

Chapter 2. Holding space and getting to know each other

Remember how we touched on some event 'must-haves' for planning an agenda in the previous chapter? These features form part of a framework for holding a feminist conversation space! When we start to integrate an awareness of power, practices of care and an attention to safety into our agenda, we set the scene for a conversation space that is fun, in-depth, creative and engaging for all folks participating!

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Intro

Image source.

Remember how we touched on some event 'must-haves' for planning an agenda in the previous chapter? These features form part of a **framework for holding a feminist conversation space** ! When we start to integrate an awareness of power, practices of care and an attention to safety into our agenda, we set the scene for a conversation space that is **fun, in-depth, creative and engaging for all folks participating!**

This chapter is for you if:

- There are sensitive topics you would like to discuss, but are unsure of how to do so safely
- You are worried conversations will lack depth, because participants might feel uncomfortable sharing with other participants they do not know
- You want to learn more about navigating power and privilege in conversations
- You are interested in process, and want examples of different conversation methods
- You're looking for practical activities for practising collective care during your event

Curious to get started? In this chapter we will look at:

Feminist principles for holding space	The principles in practice!
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Awareness of power2. Integrating care3. Attention to safety4. Principles for participation5. Get to know each other!	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2. Stories as pathways3. Open space conversation method Ecosystem dialogue

Principle 1: Awareness of power

You want to have conversations that **flesh out the complexity of different topics, nurtures multi-faceted perspectives and is intricately connected to the pleasure we experience when being online!** For this to happen, it is essential, first and foremost, to be aware of how power dynamics across intersections of our identities can play out in conversational spaces.

In any space with folks of diverse identities, backgrounds and experiences, different people will hold varying degrees of power in relation to others in the room. This power is often in the form of privileges, either as the result of their identity, or their positionality in relation to how the space enables or disables their sense of safety.

Identity privilege

An awareness of power starts with us! Your positionality as the event organiser already provides you with a certain amount of authority to control how the conversation is shaped. Over and above this, you may have certain identity privileges (for example: being white, straight, cisgender or able-bodied) that can make it harder for you to enable the meaningful participation of those in the room who experience oppression.

Creating a healthy conversational space!

In order to create a conversation space where the lived experiences of all participants are valued, it is important to be mindful of the **intersectionality** of the identities of folks present, and to practice **inclusivity**. You can do this by:

- Self-reflecting on your privileges
- Decentering your perspective
- Listening to the experiences of those that identify differently to you
- Being mindful of the language you use and the power of language to include or ostracise folks
- Being willing to apologise for your mistakes and adjust your behaviour if needed
- Recognising that everyone brings knowledge to the table

Power can show up in conversation spaces in various ways. **Recognise them** so that you can counter inappropriate behaviour or power imbalances that emerge in the room! Some examples include:

- **Freedom from certain oppressions:** some participants may run the risk of silencing or deprioritising the perspectives of marginalised folks because they do not share the same experiences
- **Abilities:** freedom from disabilities or neurodivergent needs gives certain participants more access to the space, and can lead to the exclusion of perspectives from folks who express themselves differently or require specialised access to conversation spaces if

their needs are not met

- **Freedom from care-giving roles:** not having care responsibilities for children, elders, family members, roommates or friends can enable participants to engage more fully than others who cannot be present for the entirety of the conversation
- **Facility with spoken language:** when conversations are held in a participants' native or first language, it is easier for them than others to engage, follow and control conversation flow
- **Knowledge privilege:** familiarity with the conversation topic can lead participants to overshadow the perspectives of others or direct the conversation flow
- **Relational privilege:** knowing other participants in the room enables comfortability, which can lead to participants taking up more space than others who do not know anyone

Privilege in virtual settings

While an awareness of identity privilege is integral for holding a healthy conversational space, **these privileges can be compounded in an online event by technological privileges** that may not be shared by everyone in the virtual room. Technological privileges affect participants' abilities to engage fully in the conversation. These can look like:

