LEADERSHIP IN TRANSITIONS

MODULE 3: STEP INTO NATURE

Worksheet 2: Group work - Getting into the skin of another - empathy role play workshop

To extend the learnings from this module to your team, we have suggested group work for you to lead. Initially, this worksheet is designed for team members working on the same wind energy project as you (closed group work). However, with a little adaptation, it is also suitable for attendees across different projects (open group work). In this worksheet, the differences between a closed and open set-up are implicated.

THE AIM OF THE WORKSHOP

The goal of this role play workshop is not only to consider a variety of perspectives and think critically, but also to connect with the characters on an emotional level. What does it feel like to have more or less power in a situation? More specifically, how does it feel if a large wind energy project impacts more-than-human beings, but they are unable to stand up for themselves? Additionally, the roleplay workshop includes three exercises to train democracy muscles: the empathy, disagreement and activistic muscle. These exercises are inspired by the Danish method Democracy Fitness, which aims to improve participants' democracy fitness (read more). Attendees should not overthink the roleplay workshop beforehand. Instead, they first experience the role play and explore their feelings during the debriefing (as suggested in the step-by-step script).

WHO TO INVITE

The workshop is most effective with at least eight participants. In a closed set-up, this workshop is suitable for all project team members. Depending on the insights you wish to provoke, you can also invite stakeholders outside the team, such as members of other wind energy projects or people you collaborate with outside of the project team (open set-up).

HOW TO PREPARE

This role play consists of three steps (A-C) and three Democracy Fitness exercises (1-3). Be sure to familiarize yourself with the steps and exercises to ensure the role play runs smoothly. There are eight characters in the role play; ideally, more attendees should participate, and you can assign multiple attendees the same character based on your judgment.

Minimum 90 minutes

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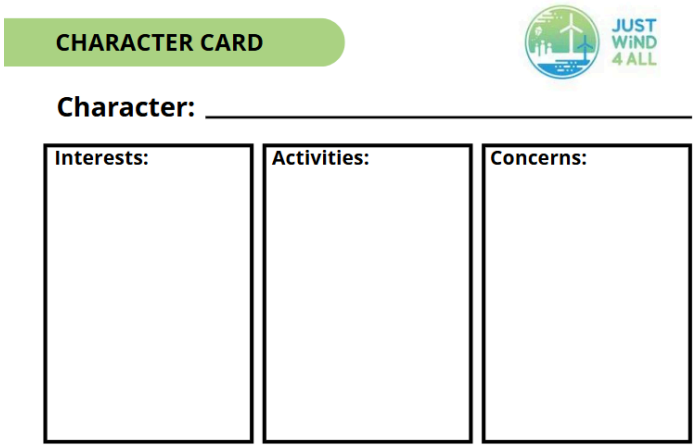
Practical details:

- Arrange a suitable room with chairs, and enough space to walk around.
- Provide paper and pens.
- Print and bring character cards, one for each attendee



- Print and bring speaking time vouchers, granting each attendee with four vouchers

- Soap box, or chair safe enough to stand on

Steps during the workshop:

Opening and setting the scene

Open the workshop by distributing the characters among the workshop attendees. Each attendee should receive a character card along with eight vouchers, each voucher granting ten seconds of speaking time. Instruct them to keep their speaking time, as they will need it during a later stage of the roleplay workshop.

Explain that while this workshop may seem like an unconventional way to engage with the wind energy transition, it is precisely the goal of the session. Emphasize that there will be a debriefing afterward, during which you will provide further insight into the purpose and reasoning behind the roleplay workshop.

Setting the scene: ask the attendees to close their eyes. Start by letting them imagine they are positioned on the shore. The smell of the ocean and kelp filling their noses. Wait for a breath or two. Ask them to open their eyes (optional: put wave sounds on in the background).

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Exercise 1: Train the empathy muscle - deepen your understanding of the character

Ask the attendees to engage in an individual exercise by researching their character (online) to gain a deeper understanding. They should reflect on what aspects of the character they feel empathy for or appreciate and consider as motivations behind their actions. Attendees are encouraged to imagine themselves as the character:

Questions that could help them empathize are:

- How do you provide for your family?
- What concerns do you have for the near and longer term future?
- What does your typical day look like? How do you feel?
- Why is sustainability an issue for you?

As part of the exercise, they should complete the Character Card* to add more depth and complexity to their character. Finally, attendees are asked to go through the remaining exercises of the role play from the character's perspective.

