

# POWER AND PRIVILEGE



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# Introduction to Privilege, Power & Oppression

Friends of the Earth works to uproot the systems that create and perpetuate environmental injustice. In order to achieve such system change, we need to challenge the structures of oppression and privilege that we come up against in our communities and political contexts. These structures of oppression are also deeply embedded in our own organisations and ways of working – often without us even realising it.

Friends of the Earth member groups across Europe are already taking action to address the multiple forms of oppression within our own organisations and networks. Some groups have internal working groups to look at how our recruitment practices and organisational processes discriminate against particular groups, and provide staff training on addressing sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination in the workplace. Member groups are also building awareness of oppression within our networks through providing training to activists and local groups. At the same time, there has been a growing recognition that marginalised groups are often hit first, and hardest, by environmental problems, and new alliances have been built in order to work in solidarity with them.

These tools, case studies and session plans will help us to understand how we may be reproducing these oppressions within our organisations and networks, and how we may be reinforcing them back into society through our work. Understanding and addressing power and privilege will help to untangle the complex links between environmental injustice and sexism, racism, homophobia, economic marginalisation, and connections with other forms of structural oppression. They will help us look at how we can start to challenge oppression within our organisations and networks, as well as through our campaigns, actions, and work with communities.

# What is oppression?

Oppression has been defined as the following:

- ✓ It is institutionalised power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time
- ✓ It allows certain 'groups' of people to claim a dominant position over 'other groups' and this dominance is maintained and continued at an institutional level.

This means oppression is built into institutions like government, education systems and our own organisations and groups. It gives power and positions of dominance to some groups of people over other groups of people.

Sometimes you will hear the words 'intersectionality' or 'systems of oppression.' These terms point out:

- ✓ There are multiple forms of oppression which relate or interact with each other, often resulting in overlapping oppressions.
- ✓ The extent and systemic nature of oppression – oppression is reinforced on individual, institutional and societal levels.

Understanding how forms of oppression are linked and intersect allows us to better understand other people's experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. Take for example the forms of discrimination a black woman may experience at a job. She may be earning less than her white co-workers (which includes both white men and white women) and less than any black male co-workers. She faces both racism and sexism at the same time. As well, she cannot separate the 'racialised' part of her identity from the 'gendered' part of her identity.

Systems of oppression run through our language and shape the way we act and do things in our culture. Because systems of oppression have a history – meaning they have formed over time in specific political, economic and social contexts – we cannot get rid of systems of oppression all at once. It will take carefully planned, strategic anti-oppressive organising and learning, as well as an understanding of histories of oppression.

Systems of oppression are built around what are understood to be "norms" in our societies. A norm states what is "normal," acceptable, and desirable. "The norm" is something that is valued and supported in a society. It is also given a position of dominance, privilege and power over what is defined as non-dominant, abnormal and therefore less valuable or marginal.

## Power and Privilege

In order to effectively confront systems of oppression we must also address issues of power and privilege. It is often easier to focus on how people are oppressed, disadvantaged and discriminated against than it is to address how we as individuals may have privileges and as a result are able to exercise our power at the expense of others. The kind of self-scrutiny needed to look at ourselves and examine the ways we have benefited from different forms of privilege is difficult but absolutely crucial if we are committed to dismantling systems of oppression and working in an anti-oppressive way.

### What is power?

The definition of power has long been debated and there continue to be different understandings of the term. One definition that we think is both simple and useful is: "the ability to get what you want."

The term "power" describes a relationship. It can only be understood as a relationship between human beings in a specific historical, economic and social setting. It must be exercised to be visible.

It is worth noting here the difference between forms of power that are 'power-over' and 'power-with'. Power-over is power that is used in a discriminatory and oppressive way: It means having power over others and therefore domination and control over others (e.g. through coercion and violence). Power-with is power that is shared with all people in struggles for liberation and equality. In other words, it means using or exercising one's power to work with others equitably, for example, in a social movement.

### What is privilege?

Privilege is an unearned, special advantage or right that a person is born into or gains during their lifetime. It is supported by the formal and informal institutions of society and automatically given to all members of a dominant group, simply because of their group membership.

Privilege implies that wherever there is a system of oppression (such as capitalism, patriarchy, or white supremacy) there is an oppressed group and also a privileged group, who benefit from the oppressions that this system puts in place. Privilege and power are closely related: privilege often gives a person or group power over others.

Sometimes the privileged group benefits from the system in obvious, material ways, such as when women are expected to do most or all of the housework, and male partners benefit from their unpaid labour. At other times the benefits are more subtle and invisible and involve certain pressures being taken off the privileged group and focused on others, such as people of colour being much more likely to be targeted and harassed by police.

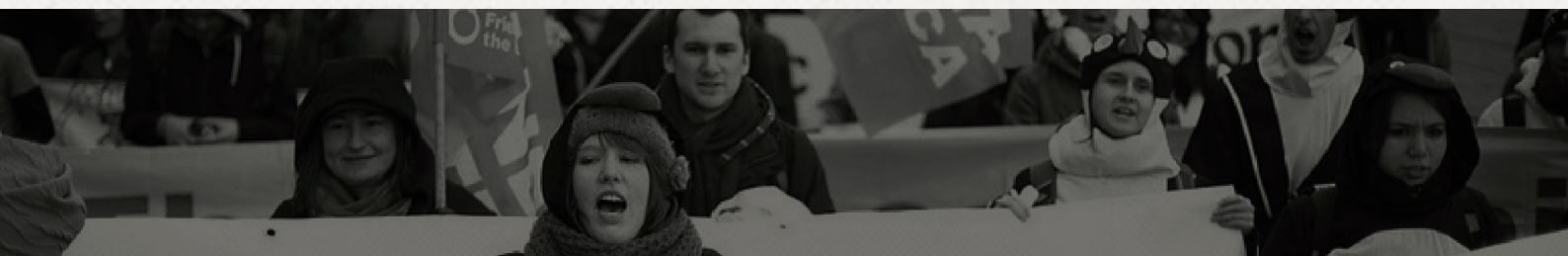
Privilege is 'an invisible package of unearned benefits' that members of privileged groups 'can count on cashing in every day,' but about which they 'are meant to remain oblivious.' Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it. A lot of people find it difficult to accept this idea when they belong to a 'dominant' group that is part of the 'norm.' After all, 'they didn't ask for it' and 'it's not their fault.' However, building awareness and understanding about the privileges you can count on and others cannot, due to systems of oppression, is an important part of building solidarity and becoming an ally.

## What is anti-oppressive organising?

Anti-oppressive organising means confronting systems of power and privilege on an ongoing basis in your daily life and in social change work. Power relationships are part of our organisations and our activism too.

Anti-oppressive organising involves being inclusive. Being inclusive can involve making meetings accessible to people with physical disabilities, or being aware of what groups of people in your organisation speak the most and which people speak the least. There are many different ways of to be inclusive in your organising and there is no single way to organise anti-oppressively. Anti-oppressive organising practices will vary according to the issues you confront; they will vary across time, location, the people you are working with, the resources you have and so on. There isn't one recipe for organising anti-oppressively but there are many ideas for anti-oppressive practises and tools that you can use – a number of which are included in this curriculum.

*Written up by Shannon Stephens - Friends of the Earth Scotland  
and Fiona Ranford - Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland*



# TOOLS

## EVENTS





# Diversity Welcome

## TIME NEEDED:

10-15 minutes

## PREPARATION NEEDED

Some time should be spent considering the likely multiple experiences and identities of the people in the space

## Why use this tool

A diversity welcome is an opportunity to welcome the complexity of people's experiences and identities into a workshop. It aims to acknowledge and raise up some of the identities and experiences that might be marginalised in a room, thereby bringing them out of the margins and establishing their importance within the group. It can also build awareness amongst people in the mainstream of a group that there are other identities and experiences present other than their own.

## Description

The diversity welcome involves naming and welcoming in aspects of people's identities and experiences that might be present in the space, one by one. The more aspects you mention, the more likely people are to feel welcome and included in the space. The process can take quite a long time, and it is important to work slowly through your list of welcomes, beginning each with an intentional I'd like to welcome...

Here is an example of a diversity welcome, but it's important to adapt it to suit the kinds of marginalised experiences and identities that might be in your group. Make sure to end your welcome with an invitation for people to name aspects of the group's diversity that might have been missed. If possible, try to look at the group rather than read from your notes, although you might want to have them to hand for those aspects of diversity you are likely to forget.

I'd like to welcome...

