METHOD	W3: WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT
Area of CoP Activity:	Learning and Developing Practice Taking Action as a Community
CoP Lifecycle Phase:	Grow Sustain
CoP Success Factor:	Community Interaction Illustrating Results and Performance Sharing Best Practice Strategy
EIGE Step:	Step 2: Analysing and assessing the state-of-play in the institution Step 6: What comes after the GEP
Group Size:	Unlimited number of groups; 3-7 people per group
Difficulty Level:	♛ ♕ ♛
Time Needed:	🕐 🕐 🕐
Facilitator Preparation:	📖 📖 📖
Participant Preparation:	✏ ✏ ✏
Description:	This activity helps groups to reflect on and think about shared experiences. The result will be a mutual understanding and will help to act in a coordinated way without losing time and energy with unproductive differences and conflicts. It supports to look for insights and to find and shape new ways and directions. The process starts by looking at "What Happened" and discussing that. Then, those facts are being analysed with "So What" and finally it's being discussed what follows with "Now What".
More Information:	www.liberatingstructures.com/9-what-so-what-now-what-w

ADAPTABLE ONLINE

W3: WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT[1]

Short description

This activity helps groups to reflect on and think about shared experiences. The result will be a mutual understanding and will help to act in a coordinated way without losing time and energy with unproductive differences and conflicts. Every voice is being heard in this activity. At the same time it supports to look for insights and to find and shape new ways and directions. The process starts by looking at "What Happened" and discussing that. Then, those facts are being analysed with "So What" and finally it's being discussed what follows with "Now What". This helps eliminating most of the misunderstandings that otherwise fuel disagreements about how to proceed.

When to use

The goal of this activity is to look back on a process and decide if and what adjustments are necessary. It helps to weigh up whether the previous procedure was the right one and to find a new path that might be better for the overall goal or how to adjust the previous procedure to make sure it is aligned with the objectives.

How to

A: Brief description

This activity consists of answering and discussing three questions (usually after a prominent incident or if the process is stagnating): 1) WHAT?, 2) SO WHAT?, 3) NOW WHAT?. By answering those questions what had gone wrong is being described, analysed and a solution or new approach is being developed.

B: Detailed step-by-step guide

- The basic question to start with after a shared experience (for example something did not work out as planned) is "WHAT? What happened? What did you observe?". The answers to those questions will be collected. The next question to ask is "SO WHAT? Why is this important? What patterns or conclusions are emerging?" Then, after understanding and making sense of what has been discussed, ask "NOW WHAT? What action would make sense in this context?"
- The number of groups in this activity is not limited. Each group should consist of 5-7 people. Everyone is included in this activity and has equal opportunity to contribute to each group.
- First of all the group needs to be divided in smaller groups of 5-7 people. Then the first step is "WHAT?". Everyone starts out working alone on this question and then they continue working on this in small groups. The most prominent aspects from the small groups are shared with the whole group and collected. Then they continue with the question "SO WHAT?".
- They again, start working alone and they discuss the question within the group. Striking aspects are shared with the whole group and are collected. After that, the participants continue with the third W: "NOW WHAT?". Like before, each participant starts working on this question alone before discussing it in the small group. The proposed strategies and actions are being shared with the whole group and are being discussed.

