

Option 1: Community café

Definition



When hosting a community café (in Dutch: Café Dialoog), you try to receive people who live in the community in an informal setting. The community café will be hosted by the youngsters, in collaboration with their teachers or coaches. The participants of the community café will be people who live in the community.

Each table has a certain question or topic the participants can talk about. There need to be several tables (as many tables as you have questions). The questions are linked to the table. The participants move from one table to another table after each round. When participants come to a new table they quickly look into the ideas of the previous group. This way, people build further upon ideas of earlier groups. The community café is a fast way to grasp the common view of the community.

By hosting a community café we want the youngsters to gain an understanding of what lives in the neighbourhood (problems, complaints), what kind of enterprises are needed, and other possible interesting questions. The atmosphere of a community café is very informal (hence 'café'), and thus fitting for both the youngsters and the people from within the community.

Preparation

- Think about the different questions you want to ask. What do you really want to know from the community? What kind of information do you need in order to come up with a business idea?

If you want to do a community analysis in order to come up with potential business idea's, possible questions could be:

- What do you dislike the most about your neighbourhood? Do you have any complaints about the neighbourhood?
- What do you like about your neighbourhood?
- What kind of people are living in the community?
- What kind of businesses do you miss in the neighbourhood?
- What kind of businesses do you have enough of in the neighbourhood?
- ...

You have to assume that people will talk for about half an hour on a question, so three to four questions is ideal.

- Try to formulate the questions as straightforward as possible so that it is clear to the people from the community what you want to know. It is marvellous if there could be some discussion around an answer, so try to avoid asking questions that you know the answer to or for which you have an obvious answer.
- Think of different ways to bring people from the community to your community café. How can you reach the people living in the community? Try to combine different channels such as social media, flyers and posters. Try to address some people in the street if possible.
- The room were you host the community café has to be as hospitable as possible. It is important that the participants are offered a drink and a bite at the beginning of the event. You can maybe put some pictures on the wall of the neighbourhood or play some music in the background that you think people will like.

- Every table has to have a paper tablecloth. Participants can just write on the tablecloth using markers.

Execution

- You have as many tables as you have questions (so three to four). Seated at each table, there is a host (one of the youngsters who want to learn more about the community) who has one question. The host reads the question to the participants. Each table can have 4 to 8 participants. The participants write down their ideas on the tablecloth. The hosts tries to link the different ideas with one another. After a half hour, the first round is over.
- The participants move to another table. The host remains seated at the same table. If the new participants take place at the table, the host explains the ideas and answers from the previous group and they start from there.
- You moderate as many rounds as you have tables.
- During the last round, the host tries to synthesise together with the group all the different responses. The hosts then presents the answers to all the participants and the other hosts.
- Finally, participants receive a specific amount of stickers. You can decide on the number of stickers in advance. The stickers can help them express priority to a certain answer or problem. For example, it can be that there are 10 possible interesting businesses for the community. By allowing the participants to vote, the youngsters will get an idea of which businesses has the highest demand. It can also be useful to use a ranking within the stickers (for example one colour or a number written on the sticker for the first choice, a number for the second and so on).

Possible variations and tips:



- If the youngsters don't feel much for hosting a table, you can ask if some of the participants are willing to host a table.
- If youngsters have already used different tools to explore the community, for example the game, LOMAP or mapping existing neighbourhoods, they can start the community café with a small presentation. It would be great if there could be some pictures of the neighbourhood (from the game or from LOMAP) on the walls.
- If the participants own a smartphone it may be fun to use Mentimeter (<https://www.mentimeter.com/>) to start the conversation. It forces each participant to give their answer so it is particularly useful if the participants aren't very outspoken. It is also a good way to collect some quantitative insights about the community.
- Try to gather data from the participants who are willing to participate again in additional stages. Ask them for their names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, ... It would be great if you could gather a list of everybody in the neighbourhood who you can contact. It is also a great way to build a network within the community.
- You can also look for variations from 'community café' is that is better suited for the people living within the community. Some may prefer to host afternoon tea or afternoon coffee.

Material:



- As many hosts and tables as you have questions. Chairs.
- Paper tablecloth for each table and markers.
- Stickers
- Bites and drinks.

Timeframe and number of participants:



2,5 hours if you have between 16 or 32 participants and 4 questions: 4 rounds and the conclusion.

Do the youngsters have to be in group or can this method be conducted alone:



Preferably in group.

When done alone, you have to have participants who are willing to host a table.

Sources and more information:



Adapted from 'Café Dialoog'. You can find more information about the café dialog method:

Participatie aan het lokaal sociaal beleid. Participatiehefboom handvaten, Samenlevingsopbouw Vlaanderen, pg 32 – 36,

<https://www.participatiewordtgesmaakt.be/websites/52/uploads/file/Participatiekoffer%20-%20Handvatten.pdf> (Dutch)

A more in-depth explanation about this method can also be found in:

Slocum N. (2003) The World Café, Participatory methods toolkit, A practitioner's manual, KBSviWTA, UNU/CRIS, pp 141-152. (English)

A useful online tool to get a grasp of the community's opinion is Mentimeter:

<https://www.mentimeter.com/>