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 disenables 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

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