

LEARNING JOURNEY GUIDE



Ecological leadership

Experiential learning with
young people in nature

CREATED BY ODA SALOMONS & LIA VAN LOO
FLOURISH IN NATURE FOUNDATION, THE NETHERLANDS
ERASMUS+ YOUTH PROJECT ECOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP
MAY 2026



Co-funded by
the European Union



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

In this project, Ecological Leadership, youth workers explore how to guide young people in ecological leadership through experiential learning in and with nature. Three core practices are central:

- building a tribe: connection and shared leadership
- exploring power and influence, for example, using the participation ladder
- exploring ecological identity and nature-based values

Nature serves as both a learning environment and a partner in learning.

WHAT THIS APPROACH SUPPORTS

This approach helps young people to:

- experience their place
- understand their influence and make conscious choices about how they use it
- include nature in their decisions
- take small regenerative steps

In this context, ecological leadership means acting from a sense of connection with oneself, others, and the natural world, rather than from competition or survival alone.

It also calls for an attitude of *active hope*: not waiting, but recognizing what is possible and taking the next step. Feelings such as concern, grief, or anger about the state of the world are not weaknesses, but healthy responses — and, when given space, can lead to engagement, leadership, and action.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

This project consists of a learning community for youth workers, starting with a training course from 12–19 June 2026 in Ommen (NL).

This is followed by an ongoing learning community in which participants apply what they have learned in their own practice.

This is supported by:

- an online webinar
- working with the same buddy throughout the journey
- coaching during implementation
- feedback loops to carry insights into next steps, such as reflection forms and evaluations, including a follow-up focus group
- a card deck with visual materials to support the activities

PROJECT PARTNERS

This project is carried out in collaboration with seven partner organisations across Europe, each working with young people on ecological leadership in their local context:

- Flourish in Nature Foundation (The Netherlands)
- Oba Utopia Education and Art Organisation (Türkiye)
- Conflicarte (Spain)
- Enasaud Association (Romania)
- O Mundo Somos Nós (Portugal)
- I-HELP Association (Malta)
- Youth 4 Youth (Italy)

ERASMUS+

This project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (2021–2027). Erasmus+ supports international cooperation in education, youth and sport, and promotes learning, inclusion, sustainability, and active citizenship.



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE IN PRACTICE

The activities in this guide can be used as a learning journey, moving from awareness to action:

ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Connecting with nature and exploring your relationship with the living world. Based on the work of eco-philosopher Joanna Macy

TRIBE & BELONGING

Gaining insight into your role, place, and connection within a group. Inspired by the work of cultural anthropologists Danielle Braun and Jitske Kramer

INFLUENCE & PARTICIPATION

Exploring influence, responsibility, trust, and leadership. Building on the participation ladder of Roger Hart, a key framework for understanding how young people can take part in decision-making.

FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION

Designing and carrying out Random Acts of Kindness for Nature

Together, these perspectives support young people in understanding their place in a

group, their influence within it, their relationship with the Earth, and how to take action from that awareness.

GETTING STARTED

Start with one activity that connects to what is happening in your group. Try it out, reflect on what works, and build from there.

From there, you can combine activities into a programme over time. For example, a series over several weeks (e.g. 1.5 hours per week), or one or more training days built from different activities.

DESIGN YOUR PROGRAMME

Designing learning processes is a core competence in international youth work, as described in the Council of Europe's competence model. This guide helps you make conscious choices about how to use and combine activities.

Each activity in this guide describes:

- purpose of the activity
- main themes (keywords)
- group size
- duration

- preparation
- steps and reflection questions

Use this information to select and combine activities into a programme that fits your group. You can also use the AI tutor to adapt activities and card sets to your context and language.

Additionally, this guide includes supporting elements such as guiding principles, working with a buddy, the card sets, and the AI tutor, to support facilitation, reflection, and use in your practice.



NATURE AS A SAFE LEARNING SPACE

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

In this learning journey, we learn and work together as a tribe, in connection with each other and the natural environment.

For a tribe to function, roles, reciprocity, and shared responsibility need to become visible and embodied. This requires a safe learning environment in which people feel connected, experience a sense of agency, and can take their place within the group. This page offers practical guidance for creating those conditions.

STEP 1: CREATE SHARED AGREEMENTS

Belonging comes before leadership. Before participants can take responsibility or step into a role, they need to feel that they belong to the group.

Start by asking:

- How do we want to be together here?
- What do you need to feel safe and welcome?
- What helps you feel comfortable taking part?

Write the agreements down and keep them visible. Return to them during the activity if needed. When participants feel seen and heard, belonging grows. From belonging, leadership can emerge.

STEP 2: ESTABLISH A NON-JUDGMENTAL LEARNING SPACE

Be clear about how you understand learning. Nature does not judge. What is, is allowed to be, exactly as it shows up. It invites you to be present with what is happening and to move with change, without immediately trying to intervene.

For example:

- Notice what is present in yourself, others, and nature, without needing to change it
- This space is a practice ground. Here we experiment, make mistakes, and try again.
- There is no right or wrong, only learning moments.
- Use simple reflection questions:
 - What worked well
 - What would I do differently next time?

A non-judgmental learning culture strengthens courage, ownership, and engagement.

STEP 3: PRACTICE HOLDING SPACE

Facilitating in nature requires a different stance than facilitating indoors. Nature invites you to slow down and be fully present, rather than focusing on doing or directing.

- You guide less and observe more.
- You resist the urge to fix or solve immediately.
- You stay present with what is emerging.
- You move with the group's dynamics.
- In nature, facilitating means tuning in to what is happening: within yourself, the group, and in the environment, and guiding from there.

Holding space means trusting the process and the participants. It means allowing discomfort, silence, or unexpected turns, without trying to fix or control them right away.

You start from the idea that both you and the other person are okay. When you begin to see someone as "not okay," tension or conflict often arises.

Youth workers tell us that 'holding space' is one of the most challenging skills to

develop. At the same time, it is often the key to deeper learning. Growth emerges when you follow the process, rather than holding on too tightly to your plan.

STEP 4: INVITE PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Encourage participants to take responsibility within the group.

Ask:

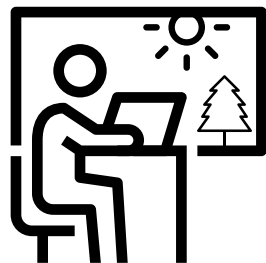
- What is important for you today?
- What would you like to contribute?
- What role feels natural for you?

When participants take responsibility and feel engaged, connection grows and leadership emerges within the group, not only from those with formal roles.

START WHERE YOU ARE

Bringing nature into your activities can feel like a big step. You don't have to do everything at once. Start with what feels accessible to you and your group. Small steps already make a difference.

THREE PHASES OF GUIDING IN NATURE



PHASE 1: LOOKING AT NATURE

Simply observing nature already influences how people feel and engage.

Methods:

- Greening the space with plants or nature posters
- Playing nature sounds
- Looking out of the window
- Asking young people about their safe space in nature
- Exploring which outdoor activities they enjoy
- Opening windows to let in fresh air

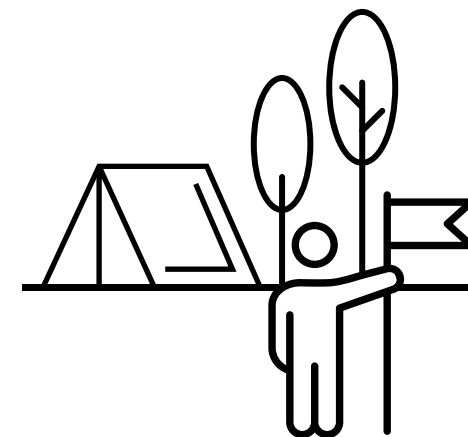
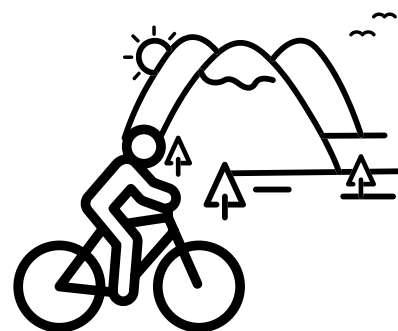
PHASE 2: BEING IN NATURE

Being outdoors changes how activities are experienced and how people relate to each other.

Take your existing methods outdoors. In this phase, nature serves primarily as the setting for your activities.

Activities:

- Morning opening activities
- Icebreakers
- Name games
- Energisers
- Group games
- Reflection exercises
- Outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling, and picnicking



PHASE 3: INTENTIONALLY INTERACTING WITH NATURE

In this phase, nature becomes part of the learning itself. Learning happens in interaction with nature and deepens reflection and experience.

Methods:

- Nature-based learning, nature rituals.

Activities:

- Outdoor exercises, games, gardening, or interacting with animals
- Mindfulness and meditation that connect body and mind
- Working with nature as a mirror for reflection
- Inviting young people to find something in nature that resonates with them
- Working with natural elements in activities. For example, a fallen tree can become a symbol of a personal challenge: do you go around it, step over it, or face it?

MACY'S LEARNING CYCLE: GRATITUDE TO ACTION

Young people are growing up in a time when concerns about climate and the future are becoming increasingly present. This can create tension, but also distance or a sense of powerlessness: how do you engage with this, without young people disengaging or becoming cynical?

The work of eco-philosopher Joanna Macy offers an important entry point. Through her method, *The Work That Reconnects*, she shows that feelings such as fear, sadness, and powerlessness are not a weakness but can instead become sources of engagement and action.

For youth workers, this is especially relevant, as young people often experience tension about the future and the climate. Some may feel disconnected from nature or even anxious about being in nature.

Macy's approach invites young people not to avoid these feelings, but to transform them into meaning and direction through four steps. In doing so, young people feel more connected to one another and to their environment, which strengthens

ecological leadership. Their sense of agency can grow, creating space for action instead of disengagement or cynicism. Rather than only worrying, young people can begin to see themselves as able to contribute to positive change.

The four steps are:

1. COMING FROM GRATITUDE

You begin by paying attention to what is already present and valuable. This helps you ground yourself, build trust, and open your perspective.

Core: seeing what is already there.

2. HONORING OUR PAIN FOR THE WORLD

This step creates space for feelings such as sadness, anger, or powerlessness in response to what is happening in nature and in the world around us.

Core: acknowledging feelings instead of pushing them away.

3. SEEING WITH NEW EYES

You discover new perspectives and begin to see yourself as part of a larger whole.



[HTTPS://WORKTHATRECONNECTS.ORG/WHAT-IS-THE-WORK-THAT-RECONNECTS/](https://workthatreconnects.org/what-is-the-work-that-reconnects/)

This leads to a different way of looking at yourself, others and the world.

Core: moving from 'I' to 'we together'.

4. GOING FORTH

From this sense of connection, you begin to take action. You take small, meaningful steps that fit who you are and your environment.

Core: taking action that feels meaningful, no matter how small.

Together, these steps form an inner journey: from appreciation, through feeling and seeing with new eyes, to meaningful action.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

To support our learning community, we work with buddies.

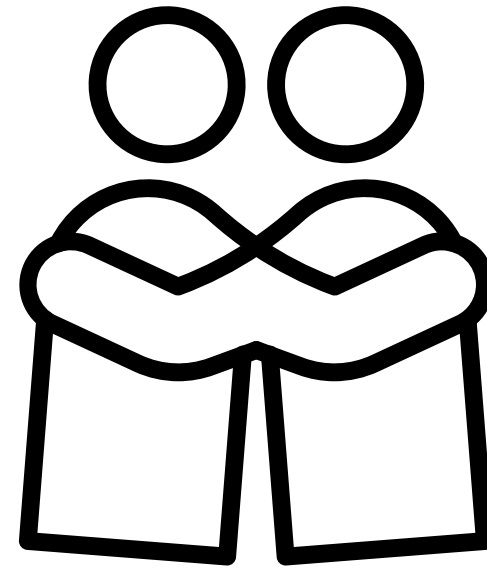
During the learning journey, you will work with the same buddy. Having the same buddy creates more trust and safety, making it easier to reflect openly and honestly. You get to know each other well, which allows feedback to become more focused and meaningful. This creates continuity and supports real growth.

The buddy card helps guide your conversations. You can find it further on in this guide. Use it to bring structure to your conversation. You are both responsible for the quality of the exchange. Take initiative and do not wait for the other.