- Technological capacity: having more access to the software and hardware needed to participate in the event
- Digital literacy: participants will have varying levels of difficulty navigating a computer interface or using the features of a meeting platform
- Better internet bandwidth: internet bandwidth determines connectivity quality, which affects participants' ability to hear voices clearly, see video clearly, and use real-time interactive online tools
- Designated workspace: some participants will join your conversation from a quiet, private, well-lit space, while others may join from public or shared spaces where privacy and freedom from distraction is not guaranteed

Principle 2: Integrating care into conversation spaces

Attention to care is an integral part of practicing the Feminist Principles of the Internet, since it **underpins our imagining of what a world where everyone experiences digital safety, health, and freedom of expression could look and feel like!** But what do we mean by care, and why should it be integrated into our conversation spaces?

The activists coming into your space do not leave their activism, emotions or daily lived experiences at the door when they enter. Instead, they bring with them worlds of past traumas and stories about their relationships with their movements. As a feminist space, your event must **give room for moments of rest and healing**, knowing that your participants may be struggling with burn out and other mental, emotional and physical challenges.

Secondly, integrating care into your local conversation is **a means of sustaining the wellbeing of your networks and movements**. It can strengthen solidarity and sustain the energy of those who are in need of support. Caring for ourselves and one another in the spaces we hold is an act of resistance in and of itself against the systems that rely on our dis-ease and lack of wellbeing to thrive. Collective care is a political act!

Ways of integrating care into conversation spaces

Care practices can be integrated into your event in a number of ways! Here are a few:

- Regular breaks: all the parts of us need rest! Ensure to include various moments throughout your event for participants to take a break from discussions, have a snack, make tea or coffee, go to the bathroom, have a cigarette or get some fresh air.
- Hydration and snacks: make sure your participants have access to plenty of water to stay hydrated during the conversation, as well as some snacks to stay energised. If your event is a full day, try to ensure that participants get at least one good meal in the time they are attending too.
- Icebreakers and energiser activities: these are essential for enhancing the comfortability of participants, creating explicit space for fun, and getting participants to engage their bodies. Hold an energiser activity at the start of the event and at the start of each new session, especially after breaks, to sustain and replenish energy levels in the room.

[Here are some icebreakers and energiser activities!](#)

Conversations or sessions about care

If your event is over a full day or longer, and you would like to prioritise collective care as a key topic or feature in your agenda, **care activities can be entire sessions on their own!** You can consider:

- Engaging in self-care activities together
- Holding a conversation about care

Some self-care activities that you can do either individually, in groups, or collectively with all participants can include:

- **Stretch:** lead a stretching routine with participants.
- **Sitting meditation:** with a partner, or on their own, participants can find a spot to meditate, using the breath as an anchor by inhaling to gather your attention and exhaling to drop into your body.
- **Mindful walks:** if the location of the event allows, participants can go for a mindful walk in nature. Encourage participants to engage all their senses as they look, hear, smell and feel the natural scenery.
- **Journal:** give your participants a few minutes to do some personal journaling or a free writing exercise.
- **Share collective strategies of organisational care:** brainstorm together different ways in which care can be incorporated into organisational policy and practice.
- **Music:** Listening to music together can set the tone of a space and bring people into the same vibration or energy level. Have a playlist on-hand for different moments during the event.
- **Dance!** Dancing together helps us feel energised! This is a great practice to introduce after participants have been sitting for a long time, or when coming back after a lunch break to re-engage the body.

You may want to have a conversation about **care in your movement**, and brainstorm ideas about how to practice care both individually and collectively. Use the following questions to spark conversation and **learn from the experiences, politics and practices of others in the room:**

- What do you understand as self-care?
- What resistances do you have, if any, to self-care?
- How do you understand self-care as linked to collective care?
- Do you have any practices or rituals you consider to be self-care? What are they?
- How can we, as activists, remind ourselves to act in a self-caring way without feeling guilt, shame or privileged?

