
● **Group size:** S, M
● **Level of difficulty:** ∗∗
● **Time needed:** 30 minutes to 2 hours

Watch more:
6-3-5 Brainwriting
Source: Bernd Rohrback

Appreciative Inquiry

Alternative for traditional problem-oriented methods. Looks for what is going well instead of what is wrong. It looks for the successes and the causes thereof: the generative capacity that has acted as the driving force. In addition, during interviews respondents formulate wishes they would like to realise in the future. This focus generates positive energy to learn and to realise the desired future.

● **Format:** face to face & online
● **Group size:** S, M, L, XL
● **Level of difficulty:** ∗∗
● **Time needed:** 1 hour

Read more:
Appreciative inquiry
Source: David Cooperrider

Rich picture

Joint visualization of cases in small groups of 5 – 7 persons. Through drawing, participants quickly share their understanding of actors, factors and relationships affecting the issue at hand. The end product is usually a flipchart or a digital whiteboard full of symbols, drawings and arrows. It is called a rich picture because it illustrates the richness and complexity of a situation.

● **Format:** face to face & online (using digital whiteboard such as Mural or Miro)
● **Group size:** S, M, L, XL
● **Level of difficulty:** ∗∗
● **Time needed:** 1 – 1,5 hours

Intermediate tools

Experience level facilitator: ✳✳✳ and ✳✳✳✳

World Café

Easy-to-use method for conversations around questions that really matter. World Café offers a simple, effective and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue with broad variety of stakeholders. In an informal café setting, participants rotate among small groups to exchange knowledge and views on defined topics and from different angles, building on previous conversations. Results are shared in a plenary. Eventually, they integrate individual perspectives into a new collective view.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✳✳✳
- **Time needed:** several days

Read more:
The World Café Community

Fishbowl

A small group sits in a circle and has a conversation about a topic. Meanwhile, participants gathered in a large circle around them, listen. They may join the conversation by trading chairs or moving their chairs into the circle. Useful if the topic demands one conversation in a large group instead of breakouts. It evokes active listening. Usually, this method is part of a larger process of dialogue and deliberation.

Format: face to face & online
Group size: M, L, XL
Level of difficulty: ✳✳✳
Time: 45 minutes – 1,5 hours

Read more:
Fishbowl

Future Agriculture in Flevoland

Question: How can we make agriculture in Flevoland more diverse and more sustainable?

Process: As part of a Wageningen Dialogue about nature inclusive agriculture in the Netherlands, a diverse group of WUR scientist, explored a concrete case. Five mixed groups – with participants from all science groups – visualised in five drawings what a more diverse and more sustainable agriculture in Flevoland would look like. They then identified opportunities, dilemmas, and knowledge gaps.

Result: A shared view on opportunities, dilemmas and knowledge gaps to realise a more sustainable agriculture in a specific region in the Netherlands.

Source: Wageningen Dialogue

Cutting across the silos

Question: How can we shape sustainable food systems together?

Process: Eighty students of various disciplines gathered to experience how diversity can lead to solving complex issues. PhD-students and young farmers pitched concrete challenges that they face on the road to sustainable food production. In three rounds they got feedback, explored their challenges from different perspectives and formulated next action steps.

Results:

- Students experienced sharing different perspectives through dialogue can enrich and deepen their understanding of complex challenges.
- PhD-students and young farmers gathered new insights and perspectives on the challenges they were working on.
- All participants made new contacts outside of their own 'silo'.

Organiser: Boerengroep (Farmers Foundation)

Read more: Wageningen Dialogue

Tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all

Intermediate tools

Experience level facilitator: ✳✳✳ and ✳✳✳✳

Appreciative Inquiry Summit

Designed to flow through the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Process of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. The participants' list for an AI Summit is by design diverse and includes all stakeholders: employees, customers, suppliers and community members.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✳✳✳✳
- **Time needed:** several days

Read more:
Appreciative inquiry summit
Source: David Cooperrider

Draw toast

Engaging way to get groups to think freshly about mental models. In 3 minutes, each person sketches a diagram of how to make toast. When comparing diagrams, people are shocked to see the wide range of models. Next step: participants draw a picture of how to improve their work as a group. This workshop helps groups to unpack their complex challenge from a systems perspective.

