



PHOENIX
YOUTH RISING
ABOVE
POLARIZATION **FØNIX**

Fønix – Youth rising above polarization

Toolbox



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**«Art does not answer questions, it provokes them;
and its essential meaning is in the tension between the
contradictory answers»**

- Leonard Bernstein



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1.INTRODUCTION: FØNIX AND POLARIZATION

VIDEO TUTORIAL 1- INTRODUCTION

Fønix is a European project born from a shared concern: polarization is growing among young people and tearing at the fabric of our communities. The World Economic Forum lists social polarization among the most serious global risks in the short term, reaching across borders and creating a concern on international level.

Youth workers, educators, and artists from Norway, Denmark, Spain, and Türkiye have come together to explore how artistic methods, especially theatre, can help us work with this challenge, specifically with youth. With the funding granted by the Erasmus Plus programme, we spent two years researching, exchanging perspectives and practices, and co-creating practical tools for youth workers and educators.

The project delivers two main results: a toolbox of practical methods and a documentary that gives voice to the lived experiences of polarization. Together, they aim to strengthen the capacity of youth workers and organizations to create spaces of dialogue, reflection, and inclusion.

This toolbox is the practical heart of Fønix. It gathers the methods we have tested and refined across the partnership and translates them into concrete tools for youth work. The toolbox is designed to be hands-on, adaptable, and accessible: something youth workers can use directly with young people to spark reflection, build empathy, and practice dialogue. It is not about theatre as performance, but theatre as experience: a way to enter conflict safe

1.1 Culture as connection and division

Culture shapes the way we live, think, and relate to one another. It is not just art or tradition, but the everyday patterns of values, behaviors, and shared meanings that we grow into. Culture binds us together in a sense of “we,” yet it can also draw boundaries that create “us” and “them.” This dual role of culture—as both unifying and dividing—forms the ground on which polarization grows.

More about culture, but academically:

The first formal definition of culture was provided by Tylor in 1871 (Kroeber, 1952, p. 9). In 1952, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled 164 different definitions of culture. Raymond Williams emphasizes that culture remains one of the most difficult concepts to define (Williams, 1976, p. 87). According to Romney, Weller, and Batchelder, culture is the knowledge individuals acquire beyond their biological inheritance, formed through learning processes. Ward Goodenough, on the other hand, argues that culture consists of behaviors applied to specific contexts, emerging through interaction and grounded in reciprocal expectations. In this sense, culture arises from social relations. And the emergence of polarization is closely linked to culture and social relations.



1.2 What is polarization?

Polarization the way we see it in our societies can be understood simply as:

Differences + rigid boundaries → division and conflict

When perspectives harden into opposing camps, dialogue weakens, empathy fades, and groups become defined by distrust of one another. This can happen along many lines: politics, religion, ethnicity, lifestyle, or even everyday choices. Polarization is not only about having different opinions, it is about those differences becoming so sharp that they separate communities into isolated poles with not much left in between.

For young people, polarization often shows up as:

Ideological polarization: clashing worldviews that leave no space in between.

Social polarization: when youth stop interacting across group differences (class, education, gender etc.), creating parallel worlds.

Cultural polarization: denotes divisions based on ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, or values.

In practice, we also see a lot of so-called Affective polarization when people themselves, rather than just their ideas and opinions, become targets of hostility.

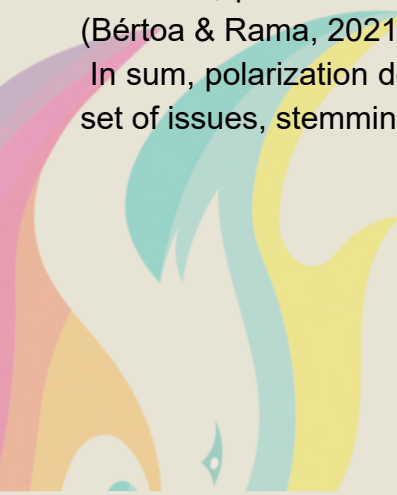
Polarization reduces the richness of diversity into confrontation. It is not disagreement itself that is dangerous, but the loss of dialogue, empathy, and trust. You can find more theoretical information about Polarization right below but also in the “Polarization basics & terminology to guide Reflection” subchapter under the Reflection part of this Toolbox.

More about Polarization, but academically:

Kempf and Tsoutsouara (2024) define polarization as a sharp division between two groups in terms of ideas and beliefs.

More broadly, polarization is defined across multiple disciplines. In political science, it refers to the formation and division of public opinion; in communication and psychology, it denotes the segmentation of opposing groups into subgroups and the intensification of antagonism. The concept implies the existence of two opposing poles (Amiel et al., 2010, p. 23). Polarization is directly linked to the sense of alienation experienced among individuals and groups (Duclos et al., 2022, p. 1). Moreover, polarization also reflects the ideological and political distance between opposing parties (Bértoa & Rama, 2021, p. 1).

In sum, polarization describes the separation of individuals from one another, on a specific issue or set of issues, stemming from differences in opinion.



1.3 Why polarization rises and affects youth today

Polarization is not new, but research shows it has risen significantly in the last 20 years. A major factor is the Internet and social media. Platforms such as Instagram or TikTok allow young people to connect, but also create “echo chambers” where they mostly see information that confirms what they already believe. This strengthens group polarization and confirmation bias.

Young people are particularly affected because:

They spend much of their social life online.

They are still forming their worldviews and identities.

They often face strong pressure to belong to a group, which increases the risk of “us vs them” dynamics.

In short: while the digital age has brought creativity, memes, and new opportunities, it has also made it easier for polarization to spread rapidly among younger generations.

1.4 Youth work in polarized times

Youth work that strives for excellency is built on participation, inclusion, and dialogue as main principles. In practice, this means creating spaces where young people of all backgrounds feel safe to share, listen, and act together. But when polarization grows, these spaces are under pressure: mistrust between groups makes cooperation harder, and exclusion grows stronger.

This is why youth work must actively engage with polarization. It is not enough to celebrate diversity; we need methods to practice empathy, confront conflict, and rebuild connections.

Academic reflections on Youth Work and further reading:

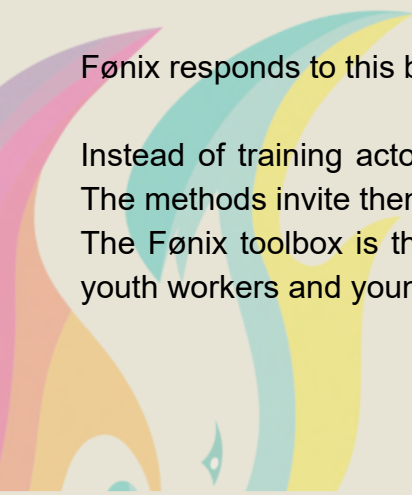
Davies (2010) defines youth work as working with young people within the principle of inclusivity. Corney et al. (2021) approach youth work through the lens of participation and argue that youth work is made possible through participation. In sum, youth work can be defined as activities undertaken for a specified period to improve the situation of young people.

A defining characteristic of youth work is that it is offered to everyone regardless of language, religion, race, or gender. At this point, youth work - particularly through the Erasmus+ program - brings together people from different cultures, backgrounds, races, and religions. In the academic literature (Batsleer & Davies, 2010; Corney, 2014; Harrison & Wise, 2005; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; Sapin, 2013; Wood & Hine, 2009), scholars broadly agree that youth work should be participatory and inclusive.

Fønix responds to this by transforming theatre exercises into anti-polarization tools.

Instead of training actors to perform for an audience, Fønix places participants inside the conflict. The methods invite them to experience tension, emotion, and perspective-taking in a safe space.

The Fønix toolbox is therefore not a set of abstract theories, but a collection of methods that help youth workers and young people experience the roots of polarization and discover pathways out of it.



In the chapters that follow, we introduce the logic of the Fønix methodology and the three key categories it is built upon. Each category, Awareness, Communication, and Reflection, has its own chapter with concrete tools that you can apply directly in your work. The categories are designed to build on one another: starting with Awareness to create safety and group connection, moving into Communication to practice interaction and dialogue, and finally engaging in Reflection to explore polarization more directly.

1.5 References and further reading

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2. THEATRE AND ANTI-POLARIZATION?

It is not surprising that one of the things people who have been part of the Fønix process have been most confused about, is the theatre and art aspect of the project. Are we making plays about polarization? Are we to perform scenes and scenarios that can teach the audience about how to be less polarizing? In using the methods, does it require art or acting experience? The answer to all of these questions is «no».

The Fønix methods are not created to have the participants create or perform.

The other thing most participants seem to have been expecting from the project, is that the methods are created to fight polarization as a phenomenon, a problem that belongs to the other side. The power of the Fønix project however, is how it takes the participants on a journey of self-discovery, almost like characters in a play, and helps fight polarization from within.

The essence of theatre is the drama, tension or conflict, played out on stage in order to evoke feelings and new understandings in the audience. To achieve this, we often need the audience to feel safe enough to suspend their natural disbelief; the audience knows that what they are seeing is not real, but in order to feel something truthfully, they need to pretend that it is. To simplify, we can say that

Theatre = Conflict + suspension of disbelief --> empathy/enlightenment.

The Fønix methods takes away the aspect of the spectators, instead placing the participants inside the conflict, and by doing so have them experience a sense of reality and emotion to better understand their own part in creating the conflict. The enlightenment that comes from participating in the Fønix methods, is what eventually will prevent polarization.

Fønix = Empathy/Enlightenment + Experienced conflict --> anti-polarization

A classic actors training consists of exercises where the students can practice human behavior in made up conflicts. The Fønix project takes this aspect and twists it to let the participants practice how to use human behavior, or empathy, to handle conflict and thereby prevent polarization.



3. THE FØNIX METHOD

The Fønix methods stem from classic exercises within western theatre tradition and several acting and directing techniques, and in many ways they are practised in similar ways.

What separates the Fønix methods from the actors' training, is the goals and wanted results. This, especially if you as an instructor or participant is trained within the theatre methods from before, demands an adjustment in your way of executing them.

In theatre training, the exercises are practised with the intent of creating or performing, and are used to improve the actors physical and emotional skills, in order to later portray and convey.

In the Fønix Project, it is important to remove this aspect completely, and focus on what the participants are experiencing while doing the exercises, and use these experiences as a base for reflection and internal enlightenment.

In the toolbox, we choose to use the term Instructor describing those who are facilitating a Fønix workshop, since the exercises come from theatre practice and rely on giving clear instructions to participants during the workshop.

3.1 Categories and difficulty levels

The methods are developed in three categories: Awareness, Communication and Reflection. Within the categories there are three difficulty levels. The Awareness and Communication categories contain the exercises which most directly resemble theatre practises, and they are designed to improve listening and communication skills. The Reflection category is to some extent using ideas from theatre, like character work, but with the intent of exploring different perspectives more than creating fully realized physical characters. The Reflection category also contains the exercises that deal directly with polarized themes and subjects, where the skills achieved from awareness and communication exercises come into play.

The intended progression is to start with Awareness to create a safe/brave space and a group dynamic, then challenge this safe space with the Communication exercises, and then move along to Reflection exercises to discuss themes and subjects that arise. It is possible to switch it up, and another suggested progression is to work on the skill level 1 in each category, before moving on to stage 2 in all categories and then stage 3.

The level 1 exercises in Awareness and Communication are also meant to be used as warm ups and energizers in other sessions. It takes time to learn the nature of the exercises and do them for the first time, but once they have been done they are easy to revisit and it is strongly recommended to do so.

3.2 Scheduling

Recommended 10 day schedule

Time – 3 hours	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<u>Warm ups</u> – 20 min	Name games	Awareness 1	Awareness 1	Awareness 3	Communication 1
1 st session – 50 min	Awareness 1	Awareness 2	Awareness 3	Communication 2	Communication 2
Break – 30 min					
2 nd session – 60 min	Awareness 1	Awareness 2	Communication 1	Communication 2	Communication 3
Evaluation – 20 min	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion

Time – 3 hours	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
<u>Warm ups</u> – 20 min	Awareness 3	Communication 1	Awareness 1, 2 or 3	Communication 1	Awareness 1, 2 or 3
1 st session – 50 min	Communication 3	Reflection 1	Reflection 2	Reflection 3	Reflection 3
Break – 30 min					
2 nd session – 60 min	Communication 3	Reflection 1	Reflection 2	Reflection 3	Reflection 3
Evaluation – 20 min	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion

Alternative 7 day schedule

Time – 3 hours	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<u>Warm ups</u> – 20 min	Name games	Communication 1	Awareness 3	Communication 1	Awareness 2 or 3
1 st session – 50 min	Awareness 1	Awareness 2	Communication 2	Communication 2	Communication 3
Break – 30 min					
2 nd session – 60 min	Communication 1	Reflection 1	Reflection 1	Communication 3	Reflection 2
Evaluation – 20 min	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion	Group discussion

Time – 3 hours	Day 6	Day 7
<u>Warm ups</u> – 20 min	Awareness 2 or 3	Communication 1
1 st session – 50 min	Reflection 2	Reflection 3
Break – 30 min		
2 nd session – 60 min	Reflection 3	Reflection 3
Evaluation – 20 min	Group discussion	Group discussion

Though it is possible to work on single chosen exercises from *Communication* or *Reflection* without having done *Awareness*, it is strongly recommended to explore the depths of the *Awareness* and *Communication* exercises, as these are designed to be able to handle the challenging *Reflection* category.

4. CREATING A SAFE SPACE

In the Fønix project, artistic and experiential methods are used to explore polarization and to promote dialogue across differences. These methods invite participants to step out of their comfort zones, share personal reflections, and sometimes embody identities or perspectives very different from their own. For such work to succeed, participants must feel respected, valued, and secure enough to take risks, express vulnerability, and engage in creative experimentation.

Creating a safe, and at the same time brave, space is therefore not an optional precondition, but the very foundation of the project, as well as a central pedagogical and ethical requirement. This chapter outlines the principles and requirements for instructors and organisations to ensure such spaces, offering practical guidelines that can be integrated into any activity from the Toolbox and adapted to different cultural contexts.

4.1 The meaning of “safe” and “brave” spaces

- Safe space refers to an environment where participants are protected from discrimination, harassment, and humiliation, and where basic respect and dignity are guaranteed.
- Brave space acknowledges that discomfort and disagreement are inevitable when discussing sensitive topics such as identity, polarization, or inequality. Instead of avoiding conflict, a brave space equips participants to handle it respectfully and constructively.

The term “brave space” was introduced by Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013) in *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*. They argued that while the idea of a safe space is important, it can also be misleading: in conversations about gender, culture, power, and inequality, complete safety for everyone cannot be guaranteed.

Instead, Arao and Clemens suggested the term “brave space” to emphasize the importance of courage when engaging in difficult but necessary dialogues. A brave space recognizes that discomfort is part of learning, and that growth often comes from engaging with challenging perspectives.

They outline several principles of a brave space:

- a) Agree to disagree – participants accept that they may hold different opinions, and that disagreement is part of the process. In a brave space, this evolves into “controversy with civility” — acknowledging that differences of opinion are expected and valuable, but must always be expressed respectfully.
- b) Don’t take things personally – participants are encouraged not to interpret challenges or disagreements as personal attacks. We can open this to “own your intentions and your impact” — reminding participants to take responsibility not only for what they mean, but also for how their words and actions may affect others.

- c)Challenge by choice – individuals choose their level of engagement, but are invited to push themselves beyond their comfort zone.
- d)Respect – all voices and perspectives are treated with dignity, even in disagreement.
- e)No attacks – criticism focuses on ideas and structures, not on personal attacks.

In youth work, especially when addressing sensitive topics such as gender and cultural diversity, brave spaces allow participants to experience both support and challenge. They move beyond the illusion of “complete safety” and create the conditions for honest dialogue, mutual learning, and personal transformation.

Together, these concepts encourage inclusion, trust, and active learning.

Simple example:

At the beginning of a workshop, a instructor says:

“In this group, we respect each other. You don’t have to agree with everyone, but you must speak respectfully. It’s normal to feel uncomfortable at times, but we will face this together.”

This short introduction already sets the tone: you are safe from harm, but you are also invited to be brave.

4.2 Why safe and brave spaces matter in anti-polarization work

- They build trust, so participants can open up instead of hiding behind stereotypes.
- They make risk-taking possible, which is needed for artistic and creative learning.
- They prevent harm, ensuring that sensitive exercises (like Identity Switch or Judgment Line) don’t reinforce exclusion.
- They teach democratic values: listening, respect, empathy, accountability.

Without a safe/brave environment, exercises risk reproducing the very polarization we are trying to address. Exercises like Identity Switch may cause distress instead of insight, as participants risk feeling exposed rather than supported.

4.3 Core Principles

To establish and maintain safe/brave spaces, instructors and youth workers should adhere to the following principles:

- i. Respect and dignity – All participants are treated as equals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, or political opinion.
- ii. Consent and choice – Participation is encouraged, not forced. The principle of “challenge by choice” ensures that each individual decides their level of engagement.

- iii. Confidentiality – What is shared in the group stays within the group, unless explicit permission is given to share it outside.
- iv. Non-violence – No form of physical, verbal, psychological, or symbolic violence is tolerated.
- v. Accountability – Participants are responsible both for their intentions and for the impact of their words and actions.
- vi. Shared ownership – Rules of interaction are co-created with participants at the beginning of each activity.
- vii. Inclusion of fewer-opportunity people –Instructors must adapt activities to ensure accessibility and equal participation.

4.4 Requirements for instructors

Even if you are not an expert, you can create a safe/brave space by following some basic steps:

Before the activity.

- Prepare the space: chairs in a circle, enough room for movement, visible flipchart with ground rules.
- Think about accessibility: is the venue physically accessible? Are there gender-neutral toilets? Is the language simple enough?
- Anticipate sensitive moments in the exercises and plan how you will guide them.

During the activity.

- Model the behaviour you expect: respect, empathy, active listening.
- Provide clear, step-by-step instructions for each exercise, ensuring all participants understand the purpose and boundaries.
- Monitor group dynamics and pay attention to non-verbal cues that may indicate discomfort or exclusion.
- Intervene firmly but respectfully in cases of discriminatory remarks, unsafe behaviour, or breaches of the agreed rules.

After the activity.

- Offer debriefing and reflection time after sensitive exercises, allowing participants to process emotions and perspectives. Always ask participants how they felt, what they learned, and what could be done differently.
- Offer one-to-one talks, letting participants know they can speak to you privately if something felt unsafe.
- Reflect yourself: what worked? What should I change next time?



4.5 Requirements for organizations

- Have a safeguarding policy (even if it's something simple and basic).
- Provide safe accommodation, food that respects dietary needs, and accessible facilities.
- Guarantee language accessibility, e.g. through simple English, translation, or visual methods.
- Designate trained staff responsible for inclusion and wellbeing during all activities.
- Establish clear complaint and reporting mechanisms in case participants feel unsafe.

4.6 Practical tools and how to use them

Creating a safe/brave space is not achieved only by setting abstract principles — it requires concrete tools and daily practices that help instructors build trust, monitor wellbeing, and manage group dynamics. Below are practical strategies that can be integrated into any activity of the Toolbox. Each tool includes its purpose, how to implement it, and examples of where it links with specific exercises.

4.6.1 Co-creating Ground Rules	
Purpose:	To establish a shared agreement that ensures respect and accountability.
How to use:	a) At the start of the workshop, ask: “What do you need from this group to feel safe and respected?” b) Collect answers on a flipchart. Encourage simple, positive statements (“Speak respectfully”, “Listen without interrupting”). c) Add key principles if missing (confidentiality, agree to disagree, challenge by choice). d) Agree as a group and keep the rules visible in the room.
Example in Toolbox:	Before starting Awareness 1a – Flow with grid and focus, participants should agree not to push, touch without consent, or make fun of mistakes.

4.6.2 Check-ins and check-outs	
Purpose:	To monitor emotional wellbeing and create a sense of closure.
How to use:	• Check-in (start of the day): Go around the circle, each person says one word about how they feel (“excited”, “tired”, “curious”). • Check-out (end of the day): Ask: “What is one thing you are taking with you today?”
Example in Toolbox:	After Communication 1a – The Gaze, where vulnerability is high, a short check-out helps participants release tension and reflect on the experience.

4.6.3 Buddy system

Purpose:	To ensure no participant feels isolated and everyone has support.
How to use:	1. Pair participants randomly on the first day. 2. Buddies check in with each other during breaks: “How are you doing? Do you need anything?” 3. Encourage buddies to sit together in some exercises, especially those that may be emotionally demanding.
Example in Toolbox:	During Reflection – Identity Switch, buddies can support each other by debriefing privately before sharing in the larger group.

4.6.4 Reflection circles

Purpose:	To provide structured space for participants to process emotions and learning.
How to use:	1. Sit in a circle after the exercise. 2. Give each person 1–2 minutes to share, without interruption. 3. Use sentence starters: “I felt...”, “I learned...”, “I was surprised by...”. 4. Remind the group: listening is as important as speaking.
Example in Toolbox:	After Reflection – Judgment Line, participants may experience discomfort. A reflection circle helps them process what happened without leaving tensions unresolved.

4.6.5 Options for participation

Purpose:	To respect different comfort levels and learning styles.
How to use:	● Always state clearly: “You choose how much you participate. Watching or trying a smaller role is also OK.” ● Offer alternatives: drawing, writing, observing, or using non-verbal expressions. ● Allow participants to “pass” if they do not wish to speak.
Example in Toolbox:	In We’re having a ball, some participants may not want to speak for an identity card. They can instead write arguments on sticky notes.

4.6.6 Emotional pause / “Red card”

Purpose:	To provide a way for participants to stop the exercise if it becomes too overwhelming.
How to use:	1. Introduce a “red card” or safe word at the start (e.g., “Pause”). 2. If someone uses it, the activity stops immediately without explanation required. 3. Resume only after checking in with the group.
Example in Toolbox:	Useful during Last person voyage with Identity markers, where participants might feel pressure when sharing personal identity markers.

4.6.7 Warm-ups for safety and trust

Purpose:	To prepare participants emotionally and physically for deeper exercises.
How to use:	● Use energisers that include gentle contact, humour, and collective rhythm. ● Avoid competitive or eliminatory games at the start. ● Gradually increase intensity: start with movement (Awareness 1a), then eye contact (Communication 1a), then role-play (Reflection).
Example in Toolbox:	Running Awareness 1b Flow with tempos before Communication 1a – The Gaze helps participants feel relaxed and synchronised before vulnerable exercises.

4.6.8 Debriefing questions

Purpose:	To help participants connect experience to learning.
How to use:	Ask three levels of questions: 1. Descriptive: What happened? 2. Reflective: How did you feel? 3. Analytical: What does this mean for how we see polarization?
Example in Toolbox:	After We’re having a ball, facilitators can ask: ● “What arguments surprised you?” ● “How did it feel to defend a position you don’t agree with?” ● “How does this connect to polarization in your community?”

4.6.9 Facilitator back-up plan

Purpose:	To prevent unsafe situations from escalating.
How to use:	• Have two facilitators if possible: one leads, the other observes group dynamics. • Prepare a calm activity (drawing, writing, breathing exercise) in case the group needs a break. • Have contact info of support staff in case a participant needs professional help.

4.7 Linking safe spaces to anti-polarization

Creating safe and brave spaces is not only about protection; it directly contributes to the project's core goal of tackling polarization:

- It enables young people to experiment with multiple perspectives without fear of judgment.
- It builds empathy by allowing participants to hear experiences different from their own.
- It reduces the risk of reinforcing stereotypes by ensuring inclusive and respectful dialogue.
- It prepares youth workers with practical, transferable methods for creating constructive dialogue environments in their local communities.

Linking it to the Toolbox exercises:

- Awareness 1a – Flow with grid and focus: participants move in shared space. Safe space means respecting personal distance and not mocking mistakes. Brave space means trying new movements even if you feel shy.
- Communication 1a – The Gaze: looking into someone's eyes can feel intimidating. A safe/brave approach: allow participants to break eye contact if needed, but encourage them to try and reflect afterwards.
- Reflection – Identity Markers / Identity Switch: these exercises involve embodying identities (gender, religion, etc.). Safe space ensures no one feels attacked; brave space invites participants to step into identities outside their comfort zone.
- Reflection – We're having a ball: debating polarized issues can easily become personal. Safe/brave facilitation ensures criticism targets ideas, not people, and protects participants from vulnerable groups.



4.8 Common challenges and how to respond

Creating safe spaces is not free of challenges:

- **Resistance:** some participants may see inclusion rules as “political correctness.” Instructors should frame them as respect and empathy, not restrictions.
- **Silence:** taboo topics may cause participants to remain quiet. Use creative methods (theatre, role play, drawing) to allow indirect expression.
- **Discriminatory comment:** stop the activity. Remind the group of the rules. Reframe: “We don’t use jokes like that here. Let’s focus on the issue, not the person.”
- **Conflict:** strong disagreements may emerge (e.g., during We’re having a ball). Instructors should frame conflict as an opportunity for learning, not as a failure. Pause, breathe, invite participants to re-state what they heard the other person say.
- **Participant refuses identity exercise** (e.g., for religious reasons): offer an alternative, like speak in third person (“He is... / She is...”) instead of “I am...”. Respect limits.
- **Personal disclosures:** sensitive sharing (e.g., about discrimination or trauma) must be handled with care, acknowledging the experience and providing resources for further support.

4.9 Checklist for instructors

Before

- ☐ Room is accessible and comfortable
- ☐ Ground rules prepared and visible
- ☐ Safeguarding policy and reporting mechanism ready

During

- ☐ Model respect, empathy, and inclusivity.
- ☐ Explain activity clearly
- ☐ Monitor group energy and emotions
- ☐ Intervene respectfully if needed
- ☐ Encourage, but never force participation

After

- ☐ Debrief with the group
- ☐ Offer optional private follow-up
- ☐ Reflect and adjust methods for next time

4.10 Conclusion

Creating safe and brave spaces is not complicated — it requires awareness, consistency, and care. Even youth workers with little experience can apply the simple tools described in this chapter: co-creating rules, checking in, debriefing, modelling respect...

When applied across the Fønix Toolbox, these practices turn artistic exercises into powerful tools against polarization: they enable empathy, dialogue, and critical reflection, while protecting participants from harm.

Safe/brave spaces are not only the foundation of the Toolbox, but also the skills and values we want young people to carry back to their communities.

4.11 Sources

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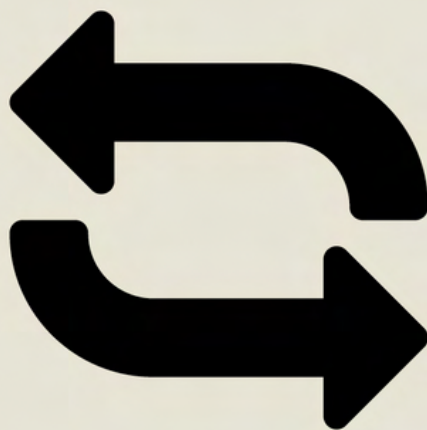
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5. METHOD AND EXERCISES

Theater

Where we create conflict to evoke empathy.



We use empathy as a tool to fight and prevent **Polarization**





HOW?

By training skills under the categories:

-
-
-

AWARENESS
COMMUNICATION
REFLECTION

AWARENESS:



AIM:

Create safe space based on awareness of self, space and each other.



GOAL:

Create mini society to use as a base for conversation/learning



WANTED RESULT:

Improved **LISTENING** skills



COMMUNICATION:

AIM:



Create awareness of communication by using strategies,
individually and in groups

GOAL:



Build understanding of verbal and non verbal
communication mechanisms

WANTED RESULT:



Improved **EXPRESSION** skills



REFLECTION



AIM:
Introducing tools for changing perspectives



GOAL:
Create distance between issue and personal perspective



WANTED RESULT:
Improved **EMPATHY**



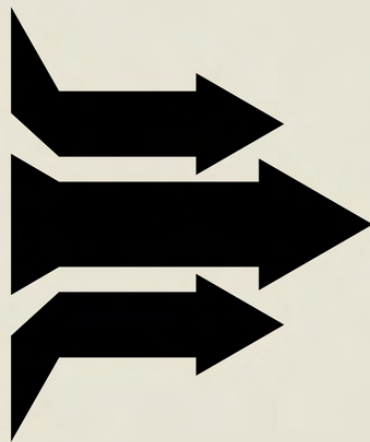
TOOLS:

EXCERISE

AWARENESS

COMMUNICATION

REFLECTION



SKILLS ACHIVED

LISTEN

EXPRESS

EMPATHIZE



6 EXERCICES - AWARENESS

VIDEO TUTORIAL 2 – AWARENESS

Exercises in the *Awareness* category stem entirely from Viewpoints – a movement-based pedagogical and artistic practice that explores spatial relationships, time, emotion, movement, among others.

In the Fønix project, a series of these exercises were tested and developed into practical tasks for the participants, with the result of creating an image of a small society, where both group dynamics and individuality became very transparent.

The Fønix Awareness exercises are physical and dynamic, but they are easily adjustable for people with disabilities. Instructors are encouraged to be inclusive, as this will enrich the results.

Many participants will have a natural urge to «do good» or «achieve» in these particular exercises, and it is important that the instructor guides the participants away from this way of meeting the exercises. It takes time and patience. When establishing the rules and framework, taking time is key.

All the exercises in the *Awareness* category should have a fluid, atmospheric, almost meditational execution. This demands a focused work space with clear instructions and confident leadership.



7. Awareness Level 1

7.1.

Title of exercise	Flow with grid and soft and hard focus
Category	Awareness
Level	1a
Aim	Create a safe space with simple, common rules regarding movement and space
General description	Group exercise, physical and non verbal. The exercise is in three main parts (1a, 1b and 1c), and part 1c can be repeated as a warm up or energizer when the rules and the terminology are established. The exercise is typically the one to start with, as it is good to build the group as a team.
Time management	20 minutes
Instructions	Instruct the participants to walk around the room and fill the space evenly while walking. In a fitting pace, give the group instructions: 5. Work together to fill the space evenly as you walk around. You don't have to look at each other, but be aware of each other, try not to bump into each other. 6. Try to discover the space as you walk around, and reflect upon what you see. What is the floor made of? What are the walls made of? 7. Remember to fill the space 8. You are now in a Flow 9. When you are in this flow, and you don't look at each other but listen with your bodies and you are aware of the space around you, we call it Soft focus. 10. When I tell you to, change into what we call Hard focus, which means that you are to look at each other in the eyes when you pass each other, and acknowledge each other. There should still be no verbal communication. You can now enter Hard focus. You can now shift between Soft and Hard focus. Keep reminding them of filling the space evenly. Shift to Soft focus, and instruct the participants: -In contrast to the flow, where you walk around freely, we have what we call the Grid. This means moving only across the width of the room or the length of the room, with sharp corners.

Instructions	Instruct the participants to change into a Grid. Change between grid and flow with soft and hard focus. Go back to flow in soft focus, and instruct participants: -This exercise ends when the group as a whole decides to stop at the same time. As a group, without verbal communication or gestures, try to come to a common end, where everybody stops at the same time. The group may or may not be able to do it. When the exercise ends, ask the group to create a circle (standing up). Do a sharing round, where participants talk about their experience. Examples of questions to ask: -How was it to discover this space, did you make any discoveries or did you reflect on something specific? -What was the experience of walking around together in Soft focus? -What was it like to walk around in hard focus, and how did it make you feel? Why?
Important	The exercise is not about performing or creating, nor is it to achieve a specific goal. The main purpose is to build a common ground for reflecting on oneself in a group dynamic.
Do's and don'ts	-Lead with confidence -If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. -Be precise about terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources / Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics



Title of exercise	Flow with grid and soft and hard focus
Category	Awareness
Level	1b
Aim	Create a safe space with simple, common rules regarding movement and space
General description	Group exercise, physical and non verbal. The exercise is in three main parts, and part three can be repeated as a warm up or energizer when the rules and the terminology are established. The exercise is typically the one to start with, as it is good to build the group as a team. In terms of polarization, the goal is to create a mini-society based on these simple rules, mainly for the participants to reflect upon the role they take in their own society.
Time Management	30 minutes
Instructions	Instruct the participants to walk around the room and fill the space evenly while walking. In a fitting pace, give the group instructions: -You are now in a flow. Reflect upon the tempo of the group. Do you walk a bit faster than the majority of the group, or perhaps a bit slower? Try to work together to find a common rhythm and tempo - a neutral tempo, not fast, not slow, just your ordinary "walk from the sofa to the kitchen"-tempo.. When common tempo is established: -The tempo you walk in now, the neutral tempo, we'll call this tempo 4. -When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 5. Tempo 5 is a bit faster than tempo 4. You can now go into tempo 5. -Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life? -Change to tempo 4, and then to tempo 5 again, and then to 4.

Instructions

-When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 3. Tempo 3 is a bit slower than tempo 4. You can now go into tempo 3..

-Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life?

-Change between the established tempos, landing in tempo 5.

-When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 6. Tempo 6 is quite fast. You can now go into tempo 6.

-Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life?

-Change between the established tempos, landing in tempo 3.

-When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 2. Tempo 2 is quite slow. You can now go into tempo 2.

-Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life?

-Change between the established tempos, landing in tempo 6.

-When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 7. Tempo 7 is the fastest you can move in this room without running or losing control. You can now go into tempo 7.

-Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life?

-Change between the established tempos, landing in tempo 2.

-When I tell you to, we'll change to tempo 1. Tempo 1 is the slowest you can move. It is not walking in slow motion, try to establish a tempo you would actually use. You can now go into tempo 1.

-Reflect upon how this tempo seems to you. Are you comfortable? Uncomfortable? Does this tempo give you any associations, what kind of images come to your mind? When did you last use this tempo in your day-to-day life?

-Change between the established tempos. Mix it up with soft and hard focus.

Instructions	-This exercise ends when the group as a whole decides to stop at the same time. As a group, without verbal communication or gestures, try to come to a common end, where everybody stops at the same time. Create a circle (standing up). Do a sharing round, where participants talk about their experience. Examples of questions to ask: -Did anybody get specific images in the different tempos? -What was the experience of the flow in the different tempos? Which tempos felt comfortable, which felt uncomfortable? -How was it in soft or hard focus?
Important	The exercise is not about performing or creating, nor is it to achieve a specific goal. The main purpose is to build a common ground for reflecting on oneself in a group dynamic.
Do's and don'ts	-Lead with confidence -If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. -Be precise about terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources / Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics



Title of exercise	Flow with improv
Category	Awareness
Level	1c
Aim	Create a safe space with simple, common rules regarding movement and space
General description	The exercise creates the base for Awareness level 2 and 3. It can be repeated as a warm up or energizer when the rules and the terminology are established. In terms of polarization, the goal is to create a mini-society based on these simple rules, mainly for the participants to reflect upon the role they take in their own society.
Time Management	20 minutes
Instructions	The exercise creates the base for Awareness level 2 and 3. It can be repeated as a warm up or energizer when the rules and the terminology are established. In terms of polarization, the goal is to create a mini-society based on these simple rules, mainly for the participants to reflect upon the role they take in their own society.
Important	The exercise is not about performing or creating, nor is it to achieve a specific goal. The main purpose is to build a common ground for reflecting on oneself in a group dynamic.
Do's and don'ts	-Lead with confidence -If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. -Be precise about terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resource and Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics

8. Awareness Level 2

8.1.

Title of exercise	5 Lanes
Category	Awareness
Level	2a
Aim	Enhance listening and kinaesthetic response
General description	Group exercise, physical and non-verbal. The exercise divides the group, where a number of participants (minimum 4, maximum 6) is doing the exercise and the others are watching and observing. In terms of polarization, the goal is to enhance listening skills, especially the kinaesthetic listening and response.
Time Management	30-40 minutes (15-20 minutes exercise, 15-20 minutes discussion) for each group
Instructions	Explain the premise and rules: -The observing group is located on chairs on one side of the room. -The other group is spread out evenly against the opposite wall, using the whole width of the space. -Each participant is given their own lane, going in a straight line from the back of the space and towards the observing group. -The participants can only move back and forth in their lane -In addition to walking back and forth, they have the following movements as their "language": 1. Running (back and forth) 2. Jumping (up and down on the spot) 3. Sitting (squat) 4. Clapping (one sharp clap)

Instructions	-The participants should try to use impulses from the common space, and respond with a change in movement - this is called Kinesthetic response. -During the exercise it can be necessary to guide participants, do this without stopping. The participants should not ask questions while doing the exercise. Tell them that you will correct them if you see someone doing something outside the common framework. -When the exercise is in motion, fade in dynamic music without lyrics to enhance the concentration of participants -Encourage “dialogue” between the participants in the lanes - if two participants are jumping up and down, others may be inspired. The participants should not look at each other. -Tell the participants that the exercise ends when all the participants have stopped moving in common agreement.
Instructions	Sharing round -Ask the observing group what they saw -Was there anything that stood out as interesting? -Were there certain moments of surprise? -Were there moments of clear “dialogue” between the participants across lanes, or moments where the kinesthetic response was detectable? -Second, ask the performers what they experienced -Were there moments that they felt in contact with each other? -Were there moments of shared dialogue? -What was challenging, and what felt easy? -Questions for the group of the whole: were there moments of conflict? Moments of togetherness? How did it make the participants feel?
Repetition	Clarify rules if needed, and repeat with other group In the sharing round, point out that the exercise is a mirror of society - we work together with a common set of rules. -Was there anyone who tried to bend the rules? How did that make the others feel? -Was there anyone who insisted on following the rules? -Were there anyone who didn't contribute to the exercise in an active way? How did that make the other participants feel? -How are these observations relevant for reflecting upon society in the real world?

Important	The exercise is not about performing or creating, nor is it to achieve a specific goal. The main purpose is to build a common ground for reflecting upon oneself in a group dynamic. It's ok and often necessary to challenge certain types of participants, especially participants who're not actively participating, or who's trying to bend the rules, or who is self-aware and uses defence mechanisms such as comedic gestures or irony. Instead of pointing it out as wrong, ask the observing group what they see, and ask the other participants how this behaviour made them feel. The instructor never judges the participants or the execution of the exercise, but simply ask questions.
Do's and don'ts	-Lead with confidence -If participants ask questions during the exercise or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something outside the common framework, you will correct them. -Be precise about terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics



Title of exercise	Flow with statements
Category	Awareness
Level	2b
Aim	Create a safe space with simple, common rules regarding movement and space
General Description	Group exercise, physical and non-verbal. The exercise is a continuation of the Flow exercise, and is designed to challenge established rules and understandings. In terms of polarization, the goal is to further explore the mini-society created by challenging the participants and their level of comfort.
Time Management	30 minutes
Instructions	Establish a point on the floor in the middle of the space. Tell the participants that during the next flow, they should all at one point stop and stand at this point, and make a statement about themselves in the space - one sentence. The statement needs to start with -My name is....., I am years old, and I.....(statement). Instruct the participants to come to a complete stop before they address the room, and that they cannot move out of the selected point before they have fully completed their statement. During the flow, the instructor should vary between established rules, such as flow/grid, soft/hard focus and if established, the gestures from the 5 Lanes-exercise - sitting, jumping, running, clapping. Tell the participants that the exercise ends when the group decides to stop. Sharing round -How did it feel to address the room in this way? -Were there moments that stood out in regards to kinaesthetic response? -How did it change the experience of the flow exercise? -Was it uncomfortable? If so, why? -Were there any surprises?

Important	The exercise is not about performing or creating, nor is it to achieve a specific goal. The main purpose is to build a common ground for reflecting upon oneself in a group dynamic. It's ok and often necessary to challenge certain types of participants, especially participants who're not actively participating, or who's trying to bend the rules, or who is self-aware and uses defence mechanisms such as comedic gestures or irony. Instead of pointing it out as wrong, ask the observing group what they see, and ask the other participants how this behaviour made them feel. The instructor never judges the participants or the execution of the exercise, but simply ask questions.
Do's and don'ts	-Lead with confidence -If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. -Be precise about established terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics



9. Awareness level 3

9.1.

Title of exercise	Flow with meetings
Category	Awareness
Level	3a
Aim	Challenge the safe group with adding conflict in the common rules regarding movement and space
General Description	Group exercise, physical and non-verbal. The exercise is a continuation of the Flow exercise, and is designed to challenge established rules and understandings. In terms of polarization, the goal is to further explore the mini-society created by challenging the participants and their level of comfort.
Time management	30-50 minutes
Instructions	Establish a few new rules, by addressing the participants: - This flow is designed to challenge yourself and each other, within the safe space and established rules - During this exercise, you are allowed to create meetings, and approach other participants. - This is executed in a non-verbal practise - When you pass a fellow participant, you might stop and look at each other, and if it feels right, create a non-verbal dialogue consisting of movement within our established repertoire of movements. - You can also challenge each other by creating physical meetings. The physical behaviour must be respectfully and carefully executed. - As a general rule, you cannot use your hands to touch other participants' bodies. - An example of physical behaviour can be standing next to each other and leaning towards each other. Instruct the participants to both challenge each other and at the same time read each other to not cross personal lines.

	Establish the rule that if a participant feels so uncomfortable by another participant's behaviours, they can say the word "STOP". If this happens, the participants in this meeting will both stop what they are doing, and respectfully move away from each other. It is also possible to participate in the exercise without challenging the others or participating with physical contact. The participants need to find the balance between challenging themselves and forcing behaviours. Start with leading the group into a flow. Fade in music, and let the improv unravel. Leaders may participate in the flow to create examples of meetings. Sharing round - How did it feel to meet each other in this way? - Were there moments that stood out in regards to kinaesthetic response? - How did it change the experience of the flow exercise? - Was it uncomfortable? If so, why? - Were there any surprises? - Were there examples of personal space being invaded? If so, how did you resolve it? How did it make you feel?
Important	The exercise may be challenging to some in regards to physical contact. Be clear about the "no hands" rule. Still it is important to establish that "safe" does not mean lack of conflict. If the exercise challenges personal space, follow up on the participants involved throughout the day. The main goal is to reflect upon oneself in group dynamics in a playful way Music in long improvs should be dynamic and vary in mood and atmosphere
Do's and don'ts	- Lead with confidence - If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. - Be precise about established terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources / Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics

Title of exercise	Flow variations
Category	Awareness
Level	3b
Aim	Explore the potential in the established rules within the common space and enhance awareness of what you as an individual bring to the community.
General Description	Group exercise, physical and non-verbal. The exercise is a continuation of the Flow exercise and is designed to challenge established rules and understandings. In terms of polarization, the goal is to further explore the mini society created by challenging the participants and their level of comfort.
Time management	20-60 minutes
Instructions	Lead an improv with all rules, gestures and movements in full effect. Repeat all elements: - Hard and soft focus - Flow and grid - Tempos - Gestures: sitting, clapping, jumping - Statements - Meetings Instruct the group to start a flow. Fade in music. Instruct the group to - Try to create a dynamic room - Participate actively - It is allowed to free yourself from established rules and in a non-verbal way create new ones - If this happens, other participants should try to pick up on new rules and try to repeat The instructor decides when the group should find the end of the improv. Sharing round - How did this flow make you feel? - What moments stood out regarding kinaesthetic response?

	- In the society we have created, who of the participants stand out as leaders? Who are followers? Who are rule breakers? Who wants to be part of a group dynamic, and who prefers to be alone or in smaller groups? - Why?
Important	The exercise may be challenging to some regarding physical contact. Be clear about the “no hands” rule - but it is important to establish that “safe” does not mean lack of conflict. If the exercise challenges personal space, follow up on the participants involved throughout the day. The main goal is to reflect upon oneself in group dynamics in a playful way Music in long improvs should be dynamic and vary in mood and atmosphere
Dos and don'ts	- Lead with confidence - If participants ask questions during the flows or are unsure of the rules you establish, encourage them to find the answers without asking, and tell them that if you see that someone is doing something wrong, you will correct them. - Be precise about established terminology to avoid confusion. When a word is established, stick to it.
Resources / Materials	Speaker, player and music without lyrics

10. COMMUNICATION

VIDEO TUTORIAL 3_- COMMUNICATION

Exercises in the Communication category draw inspiration from western, traditional actors training.

In the Fønix project, we use these exercises both as metaphors for dialogue, and as methods and tools that teach communication skills in a very direct way.

The Fønix Communication exercises are both verbal and physical, and easy to adjust to diverse groups.

Many participants will have a natural urge to «do good» or «achieve» in these particular exercises, often with the result of the participants trying to be funny or to entertain - other times participants may try to become aware of the performative nature of the exercises, and try to force conflict or elements of storytelling. It is important to differ between using our imagination to place ourselves in hypothetical conflict, and to create stories or scenarios.

Still, the Communication exercises are designed to challenge a peaceful and collaborative group dynamic, and conflict is a part of most exercises. This demands a safe and focused work space, with clear instructions and confident leadership.



11. Communication level 1

11.1

Title of exercise	The Gaze
Category	Communication
Level	1a
Aim	To improve non-verbal communication.
General description	Group exercise performed in a circle. The exercise is good for establishing a focused work space, and is typically a good warm up exercise. Also good for gathering the focus of the group after breaks and there exercises where the group is fragmented. In terms of polarization, the goal is to become aware of non-verbal communication mechanisms, and be clear in what you express and communicate.
Time management	10 minutes
Instructions	Gather the group in a standing circle. <u>Rules</u> Person A starts the exercise with establishing eye contact with one of the other participants across the circle - Person B. When the eye contact is established, person A will walk towards person B to take their place in the circle. Before A gets all the way across to B, B has to establish eye contact with another participant, person C, and once their contact is established, B walks towards person C to take their place. <u>Execution</u> This pattern repeats itself, and the group has to be aware and communicate with each other, only using eye contact. Instruct and guide the participants to be clear in their communication. A flickering gaze will make other participants unsure who's coming for which place. Emphasize precise body language and intent - instruct person A to communicate "I'm coming for you" when they establish first eye contact.

	To advance the exercise, add stakes like increasing and decreasing pace, widen or tighten the circle during the exercise.
Important	To establish a focused room, it is important to not have the participants asking questions during the exercise, or commenting or making jokes about what's happening.
Do's and don'ts	Exercises like these are often performed in a competitive way, where participants who stumble or get confused during the exercise to the extent that the exercise stops, are "out". In the Fønix method, the competition aspect is removed. Instead, analyze together with participants what happened, and encourage them to try again. This way, the group works together to accomplish a task.
Resources / Materials	None.



Title of exercise	The chair game
Category	Communication
Level	1b
Aim	To develop common strategies and communicate them non-verbally
General description	Group exercise, physical and non-verbal. The exercises require the group to read each other and develop common strategies without speaking. The exercise is playful and can be used as an energizer or warm up. In terms of polarization, the goal is to have participants become aware of their own contribution in a common task.
Time management	5-15 minutes
Instructions	<u>Preparation</u> Each participant grabs a chair, and places them evenly in random directions in the space. All sit but one - the challenger. <u>Rules</u> The challengers task is to find the available chair and sit down. The group's task is to prevent the challenger from sitting down, and when the challenger comes close to the available chair, one of the sitting participants leaves their chair and sits down on the chair the challenger is moving towards. The challenger must move in a calm, neutral pace, whereas the sitting participants may move at the speed needed to prevent the challenger from sitting down. If a sitting participant leaves their chair, they cannot return to it, they must find a new chair to sit in. Participants cannot physically prevent the challenger from moving, nor push them away.

	<u>Execution</u> Encourage the group to work together. Each time a challenger manages to sit down in a chair, analyze what happened with the group.
Important	To establish a focused room, it is important to not have the participants asking questions during the exercise, or commenting or making jokes about what's happening. During the exercise, the archetypes from the awareness exercises may reoccur - such as the leader, the rule follower and the rebel. Acknowledge their go-to- strategies, and challenge them to change their behavior to let other participants have more space.
Do's and don'ts	Exercises like these are often performed in a competitive way, where participants who stumble or get confused during the exercise to the extent that the exercise stops, are "out". In the Fønix method, the competition aspect is removed. Instead, analyze together with participants what happened, and encourage them to try again. This way, the group works together to accomplish a task.
Resources / Materials	1 chair for each participant



Level	1c
Aim	To enhance imagination and clear communication
General description	Group exercise, physical, non-verbal and verbal. The exercises require the group to develop common skills based on experience. The exercise is playful and can be used as an energizer or warm up. In terms of polarization, the goal is to have participants become aware of their own contribution in a common task, and to train imagination and reaction to hypothetical scenarios.
Time management	5-15 minutes
Instructions	Have the group form a circle, standing up. Introduce the ball, and instruct the participants to treat it with respect and caution. The task is to, in a fluid movement and common pace and rhythm, throw the ball to another participant across the circle. An easy task, but it does consist of several parts: - receiving the ball from previous thrower - establish eye contact with the new receiver - communicate in a non-verbal way that you will throw the ball - throw the ball in a manner that makes it easy to receive it If anyone drops the ball, have the group analyze what went wrong and continue to build a common strategy. After a common pace and rhythm is established, you can advance the exercise with establishing the ball as something else: - a flower - a rat

	- a baby - a bomb - a rock - a cup - a glass bottle - etc Introduce the new element with the phrase “The ball is now a....”, and have the group continue the exercise. Vary between the instructor and participants giving the ball a new “personality”. Do a sharing round and ask participants of their experiences with the different “personalities” of the ball.
Important	To establish a focused room, it is important to not have the participants asking questions during the exercise, or commenting or making jokes about what's happening. The exercise is also a metaphor for dialogue, and this should be pointed out when analyzing the outcomes throughout the exercise. Good questions to ask participants is - What can you do to make it easier for the receiver to catch your ball? - How can you communicate in a more precise manner?
Do's and don'ts	Exercises like these are often performed in a competitive way, where participants who stumble or get confused during the exercise to the extent that the exercise stops, are “out”. In the Fønix method, the competition aspect is removed. Instead, analyze together with participants what happened, and encourage them to try again. This way, the group works together to accomplish a task. Allow for the group to share their feelings and personal experiences.
Resources / Material	Tennis ball

12. Communication level 2

12.1

Level	2a
Aim	To explore communicating with high stakes
General description	The exercise is non-verbal, and performed in pairs. The exercise should be used as a metaphor for a conversation, and the instructor is responsible for observing and guiding the participants. In terms of polarization, the goal is to build understanding of communication mechanisms, and communication with risk and high stakes.
Time management	15-30 minutes
Instructions	<u>Preparation</u> Use one to two pairs of participants to introduce the rules, and to demonstrate the exercise, before having all participants doing the exercise at the same time. Instruct the two participants to face each other, standing up. Give Participant A the coin, and have them keep it in the palm of their hand. <u>Rules</u> Participant A's task is to keep and protect the coin in their hand. Participant B's task is to steal the coin from Participant A.. Participant A can not go outside the room, Participant B cannot physically attack A. They cannot use words. <u>Notes for the instructor</u> In the beginning, the participants holding the coin will typically close their fist and hide it behind their back. The participants trying to steal the coin may frighten or threaten the coin holder. Already, the exercise is a metaphor for a conversation. Teach the participants: - How can anyone engage in a dialogue where one part is closed off and the other part is threatening?

	- To engage in a conversation, even in one where both parties are standing in their own opinion, we need the possibility for change of power. - Participant A needs to take the risk of losing the coin, in order to create a conversation. - If Participant B comes too close, or is hovering over Participant A's hand, they will close their fist, and not be open. - Only when both parts dare to lose face or control, can we see an interesting, ongoing dialogue. Try again, and ask observing participants to analyze what they are seeing, and let it be the base of the sharing round. Do a sharing round, and ask participants - How did it feel to be the person protecting the coin? - How did it feel to try to steal it? - When did you feel the most vulnerable? - How did it feel to lose the game - and why?
Important	Some participants may become aware of the observing participants, and try to put on a show, using funny entertaining tactics. Remind them that the conversation is with their partner, not the observers. If this exercise is revisited after introducing Communication 3a - Goals and strategies, it may be interesting to analyze the "conversation" based on the strategies introduced.
Do's and don'ts	The point of the exercise is not to win or lose the game, it's only presented that way to give the participants some stakes. Don't emphasize too much on this aspect while doing the exercise. Help the participants by calling out whenever they do something that doesn't seem sincere or honest. This will help them come to a vulnerable place, which again helps the exercise and the main goal of The Fønix method.
Resources / Materials	Coins for each pair. The coin should have some value and size, like a 2 euro coin.

Title of exercise	Last person standing
Category	Communication
Level	2b
Aim	To explore communicating with collective impulses within the group
General description	Group exercise in circle, physical and both non-verbal and verbal. This exercise has a progression, and also advances in Communication level 3. In terms of polarization, the goal is to build understanding mechanisms of being a single individual communicating with a group majority.
Time management	15-30 minutes
Instructions	Have the group standing in a circle. Instruct them to try to find a collective impulse and have the circle collapse - by everyone moving to a different place in the circle at the same time. When the circle collapses, everybody has to find a new place and make a new circle. When the group has made a new circle, the exercise repeats itself, when the group feels the new common impulse. When you feel the group is present and really listening to each other's impulses, you can introduce the next segment: The circle collapses and everybody finds a new place to stand. The person who was the last to find their new place in the circle, has to go into the middle of the circle, and look everybody in the eyes. After they have established contact with everyone in the circle, they can take their place in the circle.. After a few rounds, we advance further: now the last person to find a place in the circle go into the middle of the circle, and after they have established eye contact with every person in the circle, they choose one and say: “My name is ... I was too late to find a place in the circle. Can I please stand next to you?”

	Now it's up to the person who was asked to say "yes" or "no" depending on whether or not they feel the person asking was sincere and honest. Repeat until most of the participants have the experience of asking to be part of the circle. Do a sharing round, and ask participants - How did it feel to be the last person standing? - How did making eye contact in the silence make you feel? - How was it asking to be part of the group? - How was it being asked? Why did you say yes or no?
Important	The participants in the circle, being asked by the last person standing, may be saying yes out of pity, but it's important that the last person standing to meet resistance in order to learn how to be honest and sincere.
Do's and don'ts	Be aware of people "cheating" the exercise to avoid getting in the middle. If you as an instructor disagree with the person being asked and their answer, you can challenge them by asking "Do you really want to have this person standing next to you? Why did you say yes?" If participants admit they are saying yes to the last person standing because they don't want to be mean, tell them that giving the last person resistance or honest feedback is not mean, but providing a learning opportunity.
Resources / Materials	None.

13. Communication level 3

13.1

Title of exercise	Goals and strategies
Category	Communication
Level	3a
Aim	Introduce tools to achieve clear communication and strategies for reaching goals and objectives
General description	The exercise has two parts. Part one is giving some theoretical insight, the assets are found in the toolbox. Part two is executed in pairs, and is highly verbal..
Time management	45-60 minutes
Instructions	This exercise demands theoretical insight, found in assets. Part 1 Go through the material with the participants. Have a conversation about how we all have goals and objectives, and what kind of strategies we use to achieve them. Questions to ask participants: - What is your go-to strategy in your communication? - Does it depend on situations and the people you communicate with? - Are there strategies you never use? Part 2 Have the participants pair up. The first pair will do the exercise in front of the others, while you instruct. Help participant A to define a goal for themselves and the obstacle standing in the way of achieving that goal. In this exercise, it works best if the obstacle is a person. Examples: My goal is to get a job My obstacle is the person interviewing me for the job

	My goal is to ask a person I like on a date My obstacle is the person I like, because I don't know if they like me Participant B represents the obstacle. Instruct Participant A to try to reach their goal by actively using different strategies, one by one. Participant B takes one step away from or towards participant A, depending on how they consider the attempt is working. The exercise can be done with fictional circumstances/goals, or with real goals from the participants
Important	The introduction of strategies is important to advancing exercises, so make sure to use enough time to practise different strategies so all participants are aware of their mechanisms. Fighting to actually achieve the goals are crucial. Encourage participants to choose goals that mean something to them, so they can put their sincere emotions in their attempts.
Do's and don'ts	Explore the exercise and strategies together with participants. Try to not push towards specific results.
Resources / Materials	Overview of goals and strategies, found in assets.



Title of exercise	Last person standing - advanced
Category	Communication
Level	3b
Aim	To explore fighting to achieve a communication goal in front of a group .
General description	Group exercise in circle, physical and both non-verbal and verbal. This exercise ground rules can be found in Communication 2. . In terms of polarization, the goal is to build understanding mechanisms of being a single individual communicating with a group majority.
Time management	30-45 minutes
Instructions	Instruct the group to do the Last Person Standing exercise from Communication level 2: When the circle collapses, everybody finds a new place to stand. The person who was the last to find their new place in the circle, has to go into the middle of the circle, and look everybody in the eyes. When eye contact has been made, the participants in the circle leave the circle and form a group, facing the single participant. The single participant must now ask to be part of the group, first by saying the line “My name is ... I was too late to find a place in the circle. Can I please stand next to you?” Now it's up to the group to say “yes” or “no” depending on whether or not they feel the person asking was sincere and honest. If they say “no”, the single participant must try different strategies from the Communication level 3 exercise Goals and strategies. Repeat until most of the participants have the experience of asking to be part of the group.

	A variation of the exercise can be that the single participant asks the group to join their side, and participants from the majority group can join the single participant when they feel that they are being sincere and honest. They can also go back to the majority if they disagree with the single participant's communication strategy. End the exercise with each participant from the majority group going up to the last person standing, looking them in the eyes and saying "I respect you". Do a sharing round, and ask participants - How did it feel to be the last person standing? - What kind of strategies did the last person standing use? - When did you feel the last person standing was honest and sincere? - How was it being asked? Why did you say yes or no? - How was it having the majority participants saying "I respect you"?
Important	The majority group, being asked by the last person standing, may be saying yes out of pity, but it's important that the last person standing to meet resistance in order to learn how to be honest and sincere. Be aware that the exercise mirrors bullying and exclusion mechanisms. The last person standing is in a vulnerable position, and it is important to end on a positive note.
Do's and don'ts	Be aware of people "cheating" the exercise to avoid getting in the middle. If you as an instructor disagree with the group's answer, you can challenge them by asking "Do you really want to have this person in your group? Why did you say yes?" If participants admit they are saying yes to the last person standing because they don't want to be mean, tell them that giving the last person resistance or honest feedback is not mean, but providing a learning opportunity.
Resources / Materials	None.

13.3

Title of exercise	Safe Sharing
Category	Communication
Level	3c
Aim	To create a safe and brave space, in order for the participants to express themselves with sincerity and honesty, and to address issues within the group.
General description	Group exercise
Time management	20-45 minutes
Instructions	Have the group sit in a circle. In the middle of the circle, place three objects: Two objects can be similar, representing a person who would like to speak. During the sharing, a participant who would like to share picks one of the objects. The participant who would like to go next, takes the other one, waiting for their turn to speak. The third object represents anger. This can only be used if a participant feels disrespected, unfairly treated or angry. This object should not be taken lightly - i.e. experiencing an exercise as difficult or challenging, is not enough - then the other objects should be used. <u>Rules</u> Any participant in the circle who feels ready can start sharing by picking one of the objects. The rules for sharing is as follows: 1) Only the participant with an object who is allowed to talk. No answers or interruptions. The exception is the instructor, but only to guide the exercise, not to participate in the conversation. 2) All participants must give full focus towards the person speaking 3) Participants can only speak from their own perspective and share their feelings. Statements, facts or judgement are not welcome. 4) Participants always end their sharing with saying "...and that's it", and placing the object back in the middle of the circle.

Important	The sharing must always come from the participants' own perspective. Example of unconstructive sharing: you were so arrogant when you laughed at the others during the exercise. Example of good sharing: When you laughed during the exercise it made me feel scared and I felt uncomfortable to continue. It felt as the laughter was pointed at me, making fun of my choices.
Do's and don'ts	Honest sharing will put the participants in a vulnerable position. Between sharings, you can call out listening participants who don't express their full focus towards participants who are sharing, instead using the time where others speak to change their position, yawn or look out of the window. Instruct the participants to do this in between sharings. The exercise may take a while, with long breaks between people sharing. It's the instructor's choice to give space for everyone to share, or just a few. Either way it is good to give a heads up 2 minutes before ending the sharing session, as it gives the possibility to those who have something burning inside As an instructor, make a clear distinction of when you are leading the exercise and when you are sharing. Use the objects to show when you are participating in the sharing.
Resources / Materials	Three objects of choice: i.e. two wooden toys, and one toy that represents anger, like a monster figurine.



14. REFLECTION

VIDEO TUTORIAL 4 – REFLECTION

Exercises in the Reflection are created to directly handle polarized themes and sensitive subjects. They are also designed to have the participants reflect upon the group dynamic.

From the world of theatre, we have taken the idea of characters and how actors defend their roles on stage. In the Fønix project, participants will get tools to become aware of their own characteristics, or identity markers, and to create a character, or perspective, that differs from their own. With this mindset, participants can move through different points of views and look at polarizing themes and subjects from different perspectives.

In the Reflection category, it is important to schedule enough time for each exercise, as discussions and debate will occur. Rushing through exercises to get results will not give satisfying outcomes.

It is also important to remind participants to shy away from their personal views in the discussions.



15.1

Title of exercise	Polarization basics and terminology
Category	Reflection
Level	1a
Aim	To increase knowledge about polarization
General description	Theory.
Time management	15-45 minutes
Instructions	The instructor may choose to have participants reading individually, or to give a lecture. The theory can be found in the toolbox assets.
Important	
Do's and don'ts	
Resources / Materials	Asset: Polarization basics and terminology



Title of exercise	Identity Markers
Category	Reflection
Level	1b
Aim	Awareness of Identity Markers and how they influence your perspective
General description	The exercise is done with white board and forms to fill out, and is meant to give participants theoretical insight on identity markers.
Time management	30 minutes
Instructions	Part One Ask participants if they know about Identity Markers. Open a conversation about it. An example of definition of identity markers: Identity markers are characteristics or attributes used to signify or express aspects of a person's identity, such as age, ethnicity, gender, language, occupation, or cultural background, helping to anchor their sense of self and how they're perceived by others. Understanding identity markers is essential for appreciating diversity and fostering inclusive environments, as they influence both personal identity and societal perceptions. In this exercise, focus on the more or less unchangeable markers, like skin color and gender, and not so much on the temporary circumstances, such as employment status. Ask the participants to suggest markers and write them on the board. You should end up with 12: 1. Ethnicity 2. Geography (city, country, region, east/west) 3. Gender 4. Class 5. Language 6. Religion

	7.Physical abilities/ disabilities 8.Sexual orientation 9.Birthyear/Generation 10.Skin color 11.Political views (conservative, liberal) 12.Family relationship status (father, sister, child) Part Two Hand out the Identity Marker form to each participant. Have them list their 5 most important identity markers in the form, in prioritized order. The answers must be written as personal identity markers, and formulated in a way where “I am” could be placed in front of the marker: “I am NORWEGIAN”. “I am A WOMAN”. Participants must not write their name on the sheet. When everybody is done, invite participants to share their experiences, and ask questions like: - Did anything surprise you? - What was challenging and why? - How does the introduction of identity markers change the way you perceive yourself? - As a thought experiment: In your opinion, what is the most prominent identity marker your loved ones would use to describe you? Collect the sheets to use in the next exercises.
Important	Notice the participants in advance that they will share their identity marker forms with the group. If they identify they are not comfortable sharing with the group, encourage them to use another identity marker.
Do's and dont's	
Resources / Materials	Identity marker list Identity marker forms White board Pens

15.3

Title of exercise	Open/Close
Category	Reflection
Level	1c
Aim	To give participants a physical feeling of being receptive or dismissive.
General description	A meditation exercise to be used as a warm up for the reflection category.
Time management	5-10 minutes
Instructions	Have the participants sit on chairs, spread out in the room and tell them to close their eyes. Lead the participants in a meditation journey, where you work with - relaxation in the body - being neutral - closing off - opening up Finally, vary with switching between being closed and open. Use ambient music to get the group focused and in a meditative state.
Important	Ask the participants after the meditation - how it felt - how was it being open - how was it being closed Remember to bring in the metaphoric aspect of the Fønix method; how the exercises mirror our behaviour in society. This will emphasize the exercise's relevance.
Do's and don'ts	
Resources / Materials	Chairs Ambient music

16. Reflection level 2

16.1

Title of exercise	Judgement day
Category	Reflection
Level	2a
Aim	Make participants judge the others based on appearance, to reflect upon how we consciously or unconsciously judge each other without knowing the facts.
General description	A group exercise
Time management	20-30 minutes
Instructions	In this exercise, the participants will place themselves on a scale from least to most, in gradually more provocative categories. Instruct the participants to make a line from left to right across the floor of the room, where left is low and right is high, by height. The participants cannot verbally communicate during the exercise. After they have all placed themselves, ask them if they are satisfied with the outcome. If some participants are not, they can change positions. After height, repeat the exercise with age, and then physical strength. Ask the participants if they are satisfied with the outcome. If some participants are not, they can change positions. When they are satisfied, ask them - How does it feel? - Why is this uncomfortable? - Why is this exercise relevant? Other categories are happiness, follower/leader and Geography (east to west, north to south).

	If the group has a solid ground work of safety and trust , repeat the exercise with self confidence, and then their amount of friends. Repeat sharing rounds and questions. If you consider the group to be strong and able to handle real challenges, repeat the exercise with income and intelligence. The exercise can be divided over several course days, advancing as the group gets more and more used to being challenged.
Important	The exercise is designed to challenge the group, and some participants may find it provocative and pointless. Lead with confidence, and use the exercise as a starting point for a conversation about judging each other and prejudice.
Do's and don'ts	The exercise is designed to challenge the group, and some participants may find it provocative and pointless. Lead with confidence, and use the exercise as a starting point for a conversation about judging each other and prejudice.
Resources / Materials	The exercise is designed to challenge the group, and some participants may find it provocative and pointless. Lead with confidence, and use the exercise as a starting point for a conversation about judging each other and prejudice.



Title of exercise	Identity Switch
Category	Reflection
Level	2b
Aim	Exploring other perspectives by changing identity markers
General description	This exercise is in three parts, and is a continuation of the Identity Marker exercise.
Time management	45-60 minutes
Instructions	Part One Randomly hand out the collected, filled out forms with participants' identity markers from the previous exercise. If someone gets their own identity, have them switch. Tell the participants to spread out, and find their own place in the room. All participants should be standing up in this exercise. Tell them to, all together at once in their own space - State their name, and add the first identity marker, in this format: "My name is Martin, and I am a woman". Repeat until all 5 identity markers have been read out loud, each time starting with their own name. Alternative: Go into a Flow with statements, and have the participants state their name and identity during the flow. Create a circle and share experiences, including the following questions: - Was the identity far from your own? Was it similar, but with another order? - Did anything feel uncomfortable? Why?

Part Two

Divide the participants into pairs, and have them sit opposite each other on chairs. Define participant A and B in each pair.

A state their name and the identity markers in the same format as in part one. B repeats the sentence from their perspective. Example:

A: My name is Martin, and I am a woman.

B: Your name is Martin, and you are a woman.

If the pair share the same native language, they should do the exercise in their own language.

Repeat until all identity markers have been read. Then participant B ask the question:

- What, in your opinion, is the most important issue in society today?

A should try to answer from their new identity/perspective.

Switch from A to B and repeat.

Create a circle and share experiences, including the following questions:

- How was this experience?
- Did anything feel uncomfortable? Why?
- Are there identity markers that feel impossible to understand/where it is challenging to understand what the important issue might be? Why is that?

Part Three

In a circle, ask a participant to state their name and new identity to the others.

Both instructor and other participants may now ask questions, and the participant answers from their new perspective. The following questions or similar is good to ask:

- What are you struggling with in your day-to-day life?
- What are you most proud about?
- What are your dreams or ambitions?
- What are you most scared of happening in the world over the next 10 years?

Not all participants should be asked all the same questions. Improvise and change it up.

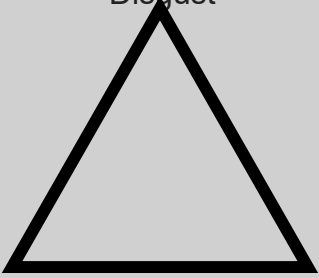
Have all the participants fold their identity sheet and respectfully place it in their pocket or in a safe place in the room. Come back to the circle and share experiences. The participants can also ask each other questions if they want.

Important	Some participants may feel resistance to state certain identity markers as their own, due to religious beliefs or social constructions. It is ok to respectfully challenge the participants out of their comfort zone, and remind them that this is a game, and a construction in a make-belief society. If the participant still feels resistance, try to solve it in a way where they state their new identity markers from a third person perspective, and ask the questions as if you are discussing a character.
Do's and don'ts	The leader never judges, but ask questions like - Why is this uncomfortable to you? - How can you find the balance of respecting both the person whose identity you hold in your hands and your personal beliefs? Bear in mind that these identities exist in the group, and that they all need to be treated with respect.
Resources / Materials	Identity marker sheets Chairs



17. Reflection level 3

17.1

Title of exercise	Violence
Category	Reflection
Level	3a
Aim	To reflect how polarization can lead to hate and potentially violence To understand how hate and violence develop. To recognize them in action
General description	This tool consists of two mini-presentations, on Hate and Violence respectively, followed by a practical reflection exercise that aims to show the theory of Violence through practical acts and their evaluation by different people in society.
Time management	90-120 minutes
Instructions	Part one Presentation of Sternberg's Theory of Hate. The presentation should be interactive, more in the style of discussion, not a lecture. Theory of Hate Hate is “to have strong dislike or ill will for; loathe; despise” or “to dislike or wish to avoid; shrink from Triangular Theory of the Structure of Hate (Negation of intimacy) Disgust  Passion (Anger/Fear) Commitment (Devaluation) Sternberg applies many of the same ideas to hate. The three components that make up hate are: (1) First a steady avoidance of interacting with people we don't like which leads to having few facts and little understanding of each other. Without meaningful interaction with our enemies there is little way to discredit the propaganda and rumours we hear about them being inferior, arrogant, immoral, cruel, subhuman, or evil people, almost like dirty or vicious animals.

(2) A second part of hate is a strong emotional reaction of passionate anger, contempt, and disgust or dislike for the enemy. These negative feelings are quick conditioned responses which our brain doesn't check for accuracy. (3) The third part of hate consists of a belief system that adds fuel to the hot emotions and justifies our hate and our firm commitment to avoiding, denouncing, and degrading or destroying the hated group.

We recommend to end with reflection in smaller groups:
Come up with examples, Share examples.

Part two

Presentation of Galtung's Theory of Violence. The presentation should be interactive, more in the style of discussion, not a lecture.

The Violence Triangle

Quoted from Ahmed Afzaal

<https://ahmedafzaal.com/2012/02/20/the-violence-triangle/>

Johan Galtung has shown that there are several different ways of classifying the phenomenon of violence. Here I will summarize the three main types of violence: (1) personal or direct, (2) structural or indirect, and (3) cultural or symbolic.

In his paper "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," Galtung made his highly significant — and now widely accepted — distinction between the two fundamental types of violence:

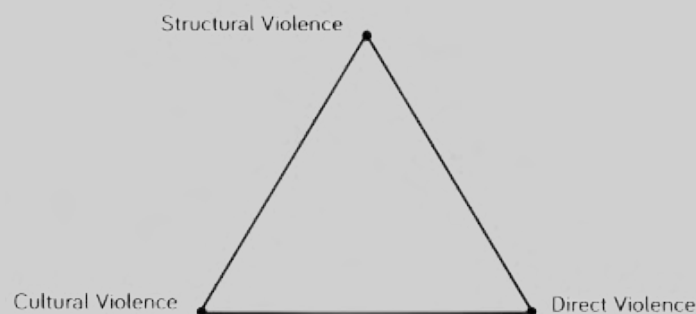
We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as personal or direct, and to violence where there is no such actor as structural or indirect. In both cases individuals may be killed or mutilated, hit or hurt in both senses of these words [i.e., physical and psychological], and manipulated by means of stick or carrot strategies. But whereas in the first case these consequences can be traced back to concrete persons as actors, in the second case this is no longer meaningful. There by not be any person who directly harms another in the structure. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances. (1969: 170-171)

In the follow-up paper, Galtung introduced his third category, cultural violence: By 'cultural violence' we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence . . . that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (1990: 291)

For Galtung, simplistic stereotypes that identify entire cultures as violent are not very helpful; it's much more preferable to say, instead, that a particular aspect of a particular culture is an example of cultural violence. Explaining further, Galtung notes:
Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right — at least not wrong. . . .

One way cultural violence works is by changing the moral color of an act from red/wrong to green/right or at least to yellow/acceptable; an example being 'murder on behalf of the country as right, on behalf of oneself wrong'. Another way is by making reality opaque, so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or at least not as violent. (1990: 291-292)

Galtung suggests that the three types of violence can be represented by the three corners of a violence triangle. The image is meant to emphasize that the three types are causally connected to each other.



Among the three types of violence represented in the above diagram, the most obvious type is direct or personal. Everything from threats and psychological abuse to rape, murder, war, and genocide belong to this category. It is called personal violence because the perpetrators are human beings, i.e., persons.

Among the three types of violence represented in the above diagram, the most obvious type is direct or personal. Everything from threats and psychological abuse to rape, murder, war, and genocide belong to this category. It is called personal violence because the perpetrators are human beings, i.e., persons.

The second type, structural violence, is much less obvious, though it can be as deadly, or deadlier, than direct violence. Typically, no particular person or persons can be held directly responsible as the cause behind structural violence. Here, violence is an integral part of the very structure of human organizations — social, political, and economic.

Structural violence is usually invisible — not because it is rare or concealed, but because it is so ordinary and unremarkable that it tends not to stand out. Such violence fails to catch our attention to the extent that we accept its presence as a “normal” and even “natural” part of how we see the world.

Galtung explains the distinction as follows:

Violence with a clear subject-object relation is manifest because it is visible as action. . . . Violence without this relation is structural, built into structure. Thus, when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence. Correspondingly, in a society where life expectancy is twice as high in the upper as in the lower classes, violence is exercised even if there are no concrete actors one can point to directly attacking others, as when one person kills another. (1969: 171)

Even though structural violence has real victims, it has no real perpetrators. And because there are no real perpetrators, the question of intention does not arise. To identify structural violence, it is imperative to focus on consequences rather than intentions. Galtung points out that Western legal and ethical systems have been preoccupied with intentional harm because of their concern with punishing (or holding accountable) the guilty party. This concern is appropriate for direct violence, but quite irrelevant for structural violence. In fact, too much concern with catching the perpetrators keeps our attention focused on one kind of violence, allowing the other, more pervasive kind to go unnoticed. According to Galtung:

This connection is important because it brings into focus a bias present in so much thinking about violence, peace, and related concepts: ethical systems directed against intended violence will easily fail to capture structural violence in their nets — and may hence be catching the small fry and letting the big fish loose. (1969: 172)

Finally, there is the issue of cultural violence.

Violence, whether direct or structural, is a human phenomenon. As such, it poses for human beings not only a physical or existential problem but also a problem of meaning. Both types of violence, therefore, need to be justified or legitimated in one form or another. This occurs in the arena of culture, in the realm of beliefs, attitudes, and symbols. It would be erroneous to say that culture is the root cause of violence, since the causal influence runs bilaterally among the three corners of the violence triangle. Yet, neither direct nor structural violence can go on for long without at least some support from the culture. In any given culture, the justification or legitimation of violence can come from a variety of directions — most significantly from religion, ideology, and cosmology, but also from the arts and sciences.

Part three

Violent Acts exercise

1. Individually:

A list of different violent acts are given to individuals, the task is to range the list where:

1 = most violent act

19 = least violent act

The list is found in resources.

2. In smaller groups, the participants discuss and try to agree on a new, common list. Ideally, the groups should not be more than 4 people

3. Plenary Discussion:

The instructor can choose to invite the whole group to work on a common list (works better with a group of 10-12 people) or to proceed to discussion, focusing on reflecting on the process of choosing individually vs “comparing notes” and trying to agree with others.

Important	Presentation parts can be as “academic” or “informal” as deemed appropriate for the specific group. Please think in advance about the language and complexity level that will work for your learners. The exercise part relies heavily on giving the participants time and space to reflect on their individual lists before jumping into group discussions. It is highly recommended that at the final stage of reflection the topics of Hate and Violence are brought back to the overarching theme of Polarization, so participants have time to explore how polarized societies lead to spread of hate and violence.
Do’s and don’ts	Do encourage a space for exploration and honest discussions Do not “overacademize” the material, the point of both presentations is to serve as a starting point for discussion, not to become a “theory” to be learned by heart.
Resources / Materials	Two triangle models drawn on the board, projected on screen, or printed in advance (works better if made big and visible). List of Violent acts. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DUmHGEP3lUoS_fMg_3TZGKgQOkJNwOCcrErd5t8uK0k/edit?usp=sharing



Title of exercise	Last Person Standing with Identity markers
Category	Reflection
Level	3b
Aim	To better understand needs from other perspectives.
General description	This exercise is a continuation of Last Person Standing-exercises, this time with the purpose of exploring further the identity markers from Reflection level 1.
Time management	30 minutes
Instructions	Do a Collapsing Circle/Last person standing exercise, but this time the last person needs to address the group and state their name and their 5 identity markers, and then follow up with why they need to be part of the group. “My name is....., I am....., I am....., I am....., I am....., I am..... and I need to be part of your group because.....” Vary with “...and I need from you...” End the exercise with each participant from the majority group going up to the last person standing, looking them in the eyes and saying “I respect you”. Do a sharing round, and ask participants - How did it feel to be the last person standing, and present yourself as someone else? - What identity markers stood out? - When did you feel the last person standing was honest and sincere? - How was it being asked? Why did you say yes or no? - How was it having the majority participants saying “I respect you”?

Important	Be aware that the exercise mirrors bullying and exclusion mechanisms. The last person standing is in a vulnerable position, and it is important to end on a positive note. If you as an instructor disagree with the group's answer, you can challenge them by asking “Do you really want to have this person in your group? Why did you say yes?” If participants admit they are saying yes to the last person standing because they don’t want to be mean, tell them that giving the last person resistance or honest feedback is not mean, but providing a learning opportunity. Be aware of participants who belong to marginalized groups or have a minority background. If the group has a participant who in example is trans gender, they should be protected from having their life and rights discussed, especially without participating in the discussion.
Do’s and don’ts	Be aware of people “cheating” the exercise to avoid getting in the middle. If you as an instructor disagree with the group's answer, you can challenge them by asking “Do you really want to have this person in your group? Why did you say yes?” If participants admit they are saying yes to the last person standing because they don’t want to be mean, tell them that giving the last person resistance or honest feedback is not mean, but providing a learning opportunity
Resources / Materials	Identity marker sheets or Identity marker cards from Reflection 1



Title of exercise	We're having a ball
Category	Reflection
Level	3c
Aim	Debating polarized issues from a non-personal perspective .
General description	This exercise is a tool for debating polarized issues in groups, without taking a personal stance. By physically filling out the gap between polarized opinions, the participants will broaden their personal perspectives, making it easier to look at the issue from other sides.
Time management	90-120 minutes
Instructions	Part One Divide the participants into groups of four to six. Each group then gets two circle shaped sheets. Give each group the task of - Agreeing on a subject or issue in the world, in a country or in a specific part of society they feel is highly polarized. - On each circle shaped sheet, write the polarized statement on this single issue. Example: Circle 1: Human life is inviolable, and it is not up to lawmakers or executors to sentence the death penalty, no matter the crime. Circle 2: Death penalty is a justified tool to both protect innocent citizens in society, and to prevent violating human life. When groups are done, share with each other.

	Part Two Each group gets handed a big, inflatable ball, glue or tape and small notes. Tell the group to stick the circle shaped sheets on each side of the ball, creating opposite poles. Each group must now create as many views and nuances to their polarized issues, and write these arguments on notes, and then stick them to the ball - in the place the group finds them to belong. Example: - The death penalty can be justified in the case of sentencing a terrorist who's responsible for the death of many civilians, including children. Guide the groups during the exercise. When each group has 10-15 arguments in addition to the poles, have them present their polarized issues and arguments to the other groups. Part Three For this part of the exercise, leaders will use Identity Cards, with specific and circumstantial markers. Give each group a couple of identity cards, and have them discuss what the opinions of this identity could be, and where to place them on the ball. The cards should provide challenges for the group, in example "Conservative Christian" and "Terrorist attack survivor". Repeat with new identity cards. Share experiences with each other, and discuss challenges.
Important	It is important to schedule enough time for the group to discuss. Be aware of participants who belong to marginalized groups or have a minority background. If the group has a participant who in example is trans gender, they should be protected from having their life and rights discussed, especially without participating in the discussion.
Do's and don'ts	Shy away from result oriented thinking. Give the participants the opportunity to learn and to discuss on their own premises. You don't have to be the cleverest person in the room. Be open to a learning experience for yourself.
Resources / Materials	Circle shaped sheets Markers One inflatable ball for each group Identity marker cards (found in resources)

18. GENDER AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

VIDEO TUTORIAL – 5 GENDER AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Gender and cultural sensitivity are not optional extras in youth work: they are essential dimensions of building inclusive, democratic, and peaceful societies. In today's Europe, polarization frequently emerges around questions of gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, migration, religion, cultural heritage, and traditions, among others. Even though there are enough studies and arguments that support the relevance of addressing these topics, some people still deny this fact. Youngsters are directly exposed to these debates, both in their everyday environments and through online spaces where hate speech and stereotyping are common.

The Fønix project emphasizes that polarization cannot be addressed effectively without paying attention to how gender and culture shape identity, communication and social belonging. This chapter offers youth workers practical tools and theoretical insights to integrate gender and cultural sensitivity into their daily practice. Using artistic and experiential methods, the aim is not only to understand difference, but to live through it, creating empathy and reducing prejudice.

18.1 Understanding the concepts

Gender sensitivity

Gender is not limited to the biological categories of male and female. It refers to the socially constructed roles, norms, and expectations that define what is considered “appropriate” for men, women, and people of diverse identities. Gender sensitivity means recognizing that these roles vary across time, culture, and personal experience and that rigid gender expectations can lead to discrimination and inequality.

Cultural sensitivity

Culture shapes how we communicate, relate to others, express emotions, and understand values such as respect, freedom, or authority. Cultural sensitivity requires more than “tolerance”; it means actively respecting different cultural practices and perspectives while avoiding stereotypes.

Intersectionality

People's identities are never shaped by only one factor. Gender and culture interact with age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and many other elements. Intersectionality reminds us that discrimination or privilege are experienced in complex, overlapping ways.

Safe and brave spaces

While youth work often emphasizes “safe spaces” it is equally important to create “brave spaces”: environments where participants feel supported enough to engage in challenging conversations. The instructor's task is to balance security and openness, so that disagreement does not lead to exclusion, but to dialogue.

18.2 Why gender and culture are central to anti-polarization

Polarization happens when we have “us versus them” narratives. These often emerge in debates such as:

- Should men and women have the same rights and responsibilities in family or public life?
- How should societies approach LGBTQIA+ identities?
- Should migrants adapt to “our culture” or preserve their own?
- Are traditions to be defended, or can they change over time?

When these questions are left unaddressed, young people may internalize rigid positions, reproducing stereotypes and fuelling hostility. By contrast, when youth workers integrate gender and cultural sensitivity:

- Participants develop critical thinking about the origins of stereotypes.
- They gain empathy for people whose experiences differ from theirs.
- They learn dialogue skills to handle disagreement respectfully.
- They experience belonging in a diverse group, which reduces susceptibility to radical narratives.

18.3 Principles for practice

1. Empathy as foundation

Encourage listening before speaking. Empathy is not about agreement, but about making space to understand.

2. Avoid assumptions

Do not assume participants share the same norms around gender or culture. Ask questions, stay curious.

3. Inclusive language

Words matter. Use gender-neutral expressions (“partner” instead of “boyfriend/girlfriend”; “they” instead of “he” when gender is unknown/assumed), respect pronouns, and avoid cultural generalizations.

4. Representation matters

Examples, case studies, and role models should reflect diversity. Show that women, men, and non-binary people can take on leadership roles; that cultural diversity is a strength, not a threat.

5. Acknowledge power and privilege

Instructors are not neutral. Be aware of your own gender and cultural position, and how it influences the group. Openness about this builds trust.

18.4 Practical guidance for instructors

Do's

- Begin with ground rules that emphasize respect and confidentiality.
- Invite personal stories, but never force disclosure.
- Use theatre, storytelling, and body-based exercises to explore sensitive issues indirectly.
- Encourage reflection: How did gender or culture influence what you just experienced?
- Normalize multiple perspectives: disagreement is not failure, but an opportunity for learning.

Don'ts

- Don't allow discriminatory jokes or slurs to pass without comment.
- Don't present sensitivity as "political correctness"; frame it as respect and empathy.
- Don't reduce gender or cultural sensitivity to "case studies of others." Every person in the group has a gender and a culture: it is about all of us.

Don't treat conflict as

18.5 Linking with the Fønix methods

The Fønix approach of Awareness – Communication – Reflection can be enriched with gender and cultural sensitivity at each stage.

• Awareness:

o Exercises such as Flow with soft and hard focus or Flow with meetings can help participants become aware of their bodies, personal space, and group dynamics. Instructors can invite reflections on how gender or cultural norms affect personal comfort in physical proximity or eye contact.

• Communication:

o Activities like the Chair game or Coin battle can be adapted to highlight inclusion/exclusion. Ask: Who tends to dominate? Who takes supportive roles? How do cultural norms shape this behaviour?

o Encourage participants to notice differences in communication styles (direct vs. indirect, emotional vs. restrained) and to reflect on how culture and gender influence these patterns.

• Reflection:

o Use the Polarization barometer to explore contested statements related to gender and culture (e.g., "Men and women should have different roles in society," "Migrants should give up their traditions when they move to another country").

o Facilitate dialogue, stressing that the aim is not to agree, but to understand the reasoning behind different positions.



18.6 Common challenges

Instructors may encounter several difficulties when addressing gender and cultural sensitivity:

- **Resistance:** Some participants may feel the topic threatens their beliefs.
 - Normalize discomfort but hold firm to principles of equality and respect.
- **Silence:** In mixed groups, participants may hesitate to speak about taboo subjects.
 - Use artistic expression (role play, drawing, theatre) to allow indirect exploration.
- **Conflict:** Strong disagreements may emerge.
 - Frame conflict as a learning opportunity. Model active listening, paraphrasing, and respectful disagreement.
- **Personal disclosures:** Participants may share experiences of discrimination or violence.
 - Validate their experience, thank them for their trust, and ensure they know where to find professional support if needed.

18.7 Tips for instructors

- Co-facilitate when possible, so different perspectives are represented.
- Set clear rules at the start (respect, no interruptions, confidentiality).
- Check-in and check-out at the beginning and end of sessions to monitor emotional wellbeing.
- Use humour carefully and never at the expense of gender or cultural identity.
- Be humble: show that instructors, too, are learning. This reduces defensiveness.

18.8 Expected outcomes

When gender and cultural sensitivity are integrated into Fønix sessions, youth workers can expect:

- Greater self-awareness among participants about their own identities.
- Increased empathy for others and reduced stereotyping.
- Enhanced skills for dialogue across differences.
- Stronger resilience against polarizing narratives.
- A group culture of respect, trust, and inclusivity.

These outcomes contribute directly to the wider goals of the Fønix project: preventing polarization, strengthening civic engagement, and building inclusive European youth communities.



Intro to Polarization



What is Polarization?

Go to menti.com and type **5227 5830**

A word cloud of terms related to polarization, including: hatred, from the center into ideo, close minded, opposition, political attitudes, judgement, deviation, anger, alienated, distance, opposite, extremes, politics, disadvantages, radicalism, freedom off speech, compromise, terrorism, discrimination, manip, segregation, division, social media, manipulation, confrontation, opposites, differences, divided, extreme, inequality, culture, wave, conflict, racism, judgmental, dead end, rasism, and rasism.

What is Polarization?

Polarization 26 languages

Article [Talk](#) [Read](#) [View source](#) [View history](#) [Tools](#)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from Polarization (disambiguation))

Polarization or **polarisation** may refer to:

Mathematics

- Polarization of an Abelian variety, in the mathematics of complex manifolds
- Polarization of an algebraic form, a technique for expressing a homogeneous polynomial in a simpler fashion by adjoining more variables
- Polarization identity, expresses an inner product in terms of its associated norm
- Polarization (Lie algebra)

Physical sciences

- Polarization (physics), the ability of waves to oscillate in more than one direction, in particular polarization of light, responsible for example for the glare-reducing effect of polarized sunglasses
- Polarization (antenna), the state of polarization (in the above sense) of electromagnetic waves transmitted by or received by a radio antenna
- Dielectric polarization, charge separation in insulating materials:
 - Polarization density, volume dielectric polarization
 - Dipolar polarization, orientation of permanent dipoles
 - Ionic polarization, displacement of ions in a crystal
 - Maxwell–Wagner–Sillars polarization, slow long-distance charge separation in dielectric spectroscopy on inhomogeneous soft matter
- Polarization (electrochemistry), a change in the equilibrium potential of an electrochemical reaction
- Concentration polarization, the shift of the electrochemical potential difference across an electrochemical cell from its equilibrium value
- Spin polarization, the degree by which the spin of elementary particles is aligned to a given direction
- Polarizability, an electrical property of atoms or molecules and a separate magnetic property of subatomic particles
 - Polarization function, a feature of some molecular modelling methods
- Photon polarization, the mathematical link between wave polarization and spin polarization
- Vacuum polarization, a process in which a background electromagnetic field produces virtual electron-positron pairs

What is SOCIAL Polarization?

Social sciences

- **Polarization (economics)**, faster decrease of moderate-skill jobs relative to low-skill and high-skill jobs
- **Political polarization**, when public opinion divides and becomes oppositional
- **Social polarization**, segregation of society into social groups, from high-income to low-income
- **Group polarization**, tendency of a group to make more extreme decisions than individuals' initial inclinations
 - **Attitude polarization**, when disagreement becomes more extreme as different parties consider evidence
- **Racial polarization**, when a population with varying ancestry is divided into distinct racial groups

IN SHORT

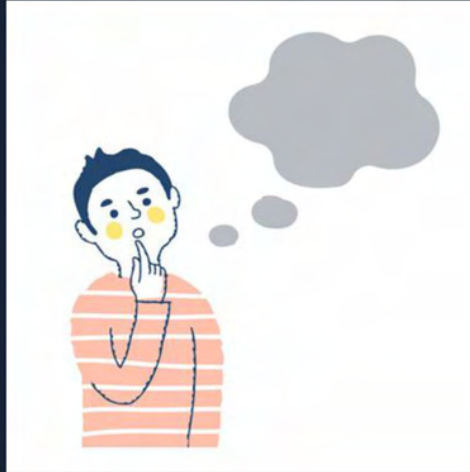


Moving away from the
“center”(common ground) towards
“extremes”:

- Economically
- Politically
- Socially
- Religiously
- Culturally etc.

WHY IS POLARIZATION BAD?

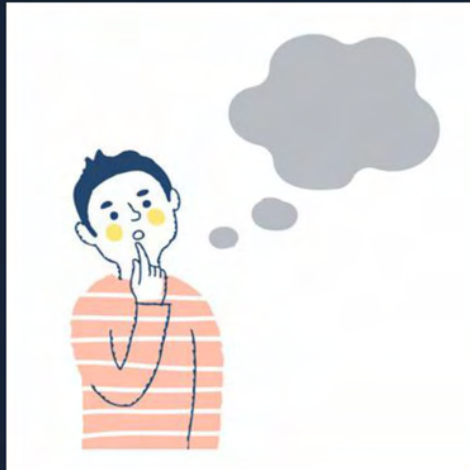
Discuss in pairs



WHY IS POLARIZATION BAD?

Attitude polarization, also known as **belief polarization** and **polarization effect**, is a phenomenon in which a **disagreement becomes more extreme** as the different parties consider evidence on the issue.

It is one of the effects of **confirmation bias**: the tendency of people to search for and interpret evidence selectively, to reinforce their current beliefs or attitudes



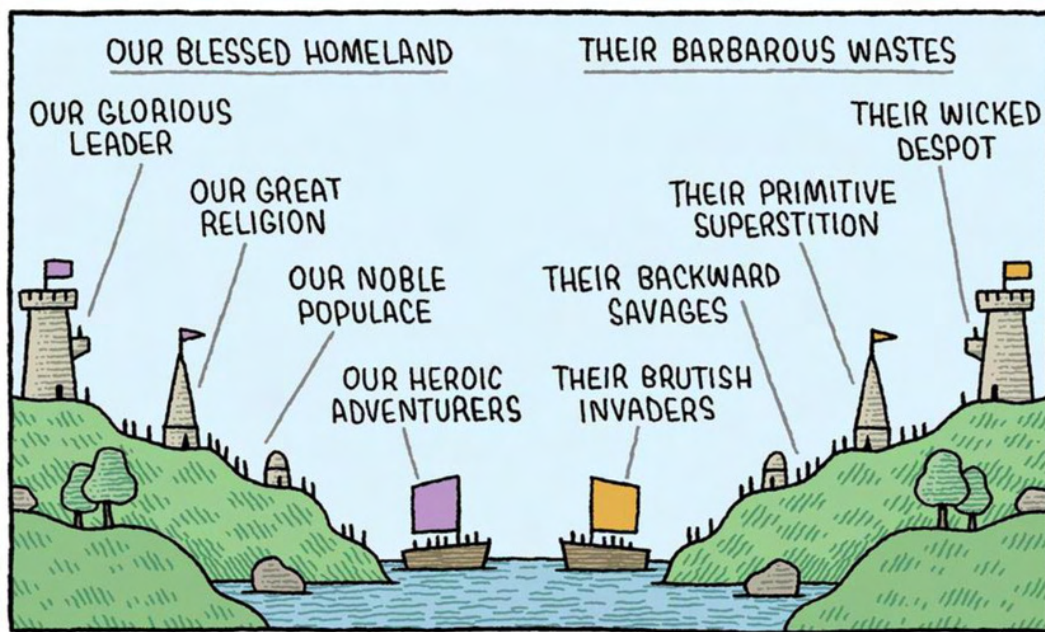
BASIC TERMINOLOGY

GROUPTHINK

SOCIAL
EXCLUSION

CONFIRMATION
BIAS

RADICALIZATION



US vs THEM mentality

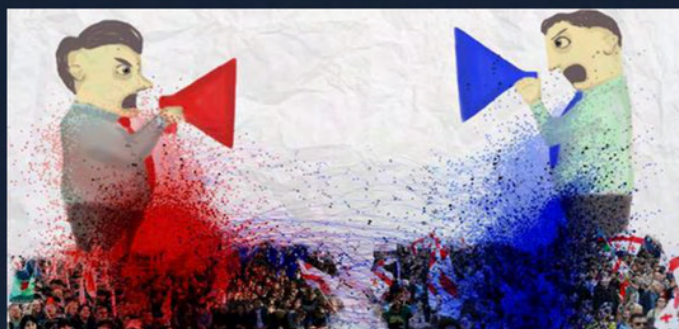
Do you know an example?

Discuss in buzz groups



POLARIZATION IN SOCIETY HAS RISEN WITHIN THE LAST 20+ YEARS

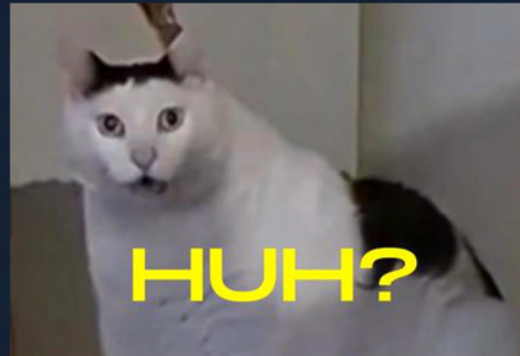
Why?



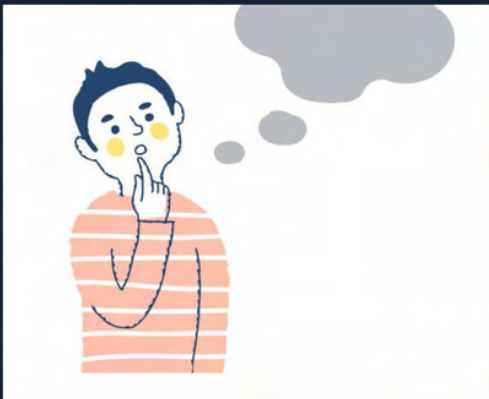
CORRECT! It's Internet.

It appears the age of **Internet*** has brought us not only cat memes but also increased group polarization

*online social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, has enabled people to seek out and share ideas with others who have **similar interests and common values**, making group polarization effects increasingly evident, particularly in **generation Y and generation Z individuals**



Clearly, Polarization affects young people



Why are especially young people affected by Polarization?

Discuss in couples

That might seem overwhelming

But what to do about it?



OUR ANSWERS

- **Social Inclusion** of various groups starts with understanding
- **Dialogue** (not Debate!)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (**DEI**) principles in Youth Work
- Youth **Participation** and Youth **Leadership**
- **Innovative** methodologies (ART!)



This Seminar is built around DIALOGUE



What is Dialogue?

Discuss in buzz groups

This Seminar is built around DIALOGUE

For us, **Dialogue** is when you come to **listen and understand** not to win the argument or convince others.

The main aim is **mutual understanding**.

If we aim to UNDERSTAND, does it mean we can say whatever we want and other people should respect it?

Discuss in pairs



The paradox of TOLERANCE

We **SHOULD NOT** tolerate
intolerance





Identity markers

IDENTITY MARKERS:

A person's identity is how the person defines who they are. While there are many identities that can describe a person, there are some that are more salient than others. Some are biological and others are socially constructed.

Markers that make you identify with a group, have lasted a longer period of time.

1. Race
2. Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Class
5. Language
6. Religion
7. Physical abilities/ disabilities
8. Sexual orientation
9. Birthyear
10. Colour of skin
11. Political persuasion
12. Family relationship status (father, sister, child)





goals and strategies

Needs

Humans all have needs in life. We can have several needs, but often one or two are more defining. In countries where the resources are poorer, we tend to have more existential needs, whereas first world countries tend to have more idealistic needs.

examples:

**Love, Safety, Power, Acceptance,
Respect, Independence, Community**



Goal/Objective

A goal is something that we want to achieve - something that will bring us closer to our needs.

Choose a goal/objective that you can achieve only by getting around an obstacle. In this case the obstacle has to be a living person.

examples:

Get something materialistic, go on a date, get a job, borrow money..



Strategies

Actions used to change the way you talk, act, move, in order to achieve your goal.

Encourage
Support
share
comfort
sympathize

Criticize
Confront
Blame
Challenge
Disagree

Question
Clarify
Explain
Advise
Suggest

Convince
Persuade
Negotiate
Seduce
Impress

Apologize
Confess
Admire
Forgive
Beg

Command
Warn
Threaten
Dominate
Intimidate

Joke
Tease
Entertain
Charm
Engage

Complain
Dismiss
Belittle
Shame
Guilt



Hate and Violence handout:

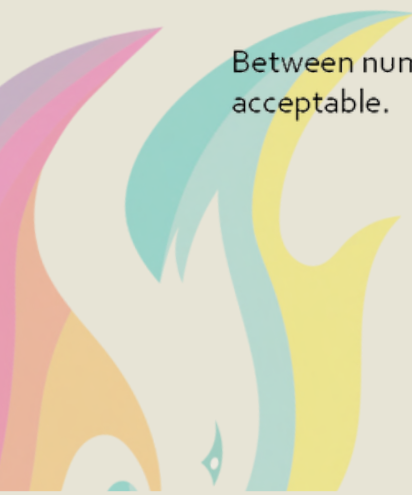
In groups of 4.

Discuss each of the statements below and mark them with a number from 1-19 according to how **violent** they are.

1 is MOST violent, 19 is LEAST violent

- __ a) Make a derogatory joke about homosexuals
- __ b) Throw a stone at a police vehicle during a demonstration
- __ c) Refuse to shake hands with someone
- __ d) Shout abuse at the police at a demonstration
- __ e) Posting a critical/negative comment in response to a critical/negative comment about a women's rights on a social media wall post
- __ f) Posting a shocking image of a violent arrest on social media, claiming this is a daily practice that many people you know experience every day
- __ g) Posting a shocking image of a violent arrest on social media for shock value
- __ h) To prevent people from marrying each other based on religious or cultural reasons
- __ i) Wearing a symbol that is offensive to other people
- __ j) Punch another person
- __ k) Unfriend a person from Facebook/other social network
- __ l) Making a sexist joke/comment
- __ m) Being part of a gang that is beating someone
- __ n) Make a girl of under 16 years marry
- __ o) Deny someone their right to be who they want to be
- __ p) Stalking someone
- __ q) Committing an act of murder
- __ r) Emotionally abusing another.
- __ s) Falsely accusing someone of rape

Between numbers ____ and ____ is where I draw the line for what I consider to be acceptable.



CUT OUT 	Wheelchair user	Conservative christian	Non-binary	Liberal muslim
Single mother	Liberal Christian	Single father	Atheist	Son of two lesbians mums
Gay man	Lesbian woman	Daughter of two gay dads	Transgendered	Brother of a trans woman
Rich	Orphan	Poor	Working class	Upper class
European	Middle class	Asian	Under class	African
Communist	South - American	Social liberalist	Born 1990	Right wing extremist
Born 1970	Republican	Born 2005	Democrat	Born 1950
Nationalist	Blind	African American	Mute	Conservative muslim



FØNIX: IDENTITY MARKERS

Write in the format "I am", i. e. "I am European",
"I am a mother"

1: I am _____

2: I am _____

3: I am _____

4: I am _____

5: I am _____





Erasmus+