- ✓ Women, men, trans\* people and non-binary people
- ✓ People of African descent, Asian descent, Hispanic descent, European descent, people native to this land, people of multiple and mixed descent
- ✓ All the languages spoken in this room (try to find them out in advance so you can name them)
- ✓ Name the countries/provinces/counties/cities represented (making sure to leave space for people to add any that are missing)

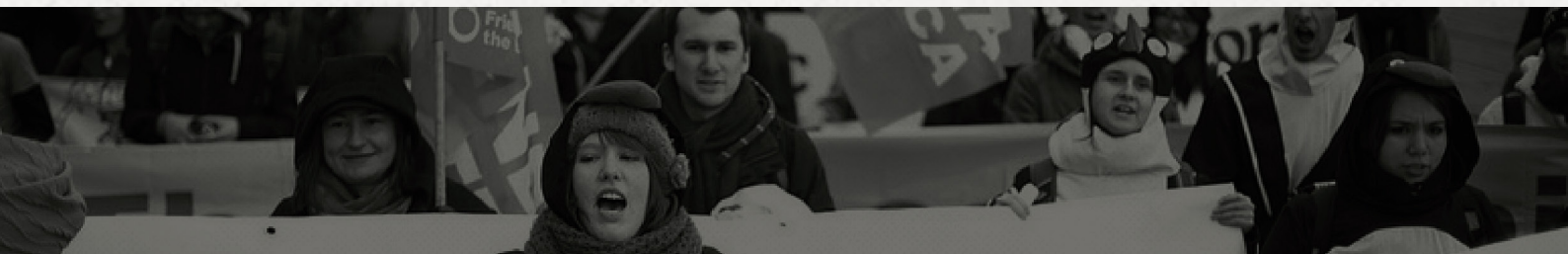
- ✓ People of all ages- in their teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s (depending on the group)
- ✓ People of all sexualities- lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, queer and those for whom these labels don't fit
- ✓ Our bodies, in whatever shape and size they come in, and with any pain or discomfort they may hold
- ✓ People who identify as campaigners/activists, and those who don't
- ✓ People who are familiar with friends of the earth and those who aren't
- ✓ People from all faith and belief backgrounds, both religious and non-religious
- ✓ All the emotions in the room- excitement, anxiety, anger, disappointment, grief, joy
- ✓ Those who have made it possible for you to be here today- those who are still living and those who have died

Is there anything else we would like to welcome into this space?

## Facilitator considerations

It's important to leave space for people to welcome into the space things that may not have been acknowledged or recognised. The experience can feel a little strange to people who are unfamiliar with it, but try not to let this rush you and take your time, almost like a ritual- it can be quite a powerful tool when done with care.

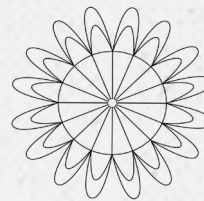
*Written up by Fiona Ranford, Friends of the Earth England, Wales Northern Ireland.  
Based on an activity by the Process Work community, including Arni and Amy Mindell.*



# Power Flower

## TIME NEEDED:

40 minutes



## PREPARATION NEEDED

Big flipchart with the outlines of the flower drawn on it. Enough paper, pencils and colouring material for all participants to draw their own flowers OR one pre-made flower for each participant + pens/colouring material.

## Why use this tool

The exercise invites participants to reflect on their own privileges or lack of them. It is a chance to increase our self-knowledge and gain more awareness of our position in the world. The exercise can also be used to open up issues of power & privilege in a group before going to explore them in more depth using other exercises or discussions.

## Description

### INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

Introduce the topic of structural oppression and explain how we will use the flower. In the centre of the flower we will write elements of social identity that may lead to oppression. In the first petal we write the dominant group in our society and in the outer petal participants will later write their own position in relation to this social identity. Afterwards they can use colour to indicate in how many cases they are part of the dominant group.

### FILLING OUT THE INNER PART OF THE FLOWER (10 MIN)

Ask the group to name different elements of social identity which may lead to oppression. When someone names one, check if the group agrees that this identity is used for structural oppression. Then ask that same participant what they think is the dominant identity. Check with the rest of the group if they agree, if not discuss further until you find some consensus in the group. Check with the example flower if there are any identities that the group hasn't thought of. Depending on the group you may choose to address specific parts of identity that you know are relevant to that group.

### PARTICIPANTS FILL OUT THE OUTER PETALS (5 TO 10 MIN)

Give participants some time to fill out the outer petals for themselves. This will be their own position in relation to this social identity, for example in the outer petal of 'family status' they might write 'married' or 'living together'. For some people this can be quite a painful exercise so it's important to give people privacy by letting them work individually. Ask for silence to start with, but don't enforce this as long as people are concentrated on the exercise. When you see that most people have finished, move on to the next step.

## **BUDDY/SMALL GROUP DEBRIEF (5 TO 15 MIN)**

Give participants the option to debrief the exercise either in buddy pairs or small groups. Make sure that it's clear that this is optional; if people want to share their power flower they are invited to, but if they would rather spend some more time working alone, they are also welcome to do that. Encourage participants to stick to how they are feeling having filled in this flower, rather than getting into theoretical discussion about oppression.

## **WHOLE GROUP DEBRIEF (5 – 10 MIN)**

Bring the group back together again and ask for some reflections of how people found the exercise. Wrap the exercise up by a discussion on what the use of this exercise could be. What did we learn? How will that help us?

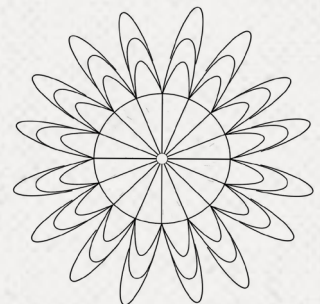
## **Additional elements**

### **EMPTY FLOWER**

Rather than everyone filling in the same elements of social identity, start with a brainstorm where you list a number of elements. Then, ask participants to write in the centre of the flower the ones that they feel most relevant to them, or the ones that they have never thought about before. This way everyone will have their own flower. This can be particularly useful in a group with a lot of variety in background and life experience.

### **THREE PETALS**

Add a third layer of petals where participants can write the identity of those who are in a leading position in their group/collective/organisation. This creates a chance to discuss power dynamics in our groups. Do we try to engage people with a non-dominant social identity in our groups? Do we succeed in that? Do we succeed in engaging them in a meaningful way?



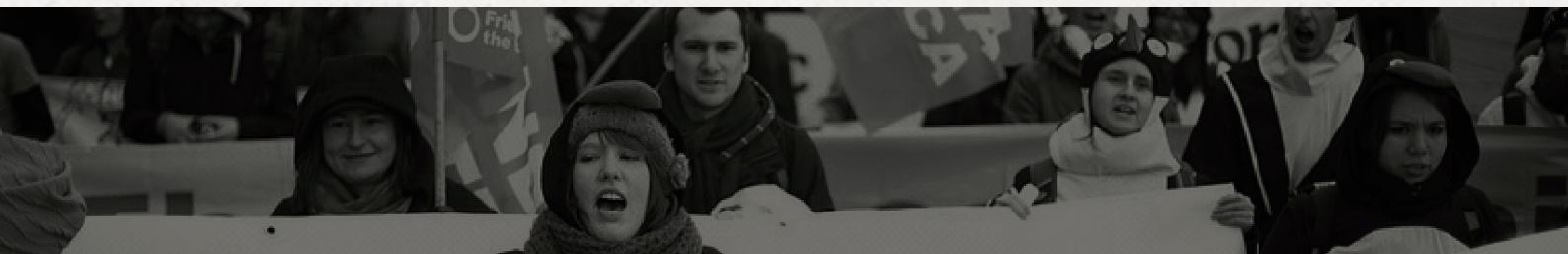
## **Facilitator considerations**

For some people this might be quite a painful exercise and it can lead to people feeling all sorts of difficult emotions. Make sure that before diving into this exercise you have done enough container building to provide safety in the group. Naming some of these social identities (e.g. race) can often be hard. Encourage people to speak up and help if necessary.

If you are working with a fairly privileged group people might end up feeling quite guilty/embarrassed to identify their position in relation to dominant groups. Discussing the concept of allies might help them accept their position and use it in a positive way.

Remember that all elements of social identity are socially constructed- and there may be some debate over the “right” or “wrong” terms to use. There may also be some discussion over who is the dominant group within your society. You may choose to dig deeper into these differences, or rather accommodate different voices by allowing people to use the terms that make most sense to them.

*Written up by Mia van Dongen - LABO vzw*



# Privilege walk

## TIME NEEDED:

1 hour

## PREPARATION NEEDED

Choose about 10 to 20 different statements, adjusted to the different privileges present in the group. Make sure you have a clear space where participants won't trip over anything and have enough space to walk without touching each other. The exercise works best in groups of at least 10 people.

## Why use this tool

A privilege walk can help us gain greater awareness about those aspects in our life where we are more or less privileged than others. By providing a very visual map of the different levels of privilege in a group it can help understand dynamics in that group.

