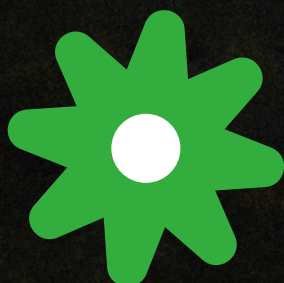


Insignia



Game

Guide

Facilitator Guide
for Anti-Discrimination
and Social Awareness
Game



Insignia

Game

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for Anti-Discrimination
and Social Awareness
Game

**erase
indifference**

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**Smile
mundo**

Age: **14+**

Time Required: **50–90 minutes**

Group size: **9–27 participants**

Setting: **Education, youth work,
group facilitation**

“There’s really
no such thing as
the ‘voiceless’.
There are only
the deliberately
silenced, or the
preferably
unheard.”

– Arundhati Roy,
author and activist

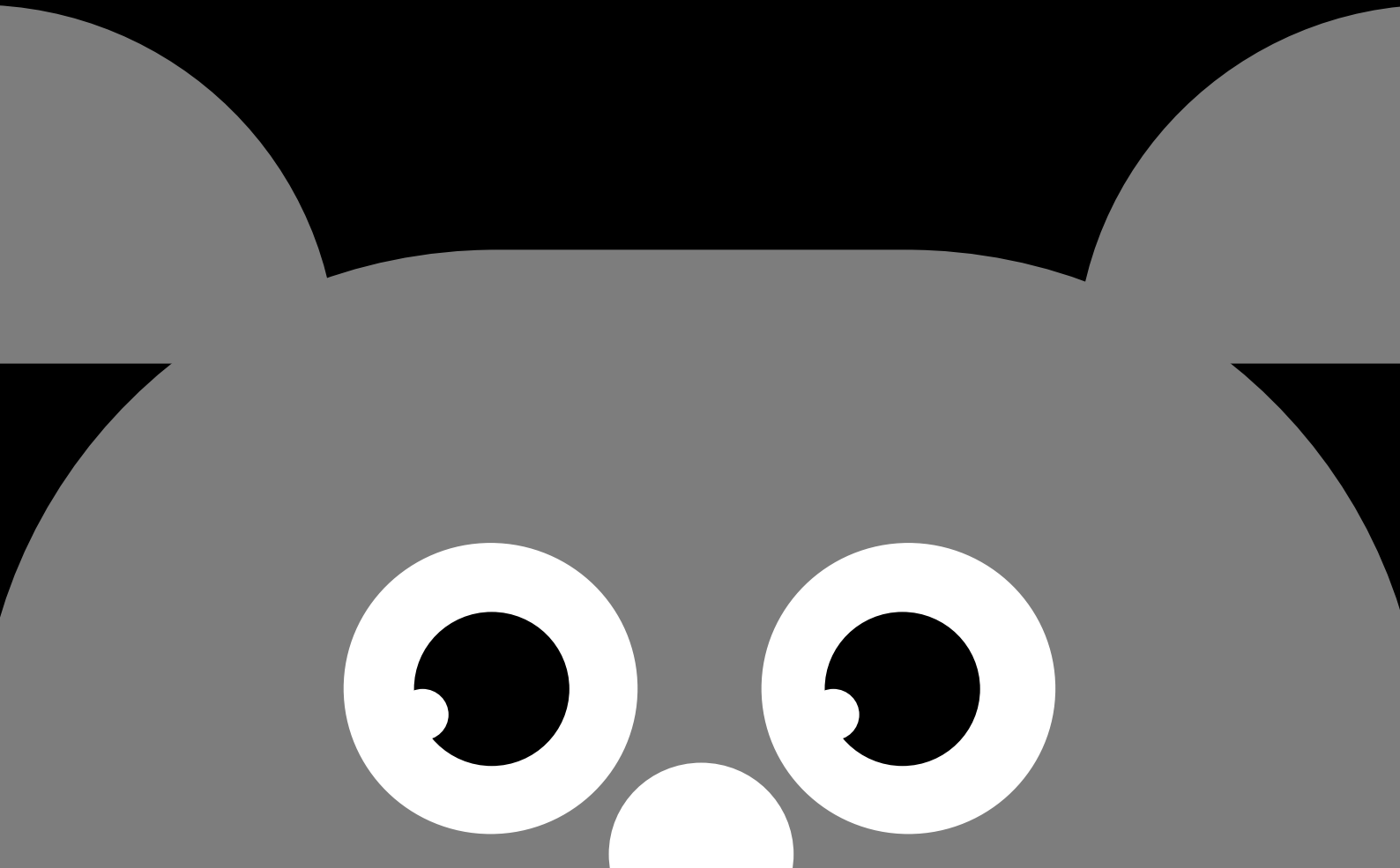
Insignia, at first glance, is a simple and fun communication game in which participants work towards a common goal — recreating the history of a destroyed community and looking into its future by creating a visual symbol. However, when we look a bit closer, it is much more than that. In reality, it's an **“undercover” experiment and an opportunity to learn firsthand just how easy it is to enter into the dynamics of social exclusion.**

Participants can explore how even minor differences can be detrimental to the way one is being treated in a group and how, if we're not careful, these differences can become a starting point, a “detonator” for indifference and social exclusion. The premise of the game is for participants to understand how important it is to examine our behavior and make sure that we act with empathy, being mindful of our own tendencies to exclude others.

Insignia offers a unique opportunity to observe how social exclusion gradually takes shape — how voices are limited, marginalized, or silenced — within a safe, controlled environment. The game creates space to explore, reflect on, analyze, and discuss these processes, supporting learning through lived experience rather than theory alone.

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Preparation



Preparation

All the necessary printable materials and online tools are available on the website insignia.smilemundo.com after entering the access code.

Materials

Printed	Online	Additional
27 Word Cards	Insignia Creator	Blank A4 sheets for note-taking
3 DIY Color Cards	Interactive presentation with sound	Pens for all participants
9 Masks		Elastic bands for the masks
1 Crown (buy a ready-made one or cut out the provided design)		

Getting ready to play

Print and cut out the **Icon Cards and Word Cards**. It is recommended to print each type of card on a different color of paper to make them easier to distinguish during the game.

Use the thickest paper available for better durability, although all materials can also be printed on a regular home A4 printer.

Prepare **one colored paper slip** for each participant. The slips are not included in the pack. Divide the slips equally into three colors: **white, blue, and red**. Each participant receives one slip, which will determine their team.

Cut out the **masks** and attach elastic bands to prepare them for use.

Cut out the **crown** template or use a ready-made golden paper crown.

To start the game, open insignia.smilemundo.com, insert the code, and launch the presentation. The interactive presentation includes voice-over guidance and step-by-step instructions for participants.

Space and Technical Requirements

The activity requires a room where participants can **sit in a circle and a table in the center**. A **projector, computer, speakers, and internet** access are required to run the interactive presentation and access the game with the Insignia Creator.

