A beginner's guide to democratize, decolonize and create socially just public and social sector design processes

A SOCIAL DESIGNER'S FIELD GUIDE TO POWER LITERACY

Created by Maya Goodwill

This field guide belongs to:

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GETTING STARTED

HELLO!

If you've found this field guide, it likely means you are interested in understanding power dynamics in the design projects you take on and, hopefully, a more equitable, democratic and socially just design process.

The aim of this field guide is to help you develop power literacy; this includes building up your knowledge, reflexivity and interpretation skills to gain a more holistic understanding of the power dynamics and types of power that come up, however subtly, in your design projects. Power literacy is really about being self-aware of, sensitive to and better able to understand the impact of your power and privilege in the design process, and to then take action based on your values.

Whether you call your work social design, participatory design, action research, civic design, social innovation, design for the public sector, urban design or something else, this guide will help you on your journey to becoming a more power literate designer!

HOW TO USE

The field guide is divided into two main parts, with fold out worksheet activities to help you build yout power literacy skills throughout. Before you begin with the worksheets, you will find a glossary to help you build up a shared language around power literacy in the social design field. You will then move on to the two main sections of the guide.

Part 1: Five Forms of Power

In Part 1 you will be introduced to five forms of power in design processes. You will learn about each form of power by reflecting on your own experience in a past design project. For each type of power you will find a corresponding worksheet activity to complete— these are best done by first filling it out individually and then discussing in a group with your design team. To complete these activities, it will be helpful to select a past design project that you were a part of; you can find some tips to help you pick an appropriate project on page 14.

Part 2: Power Checks

In Part 2, you will be provided with guidelines, tips and worksheet activities to complete *power checks*

at certain points in the design process. Power checks are a way to practice power literacy 'in the field.' These checks will help you to build reflexivity—your awareness of social structures internalized by yourself and others—through four steps: recognize power, name power, understand the impact of power and act accordingly. There are four worksheets for you to use at critical moments in your next design project: set-up, divergence, convergence, and wrap-up.

been designed so that you can pick and choose what's relevant to you. For example, the worksheets in part 1 and part 2 can be used standalone, without going through the entire field guide. To help you navigate, suggestions for when and how to use each worksheet are provided.

Extra worksheets are available to download for free at www.power-literacy.com.

Choose your own adventure

Although, for the most comprehensive learning experience you will want to go through the field guide from cover to cover, it has

GLOSSARY

Language and the way that it is used is important, especially when considering power. In order to make it easier to use this field guide, we've put together a list of terms and meanings to start to build up a shared language in the field. You can add other important terms in the space provided on the opposite page.

Power: an actor's ability to influence an outcome. This is affected by asymmetry in relationships. Power can be used both positively and negatively.

Privilege: a social relation where one social group benefits at the expense of another. It is an unearned advantage and is often invisible to those who have it.

Oppression: the systematic and pervasive social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. It can be understood as the inverse of privilege, or the 'isms' (racism, ableism, sexism, etc.).

Marginalized: a group or class of people made to be less important or of lower status, typically with less decision-making ability and influence.

Democracy: the idea that everyone should have an equal say in making the decisions that impact them.

Social Justice: equitable treatment, opportunities, rights and distribution of resources within and between all communities and social groups in a dignified and respectful way.

Design: the intention and unintentional impact behind an outcome. Everyone designs, but only certain people are paid to do it.

Participatory Design: the involvement of various stakeholders in the design process. This exists along a spectrum.

Power Literacy: the ability to practice self-awareness of, be sensitive to and understand the impact of power in order to align outcomes to intentions.

Reflexivity: an actor's awareness of power and the corresponding social structures internalized by themselves and others around them.

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Why does power literacy matter to you as a designer? What three values are most important to you when addressing social issues?

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PART 1: FIVE SOURCES OF POWER

Reflecting on a past design project

SELECTING A PROJECT

In this section you will be introduced to five different, yet interrelated, forms of power that show up in design networks. For each of the five, there is an accompanying worksheet activity that you will fill out by reflecting on a past experience. To complete these worksheets, it is best to have a past design project in mind while you answer the questions. Here are some tips when choosing a project:

☐ **Multiple stakeholders were involved in some way during the design process (even if this was minimal or varied).**

☐ **There was a clear group of stakeholders that had lived experience of the problem or issue that you were aiming to address (eg. an 'end user').**

☐ **The project aimed to address a social issue (eg. improve education outcomes) that was in a specific context (eg. for youth in a particular neighbourhood).**

1. PRIVILEGE

PRIVILEGE

What is it?

Privilege is the type of power you get from a social relation where you benefit due to the social group you belong to, at the expense of another social group. It is an unearned advantage given to you because of your identity. It is possible to both have privilege and experience oppression at the same time, since identity is intersectional. When you have privilege, it is often invisible to you. Because identity categories do not exist independently from each other (they are *intersectional*), it is possible to have privilege and also experience oppression at the same time (for example, if your gender is cis*male, but racially you are a person of colour).

Privilege often gives you a leg up in being able to do something, influence an outcome and/or influence others around you. For example, having privilege might mean you are taken more seriously when you have a health issue, you appear more 'professional' at an interview because of your physical characteristics, you don't have to constantly think about your safety when you're in public space, or you don't have to plan ahead to ensure transit is accessible before you decide to go somewhere. These types of advantages are something that everyone should have access to,

*cis refers to someone who's gender identity matches the gender that they were assigned at birth.

and those with privilege can actively work to expand them by using the influence (or power!) that they have as a result of their privilege

Why does it matter?

As a designer, we have a lot of influence on the desired outcome as well as on the unintentional impacts of our design process and design. If we become more aware of our own privilege and sensitive to how privilege and oppression function in the context we are in, it means we can actively make informed decisions in order to avoid reproducing status quo inequities and patterns of oppression. Instead, we can make decisions in order to expand these subtle advantages to oppressed social groups throughout our design process, creating an equitable playing field.

Questions for reflection

What privilege do you have and what unearned advantages might this give you as a designer? How might this have influenced and impacted your last design project? who might have been unintentionally excluded or marginalized as a result?