## Description

### EXPERIENCE (10 - 20 MIN, DEPENDING ON NUMBER OF STATEMENTS)

Line all the participants up next to each other (if possible) on one side of the room. If you use statements asking participants to take a step backwards, make sure they have enough space behind them as well as in front of them. Ask to maintain silence during the exercise.

Read out a list of statements which invite participants to take a step forward or backwards according to criteria. For example: "if you are white, take a step forward". For more examples of statements, see the list attached to this exercise.

Leave enough time between the statements to allow participants to reflect on the criteria. Ensure that the group stays silent.

Once the list is finished, invite participants to look around the room and notice how people are spread throughout the space.

### REFLECTION (10 - 20 MIN)

Invite participants to reflect with the person/people who have taken a similar number of steps forward/back as them (closest) on how they felt during the exercise. Encourage participants to stay with the feelings and not start to rationalise or interpret the experience yet. As a second question ask participants to reflect on what they learned about themselves/their upbringing/their current position in this exercise.

## **ANALYSIS (20 MIN)**

Bring the group back together in the circle. Ask people to share their reflections. Guide the conversation towards the things people learned about themselves and the way this could relate to movement building and working as allies. Take time to draw the learning out of the group and to discuss the practice of 'being an ally'.

## **Additional elements or variations**

### **STEP BACKWARDS**

You can choose to use only statements which invite participants to take a step forward. This way you focus mostly on the presence of privilege. You can also choose to include statements which invite participants to take a step backwards. This gives more visibility to areas where participants may have experienced a lack of privilege.

### **EYES OPEN / CLOSED**

Some facilitators ask the group to close their eyes. Some participants find it easier to acknowledge their (lack of) privilege when they know the group can't see it (though of course the facilitator still can). The impact is also bigger when participants open their eyes at the end of the exercise and realise how far apart everyone is.

Eyes open makes some people feel more vulnerable, because other people can see you when you move. (Mostly the less privileged people see the more privileged people moving, while those at the front are unaware of how far behind the rest are.) At the same time it may make people feel more secure, because they can still see the rest of the group and feel less isolated. There is less of a shock effect at the end of the exercise, because people already have a feeling of where they are compared to the rest of the group.

## **Facilitator considerations**

### **BRINGING THE GROUP BACK TOGETHER**

If the experience was very emotional for the group or some of the participants, you may choose to wait with the analysis phase for a while. Emphasizing the different levels of privilege in a group may cause participants to feel angry, jealous, ashamed or guilty. Sometimes a group needs a bit of time to get back together again. You can use energisers, games or trust exercises to bring the group back together. It is important not to gloss over the differences within the group that have been highlighted by this exercise. You may choose to return to this question of privilege with the group at a later stage.

## FACILITATOR

It may be useful to reflect on who will be facilitating the exercise and how this person relates to the group in terms of privilege. For example if gender and race are the most important privileges in the group, it might be less appropriate to have a white cis-man facilitate the exercise. Maybe even more important is to chose a facilitator who is aware of and comfortable with their own level of privilege and has unpacked the ways this has influenced their life.

*Written up by Mia van Dongen - LABO vzw - based on an activity by Training for Change*

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This is a list with suggestions, which you can chose to use or adapt. They were collected for a north-western European context. Criteria that would indicate privilege here, such as owning a house or having your parents pay for higher education, may not indicate privilege in other regions.

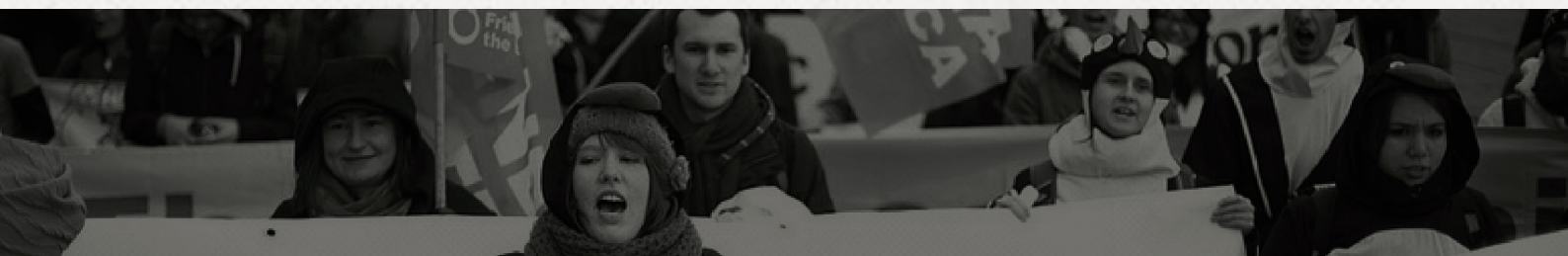
Please adapt the list both to your context and the specific of the group you will work with.

- ✓ If you are an EU citizen, take a step forward
- ✓ If both of your parents were EU citizens when you were born, take a step forward
- ✓ If you come from Eastern Europe, take a step backward
- ✓ If your family has ever left your homeland or entered another country not of your own free will, take one step back
- ✓ If you are able to access social welfare, take a step forward
- ✓ If you are a citizen of the country where you live, take a step forward
- ✓ If you have a higher education degree, take a step forward
- ✓ If one or both of your parents have a higher education degree, take a step forward
- ✓ If you grew up knowing that your parents would pay for your higher education, take a step forward
- ✓ If you were taken to art galleries, museums, sporting events or plays by your parents, take a step forward
- ✓ If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward
- ✓ If you rely, or have relied, primarily on public transportation, take one step back



- ✓ If your family ever had to move because they could not afford to pay the rent or mortgage, please take a step back
- ✓ If your family employs help as cleaner, gardeners, etc., take a step forward
- ✓ If you are white take a step forward
- ✓ If both of your parents are white take a step forward
- ✓ If your parents own a house, take a step forward
- ✓ If you own a house, take a step forward
- ✓ If the breadwinner in your family was ever unemployed while you were a child, take a step backward
- ✓ If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food, take a step back
- ✓ If you or members of your family have been on welfare, take a step backward
- ✓ If you are able to move through the world without fear of sexual assault, take one step forward
- ✓ If you feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step back
- ✓ If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take one step forward
- ✓ If you are female, take a step backward
- ✓ If you are a cis-man, take a step forward
- ✓ If you are gay or are sometimes believed to be gay, take a step backward.
- ✓ If you have ever been arrested or detained in a non-activist situation, take a step backward
- ✓ If you would never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, take a step forward
- ✓ If you studied the culture of your ancestors in primary school, take a step forward
- ✓ If the holidays of your religion are recognised as public holidays, take a step forward
- ✓ If your school was conducted in a language that was not your first language, take a step backward
- ✓ If English is your first language, take one step forward
- ✓ If you were ever made fun of or bullied for something you could not change or was beyond your control, take one step backward

- ✓ If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to fit in more, take a step backward
- ✓ If you have ever been spoken over because you could not articulate your thoughts fast enough, take a step backward
- ✓ If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take a step backward
- ✓ If you have been divorced or impacted by divorce take a step backward
- ✓ If you are under 21 years old or over 60, take a step backward
- ✓ If you have traveled outside of the E.U., take a step forward
- ✓ If there was ever substance abuse or other forms of addiction in your family, take a step backward
- ✓ If you come from a single-parent household, take a step backward
- ✓ If you or someone else in your family suffered or suffers from mental illness, take a step backward
- ✓ If you often feel or felt that your parents are too busy to spend time with you, take a step backward
- ✓ If you have an invisible or visible illness or disability, take a step backward
- ✓ If you are able-bodied, take a step forward



# Gallery of Oppression

## TIME NEEDED:

25 - 35 minutes

## PREPARATION NEEDED

Enough space for all the pairs to have some privacy.

## Why use this tool

This exercise can be used as a way to start a conversation about oppression, to reflect on the relationship between oppressors and oppressed and to discuss the difference between victims and oppressed.

## Description

### EXPERIENCE (10 MIN)

Introduce the exercise and give some background on Theatre of the Oppressed, for inspiration see the resources. Explain sculpting by demonstrating it with one of the participants or your co-facilitator. Explain that everyone will sculpt someone else into an image and that afterwards we will have a 'gallery'. Everyone will get to exhibit their image and walk around the images of the other pairs. We will do this in two rounds, so everyone gets to be a part of an exhibition, and a visitor to an exhibition. Ask for silence during this exercise.

Invite the participants to form pairs and find a space to work. Ask them to decide who will be the first sculptor and who will be the first image (either free or by giving some indication, e.g. 'the oldest', 'the one who travelled the furthest'). Ask all the pairs to sculpt an image of oppression, using the body of their partner as intelligent clay. Don't give any further instructions, only use the word oppression. Invite them to move around the space freely and use the structures and objects around them to strengthen their images if they want. It can be useful to ask pairs to sit down when they have both finished sculpting. Remind them that they need to remember both of their images in order to be able to exhibit them.

