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Feminist principles of the internet

Conduct activities to introduce and enhance feminists' appreciation of the Feminist Principles of the Internet. Have interactive exercises that will open up the space for feminists to look at the internet as a political space as well as connect the FPIs to their specific areas of concern. We **highly recommended** that you choose a Learning Path to travel, as these include activities with different levels of depth that should help participants obtain more insight into the covered subjects.

- Introduction, learning objectives, learning activities and further reading
- Introductions of internet love [starter activity]
- Imagining a feminist internet (3 options) [starter activity]
- The internet race [starter activity]
- Women's wall of internet firsts [starter activity]
- How the internet works: The basics [starter activity]
- Social movements: What’s in a tool? What’s in a space? [deepening activity]
- FPI presentation + discussion [deepening activity]

Introduction, learning objectives, learning activities and further reading

This page will guide you through the Module's correct use and understanding. Following the Learning Paths, with activities of varying depth, should allow participants to obtain a better grasp of the studied subjects.

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Introduction

This learning module aims to conduct activities to introduce and enhance feminists appreciation of the Feminist Principles of the Internet. It is designed to have interactive exercises that will open up the space for feminists to look at the internet as a political space as well as connect the FPIs to their specific areas of concern.

Who is the FPIs learning module for?

- on the ground feminist activists who are using mobiles and internet
- women´s fund donors (grantees, safety, explain why the internet is an important space)
- WHRDs running campaigns
- sexual rights activists

The commonality among these different groups is that they are all feminists, and most likely, they have not had the time to look at the internet from the lens of feminism and as a political space.

These groups will benefit from this learning module by understanding the internet – a space and tool that they use for their work – from a feminist perspective in order to make decisions about

their use of the internet with more control and knowledge.

Learning objectives

Participants will:

- understand how to engage with the internet as a political space
- understand why we are imagining a feminist internet
- have a basic understanding of the feminist principles of the internet
- be excited about feminist politics of technology
- explore/engage with the FPIs and link to their areas of activism and contexts

Learning activities

The learning activities for this module are organised as Starter Activities – exercises that begin exploring the issues of the internet as a political space; and Deepening Activities – those that focus on specific aspects of the FPIs.

Depending on time, having a combination of a Starter Activity and Deepening Activities would be ideal to have a more comprehensive session on FPIs.

Starter activities

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- Introductions of internet love
- Imagining a feminist internet (3 options)
- The internet race
- Women's wall of internet firsts
- How the internet works: The basics

Deepening activities

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- Social movements: What’s in a tool? What’s in a space?

- FPI presentation + discussion

Resources | Links | Further reading

- https://feministinternet.org/
- Feminist_principles_of_the_internetv2-0.pdf
- FPIsand5LayersofPower_2020_by_hvale.pdf
- #MFI Africa: The e-zine! (2020)
- GenderIT edition "Making a feminist internet: Movement building in a digital age in Africa" (2020)
- GenderIT edition "Making a feminist internet: Building movements, remembering resistance, hacking security and care" (2017)
- GenderIT edition "Three key issues for a feminist internet: Access, agency and movements" (2016)
- Finding the feminist internet: students respond to the feminist principles of the internet (2020)
- Imagine a Feminist Internet (2019)
- Politics of a feminist internet in Zimbabwe: Resistance and Silence (2017)
- Zimbabwean Reflections on a Feminist Internet (2017)
- A painting of an African feminist internet (2017)
- The Do-It-Yourself Feminist Internet: Cyber feminist actions from Latin America (2016)
- Imagine a feminist internet: Participation and political movements (2015)
- Why do the Feminist Principles of the Internet matter? (2014)
- Imagining a digitally secure, feminist internet (2014)
- Why is the internet a feminist issue? (2012)

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Introductions of internet love [starter activity]

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This activity is aimed towards encouraging the participants to think about how beneficial the internet has been -- personally, professionally, in movement building and networking. This activity is especially useful for the beginning of a workshop and / or for participants who have a lot of negative sentiments for the internet.

Participants introduce each other with their name, organisation, country and one thing they love about the internet - personally, for their activism or in general. They cannot repeat what anyone else has said. This can be done standing in a circle to see each other clearly and encourage short interventions. To make sure no participant takes up too much time, one option is to have each participant light a match and finish before it burns down (have a container for the hot matches on hand.)

Resources needed for this activity

- matches

- something to hold hot stubs

Time required

10-15 minutes depending on the number of participants, approximately 40 seconds each.