Download and print extra worksheets at www.power-literacy.com
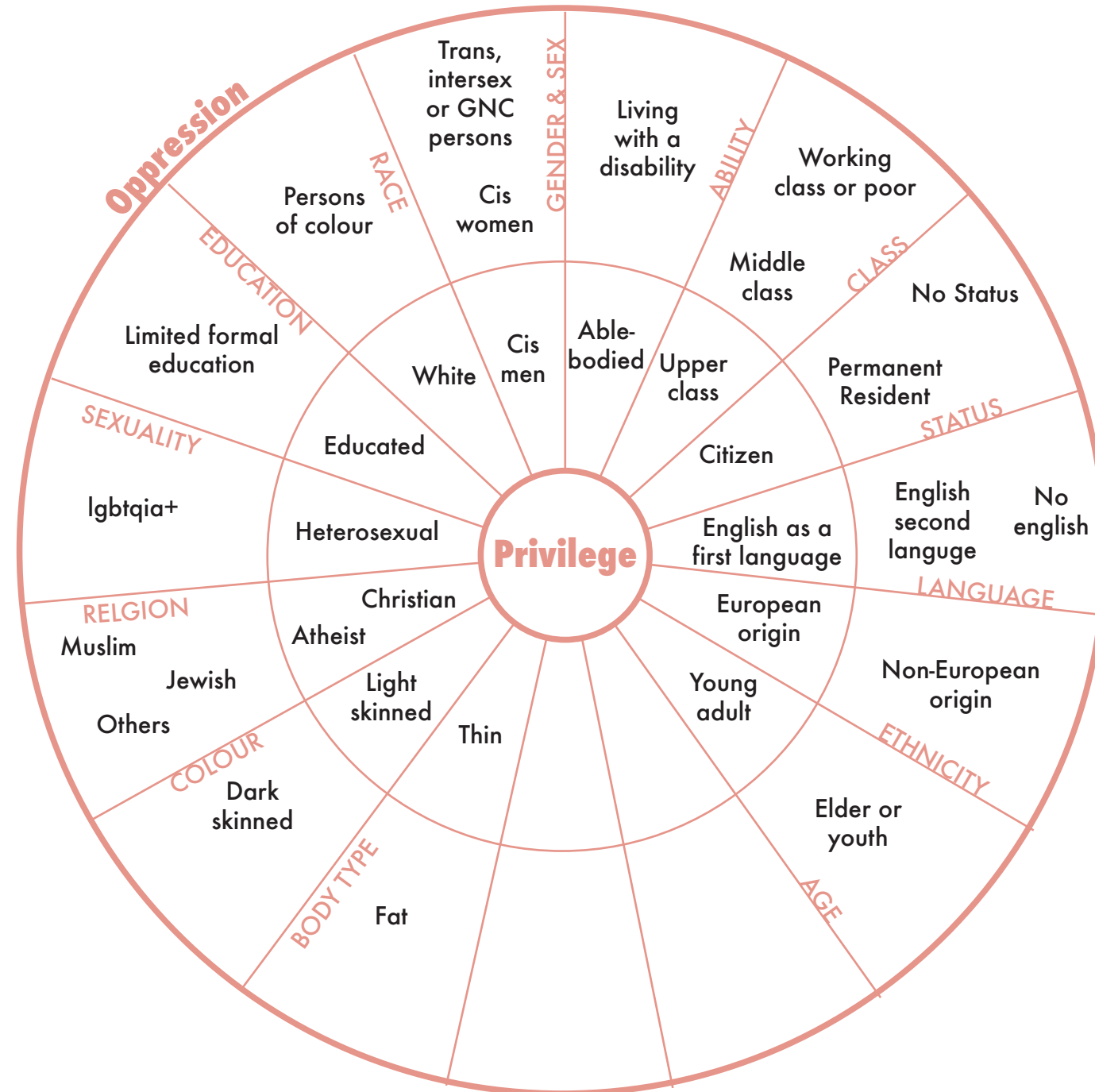
PRIVILEGE

What is it

Privilege is the type of power you get from a social relation where you benefit due to the social group you belong to, at the expense of another social group. It is an unearned advantage given to you because of your identity. It is possible to both have privilege and experience oppression at the same time, since identity is intersectional. When you have privilege, it is often invisible to you.

How to

1. Look at the different identies in the web. For each category (eg. class) take a marker and colour in the area that correspondes to your identity (eg. middle class). Add in any categories that are missing in the 2 blank sections and colour in accordingly.

2. Write down the privilege you have, and the resuting advantages that you and others may have had in your last project as a result.

3. Write down the impact of privilege and oppression on the project.

4. Discuss 2 & 3 in a group.

1. Recognize your own privilege

Which parts of my identity give me privilege? The identities in the inner circle are privileged, where as the identities in the outer circle are more oppressed (this can vary depending on geographic context and other factors).

Oppression

Privilege

GENDER & SEX — Trans, intersex or GNC persons / Cis women / Cis men
RACE — Persons of colour / White
EDUCATION — Limited formal education / Educated
SEXUALITY — lgbtqia+ / Heterosexual
RELGION — Muslim / Jewish / Others / Atheist / Christian
COLOUR — Dark skinned / Light skinned
BODY TYPE — Fat / Thin
ABILITY — Living with a disability / Able-bodied
CLASS — Working class or poor / Middle class / Upper class
STATUS — No Status / Permanent Resident / Citizen
LANGUAGE — No english / English second languge / English as a first language
ETHNICITY — Non-European origin / European origin
AGE — Elder or youth / Young adult

2. Name your privilege

What privilege do I have? What advantages do I experience in my daily life as a result? What biases and blind spots might I have had in this project as a result?

3. Understand impact

What advantages did those with privilege experience in the design process? Who may have been unintentionally excluded or marginalized as a result?

4. Discuss in a group

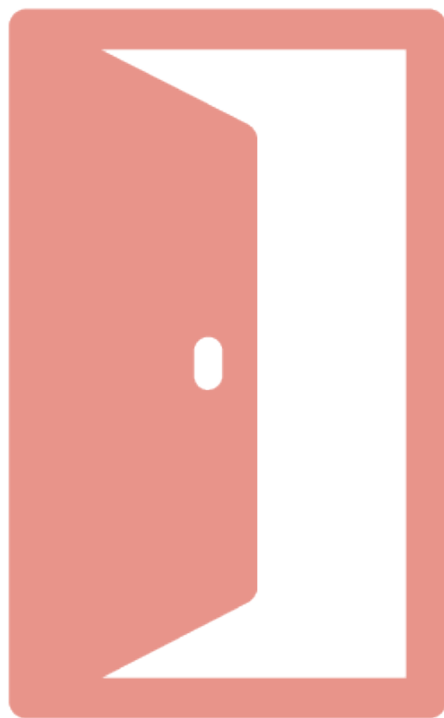# PRIVILEGE WORKSHEET

How to use

This worksheet should be done after a project is finished, to reflect back on it. However, it may also be useful and adapted to use during the planning phase at the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each person filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 30—40 min.

Key takeaways for next time:

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2. ACCESS POWER

Flip & fold out for the access power worksheet

ACCESS POWER WORKSHEET

How to use

This worksheet should be done after a project is finished, to reflect back on it. However, it may also be useful and adapted to use during the planning phase at the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each person filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 30—40 min.

ACCESS POWER

What is it

Access power is the ability to influence who is included in and who is excluded from the design project and process.

How to

1. List ALL of the stakeholders involved in the ecosystem for the social issue you are designing for; include yourself as a stakeholder. Next, mark an X through the circles of stakeholders who were not included in the design process.

2. Use the design process template, or make your own on a seperate sheet of paper. Write down the actors that had access in each phase. Draw a star on the phases with the most important decisions.

3. Reflect on the way actors were invited to participate using the guiding questions.

4. Using the guiding questions, reflect on the impact of access power in the project.

5. Discuss in a group. Write down any new insights.

6. Using the spectrum, reflect on the amount of access power you had in this project.

1.Who's in
Who are the stakeholders involved in the issue? Who was included and who was excluded from the design process?