### REFLECTION (10 MIN)

Ask all the pairs to exhibit their first image somewhere in the space. Give the sculptors a bit of time to make final adjustments to their image and then invite the sculptors to walk around the exhibition and look at the other images. Encourage the actors to take care of themselves and shake out their image if it gets too uncomfortable. Encourage them to get back in position afterwards.

Ask the visitors for reflections on the images. Begin the reflections with observations first and interpretations afterwards. An observation might be: many of the images look down, many have fists. An interpretation would be: I see anger, I feel sadness, I see a police officer.

Do the same for the second round of images.

## **ANALYSIS (5 - 15 MIN)**

Make a circle with the group. Ask people if they want to share anything. Draw out feelings, observations, learnings.

Trickster question: how many images did you see of people being oppressed? How many images did you see of people oppressing others? Usually there are many more images of people being oppressed. Yet the instruction was to make an image of "oppression". Have a short group discussion on why we would rather talk about the people being oppressed than the oppressors. Who do we identify with ourselves?

## **Additional elements or variations**

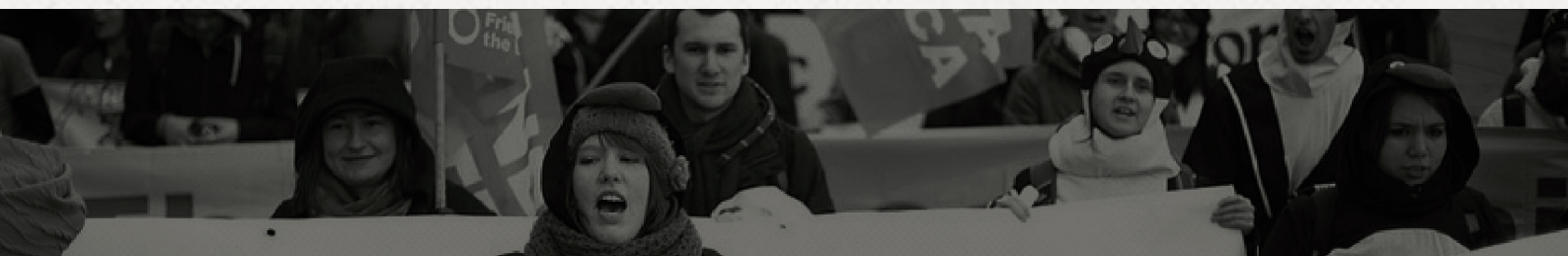
### **VICTIMS - OPPRESSED**

During the group discussion ask how many images we saw of victims and how many of oppressed people fighting back or resisting. Give some time for reflections on this. Steer the conversations towards the impact being a "victim" has on your ability to create change. If we see oppressed people as victims, how does that influence our ability to work with oppressed or marginalised people?

## **Facilitator considerations**

Don't take too much time for sculpting, the aim is to work intuitively, not to overthink things. Sometimes people struggle with that, gently encourage them to finalise their image.

*Written up by Mia van Dongen - LABO vzw - based on an activity from the Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal*



# Chair of power

## TIME NEEDED:

30 - 50 minutes

## PREPARATION NEEDED

You need 5 chairs, a table and a glass or a bottle of water.

## Why use this tool

To build understanding in a group about the different ways in which power can operate in society, and to consider different strategies for challenging dominant power relations. It can provide a strong shared power analysis in the group which can then be applied to specific issues or contexts.

## Description

### PART 1: EXPLORING POWER (15-25 MINS)

Invite participants to stand in a large circle. Arrange 5 chairs, a table and a glass or a bottle of water at random in the centre of the circle. Remove all other objects from the circle.

Ask someone to volunteer to enter the circle and use the objects to make one of the chairs the most powerful object in the scene. They can position any object wherever they want. Once they have made an arrangement and they are happy with it, invite them to stand back in the circle.

Ask the other participants (encouraging the person who arranged the chairs to listen rather than explain): Is this chair powerful? What is powerful about the chair here?

Invite someone to rearrange the objects if they can think of a way to make the chair of power even more powerful. When they are happy with the arrangement, invite them to rejoin the circle

Ask the other participants: Is the chair more or less powerful now? What makes it more/less powerful? Explore the disagreement where it exists, always asking why people think the different objects hold more or less power.

Continue asking people to enter one at a time if they have an idea for how to make the chair more powerful, while asking the groups feedback until the group is satisfied it has found the most powerful image. In this process you can draw out different kinds of power as they emerge. This might be power over & power between, visible & invisible, institutional, structural, ideological etc.

As different scenes are created and discussed, you might want to ask the group if the image they are seeing relates to a particular experience in their own life, or situation they see in the world. This can support the group to build consciousness of how power operates in our everyday lives.

## **PART 2: RESISTANCE (15-25 MINS)**

Invite someone to enter the most powerful scene that has been made with the chairs and tables and make a still image/statue with their body in the most powerful position they can imagine within that scene

Ask participants: What is powerful about this image?

Next, invite someone to step into the image and take away the power from the other person in the scene, again by creating a still image/statue with their own body, without touching the other person.

Ask participants: Who do you think is most powerful? Why?

When participants have come to general agreement about who is the most powerful in the scene, ask the person with "less power" to leave the scene as they have been replaced. The 'more powerful' person should remain in the same position. Then invite someone else to enter the scene and remove the power from this person, again by using their body as a statue.

Repeat this several times, drawing out different strategies for resisting/challenging power as you go. Again, this is an opportunity to ask people if they have seen any of these forms of resistance working in practice in everyday life.

## **Additional elements or variations**

One challenge with this exercise is how to think about what might make unequal relationships of power between chairs that are apparently equal in terms of their location in the space. You could ask this question directly at some point to draw this out- these chairs are all positioned in the same way in relation to the powerful chair. These chair all look equal. Are they? What factors might mean that some of these chairs might still have more power than others? Draw out gender, race, class etc.

If your group is working on issues of resource justice, the role of the glass of water may become very important, standing for access to resources in general, or maybe access to water in particular. If it is useful, you could ask more questions about how access to resources relate to power, in order to explore this issue further.

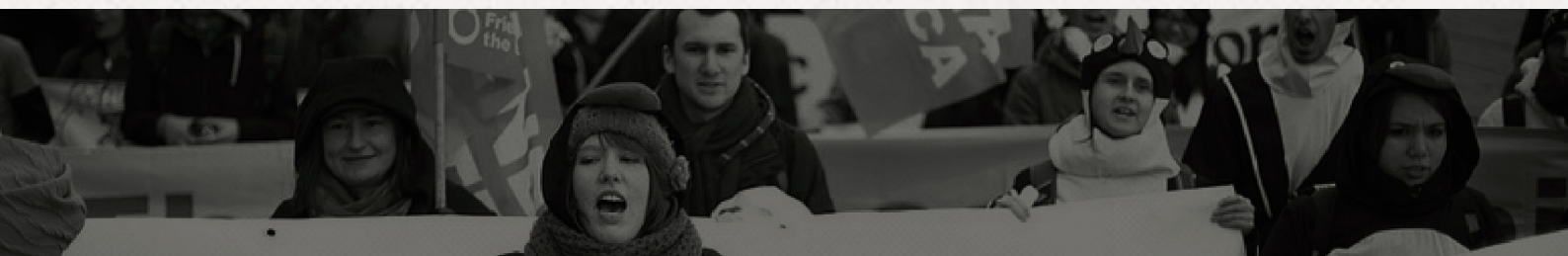
For the section on resistance, one variation involves inviting people to enter one at a time, with the aim of taking the most powerful position, without the other statues leaving the scene. In this way you can build up a small scene which you can then analyse, looking at the different kinds of challenges to power and forms of resistance that can be seen. Make sure there are enough people who are not statues in the scene so that they can analyse the image.

## Facilitator considerations

The length of time for this activity can vary significantly depending on the number of people taking part, and the depth of conversation and analysis you want to reach. Try to leave enough time so that people have to think beyond their initial assumptions or ideas about power through bringing in different voices.

You might find that the people who arrange the objects really want to explain what they intended their arrangement to be, particularly when they think that the image they made is being misunderstood. Try to encourage them to allow other people to interpret the image first, only allowing them to add any additional explanation afterwards. At this point you could invite them or someone else to see if they can re-arrange the objects to make them more reflective of the power dynamic they intended to show.

*Written up by Fiona Ranford, Friends of the Earth England, Wales Northern Ireland. Based on an activity by Augusto Boal.*



# Colombian Hypnosis

## TIME NEEDED:

20-30 minutes

## PREPARATION NEEDED

Clear as much space in the room as possible so participants are free to move about

## Why use this tool

Columbian hypnosis is a game that provides an opportunity for people to explore relationships of power. Through experiencing what it is like to have your movements controlled by someone else, or to control someone else's movements, the group is encouraged to reflect on their relationship with holding or losing power, and explore situations in their own lives where they might be controlled or exert control over others.