Players and Team Division

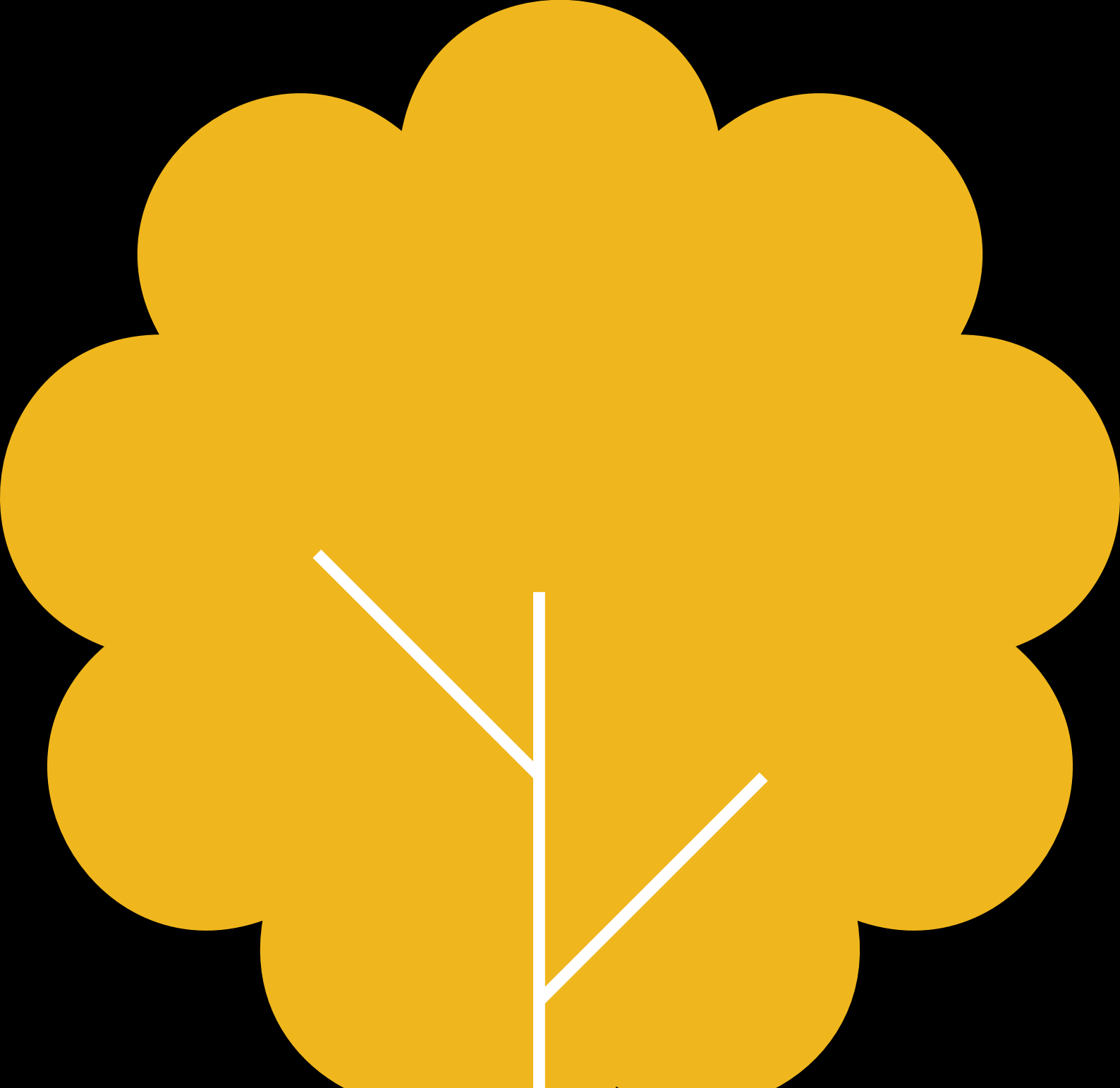
The minimum number of players is 9. At the beginning, all participants start the game together as one group.

During the game, participants are later divided into **3 teams**:

White Team
 Blue Team
 Red Team

Each team should have at least 3 players. For larger groups, participants should be divided as equally as possible between the three teams.

Game's timeline



Game's Timeline

The activity takes a **minimum of 50 minutes**, with additional time strongly recommended for the **discussion and reflection phase**, which is central to the learning process. The game consists of **three main parts**, each introducing a different group dynamic. In **Part 1**, participants collectively create a shared story of a community using cards in a collaborative storytelling process. In **Part 2**, the group splits into smaller subgroups that create an insignia representing the story they have developed. In **Part 3**, the group reunites to create one common insignia representing everyone. This phase introduces structured communication rules, including the use of **masks** and a **crown**, which intentionally create unequal access to voice and influence.

Part 1

The Memory Circle:
Creating the Story
of the Community

(15 minutes)

Part 3

The Grand Assembly:
The Final Insignia

(15 minutes)

Part 2

The Local Councils:
Creating the Insignia

(10 minutes)

Part 4

Discussion & Reflection

(10–60 minutes)

Instructions



Instructions

Part 1: The Memory Circle

Creating the Story of the Community (10–15 minutes)

Opening and setting the scene

The facilitator invites participants to take part in an educational experience and asks everyone to sit together in a circle.

Before starting, the facilitator should create an engaging and slightly theatrical atmosphere that encourages curiosity, imagination, and playfulness. Soft lighting, music, dramatic pauses, and an expressive tone of voice can help participants immerse themselves in the experience.

Once the group is settled, the online Presentation is started. Recorded voice introduces the narrative context of the game:

Many years ago an unexpected disaster changed your lives. You lost everything and spent years wandering and missing this one place you have always called home.

It's been a long time, many lost their lives and, well, you don't remember much.

Most of you know just a little piece of the story. Something you might have remembered or overheard. You still have a lot of questions: What was your community like years ago? What happened? Who are you exactly? Now it's time to put all these tiny pieces back together – so you can get to know yourself again and, finally, build something new. How, you ask?

I invite you to the old tradition of your community, the Memory Circle.

Distributing the Memory Cards

After the introduction, the facilitator places two piles of cards — **Word Cards and Icon Cards** — in the center of the circle, ideally on a table. A third pile, placed separately, contains the colored slips: white, blue, and red.

The facilitator explains that the cards represent fragments of the community's shared memory. One by one, participants silently approach the center and take one card of each type from the piles. Once all cards are taken, everyone returns to their place in the circle.

Division into groups

At the same time as drawing the Memory Cards, participants are invited to draw a slip of paper, which assigns them to one of three color groups: white, blue, or red. At this stage, the purpose of the color slips is not yet explained.

The color groups are intended to be assigned at random. However, if the facilitator knows that a participant has recently experienced **exclusion or bullying** within the group, it is recommended not to assign that person to the Blue Group. The facilitator should always prioritize participants' emotional safety over strict adherence to the game's mechanics.

Explaining the task

The facilitator explains that each participant will recreate part of the community's story by combining the two cards they have drawn into a sentence or short passage that reveals something true about the community. After sharing their part aloud, participants place their cards on the table in the center. The cards should be arranged next to one another so that the collective story remains visible to the whole group.

Rules of storytelling

The story must remain continuous, with each contribution linking to the previous one. Participants may ask the circle for support if they feel stuck. If a participant has drawn **a card marked with a star** ☆, they must retell the story from the beginning before adding their own contribution. Because of this, everyone is encouraged to listen carefully. The storytelling ends when the last card has been placed and the collective story is complete.

Before the first participant begins, the facilitator reminds the group that this moment marks the rebuilding of the community's lost story together.

Supporting the Storytelling Process

If the group finds it difficult to engage in the storytelling process, the facilitator can actively support the creation of the shared story. The facilitator may help participants expand their ideas by referring to elements that have already appeared in the story and encouraging connections between different parts of the narrative.

The facilitator can ask additional questions such as:

- *What happened next?*
- *Who was involved in this event?*
- *Why was this important for the community?*
- *How did the people react?*
- *What changed because of this?*

The facilitator may also highlight interesting or emotional moments in the story, encourage participants to develop specific characters or events, and help maintain continuity between contributions.

It is important that the story becomes as engaging, vivid, and collaborative as possible, so that participants feel involved in creating a shared narrative together.

Story Summary and Reflection (5 minutes)

Collective summary

Once the story is complete, the facilitator invites the group to summarize what has been created together, highlighting key moments, themes, or images.

Initial reflection

The facilitator asks whether anyone would like to change something in the story, or if there is anything that could have been different or improved in hindsight.

Part 2: The Local Councils

Creating the Insignia (5 minutes)

Introducing the Local Councils

The facilitator starts the Presentation for the second part of the game.
A recorded voice introduces the new phase:

Now that you've rebuilt your story together it's time to take the next step. You need something that can represent you outside of your community. Because what is a story without a powerful symbol? Think about the future! How do you want people to recognise you?

You won't work on this all together. You might form one community, but you come from three very distinct groups: the Reds, the Whites, and the Blues. Each of you has a very unique perspective on who you are.

This is the moment for each group to present their own idea of a powerful insignia.
The time has come for the Local Councils.

Framing the task

In your groups, your task is to create the perfect symbol for your community. The facilitator introduces the three questions and reads them aloud, making sure all groups understand them:

- *What is the most important part of your story?*
- *How do you want others to perceive you?*
- *How do you not want others to perceive you?*

Make sure your symbol answers these questions and reflects your shared identity, values, and how you wish to be seen by others.

Participants are reminded that their task is to draw an insignia and to be able to explain the meaning of each element they include.

Group work

Participants work separately in their assigned color groups: **blues, whites and reds**. They have approximately **5 minutes** to create their insignia and agree on the meaning behind it.

