

Chapter 1. How to organise an FPI convening

You have finally decided to host a local conversation on the Feminist Principles of the Internet! But how do you even begin to organise one? The logistical decisions you make play an important role in making sure you are able to hold a healthy conversational space and carry out the purpose of the convening effectively.

- Intro
- Who to bring together
- Where to host
- Planning an agenda
- Resources needed
- Documentation
- Evaluation

Intro



Image source:

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In this section, we will talk about:

Before the convening	During the convening	After the convening
Who to bring together Where to host Planning an agenda Resources needed	Documentation	Evaluation

Firstly, you can make effective logistical decisions when you have clear **objectives** for your conversation. Here are some questions to help you gain clarity on what you want to achieve:

- What motivated you to host a local conversation about the FPIs?
- What emotions arise for you when you think about the FPIs in relation to your local context? What type of action do these emotions inspire within you?
- Do you want the conversation to be participant-led, or do you want to decide on the topics and conversation methods beforehand?
- By the end of the convening, what would you like to have gained?

Secondly, we know that even the logistical details of a convening can either uphold or **dismantle power** hierarchies. When organised without an awareness of power differences, convenings can run the risk of excluding or silencing certain people when their needs are not met. As you decide who you want to bring together, it is important to ensure that those invited are accommodated in all the subsequent decision-making of where to host, planning an agenda, documentation and evaluation.

Who to bring together

Image description: Women and girls sitting on floor, at the Imagine a Feminist Internet South East Asia regional convening. Image source: Foundation for Media Alternatives, Philippines

We want a space that is **magnificently feminist**, right? Creating a feminist space is about the **inclusion of diverse voices**. A diversity of perspectives is also key for conversations about technology, which we know intersects with all aspects of our lives and activism. Here are some ways diversity can be enhanced:

- **Invite activist voices across movements**: Having voices other than those from your own movement can enhance the richness of conversations by bringing different perspectives and ideas. Inviting folks from different movements and sectors also stokes **cross-movement building** that can strengthen learning, solidarity and advocacy.
- **Invite voices from different locations in their movement**: Our movements are made up of a constellation of actors that include individuals, collectives and organisations working at local, national, regional and international levels. Some hold more power in their spaces of activism than others. Some see broad patterns from working fluidly across different capacities, while others have deeply rooted insight of specific spaces from their longstanding work in a particular position. Inviting folks from different locations can nurture **holistic conversations around the intersecting experiences** of working around certain issues.

Deciding who to invite

Who you wish to bring together will also depend on your objectives for the conversation. Here are some questions to help you make decisions about who to invite:

- Whose presence do you want to prioritise in this moment? If your focus for the conversation is on the intersection of technology and sexuality, for example, you will want to have the majority of participants be folks working in the area of sexuality.
- If you have hosted a similar convening before, you may want to reflect on, who have you brought together in the past? Who did you feel was missing?
- How wide is the network you want to bring together? Do you want to have this conversation with activists in your street? In your neighbourhood or community? Or with activists from across your city?

Things to be aware of when bringing people together:

Remember! **People hold power**. Organising a healthy conversational space that holds true to your reason for bringing people together requires you to **be strategic about safety**.

- Would the activists you invite feel safe with funders in the room?
- Do you want to include men?
- Do you belong to a marginalised community, and want the conversation to be specifically among folks that share the same or similar marginalisations?
- Do you want to include charismatic or influential leaders from your movement?
- If you are organising the conversation with a team, make sure the number of team members is less than the number of those who have been invited.

Different ways for inviting folks

Now that you have an idea of who to bring together, there are a number of ways you can consider inviting folks. Here are some questions to guide your decision-making:

- Do you want to host a closed conversation, or make the invitation public?
- Are there specific people you want to invite, or do you want to extend the invitation to people beyond your network?
- How many people would you like to host, or have the capacity to host?

Depending on the answers to the questions above, you may decide to reach out to specific people, send out an open invitation to trusted networks, or create a call for applications.

If you decide to select participants based on applications, make sure you have a diverse selection team and communicate with applicants about the selection process to ensure transparency.

[insert link to an appendix/resources section that includes an adapted spreadsheet from last MFI on criteria for selection]

Needs assessments

Once you have confirmed your participants, sending them a needs assessment form before the start of the event can help folks feel **included, seen and comfortable**. The responses you receive will enable you to be aware of people's needs and guide subsequent decision-making on logistics.

