

Chapter 3. Playing with tech

Now that you have a sense of the different elements to consider when organising a convening and holding a conversational space, we bet all you'll want to do now is cram your agenda with juicy feminist tech activities! If you are looking for tips and examples of hands-on activities that lift the lid on tech using a feminist politics, this chapter is for you! Though before we get under the hood of technology and the possibilities that learning hold, you may be asking, why include hands-on learning activities in a conversation about the FPIs?

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Intro

Now that you have a sense of the different elements to consider when organising a convening and holding a conversational space, we bet all you'll want to do now is cram your agenda with juicy feminist tech activities! If you are looking for tips and examples of hands-on activities that lift the lid on tech using a feminist politics, **this chapter is for you!** Though before we get under the hood of technology and the possibilities that learning hold, you may be asking, **Why include hands-on learning activities in a conversation about the FPIs?**

Depending on who you invite to your conversation, there may be participants in the room who are not familiar with certain types of technology. Some may have had negative experiences of violence and harassment when using technology. Others may not have ready access to digital devices, or may feel that technology is complicated, confusing or not for them.

Hands-on activities about technology **hold the power to confront fears** that your participants might have around using technology. They also **create a safe environment in which to explore, discover, play and find joy using technology!** This breaks dominant narratives that participants might have around technology not being for them, and can spark curiosity and deepen their understanding of how technology relates to their activism and their lives.

What we will explore in this chapter:	This section is for you if:
Feminist practices and politics of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You want a clear understanding of how to approach running a hands-on tech activity• You want to know how to frame how you talk about technology
Hands-on activities for igniting conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You want activities for stimulating conversation around how technology relates to our environment, our activism and our lives
Hands-on activities for subversion using technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You want to dispel fears among participants around creating, taking up space or learning using technology• You want to strengthen participants' positive relationships to technology

Ready to jump in? Let's go!

Feminist Practices and Politics of Technology



The Feminist Practices and Politics of Technology is an approach to running technology-related activities. We know that **a feminist practice of technology cannot be devoid of a feminist analysis of the politics of technology**. The Feminist Practices and Politics of Technology are a set of principles that put the politics into practice! These principles can help you choose what activities to include in your conversation, and also help you decide on the best approach for carrying those activities out.

Why are the Feminist Practices and Politics of Technology important when hosting a conversation about the Feminist Principles of the Internet?

- Like the FPIs, these principles ensure that the experiences of women, gender-diverse and queer folks with technology **remain at the centre** of our exploration and interrogation of technology and its development.
- When these principles are applied to how we run our activities, they ensure that those activities are not only about the technical or practical elements of technology, but mainly about the **political, social, economic and cultural paradigms** that shape and affect the technical and practical elements.
- Finally, these principles remind us that how we teach about technology **must be adapted** to the needs and priorities of those who are learning – not the other way around

- and consider the diversity of ways in which knowledge and experiences are shared.

Feminist Practices and Politics of Technology core principles

Participation and inclusivity:

- Since you as the facilitator have as much to learn from your participants as they do from you, design your conversation in a way that encourages **exchange and discussion** ! This gives space for different opinions and experiences to emerge.
- Remember there are various ways of learning and communicating! Choose activities that accommodate different learning styles.

Safety:

- Create an environment where participants feel safe to ask questions, raise issues and feel they can share information without being rejected, belittled or divulged without their consent. **Discuss with folks what they need** to feel safe when going through your event's **Principles for Participation (Chapter 2)**
- Take time to go through the risks associated with using digital technologies. Before embarking on a new activity, participants need to be **informed** of possible dangers, such as risks to their privacy when using social networking sites, for example.
- Integrate care into the practice of activities. Remember that **care looks different for different people**, and depends on who we are and where we are located in our lives and contexts. Be mindful of any stress that shows up in the room and address it where possible, so that everyone can show up fully for the collective during each activity.

Grounded in participants' realities:

- Base conversations on the needs and realities of your participants. Take into account the contexts of your participants, the kinds of technologies folks use, and the ways in which they experience technology when deciding on what activities to include.