Before moving to the next phase, the facilitator should ask the groups to put their designs aside or collect them temporarily. Participants should not be able to easily show their subgroup insignias to one another during the Assembly, as this may make the negotiation process too easy and reduce the need for discussion and collective decision-making.

As the time comes to an end, the facilitator may walk around the groups and ask them to briefly explain the process behind creating their insignia, focusing on how their choices relate to the story and the guiding questions.

Transition to the next phase

Once the group work is finished, the facilitator closes the phase by acknowledging the work done and the insights gained, and invites the group to move into the next stage of the game.

Part 3: The Grand Assembly

The Final Insignia (15 minutes)

Introducing the Grand Assembly

The facilitator starts the next part of the Presentation. A recorded voice introduces the final phase of the game:

From every corner of the community, you have returned. You brought your ideas and visions. This is the moment to create one shared insignia.

It is more than a simple image – it reflects who you are and what you value. Every choice and every detail matters. Go and create something truly special for the next generations.

I wish you luck, you've come so far... here begins the Grand Assembly.

Creating the Common Insignia – Technical Introduction

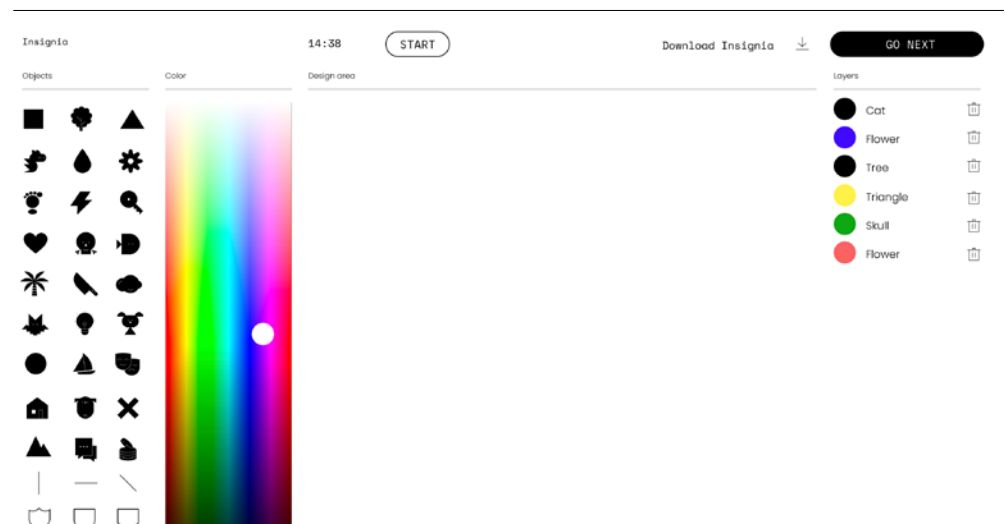
Before the Assembly formally begins, the facilitator explains the **technical side** of the process. The **online Insignia Creator** is briefly opened and introduced. **It is very important that the Insignia Creator is opened in a separate window**, so that the facilitator can easily go back to the Presentation.

The facilitator walks the participants through the interface, showing how to use ready-made symbols and colors, and how to navigate the tool: choose different objects, change their colors, resize and rotate them freely. Participants are shown how place elements on top of each other using the layers panel on the right side. The tool is very simple and intuitive, so participants are encouraged to experiment and explore different combinations. Once the insignia is ready, it can be downloaded.

Participants are invited to ask technical questions at this stage. The goal of this moment is familiarity with the tool, not decision-making. No design work should begin yet.

Once the walkthrough is finished, the facilitator closes the Insignia Creator and returns to the Presentation. At this point, the creator is no longer visible. The screen now shows only the slide with the Old Traditions of the Ceremonial Hall.

This absence is intentional. Participants should sense that something is missing and that the Assembly cannot begin yet.



Entering the Ceremonial Hall

The facilitator shows the Presentation slide presenting the Ceremonial Hall.
The rules remain visible on the screen throughout the Assembly.

Welcome to the Ceremonial Hall. This is a historic and sacred place – where the most important decisions were made. As you can see, things have gotten quite serious!

Before any word is spoken, all traditions that have been followed in this room in the past must be read and respected.

The Old Traditions of the Ceremonial Hall

The Assembly begins with an acknowledgment of those who came before:

“We stand on the work of those before us, but we do not stand still.”

The Assembly must not last longer than fifteen minutes.

The Blues wear masks. They may speak only if someone places a hand on their shoulder.

The Reds choose who will wear the crown.

No meeting ends without a Moment of Gratitude.

Opening the Assembly

After the rules have been read, the facilitator gives **no further instructions**.
The facilitator remains present but silent and allows the group to react.

The Assembly can only begin **once someone speaks the opening sentence aloud**.
If no one does so, the facilitator holds the silence. If participants ask what should happen next, the facilitator simply points to the rules displayed on the screen.

The moment the opening sentence is spoken, the facilitator opens the online Insignia Creator again. The facilitator then starts the 15-minute countdown by pressing the start button, officially beginning the Assembly.

At this point, **the facilitator hands the masks to the Blues. The Reds are given a brief moment to decide among themselves who will wear the crown** and take on the leadership role.

Closing the Assembly

When the countdown ends, a pop-up window appears. The facilitator can either stop the game at that moment or ignore the pop-up and allow the group to continue working for a little longer if the process still feels active and meaningful.

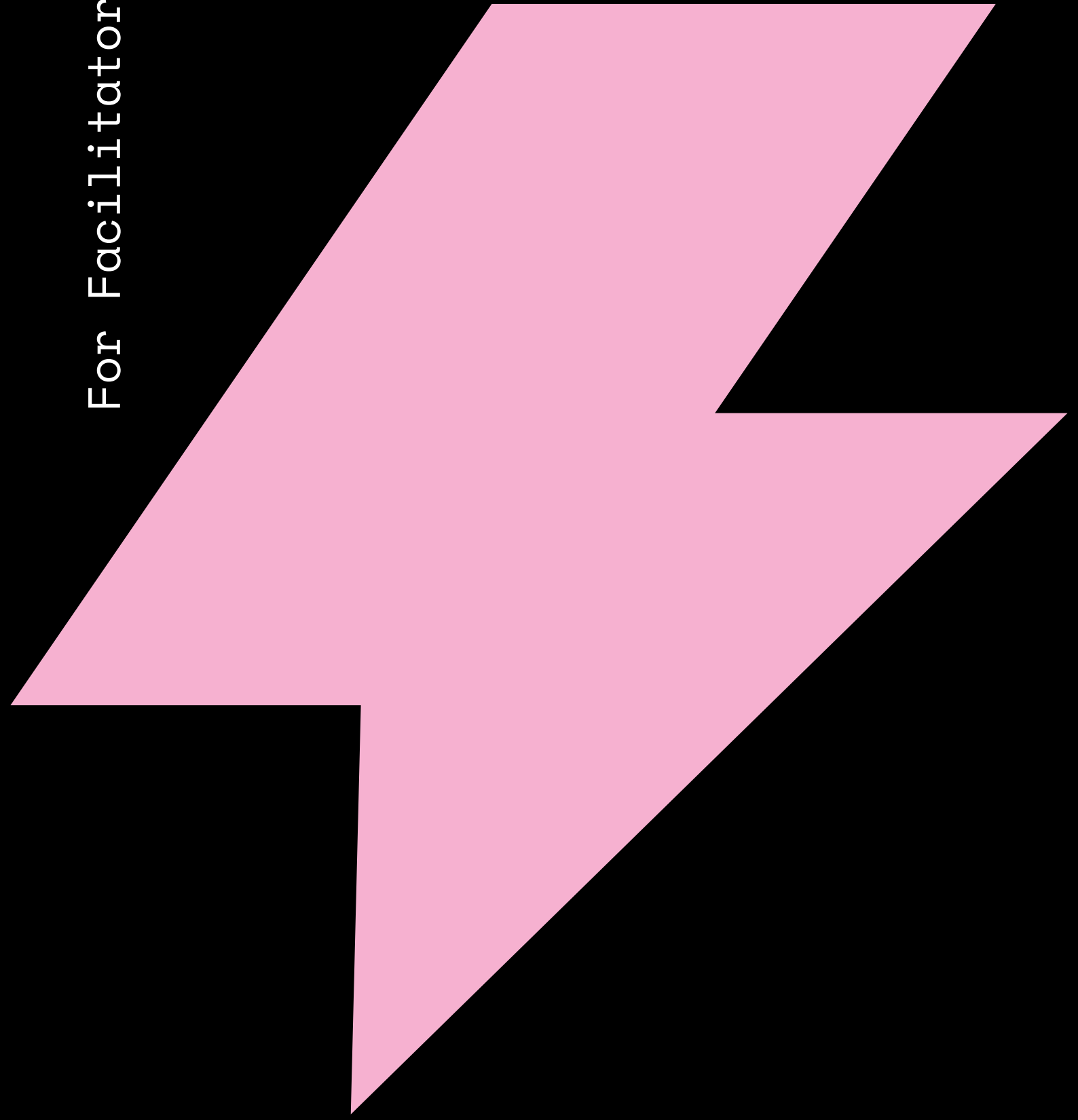
When the time is up, the facilitator thanks the participants for their work and shows the final Presentation slide. The group is invited to present their final insignia and explain how it represents their community.