- **Format:** face to face & online (using a whiteboard like Miro or Mural)
- **Group size:** S, M
- **Level of difficulty:** ✳✳✳✳
- **Time needed:** 2 – 4 hours

Read more:
Draw toast
Source: Tom Wujec

Social Presencing Theater

Methodology for understanding current reality and exploring future possibilities. Can be practiced at the individual, group, organisation and larger social systems level. SMP is not 'theater' in the conventional sense. It uses simple body postures and movements to dissolve limiting concepts, to communicate directly, to access information and to make visible both current reality and deeper leverage points for creating profound change.

- **Format:** face to face
- **Group size:** S, M, L
- **Level of difficulty:** ✳✳✳✳
- **Time needed:** 2 – 4 hours

Read more:
Social Presencing Theater – 4D mapping
Source: Arawana Hayashi, Presencing Institute (Theory U)

Ritual Dissent

Designed to test and enhance proposals, stories, or ideas by subjecting them to ritualised dissent (challenge) or assent (positive alternatives). Enables presenters to get feedback in a safe environment and to review and enhance their proposals critically. Listening in silence is the essence of this technique. To be used in workshops with a minimum of three groups with at least three participants each.

- **Format**: face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✳✳✳✳
- **Time needed:** 90 minutes

Read more:
Ritual dissent
Source: Cognitive Edge

Tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all

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Intermediate tools
Experience level facilitator: ✴✴✴ and ✴✴✴✴

Six Thinking Hats
Helps groups to look at decisions from different perspectives. It involves play-acting for six types of thinking. Examples are objective/neutral (White Hat), positive/constructive (Yellow Hat) and emotional thinking (Red Hat). The method helps make better decisions by forcing you to move outside your habitual ways of thinking. As such, it helps understand the full complexity of the decision and spot issues and opportunities to which you might otherwise be blind.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** S, M, L
- **Level of difficulty:** ✴✴✴✴
- **Time needed:** 1 hour

Read more:
Six thinking hats
Source: Edward de Bono

Open Space
In this method, volunteers offer to lead conversations on a topic. Participants choose voluntarily the session they are interested in by the law of two feet. It is very much like in a marketplace. The method encourages self-organization within the goals of the meeting. Subgroups develop proposals, which are then brought back to the plenary.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✴✴✴✴
- **Time needed:** half a day or more

Read more:
Open space technology
Source: Open Space Technology by Harrison Owen

Socratic Conversation
A formal method guided by a facilitator. It aims to find an answer to a universal question in a consensual manner. It uses experiences to identify and illustrate what the universal truth is. Similar to dialogue, individual reflection is central to this method and the focus is on creating a shared understanding. However, Socratic Conversation requires a conclusion: a universal truth. In this respect it differs from dialogue's open-endedness.

- **Format:** face to face & online
- **Group size:** S,M
- **Level of difficulty:** ✴✴✴✴
- **Time needed:** 1-2 hours

Read more:
Marinoff, L. (Enteléquia. Filosofia Pràtiqa). The Structure and Function of a Socratic Dialogue

Soft Shoe Shuffle
A conversation on feet: people are asked to move where their feet bring them. It is an energiz-ing method for sharing insights or discussing controversial topics in a group. And furthermore, for group decision making and to bring a fresh wind into encrust-ed conversation habits. It is an interactive way to hear multiple views and quickly establish key areas of conflict. This could lead to personal growth and creative solutions.

- **Format**: face to face & online
- **Group size:** M, L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✴✴✴
- **Time needed:** Up to 2 hours

Theoretically there is no maximum, but for topics that need deeper sharing of thoughts and explanations, don't go bigger than 40.
Source: Deep Democracy - Lewis Method

Tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
- Social Presencing Theatre
- Socratic Conversation
- Soft Shoe Shuffle
- Talking Stick
- Timelines
- World Café
- 1-2-4-all

Experienced tools

Very experienced facilitator: ✻✻✻✻✻

Future search

An interactive and dynamic planning process with 50 to 500 representatives of different interest groups around a shared issue. They share stories about their past, present and desired future. Through a sequence of exploratory, creative and reflective dialogue sessions, they discover their common ground. Typical results are shared visions, draft policies, strategic frameworks, process designs and action plans owned by all stakeholders.