Principle 3: Attention to safety

So, we've learnt that

- ✓ an awareness of power and privileges in the room **helps you to create conditions for marginalised voices to be amplified** and **recognise and respond** to inappropriate behaviour!
- ✓ integrating care practices into your conversation **provides important space for healing** and helps **sustain our movements!**

But how do we have conversations about sensitive topics that run the risk of triggering anxiety or reminding participants of harmful past experiences?

A topic is sensitive when:

- It relates to a participant's past experiences or the experiences of people close to them
- It requires a participant to take a political stance
- It speaks to participants' personal values
- It relates to a current, evolving political or social moment in our context
- It confronts the collective hurt experienced by certain communities, be they on religious, racial, ethnic, gendered, ability-related, age-related, sexual orientation, or other identity-related grounds.

Things to consider

Here are three points to take into consideration when talking about a sensitive issue:

1. We've learnt that **all participants do not hold the same level of privilege, self awareness or positionality**. Different topics may evoke different responses from different individuals, depending on their personal experiences. While some topics may simply be intellectual explorations for some, those same topics can be emotionally triggering for others.
2. **Trigger warnings are important**. They allow those who are sensitive to subjects of discrimination and violence to prepare themselves for discussing them, and better manage their reactions.
3. **Do not pressurise someone to talk about their experiences**. Forcing a participant to talk about a sensitive event is making them re-live that experience and all the negative emotions that come with it. Understand that some participants are not ready, or

simply may not be willing, to speak openly about their past experiences.

Prepare in advance!

If you anticipate your conversation will cover sensitive topics, you can put precautions in place to support you in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of participants during your event. Here are some ways to prepare:

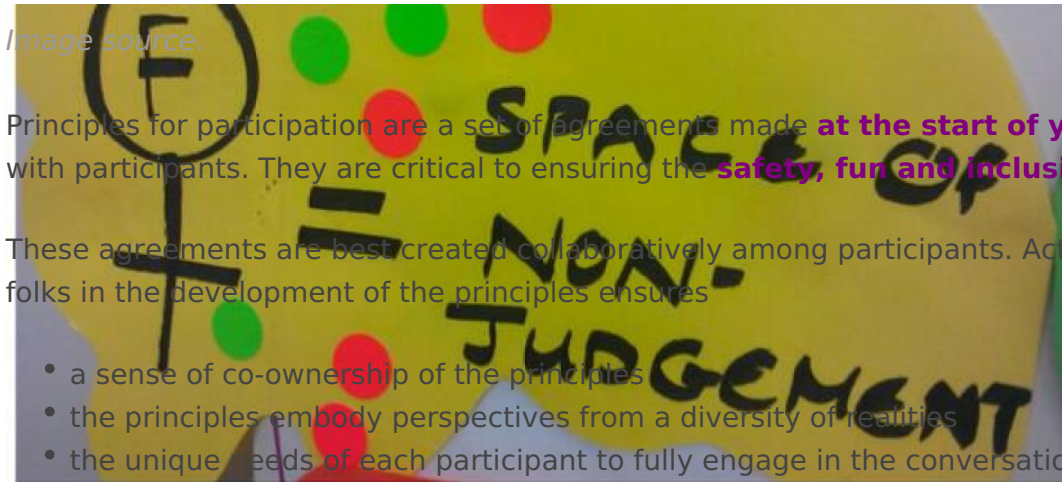
- **Have a mental health professional present** who can attend to participants that have been triggered
- Have a conversation with participants at the start of the event about some of the things that make them feel **safe, comfortable and welcome** in a space with a diversity of participants. Write them down and place them where they are easily visible to all participants during the conversation.
- **Inform** your participants at the start of the conversation of some of the topics that will be covered and **explain the importance of trigger warnings** from the beginning.

