

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.

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