

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

**A SOCIAL  
DESIGNER'S  
FIELD GUIDE TO  
POWER LITERACY**



Created by Maya Goodwill  
in collaboration with Kennisland

**This field guide belongs to:**

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This field guide was created by Maya Goodwill in collaboration with Kennisland for the graduation thesis, *Power Literacy: towards a socially just, decolonial and democratic design process*, as a part of the Master of Science in Design for Interaction at Delft University of Technology.

For the complete thesis and reference list, visit <https://repository.tudelft.nl/>.



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# GETTING STARTED

## HELLO!

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

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

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

# HOW TO USE

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



## Part 1: Five Forms of Power

In Part 1 you will be introduced to five forms of power in design processes. You will learn about each form of power by reflecting on your own experience in a past design project. For each type of power you will find a corresponding worksheet activity to complete—these are best done by first filling it out individually and then discussing in a group with your design team. To complete these activities, it will be helpful to select a past design project that you were a part of. You can find criteria to help you pick an appropriate project on page 12.

## Part 2: Power Checks

In part 2, you will be provided with guidelines, tips and worksheet activities to complete *power checks* at certain points in the design process. Power checks are a way to practice power literacy ‘in the field.’ These checks will help you to build reflexivity—your awareness of social structures internalized by yourself and others—in four steps: recognize power, name power, understand the impact of power and act accordingly. There are four worksheets for you to use at critical moments in your next design project: set-up, divergence, convergence, and wrap-up.

## Choose your own adventure

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

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

Extra worksheets are available to download for free at [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com).

# GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

**Stakeholder:** an individual, social group or organization that will be impacted in some way by the design project, process and/or its outcomes. The impact might be large, small, positive or negative.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# **PART 1: FIVE SOURCES OF POWER**

**Reflecting on a past  
design project**

# SELECTING A PROJECT

In this section you will be introduced to five different, yet interrelated, forms of power that show up in the design process: privilege, access power, goal power, role power and rule power. For each of the five, there is an accompanying worksheet

activity that you will fill out by reflecting on a past experience. To complete these worksheets, it is best to have a past design project in mind while you answer the questions. When selecting a project, try to pick one that checks off the following three criteria:

- Multiple stakeholders were involved in some way during the design process (even if this was minimal or varied).
- There was a clear group of stakeholders that had lived experience of the problem or issue that you were aiming to address (eg. an 'end user').
- The project aimed to address a social issue (eg. improve education outcomes) that was in a specific context (eg. for youth in a particular neighbourhood).

## 1. PRIVILEGE





# PRIVILEGE

## What is it?

Privilege is the type of power you get from a social relation whereby you benefit due to the social group you belong to, at the expense of another social group. It is an unearned advantage given to you because of your identity. When you have privilege, it is often invisible to you. Because identity categories do not exist independently from each other (they are *intersectional*), it is possible to have privilege and also experience oppression at the same time (for example, if your gender identity is cis<sup>1</sup> male, *and* you are black).

Privilege often gives you a leg up in being able to do something, influence an outcome and/or influence others around you. For example, having privilege might mean you are taken more seriously when you have a health issue, you appear more 'professional' at an interview because of your physical characteristics, you don't have to constantly think about your safety when you're in public space, or you don't have to plan ahead to ensure transit is accessible before you decide to go somewhere. These types of advantages are something that everyone should have access to, and those with privilege can actively work to extend them to those without privilege by using the

<sup>1</sup> cis (or cisgender) refers to someone who's gender identity matches the gender that they were assigned at birth.

influence (or power!) that they have as a result of their social identity.

## Why does it matter?

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

## Questions for reflection

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

Download and print extra privilege worksheets for free at: [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

# PRIVILEGE

## What is it

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

## How to

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

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

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

4. Discuss 2 & 3 in a group.

## 1. Recognize your own privilege

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



## 2. Name your privilege

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

## 3. Understand impact

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

## 4. Discuss in a group

# PRIVILEGE WORKSHEET

## How to use

This worksheet was designed for use after a project is completed, to reflect back on it. However, it may also be helpful and adapted for use during the planning phase, before the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each designer filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 35 – 45 min.

fold in ↑

Key takeaways for next time:

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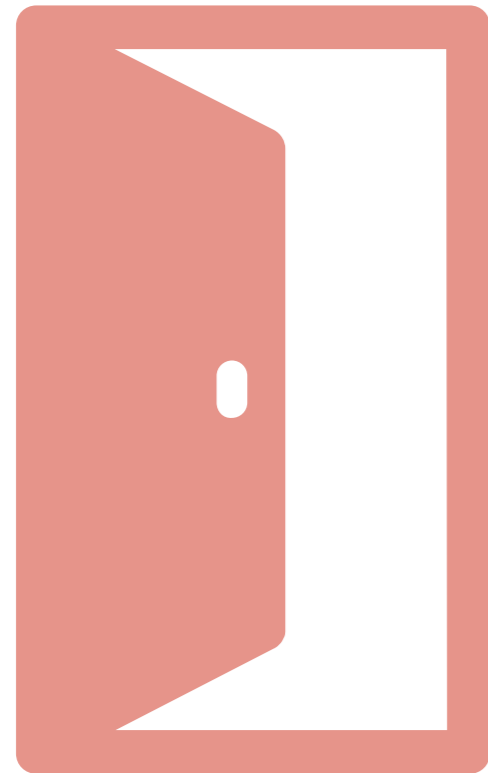
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## 2. ACCESS POWER



flip & fold out for  
the access power  
worksheet

fold in ↓

## ACCESS POWER WORKSHEET

### How to use

This worksheet was designed for use after a project is completed, to reflect back on it. However, it may also be helpful and adapted for use during the planning phase, before the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each designer filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 35 – 45 min.

# ACCESS POWER

## What is it

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

## How to

1. List ALL of the stakeholders that may be impacted by the design project and the social issue it aims to address. Include yourself (eg. designers). Next, mark an X through the circles of stakeholders who were not included in the design process.

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

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

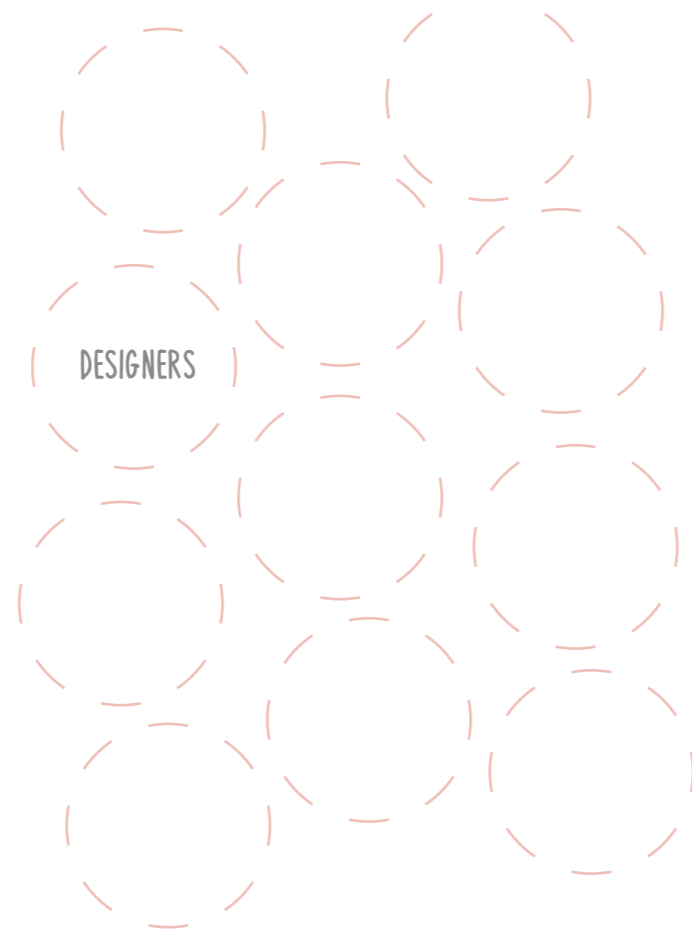
4. Using the guiding questions, reflect on the impact of access power in the project.

