

Education and communication tools for food sovereignty

Notes from the first Growing Together training



YOUNG
Friends of
the Earth
Europe



This booklet was based on the results of the first growing together training "Transformative education tools and accessible communication to frame food sovereignty". It sums up the main discussions and describes the tools, methods, knowledge and resources that were used and shared during this training.

The way that food is produced, consumed, and distributed is a major issue facing Europe - and one that directly impacts the lives of young people across the continent. Yet, the voice of young people is not often heard when our food system is being discussed.

Young Friends of the Earth Europe is part of the pan-European 'Growing Together' project, which provides a voice for young people, particularly those from rural areas, to engage with crucial debates on the future of food production, and the wider debates on the future of Europe.

'Growing Together' is led by Friends of the Earth groups in Ireland, Malta, Denmark, Estonia and Cyprus, with over 150 activities planned by 2020 which will empower at least 3,000 young people from rural communities into active political debate on the future of our food system and Europe more generally.

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WHAT IS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY?

FOOD SECURITY VS. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

FOOD SECURITY

= More food? But...

Negative socio-economic impacts

- People not in control -
- High price for land -
- Mechanisation -

Harmful for the environment

- Genetically modified crops against invasive species -
- Monoculture -
- Industrialised -

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Empowerment and autonomy

- Community farming, coops, cooperatives
- Access to food
- Self-managed food system
- Food and land autonomy
- Locally-managed
- Empowered people and power to the people!

Socio-economic justice

- Save and share land for people, not for corporations
- Fair distribution and consumption process

Environmentally-friendly

- Safe for the environment
- Local growers, local production
- Agrarian reform

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, HOW?

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION

IDEAS FOR LOCAL AND FAIR PRODUCTION

Fair prices for farmers

Also a class issue: would mean higher prices for products

Making food accessible

More farmers' markets

GIY = Grow it yourself!

Take back control! Self-sufficiency vs. monoculture.

Importance of traditional knowledge

MAIN ISSUES TO TACKLE

Small farms fading away

Because of industrial farms

Extensive industrial farming is advantaged

Free market and political subsidies support industrial farming and disadvantage traditional farming methods, organic and small scale producers.

Produce for whom? Animals or people?

Reducing intensive animal farming

METHODS

ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE

Everybody goes for a walk. Participants group in pairs and are invited to discuss several questions (for example: "Where do you come from? How does it look like?", "How is the food system in your area?"). For this activity, only one person in each pair speaks at a time. The other one shall not speak, and listens carefully to what the other is saying. When the person is finished, roles are exchanged.

At the end of the activity, there is a collective debriefing time. Each participant is invited, if they want, to share some of what was told by their pair.

This exercise allows participants to get to know each other and also to practice active listening: giving space for the other one, putting their own experience and convictions aside to hear the other person and trying to understand their experience and identity.

SPECTRUM LINE

Participants are invited to react to propositions (case studies) by standing somewhere in the working space. Opposite walls of the room represent two different concepts ("food security" and "food sovereignty"). Participants approach these two concepts by relating each case to one concept or the other. They can also stand anywhere in between, if they think that a case is difficult to evaluate.

Example of cases: "In your local supermarket, you can have access to any fruits or vegetables at very low prices, no matter the season." or "A farmers network that aims to share knowledge, skills and traditional practices for sustainable agriculture"

This exercise gives opportunity for quiet people to share their thoughts and encourages them to speak up - or at least to share what they think physically by standing on the spectrum.

RESOURCES



La Via Campesina, **Food Sovereignty now! A guide to food sovereignty**, 2018



Friends of the Earth Europe (video), **Nyeléni Europe – the biggest-ever European gathering for food sovereignty**

OUR PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL YOUTH

NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS?

This word cloud is taken from the discussion: "How does rural youth look like?" It reveals that the cross-perceptions were dominantly negative ("difficult", "isolation", ...) Still, some very positive points were evoked in the discussions (better quality of life, healthier, closer to nature, grow their own food).

A group pointed out that the mainstream stereotypes were indeed mainly negative (difficult access to education, conformity, stricter gender roles, etc). They also questioned if they could consider themselves as "rural youth" as their background was very different (farms, small villages close to towns, suburbs, ...) which could explain why the main trend in the whole group was to phrase negative features.



'RURAL YOUTH', A HETEROGENEOUS CATEGORY

Most groups pointed out that 'rural youth' should not be perceived as a homogeneous category. It depends on:

- The country and the geographic area (which conditions education, political choices, etc)
- The families and social background

METHODS

DISCUSSIONS IN GROUPS

Why use this tool?

Groups discussions help quiet people to speak up and gives them more chances to contribute. It is easier when it comes to project planning, for example.

Description

Groups may reflect same identities and interests (eg. country of origin) so they can start from a common base or introduce their own experience to the rest of the group. On the contrary, group discussion can also be used to allow people from different background to mingle and share their ideas with very different people.

Each group can include a time keeper, a moderator and a secretary: an opportunity for participants to try out some facilitation techniques.

The discussion in groups can be followed by a sharing time with the whole group (with visual support, for example a flipchart), as well as a debriefing in plenary.

HANDLING DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS

WHAT IS A DIFFICULT DISCUSSION?

- Being talked at, rather than talked with
- Feeling that there is only one way possible to communicate
- When the discussion touches a personal, basic need
- When it comes to express feelings
- When the discussion is not going anywhere
- When someone has a problem and we do not know how to help
- When we want to call someone out but we do not want to offend them
- The difficulty to take into account different needs within the discussion (some people need time, etc).

WHY IS THIS ISSUE RELEVANT FOR US?

- The need to introduce the concept of food sovereignty to very different people
- Because food sovereignty is a difficult concept
- Because we want to convince people
- Because we would like to learn how to talk with people without imposing our views

TAKING THE HELICOPTER PERSPECTIVE

MOVING UPWARDS UNTIL YOU FIND A COMMON GROUND

Change your mindset! Look for a "higher common ground", rather than "the lowest you can agree on"

1. PUT YOURSELF IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

The more you do it, the more empathy you have, the more you can find a common ground. It helps to move physically:

- Acting a conversation between you and the other person and change character by moving between 2 chairs.
- Role play

2. BE OPEN AND CURIOUS (ACTIVE LISTENING)

- Find why people think or act the way they do: "Why are you on your phone?". Stay curious and not aggressive.
- Direct your sentences towards your own perceptions (do not presume you do know what is inside the other person's head!): "I have the feeling that you do not want to be here. Is that true?"
- Remember that people are... people! They might have not slept well the night before, need a coffee or struggle in their personal lives.

3. FIND WHAT IS THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THE CONVERSATION

- Set a realistic goal by analysing your position and the other person's side.
- Start with people who are more likely to agree with you. Look at the spectrum of allies (who are the ones I can reach?)

4. PROTECT YOURSELF!

- Set boundaries: If the conversation is touching your personal identity (the other person criticizing who you are, your needs), etc, feel free to step back and remind them that this should not be discussed.
- Spare your energy: pick your fight and analyse how you can be efficiently useful without giving up all our time and power in a too painful process.

METHODS

ROLE-PLAY

Participants are divided into groups, and each person is assigned a role (butcher, traditional farmer, animal rights activist, politician).

Scenario: Imagine that you are attending a big conference on pigs with 200 different people attending. You are all there because you have an opinion about pigs. All of a sudden, a huge truck filled with piglets crash into the middle conference hall. The driver is okay, but the truck latch has broken open and 150 piglets are now running around all over the room. What do you do next?

Each group has to try to agree on a plan of action while staying in their character.

The role play is followed by a debriefing time:

- Did you reach a compromise?
- Did you think about the 200 people in the room and what to do about them?
- If had the chance to play again, what might you do differently?

The roleplay is a good activity for people to try putting themselves in someone else's shoes (how they might feel, what would be their interests, etc). Participants may also feel more free to speak up whilst they are playing a role... and have fun! This exercise can be considered as a direct practice of handling a difficult conversation and reaching a compromise when values and interests clash.

PLENARY DISCUSSION

Participants are coming together in a circle to talk about a given topic, share ideas, react to each-other. This method makes the collective discussion more free and allows participants to respond openly to each-other.

What to watch out as a facilitator:

- Always make sure that the discussion is on track and time-kept
- Ensure that some participants are not taking over the discussion.

Tools you can use for the plenary discussion:

- Speaking object: people pass it around, only the one having the object in hand can speak while the others remain silent
- Stacking: keep a list of who wants to speak, and call them when it is their turn
- Hand signs: allows people to share their agreement/disagreement without interrupting the discussion and to skip the speaking line if they have a useful point to add to what is being said.
- Active listening exercise before the activity

POPULAR EDUCATION

BRAINSTORMING: WHAT IS "GOOD EDUCATION"?

METHODS

- Story-telling, bringing imagination (games, songs)
- Taking in consideration the different learning styles (visual, audio,...) + the way people sit
- No parrot-teaching
- Discussion (teach = discussion facilitator)
- Connecting education and nature
- Going out of the classroom

ATTITUDES

- Positive feedback from the teacher (x shaming)
- Openness, friendly people
- Sit in circle and express your feelings
- Less stress and deadlines

NEEDS

- Financial support from the government
- Support from families
- Powerful structure supporting education (change the system, not the teacher)

PILLARS

1. Learning our stories, not his-story
2. Starting from daily realities of people
3. Getting out of the classroom
4. Inspiring social change
5. Learning together as equals and showing solidarity
 - Collect and transfer
 - Dialogical model
6. Commitment to transformation and freedom

THEORICIANS

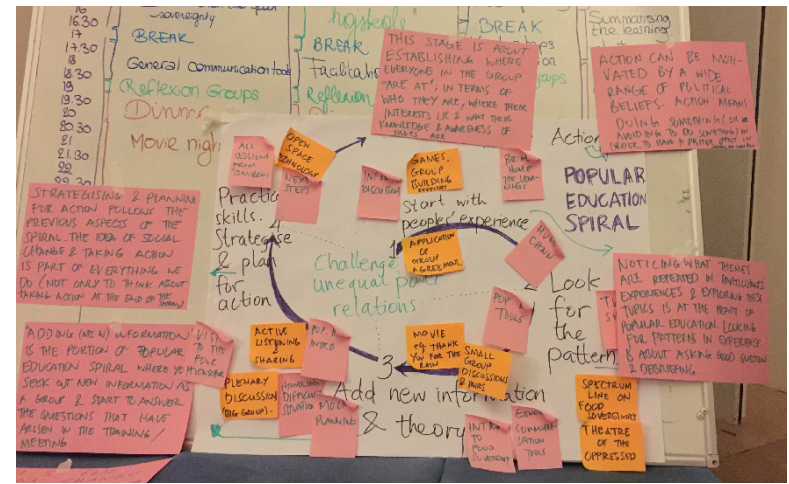
- Paulo Freire - "Pedagogy of the oppressed"
- Deborah Barndt - Praxis-oriented researcher
- Dian Marino - Praxis-oriented researcher
- Augusto Boal - "Theatre of the oppressed"

THE POPULAR EDUCATION SPIRAL

STEP 1 - START WITH PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE

This stage is about establishing where everyone in the group "are at": In terms of who they are, where their interests lie, what their knowledge and awareness of issues are.

Examples from the training: Team-building, informal discussion, group agreement and its application, human chain



STEP 2 - LOOK FOR PATTERNS

Noticing that themes are repeated in participants experiences and exploring these topics is at the heart of popular education. Looking for patterns in experience is about asking good questions and debriefing.

Examples from the training: TV show, Spectrum line on food sovereignty, theatre of the oppressed

STEP 3 - ADD NEW INFORMATION AND THEORY

The portion of popular education spiral where you seek our new information as a group and start to answer the questions that have arisen in the training / meeting

Examples from the training: Popular education tools, general communication tools, Introduction to food sovereignty, movie, handling difficult discussions, excursion to the folk high school

STEP 4 - PRACTICE SKILLS: STRATEGISE AND PLAN FOR ACTION

Strategising and planning for action follows the previous aspects of the spiral. The idea of social change and taking action is part of everything we do (not only to think about taking action at the end of the spiral)

Examples from the training: Role plays, mock-plannings, open space technology, next steps

Spiral written and developed by Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed, 1968

STEP 5 - PRACTICE IN ACTION

Action can be motivated by a wide range of political beliefs. Action means doing something (or avoiding to do something) in order to have a positive effect.

Examples from the training: Bringing home the learning, taking part in local actions,...

METHODS AND TOOLS

BRAINSTORMING

Why use this tool?

The brainstorming method encourages participants to share freely their ideas connected to a given topic.

One very important principle of the brainstorming: there is no right or wrong contribution.

First round: The facilitator collects all ideas and views regardless of their relevance.

Second round: Participants are invited to discuss or develop on the ideas that came out of the brainstorming. All the contributions will be captured, for example written on a flipchart.

Facilitator considerations

Give space for everybody to speak and ensure that nobody takes over the whole brainstorming.

As a facilitator, remember not judge, criticise or censor any contribution during the brainstorming.

IMAGE THEATER TO EXPLAIN POPULAR EDUCATION

Why use this tool?

This is one of the ways to set the tone of an activity or gathering inspired by popular education. It is also a way to demonstrate learning and sharing through a head, heart, hands approach.

Once there is a distinction made between formal education and popular education, based on the experiences of the participants, a collective harvesting can take place of the group's understanding of what popular education means and where it comes from.

Preparation

In advance, it could help to write keywords from established popular education references such as Paolo Freire. This way, there could be an opportunity to build on the collective knowledge of the group and mention the keywords: people-centred education, critical consciousness, collective learning, experiential, reflection, action, Brasil, Nicaragua, liberation movements, emancipation, change, etc.

Description

1. Invite the group to stand and to form a circle. Once everyone is in the circle, ask all of them to turn their backs from the circle.
2. Initiate a short grounding exercise which includes making everyone notice the space they are in, the ground they are standing on, the way their weight is distributed to their feet, the different sensations in the face or body and the freedom to do what they need to feel more comfortable, the thoughts they might have and to allow them to pass by, the manner in which they are taking in air.
3. Share to the group that we have different ways to express our thoughts and experiences. One of them is through the body. There's a tendency to focus too much on thinking and speaking while we could also express ourselves by listening to our body.
4. To try this out, say one word for example, "peace". Ask everyone to express through the body and face what they think and/or feel when hearing the word "peace". On a count of 5, everyone will face the circle with their body and facial expression. When everyone has faced the circle, thank everyone for the images they are sharing.

5. Pick one or two examples where anyone is welcome to describe what they see. This could also be a way to present how we can make observations based on the visual aspects we see e.g. hands are open, smiling faces, etc. This is in contrast to the general tendency to make interpretations and assumptions beyond what is visible.

6. Invite again everyone to turn their backs from the circle. Try another word. Count to 5 until everyone faces inwards. This time, say “lecture”.

7. Ask the group “What do you see?”. Collect the visual observations one by one and check with the person(s) who had been expressing the images what they are trying to portray. Then proceed with the “following questions, with the possibility for the group to elaborate together:
“What are similar gestures?”
“What are unique gestures?”
“How was your learning experiences during lectures?”
“What was your role in the learning experience?”

8. Summarise the different experiences shared when hearing the word “lecture”. Connect this to the various experiences linked to lecture and other tools being used in formal education.

9. Finally, say the word “group learning”. Ask the group to make observations in the outcomes of this exercise compared to the previous one on “lecture”. Harvest the different experiences linked to group learning. Connect this to the participatory, inclusive and people-centred approaches of popular education.

10. Thank and invite everyone to take a seat and find a comfortable spot or position. Present that you will collectively go deeper into popular education approach on a flipchart and coloured papers with keywords. Ask everyone to have a quick flipchart harvest of keywords linked to group learning.

11. Then pose the question “What comes to mind when hearing the term Popular Education?”. Allow the group to share additional keywords. Build on the contributions of the group.

This tool is part of the FoEE module on Popular Education.

WATER POURING ACTIVITY

Why use this tool?

This tool is a great way to support participants to understand the difference between formal educational models and popular education models. It is an ideal activity to begin a training for volunteers or staff members in popular education methods.

Time needed

15-20 mins

Preparations needed

You will need a glass for every participant in the workshop, and a full jug of water. The chairs in the room should be organised into rows facing the same direction.

First part

1. Once the room is prepared, invite participants to take a seat in the room and take a stand in front of the group. Welcome them to the workshop.
2. Next, walk between the rows and give each participant a glass one at a time. Don't simply pass a stack of glasses down each row but give a glass to each individual.
3. Then walk between the rows again and pour water into each of the glasses. Take your time, and don't worry if the water distributed is not equal.
4. Once everyone has received water in their glass, ask participants to speak with the person beside them for a couple of minutes and answer the question: How did that experience feel for you?
5. After a few minutes, invite people to get up and move around the room. Encourage them to chat to people and if they want to, exchange water with each other.

Debriefing

6. Invite people to share reflections on that experience to the full group. Ask: How did that feel to you? Did it feel any different to the first experience? Which experience did you prefer?

7. After gathering some reflections, explain that the first experience sought to represent something of what traditional education, sometimes known as “banking education” does. It:

- Assumes that the teacher has all the knowledge (represented by the water) in the room
- Creates a one-directional flow of knowledge between the teacher and the student
- Assumes the learner has no knowledge of the subject.

On the other hand, the second experience was more similar to a popular education approach. It:

- Assumes that all people in the room already hold knowledge
- Encourages the sharing of knowledge between participants
- Considers the teachers role to be one of enabling knowledge to emerge, and understands that the teacher also learns from the students.

Facilitator considerations

If you have a large group the first part of this activity can be quite time consuming. But don't rush it, this is another part of the experience which the participants can then reflect on and compare to their experiences of formal education – for example, being bored at school.

This tool is part of the FoEE module on Popular Education.

RESOURCES



Introducing popular education

Session plan



Friends of the Earth Europe, **Popular education -
Tools for system change**