Examples of what you really need to know about participants' needs:

- Do they need financial support to be able to attend?
- Do they have children or care responsibilities that require their attention at particular hours or on particular days?
- Do they have access to transport to the venue, or access to data in the event of the conversation taking place online?
- Do they have accessibility requirements due to a disability?
- Will there be language diversity at the event that requires the presence of translators?
- What are their dietary needs?

[insert link to an appendix/resources section that includes an adapted needs assessment form template]

Where to host

Space is political. Where you decide to hold the conversation can either enhance the inclusion of those who have been invited or exclude them. In making decisions of where to host a local conversation, we need to interrogate our assumptions of people's access to devices and connectivity, as well as our assumptions about the ablebodiedness of our participants.

Use the needs assessment discussed in the previous section to guide your decision-making in choosing a venue for your event.

Our environment also has a huge impact on our engagement. If you are hosting a physical conversation, look for a space that has **good ventilation, fresh air and lots of natural light**. If possible, find a place that makes you feel inspired! For you, this might look like a venue surrounded by nature, or a local arts and culture centre nestled within a bustling city, or a community-led space with a rich history of hosting activist organising.

Ethical considerations

Go through your participant list and their responses from the needs assessment to answer the following questions:

- **Do folks have specific accessibility needs?** If choosing a physical venue, make sure the venue enables the mobility and onsite accessibility of all those attending. If hosting an online conversation, choose a platform that has the necessary features available to ensure full and engaged participation of all invited.
- **Is the venue safe for diverse identities?** Is it queer-friendly? Is it women-friendly?
- **Can folks access the venue using public transport?**
- **Does the venue provide vegetarian meals, and accommodate other dietary needs?**
- **Who runs the space?** If choosing a physical venue, are its custodians attentive to the ecological impact of the space, and the environmental sustainability of its surrounds? Do they welcome diverse bodies? If hosting an online conversation, are your chosen platform's developers invested in enabling internet freedom?
- **Can information be kept safe at the venue?** Can conversation materials be locked away overnight if taking place over multiple days? Does the space have surveillance cameras, and if so, can they be turned off for the duration of your event? If taking place online, does your chosen platform support your privacy needs?

Useful resource: [Come together, APC guidelines on planning and designing online events](#)

Venue facilities

Depending on the conversation activities you want to host, also consider whether the venue has:

- A whiteboard or chalkboard
- Walls on which to stick up posters
- Open space for participants to self-organise
- If hosting a conversation online, you may want to choose a platform that enables breakout rooms, and explore online tools for different ways of engaging and being together

Lastly, let's not forget about our love for technology and our ability to be in our bodies!

Bringing your technology to physical venues	Bringing your bodies to online spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check if there are plug points for folks to charge their devices and stay connected• Ask the venue beforehand about their Wi-Fi facilities• Create a digital repository for folks to share information and resources with one another <p>Share infrastructure! Invite folks to bring their devices and favourite tech to the conversation.</p>	<p>Does the platform you wish to use allow folks to engage their senses? You may want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share, listen to, and dance to music!• See one another on video• Enable ongoing engagement via a separate chat platform or by making use of the video conferencing platform's chat facility <p>Pool resources! Invite folks to bring material items to the conversation that speak to particular moments in their activism.</p>

Reflective exercise

What is the best workshop or conversation you have been in? In a list, describe the aspects of the space you believe contributed to the energy you experienced.

Planning an agenda

Alright! Now that we know who to bring, and where to host our conversation, how are we going to organise the time spent together? Organising a local conversation is not easy and takes a lot of energy on behalf of the organising team. **You want to make the most out of the conversation space.** Having an agenda can help you stay focussed on your objectives in the limited timeframe you have.

It is important to note that the agenda will depend on two key things:

- 1. the amount of time you have together
- 2. your objectives and the objectives of those attending

You may decide to plan the agenda in advance, or decide on the agenda collaboratively with participants on the spot. Keeping the agenda open for collaboration can enhance the ownership that participants feel of the space. At the same time, bringing people together requires participants to give their time and resources, and many may feel a sense of security in being able to anticipate a planned structure to the event.

The deliberateness of pace

The pace of the conversation should be **deliberate**, as it impacts the nature of conversations as well as your choice of conversation methods. How long do you want the conversation to be? You want to think about:

Number of sessions	Length of each session	If more than one session, frequency of sessions
One session? Multiple sessions?	Half a day? A full day? Multiple days?	Consecutive days? Weekly? Monthly?

Having participants get to know one another, allowing for in-depth conversations to develop, and creating space for energisers and breaks, all take time. Simultaneously, long sessions or a high frequency of sessions can be draining for folks, or cause the event to lose momentum. This can also be the case when running a virtual event, where the over-reliance on the brain and eyes to process inputs, struggles with technology, and fewer, shorter breaks all contribute to digital fatigue. Consider the minimum amount of time it would take to have an **energised, engaging and generative** conversational space and develop an agenda around those parameters.