Buddy conversations are preferably held while walking. Walking side by side, rather than face-to-face, makes it easier to speak openly.

- The rhythm of walking brings calm, helping thoughts to settle and conversations to deepen.
- Nature helps you find words for what you experience.
- Silence feels more natural and creates space for reflection.

After the training, stay connected with your buddy to support each other in practice. You can also have buddy conversations when you are not in the same location. Call each other and go for a walk at the same time, each in your own (natural) environment.



USING THE BUDDY SYSTEM WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

We invite you to also use buddies when working with young people. Pair them with the same buddy so they can support each other in learning and reflection.

In this way, they learn to ask for help and support each other in their learning process.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANISATIONS

Ecological leadership is about the choices you make in your daily work. The guiding principles in this guide help you make these choices more consciously and support conversation and alignment within your organisation.

Guiding principles are short guidelines that help you make choices in line with your organization's values. You can see them as a compass for behaviour and decision-making.

Three guiding principles to work with and experiment with:

1. INDOOR OR OUTDOOR? CHOOSE CONSCIOUSLY

For each activity, ask yourself: Do we do this indoors or outdoors?

Example: move a familiar activity outdoors and experience the difference. Or bring nature inside with images and natural objects as a first step. (See also the page 'Step into nature and start where you are'.)

2. WE MAKE CHOICES THAT ARE GOOD FOR PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

When choosing materials and activities, ask: What is the impact of this choice on nature? Does it have a negative impact on the environment? And if so, how can we reduce that impact?

Example: choose reusable or natural materials instead of disposable ones.

3. WE GIVE NATURE A PLACE IN OUR DECISION-MAKING

We include the perspective of nature in our decisions.

Example: place an extra chair in a meeting with a symbol representing nature, the 'Voice of nature'.

Ask questions such as:

What is the impact of this decision on nature?

What does this mean for the next generation?

FROM PRINCIPLES TO EXPERIMENT

Choose one or more principles and experiment with them in your work.

What will you try?

When and for how long will you do this, for example one or two months?

What do you notice?

Afterwards, reflect together:

- What worked well?
- What did you discover?
- What is your next step?
- Which guiding principles fit your organisation best?

You will receive a reflection format to support this process.

AI TUTOR

AI TUTOR AS SUPPORT FOR THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

In this project, we use AI to support the learning process. This is a pilot exploring how AI can support youth work and ecological leadership.

The AI Tutor is a digital learning companion that thinks along with you. You can use it to ask questions, prepare activities, and reflect on your work with young people. The AI tutor is based on the knowledge developed in this project.

ACCESSING THE AI TUTOR

Open the AI tutor via this [link](#)*

- Click the link
- Create a free account if needed
- Type a question to get started

You can find the tutor later in your ChatGPT sidebar.

If you want to continue a previous conversation, open that chat again instead of clicking the link. This way, you can build on what you already discussed.

GETTING STARTED WITH PROMPTS

Type a question related to your work with young people. A prompt is what you ask the tutor. The more concrete your prompt, the better the answer.

Use the answer as inspiration and ask follow-up questions. You are having a conversation grounded in project knowledge.

Work from your own practice, for example, with an activity from the toolbox.

This is an example of a prompt: 'I share here an activity from the toolbox. Can you translate it into Portuguese?'

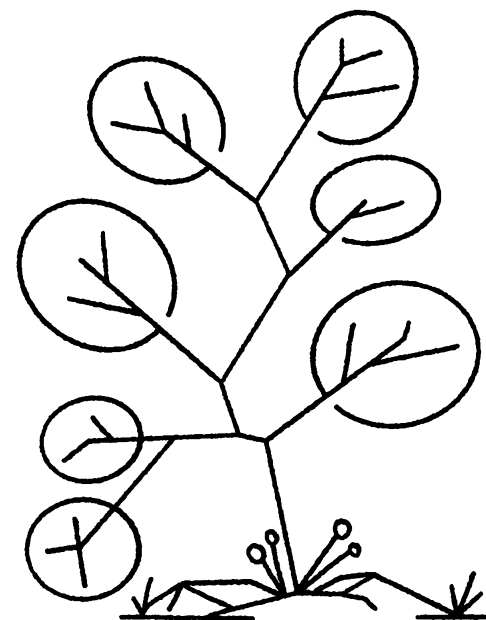
USING THE TUTOR IN PRACTICE

You can use the tutor for:

- explaining ecological leadership
- ideas for Random Acts of Kindness for Nature
- guiding reflection
- translating or simplifying texts
- adapting ideas to your cultural or local context

PRIVACY AND DATA

Your conversations are private. The project coordinator and other participants cannot



read your chats. The ChatGPT Privacy Policy applies.

Read the privacy policy [here](#)**

Do not share personal or confidential data of young people. Use no names, addresses, or other identifying information. Also, check your own privacy settings.

GOOD TO KNOW

The AI tutor supports you, but does not replace professional judgment. Stay critical of the answers. Not every answer will fit your situation. Use what works and adapt where needed.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

AI uses energy and water. Use the AI tutor consciously and when it truly adds value.

LEARNING TOGETHER

This is a pilot. We are learning together what works. You will receive a short feedback form. Your input helps improve the AI tutor. Together, we explore how technology can deepen learning while keeping human and ecological connection at the centre.

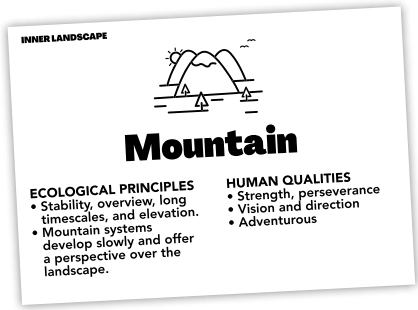
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**<https://openai.com/policies/privacy-policy>

ACTIVITIES

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

- Inner Landscapes Game
- Nature Values Walk
- Building a Tribe
- Leading & Following
- Participation Ladder
- Macy's Activity Cycle: Gratitude to Action
- Random Acts of Kindness for Nature
- Template Activities for Nature



INNER LANDSCAPES GAME

 GROUP SIZE 4-30	 LOCATION Outdoors	 CARD DECK Inner Landscape
 KEYWORDS Ecological identity, Perspectives	 TYPE OF ACTIVITY Exploration	 TIME 90-120 minutes

MATERIAL 8 inner landscape cards plus one blank card (to create your own) Optional: natural objects to place or collect Paper, pens, pencils, and chalk	PURPOSE (LEARNING GOALS) • Recognising ecological identity • Young people discover which landscapes they connect with • Insight into patterns and qualities. Young people recognise how their landscape influences their behaviour • Applying this to leadership. Young people explore how their landscape shapes their leadership	PREPARATION Choose a natural outdoor space with enough room to lay out the cards and move around.
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STEPS

Step 1 – Introduction: The landscape that lives in me
We all carry a landscape within us. The place where you grew up shapes how you see, feel, and act.
In this activity, you explore which landscape lives in you and what this says about your qualities and your leadership.

Step 2 – Check-in (5 minutes)
In some Aboriginal and other Indigenous cultures, people introduce themselves in relation to the place they come from. Invite participants to introduce themselves from a place that is meaningful to them.

For example:
I am ... from the mountain, from the river, from the city...
Let everyone introduce themselves in 1–2 sentences.

Step 3 – Arriving in your place of origin (10 minutes)
Participants stand quietly in nature. Guide a short visualisation:
Close your eyes and take a few breaths. Think back to the place where you were born or grew up until about age seven (if there are multiple places, choose one).

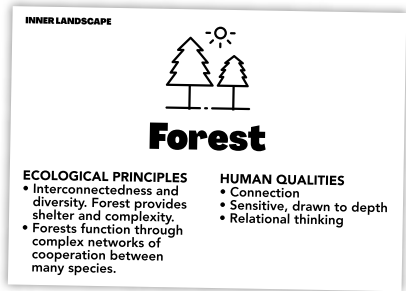
- What does the landscape look like?
 - What activities did you do in nature?
 - What smells, sounds or colours belong to this place?
 - How did you feel there as a child?
- Afterwards, let participants walk around in silence and stay with the feeling.
Ask: If your childhood were a landscape, what landscape would it be?

Step 4 – Choose your landscape (15 minutes)
Invite participants to choose a landscape that reflects their childhood. If your landscape is not there, use the blank card and create your own. Move as your landscape
Let participants explore their landscape through movement.
Speak as your landscape
In pairs or small groups:
If my landscape could speak, it would say...

For example:
I stand like a mountain, I feel strong and free
I am the desert. You are welcome here. Do you dare?

Step 5 – Qualities of the landscape (10 minutes)
You have just experienced how you move and speak as your landscape. Now explore:





which qualities of this landscape do you recognise in yourself?

Let participants write this down briefly or share in pairs.

Landscapes have ecological characteristics such as openness, boundaries, movement, or stability. In ecopsychology, these are sometimes linked to human qualities and behaviours. These are described on the cards. For a self-created landscape, participants can define these themselves.

Then let participants share in their landscape groups:
Which qualities do you see in this landscape?
What does this mean for your leadership?

**Step 6 – Landscape encounters
(20 minutes)**

Invite participants to look around at the other landscapes and notice which one draws their attention.
Ask: Which landscape challenges you in your leadership?
Go and stand there.
Repeat steps 3, 4 and 5 for this landscape.
Allow a few minutes per step.

Step 7 – Reflection (15 minutes)

Individual:
Write down what you have discovered about your landscape and yourself.

Then share in groups of three:

- Where do you feel challenged in your ecological leadership?
- Which quality from the landscape do you want to connect with to support your growth?
For example, I connect with the Mountain for more overview.
- What do you realise now about your place in Earth's community?
- Which qualities of your landscape do you bring into the world?

Closure
Close in a circle with the whole group:
Each person shares one sentence:
The landscape that lives in me brings ... into the world.
For example:
The forest that lives in me brings connection into the world.

**Step 8 – Creative anchoring
(15–30 minutes)**

Everyone chooses their own place in nature.
Bring your learning journey into form.
This can be a drawing, a mind map, or something created with natural materials.

Work with your inner landscapes and the qualities you have discovered.
There is no fixed format.
Keep it simple and create something that feels right for you.
You may choose to include your sentence:
The landscape that lives in me brings ... into the world.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This activity connects three layers: personal biography, ecological principles, and symbolic meaning.
Young people explore how childhood landscapes shape their identity, values, and ways of relating to others. By working with landscapes as metaphors, they gain insight into their qualities and how these influence their leadership.

This activity is based on insights from ecopsychology and place-based learning. Both approaches assume that learning and identity development emerge in relation to the place where you live and grow up. Research on place attachment shows that places from our childhood influence how we see ourselves, how we act, and how we relate to others.

Landscapes such as mountains, forests, or deserts invite recognition and reflection. They can mirror inner qualities and patterns, as described in the archetypal psychology of Carl Jung and in Bill Plotkin's work. This also connects to E.O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that humans have an innate relationship with the living world and respond intuitively to landscapes and ecological patterns.

In many cultures, identity is understood as something that emerges in relationship with place and community. This activity makes that reciprocity tangible: not only what the environment means to us, but also how we relate to the wider whole of which we are a part. As Robin Wall Kimmerer describes in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, places carry stories and values that shape who we are.



NATURE VALUES WALK

 GROUP SIZE 3-30	 LOCATION Preferably in a natural setting (e.g. woods)	 CARD DECK Nature Values
 KEYWORDS Awareness, Perspective, Values	 TYPE OF ACTIVITY Exploration	 TIME 45-60 minutes

MATERIALS

Optional: flipchart or printed handout with the ten values (for step 3, to support ranking)

PURPOSE

(LEARNING GOALS)

- To gain insight into what is important to you in your relationship with nature
- To understand how people relate differently to nature
- To explore how your values guide your leadership and actions

PREPARATION

Choose a quiet, inspiring place in nature where participants can move around freely
Make sure there is enough space to walk and reflect in pairs
Write the reflection questions on a card to take along during the walk

STEPS

Introduction

Ecological leadership starts with discovering what truly matters to you in relation to nature. What is important to you gives direction and energy to take action. Sometimes values can be in tension, for example, using nature while also wanting to take care of it. Ecological leadership emerges in how you work with these tensions. Today, we explore your nature values and what they mean for how you think and act.