- **Format:** face to face (experiential online)
- **Group size:** L, XL
- **Level of difficulty:** ✻✻✻✻✻
- **Time needed:** 20 hours, across 3 days

Integrated Water Resources Management in Mozambique

Question: How do we sustainably make use of the water resources in the Zambezi Valley?

Process: Seventy diverse stakeholders gathered for a three days Future Search conference near the Zambezi river in Mozambique in May 2017. They had a deep dialogue with the purpose of developing a common vision for integrated water resources management in the Zambezi Valley. Participants came from industry and mining; government; agriculture, fishing and tourism; education and research; gender groups and local communities; water suppliers and regulators; as well as development partners. Their interests varied immensely.

Results:

- Increased insights into what is happening in water management in the Zambezi valley.
- Shared vision on how to sustainably manage the water resources in the region.
- Targeted and widely supported actions for integrated water management by local stakeholders.
- Enhanced trust and cooperation between the different stakeholders.

Read more: Paradigm change for water supply in Mozambique
Source: Perspectivity

Tools

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Inquiry Summit
- 6-3-5 Brainwriting
- Draw Toast
- Fish Bowl
- Future Search
- Open Space
- Rich Picture
- Ritual Dissent
- Six Thinking Hats
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Building blocks

Are you organising or participating in a dialogue, deliberation, debate or a discussion? It is good to realise there are a number of general working principles that underpin effective interactions among scientists and between scientists and societal stakeholders. These could be called the building blocks for effective conversations that are part of science-society interactions. These building blocks are relevant for all those organising, facilitating, and participating in a conversation between people with different backgrounds, knowledge, viewpoints and stakes. They present a certain attitude of listening and openness towards others, stimulate involvement, create shared ownership and understanding, help to manage conflict and (unequal) power relations, and contribute to creating a safe space.
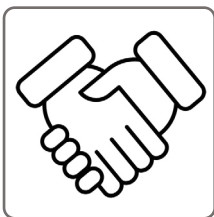
Mutual respect

A key principle of effective science-society interaction is the belief that **everyone has a valid viewpoint and should therefore be respected**. Ensuring mutual respect is a precondition for stakeholders to open up and share their thoughts and vision. Mutual respect also contributes to the creation of a safe space[17].

Practical tips

Be aware about the context in which the dialogue takes place, and take impact of subcultures and differences in hierarchy serious.
Participants will have different values and viewpoints, shaped by their earlier experiences. This could be cultural, political-economic, related to power. **Awareness about such context, and taking this seriously, will allow for a better understanding** about how and why participants react. For a meaningful dialogue it is important to accept that others differ and not let that stop from participating.

Treat other participants as colleagues and be empathetic towards them.
Regarding participants of the conversation as colleagues is another way to achieve mutual respect and dignity. **Politeness and kindness will ensure that everyone feels safe to share**. Empathy, the ability to feel what others are feeling, is helpful to create an enabling environment to explore different viewpoints and values. Having regard for the other participants rights, feelings, and opinions will likely result in mutual trust among those involved and contribute to building a shared understanding.

Allow participants to establish their identity in the group and actively ask them to share.
The group dynamic is an important aspect to consider when organising a dialogue. Asking everyone to introduce at the beginning does not only guarantee that everyone will be heard, it also **creates the feeling that everyone is in it together no matter how different they are**[18]. A nice method to start a dialogue is the sociogram: you prepare a list of characteristics that people may recognise: being married, having a funny hobby, having a passion for horses, it could be anything. This is a fun and low threshold way for people to connect and establish an identity in a group, while also getting to know each other.

Building blocks

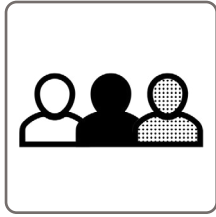- Mutual Respect
- Inclusivity, diversity
- Listening
- Transparency
- Critical reflection
- Dealing with conflict

17] Ansell and Gash (2008); Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Schein (1993); Welp et al. (2006). 18] Schein (1993).

Inclusivity, diversity and fairness

People who decided to participate in any science-society interaction should feel treated fairly and have an equal right to express their view. This requires participants to have equal access to definitions, terms, concepts and relevant knowledge. Failure to do so creates unequal participation impeding a meaningful dialogue[19].