DESIGNERS
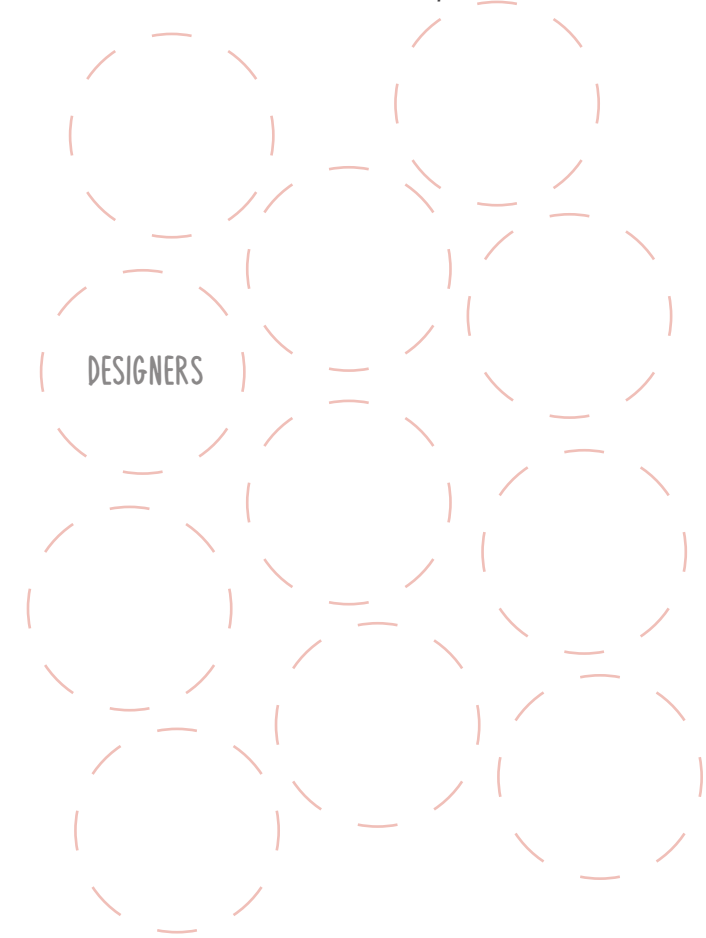
3. Invitations
How were different actors invited to participate? How might the nature of the invitation affect their feelings of inclusion? Who decided who was included? What was the reason for inclusion/exclusion?

4. Understand impact
Who was not represented? How might this have impacted relationships in the larger ecosystem? How might this have impacted outcomes?

2. Points of access
Is access the same throughout the design process for each actor, or does it change? In which phases was access more valuable and/or influential? Use the double diamond below, or make your own project timeline on a seperate piece of paper.

Set-up   Discover   Define   Develop   Deliver
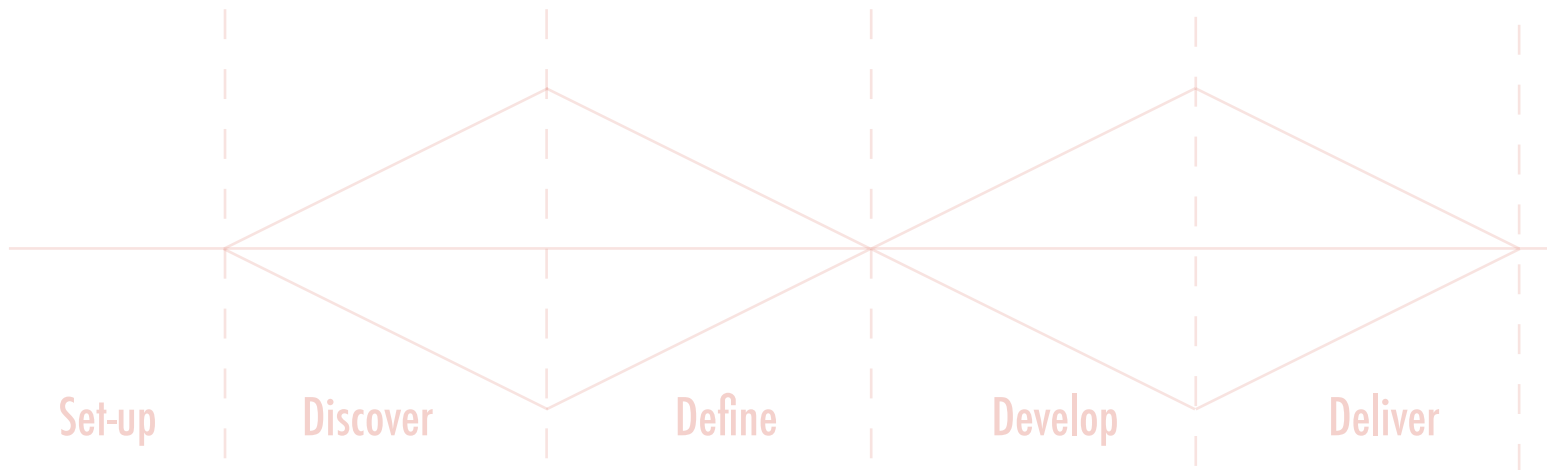
5. Discuss in a group

6. Your access power
How much access power did I have in the design process?

Low   High

ACCESS POWER

What is it?

Access power is the ability to influence which stakeholders are included and which are excluded from the design process altogether.

Why does it matter?

The input, experience and perspectives that are included in the design process have a huge impact on the decisions that are made, relationships between people and, ultimately, on outcomes. In this way, representation is extremely important. If certain stakeholders and certain social groups are excluded, the design process, its outcomes and the relationships that are built throughout will likely reproduce existing inequalities , not doing much to challenge the status quo situation that is producing the problem to begin with. Understanding this type of power and who has it can help you to evaluate how inclusive the design process is. Determining how much access power you have in a project allows you to use your influence in a way that aligns with your values and the values of the community you are designing with.

Questions for reflection

Who is included and who is excluded from the design process? How does this change depending on the phase of the project? How much influence do you have in deciding who has access and when?

Download and print extra worksheets at www.power-literacy.com

Key takeaways for next time:

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3. GOAL POWER

GOAL POWER

What is it?

Goal power is the ability to initiate the design project to begin with, as well as the ability to influence decisions related to framing the problem, goals and the structure of the design process.

Why does it matter?

The power to initiate, set-up and frame a design project has a huge impact on every following decision made. Although you may not have complete goal power as a designer, you likely have some degree of influence over problem framing, and structuring the design process. Depending on which stakeholders are given a share of goal power, the design process and outcomes will look completely different and likely serve different interests. As such, it is valuable to consider which stakeholders have influence over these decisions (and which don't) and what this might mean in terms of participation and inclusion. Additionally, as a social designer it is important to become more aware of the goal power that you have, so that you can evaluate if you are using it in ways that align with your values, and, if not, how you might change this.