Moment of Gratitude

The Assembly comes to a close with a final ritual. The facilitator acknowledges the importance of what has been created together. It's time for the final recording:

The Assembly has come to a close. As is tradition, the Blues honor the Ceremonial Hall by carefully organizing the space and preparing it to welcome the next Assembly.

For Facilitator



For Facilitator

Observation

This phase is particularly important for the discussion and reflection that follows. During the Grand Assembly, the facilitator should focus on careful observation of the process, rather than intervention.

How long the group remains silent before someone speaks the opening sentence, and who takes that initiative	What arguments are used to promote particular visions of the final insignia
How the Reds choose the person who wears the crown and what dynamics emerge during that decision	Whether participants defend their ideas, negotiate them, or quickly abandon them to avoid conflict
How the person wearing the crown uses their role: facilitating, dominating, withdrawing, or delegating	How disagreement is handled: through debate, silence, compromise, or dominance
Whether participants wearing masks attempt to speak and how often they are invited into the conversation	Who ultimately shapes the final design and whose perspectives are left out
Who places a hand on the shoulder of masked participants, and under what conditions	Whether there are any attempts to change or challenge the rules during the Assembly. Who proposes these changes, who supports them, and who resists or stops them
Whether masked participants' ideas are acknowledged, ignored, repeated by others, or taken over	Whether the Moment of Gratitude takes place at the end of the Assembly, and whether anyone questions or opposes it
Who takes control of the computer and the Insignia Creator, and how access to the tool is negotiated	The overall atmosphere of the Assembly: whether it feels tense, collaborative, playful, conflictual, formal, emotional, or friendly
Whether participants bring ideas from their subgroup insignia into the Assembly	

These observations will form the basis of the discussion and reflection phase after the game.

Part 4: Discussion & Reflection (10–60 minutes)

The facilitator opens the debriefing slowly and calmly, giving participants a moment to leave the roles and atmosphere of the Assembly behind. It is important to create a space where participants feel comfortable sharing both positive and difficult reactions.

The facilitator may begin with simple, open questions such as:

- *How are you feeling right now?*
- *How was this experience for you?*
- *What emotions stayed with you during the Assembly?*
- *What surprised you?*
- *What was easy, and what was difficult?*

Participants should be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that they can speak honestly about their experience.

At this stage, the goal is not yet to analyse the meaning of the exercise, but to allow participants to express immediate feelings, tensions, frustrations, moments of enjoyment, confusion, exclusion, leadership, cooperation, or conflict that emerged during the process.

Reflecting on the outcome

- *Did you like the final insignia your group created?*
- *Which parts of it did you like?*
- *Which parts did you like less or feel unsure about?*
- *What do you think about the story you created in the first part of the game?*
- *What felt interesting or surprising about it?*
- *Which parts of the story felt most important to you?*
- *If you compare the final insignia to the insignias created in your small groups, what similarities and differences do you notice? Invite each group to briefly show and explain their original design.*
- *Do you feel your group's ideas are visible in the final symbol? Why or why not?*
- *If this were truly your community's symbol, would you feel represented by it? Why or why not? Extra tip: If participants quickly agree that they feel represented by the final insignia, the facilitator may encourage deeper reflection by inviting the groups to compare the final design with the original insignias created in their small groups. This can help participants notice which ideas remained visible, which disappeared during the negotiation process, and whether everyone's perspectives were equally represented in the final outcome.*

Reflecting on the process

- *Which part of the game did you enjoy the most: the first part (creating your own world), the second part (working in groups), or the third part (deciding together in the Assembly)? Why?*
- *How did you make the final decision about the group insignia?*
- *Was it easy or difficult?*
- *How did you eventually agree, or stop disagreeing?*
- *How did you feel about the traditions of the Ceremonial Hall?*
- *Did you feel like breaking them at any point? Why or why not?*

Masks, crown, and power

- *How did it feel to have masks in the game?*
- *Was it difficult to share ideas when you couldn't speak?*
- *What happened to the ideas of people who were wearing masks?*
- *How do you think the discussion would have gone if there were no masks?*
- *What about the person wearing the crown?*
- *Did the crown change anything in the game?*
- *How did people treat the person with the crown?*

From the game to real life

- *What do you think this game is really about?*
- *Sometimes games show us how we act in real life, without us even noticing at first. What do you think this game showed about:*
 - *who gets listened to?*
 - *how decisions are made?*
 - *what happens when people cannot speak?*
 - *symbols and their power?*
 - *inclusion and exclusion?*

Closing question

What is one thought, feeling, or question you are leaving this game with?

Facilitating Meaningful Reflection

The goal of the discussion is not to evaluate participants or judge their behaviour, but to understand the social processes that emerged during the game. Throughout the debriefing, remind participants that *Insignia* is a game. The fact that most groups naturally accept and reproduce the assigned roles is not a weakness of the participants—it is precisely what the experience is designed to demonstrate. Social roles, group norms, and power structures can shape our behaviour much more strongly than we usually realise.

Encourage participants to **reflect on the experience through the lens of the group rather than individual personalities**. Instead of asking who was passive, dominant, or silent, explore what happened within the group that made these roles emerge. Questions such as *How did you function as a group?*, *What roles emerged?*, or *What made some voices easier to hear than others?* help shift attention from judging individuals to understanding social mechanisms.

Some participants may leave the game **feeling uncomfortable**. Wearing a mask and struggling to regain one's voice, remaining passive despite disagreeing, or leading the Assembly without noticing exclusion can all be emotionally challenging experiences. These reactions should not be framed as personal failures. Rather, they illustrate how easily people adapt to social roles and how powerful group processes can become when they are left unquestioned. This is exactly why these mechanisms can become dangerous if we are not aware of them.

The discussion should leave participants **feeling more aware and empowered**, not defeated. Help the group identify not only where exclusion or unequal participation appeared, but also what enabled cooperation, inclusion, or solidarity. Encourage

participants to think about what they, as a group, could do differently in a similar situation and what practical lessons can be applied in everyday life.

One moment worth discussing is the **Moment of Gratitude**, which many groups hesitate to perform or openly resist. This resistance often signals that participants feel they are being asked to cross another social boundary. It can provide an excellent opportunity to introduce the "boiling frog" metaphor described in the Knowledge Base and to reflect on how people gradually accept one rule after another, while only noticing certain boundaries once they are asked to cross them.

Finally, if the group is interested in exploring the experience further, encourage participants to continue the discussion using the **Knowledge Base** included with this guide. The concepts of group dynamics, discrimination, and symbols can help participants better understand what happened during the game and connect it to situations they encounter in schools, workplaces, communities, and society more broadly.

Resist the temptation to provide a **single "correct" interpretation of the game**. Different groups will experience the Assembly in different ways, and there is no one right conclusion. Your role is not to explain what the game was "really about," but to help participants make sense of their own experience. Ask questions, encourage multiple perspectives, and trust the group to draw its own conclusions. This approach strengthens reflection and allows participants to connect the experience with their own lives.

Note for Facilitator

Insignia is an experiential educational game that makes power dynamics, exclusion, and unequal access to voice visible through participation rather than explanation. Because of this, it **may evoke strong emotions and should be facilitated with care**.

The game is intentionally uncomfortable at times. **Silence, tension, or frustration are part of the learning process**. Your role as a facilitator is not to resolve these moments, but to hold the space and allow the process to unfold.