## Description

Ask people to form pairs. Explain that in each pair one person will hold the palm of their hand in front of the face of their partner. The person with their hand out will then "lead" the person by moving their hand around. The person "following" will follow the hand in front of them wherever it goes, keeping the same distance between their face and the hand of the person leading. Give a short demonstration with a partner.

Explain that it is the responsibility of the person leading to ensure that the person following is safe at all times and doesn't collide with other people.

Ask the pairs to begin the activity. When pairs have developed a bit of confidence with the activity, encourage them to challenge their partners a little bit and see what they can do.

After a few minutes stop the exercise, and ask the partners to switch, so that the person leading is now following.

Ask the pairs to share with each other how they found the exercise. Then debrief with the whole group. Ask: How did it feel when you were following someone? How did it feel when you were leading someone? Who in the group preferred leading? Who preferred following? Did the experience remind you of any situations in your own life, or in the world?



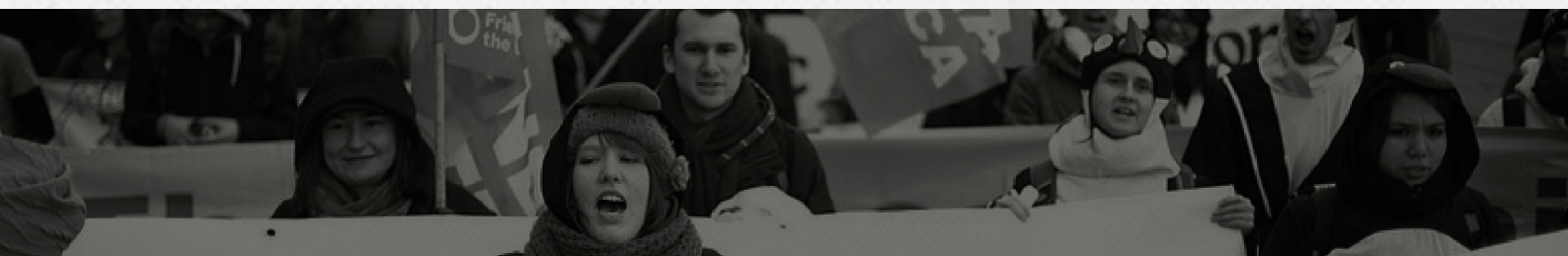
## Additional elements or variations

The game can be extended in numerous ways. After working in pairs, you can ask people to work in threes, with each person taking a turn to lead the other two people by using both their hands. You can then ask the person leading to choose another leader in the room to follow, by mimicking their hand movements. These variations provide opportunities for further debriefs. Ask: How did it feel leading two people? How did it feel following with someone else? How did it feel different to following as an individual? How did it feel to be a leader, while following another leader? What situations in real life does this activity make you think of?

## Facilitator considerations

Sometimes the activity can bring up some uncomfortable feelings or strong emotions, and it can be fruitful to explore these if participants are willing to. For example, organisational rank or gendered power relations might influence people's comfort or discomfort with leading or being led, and can open up conversations about power and privilege between participants. You might want to do this activity after a few other group-building activities when a little trust has been built in the group.

*Written up by Fiona Ranford, Friends of the Earth England, Wales Northern Ireland. Based on an activity by Augusto Boal.*



# CASE STUDIES

## EVENTS



# Privilege walk at Young FoEE summer camp

## Context/Problem

The exercise was used in order to allow participants to acknowledge their own privilege and understand better systemic oppressions.

## Who was involved

Some members of the Equality and Interculturalism working group of Young Friends of the Earth Europe and the Coordinator of Young Friends of the Earth Europe.

## Which strategy/tactics/activities were used

We first used the walk of privilege exercise to allow participants to acknowledge their own privileges. We then came back to a circle and participants could, for only 1 minute, express anything they wanted/felt during the exercise. This was not a discussion and therefore people were invited to not respond to each other but just share their thoughts/feelings. After that, different systems of oppression were presented (racism, sexism, ableism, ageism...) as well as the notion of intersectionality. Definitions for each of these concepts were also given. Participants then broke out into groups to discuss these definitions. Finally, we went back into plenary to gather the result of our discussions.

This strategy not to discuss right after the walk of privilege was on purpose. Indeed, getting away from a discussion on people's perspective of the walk of privilege proved difficult in previous sessions so we decided to not allow discussions after/on the walk. Discussing the definitions on the other hand allowed people to take some distance from the walk and each other's position and to discuss concepts which felt less personal than a discussion after the walk.

## What happened

We facilitated two sessions with two groups. Both went quite well, even though the emotional dimension of the walk was present. Some recurring points were raised (the exercise was questioned, the non-concept of "reverse racism", the difficulty to "be satisfied" at the end of this type of session...) but these points were expected and addressed right away.

## Lessons learned/challenges

The privilege walk in itself is a challenge we have been looking for other exercises but never found one as visual and as 'efficient' as this one. The decision to move the discussion from right after the walk to a general discussion on the definition is a lesson learned from previous sessions where the discussions were very much associated to individual's positions along the line and not on the systemic issue. This new way of facilitating the discussion proved better.

## Any other relevant info

There are many different version of the privilege walk and many questions. We had to reduce the list because of time. The definitions were based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on intersectionality and on YFoEE Equality and Interculturalism working group's manifesto (ongoing work).

*Written up by Myriam Duou - Young Friends of the Earth Europe This is a list with suggestions, which would be appropriate to use in a north-western European context. Criteria that would indicate privilege here, such as owning a house or having your parents pay for higher education, may not indicate privilege in other regions.*

# Tackling oppression in FoE England, Wales & Northern Ireland's movement and campaigns

## Summary

FoE EWNI has taken numerous steps to address oppressions within the internal organisational structure and in its activist groups and networks. They centre around a public commitment to “ensure all areas of our movement – including our Board, staff and volunteers, community activists and national supporters – accurately reflect the gender and ethnic diversity of the UK.

## Context

Over several years, FoE EWNI has become aware of issues of power and privilege within the organisation, its local groups, and the wider environmental movement. In order to more effectively address environmental injustice, the organisation committed to tackling these issues directly.

## Who was involved

This work has involved a large number of staff across all levels of the organisation. In particular it has involved FoE EWNI local group members who are passionate about anti-oppressive organising, FoE staff in different parts of the organisation, and paid diversity and inclusion staff.

## Using popular education methodologies

We have used popular education methodologies to design the anti-oppression training that is given to our local groups as well our train-the-trainer workshops for staff on inclusive facilitation. This has been essential to showing that we are “practicing what we preach” as an organisation, by delivering workshops that acknowledge and seek to address power and privilege in the space. For example, we have begun workshops with a Diversity Welcome, facilitated Privilege walks, and used Theatre of the Oppressed tools to explore Mainstreams and Margins in our Friends of the Earth networks.

## Linking to system change and local to global

In our work on gender justice we have connect local experiences of sexism to global processes, and build solidarity with feminists across the world in the FoE International network. For example, we held a discussion on gender and climate change, and invited someone from World March of Women to share the work taking place in Kenya on the relationships between environmental justice and gender justice.

## What happened

### **LEADERSHIP & STAFF BODY**

It was identified that the senior leadership of the organisation was unrepresentative of the wider UK population, with too few women and people of colour in both the senior management team and the trustee board. And while women were well represented in the rest of the staff body, people of colour were significantly under-represented.

To address the problems with underrepresentation in the staff team, staff involved in recruitment now receive specific training focussed on diversity and inclusion. This includes training on “unconscious bias” which aims to challenge prejudicial assumptions that might shape the outcomes of job interviews. It is also policy that all interview panels must include a mix of genders and at least one person of colour.

To address this under-representation within the trustee board (who are unpaid and elected by the wider Friends of the Earth network), action has been taken to fill recent vacancies with people whose gender or ethnicity is under-represented. This has led to the recruitment of the first ever woman of colour on our trustee board. While more work needs to be done in this area, the new policies and practices are already beginning to have an impact.

### **STAFF TRAINING & EDUCATION**

In order to increase understanding amongst staff about oppression and privilege, we hold trainings, discussions and awareness-raising campaigns throughout the year. Recent events and trainings include a guided visualisation on homophobia, a visit to the Black Cultural archives for black history month, and a workshop on the relationship between gender injustice and environmental injustice. Internal research on how the way in which men tend to dominate conversation in meetings was also shared on international women’s day, encouraging men to reflect on their behaviour in the office.