Questions for reflection

Who initiated this project and decided what the design process would include? How has the problem been framed, and what were the goals of the project? How did this impact the project?
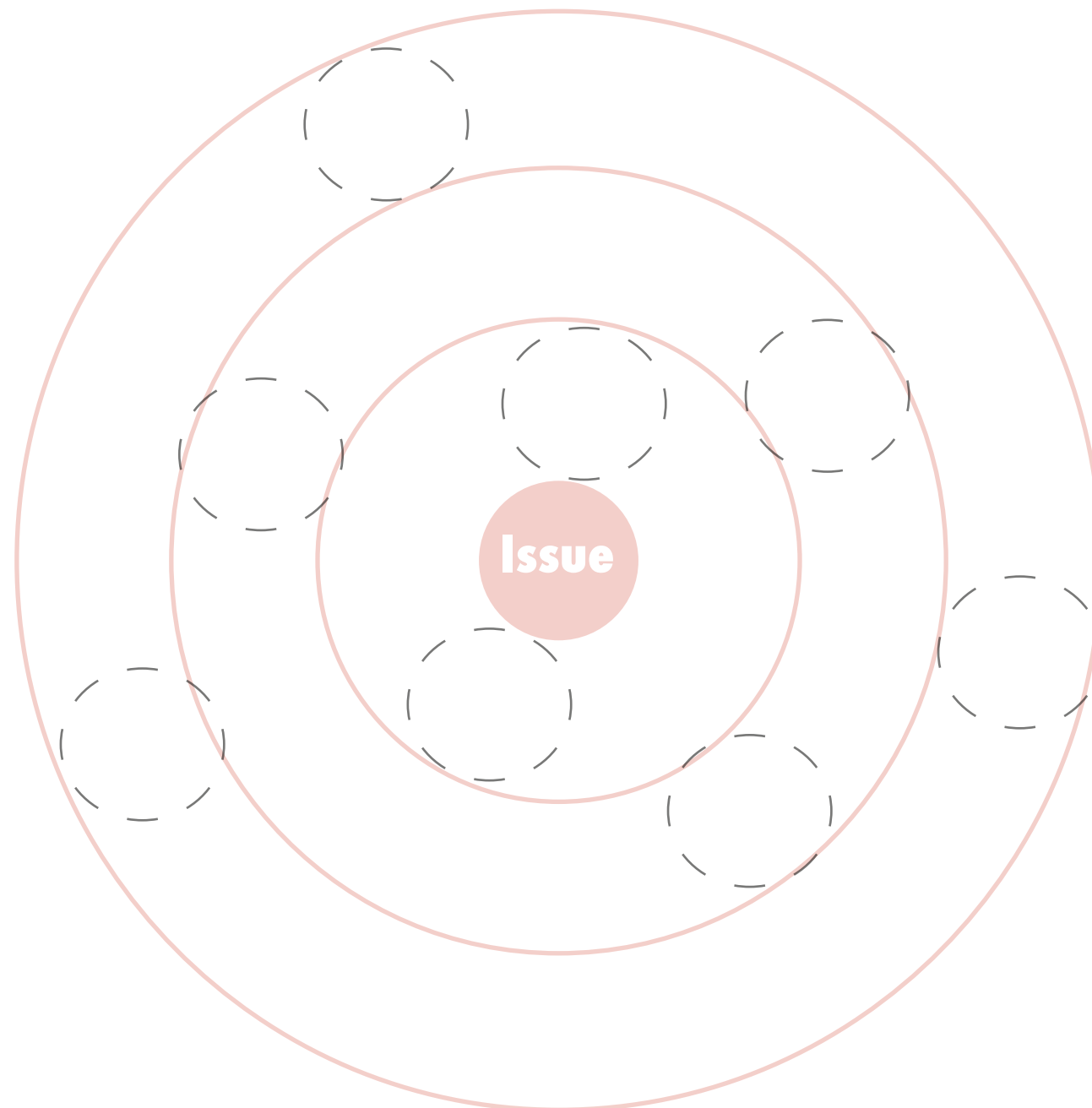
GOAL POWER

What is it

Goal power is the ability to initiate the design network (the project and the people involved) to begin with, as well as the ability to influence decisions related to framing the problem, defining desired outcomes and the set-up of the design process.

How to

1. Write down the problem framing as well as the desired outcomes/goals of the project.

2. Add the actors who have access to the design process onto the map; place those who have lived experience of the issue in the circles in the inner ring, and those who have indirect or no personal experience in the relevant outer ring. Use a red marker to circle the actors that initiated the project. Use a green marker to circle the actors that were involved in framing the problem, setting goals and/or setting up what the design process will look like.

3. Write down the impact and consider alternatives.

4. Discuss and add any new insights that come up.

5. Reflect on the amount of goal power you had in this project.

1. Recognize
How was the problem defined or framed? What were the desired outcomes for the project?

3. Understand impact
How might the framing and goals defined for this project have affected participation? What and who may have been left out as a result? If goal power had been distributed differently, what alternative problem framing and desired outcomes might have been selected for the project?

2. Mapping and naming goals
Which actors initiated the project? Which actors had influence in problem framing and setting goals? Observe whether goal power was concentrated in the outer or inner rings of the map.

Issue

4. Discuss in a group

5. You goal power
How much goal power did I have in the design process?

Low   High

GOAL POWER WORKSHEET

How to use

This worksheet should be done after a project is finished, to reflect back on it. It is recommended that you first complete the privilege and access worksheets. It may also be useful and adapted to use during the proposal/planning phase at the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each person filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 25—40 min.

Key takeaways for next time:

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4. ROLE POWER

ROLE POWER WORKSHEET

flip & fold out for the role power worksheet

How to use

This worksheet should be done after a project is finished, to reflect back on it. It is recommended that you first complete the privilege and access worksheets. It may also be useful and adapted to use during the proposal/planning phase at the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each person filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 25—40 min.

ROLE POWER

What is it

Role power is the ability to influence the roles that different actors will take on. This includes any hierarchies and titles (eg. 'participant', 'team member', or 'expert') assigned to actors in the design network, as well as influencing the role each actor will play in making decisions, especially who is given the ability to analyze and prioritize findings in the converging phases.

How to

1. Add the actors who have access to the design process onto the map; place those who have lived experience of the issue in the circles in the inner ring, and those who have indirect or no personal experience in the relevant outer ring. Write their role or title in the design process.
Draw a green line to connect actors that had reciprical relationships. Draw a red line between actors that had hierarchical relationships. Draw a blue circle around actors who had the highest decision-making ability in the design process.

2. Based on 1, Indicate to what extent those with lived experience were invited to participate.

3. Reflect on the decisions made related to roles using the guiding questions. What was the impact?

4 & 5. Discuss. Reflect on the role power you had in this project.

1. Mapping roles
Which roles have been assigned to different stakeholders as actors in the design network (eg. expert, user, team member, participant, decision-maker)? How does this affect relationshps between actors? Are those with lived experience marginalized as a result?