Step 1 – Reflection in pairs while walking (15 minutes)

Give one question at a time. Let participants walk and share in pairs, allowing a few minutes per question. Complete the sentences:
For me, nature begins with...
What moves me in nature is...
What I find difficult about nature is...

Step 2 – Nature values walk (10 minutes)

Place the value cards on the ground with enough space between them. Let participants walk past the ten values in pairs. Give the following questions:
What do you recognise most?

What attracts you?
What feels less fitting for you?

Step 3 – Ranking the values (5–10 minutes)

Individually:
Create a ranking of the nature values. Order the ten values from 1 to 10:
1 = most important to you
10 = least recognisable for you

In groups of three (new partners) (5–10 minutes):
Share your ranking and discuss your choices:

- What do you notice in your similarities and differences?
- Which values are in tension or difficult to combine?
- What does this ask of you as a facilitator or leader?

Step 4 – Living your nature values (5–10 minutes)

Individually:
Look at your top 3 nature values. For each value, give a score from 0 to 10: to what extent is this value present in your daily life?
Example: Being outdoors (naturalistic) may be important to you, but if you spend a lot of time indoors, you might give it a 6.





In pairs:

Discuss: What would be a first step to live one of your core values more in your daily life?

Example: If being outdoors is important to you, you might choose to spend more time outside.

Debriefing (10 minutes)

Place the ten nature values on the ground. Ask participants to stand by the value that is number 1 for them (most important).

Reflective dialogue:

- What do you notice?
- Where are many people standing?
- Which values are less represented?
- What does this say about the group?

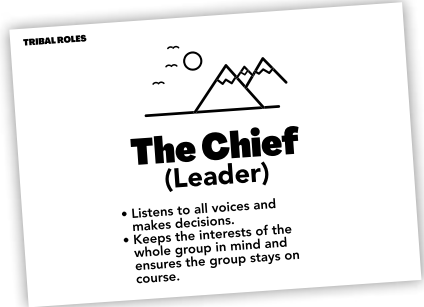
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

NATURE VALUES

Stephen Kellert described ten recurring ways in which people relate to nature. These nature values show how people relate to nature and give it meaning. For example, by wanting to understand it, enjoy it, use it, care for it, or experience distance or discomfort.

The ten nature values are: naturalistic, ecologicistic/scientific, aesthetic, symbolic, humanistic, moralistic, utilitarian, control, negativistic, and spiritualistic. These values are based on E.O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that humans have an innate tendency to connect with nature. When this connection is less present, a sense of disconnection can arise, from ourselves, others, and nature.

These ten nature values make visible how differently people relate to nature. By becoming aware of this, you will better understand what drives you and also see what matters to others. This strengthens your leadership, as you can better attune, work with differences, and make choices that fit the group and the situation.



BUILDING A TRIBE



GROUP SIZE
6-30



LOCATION
Outdoors, preferably in a natural setting with space to move and walk



CARD DECK
Tribal Roles



KEYWORDS
Roles, Position, Group dynamics



TYPE OF ACTIVITY
Experiential



TIME
45 minutes

MATERIALS

Card deck with the six tribal roles (Chief, Sub-Chief, Elder, Magician, Hunter, Gatherer)
Flipchart and markers

PURPOSE

(LEARNING GOALS)

- Become aware of your natural role in a group and how it affects others
- Understand how your behaviour affects others
- Experiment with a new role in a group setting

PREPARATION

Write the reflection questions from on a flipchart.
This exercise can be applied during activities you already do with young people, such as cooking together, a game, a creative activity, or sports.

STEPS

Step 1 – Connecting (10 minutes)

Start with a short energizer, icebreaker, or name game.
Make sure the group feels comfortable.

Step 2 – Exploring roles

Lay the cards with the six roles on the ground.

2.1 Walk in silence (5 minutes)

Let participants first walk past the roles in silence and read the texts.

2.2 Share in pairs (5 minutes)

Walk past the roles together in pairs.
Question: ‘Which roles do you recognize in groups you are part of?’

2.3 Preferred role (5 minutes)

Then let them stand by a role they often take.

In small groups, they discuss:

- What do you recognize in this role?
- When do you often take this role?
- What challenges do you face in this role?

2.4 Which role are you curious about? (5 minutes)

Next, let them go to a role they want to practice.

Give them the following questions:

- What is your challenge in this role?
- What do you need to practice this role?
- What is the first small step you can take?

- Who or what can help you with this?

Step 3 – Experiencing

Let the group do an activity, for example, developing a Random Act of Kindness for nature, as described in this guide.
Important: They do this activity consciously from the role they want to practice.

Step 4 – Reflection (5 minutes)

Place the role cards on the ground again and let participants return to the role they practiced.

In small groups, they share:

- What did you do in this role?
- What went well?
- What was difficult?
- What did you discover?

Plenary debriefing (5 minutes)

Ask:

- What did you notice?
- What will you take away to other groups?
- Where could you apply this new behavior?





BACKGROUND INFORMATION
BUILDING A TRIBE

Ecological leadership begins with becoming aware of how you behave in a group. People have lived in groups for thousands of years, often referred to as tribes. In order for a group to function and survive, different ways of contributing naturally emerge. For example, by taking initiative, connecting, leading, or making decisions. These ways of contributing are called roles. You usually don't choose these roles consciously. They arise naturally in how you behave in a group.

This insight is based on the work of anthropologists Daniëlle Braun and Jitske Kramer, among others, as described in *Building Tribes*, who show how these roles appear in groups and organizations. Ecological Leadership starts with becoming aware of your role, taking responsibility for your behavior, and discovering that you can move between roles.

In many groups, the focus is often (unconsciously) on yourself: taking space, being heard, or proving your point. However, a group works best when people not only think about themselves, but also about what is good for the whole. This is called prosocial behavior: contributing in ways that benefit yourself and the group.

In a resilient group, there is space for difference. Not everyone does the same, but everyone can contribute in their own way.



LEADING AND FOLLOWING



GROUP SIZE
10-15



LOCATION
Outdoors (forest or natural environment with space to move)



TIME
30 minutes



KEYWORDS
Influence Roles,
Group dynamics



TYPE OF ACTIVITY
Exploration,
Adventure walk

MATERIAL

Optional: timer or flipchart for reflection

PURPOSE

(LEARNING GOALS)

- Experience the difference between following, suggesting and leading in a group.
- Recognise how influence shifts within a group and how this affects attention, energy and behaviour.
- Reflect on your own role in a group and how you respond to different levels of influence.

PREPARATION

Choose a safe outdoor location with enough space to move.

STEPS

Step 1 – Informing

Explain that there are different ways to participate in a group, such as listening, contributing ideas, or leading. In this activity, you will explore what happens in a group.

Step 2 – Following

Choose one participant as the route leader. Inform the group that they will follow this person. The route leader silently chooses a short route (2–5 minutes) through the forest. The rest follows in silence, without discussion or explanation.

Reflection (plenary):

- How did it feel to only follow?
- How was this for the route leader?
- What happened to your attention and energy levels?

Step 3 – Consulting

Choose a new route leader. Repeat the same activity, but now participants can make suggestions before and during the walk (e.g., “Shall we go that way?”). The route leader decides. Walk in silence, with space to occasionally suggest directions.

Reflection:

- When did you feel influence? When not?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Good leadership is not only about leading, but also about knowing when to follow. In his book ‘Leaders Eat Last’, Simon Sinek explains that strong leaders create trust and safety in a group by putting others first. This means they do not always take control, but listen, adapt, and give space when needed. In a healthy group, people naturally move between leading and following, depending on the situation.

- How was it for the route leader to receive suggestions?
- What happened to your attention and energy?

Step 4 – Co-creating

Choose a new route leader. The group has 10 minutes to design a 5-minute route together with a chosen goal (e.g., “exciting”, “calm”, “exploring”). They agree on roles and decision-making in advance. Leadership can be shared, but one person leads at a time. Stay together as one group. As a facilitator, let the group lead the process. Only intervene if needed for safety.

Reflection:

- What changed when you designed the plan together?
- What happened to your attention and energy?
- For the route leader: how was your role different?
- What did you find challenging?

Step 5 – Debriefing

Form a circle with the group.

- What did you discover about leading?
 - What did you discover about following?
- Close by briefly highlighting that good leadership requires both the ability to lead and to follow.

PARTICIPATION LADDER

**GROUP SIZE**
10-15

**LOCATION**
Outdoors (forest or natural environment with space to move)

**CARD DECK**
Participation Ladder

**KEYWORDS**
Responsibility, Participation, Influence

**TYPE OF ACTIVITY**
Exploration

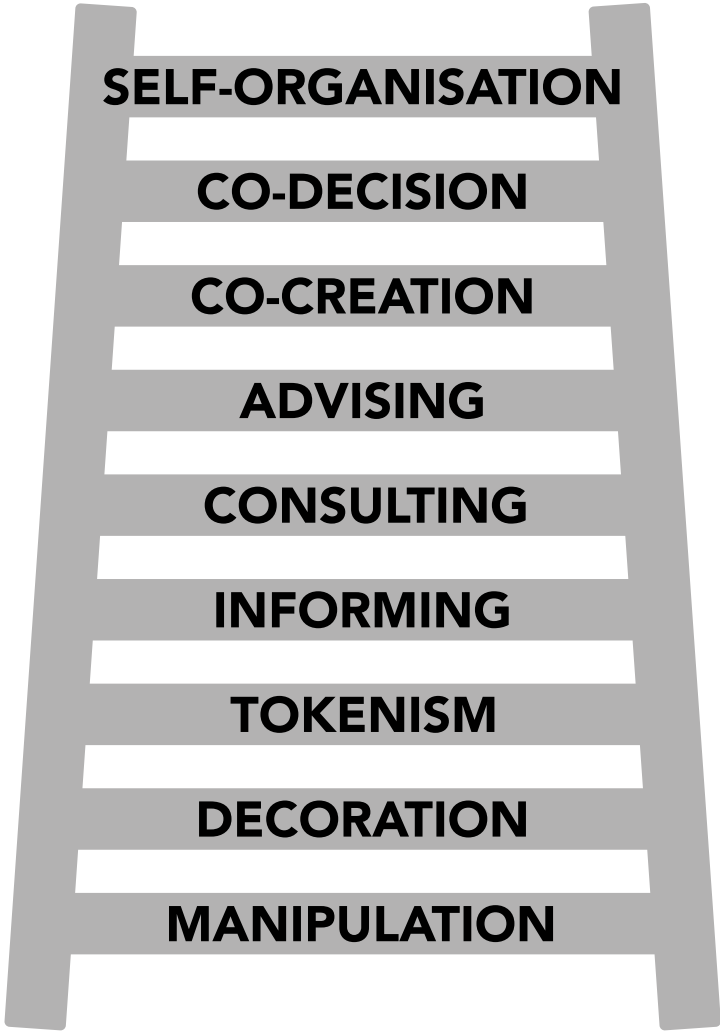
**TIME**
60 minutes

MATERIALS
Participation Ladder card deck (9 levels: Manipulation, Decoration, Tokenism, Informing, Consulting, Advising, Co-creation, Co-decision, Self-organisation)
Sticks or other natural materials (e.g., rope, leaves) to create a ladder on the ground
Flipchart and markers

PURPOSE (LEARNING GOALS)

- Participants can recognise and name the different levels of the participation ladder based on their own experiences.
- Participants can identify where they stand as a facilitator (from making all decisions themselves to sharing responsibility with young people) and explain what this means for influence, responsibility, and trust in young people.
- Participants can determine the next appropriate step in different situations, based on what young people need and are able to take on.

PREPARATION
Choose a safe outdoor location with enough space to move.
Print and/or laminate the cards depending on the group size.
Collect materials (sticks, rope, ribbon) to build a ladder on the ground.
Bring the reflection questions (on a flipchart or cards) and prepare a few of your own examples for each level.
Ensure a safe and open atmosphere, especially when exploring manipulation, tokenism, and decoration.



STEPS

Experiencing the Participation Ladder
(60 minutes)

Step 1 – Introduction (5 minutes)

Explain that there are different ways to participate in a group, from following to taking initiative. At the bottom, participants have little influence. At the top, they take initiative and responsibility.

Step 2 – Building the ladder (10 minutes)

The facilitator prepares a large ladder in advance. Depending on the group size, either work with this ladder or have participants create their own ladders in pairs using natural materials, then place the cards in order.