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

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

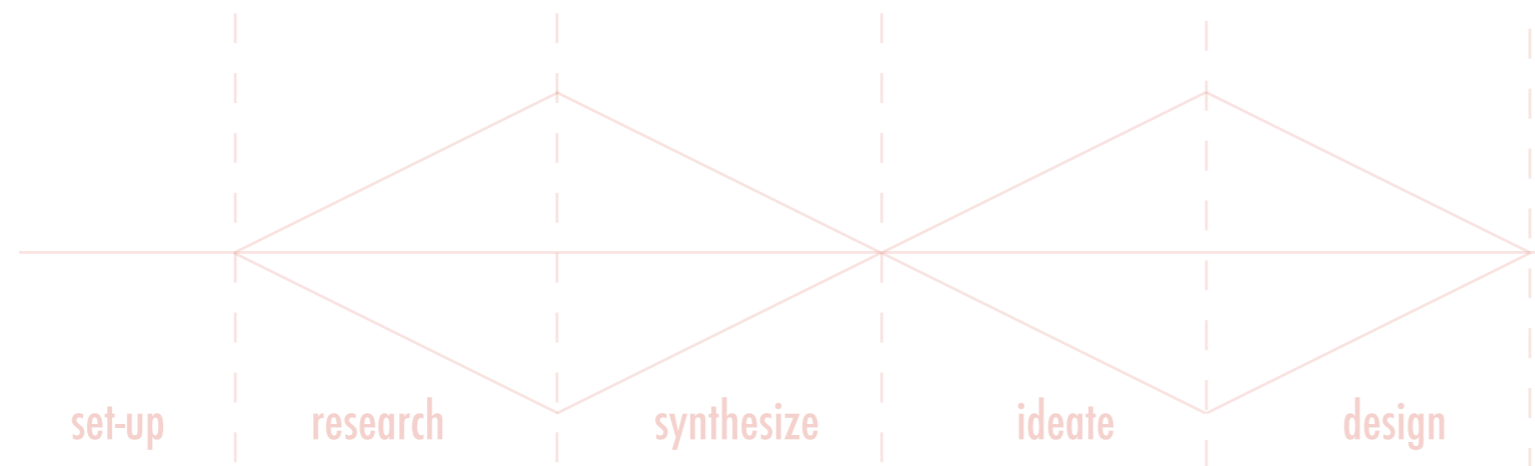
### 1. Who's in

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



### 2. Points of access

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



### 3. Invitations

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

### 4. Understand impact

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

### 5. Discuss in a group

### 6. Your access power

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



# ACCESS POWER

## What is it?

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

## Why does it matter?

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

## Questions for reflection

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

Download and print extra access power worksheets for free at: [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

Key takeaways for next time:

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.

## 3. GOAL POWER



# GOAL POWER

## What is it?

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

## Why does it matter?

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

if you are using it in ways that align with your values, and, if not, how you might change this.

## Questions for reflection

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

Download and print extra goal power worksheets for free at: [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

# GOAL POWER

## What is it

Goal power is the ability to initiate the design project to begin with, as well as the ability to influence decisions related to framing the problem, defining desired outcomes and structuring the design process.

## How to

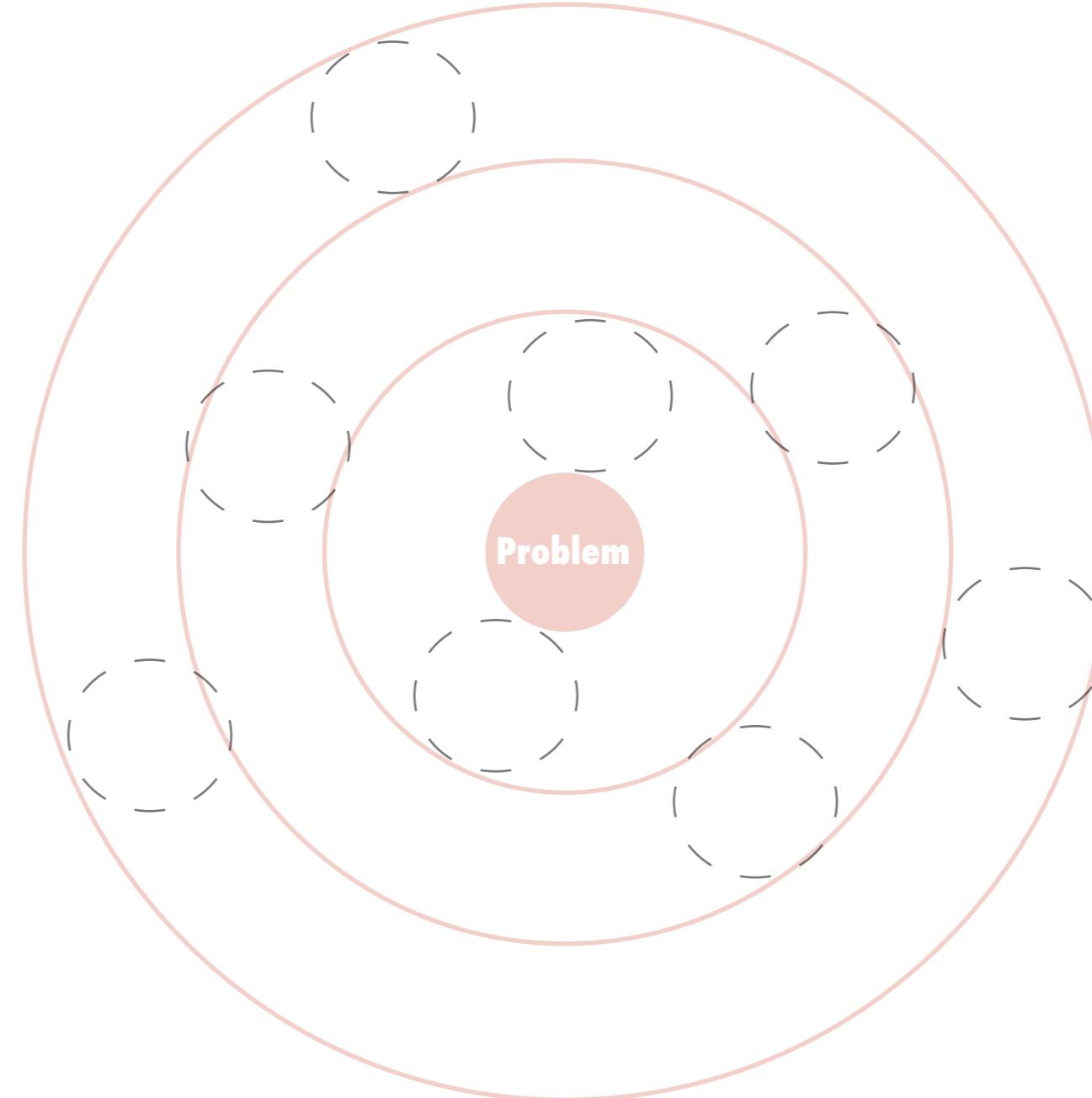
1. Write down the problem framing, as well as the desired outcomes/goals of the project.
2. Add the actors who had access to the design process onto the map. Place those who are most impacted by the problem in the inner ring, and those who are impacted less, or indirectly in the outer rings. Use a red marker to circle the actors that initiated the project. Use a green marker to circle the actors that were involved in framing the problem, setting goals and/or setting up what the design process will look like.
3. Write down the impact and consider alternatives.
4. Discuss and add any new insights that come up.
5. Indicate the amount of goal power you had in this project.