Imagining a feminist internet (3 options) [starter activity]

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Option 1

People work individually for 10 minutes to write down their definition/idea of a feminist internet. (Alternatively, to complete one of these sentences “In a feminist internet….” “A feminist internet is…”) It is time for them to explore and dream. It may be necessary to “warm up” the idea by asking for some basic ideas of what a feminist internet would look like. Each participant then reads their definition out loud to the whole group. As they read, the facilitator notes key words from their definitions on a flip chart. Their definition is taped to a wall for others to see, but their is no discussion on individual definitions.

Facilitators briefly summarise keywords that emerge and are recurring, aware of how these connect to concepts in the feminist principles of the internet and clusters. The discussion can deepen with participants defining what they found most important overall or simply provide an entry point to open a presentation or further exercise on the FPI.

Resources needed

Markers, paper, butcher paper, coloured post-it notes or colored paper cut in half sheets, blue tack or masking tape.

Time required

30-40 minutes total: 10 minutes to introduce and carry out individual work. 20-30 minutes to read out and analyse definition results, depending on the number of participants.

Option 2 - Imagine a feminist internet: Group work

The exercise is the same as above but designed for groups of 4. More time is necessary for group debate than report back.

Time required

35 minutes total - 20 minutes for group work, 15 minutes for report back.

Option 3 - Develop your internet dream space

(adapted from FTX: Safety reboot, creating safe online spaces)

Briefly ask participants in plenary: Why are we online? Why is it important to us? Ask participants for examples of things they are doing online that are significant to them, in different facets of their lives.

Ask them to imagine building their dream space on the internet, based on their answers to the two questions above. Invite them into small groups of 3-5 to imagine this space together.

- what is it called?
- why is this space significant?
- who and what is it for?
- what kinds of things do people do in this space?
- what are some of the rules in that place?
- what will the space look like?
- who has responsibility for managing the space?

Have the groups draw out this space as creatively as possible, and get them to prepare a creative presentation for the rest of the group. To add a more playful element, challenge the participants to try to convince the rest how great their space is – like a pitching an idea.

In plenary, as groups share back, the facilitator should write down key elements of all the spaces, aware of the feminist principles of the internet and connections.

These can serve as an input of elements to highlight when presenting the principles in the next exercise and to provide closure of common elements and key insights emerging from the groups.

Resources needed

Butcher paper, crayons or markers of many colors for each group, masking or blue tack

Time required

1 hour: 5 minutes in plenary, 25 minutes in group work, 30 minutes shareback and facilitator sumary.

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The internet race [starter activity]

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The aim of this activity is to illustrate the privilege that different people have when it comes to technology and the internet, and to show that there are sectors of society that are privileged on the internet. This activity could be used to start a discussion on the inequalities of different users based on technical, gender, language, age and race privilege.

Mechanics

Invite the participants to stand in one line, side-by-side. Where that line is will be the starting line, the facilitator moves across the room from that line. Let the participants know that the point of the game is to get to the finish line – where the facilitator is standing – based on the facilitator´s instructions.

The main point here is to show the inequalities among the participants when it comes to technology and the internet, specifically to challenge the very notion that technology and the internet are neutral.

Suggestions for instructions based on themes:

> Note: These are suggestions only. Each context will have a different way of defining what being privileged on the the internet means. If a suggestion doesn't work in your context, think of another one that would. Remember, this also reflects the trainer / facilitators own biases and values around what privilege means.

Technical privilege

- If you understand what HTTPS means, take two steps forward
- If you understand what VPN means, take two steps forward
- If you use a VPN software, take three steps forward
- If you use Open Source software, take two steps forward
- If your Android phone is less than two years old, take three steps forward
- If you have the latest iPhone, take three steps forward
- If you have a laptop, a tablet and a mobile phone, take two steps forward

Language privilege

- If you read, write and speak English as a first language, take two steps forward
- If you read, write and speak English as a second language, take one step forward
- If you did not grow up with English as a language of daily communication, take one step back
- If you are more comfortable communicating with language that is not English, French, German, or Spanish, take two steps back.
- If you are more comfortable communicating in an Asian language, take two steps back
- If you can use the language that you are most comfortable communicating in on your computer, take one step forward

Race and geo-political privilege

- If you are American, take four steps forward
- If you are from North America and Western Europe, take three steps forward
- If you have been to the USA more than two times, take two steps forward

Gender privilege

- If you are a CIS male, take three steps forward
- If you are female, take two steps backward
- If you are queer, take two steps backward
- If you are trans, take two steps backward
- If you are heterosexual, take one step forward

Economic privilege

- Take a step forward for every credit card that you own
- If your gadgets are less than six months old, take four steps forward
- If your laptop is second-hand, take two steps backward
- If you have had your phone for over three years, take three steps backward

Experience-age privilege

- If you have been on the internet for longer than 7 years, take three steps forward
- If you started using the internet before Facebook, take three steps forward
  - Note: People who have been using the internet since they were children or teenagers may be more comfortable with technology than older people.
  - Alternative: If you've been using the Internet since childhood, take two steps forward
  - Alternative: If you've been using the Internet since you were a teenager, take two steps forward.

