Step 1: Describe

Which actors are involved?

Which dimension would you like to start analysing?

Facts

How does the conflict over facts manifest itself?

Why can the involved parties not agree on the facts?

Emotions

How do emotions play a role?

Why do emotions play the role they do?

Power

How does power play a role?

In what ways are power relations important?

Summarize your discussion of the dimensions:

Would you like to continue analysing any of the dimensions?

Yes, facts!
Go back to the questions

Yes, emotions!
Go back to the questions

Yes, power!
Go back to the questions

No.
Continue to step 2

Step 2: Assessment of the current situation

How do emotions, facts, and power influence each other?

Based on your understanding of the current situation, you will now move on to assessing the conditions for dialogue.

Step 3: Conditions for dialogue

Post-truth situations have a number of different characteristics that can influence the conditions for dialogue.

Check the characteristics that are present in the situation you have analyzed. Then discuss how the checked characteristics are expressed.

- ☐ **1. Factual controversies**
  Ignoring and selectively using facts, conflicting claims to the truth, discrediting opponents' claims, and fabricating facts and evidence.
- ☐ **2. Manipulative use of emotions**
  Weakening opponents and mobilizing followers by expressing strong emotions, evoking strong emotions in others, and/or using emotionally charged rhetoric.
- ☐ **3. Lack of trust in institutions**
  Lack of trust in politics, established political parties, processes, expertise, and society as a whole, as well as questioning the democratically grounded separation of powers.
- ☐ **4. Expressions of mal intent**
  Systematic lies and distortion of opponents' arguments.
- ☐ **5. Threatening language and behavior**
  Violent, abusive, derogatory, and threatening behavior and language.
- ☐ **6. Polarization between groups**
  Divisive rhetoric, low trust between groups with opposing views, demonization of opponents.
- ☐ **7. Undermining of democratic norms and procedures**
  Attempts to erode trust in experts, politicians, and authorities, opposition to democratic processes and decisions, staging of sham trials to sow confusion.

You can also discuss what motives you think lie behind the destructive actions you've identified above. When discussing motives, it's important to distinguish between consciously destructive actions and actions done without mal intent.

Is the situation diabolical or dialogical?

Now it's time to use your analysis of dimensions (facts, emotions, and power) and characteristics to assess the conditions for dialogue. We suggest that you apply the distinction between diabolical and dialogical situations as described below. It is often the case that the situation seems to fall somewhere in between.

Diabolical situations entail a risk that, under current conditions, dialogue may do more harm than good. This can occur, for example, by:
- legitimizing destructive or erroneous positions;
- reinforcing power imbalances and fostering cynicism;
- exacerbating conflict when destructive emotional expressions and mistrust dominate.

Dialogical situations mean that, despite difficult conditions, it might be possible and desirable to engage in dialogue. For a situation to be open to dialogue, the parties involved need to be reasonably open to listening to one another and willing to reach an agreement or respectfully disagree.

Is your situation diabolical or dialogical?

Note that even if your analysis provides a snapshot, situations can evolve over time and shift between being diabolical and open to dialogue.

Difficult and open-ended situations call for different approaches. Below, you can use a set of questions to determine how to handle the situation.



Diabolical

You have concluded that the situation is diabolical. This means that the situation is currently not conducive to dialogue. Now you can learn more about the situation and identify what you can do to try to change it so that it becomes conducive to dialogue.
- What makes the situation diabolical?
- What would need to change for the situation to become open to dialogue?
- What steps need to be taken to make the situation open to dialogue?



Dialogical

You have concluded that the situation is dialogical. You can now begin to design a process for continued dialogue using the questions below.
- What is the purpose of the dialogue?
- Who should participate in the dialogue?
- How will the dialogue be facilitated?
- Where should the dialogue take place?
- What dialogue methods should be used?

There is space for notes on the next page.

Diabolical

Dialogical