Step 3 – Moving through the ladder (15 minutes)

Guide the group through the ladder and give a concrete example for each level. Then ask participants to work in pairs, starting at level 1 (manipulation) and moving step by step upwards. At each level, they share a concrete situation from their own experience. Use the reflection questions (on a flipchart): Share your experience

- What do you notice in your body?

- How much responsibility did you have?
- How much trust were you given?

Step 4 – In the role of facilitator (15 minutes)

Turn the cards around to show the facilitator role. Explain that each level requires a different way of guiding and influences how much participation young people experience. Ask participants to move through the ladder again, now from a role where they influence others (e.g., facilitator, leader, initiator).

They start again at level 1 and share concrete situations from their own context. Use the reflection questions:

- How do you give influence and responsibility?
- When do you take the lead, and when do you give space?
- What does this say about the trust you give others?

Step 5 – Sharing and insights (10 minutes)

Work in groups of four and discuss: When does it become challenging for you to give trust or responsibility? Share key insights in the plenary session. Refer to the success factors for increasing participation (see background information).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The participation ladder is based on Roger Hart’s (1992) model, adapted for working with young people. It shows how much influence young people have and how the facilitator’s role can increase or limit it through trust and responsibility.

Within ecological leadership, the ladder is used to explore what is appropriate in a given situation. It helps facilitators decide when to guide, when to give space, and when to share responsibility, always in relation to the group and their development.

The nine levels are: Manipulation, Decoration, Tokenism, Informing, Consulting, Advising, Co-creation, Co-decision, and Self-organisation. During this activity, participants explore these levels through real experiences and reflect on how influence and responsibility are shared. It also helps to recognise when there is no real participation, such as in manipulation, tokenism, or decoration.

Success factors for increasing participation

Provide clear boundaries, balance giving space with staying connected, and realistically assess what young people can handle. Be willing to tolerate discomfort and accept outcomes that differ from your expectations. This is where their ownership grows.

Key insight for young people

If you want more influence, you also need to take on more responsibility.

Key insight for youth workers

Real participation requires courage: giving space, holding boundaries and trusting the capacity of young people, even when it feels uncomfortable.



MACY’S ACTIVITY CYCLE: GRATITUDE TO ACTION

- 1) GRATITUDE SAFARI
- 2) HONOURING OUR PAIN FOR THE WORLD
- 3) SEEING WITH NEW EYES

 GROUP SIZE 4-30	 LOCATION Outdoors, in a natural environment (e.g., forest, park, or near water)	 TIME 35-45 minutes
 KEYWORDS Gratitude, Pain, Connection, Active Hope	 TYPE OF ACTIVITY Nature Rituals, Experiential	

MATERIALS
Natural materials in the environment
Nature images (6-8 perspectives) for activity 3

- PURPOSE (LEARNING GOALS)**
- Experiencing what is already present in nature through the senses, and developing a sense of wonder, gratitude, and connection.
 - Making space for feelings

- such as pain, grief, and powerlessness, and recognising these as expressions of care and connection to nature.
- Learning to see from different perspectives and discovering how this brings more space, overview, and flexibility.
 - Experiencing how connection with oneself, others and nature forms the basis for ecological leadership.

PREPARATION
Choose a natural location with enough space for all participants.
Mark out a clear and safe area where participants can move freely.
Create a setting in which participants feel safe to share.

STEPS

Movement 1 – Coming from gratitude (15 minutes)

Intro
‘Coming from gratitude’ means starting with attention to what is already here, before wanting to change anything. This is what Joanna Macy describes as nurturing your inner ground.

Step 1 – Gratitude Safari
Go outside into nature.
In ten minutes, collect five things in nature that you feel grateful for.
This can be a smell, a sound, a small detail or something easily overlooked.
Form groups of four.
Let everyone share one finding and explain why they feel grateful for it.

- Step 2 – Debrief (plenary)**
- What did you notice that made you feel happy or grateful?
 - Who or what did you feel connected to, even if only for a moment?

Movement 2 – Honouring Our Pain for the World (20 minutes)

Intro
Young people often experience concern, distance or powerlessness when it comes to nature and the future.
In this activity, there is space to pause and

reflect on what is affecting them, without the need to fix it.

Step 1 – A quiet place for what touches you
Find your own place in nature within the marked area. Sit quietly or walk slowly for a few minutes.
Take this question with you:
What is touching me right now in relation to nature or the future?
Notice what is present in your body, without trying to change it.
Choose a natural object that reflects what you feel.
For example, a bird as a symbol of freedom, you miss, or a piece of wood for something that feels heavy.

Step 2 – What does the object tell you?
Work in pairs.
Place the object in front of you (or visualise it if needed).
Imagine this object has a voice.
What would it say to you in one sentence about your pain and/or what you long for?
For example:
‘I am your longing to feel free in nature.’
Share your sentence and what you feel with each other.

- What does the object say?
- What does this mean for you?
- What do you long for?
- What do you need right now?



Step 3 – Debrief (plenary)

Invite a few participants to share.
Only share what feels right for you.

**Movement 3 – Seeing with New Eyes
(20 minutes)**

Intro

Leadership requires the ability to look from different perspectives. By engaging with nature as an entry point, you discover new ways of seeing, thinking, and acting. This creates space, overview, and flexibility, and shows that you can always have an influence, even in complex or uncertain situations.

Step 1 – Exploring (10 minutes)

Place or hang the nature images throughout a marked area.

Invite participants to move along the images and experience each perspective through their bodies.

Take on a posture that fits the perspective, and experience it with your body. For example, by floating, flowing, standing firmly, or rooting.

Engage with the space: climb onto something, stand higher, lie on the ground and look up, or zoom in on something small.

For example:

Tree: standing, rooting, growing

Bird: looking from above

Stone: steady and still

Ant: close to the ground, in motion

Water: flowing and adapting

Step 2 – Sharing (5 minutes)

Exchange in small groups:

- What did you notice?
- Which perspective helps you to look differently at what is affecting you?
- What changes in how you see it now?

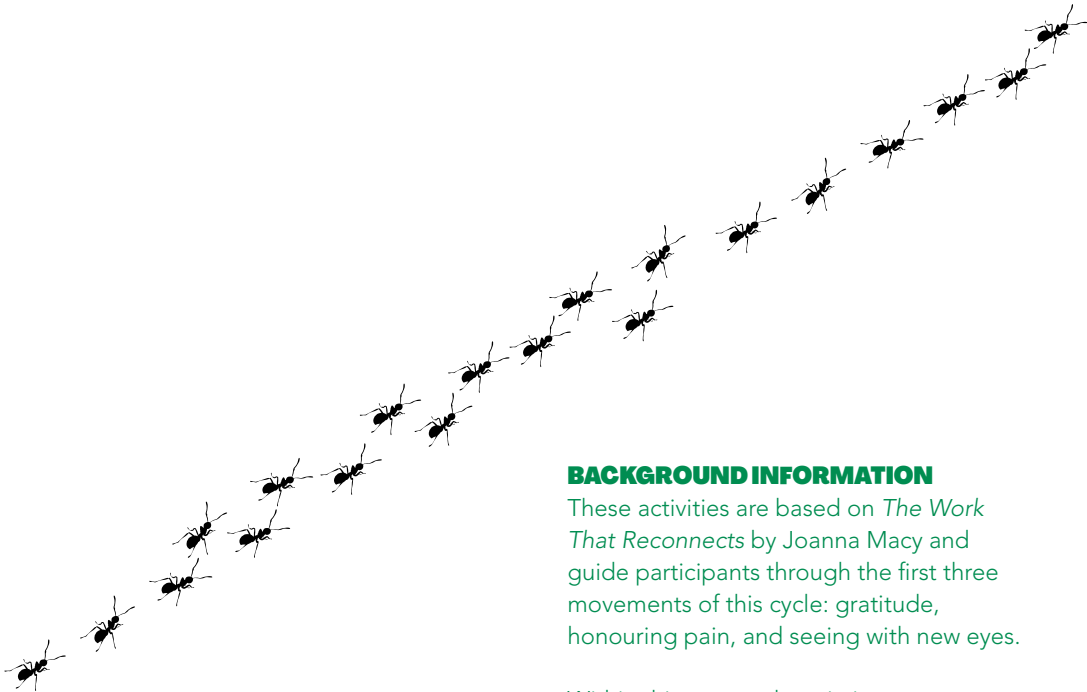
Step 3 – Debrief (plenary, 5 minutes)

Invite a few participants to share their insights.

Only share what feels right for you.

Movement 4 Going Forth – Taking action

To complete Joanna Macy's cycle, participants take a step towards action. This step is further developed in the manual *Designing Random Acts of Kindness for Nature*, where engagement is turned into concrete actions.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These activities are based on *The Work That Reconnects* by Joanna Macy and guide participants through the first three movements of this cycle: gratitude, honouring pain, and seeing with new eyes.

Within this approach, pain is not seen as something to be solved, but as a sign of connection and care for the natural world. By making space for feelings such as grief, concern, and powerlessness, participants begin to discover what truly matters to them and what they want to care for.

This forms the basis for ecological leadership: discovering what is important to you and acting from that. From this experience, the next movement in the cycle unfolds: moving into action.



MANUAL:

DESIGNING RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR NATURE

WHY RANDOM ACTS FOR NATURE?

Random Acts for Nature are small, concrete actions that have a direct positive impact on nature or the environment, without expecting anything in return.

These small actions make a difference:

- easy to carry out
- make the impact visible and tangible
- encourage young people to take action

PURPOSE

The aim is to develop experiential, nature-based activities in which young people:

- feel connected to nature
- explore their role and responsibilities
- practise ecological leadership

EXAMPLES OF RANDOM ACTS FOR NATURE

These examples show how small and concrete a Random Act can be. Use them as inspiration.

Green your space (indoors or outdoors)

Young people make their environment greener, for example by adding plants indoors or replacing tiles with greenery outside.

Adopt a place

Choose a place nearby and return to it regularly to care for it, observe, and take small actions, such as tending plants or removing litter.

One-time action with direct impact

Young people choose one concrete action that creates an immediate visible result, such as cleaning up a place, clearing a path, or repairing something.

Co-creation Step-by-Step – Random Acts of Kindness for Nature

This manual provides a step-by-step approach and a template for developing Random Acts for Nature with young people. Use the participation ladder to consciously decide how much participation and ownership fit your group best. This approach is inspired by the work of Joanna Macy and her method, *The Work That Reconnects*.

STEPS

Step 1 – Gratitude – Connecting with the place (15 minutes)

Start with the ‘Gratitude Safari’ (see elsewhere in this guide).

Step 2 – Making space for what is painful (15 minutes)

Continue with the activity ‘Honouring our pain for the world’ (see elsewhere in this guide).

Step 3 – Seeing with new eyes (10 minutes)

Do the activity ‘Nature Perspectives’ (see elsewhere in this guide) to help young people see their situation differently.

Step 4 – Generating and choosing ideas (15 minutes)

Form groups

Each group divides roles, inspired by the tribal roles (e.g., who takes initiative, who connects, who keeps the overview).

Collect ideas

Each participant pitches ideas.

Choose an action

Each group chooses the action with the most energy — not the biggest, but the one that feels most alive.

Step 5 – Designing and taking action (60 minutes)

Work with the template

Make it concrete for everyone’s role.

- What are we going to do?
- Who does what?
- What do we need?
- When will we do it?

Take action

Carry out the action with your group.

Step 6 – Reflection (15 minutes)

In pairs:

- What was your challenge?
- What helped you?
- What has started to move?

Plenary debrief:

- What worked well?
- What will you take with you?
- Briefly explore: at what level of the participation ladder was the group?

ROLES IN THE PROCESS

Facilitator

- Adapts to the group’s level of participation
- Safeguards safety and structure
- Facilitates the process
- Guides reflection

Young people

- Bring in ideas
- Take ownership within their abilities
- Learn by doing

TEMPLATE:

DESIGN A RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS FOR NATURE

USE THIS TEMPLATE TO DESIGN AND CARRY OUT AN ACTION FOR NATURE TOGETHER WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY

Instructions: Choose a name that gets the group excited about the activity.

GROUP SIZE

How many participants is this activity suitable for? (minimum – maximum)

KEYWORDS

Focus on ecological leadership themes explored in the activity.
For example: Gratitude, Pain, Active Hope, Action, Influence, Roles, Position, Place, participation, ecological identity, collaboration, awareness, perspective, responsibility, group dynamics, trust.