## 1. Recognize

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

## 2. Mapping and naming goals

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



## 3. Understand impact

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

## 4. Discuss in a group

## 5. Your goal power

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

Low High  
|-----|

# GOAL POWER WORKSHEET

fold in ↑

## How to use

This worksheet was designed for use after a project is completed, to reflect back on it. It is recommended to first complete the privilege and access worksheets. It may also be helpful and adapted for use during the planning phase, before the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each designer filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 30 – 40 min.

Key takeaways for next time:

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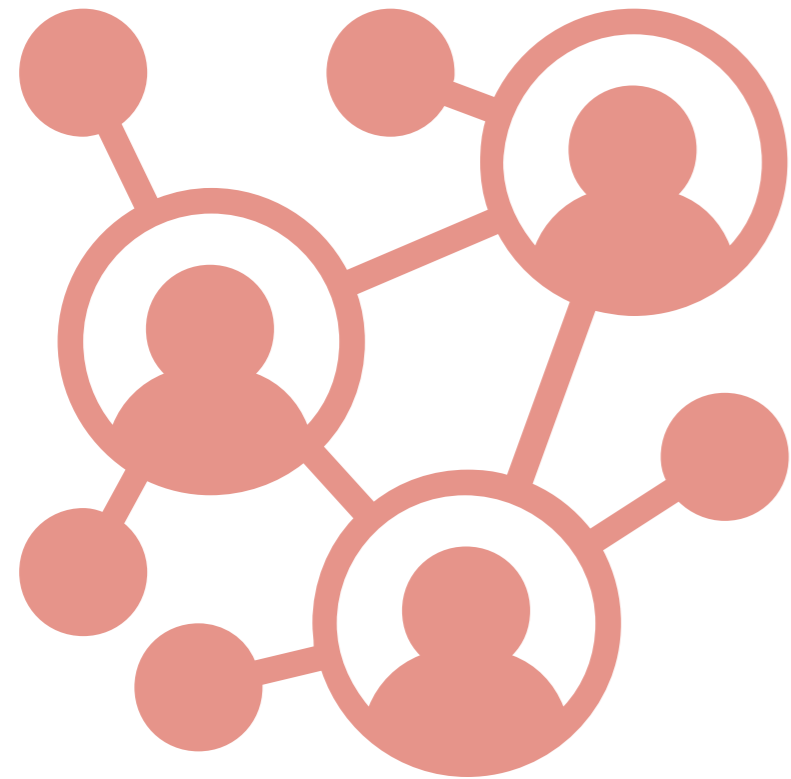
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## 4. ROLE POWER



flip & fold out for the  
role power worksheet

## ROLE POWER WORKSHEET

### How to use

This worksheet was designed for use after a project is completed, to reflect back on it. It is recommended to first complete the privilege and access worksheets. It may also be helpful and adapted for use during the planning phase, before the beginning of a project. It's recommended to do this activity in a group, with each designer filling out their own worksheet.

Time needed: 30 – 40 min.

fold in ↓



# ROLE POWER

## What is it

Role power is the ability to influence the roles that different stakeholders take on. This includes the ability to assign any roles or titles in the design process (eg. 'participant', 'co-designer', or 'user'), as well as influencing the role each stakeholder plays in making decisions, especially who is given the ability to analyze and prioritize findings in the converging phases.