Steps to take when someone feels triggered

Even with the best of preparations, sometimes precautions are not effective, since triggers are very specific to each individual. Here are some steps you can take to support someone feeling triggered:

- **Recognise** that your content could be hurtful to someone.
- **Apologise** for saying something that hurt the person. Remember, the apology is about the person who has been hurt, and not about you. **Avoid justifying or defending your words or actions and be sincere about your apology.** It is not personal.
- **Empathise** by trying to understand why the participant may be hurt. You can do this by actively listening to the person who is feeling triggered.
- **Rectify** by avoiding a repetition of the specific trigger when continuing the discussion.
- **Be open** to participants leaving the conversation if they feel uncomfortable, or if they need some space.

Principle 4: Principles for participation



While the principles you develop with participants will be unique to their needs and your specific context, you can read the principles of participation developed by members of the APC community as an example of what you may want to include.

Here you can read the [APC feminist principles of participation](#).

Principle 5: Get to know each other!

Nurturing a sense of comfortability in the room, particularly if participants do not know one another, is essential for **trust building** and engendering a sense of **safety** among participants. Plus, where will you find a more fabulous group of folks than at your feminist conversation about the internet? **Learning about one another is part of the fun!**

At the start of the conversation, run a few activities that spark personal reflection about participants' relationship to the internet. When folks share their stories with one another, **participants discover commonalities** between their experiences and the experiences of others in the room, which **catalyses connection and builds a sense of trust**.

Want to get your hands on some fun activities? **You're in the right place!** Keep reading!

Principles in action! Stories as pathways

Museum of movements, by Shivani Lal (cropped). Creative Commons BY-SA(link is external).

The act of sharing stories and recalling past moments of pleasure, power or significance in our activism and personal lives **render our role in shaping the internet and the world visible**, to one another and to ourselves. Below are five activities that can help you and the participants of your conversation get to know one another.

First times!

Ask participants, **Think back to the first time you found pleasure online!** When was it? What device were you using? On what platform did you find pleasure, and with what activity? Describe the scenario, the feeling, the sense of discovery!

- Participants will come up with as many experiences as there are participants themselves, with some experiences dating back to childhood memories of online gaming to other experiences featuring secret searches for online porn.
- Encourage as many responses to emerge in the wider group as possible.
- As similarities start to emerge between responses, ask participants to find others in the room who had similar first time encounters to them.
- As groups come together, give the small groups five minutes to talk about their experiences amongst each other.

Resources you may need for this activity

- Open space to mingle and for small group conversations
- **Time:** Approximately 15-20 mins, however, bear in mind that time is related to the number of participants! Use your intuition and be careful not to rush through this phase of your conversation.

Internet loves!

Ask participants, **What is one thing that you absolutely love about the internet?** This question prompts participants to remember how beneficial the internet is and has been – personally, professionally, in movement building and for networking. This is an especially good question to ask when participants are coming into the conversation with a lot of negative sentiments about the internet.

- Invite participants to stand in a circle and share one thing they love about the internet. It

could relate to them personally, their activism, or something more general.

- Each participant gets a turn to speak as responses are shared around the circle, with a rule that nobody can repeat what another person has said previously.
- Encourage short interventions! One way to ensure no participant takes too much time is for a box of matches to be sent around the circle, and for each participant to light a match and finish their response before it burns down.

Resources you may need for this activity

- A box of matches (or more, depending on the number of participants)
- A small container to hold the hot, burnt out matches
- **Time:** approximately 40 seconds per participant

First transgressions!

Ask participants to **think back to the first time they searched for something 'taboo' online** ! What was it?

- Get participants to stand together in the room.
- Diverse responses will emerge on anything from transition surgery to periods, from understanding feminism to confronting religion.
- Invite participants to give 'popcorn' responses, which will encourage quick and light-hearted responses.
- As similarities emerge in the room, ask participants to find those with whom they share experiences
- Give each smaller group five minutes to talk among one another about their first transgressions.