LOCATION

Indoor, or outdoors? What kind of environment or landscape?

CARD DECK

Indicate which card deck or tool is used in this activity, if any.
For example: Tribal roles cards, Nature values cards

TYPE OF ACTIVITY

For example: name games, exploration, experiential, reflection, game, nature ritual, place-based learning

TIME

Indicate the duration of the activity in minutes

MATERIAL

List the materials needed, such as paper, pens, or natural objects.

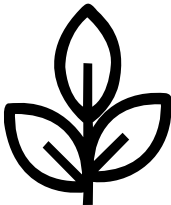
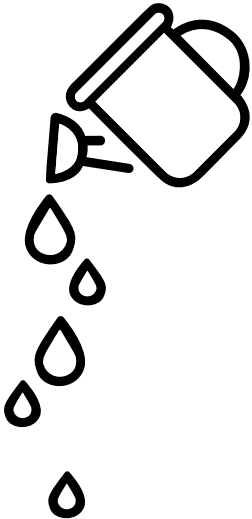
PURPOSE (LEARNING GOALS)

Describe how the activity connects to ecological leadership. List up to three learning goals:

- What will participants become aware of or understand?
- What will they experience or practice?

PREPARATION

Describe what preparation is needed for the activity. For example, finding a suitable spot in nature in advance, gathering materials, or checking the weather conditions. How do you use the participation ladder to involve



your target group in the preparation and execution of this activity? Who takes on which role (e.g., tribal roles).

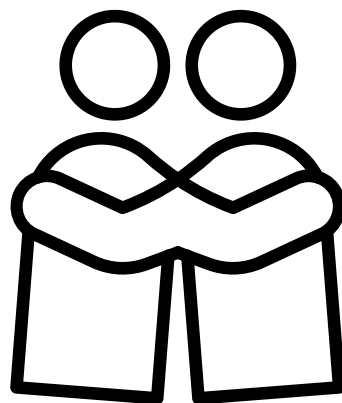
STEPS

Describe how to guide the activity step by step.
This section serves as the handout for the activity. It provides clear instructions for carrying out the core part of the activity. We use non-formal and experiential learning, so detailed introductions with much information are not always necessary. Instead, this information can be shared during the debriefing and evaluation moments. It is often more effective if young people simply begin the activity, and later reflect afterwards.

REFLECTION

An activity becomes a learning experience only when we reflect on it.
Add reflection questions such as:

- What went well?
- What can I do differently next time?
- What did I learn about...?



Buddy Card

Holding space

- What do you need to feel safe enough to share?
- What can you offer the other person to create that space?
- Agree that what is shared stays between you.

Check-in

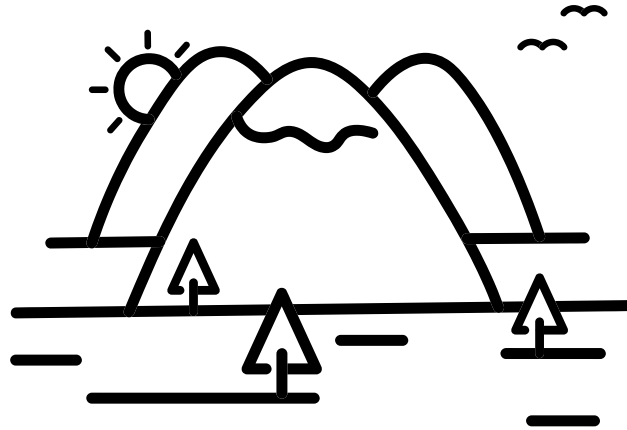
- Look around you. What do you notice in nature?
- Where in nature do you feel most connected right now?

Invite your buddy into the learning zone

- What is your challenge?
- What is your need?
- What could be a first step?
- Who or what can support you?

Reflection

- What do you take away?
- What are you going to do?



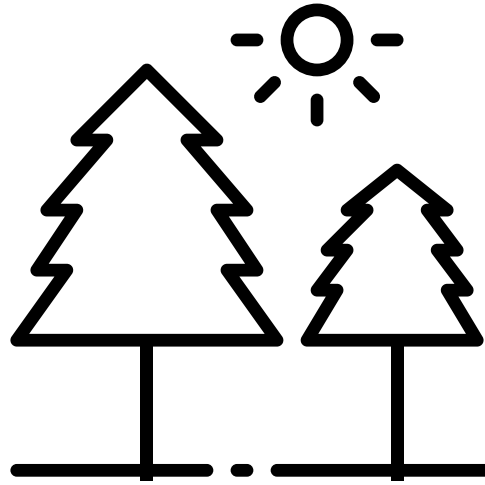
Mountain

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Stability, overview, long timescales, and elevation.
- Mountain systems develop slowly and offer a perspective over the landscape.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Strength, perseverance
- Vision and direction
- Adventurous



Forest

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Interconnectedness and diversity. Forest provides shelter and complexity.
- Forests function through complex networks of cooperation between many species.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Connection
- Sensitive, drawn to depth
- Relational thinking



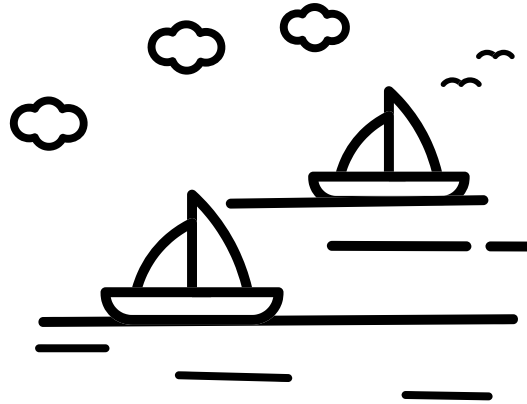
Island

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Small, interdependent ecosystems, limited resources, perseverance.
- Islands stand on their own, but need to orient outward in order to grow.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Strong social bonds, sometimes closed to the outside world
- Duality
- Practical simplicity



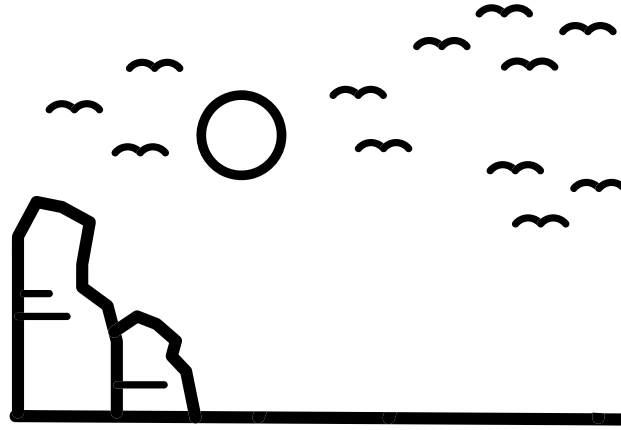
Sea / Coast

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Open systems, exchange, and vast biodiversity.
- Seas offer openness and distant horizons, as well as threats. Life moves with the rhythm of the tides.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Living with rhythm
- Imagination
- Drawn to adventure
- Needs openness



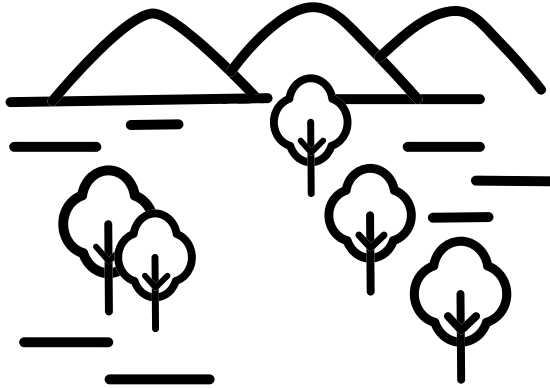
Desert

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Minimalism and efficient use of scarce resources. Silence, simplicity, essence.
- Deserts have large differences between day and night, with unexpected blooming at the right moment.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Comfortable being alone
- Appreciates clarity and minimalism
- Quickly sees what truly matters



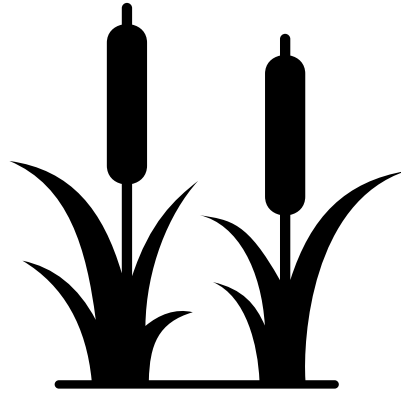
Grassland / Prairie

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Dynamics, resilience, and collective systems.
- Grasslands are open, but grasses can also conceal things. They sustain many animals.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Enjoys collaboration
- Feels at ease in openness
- Sees the bigger picture



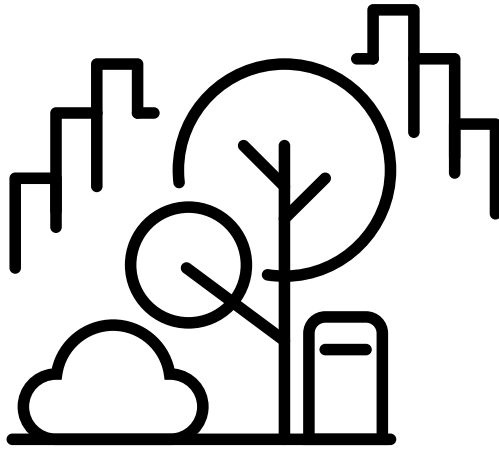
Wetlands / Swamp

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Water-rich transition zones (ecotones) with high productivity and sensitivity.
- Wetlands are crucial for water purification and have rich biodiversity. They slow things down and can draw you in.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Senses subtle changes
- Intuitive
- Able to work with complexity
- Creativity



City

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

- Human-made ecosystems with intensive interactions.
- Cities are created by people. There is creativity, dynamics, and a lot of human energy.

HUMAN QUALITIES

- Sees opportunities for innovation and connections
- Social, gains energy from interaction
- Thinks and acts quickly

Your Landscape

Describe your own landscape based on your experience.

ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

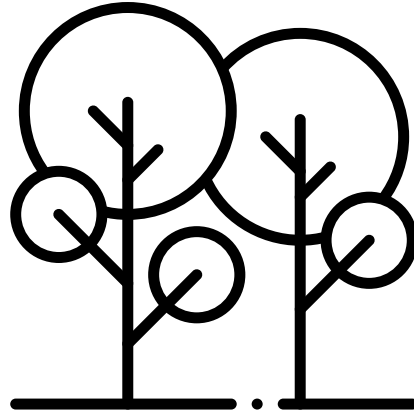
(What defines your landscape?):

HUMAN QUALITIES:

1)

2)

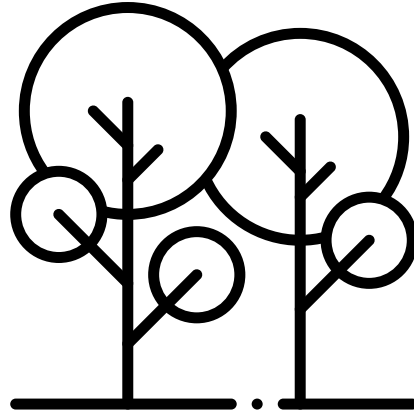
3)



Utilitarian

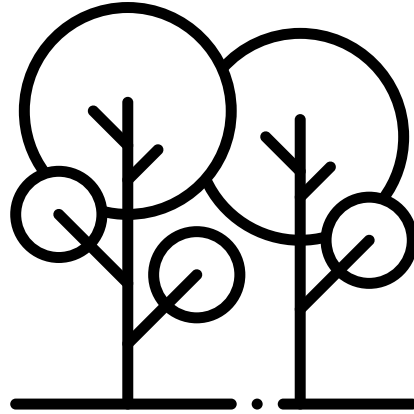
(Use / Resource)

- Nature as something we use
- I depend on nature and use what it provides
- food, materials, energy



Naturalistic (Being outdoors)