Based on your context you can create new instructions, or mix and match the one above.

Debriefing on the activity

After the race is over (either someone reaches the finish line, or you´ve exhausted the instructions), ask everyone to stay where they are and process the activity:

- Ask the person in front of the race how they feel about winning the race
- Ask the person at the back of the race how they feel
- Ask the participants what they felt during the race

Once that has been processed, deepen the discussion with the following guide questions:

- What was the race all about?
- Based on the activity, what is it that the internet and technology privileges?
- What type of person is the internet and technology built for?

Write down keywords from the discussion on flip chart paper.

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Women's wall of internet firsts [starter activity]

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This activity is aimed towards acknowledging the various ways that women have interacted with the internet.

Resources needed for this activity

A big wall that you can stick paper to, sticky notes. You can also prepare a linear timeline indicating years and people place their sticky notes on the timeline.

Time required

Depending on number of participants and number of firsts, an hour.

Mechanics

In this interactive session, participants will discuss questions and share milestones in their use of technology, such as:

- The first time you ever used a computer
- When you first visited a web page
- When you first understood a computer-based concept and what is it
- First time someone taught you something about tech that was really cool
- The first time you taught someone technical skills
- The first time you showed someone a website – what was it?
- The first time you attended a tech training
- First time you flirted with someone online
- The first time you tried looking for information about a topic and couldn´t find anything about it on the internet
- The first time you experienced unsolicited sexual advances online
- First time you joined a group that shared an common interest with you on the internet – what was it?
- First time you felt unsafe
- First time you realised what kind of power the internet had – what was it?

Everyone will write down their short answers (date and / or topic) on sticky notes and pin them to the wall as they share. At the end of this activity, there will be a big wall of the first experiences the participants have had on the internet.



How the internet works: The basics [starter activity]

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This starter activity is aimed towards getting the participants to understand the basic concepts and requirements for the internet.

Resources needed for this activity

Sheets of paper with the concepts

Time required

1.5 hours, minimum

Mechanics

Embodying the internet

Depending on the scenario that you want the participants to grasp, there will be some basic concepts required to be either illicited from the group or handed out on separate sheets of paper.

For the scenario, "How do you connect to <insert popular website>?", these are the basic concepts:

- Devices that connect to the internet: computer, laptop, mobile phone
- Router (can also be wifi connection)
- ISPs and / or Telco
- National gateway
- Destination webserver: Google, Facebook
- Servers

For the scenario, "How does Person A send an email to Person B?", the basic concepts are:

- Person A´s device (laptop, computer, mobile phone)
- Person A´s router
- Person A´s ISP / Telco
- Person A´s national gateway
- Person A´s mail server
- Servers
- Person B´s device
- Person B´s router
- Person B´s ISP / Telco
- Person B´s national gateway
- Person B´s mail server

For the scenario, "How do you send someone a chat message?", the basic concepts are:

- Person A´s mobile phone
- Person B´s mobile phone
- Person A´s ISP / Telco
- Person B´s ISP / Telco
- Person A´s national gateway

- Person B´s national gateway
- Person A and B´s chat service (Signal, Telegram, Vibr, WhatsApp)
- Chat service server
- Servers

Assign the different concepts to individual participants by making them stand in the centre of the room. Then ask them to do show the scenario.

Alternatively, you can group the participants according to the scenario, ask them to assign each concept to each member of the team and then role-play how the scenario would work in front of the bigger group. This option requires that there are participants that have some basic understanding of Internet 101.

This exercise can be expanded to illustrate HTTPS and PGP

For HTTPS, you will need an envelope provided by the web service to show the certification needed to encrypt data in transit. This could be used for both the scenario about connecting to websites, and sending emails.

For PGP, you will need envelopes that Person A and Person B would exchange with one another to signify the key exchange.

Interactive input on the how the internet works

This input will include the history of the internet as well as the history of the women´s movements on the internet (To be added).

This could also be a great exercise in data, corporate ownership, points of interception and surveillance.

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Social movements: What’s in a tool? What’s in a space? [deepening activity]

Note: This is from the Movement Building module that the APC WRP developed.

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Activity 1: What's in a tool? - 15 minutes

Participants are asked to think of their favourite tool. This can be a pen, a knife, a blender, anything. Have them write it down. Ask them 2 questions:

- Who do you think the tool is made for?
- What do you think it's designed for?

Facilitators guide

Draw out the idea that tools are designed with values embedded within them. They are not neutral, and that the design to some extent, affects/directs its utility.