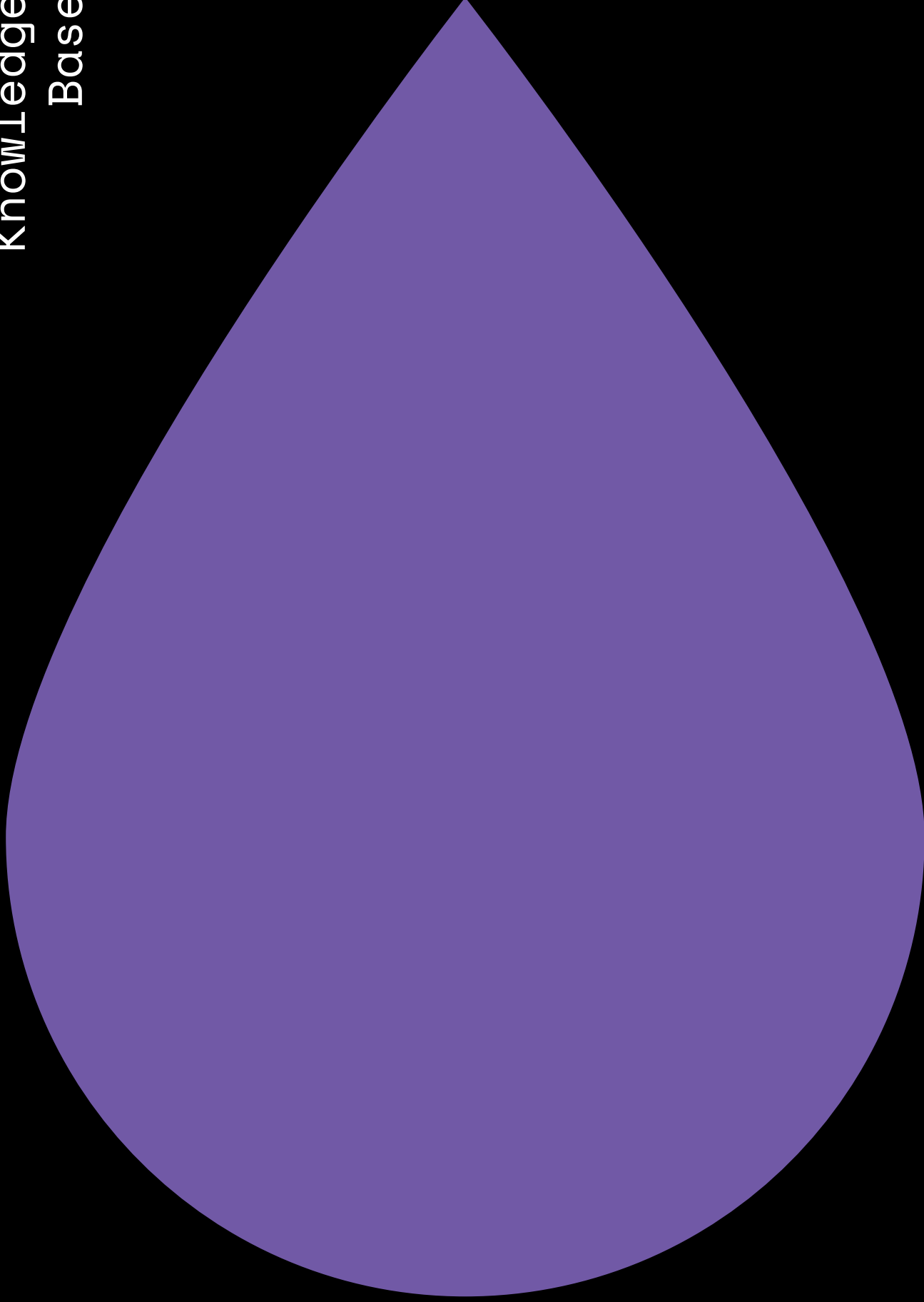
Avoid explaining the meaning of the mechanics during the game. Early intervention or over-guidance can weaken the experience. Observe closely and trust the structure.

Pay attention to emotional safety, particularly for participants with lived experience of exclusion. During reflection, remind the group that these dynamics were intentionally designed. Participation in reflection should always be voluntary.

The Discussion & Reflection phase is essential. Without it, the game may remain at the level of discomfort rather than learning. Focus the discussion on process rather than outcome, especially on how decisions were made and whose voices were heard.

This game is recommended for facilitators with experience in group processes or critical pedagogy. Your presence, attention, and restraint are key to a meaningful learning experience.

KnowLedge
Base



Knowledge Base

This document is an additional resource that educators are encouraged to use if they want to provide more context to the game. The authors believe that, when followed by this educational module, the activity helps participants connect their experience in the game with their existing knowledge of history and society or new knowledge provided by the game facilitator.

Put simply, the goal of the Knowledge Base is to help participants realize that, although the activity was “just a game,” understanding what happened between them and what drove their behavior can be crucial for recognizing how similar mechanisms operate in society; and for reflecting on the role they want to play within it.

The document consists of three parts, each representing a distinct knowledge module:

Module 1: Group dynamics

The goal of this module is to explain how groups behave and how group processes can influence individual behavior. In this part, participants are encouraged to analyze what happened within their own group during the activity and to recognize that these are common and natural social mechanisms that occur in many real-life situations.

Module 2: Discrimination

This module provides key concepts and definitions that explain social mechanisms behind the emergence of discrimination. In this part, participants are encouraged to reflect on the small things that happened during the game and to understand how similar seemingly minor dynamics, when repeated or normalized, can lead to exclusion and discrimination in real life.

Module 3: Symbols

In this module we explore the role of symbols, the process of their creation, their importance in every society, and how they can reflect underlying social dynamics. In this part, participants come to understand that the stakes of the game were not entirely abstract, as symbols in real life shape identity, belonging, and power just as the insignia did during the activity.

Each module is organized using the same structure: first, we provide key definitions and concepts to help the educator reflect on the game with participants; then, we suggest optional exercises and real-world examples that connect the experience to broader social phenomena.

Module 1:

Group dynamics

Objective

Participants understand key concepts in group behavior and how group processes can shape individual actions.

After playing Insignia, participants may feel strongly about the role they played; whether passive, dominant, or excluded. If this happens, take note and gently emphasize that their behaviour is often a normal response to group dynamics rather than a personal flaw or achievement. Explain that in group settings, people commonly adapt to the roles, pressures, and expectations that emerge around them, often without fully realizing it in the moment. The goal is to help participants view their actions in a wider social context, fostering reflection without judgment.

Key concepts

Below are well-established social and psychological concepts connected to group dynamics, with short definitions and suggested questions to help participants connect them to their experience in Insignia.

Concept	Definition	How to incorporate in workshop
Conformity	The tendency of individuals to adjust their thoughts, feelings, or behavior to match the group.	Who followed the group when deciding the insignia? Did anyone hesitate to propose an idea?
Groupthink	A psychological phenomenon where the desire for consensus overrides realistic evaluation of alternatives.	Did the final insignia reflect the group identity in its whole, or only partly? Were there signs of "avoiding conflict at all costs"?
Social Roles	The expected behaviors of individuals in a group. Roles can be formal (king) or informal (natural leader).	How did the crown or masks shape behavior? Who "naturally" took leadership or stayed silent?
Bystander Effect / Diffusion of Responsibility	Individuals are less likely to act when others are present, assuming someone else will intervene.	Were there times in the game when participants noticed unfairness but didn't act? Why?
Minority Influence	A small group or individual can influence the majority if they are consistent and confident – they might act as an agent of social change by questioning established societal perceptions and proposing alternatives.	Did anyone challenge the dominant ideas? Did it work? Did their persistence matter?

Concept	Definition	How to incorporate in workshop
Obedience to Authority	The tendency to follow instructions or rules from authority figures, even when they conflict with personal values or ethics.	Did participants follow the “traditional rules” (masks, crown) without question? How did it affect behavior?
Social Loafing	Individuals exert less effort in a group, often if they feel their contribution is invisible.	Did anyone feel their contribution didn’t matter? Did that change how they behaved?

Exercise: Exploring Concepts

Introduce the concepts by name only to the group (from the Key Concepts table).

Ask participants to share what they think each concept might mean.

Some will be intuitive or familiar.

The facilitator guides the discussion to reach a shared understanding: a bottom-up learning approach, where **participants construct meaning together** rather than being given definitions.

Once the definition is clear, link it to the game experience — you might use suggested questions in the table.