## How to

1. Add the stakeholders who have access to the design process onto the map. Place those who are most impacted by the problem in the inner ring, and those who are impacted less or indirectly in the outer rings. Write the role assigned to each stakeholder in the design process.

Draw a green line to connect stakeholders that had reciprocal relationships. Draw a red line between ones that had hierarchical relationships. Draw a blue circle around stakeholders with roles that were given the highest decision-making ability in the design process.

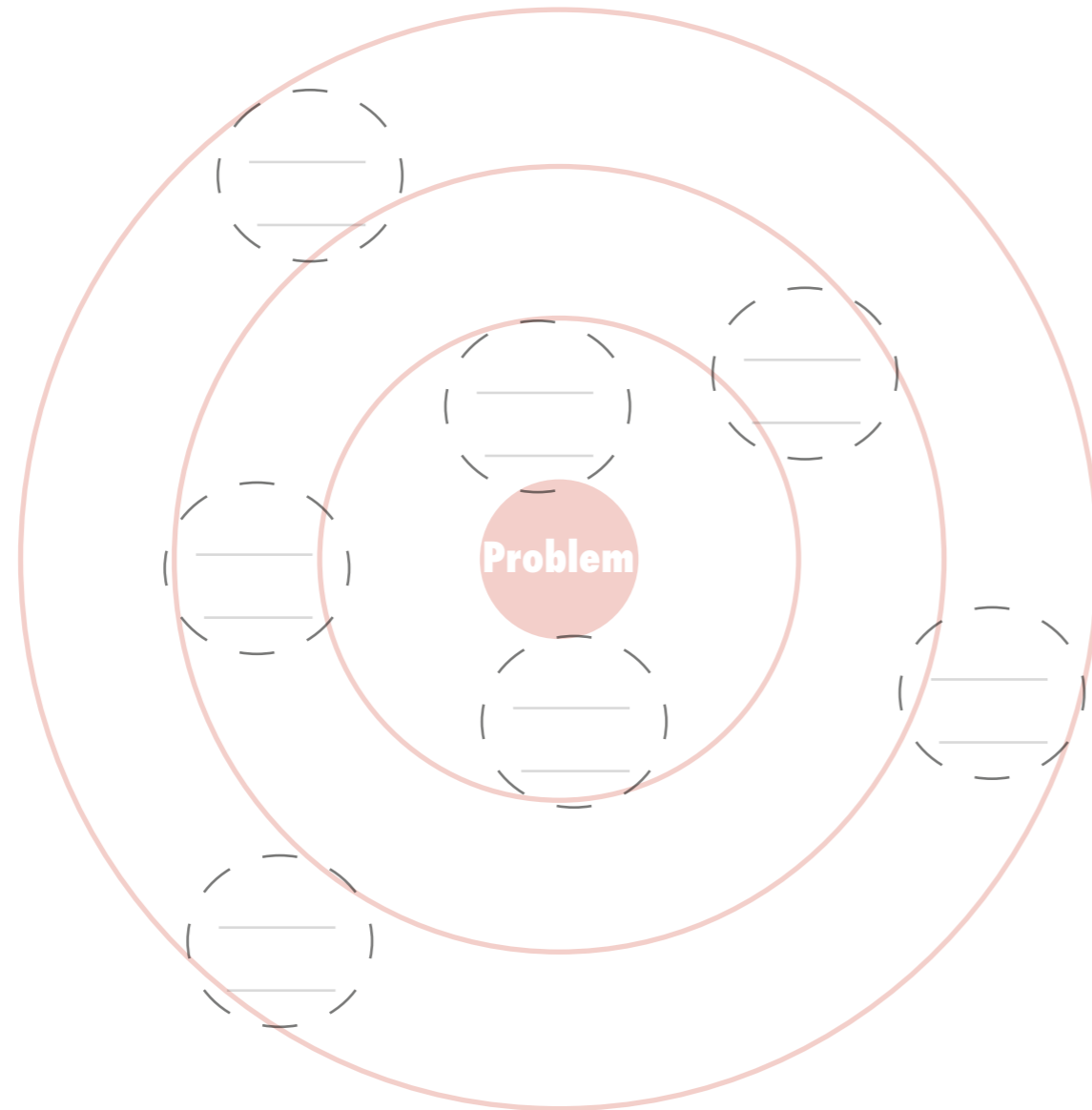
2. Based on 1, Indicate to what extent those with lived experience were invited to participate.

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

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

### 1. Mapping roles

Which roles have been assigned to different stakeholders in the design process (eg. user, participant, co-designer, subject, etc.)? How does this affect relationships between stakeholders? Are those closest to the problem marginalized as a result?