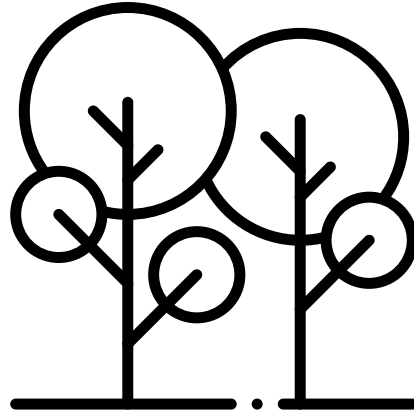
- Nature as a place to be
- I feel good when I'm outdoors
- rest, movement, recharging



Ecological / Scientific

(Understanding nature)

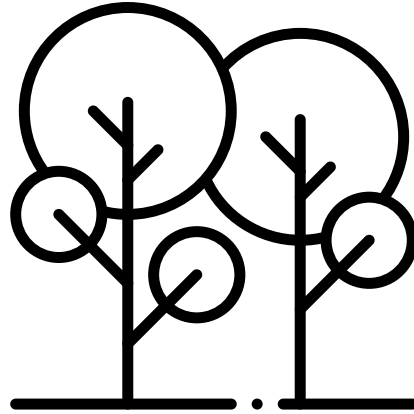
- Nature as a system to understand
- I want to understand how nature works
- climate, ecosystems, connections



Aesthetic

(Beauty)

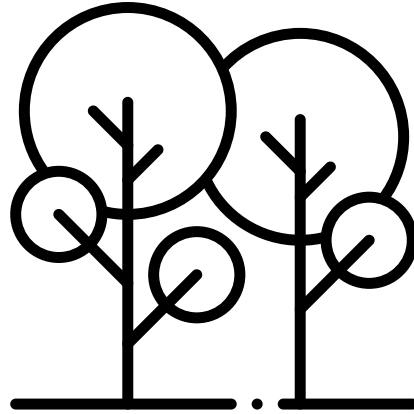
- Nature as beauty
- I notice how beautiful nature is
- landscape, colors, silence



Symbolic

(Meaning & stories)

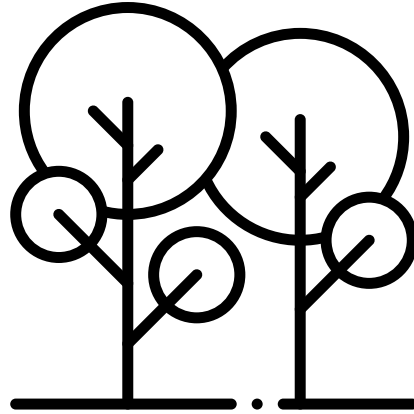
- Nature as a source of meaning
- I find meaning and stories in nature
- symbols, art, inspiration



Humanistic

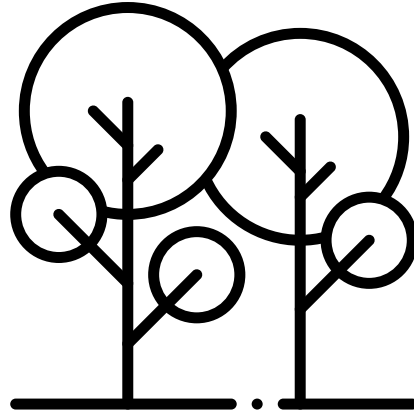
(Care & connection)

- Nature as something to care for
- I feel love for nature and animals
- protecting, helping, caring



Moral (Responsibility)

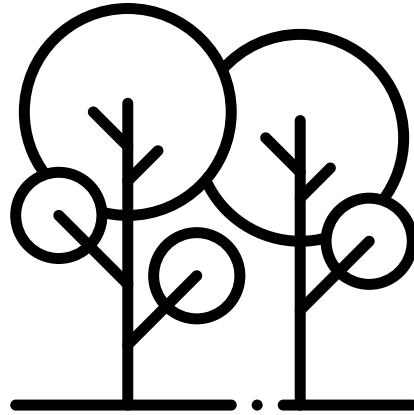
- Nature as a responsibility
- I feel responsible for taking care of it
- care, fairness



Control

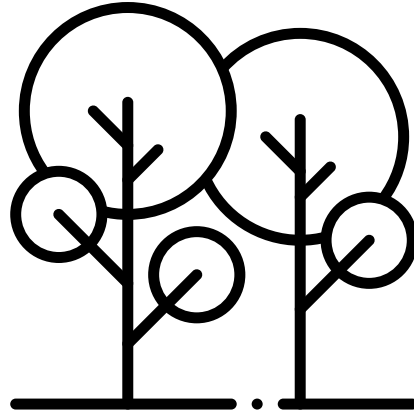
(Managing nature)

- Nature as something we try to manage and control
- I want to influence what happens
- solutions, design, intervention



Negativistic **(Discomfort/distance)**

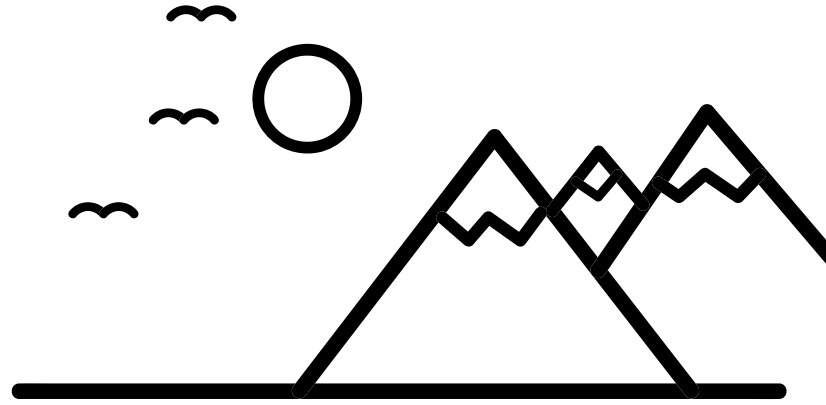
- Nature as something I feel distant from
- I feel uncomfortable in nature
- fear, discomfort, disconnection



Spiritual

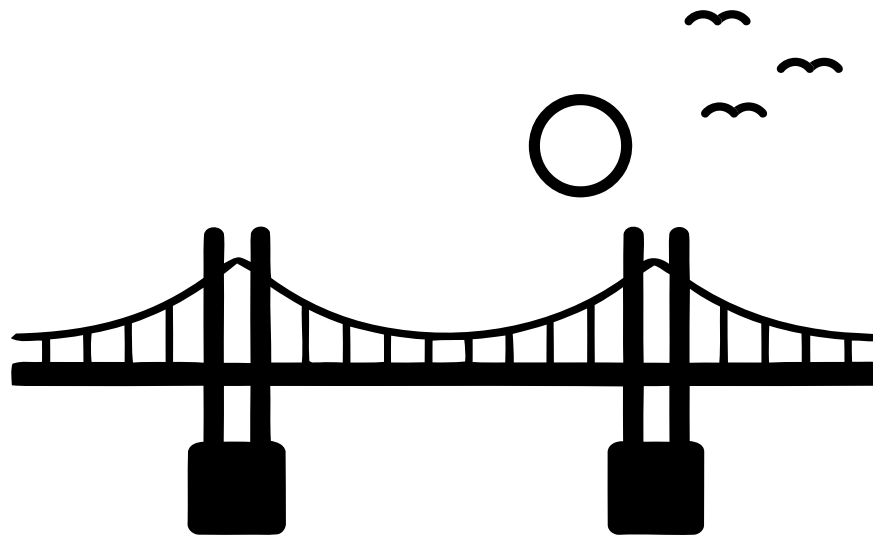
(Connection to something bigger)

- Nature as something I am part of
- I feel connected to something bigger than myself
- peace, meaning, belonging



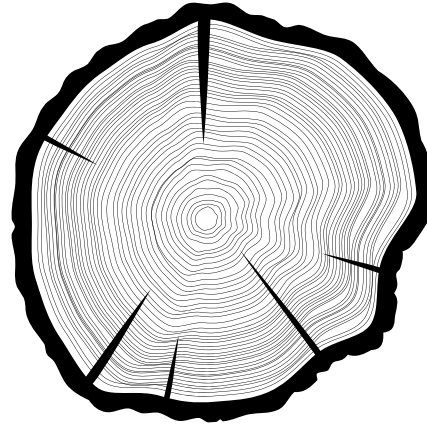
The Chief (Leader)

- Listens to all voices and makes decisions.
- Keeps the interests of the whole group in mind and ensures the group stays on course.



The Sub-Chief (Connector)

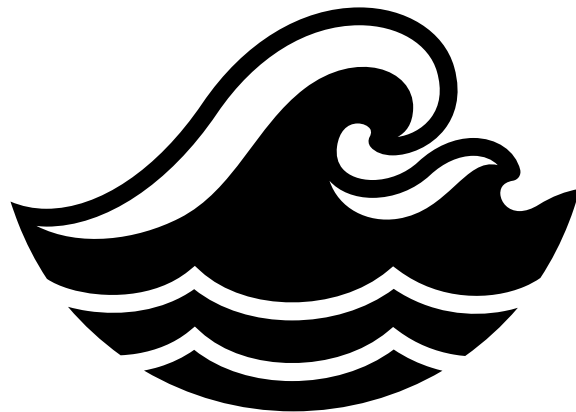
- Stands between the leader and the group, fostering collaboration.
- Brings perspectives together and helps people understand each other.



The Elder

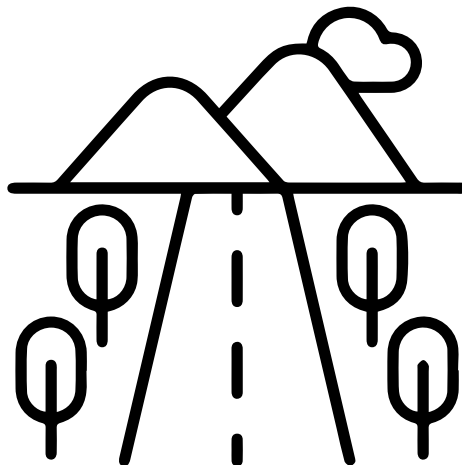
(Wise Guide)

- Slows things down and asks questions that support reflection.
- Brings overview, helps create meaning, and keeps the long-term in view.



The Magician **(Innovator)**

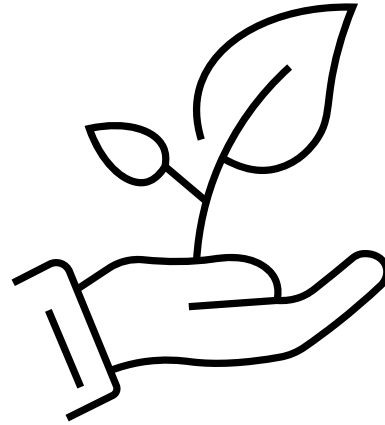
- Sees what is happening and notices new possibilities.
- Brings new perspectives and supports change in the group.