Issue
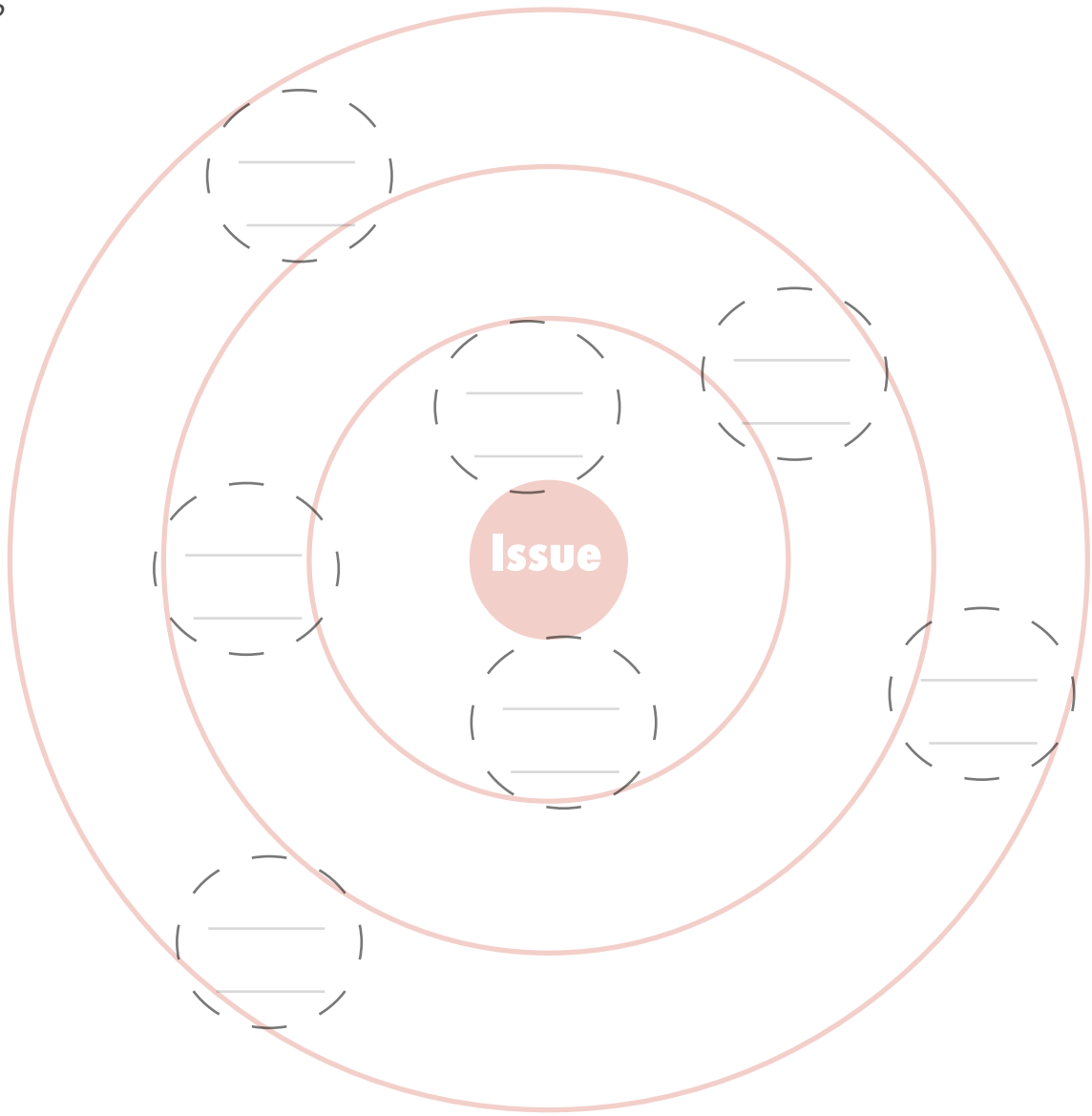
2. Spectrum of participation
Based on the roles assigned to stakeholders with lived experience of the problem, where do they fall on the spectrum of participation below? Was this decision made consciously? If so, why?

stakeholders consulted as users

stakeholders involved as particpants

stakeholders empowered as (co) designers

3. Understand impact
Are these roles challenging or reproducing existing social structures found outside of the design network? What were the positive and negative impacts?

What effect (good or bad) might participation have had on those with lived experience of the problem? Those with less privilege? Consider whether non-participation was an opton for these stakeholders.

4. Discuss in a group

5. You role power
How much role power did I have in the design process?

Low   High

ROLE POWER

What is it?

Role power is the ability to influence the roles that different actors who have already been invited into the design process will take on. This includes any hierarchies and titles (eg. 'participant,' 'codesigner,' 'subject') assigned to actors in the design process, as well as influencing the role each actor will play in making decisions, including who is given the ability to analyze and prioritize findings in the converging phases.

Why does it matter?

As a designer you likely have some influence over the way that various stakeholders are involved. For example, you may be able to influence when and how people who have lived experience of the problem are included; this might be as interviewees, as users to test solutions with, as participants in a co-creation session, as co-designers invited onto the design team, and/or as experts brought in during research. Depending on the roles that are assigned, the experience and outcomes of the design process will be very different. The way this power is used will determine whether the design network challenges existing inequities or reproduces them, and to what extent the process is democratic and equitable. As such, it is important to be aware of this type of power, how much you have, and its impact.

Questions for reflection

What are the different roles, relationships and hierarchies between those who are involved? How does 'involvement" differ for each stakeholder?

Key takeaways for next time:

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5. RULE POWER

RULE POWER

What is it?

Rule power is the ability to influence the way that those in the design network will work together. It includes the ability to influence what is considered normal, what is allowed and what isn't, how actors will communicate with each other and beliefs about what types of knowledge are valid.

Why does it matter?

As a designer, especially if involving various stakeholders in a participatory process, the 'rules of the game' determine the way in which participation can unfold, and will thus influence the experience of all actors, the relationships between them and, ultimately, outcomes. The way that rule power is used will determine how comfortable different stakeholders are with sharing their knowledge, whether certain stakeholders are heard at all, and what ways of knowing and doing are deemed valid. Without being conscious of this type of power, how it impacts the design process, as well as how rule power intersects with privilege, the likelihood that the design process will be exclusionary and reproduce inequity is much greater.

Questions for reflection

How do we work together in the design process? What rules, norms and/or beliefs about 'proper' behaviour and ways of communicating are influencing this?

RULE POWER

What is it

Rule Power is the ability to influence the way that those in the design network will work together. This includes what is considered 'normal,' what is and isn't allowed, the language being used, and beliefs about what types of knowledge and ways of doing are valid in the design process.

How to

1.. Write down your observations during the design process in the tip of the iceberg, using the guiding questions and promts.

2. Write down and reflct on the underlying rules, norms, assumptions and beliefs for your observations in the section of the iceberg that is below the surface, using the guiding questions.

3. Write down and reflect on the impact of the rules, norms and beliefs underlying the way actors worked together in this project, and how privilege may have factored into this.

4. Discuss your reflections in a group, and write down any additional insights.

5. Using the spectrum, reflect on the amount of rule power you had in this project.

1. The tip of the iceberg

What did I see, hear and feel during the design process, especially during participatory sessions? Where and when were participatory sessions held? How did different actors look and dress? How were they introduced? What was the format of the sessions? Who spoke most? What language, terms and jargon did you use? What was the length, quantity and quality of sessions? What kind of and whose knowledge was centred? How could actors communicate during and between sessions? How were decisions made?

1.