### 2. Spectrum of participation

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



### 3. Understand impact

Are these roles challenging or reproducing existing social structures found outside of the design project? What were the positive and negative impacts?

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

### 4. Discuss in a group

### 5. You role power

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



# ROLE POWER

## What is it?

Role power is the ability to influence the role that different stakeholders who have already been given access to the design process will take on. This includes any titles or roles (eg. 'design expert' 'participant' 'interviewee' 'co-designer' 'user,' etc.) given to those included in the design process and the resulting hierarchies that this will create. Role power also includes the ability to influence the role that each stakeholder will play in making decisions, especially what role—if any—various stakeholders are given in synthesizing and prioritizing during the converging phases

## Why does it matter?

As a designer you likely have some influence over the way that various stakeholders are involved. For example, you may be able to influence when and how people who have lived experience of the problem are included; this might be as interviewees, as users to test solutions with, as participants in a co-creation session, as co-designers invited onto the design team, and/or as experts brought in during research. Depending on the roles that are assigned, the experience and

outcomes of the design process will be very different. The way this power is used will determine whether the design network challenges existing inequities or reproduces them, and to what extent the process is democratic and equitable. As such, it is important to be aware of this type of power, how much you have, and its impact.

## Questions for reflection

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

Download and print extra role power worksheets for free at: [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

Key takeaways for next time:

A series of 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing notes.

# 5. RULE POWER



# RULE POWER

## What is it?

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

## Why does it matter?

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

with privilege, the likelihood that the design process will be exclusionary and reproduce inequity is much greater.

## Questions for reflection

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

Download and print extra rule power worksheets for free at: [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

# RULE POWER

## What is it

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

## How to

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

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

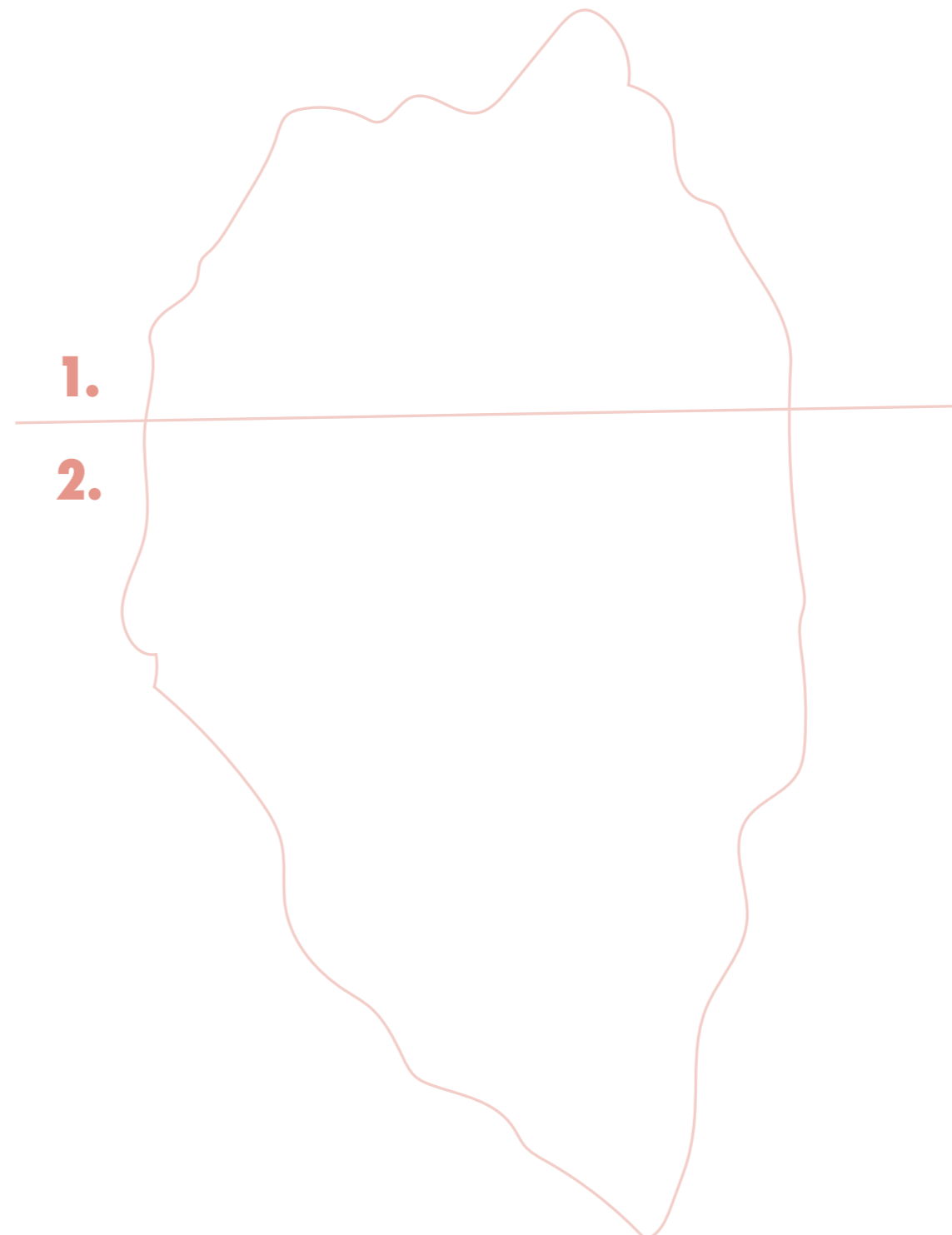
3. Write down and reflect on the impact of the rules, norms and beliefs underlying the way actors worked together in this project, and how privilege may have factored into this.

