

Ritual Dissent

Field of application	<p>The facilitation technique is used in situations where groups of people have defined solutions and ideas for steps forward (e.g. projects, initiatives, concrete action plan) but they want to get critical feedback to improve their solutions and adopt them better to the circumstances. The technique can be used when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have to develop a business idea and want to get critical feedback • The CEO or a department team want to come up with concrete initiatives and project ideas for a specific solution but still want to discuss the prototype idea before going forward • When a group of local business representatives or local stakeholder networks want to promote certain development initiatives for the development of the business network or community but want to know what the other group of stakeholders think about it.
Resume / Brief description	<p>Ritual Dissent is a workshop technique designed by Dave J. Snowden (The Cynefin Company - formerly known as Cognitive Edge) to test and enhance proposals, stories, ideas or other content by subjecting them to ritualised dissent (challenges) or assent (positive alternatives). It offers a formalised way to share criticism and disagreement for the purpose of learning and increased resilience. Essentially an individual or a group develops and presents a proposal, idea or initiative to another group and then have it subjected to 'ritual dissent' by this group. During the time of the feedback the presenter turns his back to the group who then provides comments on the presented ideas. The presenter is only allowed to listen and to take up critical comments to improve the proposal afterwards. The ritual dissent is normally done in several rounds.</p>
Target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A class of students that develops certain initiatives ranging from essay proposals to business models or plans • Strategy departments in the university or in an organisation to intensify their reflection on concrete planned steps forward • Stakeholders who have the tasks to design certain proposals for action and that want to get a constructive feedback
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase critical feedback for learning and adjustment • To better think through certain ideas and proposals and make them more substantial • To learn from other perspectives • To evaluate the robustness of a certain move forward • To learn by active listening and reflecting on one's own position and arguments
Requirements	<p>When to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In group contexts where critical feedback and deeper reflection can be useful • The format works in smaller groups but also in large groups <p>Material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of tables with at least two tables and groups of chairs • Notebooks for the presenters, listeners and commentators to take notes • A flipchart or pin board for explaining the technique and summarising observations and learning <p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting sessions of approx. 3 minutes • Time depends on the number of feedback rounds
Implementation - Overview	<p>The activity is realised in four main phases.</p>



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The activity works best with a larger group of participants who want to adjust their proposals or ideas and are interested to help each other out. In this way the groups can work in parallel in several groups to present and give feedback to each other.

Implementation - Guidelines

1. Clarification on why feedback is needed

- The groups reflect on the ideas or proposals they want to get feedback on. These can be proposals where the participants still have some doubts, but also proposals where they are quite sure about and think they are well developed.
- The group decides what they want to present and how far they need to go into detail during the presentation to the others.
- The presentation should be focused. It should be an oral presentation more understood at bouncing main ideas or proposals to the others instead of long PowerPoint presentations. The idea is to present key elements within a time frame of approx. 3 minutes.
- The group has to choose the presenter. It is also possible that several persons of the group present their ideas to different other groups in parallel. This depends on the total number of participants and groups.
- An alternative is that one group member goes to another group to present. The others in the group become listeners and commentators of a person presenting their proposals from another group.

2. Presentation of proposal, story or idea

- The presenter goes to the listening group and presents the proposals or ideas he or she and the group have worked out. The listening group receives the ideas in silence.
- At the end the space is opened just for some clarification questions.

3. Feedback from group of listeners

- The presenter then turns his or her chair, so that his or her back faces the audience. He or she then listens in silence while the group either attacks (dissent) or provides alternative proposals (assent).
- The ritualisation of not facing the audience de-personalises the process and the group setting. The attacks or alternatives are not personal, but supportive.
- Listening in silence without eye-contact increases at the same time listening for the presenter.

4. Presentation of comments to own group-adjustment of proposal

- The presenter goes back to his or her group after all comments were made.
- The presenter provides a summary of the comments to the group.
- The group reflects on the value and significance of the comments.
- If the approach needs to be adjusted, it will then be adjusted.

It is possible to have several rounds of ritual dissent between different groups to get even more comments on (adjusted) proposals. This depends very much on the number of participants.



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	<p>Ritual dissent on local economic development (LED) initiatives after an analysis of a local economy and local value chains</p> <p>Description of the context</p> <p>Together with a group of local stakeholders from the tourism sector in the city of Korca, the GIZ with the support of Mesopartner did a value chain analysis of their local tourism chain. The objective of this analysis was to promote very concrete local development initiatives that could be implemented within the next 3 to 6 months. The ritual dissent was used to verify the local economic development initiatives if they comply with the 3 criteria for the initiatives. They should be able to be visible in the end, should be able to be realised with joint network forces and financial and motivational resources. It should be realised in max. 6 months.</p> <p>Different groups came up with different initiatives that were presented to each other using the ritual dissent technique.</p> <p>Starting point</p> <p>Group of stakeholders from the tourism value chain analysed the main strengths and weaknesses in the tourism chain with moderation cards.</p> <p>Reflection on short term initiatives and quick wins</p> <p>After having identified and prioritised key challenges in the value chain the participants divided into 3 groups. Each of the groups had to come up with some initiative ideas according to the criteria mentioned above.</p> <p>Presentation of initiatives to the others using ritual dissent</p> <p>The presenters of the three groups presented their defined development initiatives to the other groups using the ritual dissent technique. Three rounds of presentations were made and after each round, the groups were able to adjust their proposals according to the reflection process they went through due to the comments from the other groups.</p> <p>Finally, the revised initiatives were presented to the plenary and final decisions were made jointly on which quick win initiatives should be promoted in the next months.</p> <p>Contribution of the ritual dissent to the findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good initiatives were substantiated and defined in a more outcome-oriented way. • Some initiatives were dropped because they did not apply to the 3 criteria. • Infrastructure projects and initiatives with a lack of real interest of the local stakeholders in the chain were dropped due to the lack of real support. • The ideas were discussed and different opinions considered <p>Support requirements</p> <p>The ritual dissent is often a real encouraging and dynamic way to discuss proposals and ideas. Everybody has to listen for a period of time as well as to present. The process itself encourages also reflection which provides also a dynamic way of improving proposals.</p> <p>The facilitators role in this process is to manage the time well and to assure that the rules are followed (no discussion, no defence, only clarification questions allowed).</p>
<p>Example of application:</p>	
<p>Templates, Graphics for download</p>	<p>There are several instructions or guides available. The tool was developed by Dave J. Snowden and his company, The Cynefin Company (formerly known as Cognitive Edge).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cynefin Company - Ritual Dissent: https://cynefin.io/wiki/Ritual_dissent • SDC learning and Networking - Ritual dissent: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Learning-and-Networking/sdc_km_tools/Documents/Ritual%20Dissent.pdf • Pearl language - Ritual dissent and ritual assent: http://pearllanguage.org/Ritual_dissent_and_assent
<p>Additional format/references</p>	<p>Videos</p> <p>The video shows the tourism value chain workshop in Korca, Albania: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3N7utVu-fU</p>

🕒 Revision #12

★ Created 19 May 2021 12:36:58 by Petra Riedinger

✎ Updated 2 August 2022 18:51:15 by Admin



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