After linking the concepts to the game, encourage participants to think about **real-life examples**: *Have you seen these dynamics in school, family, sports, or other groups? What about historical events?*

If some of these concepts feel abstract to participants, the facilitator can provide concrete examples. **Appendix 1** includes well-known experiments and historical events that illustrate these concepts and are directly linked to their popularization in social psychology.

Module 2: Discrimination

Objective

To help participants understand how subtle dynamics of exclusion, indifference, or hierarchy within the game can reflect broader social mechanisms that may lead to discrimination and escalate over time. While previous exercises focused on explaining these mechanisms in a more neutral way, this activity shifts the focus toward the potential risks and consequences of such dynamics when we are not aware of them or do not actively challenge them.

Us vs. Them & Othering

Key concepts

Us vs. Them

Us vs. Them is a basic psychological and social process where people divide the world into groups they belong to ("us") and groups they don't ("them"). This can strengthen group identity, but it also creates mental barriers that make it easier to ignore, distrust, stereotype, or exclude others.

Othering

Othering happens when people are treated as fundamentally different: not just "not like us," but less human, less valuable, or outside the moral circle of care. Othering is a social process that begins subtly (words, jokes, assumptions) and can lead to exclusion, discrimination, and even violence.

Quotes

// I don't believe there has ever been a more terrible weapon in this world than the word they.

— Cebo Campbell, *Sky Full of Elephants*

// Human beings have a strong dramatic instinct toward binary thinking, a basic urge to divide things into two distinct groups, with nothing but an empty gap in between. We love to dichotomize. Good versus bad. Heroes versus villains. My country versus the rest. Dividing the world into two distinct sides is simple and intuitive, and also dramatic because it implies conflict, and we do it without thinking, all the time.

— Hans Rosling, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World — and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*

// Othering is not about liking or disliking someone. It is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group. It is largely driven by politicians and the media, as opposed to personal contact. Overwhelmingly, people don't "know" those that they are Othering.

— John A. Powell, "Us vs them: the sinister techniques of 'Othering' — and how to avoid them", article published in *The Guardian* (See the [article](#))

Exercise: Exploring concepts

Introduce the first concept — ‘Us vs. Them’ — by writing it on the board. Ask participants what they think it means and guide the discussion until a shared understanding of the definition is reached.

Connect to the game/reflection questions: *Did you notice this dynamic in the game? When did it appear — during telling the story altogether, group work designing insignia, or the final discussion with masks and a crown? Why do you think it happened (or didn't)? Do you see similar group divisions in real life? Where?*

At this point, **introduce the second concept**, “othering,” and guide the discussion using questions: *What could it mean to “other” someone? How is it different from “us vs. them”?* Guide the discussion until participants understand the difference: one is a basic, automatic process (us vs. them), while the other (othering) goes further — it’s not just “not like us,” but “less than us”.

Reflection on the game: *Did you feel like you were othering someone during the game? In what way? Or maybe someone felt othered? If not, what would have to happen in the game for othering to happen/escalate further? What do you think could be consequences of othering — in groups, schools, or communities?*

Invite participants to think about **instances of othering in history or current events** (see: **Appendix 2** for reference.)

Exercise: Quote analysis

In this exercise, the facilitator uses quotes as a tool to deepen the discussion about othering. Excerpts from texts are provided below, along with suggested questions. Quotes can be selected based on the group’s age and readiness to analyze: for younger participants, we recommend focusing on the first quote by Cebo Campbell.

For each quote, we suggest a different set of questions that can be edited or expanded by the educator.

Cebo Campbell quote: *Do you agree with the quote? Why/why not? How does labeling a group as “they” affect how society treats them? Why do you think words like “they” can be so powerful in creating divisions?*

Hans Rosling quote: *Have you ever felt like your thinking was too binary? What were the situations? How does binary thinking affect decision-making or the treatment of certain groups? Can you think of times when seeing more than two sides could have prevented conflict or misunderstanding?*

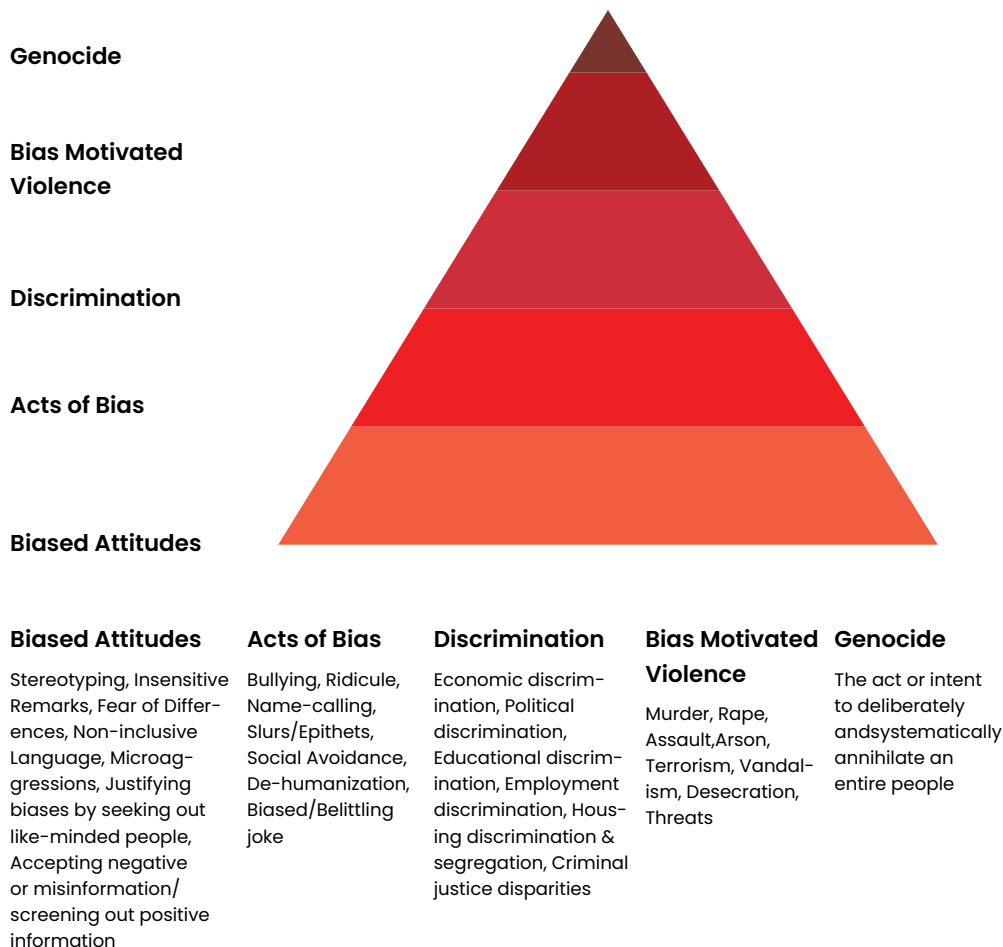
John A. Powell quote: *Can you think of examples in news, history, or society where leaders or media fueled othering? What can individuals or communities do to reduce or prevent othering in real life?*

Pyramid of Hate

Key concept

Pyramid of hate

A curricular tool developed by the Anti-Defamation League showing how small acts of bias can escalate into discrimination, harassment, and violence if unchecked. Often represented as a pyramid: **Biased attitudes > Acts of Bias > Discrimination > Violence > Genocide.**



Exercise: Pyramid of Hate and Boiling the Frog metaphor

Draw the pyramid of hate with only the main categories, without examples. Ask participants: *What do you think this pyramid represents?* Try to fill in the pyramid with examples of actions.

Connect the pyramid to the game: *Can any behaviors or dynamics from the game be placed on this pyramid? If so, where?* (for a Pyramid of Hate exercise with specific examples you could use the following source: Holocaust Center for Humanity)

Introduce participants to the concept of boiling a frog (if you want, you can draw it on the board). Check whether participants have encountered this idea before and in what context. If not, explain that it is a commonly used metaphor to, among other things, describe processes in which harmful norms, exclusions, or inequalities become normalized step by step, making extreme outcomes feel less shocking because each individual step seems small or justifiable (just as it's commonly believed a frog would jump out from boiling water but stay if the water is being heated slowly).

Ask participants: *What are examples of situations where harm or exclusion happens suddenly and clearly, like a “frog placed directly into hot water”? What are examples where harm develops slowly over time, step by step, like a “frog slowly being brought to a boil”?*

Ask participants: *Why is it easier to notice sudden harm than gradual shifts? What helps people recognize early warning signs before something becomes normalized?*

Module 3: Symbols

Crown and masks, what do they mean?