Resources you may need for this activity

- Open space to mingle and for small group conversations
- **Time:** approximately 10-15 mins

Share insight!

At the end of this activity, **remind participants of their power** not only to access information and find pleasure, but to shape and create what we can access in a space such as the internet that often feels like it was not created for us. The kinds of topics that are considered 'taboo' in our societies are so often the very type of content we need more of! At the same time, it is also the type of content that becomes political as states and private companies attempt to censor, erase and otherwise block access to it.

Sex and the internet!

Ask participants, **When was the first time you made the connection between sex and the internet?** Was it a conversation with a friend? An online search? Downloading a dating app? Sexting with a distanced lover?

- Invite voluntary responses from participants that describe their first time exploring sex or intimacy online.
- Keep the activity flowing and light-hearted by asking participants to give quick interventions

Time: approximately 10-15 mins

Share insight!

The internet informs the way we understand and define sex, pleasure, intimacy and love. It informs how we relate to one another and reimagine our freedoms. There is something very impactful about **connecting to our transgressive power** to transform, shape and use the internet for our activism and our pleasure!

Online communities exploring different ways of knowing or sharing stories relating to love, sex, pleasure and intimacy, open up worlds of reimagining, redefining and sensemaking of ourselves and our relationships.

Museum of movements!

When we reflect collectively on some of the memories we have of significant moments in our activism, **we surface the bookmarks that tie common references together!**

- Invite participants to bring to the local conversation an artefact from their activism. This is a material item that can include anything from a flyer, a sticker, a T-shirt, photographs or protest banners!
- Once you are ready to start the activity, bring participants together in the room, either seated or standing in a circle so that each person can see the other clearly.
- Go around the room and invite participants to share the story connected to their artefact. Ask participants, How did you become involved in that particular moment? Why did that moment matter to you? Who were the people around you in that moment that you loved, were inspired by, or with whom you were building relationships of care and solidarity? How did your presence and action in that moment rupture the normality of discrimination?
- Keep watch of the time, and limit different inputs from participants according to the time constraint you have for this activity and the number of people participating.
- If participants are many, split participants up into smaller groups for more intimate engagement and conversation.

Resources you may need for this activity

- Open space for all participants to sit or stand in a circle, or possibly for smaller group conversations
- **Time:** approximately 30-40 mins

Note: This activity will require pre-planning, since it is helpful to ask participants well in advance to dig into their material history and bring an artefact from their activism to the conversation.

Open Space Method

While you may already have a set agenda for your conversation, you may also want the topics of conversation to be entirely participant-led. In this case, the Open Space method is a powerful tool to help you **facilitate a participant-led conversation!**

Open Space is a method that allows participants in the room to decide on the topics they want to discuss, and can be used for a single session of conversation, multiple sessions or multiple days of conversations. It may take up the entire event, or be an engaging session that is followed by a plenary discussion.

How it works

Open Space has Four Rules, One Law and Two Insects.

The **Four Rules**

1. Whoever come are the right people
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
3. Whenever it starts is the right time
4. When it's over, it's over

The One Law is the **Law of Two Feet**. It states:

“ If, during the course of the conversation, any person finds themselves in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they can go to a more productive place.

The Two Insects are **the Butterfly and the Bee**:

- Butterflies are the participants who hang out, maybe drink tea, and don't appear to do too much. However, they may just be involved with the most important discussions of the day. Interesting conversations can emerge around them as people find them and pause to chat.
- Bees flit from conversation to conversation, cross-pollinating, bringing new ideas and fresh eyes to each conversation. They can also encourage mingling for those for whom the Law of Two Feet feels a bit rude.

Resources you will need for this activity

- Lots of marker pens
- A4 paper on which to write down questions
- Poster paper on which to record discussions
- Prestik to stick poster paper to the wall

Considerations about venue

- The venue needs to be large enough to enable participants to sit in a large circle, and also to be large enough to hold several conversations simultaneously.
- Ideally, the venue needs to have walls on which you can stick your poster paper

The process step-by-step

1. The question

- Key to a successful Open Space event is to start the event with a good question. The question you ask and how you frame it will influence the types of conversations that are had. Be mindful that how you frame the question will also influence who turns up for the event. It can be tempting to just want people who agree with you to be there, but this will limit the diversity of your group.
- If you intend on making your entire event Open Space, the question is usually the title of the event. This helps set the tone for what will be discussed at the session. If this is the case, it is important that the question is stated clearly on the invitations.

2. Setting up the conversation

- Invite participants to sit in a circle. If the venue has chairs, the format of the space can be set up beforehand by arranging the chairs in a circle.
- Place a pile of sheets of A4 paper and marker pens in the centre of the circle, have a large timetable showing times of conversations and breaks, with blank, open slots, either in the centre of the circle on the floor, or on a nearby wall.
- Explain to participants the concept of Open Space, including the Four Rules, the Law of Two Feet, and the two insects. Also ask participants to record discussions on the poster paper that will be provided.
- If you like, you can also share tips on how to facilitate conversations, since these will be self-led by participants themselves.

Remember! Before starting Open Space, go through the 'must-haves' of the agenda, which include introductions, a welcome, icebreakers, and principles for participation! When setting up the conversation, take time to reiterate the principles of participation, explaining how they apply to the smaller group conversations too.

3. Question proposals

- Give participants the opportunity to propose questions related to the overall question or

topic of the event. These will become focus points for different conversations.

- If a participant proposes a question, they must host that conversation, and document the conversation themselves or arrange someone else to document.
- Give roughly ten minutes for participants to come forward and propose a question by writing the question on one of the A4 pieces of paper in the centre of the circle.
- Participants who propose a question must also add their conversation to a blank slot in the timetable provided.
- The number of parallel conversations being held will depend on the number of people you anticipate attending, as well as the length of the session. If more questions are proposed than slots available, topics that are similar can be put together in the same conversation.

4. Facilitating the session

- Once questions have been proposed and transferred onto the timetable, give all participants a few minutes to look at the timetable and decide which conversations they want to join and when.
- Ask participants to go to the break-out space where their chosen question is being hosted for the first round of conversations to begin.
- Once the first round of conversations start, a key facilitation role will include keeping track of time. It is useful to have a bell or alternative sound that signals the end of one conversation session and the beginning of another.
- Throughout the event, ensure each break-out space has enough poster paper and pens available for documenting the conversations
- Remind participants every now and then about the Law of Two Feet.
- At the end of each conversation session, go to each break-out space and collect the notes that have been made. Put them up on an available wall.
- Depending on the number of participants and number of conversations, ensure to schedule an appropriate amount of time at the end of the event to allow one person to give feedback from each conversation that took place.
- The notes that were generated can be typed up and circulated to all participants who attended.

5. Closing the event

- The way you close the event will depend on your goals.
- You may have wanted simply to hold space for learning and sharing of experiences and ideas, in which case you could close the event by thanking everyone for their engagement and for honouring the principles of the space.
- You might have intended to use the conversation as a means of activating a community for local action, in which case you might want to invite participants to reach out if they are interested in being part of continuing and developing the initiative.
- Provide space at the end of the event for feedback from participants about how they experienced the process: what they found effective, what surprised them, and what they felt could be improved.
- End the event with a brief check out, giving each participant the chance to give a word or single sentence about how they are feeling after the conversations had.

Ecosystem Dialogue

The ecosystem dialogue is a method for surfacing tensions, contradictions and issues among a group of participants. It is valuable as a form of conversation, because it allows participants in the 'ecosystem' to **plug into and connect to a diversity of views, experiences and perspectives**, and develop empathy and appreciation in the process.

How it works

There are a number of logistical points to take into consideration:

- **Number of participants:** A dialogue should ideally have between twenty and fifty participants.
- **Facilitation:** The method requires facilitation to guide the process. If possible, it is useful to have up to two facilitators to help move the process along.
- **Time allocation:** It is ideal to have at least three hours allocated to this method, as this amount of time allows for different experiences, feelings and perspectives to surface, and also allows time for the group collectively to think together about how to shift those experiences, feelings and perspectives.

Resources you will need for this activity

- Coloured paper
- A marker pen

The process step-by-step

1. Setting up the conversation

- Invite participants to sit in a circle. If the venue has chairs, the format of the space can be set up beforehand by arranging the chairs in a circle.
- Invite participants to propose areas or issues of discussion that have importance for them, and collectively agree on one of those issues for the sake of the exercise.
- Ask participants how this issue manifests – what are the tensions, pain points or realities that get in the way of the issue being resolved? Give at least ten minutes for participants to surface this.
- As tensions surface, different types of actors in the 'ecosystem' will be named. Allow for at least eight voices or actors to emerge from the discussion.
- Write these voices on separate pieces of coloured paper, and place these pieces of paper on the floor around the room.
- Invite participants to choose which voice they would like to speak from in the dialogue. The voice they speak from does not have to be their own identity or embodied

experience.

- Invite participants to get up and stand at the piece of coloured paper that represents their chosen voice.

Remember! If the ecosystem dialogue is your first session of the event, remember to first run through the 'must-haves' of an agenda, which include, introductions, welcome, icebreakers, principles for participation, and any other framing you would like to offer to participants for collectively holding space before you start.

2. Dialogue part 1: Surfacing key tensions

- To initiate the dialogue, invite one of the voices to start by giving their perspective on the issue.
- Encourage the flow of dialogue by inviting other voices to respond.
- It is important to allow the dialogue to flow. If participants get stuck, the facilitator can step in and act as provocateur in the discussion.
- Let participants know that they can move from one voice to the other, especially if they feel a particular voice is not fully present in the space.
- If new voices emerge, allow those to also enter the dialogue.
- Note that at this point, the dialogue may focus predominantly on the problems, the tensions and points of difference. Allow that to surface for at least 15-20 minutes.

3. Dialogue part 2: Shifting from problem to deepen dialogue

- Pause the dialogue for a moment. Suggest to participants that, now, their role is to think about how to build on what another actor or voice is saying. For example, if one voice surfaces a problem from their perspective, another voice can ask questions about that problem, or ask what that actor feels they need.
- Remind participants of the principle of 'yes, and...' This ensures all issues that surface are acknowledged as opposed to invalidated or broken down, and at the same time, actors are encouraged to think about how to shift those issues.
- Again, allow at least 15-20 minutes for this stage, depending on the number of participants in the dialogue.

4. Dialogue part 3: Appreciation

- Again, pause the conversation. Acknowledge what has been accomplished so far: surfacing issues and working to shift from problematising to thinking together in dialogue.
- Allow at least ten minutes of dialogue from different voices to express appreciation for one another and what each one brings, and how it contributes to the greater ecosystem.

5. Debriefing

- Invite participants to return to their chairs in the circle.
- Allow at least ten minutes of debriefing. Ask participants what the dialogue raised for

them.

- Invite participants to give feedback on the process: what they appreciated about it, what surprised them, and what challenges it presented.

6. Moving forward

- Note some of the issues that surfaced in the debrief.
- Split participants into break out groups to discuss what could be done to address those issues as the whole ecosystem. A good framework for discussions could include addressing strengths, struggles and solutions that are relevant to different actors.
- Allocate time at the end of the break out group discussions for feedback to the larger group.

Appendix : Icebreakers

Let's move!

