

Making links

What is civil society - and who does what, for whom?

Themes	Citizenship, Democracy, General human rights
Complexity	Level 4
Group size	8 - 20
Time	90 minutes
Overview	This activity involves negotiation about the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the government, NGOs and the media in a democracy.
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The right to vote; to serve and to participate in the running of the country ▪ Freedom of information and expression ▪ Duties to the community
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To develop an understanding of the link between rights and responsibilities ▪ To develop a feeling for the complex relations between the different sectors in a democracy ▪ To promote co-operation and civic responsibility
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large sheet of paper (A3) or flipchart paper for each group ▪ 2 markers of different colours (e.g. green and red) for each group ▪ A ball of string or wool (preferably green) ▪ A roll of sticky tape (Scotch tape or sellotape) for each group ▪ Scissors
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cut up about 24 strands of wool into 1.5m lengths.

Instructions

1. Explain that the purpose of the activity is to draw a “map” of the different relations between four sectors within (an ideal) democratic society.
2. Divide the participants into four equal-sized groups to represent four “actors” in a democracy: the government, the NGO sector, the media, and citizens respectively.
3. Hand each group a large sheet of paper and markers and tell them to spend 10 minutes brainstorming the role that their “actor” plays in a democratic society, that is, what are the main *functions* it performs. They should list their five most important functions on the large sheet of paper, using the red marker.
4. Bring the groups together to present their ideas. Let the groups share their reactions. Ask them if they agree about the main functions of these four “actors”. Allow the groups to amend their lists if they wish to in the light of the feedback.
5. Now separate the four groups again and ask them to brainstorm what they require from each of the other “actors”, in order to carry out their own functions, that is, what demands do they make of each of the other “actors”. They should list these demands under separate headings using the green marker. Give them fifteen minutes for this task.

THEMES



CITIZENSHIP



DEMOCRACY



GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 4

GROUP SIZE



8-20

TIME



90 MINUTES

6. When the time is almost up, ask the groups to prioritise up to six of the most important demands, and hand each group a roll of tape and strands of wool to represent these demands.
7. Hand out the copies of the “Rules of play”, go through them and make sure everyone understands what they have to do next. Ask the groups to bring their sheet of paper into the middle of the room and to lay them in a square about 1 m apart (see diagram). Ask members of each group to position themselves near their “corner”.
8. The rounds of negotiation now begin. You should allow 10 minutes for each round. Remind people that when a demand is accepted one piece of wool should be taped between the two papers to signify acceptance of responsibility.
9. By the end of the process, the four “actors” should be linked up by a complicated web of wool. Move on to the debriefing and evaluation while people are still sitting around the chart.

Debriefing and evaluation

Ask the participants to look at the web they have created and to reflect on the activity.

- Was it hard to think of the functions that the government, NGOs, media and citizens perform in a democracy?
- Were there any disagreements within the groups about which claims should be accepted or rejected?
- Which of the claims made on other groups did they not accept as responsibilities? Why was this? Do you think that such cases would cause any problems in reality?
- Were there responsibilities that each group accepted but which they had not recognised before? How do they feel about this now?
- Did the activity show people anything new about democratic society that they did not know before? Were there any surprises?

Tips for facilitators

In step 4 of the instructions, after the groups have drawn up their list of functions, don't spend too long discussing the issues as a whole group. You should use this more as a prompt for the next small group work they will be doing. Groups may want to make a note of the other groups' functions.

When they draw up their lists of demands (step 5), tell them not to be unrealistic in their demands on the other “actors”! These responsibilities will need to be acceptable, so they should not make unfair or unreasonable claims.

When the groups start negotiating (step 8), this should not be presented as a “competition”, nor should this stage occupy too much time. Emphasise to groups that they should see themselves as *co-operating* with each other: the purpose is to establish a society in which all “actors” work together for everyone's satisfaction. Therefore, the transactions should be relatively quick: tell groups to accept claims if they seem to be reasonable, and otherwise to reject them, with any controversial ones to be discussed at a later stage.

Variations

The activity may be made more or less complicated by using different numbers of “actors” within society: for example, you may want to add “businesses”, “minorities”, or “disadvantaged groups”. However, this will make the negotiation process a lot more complicated, and you may not want all of the groups to exchange demands with each of the others. You could also use different categories with more direct relevance to young people’s reality – for example, replace “citizens” by “young people” and “the government” by “school”.

The activity could be simplified by removing one or more of the groups: for example, by working with only “citizens” and “the government”. This may be preferable if you have a small group.

You may want to try the activity without the use of the chart: during the negotiation process, someone from the first group should hold one end of the piece of wool, and offer the other end to someone in the second group. If people keep hold of their ends, the whole “society” should be physically linked up by the end of the process!

Suggestions for follow-up

The group could continue to add to the map, by including different groups within society (see Variations). They may want to transfer the map to another sheet of paper for greater clarity, and then to draw in the connections using different colours – for example, red for the government, yellow for the media, green for NGOs, etc. Think about which connections in your own society are not well developed, and what could be done to overcome this.

If the group would like to work on a more practical project that involves liaison and co-operation between local government, NGOs and media in their own community, they may enjoy the activity “Garden in a night”, on page 139.

Key date

9 November 1989

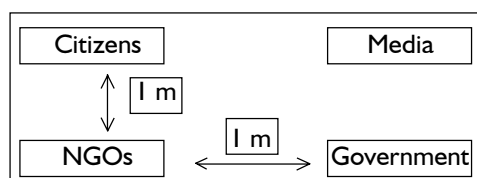
The fall of the Berlin wall

HANDOUT

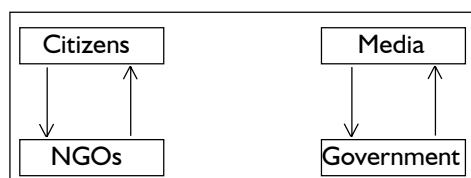
Rules of Play

1. The aim of the exercise is for each “actor” to get their demands accepted by each of the other “actors”.
2. The negotiations are made between pairs of “actors” in three rounds as follows:
 - Round 1: citizens and NGOs negotiate, and the media and the government negotiate.
 - Round 2: citizens and the media negotiate, and NGOs and the government negotiate.
 - Round 3: citizens and the government negotiate, and the media and NGOs negotiate.
3. Pairs decide themselves who is to start and they take it in turns to make demands of each other.
4. When making a demand, people should state the demand clearly and concisely. They should also explain what it involves and why they are making this particular demand, that is, why it is important to enable them to fulfil their own functions.
5. When deciding whether or not to accept a demand, people should decide whether what is being asked is fair, and whether they would be able to carry it out.
6. If the second group rejects the demand, the piece of wool is put aside. If they accept it, then one strand of wool is taped to the charts to represent the link that has been established between the two groups. The “accepting group” should make a brief note on their chart to remind them what the demand was.
7. Repeat the process, until all demands have been discussed.
8. Repeat the process in each round until there are connections between the four actors.

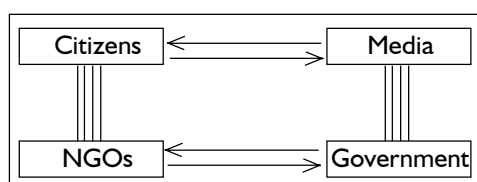
Starting positions:



Round 1:



Round 2:



Round 3:

