

Activity 4.4 Inequalities and Violation of Rights

Learning Goal: Participants explore Environmental Justice

Format: World cafe, mind mapping

Materials: Large papers, markers

Estimated time: 1 hour 30 mins

Level: 2

Description: Facilitator divides participants in 4 tables.

Each of the table has the following themes written on a large paper on each table:

- Human rights and the right to food, energy, water and house
- Human rights and the right to environmental protection
- Environment and gender equality (Feminist Movement)
- Animal rights

Participants discuss in each table, answering the following questions regarding the theme they are given:

- Q1. What does it mean
- Q2. How is it expressed
- Q3. Identify sectors of our life and the ecosystem affected by it, and How?

Every time the facilitator gives the signal, all participants, apart from 1 who gets the role of reporter and table representative, move to the next table answering each time the next question indicated by the facilitator. The facilitator gives 5 minutes extra to discuss after every switch starting with 10 minutes for Q1.

It is expected that participants will move three times. Each time, participants make readable notes about their ideas and the reporter stays to provide explanations to the next group coming to the table (World Café).

Then the initial groups of each table come together and discuss about the results. Their goal is to create a mind map of each issue, trying to connect and make sense of the ideas expressed during the activity.

Finally, each group presents their mind mapping to the plenary, followed by clarifications and debriefing questions.

Suggestion to the facilitator

The facilitator may provide additional informative materials to each table based on the resources available, eg. relevant videos, articles, pictures etc.

For the mind mapping, participants may use additional materials for creative purposes (eg. pictures, scrap paper, thread, etc.)

Externalities

For mainstream economists, it is convenient to analyze everything as benefits and costs. That is why they use the “externalities” theory to either correct for malevolent results of human actions or promote beneficial human activities.

Externalities - either negative or positive - are consequences of an economic activity experienced by unrelated third parties (eg. the noise pollution produced by the noisy neighbor or the selfless acts of kindness from your neighbor).

Because property rights are not perfectly set and defined, and externalities are not easily expressed in money, the economists have found ways to express these positive or negative consequences in monetary values. Can you imagine your neighbor having to pay an additional fee to the electricity company every time his or her radio was too loud for your ears? What if the same neighbor could get extra money for being nice to you bringing you cookies and gifts every weekend! Similar methods are used to include the environmental parameter in policy making by including the costs of the environmental problems and the benefits derived by the ecosystem services.

Many people from the scientific community have conflicted thoughts about how this actually works. One of the concerns is that the ethical and social parameters are either not fully considered or even falsely judged due to economic interests and existing hierarchical structures that cannot be overcome with these methods.

Apart from this, it sounds a bit scary to expect for somebody to pay you back with his or her kindness and reimburse you for his or her rudeness. Even scarier it is to try to estimate in monetary terms how valuable is the earth in order to protect her. It looks like having a friend and always expect something in return in order to care for him or her. We would normally have said in this case that we are not dealing with a real friendship.

These methods state that “justice” can be restored by this way. Regardless, conflicts have generated and still exist because of environmental injustice, social inequalities and environmental threats. These conflicts initiated the political discussions towards sustainability already in previous years. However, the motives behind making reconciliations and solving these conflicts are not as straightforward as they may look like.