Get participants to stand together randomly in the room. Let participants know that we are going to say 'hi!' to one another with our bodies. Invite participants to walk around amongst each other. At the facilitator's call, say 'hi' with a wink to the people you pass by. Next, at the facilitator's call, say 'hi' with a touch of the elbows. Again, after giving participants a minute to say 'hi' with a touch of the elbows, invite them to say 'hi' to one another with a touch of the shoulders. Then, with the touch of the hips. Next, with the touch of the back. And finally, invite participants to say 'hi' to one another with a hug.

Pleasure rituals

The following icebreaker is a great way to 'randomly' break up participants into smaller groups for conversation.

Get participants to stand together randomly in the room. Ask participants, 'What are some of the things you enjoy doing every day?' Invite participants to call out their pleasure rituals. Some participants will call out the same pleasure rituals, react in resonance to the responses of others, or give similar types of rituals in relation to others. Name some of the common rituals or types of rituals that have been called out, and ask participants to stand with the people in the room they've noticed who enjoy doing the same things. Each group gets a chance to name their pleasure rituals.

Yoga or stretching:

Lead participants through some yoga stances for 10-15 minutes, or through some gentle stretches that engage diverse muscle groups of the body. Work your way from the top of the head down to the feet. Movement releases tensions in joints, alleviates muscle pains and stiffness, and invigorates blood flow and oxygen to the brain. This is particularly useful if participants have been sitting for a long time, or have just returned from a lunch break.

F-E-M-I-N-I-S-T:

Ask participants to stand in a circle. Each participant gets a turn to do the exercise one at a time, or together if in a big group, which is to spell the word, 'F-E-M-I-N-I-S-T,' with your hips!

Moment of gratitude and energy sharing:

Ask participants to stand in a circle and bow in gratitude to one another. Then, invite participants to open their arms and bring their hands towards their heart, bringing in the gratitude of everyone in the room. Then, invite participants to open their arms out again, and spread their gratitude back out. Next, ask participants to open their arms wide and upwards to the sun and the air, and lower their arms, putting their hands on their abdomen, bringing that energy into their sacral area. Next, invite participants to bend forward and open their arms down to the ground, giving thanks to Mother Earth. Let participants bring themselves back to stand up straight, distributing that energy through all their chakras. Allow their hands to run up the central line of their bodies, and continue to lift their hands up to the heavens, the stars and the cosmos, and then bring that energy back to themselves in hands of prayer. Lastly, invite participants to bow and say thanks to everyone in their presence.

Quick conversations:

The following icebreaker is particularly relevant when coming back to the conversation after a break, or at the start of the second day of conversation in the case of multi-day conversation sessions.

Ask participants to find someone in the room that they have not yet spoken to, and introduce themselves. Tell your partner about your experience of the previous session. Each person gets one minute to speak, and then switch.

Power circle:

Invite all participants to stand in a wide circle. Ask the group, 'Who of you have at least one collaborator in your activism/work?' If you do, take one step forward into the circle. Next, ask the group, 'Who of you feel you are part of a collective or have more than one collaborator?' If you do, take another step forward into the circle. Third ask, 'Who of you are part of an organisation?' Take another step forward. Who of you is part of an institution? A national community? A transnational community? A global community? With each question, those who identify take a step forward towards the centre of the circle. Next, ask participants to take a moment to see who is closer to the centre of the circle (i.e. closer to power), and who is on the outskirts.

Clapping rhythm:

Ask participants to stand in a circle. Each participant creates a sound and a simultaneous body

movement to describe feminism. Create a coordinated rhythm by slapping thighs or clapping hands, and creating a break in the rhythm that provides space for each person in the circle, one at a time, to express their sound and movement. Go around the circle once, twice or three times, depending on the number of participants and flow of the exercise.

Name game:

All participants stand in a circle. A ball/small stuffed toy is thrown from one person to their person of choice, while saying the name of the person they are throwing the ball to. Each person must throw the ball to the same person every time, and the ball must be thrown to every participant once throughout one round. Each round is timed and must be completed faster than the previous round.