Lastly, remember that these local conversations can be as informal or as formal, and as big or as small as you like. While you may want to cover a lot of ground in one go, design the agenda at a scale with which **you feel most comfortable**.

Conversation flow

Now, how do you want to integrate your objectives and the objectives of participants into the agenda? If you want the conversation to be entirely participant-led, you may want to consider an Open Space methodology for facilitating the conversation flow.

If you prefer to guide the topics of discussion, you will want to choose conversation methods for those topics beforehand that can enhance engagement.

As a basic framework, here are some **must-haves** to include in your agenda:

1. Icebreaker activities for getting to know one another
2. A conversation about participants' expectations and setting intentions for the session
3. Collective decision-making on the principles for participation
4. Conversation activities
5. Breaks in-between activities
6. Closing check-out

[Insert link to an appendix/resources section that includes a sample agenda]

Top tip! Bring skilled facilitators on board that can support the structure and flow of the conversation and guide the development of your agenda. Meet with facilitators before the event to discuss and brainstorm!

Use this kit!

In the chapters to follow, you will find more information on how to facilitate and hold a conversation space. You will also find plenty of ideas for activities and methods specifically designed for enhancing conversations around the different FPIs and their relation to local contexts. Read these chapters and add the activities that resonate with your objectives to the agenda of your event!

See these chapters:

[Chapter 2. Holding space and getting to know each other](#)

[Chapter 3. Playing with tech](#)

Resources needed

We all know that hosting any event, whether online or in-person requires resources, which are **both people, as well as money**. At the same time, we know that such resources are not always available, both for yourself as the organiser, or for the participants of your event. **Having adequate funding for your event responds to the collective need for embodied care** among you, your team and your participants when investing time and labour in coming together. It is useful to be aware of any hidden costs in the form of time and money to everyone involved.

When applying for funding for your event, here are a few costs you may want to consider when drawing up your budget proposal:

Infrastructure and venue costs: For an in-person local conversation, you may have to consider costs such as venue rental, meals, materials needed for activities, transport for participants and perhaps even accommodation. At the same time, an online event may require costs for technology, or the paying for the use of secure platforms or online spaces.

Travel costs of participants: It is not always acknowledged that both online and in-person events require a 'travel process': participants need to commute to a space where they can devote their full attention. Participants will have varied hidden costs to be fully present at your event, which can include data costs, renting a private space with internet access, buying any materials needed for the event, paying for elder or child care, or buying meals.

Top tip!

Include a flat per diem for each participant with no claims process in your budget proposal. Participants can use the money to pay for the specific things they need in order to participate and be fully present at your event!

A dedicated support team: Whether you are organising your local conversation on your own, or as part of a collective, having a support team dedicated to different needs of your event can help you to stay focussed on your role hosting the event. Support persons you may want to consider bringing on board would include:

- **An experienced facilitator:** especially if you intend on having difficult conversations around sensitive topics, having an experienced facilitator to hold the space can greatly enhance the safety and depth of each conversation and the process overall.
- **A tech person or team:** particularly in the case of an online event, a dedicated tech person (or team, for a larger group) can offer guidance to participants who may be new to using particular platforms or online tools, or struggling with their connectivity.
- **A documenter or documentation team:** as you will read below, documenting the process and content of conversations during your event greatly enhances the inclusivity, accountability and possibilities for learning that your event can offer. Having a person or

team dedicated to this task can ensure a coordinated, comprehensive and efficient documentation process and will provide rich material that you can draw from for any future action after your event.

Documentation

An *ezone* was created by Wairimū Muriithi and Youlendree Appasamy in 2020, to document the MFI Africa convening in Johannesburg in 2019

Documenting your conversation has three key roles:

1. It makes your event more inclusive, as you are able to share the notes and insights of your event with those who were unable to attend.
2. It enables learning for both you and your participants, as the notes become a reference for continued organising.
3. It enhances accountability in a conversation context in which key decisions are being made, or strategies are being discussed for future action around a particular issue.

Two key aspects of your conversation that are useful to document are:

1. The content of conversations
2. The process for holding the conversation space

Depending on the nature of the event, you may also want to note other aspects, such as the names and contact details of participants (with their permission), and logistical details.