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[1] Adapted from Liberating Structures, http://www.liberatingstructures.com/9-what-so-what-now-what-w/.
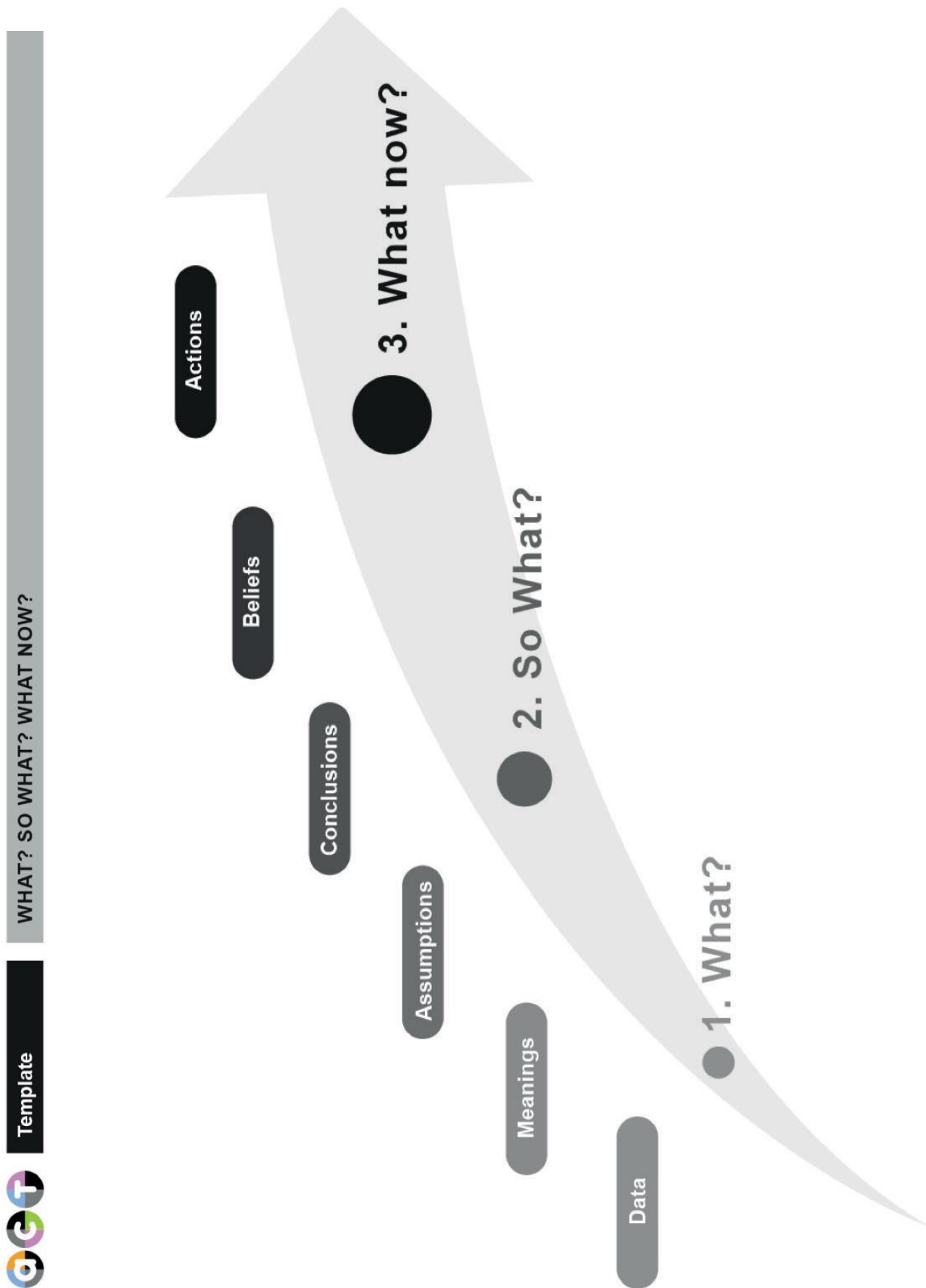
Additional ideas/ information

- During the process it would be good to check in on the small groups and ask if it is clear to them which answer belongs to which category as that might be a bit confusing. It could also help to share some answers with the whole group to avoid misunderstandings.
- Feedback is really important for this activity. Without feedback there won't be progress / learning.
- It helps to set time limits for the different steps of the activity in order to avoid getting lost in one step.

The W3 activity can be adapted online and used for virtual meetings. The process doesn't need to be adapted but some things should be taken into account: When deciding on a web-based application it is important to make sure it allows to divide participants in smaller groups (breakout-rooms). This takes time that should be considered when planning the activity. It is also important to set a time limit for the group work and to have a timer to stop the time. It might also help to share the visualisation beforehand with the participants. To not loose to much time on explaining the process of the activity, this can also be done before the meeting. Web-based applications that provide breakout-rooms you could use are for example Vispa, Whereby, GoToMeeting, BigBlueButton or Zoom

ADAPTABLE ONLINE

Visualisation:[2]

WHAT? SO WHAT? WHAT NOW?

Template

3. What now?

Actions

2. So What?

Beliefs

Conclusions

Assumptions

1. What?

Meanings

Data

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[2] Based on Liberating Structures: http://www.liberatingstructures.com/9-what-so-what-now-what-w/

REFERENCES

Liberating Structures – Innovation durch echte Zusammenarbeit. 2019. Available from: https://www.liberatingstructures.de/.

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