Effective conversations which contribute to improving research questions, problem definition, or policy change require the inclusion of relevant stakeholders: those involved, interested or affected by the problem, decision or action at stake. **Involving stakeholders with diverse views, interests and positions allows for a diversity of perspectives and expertise.** It can also create or improve the support base for certain change directions or decisions. Inclusivity and diversity is generally said to increase creativity and innovativeness[20]. However, inclusive decision-making processes are time and resource intense.

Practical tips

Guarantee a safe space to share
Providing a safe space for participants to share and interact is a precondition for effective communication. Turned around: people close up when they don't feel safe, which hampers the exchange of insights and arguments. **Particularly in situations where people initially have rather polarised views, or in situations of implicit or explicit power differences between participants, a safe space is vital.** People need to feel comfortable to share their views. This could be done by agreeing that what is being said will remain among the people present. Or by jointly establishing some 'rules of the game' for the conversation (letting each other speak, postponing judgement; inquiry and asking questions to understand each other...). It is helpful to create an environment that allows people to feel comfortable admitting their mistakes or failures. This will

stimulate everyone to openly share ideas which will contribute to better innovation and decision making[21].

Remove (unnecessary) barriers to participation
For effective participation in dialogue it is important to identify and remove things that hinder the process. There are many different types of barriers. Sometimes they are physical, for instance when the location where the dialogue is held is not wheelchair accessible or when participants are not familiar or comfortable with online tools being used. Barriers can also be socio-cultural or apply to things such as language, gender, and information. **Anticipate on things that possibly prevent stakeholders from (fully) participating.**

Avoid stereotyping and don't discriminate
Stereotypes, also unintentional ones, are harmful because they reduce individuals to certain assumed characteristics based on culture, gender, ethnicity or religion. If stereotyping leads to the unjust and prejudicial treatment of others, it is discrimination which is forbidden by law. **Both stereotyping and discrimination prevent the creation of a safe space for participants** to share and contribute to the further polarisation between people.

This general principle may seem simple. In reality, it is often violated. For instance, there may be an implicit hierarchy between scientists and laymen (farmers, citizens) which impedes free communication because citizens or farmers may have a low self-esteem to speak freely. Or, in cases of North-South collaboration, the relation is troubled by post-colonial patterns or false expectations between Southern-Northern partners. For example, when Northern partners bring funding into the game.

Building blocks

- Mutual Respect
- Inclusivity, diversity
- Listening
- Transparency
- Critical reflection
- Dealing with conflict

19] Chilvers (2008); Herrero et al. (2019); Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Schein (1993). 20] Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Chilvers (2008); Herrero et al. (2019). 21] Edmondson (2003); Welp et al. (2006).

Listening

For the most part, people don't listen to others; they listen to themselves commenting on what is being said. Otto Scharmer calls this 'downloading' (see figure 2 below). It is on the monologue with themselves that most people base their responses. This often creates actions whereby everything proceeds the way it always has: **more meetings, more declarations, more empty words.**
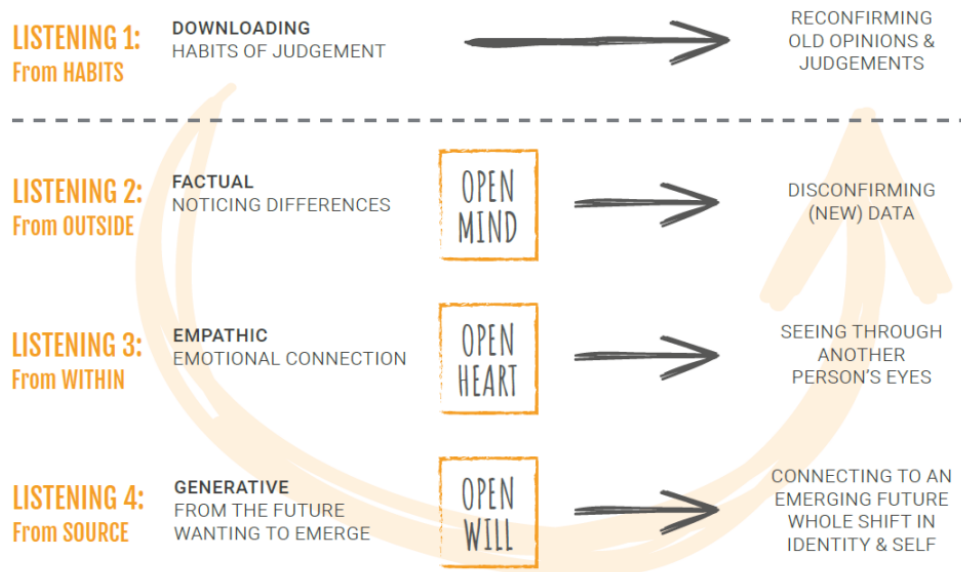
In this clip, Otto Scharmer explains the importance of listening and the four levels of listening (see also figure below).