The Hunter

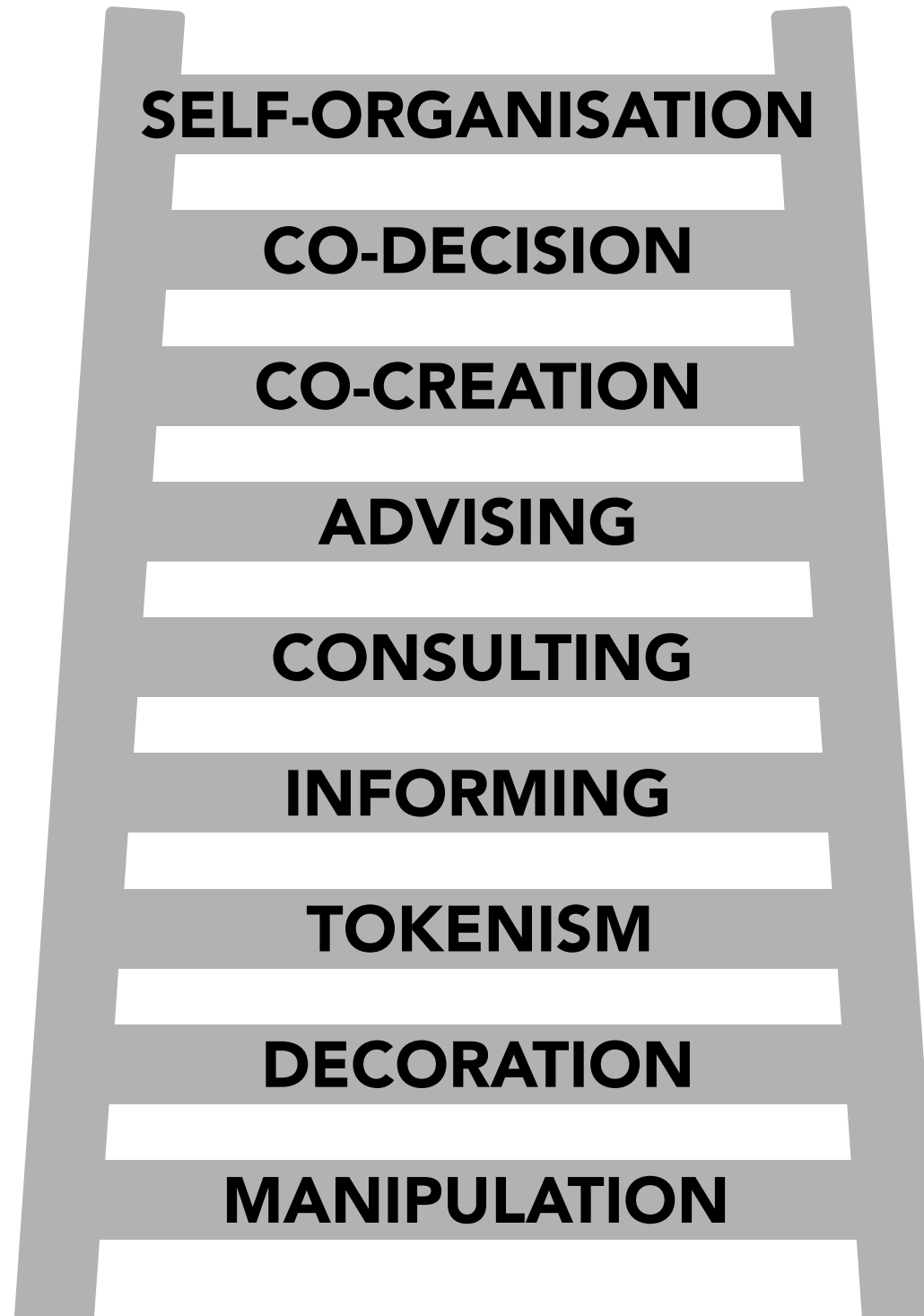
(Initiator)

- Takes initiative, stays focused, and moves into action.
- Turns ideas into concrete steps and results.

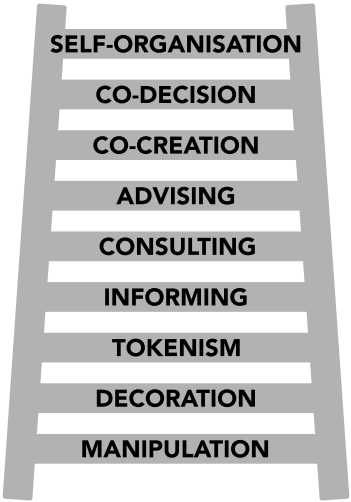


The Gatherer (Provider)

- A key role in the tribe, though often positioned lower in the hierarchy.
- Provides the group's foundation: daily food, rhythm, and continuity.



PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Self-organisation

PARTICIPANT ROLE

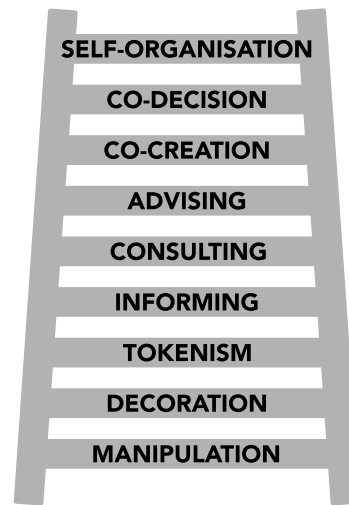
- able and confident to initiate and start activities
- carry out activities independently or with the group
- involve the facilitator in decisions when necessary

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- confidence and skills to take initiative
- access to space, materials, and resources to take action

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Self-organisation

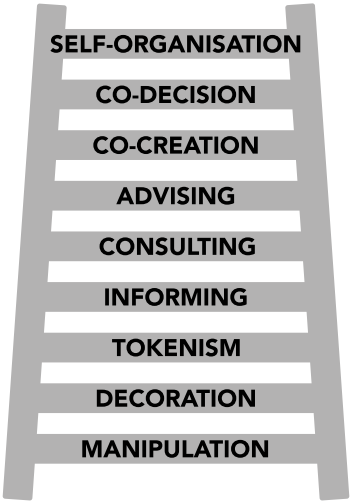
FACILITATOR ROLE

- remains ultimately responsible in youth work
- only steps in when participants ask for it
- provides trust and space
- intervenes only in cases of serious risk

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- letting go of control
- asking open, coaching questions instead of filling in
- providing clear boundaries without limiting autonomy

PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Co-decision

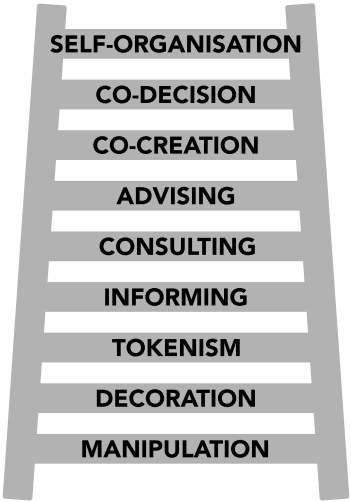
PARTICIPANT ROLE

- develop activities together with the facilitator
- share decision-making during implementation

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- clarity on how decisions are made (e.g., democratic or otherwise)
- equality in dialogue
- safety to make mistakes, learn through experience, and experiment

PARTICIPATION LADDER
FACILITATORS



Co-decision

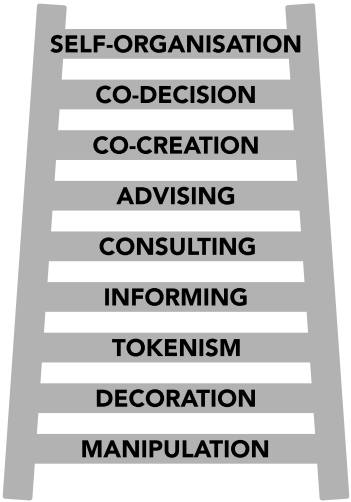
FACILITATOR ROLE

- develops activities together with participants
- supports and coaches where needed

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- asking questions in critical situations instead of directing
- turning 'mistakes' into learning experiences

PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Co-creation

PARTICIPANT ROLE

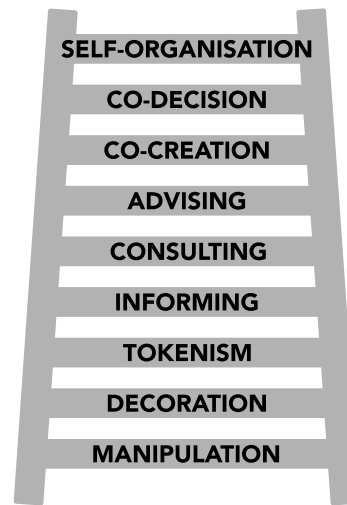
- think and act together at every step
- influence how things are done
- collaborate with others in implementation

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- clarity about the process and boundaries
- actively contributing based on their abilities
- being seen and valued for their contribution

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Co-creation

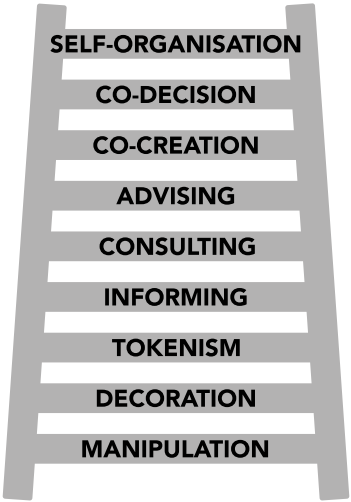
FACILITATOR ROLE

- keeps overview and structure
- safeguards the intended outcome
- values everyone's contribution

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- providing structure while maintaining overview
- actively involving and motivating everyone
- observing and listening attentively

PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Advising

PARTICIPANT ROLE

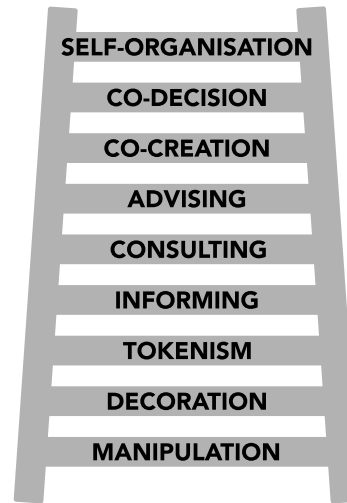
- understand what is happening and why
- give advice when asked or on their own initiative

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- insight into the process
- receiving feedback on how their advice was used
- dealing with disappointment when advice is not used

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Advising

FACILITATOR ROLE

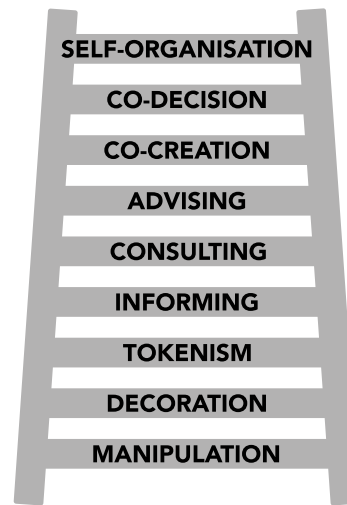
- takes advice seriously
- shows how advice has been used
- ensures implementation of the plan

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- listening and asking follow-up questions
- explaining and justifying decisions

PARTICIPATION LADDER

PARTICIPANTS



Consulting

PARTICIPANT ROLE

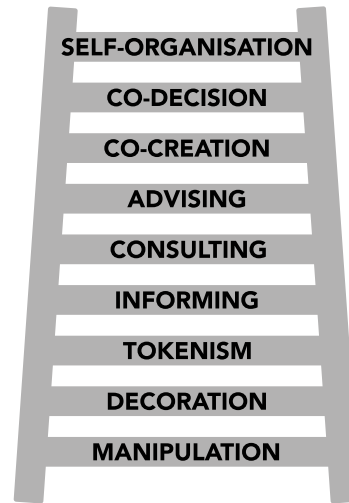
- are asked for input from time to time
- have limited influence

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- clarity about when and how they can give input
- short and concrete opportunities to contribute
- understanding their limited role

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Consulting

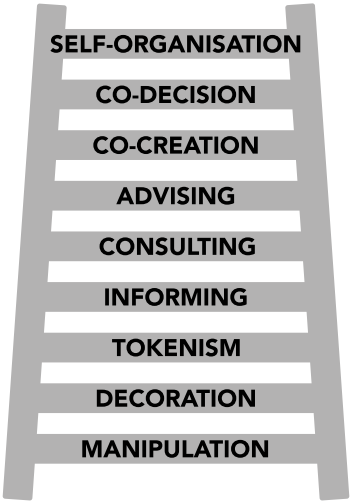
FACILITATOR ROLE

- implements the plan
- decides how input is used

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- asking for input in a focused way
- summarising and giving feedback
- acting ethically and taking responsibility

PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Informing

PARTICIPANT ROLE

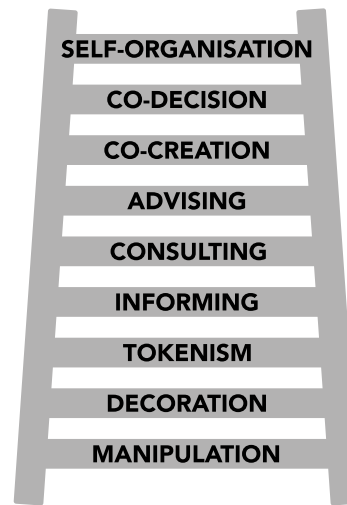
- receive information about what will happen and when
- have no influence on decisions

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- asking for information at the right moment
- asking follow-up questions when things are unclear

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Informing

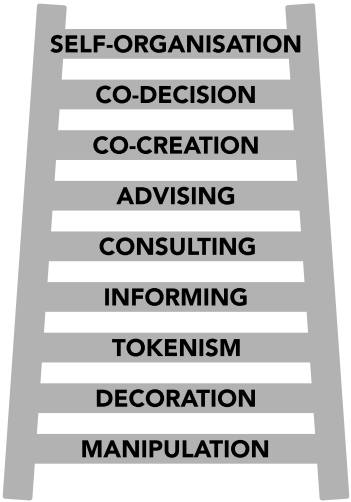
FACILITATOR ROLE

- decides, organises or delegates everything
- communicates clearly and simply

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- deciding what information is relevant for participants
- structuring information clearly
- managing expectations