Ways of documenting

Documentation can be done through a range of media, including text or transcribing, illustrations, photographs and sound recordings. All conversation materials, including posters and sticky notes, and online collaboration spaces for conducting activities in the case of a virtual event, are also rich resources that can contribute to the documentation of the conversation.

Medium of documentation:	Useful for:	What you need:
Live text	<p>Capturing spoken insights and important quotes</p> <p>Sharing key points with participants post-event</p> <p>Recording the structure of the conversation and process</p> <p>Report writing</p> <p>Writing publishable thought pieces about insights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For an in-person event, a dedicated table and chair for documenter/s to sit and write near plug point• Laptop/s for typing• Online notepad or offline notetaking software

Illustrations	Capturing the energy of the room Sharing insights in an accessible, visually intriguing way Creating communication outputs about the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For an in-person event, a dedicated table and chair for illustrator/s to sit and draw near plug point if using software Illustration materials as needed by illustrator
Sound recordings	Transcribing spoken conversation word-for-word Report writing Capturing spoken insights if a dedicated text documenter is unavailable	For an in-person event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voice recorder Extra set of batteries USB for uploading recordings when the recorder reaches full storage capacity For a virtual event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recording facility available on your chosen video-conferencing platform
Photography and videography	Capturing insights shared on conversation materials, such as post-it notes and posters, or slides of presentations Capturing the energy of the room Sharing clips or visuals in communication content about the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camera Camera charging cables USB for uploading photographs and video when the camera reaches full storage capacity For a virtual event, a recording facility available on your chosen video-conferencing platform

Storage and transfer of files

How you store your documentation materials will impact the safety of that data. Based on your context, you may prefer to store documentation materials online on a secure cloud platform, or offline on a hard drive, or both. You may also want to decide beforehand on the use of a specific secure infrastructure, such as a password-protected online notepad, on which notes can be created and kept, especially if you are in a country with high levels of online surveillance.

The safety of data can also be compromised during the transfer of files. Try to avoid emailing files if you feel that the material you are sharing must remain confidential. If needed, consider encrypting any file in transit, or create a secure, password-protected shared folder online in which documenters can download files or access them.

Safety of participants

It is important to recognise that the documentation of your event can compromise the safety of

participants if not adapted to their security needs. Some precautions you can take include:

- Inform participants before the event of your intention to document the conversation, for what reason, and how.
- Prepare a short questionnaire that folks can fill out on arrival to your event that asks them whether they give permission to be filmed, photographed or otherwise recorded, or attributed in text. Some participants will not want their presence to be documented in any way, while others will only want to give permission under certain conditions.

[Insert link to appendix/resources section that includes questionnaire template on permissions/consent]

- Establish a set of protocols collectively at the start of the conversation that informs how you document, and under which conditions you don't. Decide together how to indicate to the collective if a certain contribution is off the record, or if a participant wishes for a particular comment they make to remain anonymous.
- Discuss with participants at the start of the event whether those attending can publish insights on their social media, and if so, under what conditions.

Remember!

Back up your documentation on an encrypted hard drive or secure online cloud at the end of each session or conversation day to mitigate the risk of losing the files!

For more details on documenting virtual events specifically, visit this page [Documentation design and preserving memories](#), from the APC guidelines on planning and designing online events)

Evaluation

Evaluation is useful for two key reasons:

1. Improving your processes
2. Sharing learnings with others hosting similar events

Evaluations are helpful both during and after your event. Evaluations at the end of each session are particularly helpful if you intend on hosting more than one session, or a follow-up conversation in the future. One way of doing an evaluation with folks on-site is by using the **Plus Delta practice**.

Plus Delta practice

At the end of a session, distribute two sticky notes to each participant. One sticky note will be marked with a plus (+) sign, and the other with a delta (Δ) sign. Ask them to answer the following question on each corresponding sticky note:

- + What did you like?
- Δ What can be improved?

At the end of the conversation, you can also send an evaluation form to those who have attended. **Reflect on what you want to learn from participants** about their experience of the event, and design the questions accordingly. Include the responses received from the evaluations in your final report.

Safety

- When documenting responses, remember to ask the permission of participants as to whether they want to be attributed or not in the final report.
- When sending out the evaluation form, be transparent about your intentions in acquiring responses. Do you intend on publishing their responses in any way? Will their responses be shared with any third party?
- If possible, send the evaluation form using a link via a survey platform so that their responses cannot be traced back to them, and give participants the option to respond anonymously.

[Insert in-document link to the resources section, or quick links to one or two resources relevant to this chapter] <https://padlet.com/jhybe/d74tt00dl5qogaex>

Useful resource: [Come together, APC guidelines on planning and designing online events](#)