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

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

## 1. The tip of the iceberg

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



## 2. Making the invisible visible

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

## 3. Understand Impact

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

## 4. Discuss in a group

## 5. Your rule power

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



# RULE POWER WORKSHEET

fold in ↑

## How to use

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

Time needed: 30—40 min.

Key takeaways for next time:

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# PART 2: POWER CHECKS

**Reflexivity in  
the field**

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

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

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

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

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

# POWER CHECKS

## Four Steps for Reflexivity

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



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

### 1. Recognize

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

### 2. Name

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

### 3. Understand

Understand the impact that these decisions will have on stakeholders with lived experience of the problem, as well as on outcomes of the project.

### 4. Act

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

## Four Critical Moments for Power Checks

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

‘Set-up’ refers to the stage where the project is being set-up. This might be before or while preparing a proposal for a client, partner or funder.

‘Diverging’ refers to any phases where data is being collected or stakeholders are being invited to participate in the design process.

On the other hand, ‘converging’ refers to any phases in the design process in which previously collected data is being analyzed, synthesized or prioritized.

Finally ‘wrap-up’ refers to the last phase of the project, where deliverables are being finalized and the success of the project is being evaluated.

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

Extra worksheets are available to download for free at [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com).

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

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

Extra worksheets are available to download for free at [www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)

## SET-UP

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

### Pay attention to:

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

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

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

### Tips from the field:

1. *Include values and intentions in the proposal.* This way, you can go back to the proposal in order to hold key decision-makers accountable.

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

### 1. Recognize

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

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

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

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

### 2. Name

*What forms of power are present?*

- Privilege
- Access Power
- Goal Power
- Role Power
- Rule Power

### 3. Understand Impact

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

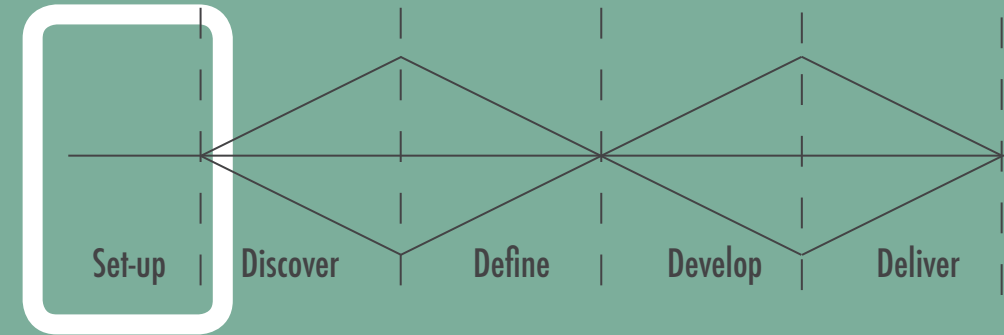
*Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?*

### 4. Act

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

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Power Check: SET-UP



## When to use

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

Time needed: 30 - 45 min.

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## DIVERGING

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

### Pay attention to:

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

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

### Tips from the field:

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

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

### 1. Recognize

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

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

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

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

### 2. Name

What forms of power are present?

- Privilege    Access Power    Goal Power  
 Role Power    Rule Power

### 3. Understand Impact

How might these decisions determine which perspectives are valued? What positive and negative impacts might these decisions have on stakeholders, especially those who have lived experience of the problem? What effect might this have on outcomes?

Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?