### **LOCAL GROUPS AND WIDER FOE NETWORK**

As well as tackling oppression within the structures and cultures of the Friends of the Earth staff body and trustees, steps are being taken to address the same challenges within our local groups network. Training on building inclusive local FoE groups is delivered annually at our activist training camp, and discussions on promoting racial and gender justice in the environmental movement are organised. Innovative new programmes have been developed to tackle the under-representation of particular groups in our network compared to the UK population. For example, we have developed a programme to build college students’ campaigning skills in three cities across the UK. These colleges have diverse populations in terms of the ethnicity and class background of the student body, and through this programme we are building the campaigning skills of young people who might otherwise not have had access to this training.

## **CAMPAIGNS & WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT**

We are aware that what we chose to campaign on and the solutions we propose, can work to either dismantle or perpetuate oppressions that exist in society. Our latest campaign, launched in 2016, is on air pollution, an issue that disproportionately impacts poor and black communities in the UK. This campaign was selected in order to address more directly the experiences of those most impacted by environmental injustice.

We have also sought to influence the wider environmental movement to take issues of oppression seriously. For example, we have a policy that Friends of the Earth representatives will not speak on a panel which is all-male, and there are examples of where campaigners have refused to speak on panels for this reason.

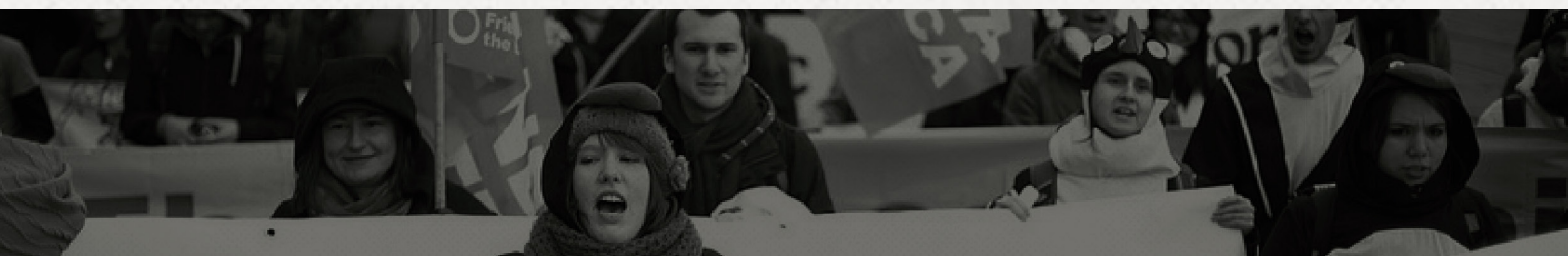
## **WORKING GROUPS & INCLUSION STAFF**

Much of this progress in tackling oppression has been down to committed work by staff and volunteers the FoE network. A group for staff and volunteers, called “Environment is for Everyone” meets regularly to discuss challenges and propose actions that could be taken. In order to make sure that these proposals are fed into the senior levels of the organisation and get broader organisational support, a “Heads diversity group” was formed consisting of a representative from the “Environment is for Everyone” group and from other departments. In addition to this structure, several staff members have time allocated to working on these issues. There is a member of staff who works for up to two days a week on inclusion and diversity, a departmental director who has a third of their job allocated to inclusion, and a staff member who has time allocated to developing our work on gender justice.

## **What we've learned**

Through this work, we have learnt the importance of having staff time dedicated to addressing oppression at Friends of the Earth. While there might be real enthusiasm about the idea, having staff capacity set aside to work on the issue has been essential to making progress. In addition, having buy-in from senior management has been really important in addressing oppression at an organisation-wide level.

*Written up by Fiona Ranford, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland*



# FoEE feminist group

## Context

Several NGOs, based in Brussels, are involved in a workplace-based feminist group. The initiative began in early 2016 as an informal discussion group in our offices, stemming from the need to collectively discuss and address cases of gender injustice being experienced and observed in our offices. This feminist group became active in identifying, sharing, providing support, and in some cases, taking action on personal, organisational and societal issues concerning patriarchy and gender justice. It quickly became a safe space for women in these offices where they could support each other and feel a sense of solidarity and understanding about feminism and related issues. Beyond the shared discussion space, which existed in lunchtime discussions and in an online skype group, we began an email list, attending protests and workshops together, and even organised a weekend away. There have also been very successful efforts to change existing gender dynamics and patterns in our offices, through awareness raising and popular education.

## Who was involved

The feminist group quickly decided that they would keep the group women-only and trans-inclusive, inviting all women in the Friends of the Earth Europe office and women of other organisations we work closely with – mostly based in the same floor of the Mundo-b building. Additionally, open activities have been organised (more information below) in which several topics concerning gender justice and patriarchy were discussed together with colleagues who are not in the feminist group.

## Using popular education methodologies

During our lunchtime meetings, weekends away, and similar events, we strive to use participatory facilitation techniques to ensure we offer space for everyone to be heard. For example, during our first feminist weekend away, we shared skills, had lively exchanges on creative ways to deal with self-care, collective care and patriarchy and brainstormed our ways of working, using techniques such as image theatre, world cafe, interactive walk and zine making, amongst others.

On an organisational level, open activities reaching out to colleagues not in the feminist group included organising a mixed-group workshop on feminism during the Friends of the Earth Europe staff retreat. The workshop used theatre to try to pin down dynamics that reinforce men's privilege in our work environment. The goal was to have an open discussion on topics like sexism in the workplace, and work together to find ways in which gender issues might be tackled, which turned out to be a huge success.

There have been follow-up meetings on this, in which work on gender justice in the office is taken forward further. For example, on the International Women's



Day of Struggle, we facilitated a lunchtime exchange based on the text “How patriarchy makes us tired” (<http://www.emptycagesdesign.org/overcoming-burnout-part-6-patriarchy-makes-me-tired/>), to start a conversation with other people in the office interested in tackling gender issues.

## Linking to system change and local to global

Achieving gender justice is intrinsically linked with achieving system change and vice versa. The feminist group see that the greater power and privilege which men currently possess is a barrier which needs to be overcome. Working together towards better gender dynamics often requires awareness raising as we observe men tend to be blind to cases of gender injustice because it is often something they do not suffer from – and can draw privilege from. Highlighting this blindness and different experiences of oppression related to gender is something the feminist group is actively working on and has made progress on so far.

We also organise and participate in solidarity actions to highlight women’s struggles globally, such as on International Women’s Day, or in solidarity with women environmental defenders under attack. For example, after the lunchtime exchange on International Women’s Day of Struggle we symbolically striked in solidarity with women worldwide who are disproportionately impacted by austerity, climate change, violence and more.

## What happened

Following the actions and discussions triggered by the feminist group, we have observed significant mainstreaming and heightened awareness of the need for feminism in our offices, and a much better gender dynamic has already been achieved. For example, gender dynamics has become an area actively thought about by nearly all members of our offices during work meetings, and these ideas are adopted and taken seriously. Furthermore, women in the office now have a lot more confidence in discussing these topics, and possible gender issues are named and defined much faster.

## What we’ve learned

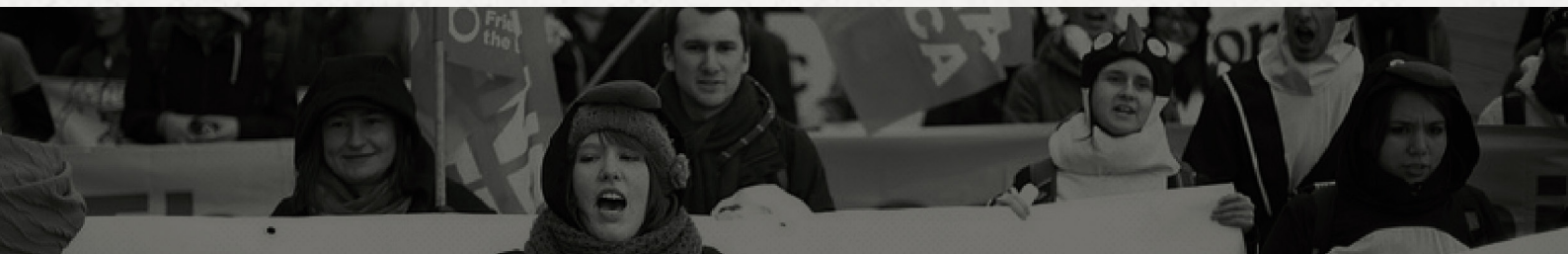
While gender dynamics in the offices where Feministas are present have improved, the issue remains outside the office, when working with other organisations. A next step is to work on this aspect and gain support and action also from male colleagues on this. There are good signs; for example, we see more attention is paid from members of our offices to have gender-balanced panels and ask that specifically when invited to take part in one.

The feminist group started quite quickly to have discussions about intersectionality. The group is composed of women from more than 10 nationalities – mainly European – and from different backgrounds. Experiences are diverse and we want this group to be inclusive of all experiences. Feminism is also thought of in different ways. This diversity is enriching but also

challenges us in our own power and privilege dynamics. We're working hard to make sure everyone feels comfortable and happy about what's happening.