Key concepts

Cultural construction of meaning

People and societies assign meaning to objects, gestures, and symbols based on cultural norms and shared experiences. A crown may mean power in one culture but something else in another; masks can symbolize celebration, disguise, or danger.

Symbols don't have fixed or universal meanings on their own; instead, their meaning is created and shared within cultural contexts. A crown, a mask, a flag, or even a word becomes meaningful only because people in a culture agree on what it stands for.

Quote

//

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.

— Max Weber

Exercise: Crown

Show the crown again and ask participants to recall who wore the crown, how they behaved, and how others reacted, then discuss why those reactions happened.

Hold up a mask and ask: What is this? What does it represent or connect with? Write answers on the board.

Ask: *Why do we often associate a crown with these things (ex. power)? Today it was just a piece of paper = so why does it influence us?* Introduce cultural construction of meaning — you can first do it by showing participants the Max Weber quote.

Ask: *Would you listen to this person the same way if they held a flower instead of a crown?* Encourage participants to imagine different objects the person could hold and how it would change their perception in the game.

Discuss: *Would everyone in the world react the same way to this crown?* Give examples: (see: **Appendix 3**).

Ask participants: *Can you think of historical examples where following symbols unquestioningly caused harm?*

Exercise: Masks

Follow a similar logic and discussion: *How did the masks make participants feel? Why?*

Explore: *What meanings do we culturally associate with masks, and why?*

Discuss: *Did wearing a mask make it easier for others to ignore someone?*

Ask: *What if our culture associated masks with power instead of anonymity or being different? (see: **Appendix 4**)*

Invite participants to play with a following idea: What if one of the masked participants also wore the crown? Ask: How would this crossing of symbols make you feel? How might it change the group dynamic?

Isignias, flags, titles – idea of representation

Key concepts

Symbolic representation of groups

Groups often create symbols (flags, insignias, logos, or titles) to represent shared identity, values, and belonging. These symbols communicate meaning to both members and outsiders, shaping how the group is perceived. The creation of a symbol is a deliberate act, often carrying significant weight. Even seemingly small design choices (colors, shapes, images) can signal history, power, or inclusion/exclusion.

Exercise: Participation in symbol creation

Re-orient to symbols: Explain that in the game they were not only surrounded by symbols (crown, masks) but were actively creating a symbol themselves – something many societies do when representing a community or nation.

Reflect on the process: Summarize with the group how the insignia was created: *Did everyone participate? Were some voices louder? Were compromises made?*

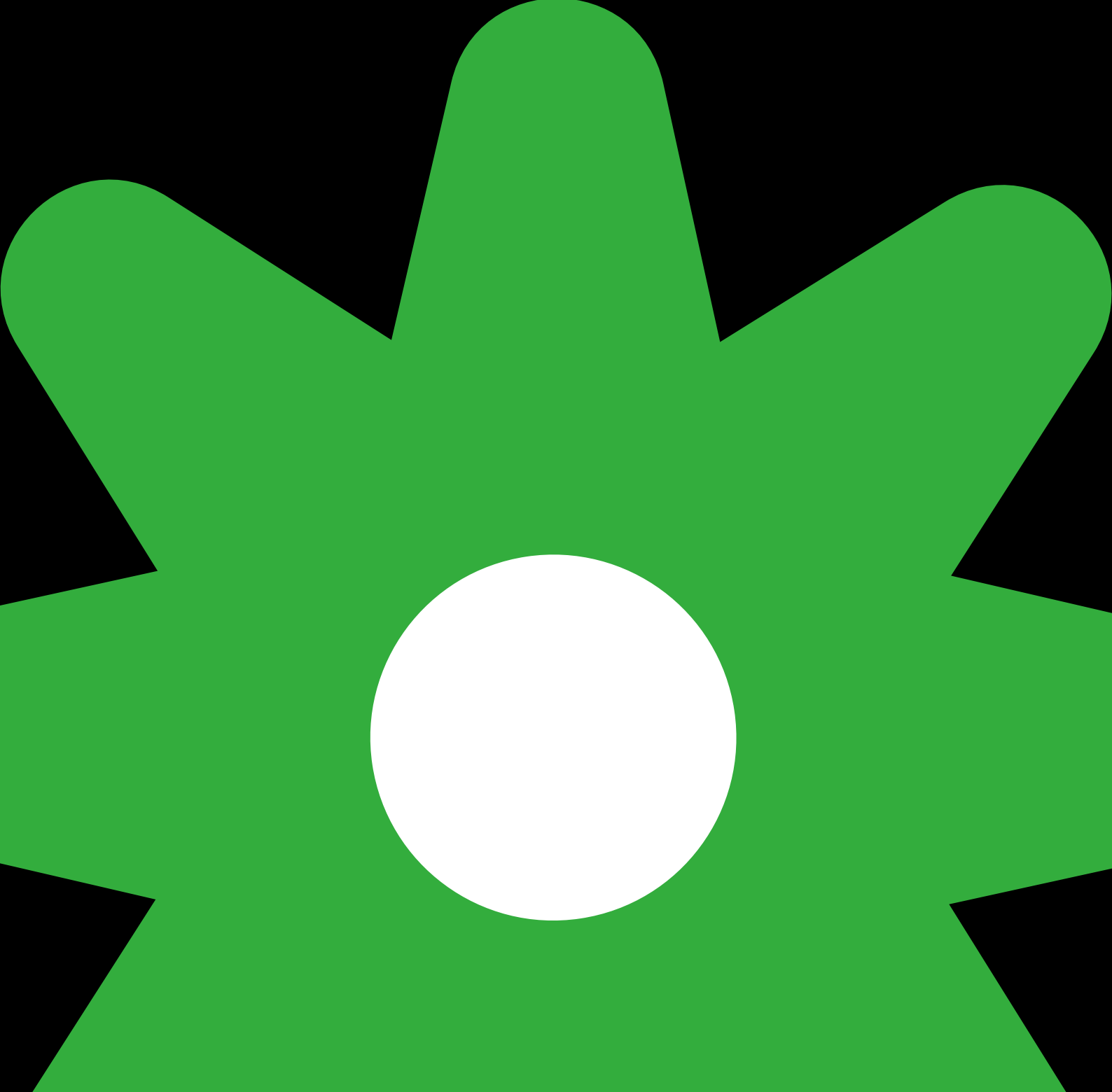
Encourage discussion: *Is it important for the whole group to have a say in creating symbols meant to represent them? Why or why not? Is it always possible?*

Explore: *What can be the consequences of being surrounded by symbols that don't represent you? Ask participants: Are you feeling represented by the symbols that surround you? Do you think people you know feel the same? And people you meet on the street?*

Explore exclusion & consequences: Ask if anyone knows examples when people were excluded from making an important decision or creating their representation and what happened as a result. You can offer some examples, such as flags created during colonial times that didn't represent all people, and then later changes to make them more inclusive (See: **Appendix 5**). Ask: *Why do you think these symbols have been changed?*

To reflect back to the game: *How could your Insignia change in the future? Would it?*

Appendix



Appendix

Appendix 1: Social concepts

1. Conformity — Asch Line Experiment (1950s)

In a famous series of studies, social psychologist Solomon Asch investigated how much people would go along with a group even when the correct answer was obvious. Participants were shown a card with one line and then another card with **three lines of different lengths**. They were asked which line matched the target line. In each group, all but one person were actors who gave **the same incorrect answer on purpose**. Despite the task being easy, many real participants **also chose the wrong answer because everyone else had**. About three-quarters of participants conformed at least once to group pressure, showing how the desire to fit in can influence people's decisions and perceptions.

2. Obedience to Authority — Milgram Experiment (1961)

Psychologist Stanley Milgram tested how far people would go in obeying instructions from an authority figure. Participants were told to administer increasingly **strong fake electric shocks** to another person each time they gave a wrong answer on a memory task. The "learner" was actually an actor and did not really receive shocks, but the participant did not know this. Despite hearing cries of pain from the learner, many participants continued to follow orders to deliver shocks, often up to the highest level, just **because the experimenter in authority told them to continue**. This work showed how powerful authority can be in shaping behaviour, even when it conflicts with personal values.