Appropriate, sustainable technologies:

- Related to the principle above, prioritise activities about technologies that participants are able to access, appropriate and use after the conversation. Free and open-source software (FOSS) should be given priority, but only if participants can access them and sustain their use.

Transparency and openness:

- Remember that you have your own agenda when hosting a local conversation. **Make your goals apparent** to your participants.
- When planning the agenda of your conversation, include processes in which the expectations and goals of participants are surfaced and integrated into the agenda.

These processes can take place either before or at the start of your event.

Creativity and strategy:

- Use the conversation as a space to look at technologies strategically and creatively! Figure out collectively how folks can appropriate them in ways that enhance their activism and lives.

Emphasis on the roles of women, gender diverse and queer folks in technology:

- Be aware that many folks have been erased from the histories of technology. Your conversation is the perfect space to correct this misrepresentation. When talking about technology, **highlight the contributions that women, gender diverse and queer folks have made** to technology development. Ask participants of some of the women, gender diverse and queer folks they know who have shaped technology! Raising these examples is a powerful way of showing participants how much technology is meant for and is shaped by women, gender diverse and queer folk around the world.

Emphasis on our control of technology:

- Do not be hesitant to dive deeply into the ways in which you and your participants can take control of the internet and technologies.
- Provoke curiosity among participants around **how technologies work** – not only how they can be used – by integrating hands-on tech activities into your conversation agenda.

Fun!

- Simply put, have fun at your event! Remember that **having fun is political**, because it breaks down barriers that negatively affect folks' relationships to and control over technology. Fun enables ownership of technology and our online spaces and sustains curiosity and joy.

Now that we know **how to frame the way we talk about technology** with our participants, and **how to approach the selection and facilitation of activities**, let's take a look at a few examples of hands-on activities designed and practiced by feminist trainers from around the world!

Hands-on activities for igniting conversation!

Image Source: Feminist Internet City Conversation in Harare, 2017. Photograph by Fungai Machirori

Conversation is an important means for surfacing different perspectives and experiences about technology. The following activities create spaces for small and larger group discussions that can help folks to deepen their understanding of how technology relates to their environment and their lives.

Read on to learn about:

- 1. Hosting an Install Party, by (person) from (country)!
- 2. Using metaphor surrounding the body and territory, by (person) from (country)!
- 3. Feminist Dada Technopoetry, by Juliana from Colombia!

Hosting an Install Party! [to be completed]

By (person), (country)

Overview
<p>An Install Party is a gathering, firstly, to have fun, but also to collectively install free operating systems on the computers of participants. Using CDs or USB sticks, participants work together to replace their computers' proprietary operating systems with operating systems from a GNU/Linux distribution. If a problem arises, it is solved by the whole group, although there are usually more experienced installers present to support the process.</p> <p>If we compare our body to a computer, we could also consider ourselves to be made up of a physical part, like the hardware, and software, which would be the content of our brain and the subjectivity or codes and values that constitute us. Just as hardware and software in a computer communicate with each other through a series of protocols, so our physical bodies and identities are permeated by specific programmes. For example, the dominant operating system on our computers could be Windows, which is organised on the basis of user dependency on corporations, where copying and the modification of code is forbidden. We could understand heteronormativity as a cultural operating system that runs through our bodies, which, just like Windows, is not easy to modify, because its codes have not been opened and seek to preserve binary divisions of gender.</p> <p>In the same way that an Install Party brings people together to install free operating systems on their computers, this activity brings people together to uninstall dominant cultural systems from our bodies and install alternative cultural systems around gender and other parts of our identity that are open and allow us to share, copy and modify them!</p> <p>Who is this activity for? [To be completed]</p>