Similarly, the tools that we use online, is designed with an end-user in mind. They can be gendered, heteronormative etc. Use some examples to draw this out. For example, dating sites are usually designed for heteronormative couples (also porn sites are designed for the male gaze), FB took a long time to allow for genders other than women and men to be included.

Open up a discussion to find participants' examples of how they see technology design as being embedded with values and assumptions, and how they may affect its utility.

Activity 2: What's in a space?

Resources needed

open space, quarter slips of paper and markers to write tool down.

Time required

45 minutes

Mechanics

Ask participants to remember their tools. Give them a challenge that they would have to solve:

- The room only allows people who are 6 feet and above to move around.
- You can only have a say if you have a chair, but you can only sit on a chair if you have a dog.
- The door to the room is 4 feet tall

Ask them to find others and work together. Think of how they can use their tools in creative ways for which the tool is not designed and collectively solve this problem. They can think out of the box, be as outrageous as possible. Share their solutions.

Hold a discussion on their thoughts about the exercise:

- How were you able to change the use of your tools? Did this transform its embedded assumptions and values?
- How were you able to change the rules/structure by working together?
- What did this tell us about transforming power? Our own, as well as power structures in the space we occupy?

Close the discussion with a brief input. Giving the #FBrape campaign as an example.

The Day the Everyday Sexism Project Won and Facebook Changed

Facilitators guide

In the discussion, make the connection between how the tool, the space and their actions connect and affect each other.

Talk about how the way a room is structured affects how we interact with each other. How the tables and chairs are placed together. Are they nailed to the floor? How much freedom can we have to move things around? Importantly, move from the idea of the internet as a tool to a space that also regulates our ability to interact with each other. That the design of this space also has particular assumptions embedded within them. E.g. that it's for a lecturer speaking to a classroom, or a workshop kind of space where you can move around more.

In other words, internet tools and platforms are not inert tools that we hold in our hands, but also a space that affects and structures our interactions.

Talk about how the internet is a space with many spaces within them. Like land where people build houses, but fantastical houses that shape-shift depending on how we occupy the space.

Also bring in the idea of different kinds of ways to access the houses. Some people only can enter through a small window (mobiles), and how this restricts to some extent your ability to move around in the house, what you can do to change it.

However, the more well resourced the house, the stronger it is. Harder to break the infrastructure. Like Facebook – harder to negotiate its values and how it is built, although not impossible. Bring the example of the #Fbrape campaign.

The #Fbrape campaign: details. Managed to change the policy of FB to look at rape pages more carefully. How this also had a knock-on effect on Twitter, and the norms that makes other house-builders/platform builders change the logic/values of house-building

Lesson

Users can change the norms and values of a space online. Norms and values that affects and regulates our interaction.

Activity 3: Social movements and the internet

This exercise is useful to orient participants into positive thinking of the internet as a space of activism and action, rather than a space of aggression and a reactive feminist response.

Resources needed

flipchart paper, markers and masking tape

Time required

60 minutes: 15 mins for the 1st activity, 20 minutes of group discussion, 10 minutes of gallery walk, and 15 minutes of plenary discussion.

Mechanics

Ask the participants to reflect on one tool that they use for activism by processing these questions:

- What do you think this tool is for and how have you appropriated it for activism?
- Why have you appropriated this tool and not another one that is similar?

Divide the room into pairs (or groups of 4 depending on size of workshop). Decide on the movement/struggle that they are currently part of, or identify one significant and recent social movement in their own contexts.

Draw a mindmap of this movement and the different components. Ask: How has the internet transformed power relations in the following components:

- Individual power (How did it help to strengthen individual power. How did it allow new kinds of subjectivities to be recognised and named? E.g. Dalit women, transpeople etc – allowing them to be recognised as political subjects)
- Power of the collective, the coming together (How did it enable people to gather, congregate, come together)
- Actions that can be taken (Was there a diversity of actions? How did the online and offline actions speak to and strengthen each other?)
- Political goal (How did it help to communicate the shared goal? What was the emotive motivation that enabled the coming together)
- Space (of occupying, of taking action, of claiming and renaming)
- Time (what was it responding to, is it a sustained or an immediate thing? How long did it last?)

Participants walk around the gallery of the mindmaps.

Hold a plenary discussion to close this activity:

- How has the internet helped to transform power relations in the movement? See the brackets in the questions above as ways of prompting.
- How is it different from ways of organising before?
- How can we, as feminists/women's rights activists engage with the internet more as a political space?

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FPI presentation + discussion [deepening activity]

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Here is a FPIs presentation that you can use : FPIsand5LayersofPower_2020_by_hvale.pdf

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