

## Activity 7: Permaculture zoning

### Description

This activity is a mix between a **role-playing game** and a **board game**, which will help participants to familiarize themselves with the internal dynamics of a permaculture garden. This activity consists in identifying the elements of a permaculture garden and understanding how they interconnect.

Participants are then asked to become one of these elements and natural factors and locate themselves where they think they'll have more chances to prosper. In this way, participants will be able to better empathize with the natural ecosystem and understand its challenges. The experience will also give them an idea about how natural ecosystems can be imitated for co-living in teams and, on a larger scale, in societies.

### Teaser

Permaculture zones help us organize our spaces according to how (and how often) we use them. As a design strategy, zones are a super powerful way to make choices about where to place elements of the ecosystem, in order to enhance their ecological performance. Try to imagine: how could these zones be envisioned? In our micro training, you will get more practical experience about how this principle works and how human and natural interactions occur.

### Competences addressed

#### Ecological:

- Knowledge about geographical structures and landscapes
- Knowledge about crop management
- Knowledge about botanical processes and natural cycles
- Knowledge about climate and climate change
- Knowledge about biodiversity and fauna
- Knowledge about energy and energy-saving
- Knowledge about permaculture

#### Personal:

- Attention and care
- Sense of control
- Ownership on actions
- Creativity
- Precision and structure

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### Social:

- Project-management
- Ownership of public space
- Collective and democratic decision-making
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of usefulness
- Sense of support and solidarity
- Sense of responsibility and commitment

→ *The experiment makes clear the interdependence between elements in the natural ecosystem and supports participants in the learning process through real experiences. Each participant is part of the ecosystem and part of the collective mission, with a function and a role. Each part of the system relies on others and the team is strengthened when everybody's action is aimed at the overall mission.*

### Learning objectives

- Learn about how to design a garden considering the impact of different actors and trying to maximize the capacity of these actors to interoperate and support each other.
- Make participants experience the relationships in the garden.

### Group characteristics

There is no strict number of participants in this activity. Of course, the larger the group the more possibilities we will have to explore different elements and see them in action.

### Preparation for the activity

The materials needed for this activity are cheap and simple (see below).

You would need a surface where you can draw the different zones as different concentric circles that expand from zone 0 (the center) to zone 5 (the furthest from the center). For that, you can use a cartoon or a big piece of paper. You can also figure out other ways (e.g. circles on the grass, circles with different materials, etc.)

You can prepare some cards with elements that are typical of a permaculture garden; we'd suggest preparing some empty cards as well because participants could think about an element that didn't come to your mind. It's always better to let it open for further ideas.

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Don't forget to bring some pens and pencils for drawing lines, connections or new elements. Keep in mind that colorful cards and drawings make the activity always more attractive, increasing the opportunities to become active learners.

If you are in an open space, you could think about designing that specific space as a permaculture garden. Participants will then have the space to spread around and experience the space. Ideally, start the activity in the center.

### The activity / the content

1. Introduce the game and the concept of zoning in permaculture (see "Useful resources" for information)
2. You can choose between:
  - i. leaving the cards covered on the table and asking participants to uncover one and place it in the "right" zone
  - ii. presenting the cards uncovered and asking participants to pick one and place it in the "right" zone

→ give participants the possibility to propose a new element if that's not on the cards!

→ rounds: in order for everybody to be active and participate (even the shiest ones) go around in circles and let everybody speak when their turn comes
3. Discussion: Why did you put it there? How does this element relate to other elements? You can draw lines to highlight these interconnections.
4. Consent: the entire group should reach consent about where the element would be located. If someone does not agree, he/she should object and the group should find a better solution
5. If you find yourself in a place that allows that, you can pretend that the area around you is the garden you have to design.
  - i. Locate Zone 0 - all together, through consent
  - ii. Ask participants to pick an element and locate themselves in the spot where those elements could live at best. Remember participants to act as a team and consider the interconnection with other elements (the team is now an ecosystem and interconnections among elements are extremely important for a self-sustaining ecosystem).

b. Ask participants to take a moment for themselves once they have found their location (meditate, sing, dance, do whatever they want!) and then come back to the center for follow-up and reflection.

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### Questions for reflection, self-assessment and conclusions

- How did you feel when you were in your zone?
- How did you perceive the other elements?
- What inspiration can we take for the organization of human societies?
- How do interactions among social individuals reflect interactions among natural elements?

### Recommendations on how to adapt to different target groups

Try to find a barrier-free space to run the activity.

If people have disabilities or are for any reason not able to follow the game, try to put them together with another participant, who can help. Together it could be easier.

### References

<https://www.freepermaculture.com/permaculture-zones/>

This BSL tool was developed by the Feld Food Forest community for the design of the West Feld Garden (Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin), a permaculture community garden that sees the participation of more than 10 different organizations. The tool was therefore intended to be as participatory as possible, to ensure that everybody's voice is heard and the participants are empowered to participate in the co-creation process.