Getting started
Materials needed:
Preparation:
The activity
<p>The aim of the activity is to make new versions of the concepts that affect, classify and construct us, so that we can adapt them to our experience and replicate them in other spaces. It is a way of hacking what has been given to us as unchangeable and closed, and replacing those systems with concepts that are open and modifiable.</p> <p>Some basic concepts to share with participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and open-source software – This refers to programmes and applications that can be copied, studied, modified, used freely for any purpose, and redistributed with or without changes. • P2P system – P2P stands for “Peer to Peer.” It is a network structure that indicates the way connections should be made when transmitting information from one machine, or node, to another. In P2P networks, each node is considered a ‘peer’ since they are all equal within the network. Unlike client-server networks where information has to pass through a central server, in P2P, the resources come from each of the nodes and a dedicated connection is used to solve a specific problem (in this case node communication). <p>Activity step-by-step [to be completed]</p>

Using metaphor surrounding the body and territory!

By (person), (country)

Overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-liner what the activity entailed • Who were the participants • For what group of people is this activity best suited
Getting started
Materials needed:
Preparation:
The activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Activity step-by-step

Feminist Dada Technopoetry!

By Juliana, Colombia

Overview

Texts are not neutral. Whether technical, narrative, essay or principles, they are written with a limited set of words supposedly known by those to whom these texts are intended. Breaking those texts and approaching them word by word, asking questions about how they are composed, is a way to consciously think and reflect on a particular topic.

Creating with these words without necessarily knowing their context or even their meaning (quite common with technical terminology) is an opportunity to imagine and create a new meaning for them. Can we build a feminist internet from scratch? Probably not, but dada poetry and collage has taught us how to transform reality using what we have and recycling it.

Using an arbitrary word set while thinking about a possible feminist internet may help us to reject some traditional assumptions and freely create their meanings and contexts. This activity uses collage as a way of exploring code, creating texts and unpacking technical terms. It is an analytical and joyful activity. We want to identify the different origins and intentions of words used and create not only new texts but images of possible scenarios.

It has been practiced by trainers in Mexico, Toronto, New York and Bogotá.

Who is this activity for? Participants for this activity have been (non-tech) feminist activists, techies and digital rights activists. Basic literacy (reading and writing) in the language of the event is required for this activity. No other technical expertise is needed.

Getting started

Materials needed:

- A word set (or more than one), such as the Feminist Principles of the Internet, Cyborg Manifesto, or digital security guides

If the activity is conducted in-person:

- Different coloured papers on which to print or write the words
- A bag in which to mix the word sets
- Paper, glue and markers to compose the poems

If the activity is conducted online:

- The software of your preference to convert the text of your choice into a word cloud (this can also be done manually), or alternatively program a gif where the words can appear in sequence

Preparation:

If the activity is conducted in-person:

- Print one or more word sets (for example, the FPIs) on different coloured papers. Each principle should be on a different colour, or if using more than one word set simultaneously, you can print one word set on colour and another word set on another colour. Make sure the font size is large for ease of use.
- Imagine collecting flyers on the street and then cutting them out. Each one will have a different style, what does this style represent? Play around with different fonts, colours and sizes. Try to preserve the different aesthetic styles of each word set used when you print, and enjoy the diversity you will see at the end!
- Cut each word out separately and place them into a bag. You can mix different word sets or use them separately.
For the activity, you can work on the floor or on a big table. Some words will be lost during the activity, but that is not a problem.

If the activity is conducted online:

- Use the software of your choice to create a word cloud from the word set you've chosen. Alternatively, you can do this manually by printing and cutting out the words, creating a physical word cloud, and taking a picture of it. Another way of presenting the words is by creating a gif that runs the words one by one in sequence.
- Participants can then select the different words they see appearing on the screen, write them down on a piece of paper and compose with them. Many words will be repeated in different participants' creations. That is not a problem but is something to talk about.

You can also invite participants to bring their own word sets and image materials to contribute, however, this may confuse the exercise. It is up to you if you decide whether to introduce other materials or not.

The activity

This activity can be run at any moment during a workshop, even during a break time.