Practical tip

Use of facilitation methods that encourage true listening
You can use a range of appropriate facilitation methods which encourage true listening. Examples are the talking stick, ritual descent or the fish bowl. These three methods have in common that **they force participants to postpone their immediate reaction to what is being said**. This can be uncomfortable at first, but when one is able to let go of the urge to react immediately, it automatically results in a deeper level of interaction and understanding between people. This often results in a satisfactory feeling afterwards. Moreover, it really helps to get a better understanding of each other's point of view and/or a certain complex problem.

Building blocks

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Figure 2: Levels of listening as depicted by Otto Scharmer[22]

LISTENING 1: From HABITS — DOWNLOADING HABITS OF JUDGEMENT → RECONFIRMING OLD OPINIONS & JUDGEMENTS

LISTENING 2: From OUTSIDE — FACTUAL NOTICING DIFFERENCES — OPEN MIND → DISCONFIRMING (NEW) DATA

LISTENING 3: From WITHIN — EMPATHIC EMOTIONAL CONNECTION — OPEN HEART → SEEING THROUGH ANOTHER PERSON'S EYES

LISTENING 4: From SOURCE — GENERATIVE FROM THE FUTURE WANTING TO EMERGE — OPEN WILL → CONNECTING TO AN EMERGING FUTURE WHOLE SHIFT IN IDENTITY & SELF

22] Scharmer (2016).

Transparency

Openness and transparency about the nature and objective of the conversation is important to manage expectations of participants. For instance, about its engagement: who is part of the dialogue and who is excluded (and why)? Additionally, how does the decision process work, what are the underlying assumptions and uncertainties? Openness and transparency of the dialogue will increase trust and clarify expectations[23].

Practical tip

Clear objectives, rules of dialogue and role of participants
Providing clear objectives and explaining the rules and roles of those involved is closely related to creating a safe space. As[24] explains, this will contribute to feeling psychologically safe as it gives people a sense of direction. Only then can real change happen.

As we become more reflective, we begin to realise how much our initial perceptions can be coloured by expectations based on our cultural learning and our past experiences. We do not always perceive what is "accurately" out there. What we perceive is often based on our needs, our expectations, our projections, and, most of all, our culturally learned.

Edgar I.L. Schein (1993).

Building blocks
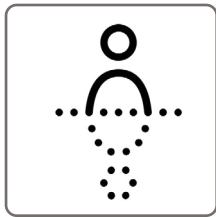
Mutual Respect

Inclusivity, diversity

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Critical reflection

Dealing with conflict

23] Stilgoe et al. (2014); Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Chilvers (2008); Schein (1993). 24] Schein (1993).

Critical reflection and responsiveness

Critical reflection is a crucial building block for effective dialogue. A dialogue is only effective when participants are willing and able to critically reflect on their *individual and institutional assumptions*, motives and commitments. And also on their role in society and their perspective and position towards the central theme of the dialogue. In dialogue, **reflection is inextricably linked to the willingness to learn and thus be open to the value of viewpoints of others.** This is also becomes apparent from an excerpt of Schein's article 'on dialogue, culture and organisational learning[25].

Crucial in larger trajectories

Reflection and responsiveness are crucial in conversations that are part of larger trajectories with science-society interactions. This applies, for example, to the transitions that we are contributing to, such as the protein transition and the transition towards circular agriculture. In such trajectories, circumstances may change and unpredictable situations may be a daily reality to deal with. **It helps when conveners and participants of conversations can embrace uncertainties and find ways to responsibly manage these**. Being responsive and adaptive is especially useful when presented with complicated problems that constantly change such as wicked problems.