PARTICIPATION LADDER
 PARTICIPANTS



Tokenism

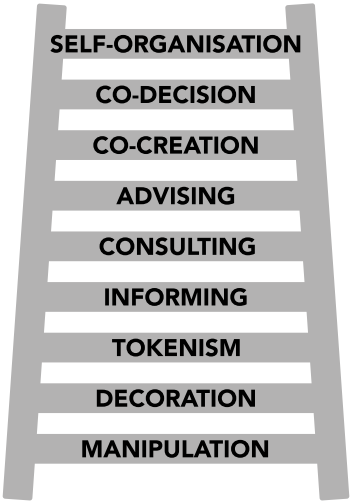
PARTICIPANT ROLE

- appear to be involved
- in reality, their input does not change anything

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- recognising this role
- bringing it up

PARTICIPATION LADDER
FACILITATORS



Tokenism

FACILITATOR ROLE

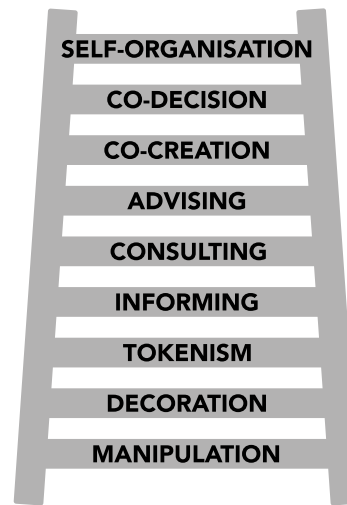
- has already made decisions in advance
- allows input without real influence

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- recognising this role in yourself
- reflecting: 'What is this behaviour a solution for?'
- exploring how to move to a higher level on the ladder

PARTICIPATION LADDER

PARTICIPANTS



Decoration

PARTICIPANT ROLE

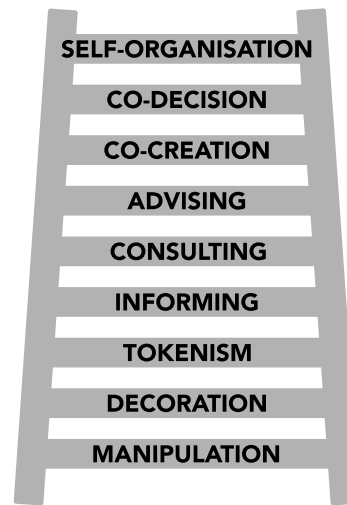
- are involved to make something appear acceptable
- have no influence on content or purpose

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- recognising this role
- bringing it up

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Decoration

FACILITATOR ROLE

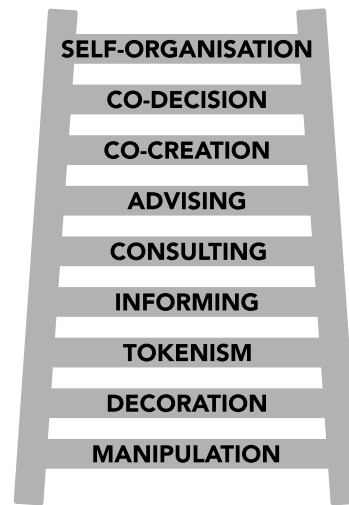
- the activity is already designed by the facilitator
- appears participatory, but in reality is not

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- recognising this role in yourself
- reflecting: 'What is this behaviour a solution for?'
- exploring how to move to a higher level on the ladder

PARTICIPATION LADDER

PARTICIPANTS



Manipulation

PARTICIPANT ROLE

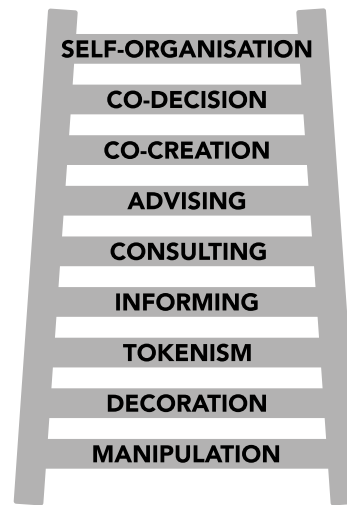
- are not aware of why something is happening or what it is for
- have no insight into purpose or consequences
- follow the facilitator's plan without being aware of it

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPANTS

- recognising this role
- bringing it up

PARTICIPATION LADDER

FACILITATORS



Manipulation

FACILITATOR ROLE

- uses participants to achieve their own goals

CHALLENGES FOR FACILITATORS

- recognising this role in yourself
- reflecting: 'What is this behaviour a solution for?'
- exploring how to move to a higher level on the ladder

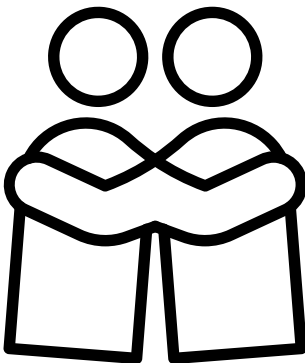
NATURE JOURNAL

BUDDY REFLECTION

Take a moment to reflect on your experience with your buddy.

Name of your buddy: _____

- What do you need from your buddy to feel safe enough to share?
- What can you offer to create that space?
- What is your challenge?
- What is one step you will take?



Lined area for writing reflections.

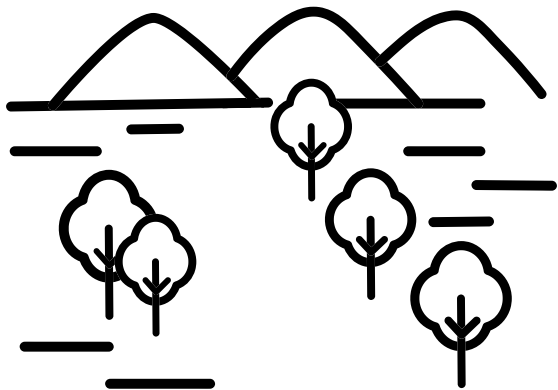
NATURE JOURNAL

INNER LANDSCAPES REFLECTION

Explore what your inner landscapes show you.

- Landscape you come from
- Landscape you want to develop

- What is your first chosen landscape?
- What landscape do you want to explore?
- What qualities do you recognise in your landscapes?
- Which quality do you want to bring more into your life to grow in your leadership?
- What is your first small step to develop this quality?



A series of horizontal lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

NATURE JOURNAL

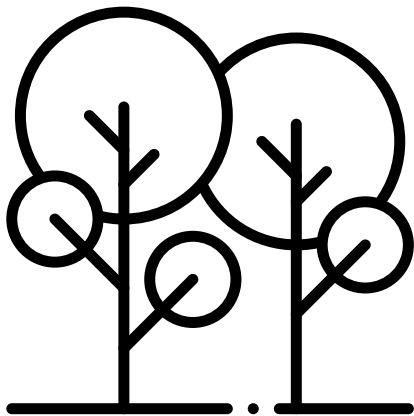
NATURE VALUES REFLECTION

Take time after the activity to reflect on your nature values.

Choose your top 3 nature values.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

- What do these values show about what matters to you?
- Where do you already live these values in your daily life?
- What is one step you can take to live one of these values more?



Lined area for journaling.

NATURE JOURNAL

TRIBAL ROLES REFLECTION

Reflect on your role after group activities.

- What is your natural role?
- Which role do you want to practice more?
- How does your behaviour in this role affect the group?
- What is one step you will take to try this role in practice?
- What kind of leader do you want to be in a group?



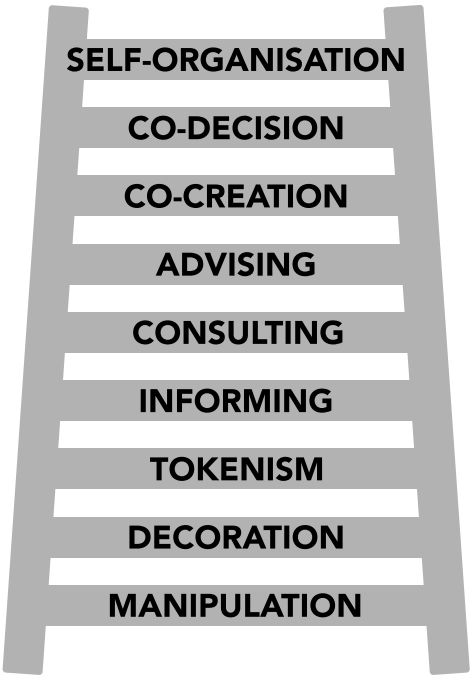
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NATURE JOURNAL

PARTICIPATION LADDER REFLECTION

Look back on your experience with the participation ladder.

- Where are you most often?
- Where do you tend to end up in groups?
- Where would you like to be?
- Do you prefer to lead or to follow?
- What is one small action you can take to move up one step on the participation ladder?



A series of horizontal lines for writing reflections, spanning the right side of the page.

NATURE JOURNAL

WORK THAT RECONNECTS REFLECTION

Coming from Gratitude

- What are you grateful for?

Honouring Our Pain for the World

- What feels painful for you in relation to nature or the future?

Seeing with New Eyes

- Which perspectives did you discover?
- Which perspectives do you need more in your life?

Going Forth

- What is one Random Act of Kindness for Nature you want to take?



Lined area for journaling.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

This guide builds on insights from experiential learning in nature, ecopsychology, and place-based learning. Together, these perspectives show how people develop in relationship with the natural environment, the places they live, and the communities they are part of.

An important green thread throughout the training is the work of Joanna Macy (*Coming Back to Life*, 2014; *World as Lover, World as Self*, 2021), in which young people learn to recognise their experiences and feelings about the world around them and transform these into engagement and meaningful action. The participation ladder of Roger Hart (*Children’s Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, 1992) is a second key thread, helping to explore influence, responsibility, and collaboration.

In an international context, perspectives from cultural anthropology are essential. Keith Basso (*Wisdom Sits in Places*, 1996) shows how people connect to places and how landscape, language, and identity are intertwined.

Within ecopsychology the work of Theodore Roszak (*The Voice of the Earth*, 1992) and Bill Plotkin (*Nature and the Human Soul*, 2008), emphasise how nature can also serve as a mirror for understanding oneself.

This guide is further informed by the work of:

- David Sobel (*Place-Based Education*, 2004; *Beyond Ecophobia*, 2019)
- Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970)
- Joseph Cornell (*Sharing Nature*, 2015)
- Cooley, S. J., Jones, C. R., Kurtz, A., & Robertson, N. (*Into the Wild: A meta-synthesis of talking therapy in natural outdoor spaces*, 2020)
- Heather Plett (*The Art of Holding Space*, 2020)

Insights into the relationship between humans and nature, such as the nature values described by Stephen Kellert and the biophilia hypothesis of Edward O. Wilson (*Biophilia*, 1984), provide an additional foundation.

The activities in this guide build on earlier Erasmus+ projects and related publications,

including *Building Blocks for Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in the European Youth Sector* (Albert & Salomons, 2020) and the *Resilience in Nature Toolkit* (Salomons et al., 2021).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Publication of the Erasmus+ Project Training Course Ecological Leadership.

This publication has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ project 'Ecological Leadership', funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Project No: 2025-3-NL02-KA153-YOU-000373832).

This learning journey was enriched through the contributions of partner organizations supporting youth participation.

7 project partners:

- Flourish in Nature Foundation, The Netherlands
- Oba Utopia Education and Art Organisation, Türkiye
- Conflicarte, Spain
- Enasaud Association, Romania
- O Mundo Somos Nós, Portugal
- Youth 4 Youth, Italy
- I-HELP Association, Malta

Project Idea and Coordination:

Oda Salomons, Lia van Loo, Flourish in Nature Foundation, The Netherlands.
All project outputs are freely accessible on the project website: flourishinnature.org/

Design: Rob Molthoff

Suggested Citation: Salomons, Oda, Loo, Lia van (2026). *Ecological Leadership Learning Journey Guide*, Amsterdam, Flourish in Nature Foundation, The Netherlands

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**Co-funded by
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