Build your character by adding points on the Character Card:

Human coastal resident

- Interest: The beautiful coastal environment and making ends meet financially.
- Activity: Keeping a 5-room bed and breakfast, while running a family household.
- Concern: The absence of tourists or guests for their bed and breakfast, and the impact of pollution on the coastal environment and recreation opportunities.

Human fisher

- Interest: Catching fish and ensuring a financial sustainable livelihood.
- Activity: Fishing in coastal waters, maintaining equipment, and selling catch.
- Concern: Environmental changes affecting fish populations, government regulations, and limitations on fishing in offshore wind areas.

Oyster

- Interest: Clean, nutrient-rich water to filter-feed.
- Activity: Anchoring to the seabed, filtering water for plankton, and reproducing.
- Concern: Pollution, habitat destruction, and changes in water quality or temperature.

Little Tern

- Interest: Safe nesting sites and abundant fish to feed young.
- Activity: Diving, flying and nesting.
- Concern: Coastal habitat disturbance, human activity, and obstructions of flying routes.

Seal

- Interest: Food and safe coastal haul-out sites for rest.
- Activity: Hunting, hauling out on beaches, and socializing in colonies.
- Concern: Loss of safe haul-out locations, and noise pollution.

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Human council member

- Interest: Balancing community needs with environmental protection and economic development.
- Activity: Making decisions on local policies, development projects, and resource allocation.
- Concern: Public opinion, potential environmental impacts, and economic costs of large projects.

Human project developer

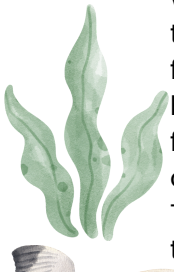
- Interest: Completing successful, profitable projects that meet regulations and stakeholder needs.
- Activity: Planning, designing, and overseeing the development of infrastructure and projects.
- Concern: Delays, cost overruns, regulatory hurdles, and community opposition.

Human offshore wind investor

- Interest: Generating returns from renewable energy investments in offshore wind farms.
- Activity: Investing in the development and operation of offshore wind projects.
- Concern: Regulatory challenges, project viability, return on investment, and public opposition.

Step A: introduce the characters and their context

Let the participants know that you will be introducing the context of their character. Ask them to raise their hand when their character is mentioned by name. This will help us become familiar with the more-than-human beings that are part of this story.



THE SEA: tell the participants that the sea that they have been hearing in the background is coming closer. The waves are moving up and down. The wind is blowing into our ears, and as a result the crest of the waves are turning white. In the unrestful water a **Seal** is making its way deeper. As the seal moves to calmer water we hear the sound of wings flapping in the air. A white feather bird comes closer from the sky: the **Little Tern** catches a small fish and proceeds to fly away. The rest of the fish dive deeper and we go with them. On the ocean floor we manage to bump into a bed of wild Oysters. We observe one **Oyster** who sucks in the surrounding water to filter out the nutrients it needs. Suddenly this peaceful moment is disturbed as all sorts of wires are surrounding us, we feel trapped as fishing nets make a way around us. They are catching all sorts of fish. The fish are slowly taken up back to the surface, by the **Fisherman** who stands on the deck of their fishing boat.

THE BEACH: after loading in the catch of the day the boat makes its way towards the harbour where we see some people standing on the windy beach. A **Wind developer** is talking to an **Offshore wind investor** about wind energy development.

THE HINTERLAND: while they finish their talk we follow them to the town behind the beach, a **Human local resident** is looking at the sea, and at least we see the town's **Council member** sitting in an office looking at the plans for an offshore wind farm.

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After you have introduced the characters, share the story the characters are part of: The energy transition is in full swing, with a strong focus on renewable energy sources like wind and solar power to meet climate goals. In the near-shore waters of a picturesque coastal fishing town, known for its stunning landscapes and rich ecology, a major project is on the horizon: the construction of an offshore wind farm. Supported by the national government and a large energy developer, the project promises to significantly contribute to the region's transition to sustainable energy.

However, the development of the wind farm has sparked considerable division in the town. Some residents are strong advocates for renewable energy and see the wind turbines as a vital step toward a greener future. On the other hand, many are concerned about the possible decline in property values due to the cabling, the disturbance of lifes, along with uncertainty around the wind farm's effect on local businesses. Many also feel excluded from the decision-making process, which they believe is being dominated by outsiders with little regard for the local community. Some actors are not even thought of, and are not considered altogether. Without talking to each other the characters find themselves in echo chambers and tensions rise. Until the silence between actors is broken...