1. Prepare the materials considering carefully what text or word set would be a nice trigger. Trainers practicing this activity in the past have combined texts with heavy technical and feminist terminologies that seem to be very different from one another. What does 'intersectionality' mean for a non-feminist techie? Or what does 'E2EE' mean for a non-techie feminist?
2. Define a question, a prompt or provocation for the participants who will play. Examples of questions include, What should the internet look like? Or, What will make the internet a pleasant place to be? The question could also be something radically different like, What do you enjoy most about your body?
3. Display the word set on a surface (in-person) or on the screen (online) and invite participants to pick words from the set and start playing with them. Set a time limit for this activity. Remember to say that we are creating poetry. We are not explaining or guessing an answer, we are just playing with arbitrary given words and the primary goal is to enjoy doing it.
4. Share the creations with one another and give time to talk about them. Ask, What happened? This discussion is an important moment of learning among one another. It can raise new questions or open up new approaches to a topic.

The success of the activity lies in remembering that the preparation is both directive and arbitrary. In selecting the word set, you are controlling the system and are in no way neutral. However, allow yourself and the participants to let go, play and enjoy the activity.

Hands-on activities for subversion using technology!

Want to get down and dirty with tech? Touching, holding, pulling apart, building and using technological devices themselves can be a powerful means for exploring unknowns, taking up space and subverting using technology. The following activities can help folks gain confidence handling technology and realise their own capabilities in shaping tech!

Read on to learn about:

1. [Even machines dream: Feminist robots for Twitter, by Stef from Brazil!](#)
2. [Proud Dyke.tech - a master of web technologies, by Maja from Slovenia!](#)
3. [Taking apart your computer, by \(person\) from \(country\)!](#)

Even machines dream: Feminist robots for Twitter

By Stef, Brazil



This activity entails making (or many) feminist bots on Twitter using generative grammar constructs.

A bot (or robot) is a computer programme that automatically performs repetitive tasks over the internet. Normally, these bots perform simple tasks. When they do together, it is often called a 'bots farm.' When used on Twitter, they are rarely influential, but they do help generate trending topics - the topics that Twitter considers 'hot' at a certain moment - or generate noise about a topic.

Making and using feminist robots on Twitter is a playful way of making feminist 'noise' online, and creating a feminist internet.

Generative grammar, which will be used to create our bots, is a linguistic theory that regards grammar as a system of rules. It generates exactly those combinations of words that form grammatical sentences in a given language.

Who is the activity for?

Getting started

Materials needed:

- A digital device such as a computer, tablet or mobile phone
- Internet access

Preparation:

- Check in with participants to make sure they can bring their own digital devices to the conversation. If they do not have their own, participants can also work together in pairs or small groups.

The activity

The activity can be run either in-person or online. Make sure that participants each have the materials needed as stipulated above. Remember to set a time limit for each step of the activity.

1. Invite participants to think of a Twitter robot concept. What will be their username ('@...')? What cover image, profile image and description will you use?
2. Give participants a moment to create a Twitter account for their bot and with it, log onto Twitter.
3. While logged on Twitter, ask participants to access the website: <https://cheapbotsdonequick.com/>
4. Instruct participants to click, 'Sign in with Twitter'
5. Instruct participants to click, 'Authorise the application'
6. Once your participants have reached the next page, they are ready to create the rules of their bot. They are going to write their code in the space after 'JSON Tracery'.
This site will help you make a Twitterbot! They're easy to make and free to run. To use it, [create a Twitter account](#) for your bot to run under and then sign in below. The bots are written in [Tracery](#), a tool for writing generative grammars developed by [Kate Compton](#). This site is run by [v. buckenham](#) - they can be contacted at vtwentyone@gmail.com. You can support this site on [Patreon](#).
7. Trying with an example is the best way to understand how it works. Invite participants to play with different examples, and from there to start creating their own robot. Paste the code that follows into the space and start playing. The code will look something like this:

```
{
"origin": ["Good day for #action# #something# with #object# #where#"]
,"action": ["explode","leave","kill","?","?","?","?"]
,"something": ["Facebook","patriarchy","the machista","?","?","?"]
,"object": ["scissors","encryption","?","?","?","?","?"]
,"where": ["in the kitchen","in the car","?","?","?"]

}
```