3. Bystander Effect — Darley & Latané (1968)

Following the tragic case of Kitty Genovese — where bystanders reportedly did not intervene during her murder — psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latané studied how the presence of others affects helping behaviour. They created staged emergencies in which a participant believed someone was having a seizure while other people (actually recordings or confederates) were also present. They found that people were **much less likely to help quickly when they thought others were also aware of the emergency** compared with when they believed they were alone. This phenomenon is explained by **diffusion of responsibility** — the more people present, the more individuals assume someone else will act.

4. Social Roles and Situational Influence — Stanford Prison Experiment (1971)

In 1971, psychologist Philip Zimbardo set up a simulated prison in the basement of Stanford University to study how social roles affect behaviour. Volunteers were randomly assigned to be "guards" or "prisoners." Over just a few days, many of those assigned as guards began acting **harshly and enforcing authoritarian rules**, while many prisoners became passive or distressed. The situation was so intense that the study, planned for two weeks, was terminated after only six days. This experiment illustrated how ordinary people can quickly adopt behaviours associated with their roles and how the situation, not just personality, can shape actions and interactions.

5. Minority influence

Minority influence happens when a **small subgroup consistently challenges the majority**, eventually changing the majority's view or behavior. Serge Moscovici demonstrated this with studies where small groups of participants consistently

labeled a blue slide as green. Even though the majority initially saw the slide as blue, the **consistent minority** eventually influenced some members to also call it green. Real-world examples include social movements like the **Civil Rights Movement**, where persistent minority voices shifted social norms and eventually larger public opinion.

6. Groupthink

Groupthink is a social dynamic where a group **values agreement so strongly that it suppresses disagreement, critical thinking, or realistic evaluation of alternatives**. A well-known real-world example is the Bay of Pigs invasion (1961), where U.S. government officials agreed to support a plan to invade Cuba despite serious concerns. **Many advisors held back objections because they wanted unity and believed group consensus was more important than airing doubts**. The result was a poorly planned invasion that failed quickly. Groupthink helps explain how groups can make poor decisions when dissenting voices are discouraged or ignored.

7. Social Loafing — Latane, Williams & Harkins (1979)

Social loafing describes the tendency for people to exert **less effort when they are part of a group** than when they work alone. In classic experiments, researchers asked participants to clap or cheer as loudly as possible, either alone or as part of a group. They found that individual effort decreased as the number of participants increased — the logic being that when personal effort is less visible, people may not try as hard. This phenomenon helps explain why some individuals may contribute less in group tasks, not out of laziness, but **because they feel their contribution doesn't stand out**.

Note to facilitator:

Some classic experiments (e.g., Asch, Milgram, Stanford Prison) have limitations and have been critiqued, but they still reliably illustrate how people often behave in groups. Be sure to let participants know that all of these examples have nuance and are not absolute truths.

Appendix 2: Othering

Othering by language

In 2015, British politician and journalist Katie Hopkins published a column in which she referred to migrants as **“cockroaches”**. Although not a government statement, the language gained wide media attention and was strongly criticised by the United Nations because it **dehumanised people by comparing them to pests**.

Othering by law institutional exclusion

During the Nazi period, Jewish people were progressively excluded from public life through **formal rules and institutional practices**. In universities, they were placed in the **last rows or segregated** from other students, and later barred from many **academic and professional spaces**. Jewish athletes were also excluded from international competitions, including the Olympic Games, as part of broader policies that restricted participation in public and cultural life. These measures made exclusion appear **“administrative”** rather than openly violent, while reinforcing social separation.

Othering by visibility

Othering can also happen through everyday practices of suspicion, such as **racial or ethnic profiling**. People may be repeatedly stopped, checked, or treated as **potentially suspicious based on appearance, name, or perceived background**. Even without explicit discrimination, this creates a constant sense of being watched or questioned, sending the message that some individuals do not fully belong or must continuously prove their legitimacy in public space.

Appendix 3: Symbols of crown

French revolution

In the French Revolution, the crown stopped being a symbol of respect and legitimacy and became a visual shorthand for the “Ancien Régime” — the old political and social order that revolutionaries wanted to dismantle. Its meaning shifted because monarchy itself was reinterpreted as the source of inequality, privilege, and oppression rather than divinely justified authority.

The execution of Louis XVI in 1793 further reinforced this shift: the crown became associated not just with political authority, but with a system that had been judged and removed. Even when still depicted, it often appeared distorted, broken, or discarded, signaling the end of its legitimacy.



There is hope of a Tree if it be cut downe that it will sprout again and y^e branches thereof will not cease though y^e root of it wax old in y^e Earth and y^e stocke thereof be dead in y^e Ground yet by the sent of Water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a Plant

Source of the picture: Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Emblematic print referring to the execution of Charles I and the Stuart succession (www.commonswiki.org/w/index.php?search=Emblematic+print+referring+to+the+execution+of+Charles+I+and+the+Stuart+succession%3B&title=Special%3AMediaSearch&type=image&haslicense=unrestricted)

Banksy

Banksy's *Monkey Queen* (2003) is a useful example of how the **meaning of a crown can be deliberately flipped to challenge authority and status**. Due to copyright restrictions, the image is not reproduced here; however, it can be found online by searching its title, "*Monkey Queen Banksy* (2003)".

In the artwork, Banksy depicts a crowned monkey presented in the style of a royal portrait. At first glance, the image resembles traditional depictions of monarchy – formal, staged, and associated with dignity and power. However, the substitution of a human queen with a monkey completely changes the meaning of the crown.

Instead of symbolising legitimacy or respect, the crown becomes **ironic and critical**. It suggests that authority is not inherently noble or natural, but **socially constructed and sometimes arbitrary**.

Appendix 4: Symbol of a mask

Kwakwaka'wakw tribe

In many Indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest (e.g., Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw – Canada/US) masks are not used to hide identity, but to embody powerful spiritual beings, ancestral spirits and often. During ceremonial dances, wearing a mask can mean the person is temporarily becoming a supernatural entity. The mask therefore represents **authority, transformation, and connection to the spirit world**, not concealment.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Kwakwaka'wakw mask (www.commonswikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Kwakwaka%27wakw+mask&title=Special%3AMediaSearch&type=image)

Political protest masks (Anonymous / Guy Fawkes)

The Guy Fawkes mask, popularised by V for Vendetta, is often seen as a symbol of anonymity, but in activist contexts it mainly represents **collective identity and resistance** to institutional power. It comes from a historical figure linked to rebellion in 1605, and was later reinterpreted as a symbol of challenging authority.

Groups like Anonymous use it not simply to hide identity, but to show that **they are part of a larger, leaderless movement, where no individual is important on their own**. The mask makes everyone look the same, emphasising shared action and political message over personal identity. Masks in these case represent **shared identity and collective power**.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Anonymous mask, available via Wikimedia Commons Media Search (www.commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=anonymous+mask&title=Special%3AMediaSearch&type=image&haslicense=unrestricted)

Appendix 5: Visual representation

Australian \$5 banknote

The image is available online at the following link: www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/17/australia-5-dollar-note-redesign-first-nations.

The old Australian \$5 note that featured the British monarch (Queen Elizabeth II), which has appeared on Australian banknotes since 1992 and was long seen as a symbol linking the country to its colonial history.

The newly **redesigned \$5 banknote theme** chosen through a **public process to celebrate First Nations peoples'** enduring connection to Country will replace the monarch's image with artwork reflecting Indigenous cultures and identity – a shift intended to make a symbol of everyday life more inclusive and representative of the nation's history and values.

The Wiphala flag — Indigenous visibility in Bolivia

The Wiphala, a multicoloured Indigenous flag representing Andean Indigenous peoples, **gained official national status in Bolivia under the 2009 Constitution**, making it the only country in the world with two official national flags. Since then, outside of every government building in the central South American country, two flags have flown.

For many Indigenous communities, this was important because national symbols had historically centred **colonial or European heritage** while **marginalizing Indigenous identities**. Making the Wiphala an official state symbol was part of a broader effort to create a more plurinational and inclusive national identity.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, File: Wiphala flag (www.upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a7/Wiphala_flag.jpg)

Thank you for choosing Insignia and for your commitment to fostering anti-discrimination, empathy, and social awareness. By facilitating this game, you are creating a space where participants can safely explore difficult topics, reflect on their own perspectives, and better understand the mechanisms that lead to exclusion and indifference.

Thank you for being part of this journey.