### 4. Act

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_

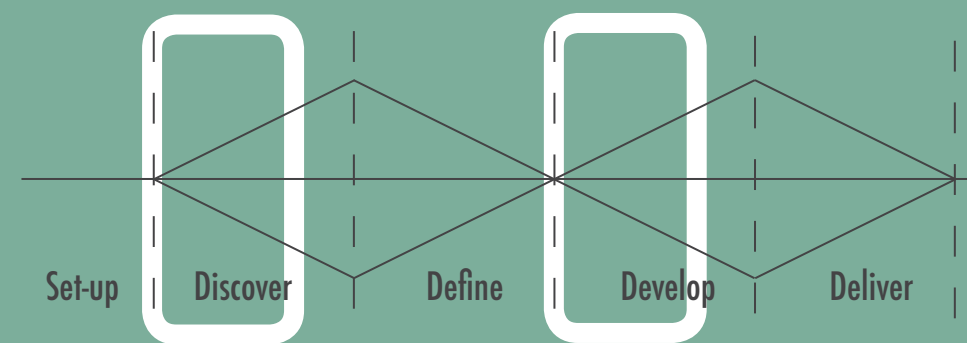
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



# Power Check: DIVERGING

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## When to use

A divergence power check will ideally be conducted before the start of any participatory moments where stakeholders are being included in the design process.

This includes collecting data through interviews, observations, storytelling, co-creation sessions, user testing and other forms of participation. This worksheet should be completed by the design team, all together.

Time needed: 30 - 45 min.

## CONVERGING

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

### Pay attention to:

**Rule Power:** Rules and norms around prioritization and decision making. This includes language being used, the selected approach for analysis, what forms of knowledge are deemed most valid and communication styles.

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

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

### Tips from the field:

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

### 1. Recognize

Which stakeholders are able to influence synthesis and prioritization of insights?

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

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

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

### 2. Name

What forms of power are present?

- Privilege**  
  **Access Power**  
  **Goal Power**  
 **Role Power**  
  **Rule Power**

### 3. Understand Impact

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

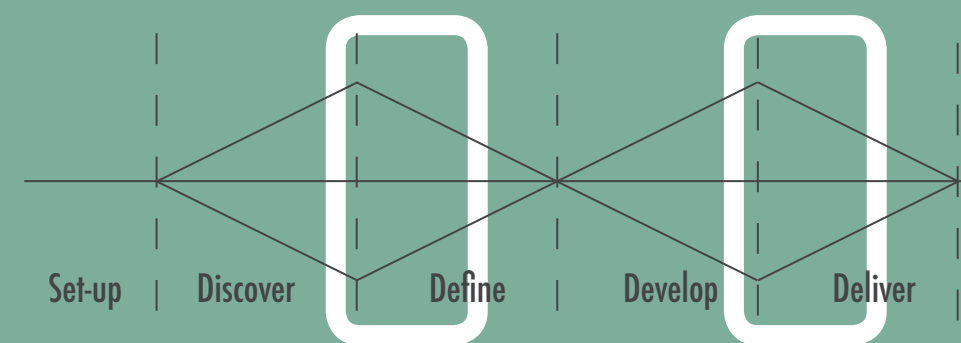
Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?

### 4. Act

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Power Check: CONVERGING



## When to use

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

Time needed: 30- 45 min.

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## WRAP-UP

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

### Pay attention to:

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

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

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

### Tips from the field:

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

### 1. Recognize

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

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

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

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

### 2. Name

What forms of power are present?

- Privilege    Access Power    Goal Power  
 Role Power    Rule Power

### 3. Understand Impact

How might these decisions determine which perspectives are valued? What impact might this have on stakeholders with lived experience of the problem? Would all stakeholders deem the design outcome as relevant and/or successful?

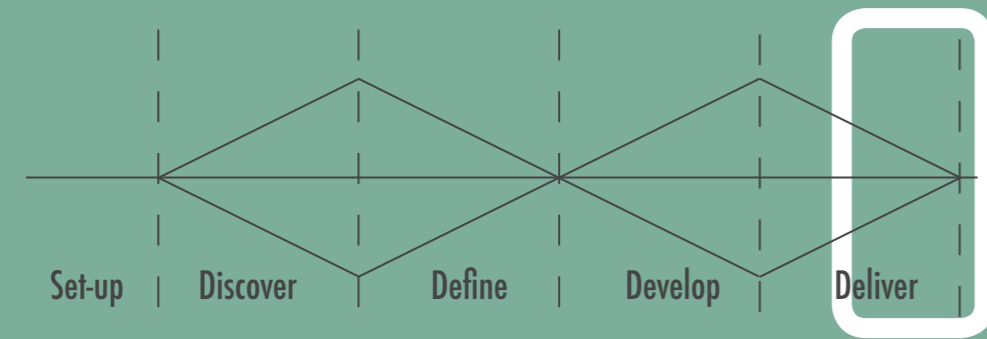
Will existing inequities be reproduced or challenged?

### 4. Act

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Power Check: WRAP-UP



## When to use

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

Time needed: 30 - 45 min.

After completing these four power checks, write down why power literacy matters to you as a designer. Take a moment to reflect on any changes from your original answer on page 10.

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# YOU MADE IT.

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

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

**[www.power-literacy.com](http://www.power-literacy.com)**

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

Until next time!