Another challenge we face is how to take things forward. Sometimes, we feel the need for steps to be taken back so new people or people who have less background can fully understand discussions etc. To tackle this issue, we're in the process of compiling resources used in our feminist discussions in a database.

*Written up by Marte Billen - Friends of the Earth Europe*



# SESSION PLANS

## EVENTS



# Mainstreams and Margins

## TIME NEEDED:

2 hours

## PREPARATION NEEDED

Paper and colouring materials for all participants

Flipchart and markers

Hand-outs on mainstream – margins from Training for Change

## Why use this tool

This is a good exercise to introduce the concept of mainstream – margins and to get a conversation started on how those are present in the group you're working with.

## Description

### EXPERIENCE: (15 MIN)

You may choose to explain that the next exercise will be about mainstream – margins or you may choose to simply start the exercise.

Invite participants to find a space in the room, sit down comfortably and if they feel OK with that to close their eyes.

"Take a few deep breaths and become aware of the sounds around you. People moving around, people breathing, [mention any sounds you hear, like birds, cars, wind, rain]. Take a few more breaths and turn your attention inwards. I want to invite you to remember a time when you felt like you were on the edge of a group. Try not to pick a really painful memory, simply a time when you weren't part of the 'in' crowd. Maybe try a few different memories until you find one that you feel you can work with. It's still clear enough to remember some details, but not too painful.

Try to remember that situation as clearly as possible. How old were you? Where were you? Who were involved? Why were you there? What colours did you see around you? What smells do you remember?

What did you feel like in that situation? Angry, sad, ashamed, guilty, lonely or something else? If you can try to become aware of where in your body can you experience these feelings. In your stomach, your throat, your head or somewhere else?

Can you remember any thought patterns that you associated with that memory? Any ideas about yourself or the world that you 'learned' through that experience.

How did you behave in your memory? How did you act around the 'mainstream' of the group? Did you try to connect with them? Did you ignore them? Where you shy? Or arrogant? What behaviours did you develop to protect yourself?

And what about the 'in' crowd, the mainstream? What did they look like to you? Did you look up to them? Did you envy them? Or did you develop a dislike towards them? How did they behave towards you? Did they notice you? Were they mean or friendly? How do you think they felt towards you?

Capture all the details you can remember and bring them with you, into the Here and Now. Become aware of your breath again. The sounds around you [name a few sounds], the feeling of your body on the ground. And when you're ready open your eyes."

For the next 5 or 10 minutes I want to invite you to remain silent and to work individually to capture this memory on the paper in front of you. You can draw it very realistically or very abstractly or if you're uncomfortable drawing you can make a word cloud. Try not to write sentences though, because that uses a different part of the brain.

### **REFLECTION (10 MIN)**

Invite participants to partner up with someone next to them and share their drawings and explain what that symbolise. Make sure everyone gets a chance to share their story.

### **ANALYSIS (40 - 45 MIN TOTAL)**

#### **SMALL GROUPS: (20 MIN)**

Ask all pairs to partner up with one or two other pairs, to make small groups of 4 or 6. Ask these groups to discuss the following questions:

How did you feel during that exercise?

How did you feel when you were in the margin?

What behaviours did you apply when you were in the margin?

What behaviour did you see from the mainstream?

What feelings did you project onto the mainstream?

Ask them to write down the answers to the last 4 questions.

#### **BIG GROUP: (15 - 20 MIN)**

Take a flipchart and divide it into two columns. Write 'mainstream' above one column and 'margin' above the other.

Bring the group back together in a circle. (You can start by asking if people want to share how it was to do that exercise, don't stay with this question too long, just check-in with the group.)

Make a list of the feelings and behaviours of the margin and mainstream. Ask the group if they want to add anything to that list. Maybe point out that we've probably been in the mainstream of a group as well. Can we think of any feelings or behaviours from that point of view?

### **THEORY: (5 MIN)**

Add a bit of theory about the concept of mainstreams and margins in group dynamics as developed by Training for Change. Explain why you are discussing it with this group. For inspiration see the handout on 'Mainstream and Margins'.

### **APPLICATION (40 MIN)**

In order to take a next step, it's important to try to apply the theory of Mainstream and Margin to the group you're working with. Ask participants to name some behaviours or aspects of identity that are in the mainstream of the group. For each characteristic of the mainstream, ask which behaviours/identities etc. are therefore in the margin. Ask if people can identify any behaviours/identities which are in the margin of the group and what therefore is in the mainstream.

There might be some disagreement on which qualities/characteristics go in the mainstream or margin. Some questions that can help the group identify this are:

do you automatically take account of the needs of this group? If yes, they are in the mainstream. For example: do we automatically take account of the needs of vegetarians? Or do we need people to ask us to take this into account?

which voice/behaviour do we value most? For example, there might be fewer men in numbers, but their opinion might carry more weight

## **Additional elements or variations**

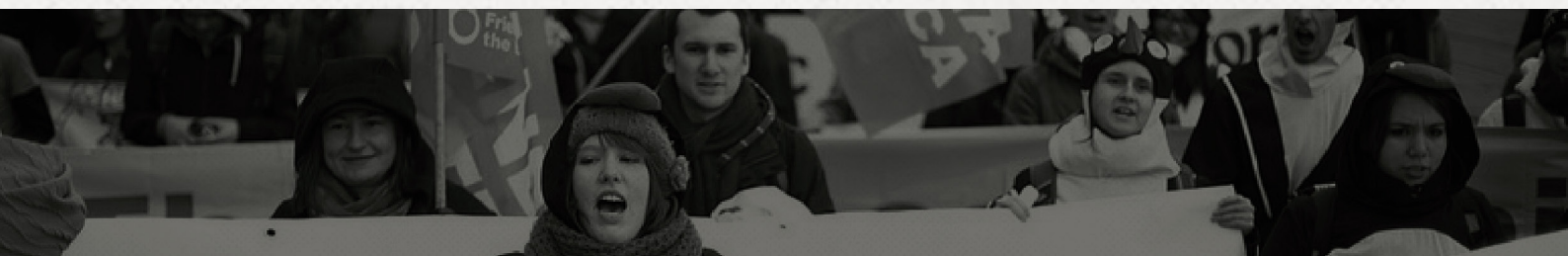
If you have more time you can add a 'sketch' (a short play) in between the reflection in pairs and the analysis in small groups. The sketch is also developed in groups of 4 to 6. In small groups, participants get about 15 minutes to pick one of the situations one of them experienced and develop a short sketch about that. Each group acts out their sketch with the big group. The advantage of this is that it lightens the mood a bit and takes of some of the heaviness. It also give a much richer example to work with.

## **Facilitator considerations**

In some groups this concept can be met with resistance or scepticism. Sometimes it takes people a few times of coming across the concept before they connect with it. Don't be discouraged by this. It's not solid science. It's an approach to group dynamics that some people have found very helpful, others might find it less helpful.

Make sure it's clear that we're not asking the mainstream and the margins to merge. We need margins, that's where growth occurs. It's about renegotiating

the power relationship between mainstream and margin and allowing the margins to fully flourish. It's also not bad to have a margin. Each group will have a mainstream and a margin, it's natural.



# Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed

## TIME NEEDED:

2 hours

## Why use this tool

The learning goals identified for this session are:

- ✓ Introducing Theatre of the Oppressed
- ✓ Introducing the topic of anti-oppression work
- ✓ Exploring different forms of structural oppression
- ✓ Exploring privilege as present in the group

## Description

### INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

Take some time to introduce the workshop, the facilitators and the goals of the workshop. This can also be a space to make some group agreements, e.g. phone off or to use hand-signals.

### NAME GAMES + ENERGIZERS (10 MIN)

If this is the first session you do with the group, it's important to take some time to get to know names and build a group container through playing games. For inspiration for games you could look in Games for actors and non-actors by Boal. Starting the workshop with some games where we use our body is important as a warm-up for the Image Theatre later on.

### INTRODUCING THE TREE OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED (5 MIN)

The tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed gives an overview of the different types of Theatre that Boal developed and can be used as a visual tool to support an introduction of his work.

### IMAGE OF THE WORD (5 MIN)

An easy exercise to introduce Image Theatre, where participants stand in a circle with their backs to the middle and turn back into the circle to intuitively make a statue with their body to express the word the facilitator gave.

### GALLERY OF OPPRESSION (25 MIN)

See description in the tool section.



## **POWER FLOWER (40 MIN)**

See description in the tool section.

## **IMAGE OF TRANSITION (30 MIN)**

This exercise offers a group a chance to make a collective image (with several people using their own bodies to make statues) to portray a certain situation/ challenge/..... and then use several steps to transform it into an ideal image.