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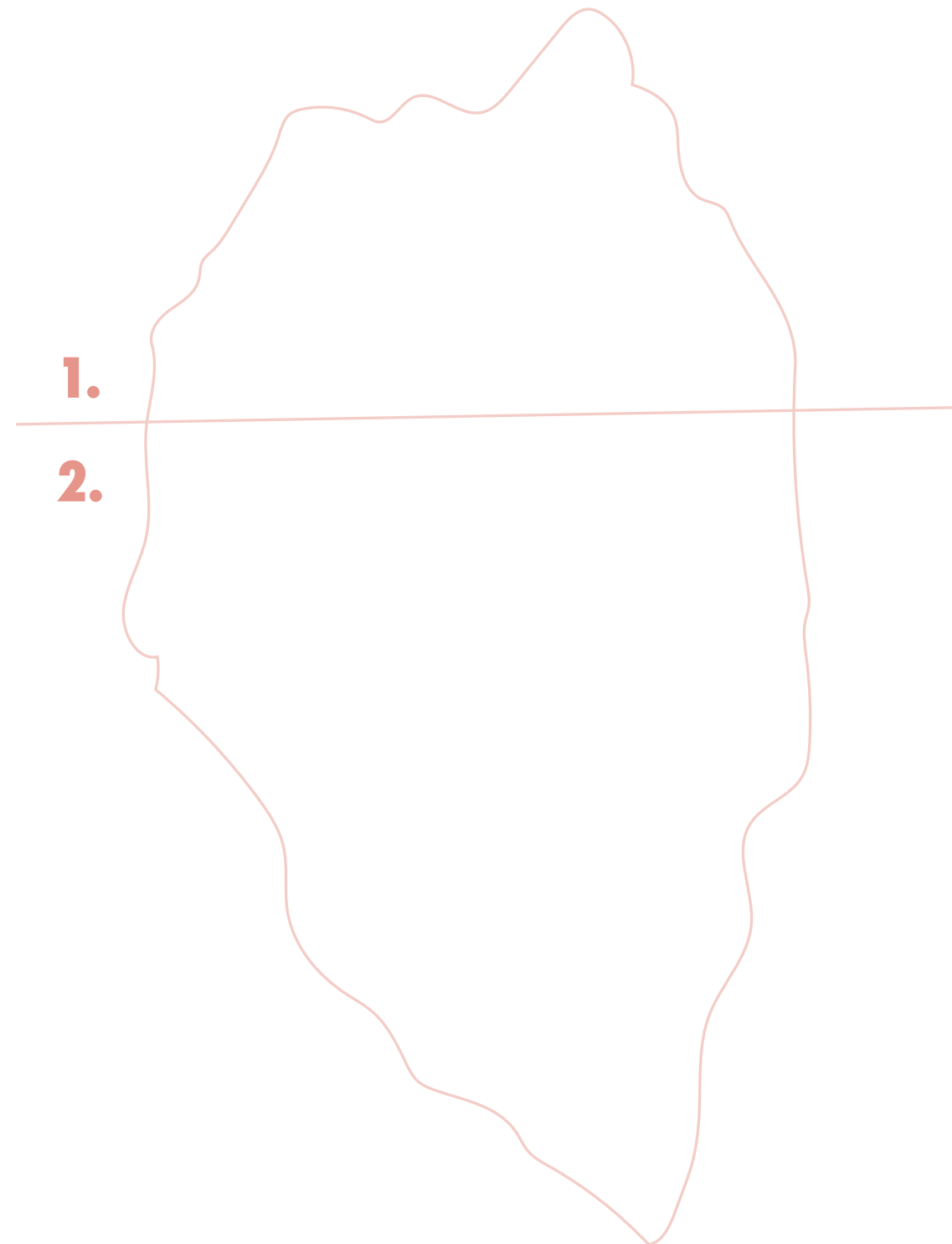
2. Making the invisible visible

What rules, norms, assumptions or beliefs might underlie the observations you wrote down? How does this influence what is deemed appropriate in terms of behaviour and social interactions between actors?

3. Understand Impact

Who may have been disadvantaged or marginalized as a result? Did identity and privilege influence the 'rules of the game' for the design process? Did rules for working together during the design process make participation more or less equitable between different actors? How so?

4. Discuss in a group

5. Your rule power

How much rule power did I have in the design process?

Low   High

RULE POWER WORKSHEET

How to use

This worksheet should be done after a project is finished, to reflect back on it. It is recommended that you first complete the privilege and access worksheets. It may also be useful and adapted to use during the planning phase at the beginning of a project, as well as in preparation for any phases where you are involving or inviting in stakeholders who are outside of the main project team. .

Time needed: 30—40 min.

Key takeaways for next time:

PART 2: POWER CHECKS

Reflexivity in the field

Now that you have a deeper understanding of power, how it has impacted past projects and an awareness of your own position, it's time to apply your literacy skills 'in the field' for your next design project.

In this section, you will be guided through power checks—moments throughout the design process where you slow down to reflect on how power is showing up in design decisions and its potential impact. Using four skills for power literacy (recognize, name, understand impact and act) you will become more aware of the power dynamics at play and the potential impacts. It will then be up to you to act in a way that ensures outcomes align with your original intent and values.

You should use this section of the field guide before you start and throughout your next design project. You will be guided through the four steps of a power check at a number of critical moments:

- Set-up of the project
- At the start of the divergence phase(s)
- At the start of the convergence phase(s)
- Wrap-up of the project

A worksheet with guiding questions for the four steps of a power check, what to pay attention to and social justice tips are outlined for each of these critical moments.

POWER CHECKS

Four Steps for Reflexivity

Why do power checks matter? Without building in intentional moments for reflexivity into the design process, we are likely to continue on autopilot, easily defaulting to 'business-as-usual' without considering impact. As such, a power check offers a moment to pause and reflect on invisible power structures, and consider what changes need to be made for impact to align with values and intention.

A power check consists of four steps that correspond with each of the four power literacy skills:

1. Recognize
Recognize the explicit and implicit decisions that are shaping the design process and how much influence you (as well as other actors) have over them.

2. Name
Name the forms of power that are present in the decision being made.

3. Understand
Understand the impact that these decisions will have

on stakeholders with lived experience of the issue, as well as on outcomes of the project.

4. Act

Act in a way that will align outcomes with intentions based on insights gathered from the first three steps.

Four Critical Moments for Power Checks

You should conduct power checks at critical moments in the design process. As such, the following pages of the field guide include four fold-out worksheets for conducting power checks at a number of critical moments throughout the design process: set-up, divering, converging and warp-up.

Each worksheet includes information for when to use it, what to pay attention to, tips from the field and guiding questions for each of the four reflexivity steps.

Extra worksheets are available to download for free at www.power-literacy.com.

You will find these four fold-out power check worksheets on the following pages:

1. Set-up
2. Diverging
3. Converging
4. Wrap-up

SET-UP

Before a project has officially started decisions are already being made, whether they are explicit or implicit ones, that will impact the design process and affect the distribution of power within it. As such, before starting any given project, it's important to take a moment to unpack underlying assumptions, beliefs and norms and reflect on the impact that some of these decisions may have.

Pay attention to:

Goal Power: **decisions about goals, problem framing and structure of the design process**

Access Power: **decisions about who will be invited to participate in the project, and when.**

Privilege: **decisions will be affected by the positionality and perspectives of those in the room.**

Tips from the field:

1. *Include values and intentions in the proposal.* **This way, you have a mechanism to hold key decision-makers accountable.**

2. *Ensure representation on the design team.* **Having a diversity of perspectives will help to fill blind spots and build trust with the communities you are designing with.**

1. Recognize

Who has initiated this project and what desired outcomes are being set? How are we framing problems and why? What structure for the design process is being suggested?

What social identities are represented here? Are marginalized perspectives present in the set-up of this project?

Who will be included in the design process and in what ways? When will access be granted, and when will it be denied?

In what other ways is power showing up in the set-up of this project, and what influence do we have?