Practical tips

Get comfortable in making, admitting and learning from mistakes and failures
The dialogue process exposes participants to diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and opinions. This can reveal that mistakes have been made or that there are better solutions and approaches to a problem. How to **learn from others** and prevent that the same mistakes are made twice? For this, it is important that people can admit mistakes, learn from their failures, and are willing to change the way they are currently doing things.

Build flexibility in objectives
Particularly for larger trajectories with science-society interactions, having pre-fixed inflexible objectives will make the science-society interaction seem less sincere. **Pre-fixed objectives bear the risk that participants do not feel any space to influence the process.** This hampers the co-production of new knowledge. (see the example of Jeanne Nel. For instance, the host of a meeting that is set out to determine a research agenda already, could have pre-fixed ideas about how this agenda should look like. When he or she does not demonstrate any flexibility to new ideas, this stands in the way of the objective of the session.

Arrange for a professional process facilitator
Facilitators are vital for creating an inclusive environment, communicate clear guidelines and instructions, manage the group dynamic or possible conflict, and in general monitor the structure and time of the dialogue process. The facilitator helps the group achieve common understanding and objectives.

Building blocks
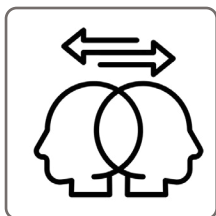
Mutual Respect

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Critical reflection

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25] Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Chilvers (2008); Schein (1993).

Dealing with conflict

Conflict is an inevitable and normal part of processes that include diverse parties or individuals with different backgrounds, knowledge, viewpoints, position taking and stakes. A situation or process is considered a conflict once differences lead to struggle and parties find it difficult to imagine an acceptable compromise. Although conflict is generally believed to be a negative occurrence it is sometimes necessary and desirable for change to occur.

Understanding and dealing with conflict is an essential part for having an effective science-society dialogue. And not only understanding but also daring to deal with conflicting situations and creating conflict or friction are skills needed to change status quo and build-in patterns.
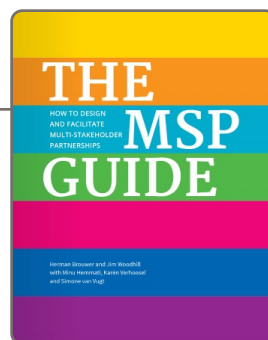
Practical tips

Guarantee a safe space to share
Being able to provide a safe space for participants to share is a component that contributes to building trust. A safe space is vital for the exchange of arguments as **people need to be comfortable being themselves during the dialogue**. It is, therefore, important to take perceptions of risk and vulnerabilities into account, and to ensure that negative consequences are minimized. An environment should be created where people are comfortable admitting their mistakes and learn from their failures. This will stimulate everyone to openly share ideas which will contribute to better innovation and decision making[26].

Arrange for a skilful facilitator
Professional facilitators are vital for creating an inclusive environment, communicate clear guidelines and instructions, manage the group dynamic or possible conflict, and in general monitor the structure and time of the dialogue-based process. The facilitator helps the group achieve common understanding and objectives, also in case of a conflict.

THE MSP GUIDE

HOW TO DESIGN AND FACILITATE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Herman Brouwer and Jim Woodhill
with Minu Hemmati, Karèn Verhoosel
and Simone van Vugt

Conflicts are changing, interactive social processes, rather than individual, self-contained events. And each conflict has its own unique history and its own course of phases and levels of intensity. Essentially, conflicts are about the perceptions and the (different) meanings that people give to events, policies, institutions, and others. Thus, there is no single true or objective account of a conflict. Rather, the participants in and the observers of conflicts are likely to interpret them differently, depending on their particular perspective and interests. Different underlying causes require different solutions. MSP guide, p. 90.

More on the meaning of conflict, its causes, and practical implications, please read the MSP guide page 85-92.

Building blocks

Mutual Respect

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Transparency

Critical reflection

Dealing with conflict

26] Burgess and Chilvers (2006); Chilvers (2008); Schein (1993).

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