## **CLOSING (5MIN)**

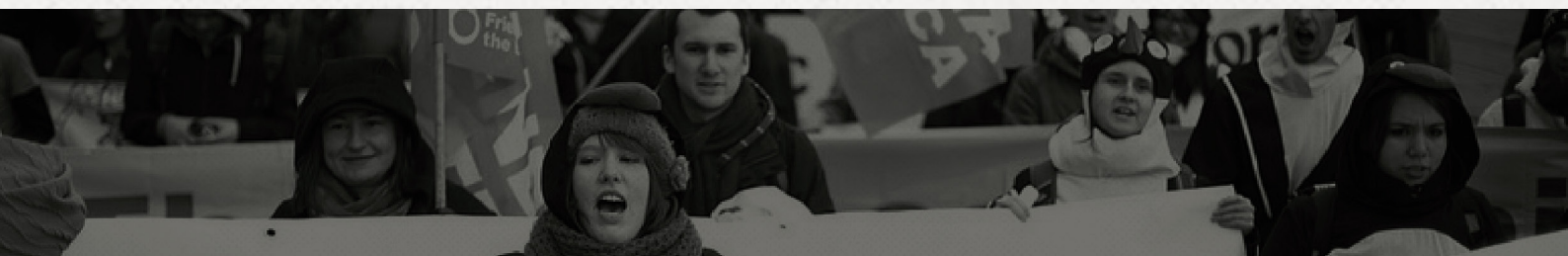
Make sure to take time to close the workshop and give participants a chance to give some feedback.

## **Possible variations**

Depending on the context of the group you might chose to spend more or less time of individual exercises. For example if you know the group will have another session to talk about privilege you might leave out the power flower and focus more on different Theatre tools.

## **Facilitator considerations**

Theatre of the Oppressed asks participants to really use their body and though this can support really powerful learning, it might also be challenging for people. Some ways you could support participants in this would be to offer different ways of participation and to ensure they ask consent before touching each other.



# GLOSSARY

This section tries to define some key concepts that are necessary to inform ourselves to deepen our understanding of power structures and systems of oppression which help us to better connect the root cause of environmental and social justice issues. We believe that understanding these concepts is crucial if we are to build a movement that will achieve system change. Young Friends of the Earth Europe acknowledges these concepts and the consequences they entail.

This is in no way an exhaustive list nor do we claim it to be, but rather we see this as a starting point and as a living document which we will continue to grow as part of a wider culture of learning and unlearning within and beyond our network. Concepts will be added/adapted as needed. If you feel that elements are missing don't hesitate to contact us.

## Intersectionality

"The study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination."

Intersectionality is a concept coined by the African-American feminist writer Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain how different forms of power and oppression interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. Intersectional studies show different categories (biological, social or cultural) - such as gender, race, class, ability, age - must be taken into account when trying to understand how systemic injustice functions.

Crenshaw's work cannot be separated from her own social position. As a Black woman in the United States, she experienced the systemic violence at the crossroads between race and gender. For this reason, the experience of black women is different from those of both Black men and white women.

Intersectionality is important for two reasons. Firstly, it helps us to analyse how systemic oppression affects groups differently, so that we can better understand its mechanisms. Secondly, intersectionality can help us to see how many different struggles for justice are interconnected and require solidarity between movements. Building an intersectional environmental movement means understanding the climate crisis and other environmental battles in relation to other social struggles, against racism, sexism, neoliberalism and neocolonialism.

## Interculturalism

Interculturalism is a way of working with people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Interculturalism acknowledges and celebrates difference, rather than trying to pretend that 'we are all the same'. It acknowledges the reality of racism and xenophobia and the need to create the conditions for equality through dialogue and action. It ultimately aims at achieving social harmony.

We aim to create an intercultural movement which is aware and respectful of all the cultures. These cultures interact with each other and are not compared to each other.

## Privilege

Privilege can be defined as a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific group: social, financial, political, racial, legal. Privilege must be understood in the context of different power systems, how they overlap and interact with each other. Privilege means enjoying the benefits from a certain system of power. Privilege does not mean your life is easy, it means certain aspects of your life are easier. It means you face less obstacles than other groups of people. Privilege is also the power to define societies' norms: what is 'just', which serves the purpose of presenting domination as normal, as the result of human history - therefore erasing the historical construction of injustice, and presents any action to dismantle this system as going against natural laws. This pervasive line of thought gives tremendous power to dominant groups to preserve the status quo that benefits them.

## Oppression

Oppression is systematic injustice, deeply embedded in our societies, via hierarchical social norms and values, prejudice, discrimination, the legal system. Oppression never goes both ways. "Reverse" oppressions do not exist. It is by definition linked to systems of power and institutional violence that disadvantage certain groups for the benefit of others; it does not compare to individual prejudice. Oppression is pervasive, it is visible throughout social institutions as well as rooted within our own consciousness. Oppression restricts people's chances and opportunities throughout life, beyond the limits of our control.

## Oppression vs. Prejudice

Note: the following descriptions depicts social phenomenon involving humans; non-human oppressions are not included

Prejudice comprises preconceived negative beliefs, thoughts or ideas, often untrue, about what certain groups are like, how they think, behave, speak, dress and even their preferences. This negative prejudice may be unfavorable towards minority or groups with less power or authority causing them to be inferior groups. This leads towards the exercise of inhumane acts of oppression towards them. Oppression is an unjust and cruel act often enforced by groups of people, often superior groups with some form of authority or power, towards inferior groups. This allows superior groups to keep their social, economic, cultural and many other forms of privilege.

# Power and forms of Power

Social power refers to having the ability to bring about social achievements even when the system opposes those goals. Some may argue that, to a certain extent the government harnesses all the social power and this power may be accompanied with unsolicited force. According to Max Weber, an eminent sociologist and political economist, there are three 'legitimate' avenues to power. Three types of authority are:

## 1. CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

When authority is allocated to a person and/or their party due to personal charm/strong personality. This leader's mission and values inspire others.

## 2. TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

The source of this authority is sourced from tradition or custom. This is the type of authority that is generally not challenged by the people due to traditional methods of electing government, this links to cultural beliefs and systems

## 3. RATIONAL-LEGAL AUTHORITY

This form of authority is allocated to an individual through a process; the person with this authority exerts power based on a system of rules. The authority remains with the office and not the individual.

The definitions above exemplify types of authorities that hold social power as power derives from authority.

Here is a list of six types of power:

- ✓ Reward Power - The ability to provide rewards when others comply with your wishes
- ✓ Coercive Power - Providing punishments when wishes are not met. This can lead to resentment towards the source of this power
- ✓ Referent Power - When the source of power is admired by a group of people and these people reflect their behaviour and way of thinking
- ✓ Legitimate Power - Power that is sourced from the position or role. This power does not lie within the individual but within the position or role.
- ✓ Expert Power - Power that lies within the individual's knowledge. For instance, a scientist has power because they are an expert in their chosen field.
- ✓ Informational Power - A transitory type of power, linked to expert knowledge. However, by giving out the information, the individual lessens the power that they possess.

It is important to recognise and identify these forms of power in order to work with or against them.

## Empowerment

Empowerment is about working with people and using processes that support them to become critical, creative, and liberated, enabling them to take more control of the decisions that affect their lives, their communities and their environment. It aims to address the unequal distribution of power, focusing more on the benefits of sharing power to create structures that provide genuine participation and engagement. Empowerment is a process based on mutual respect, and equal and genuine partnership between all those involved to enable the sharing of talents, experiences and expertise.

## Safe Spaces and Safer Spaces

A safe space is an environment that promotes a tolerant and inclusive space representing people from different multicultural, gender, race, religious, ages, political, economic, political (etc.) backgrounds. Most importantly, it allows each individual within the environment to freely express themselves without using discriminatory language and actions that could be abusive and damaging to any other individuals within the group (or any other groups which may not be present).

Creating a safer space means allowing open discussions which are welcoming, engaging and supportive of every individual present both offline and online. Therefore, everyone should:

- ✓ Challenge all forms of discriminatory acts and speech
- ✓ Respect physical and emotional boundaries
- ✓ Be aware of their privilege and position of power to avoid overshadowing other members
- ✓ Avoid being judgmental or belittling others' opinions
- ✓ Be cautious of one's speech (speak cohesively with clear tones and slowly)
- ✓ Promote mutual respect
- ✓ Be given the chance to speak
- ✓ Challenge the behaviour, not the person
- ✓ Be responsible for their own behaviour

## YOUNG

### Friends of the Earth Europe

*This glossary is one part of the Young FoEE Manifesto. The manifesto was developed by volunteers in the Young FoEE network who came together to build an explicit statement of our values and principles as an organisation. It is a commitment to inform ourselves and our work, to challenge ourselves and one another, and to be accountable and conscious in our efforts to be part of the change we want to see in the world.*