2. Name
What forms of power are present?

☐ **Privilege**   ☐ **Access Power**   ☐ **Goal Power**

☐ **Role Power**   ☐ **Rule Power**

3. Understand Impact
How might these decisions determine which perspectives are valued? What impact might this have on stakeholders with lived experience of the problem? Is the problem being addressed the right one and how might this impact the design process?

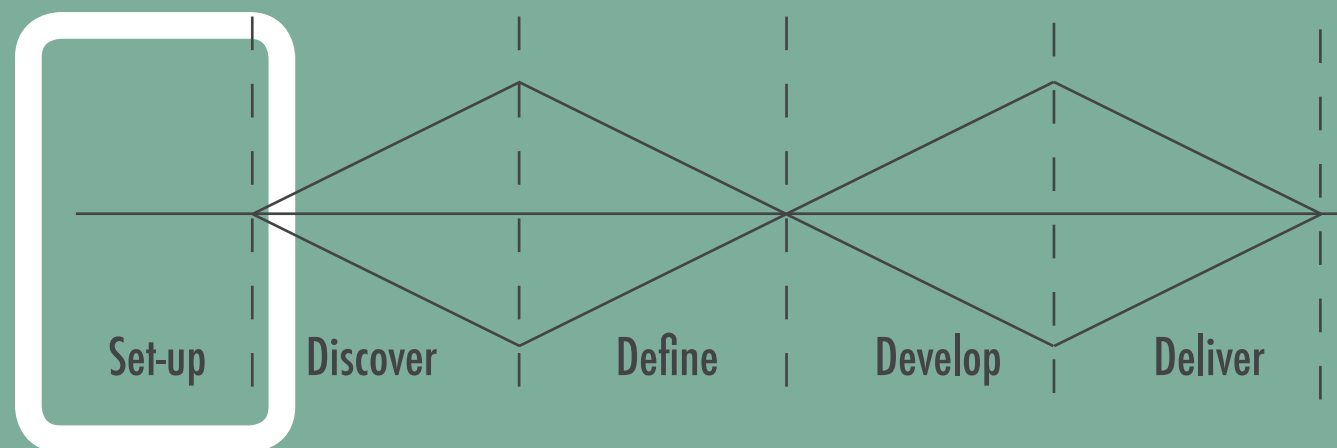*Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?*

4. Act
What actions need to be taken in this phase to align the impact of the design process with our intentions and values? What are three actions we can take to move in that direction?

1. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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3. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Power Check:
SET-UP

Set-up | Discover | Define | Develop | Deliver

When to use

A set-up power check will ideally be conducted before or while preparing a proposal for a client, partner or funder. This worksheet should be completed by the design team, all together.

Time needed: 20 - 30 min.

DIVERGING

During divergent phases different stakeholders are often invited into the design process. As a designer you usually have influence over the way various actors are involved and the role that they take during participatory moments. For example, as a designer you likely have influence over how to include people who have first hand experience of the issue being addressed: as 'subjects' to collect data from, 'users' to test solutions with, 'experts' from the community to consult with, 'co-designers' of solutions or some other variation.

Pay attention to:

Role Power: **decisions about what role participating stakeholders will be given during data collection and co-creation.**

Rule Power: **decisions about the rules of how stakeholders will work together. This includes language, norms for behaviour, forms of communication, location and timing, among other factors.**

Tips from the field:

1. *Partner, don't invade.* **Build real relationships that are reciprocal with those in the community. What value can you offer in return to those who are participating?**

2. *Go to them.* **Meet marginalized stakeholders on their terms, in a setting that is comfortable for them.**

1. Recognize

Who has initiated this project and what desired outcomes are being set? How are we framing problems and why? What structure for the design process is being suggested?

What social identities are represented here? Are marginalized perspectives present in the set-up of this project?

Who will be included in the design process and in what ways? When will access be granted, and when will it be denied?

In what other ways is power showing up in the set-up of this project, and what influence do I have?

2. Name
What forms of power are present?

☐ **Privilege**   ☐ **Access Power**   ☐ **Goal Power**

☐ **Role Power**   ☐ **Rule Power**

3. Understand Impact
How might these decisions determine which perspectives are valued? What impact might this have on stakeholders with lived experience of the problem? Is the problem being addressed the right one and how might this impact the design process?

Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?
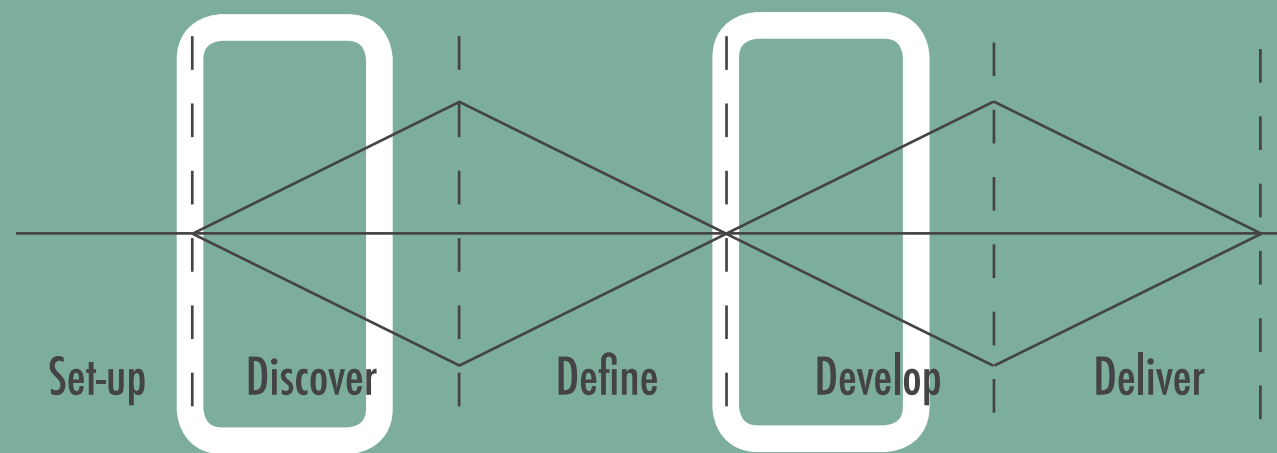
4. Act
What actions need to be taken in this phase to align the impact of the design process with our intentions and values? What are three actions I can take to move in that direction?

1. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

2. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

3. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Power Check:
DIVERGING

Set-up   Discover   Define   Develop   Deliver

When to use

A divergence power check will ideally be conducted before the start of any participatory moments where stakeholders are being included in the design process. This includes collecting data through interviews, observations, storytelling, co-creation sessions, user testing and other forms of participation. This worksheet should be completed by the design team, all together.

Time needed: 20 - 30 min.

CONVERGING

During converging phases of the design project, the design team is likely undertaking decisions related to analysis, synthesis and prioritization. This involves making sense of the information that has been collected, deciding what is most important, and/or translating insights into a design output. Your positionality, the norms and rules surrounding behaviour and procedure, and who has access to this phase will have a considerable impact on the design process and outcomes.

Pay attention to:

Rule Power: **Rules and norms around how prioritize and design decisions will be made. This includes language being used, approach to analysis, what forms of knowledge are deemed most valid, and communication style.**

Privilege: **decisions will be affected by the positionality and perspectives of those in the room.other factors.**

Access Power: **decisions about who will be involved in interpreting, validating and prioritizing information.**

Tips from the field:

1. *Invite pariticpation.* inviting marginalized stakeholders to be involved in convergence can redistribute power and create a more democratic design process.