Exercise 2: Train the disagreeance muscle - Breaking the silence

This is an activity that is to be done in pairs (or possibly groups of three). Ask the attendees to connect with another character and find something they disagree with regarding offshore wind development. Ask them to drop off four speaking time vouchers. In the groups the actors can decide who will begin talking and who will start listening. The first speaker will elaborate on their perspective of the situation (as presented in the story), while the listener should focus solely on listening. Once the speaker has finished, the listener can ask clarifying questions. Switch activities so the other character gets the chance to speak. The goal of this exercise is to gain a deeper understanding of the other character's point of view.

Closing the exercise: after long chats, all characters leave to go back to their own habitats. The Oyster to the rocks on the ocean floor, the Seal to the sand banks, the Human coastal resident and the Fisherman to their houses in town. Everyone feels that at least their opinion is heard, but is it also understood? Many question what will happen next. Meanwhile, plans are being made...

Step B: The story continues...

Read the story's progression to the attendees:

The construction of the offshore wind farm is underway. As large cranes and machinery populate the once pristine coastline, workers construct the foundations for the wind turbines. The wind farm promises clean energy, job creation, and an investment in the region's long-term sustainability. Some Human local residents involved in the construction are benefiting from employment opportunities. The foundation of the wind turbines are used for "new" ecosystem creation, mitigating some of the impact of construction and operation. However, local Fishermen report disruptions to their fishing operations, and the Human local residents lack confidence that the developments will benefit the long term local economy. Additionally, the Little

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Terns are at risk due to disrupted migratory routes, and Seals are being pushed away from their habitats. Council members are caught between supporting the renewable energy project and addressing growing concerns from their more-than-human community, with facing backlash for not listening to local voices.
As tensions rise again, a public gathering is organized on the beach where the characters involved get the opportunity to speak openly. However, not all characters are treated equally. The most affected characters are either so shaken by the development or are not allowed by the Human actors to speak. This has consequences for the amount of speaking time per character. Ask the attendees to collect extra or drop-off vouchers for speaking time:

Character	Consequence (and total seconds per character)
HUMAN COASTAL RESIDENT	No consequences (40 seconds)
FISHERMAN	Drop-off 2 vouchers (20 seconds)
OYSTER	Collect 1 voucher (50 seconds)
LITTLE TERN	Drop-off 3 vouchers (10 seconds)
SEAL	Drop-off 4 vouchers (no speaking time)
HUMAN COUNCIL MEMBER	No consequences (40 seconds)
HUMAN PROJECT DEVELOPER	Collect 2 vouchers (60 seconds)
HUMAN OFFSHORE WIND INVESTOR	Collect 2 vouchers (60 seconds)

After these consequences regarding the speaker time have occurred, it is likely that tensions only mounted. Many characters feel worried and threatened.

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Exercise 3: Train the activism muscle - Make your voice heard

Some local characters decide to organise a public gathering for the more-than-human beings involved, the characters are asked what they want to advocate for or against by standing on the soap box and speaking up.
Give the attendees some time to think about what they would like to say. They have the option to use their vouchers or pass them to someone else, allowing that character to take the opportunity to step onto the soapbox. There is potential for characters to unite, but this decision is up to the attendees. Before stepping onto the soapbox, they must submit their speaking time cards to the timekeeper. Once used, the voucher cannot be regained.
The exercise concludes when time runs out. This concludes another night in a fishing town where multiple characters are affected, either positively, negatively or in a neutral way.

Step C: Debrief

Take some time to plenary discuss the experiences in this role play. You can use the following questions to lead the debrief:

- **What did you experience?** Were you able to step into the role? How did it feel to receive more, less, or the same amount of speaking time - did you feel advantaged or disadvantaged in this story?
- **What caused conflict, or conversely, consensus and agreement?** What feelings/thoughts did this evoke in you? What is the purpose and value of conflict? As a facilitator you can elaborate that conflict has a productive function. If conflict is suppressed because it is uncomfortable, you may end up optimizing the current situation rather than working toward a transition.
- **What role does resistance and activism have in the wind energy transition?** As a facilitator you can elaborate that the concept of muscles and democratic fitness suggests that such processes are always present, and you can develop greater skill in navigating them.
- **What have you learned about yourself and others?** What would you want to share with the group or your project team? How did you find the experience of doing this exercise together?

To close the roleplay workshop, explain to the participants that the third exercise may feel unsatisfying. In reality, when advocating for a more just and effective process or outcome, it is common to experience little immediate change and impact often comes later. We are not working toward a neat or satisfying conclusion, because transformative change is always complex and uncertain (see also the fifth module of this programme). Additionally, this roleplay workshop is inspired by Democracy Fitness and the Moral Dilemma Discussion Method.