- 'Origin' is where the structure of our sentence comes from.
 - Everything that is between '#' in 'origin' is what is going to get mixed up in the sentence.
8. With the code there, by clicking 'refresh,' participants can look at the possibilities of combinations with the words they have written in their example.
 9. Once a participant clicks on 'Tweet,' that text will be published in the Twitter account of the tweet.
 10. Participants can also select a number of configurations at the bottom left-hand area of the screen, including how long their bot is going to say something on Twitter, whether the bot can reply or not when someone sends it a message, and whether they want to share or not share their code with the public on the Cheap Bots Done Quick website. If a participant chooses to allow their bot to 'reply' to messages, explain that they will answer using a combination of words with the same rule that has been created for them.
 11. Once the above has been set up, the participants' bots are ready! Invite them to click 'Save' to have the bot active on the Twitter account created for it.

Proud Dyke.tech - a master of web technologies

By Maja, Slovenia (<https://www.22nds.com>)

TAKE THE CHALLENGE AND BECOME	
Overview	
<p>Dyke.tech is a web page where nine web development challenges are featured. They are ordered by their complexity and while participants are solving them they learn about web technologies.</p> <p>If the participant solves all nine challenges they get a certificate.</p> <p>Project DYKE.tech originates from the LGBTIQ community in Slovenia. It was first presented at LGBTIQ in Tech meetup and is an English version of Lezba-si – a lesbian who masters computer science – as defined in Slovenian LGBTQ dictionary. It is a fun way of exploring web development while being creative, exploring functionalities of web browsers and sharing tips on how to solve the challenges.</p> <p>The activity has been practiced in Ljubljana, Slovenia and Berlin, Germany.</p>	
ABOUT THE PROJECT	START THE CHALLENGE
<p>Who is this activity for? The activity is best suited for web developers or those who are curious how websites are built and already have at least a little knowledge about web development.</p>	
Getting started	
<p>Materials needed:</p> <p>Laptop (not mobile phone) is needed to be able to look into source code of web pages. Preferably using Mozilla Firefox browser.</p> <p>Preparation:</p> <p>No preparation for participants is needed. Facilitator should solve the challenges on website https://www.22nds.com/dyketech/ before the activity to be able to help participants and be familiar of concepts used in modern web development (browser, source code, design, JavaScript, RegEx, cookies, search engines, data, images).</p>	
The activity	

The facilitator should give a little intro into the activity (also available at <https://www.22nds.com/dyketech/about-the-project/>) and make sure all participants have web site <https://www.22nds.com/dyketech/> opened in Mozilla Firefox browser.

There are several ways this activity can be run and the choice is based on the proficiency of participants' web development skills:

1. *If all participants have a lot of experience and knowledge*, facilitator can block 20 minutes and let everyone start solving the challenges. After 20 minutes everybody shares their progress and if there is anybody that was unable to progress they get additional support to solve the challenge. If needed participants get another 20 minutes to tackle the challenges. Afterwards a review of all the challenges should be made and participants share how they solved it. If some challenges are still unsolved then the facilitator helps with tips (not solutions!) and motivates participants to solve the challenge together.

2. *If participants are not web developers*, but would like to learn about web technologies, then the challenges should be solved together by the whole group. For every challenge one of the participants is selected to read out loud the text on the web site (the tip that hints where the solution is) and think about the strategies of solving the challenge. Other participants can help and share their thoughts and possible solutions until they find the solution and all group progresses to the next challenge and ultimately solves all challenges. Facilitator should help with tips when the group gets stuck and when participants reach solution facilitator can also point out alternative ways of solving the challenge.

At the end of the activity participants and facilitator can have a discussion about which other challenges could be implemented, what they had learned and which web technology they would like to learn more about in the future.

Taking apart your computer!

By (person), (country)

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