1. Recognize

Which stakeholders are able to influence interpretations and prioritization of needs?

What social identities are represented here? Are marginalized perspectives present in this phase?

How is convergence being carried out? How will decisions be made, and what unspoken norms, beliefs and assumptions are influencing this?

In what other ways is power showing up in the set-up of this project, and what influence do we have?

2. Name
What forms of power are present?

☐ **Privilege**   ☐ **Access Power**   ☐ **Goal Power**

☐ **Role Power**   ☐ **Rule Power**

3. Understand Impact
What positive and negative impacts might these decisions have on stakeholders, especially those who have lived experience of the problem? What effect might this have on outcomes?

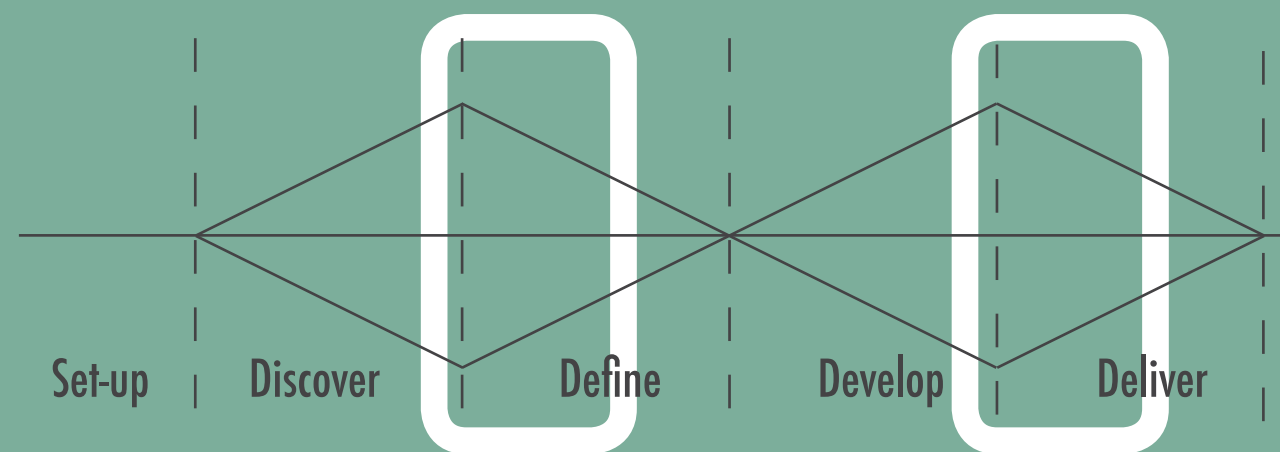*Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?*

4. Act
What actions need to be taken in this phase to align the impact of the design process with our intentions and values? What are three actions we can take to move in that direction?

1. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

2. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

3. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Power Check: CONVERGING

Set-up | Discover | Define | Develop | Deliver

When to use

A converging power check will ideally be conducted before the start of phases that include activities related to analysis, synthesis and prioritizing. This worksheet should be completed by the design team, all together.

Time needed: 20- 30 min.

WRAP-UP

It's a good idea to take a moment to consider how power is distributed in the design process before the final decisions are made and the project ends. This power check can serve as a way to asses whether values and intentions are still aligned and inequities are being challenged.

Pay attention to:

Goal Power: decisions about final outcomes, and what is considered successful and relevant.

Privilege: decisions will be affected by the positionality and perspectives of those in the room.

Rule Power: underlying norms, rules and assumptions about what a successful outcome is, and how it should be communicated.

Tips from the field:

1. *Bring in alternative perspectives.* Before delivering the final recommendations or design output to the client or funder, identify blind spots by including the opinions of those with lived experience (and pay them for their time!).

1. Recognize

What decisions are being made on final outcomes, and who is assessing success and relevance?

How is will the design process be wrapped-up? How will final decisions and evaluations be made, and what unspoken norms, beliefs and assumptions are influencing this?

What social identities are represented here? Are marginalized perspectives present in the set-up of this project?

In what other ways is power showing up in the set-up of this project, and what influence do we have?

2. Name
What forms of power are present?

☐ **Privilege**   ☐ **Access Power**   ☐ **Goal Power**

☐ **Role Power**   ☐ **Rule Power**

3. Understand Impact
How might these decisions determine which perspectives are valued? What impact might this have on stakeholders with lived experience of the problem? Would all stakeholders deem the design outcome as relevant and/or successful?
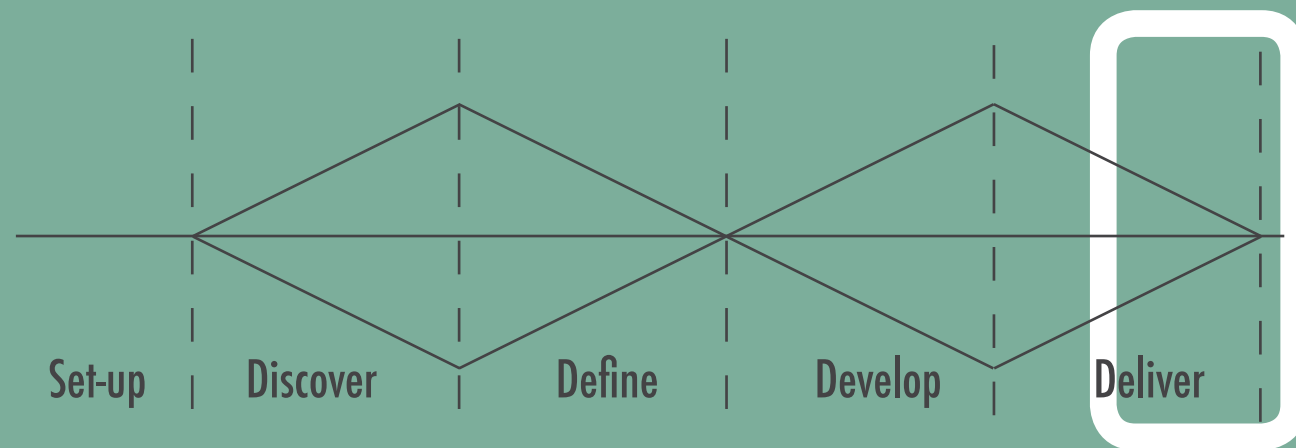
Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?

4. Act
What actions need to be taken in this phase to align the impact of the design process with our intentions and values? What are three actions we can take to move in that direction?

1. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

2. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

3. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Power Check:
WRAP-UP

Set-up | Discover | Define | Develop | Deliver

When to use

A wrap-up power check will ideally be conducted before the deliverables are finalized, to provide one last opportunity to consider power distribution in the design process before the project ends. This worksheet should be completed by the design team, all together.

Time needed: 20 - 30 min.

YOU MADE IT.

Congratulations, you've made it through the field guide! On the way, you've picked up some important power literacy skills that will help you on your journey to becoming a more socially just designer.

Even so, this work is never really done. You can find further resources to help you on your journey at:

www.power-literacy.com

Continue to practice power literacy in your design projects, and refer back to this field guide whenever you need a refresher.

Until next time!