

BRIDGES A **toolkit** for **diversifying knowledge** and **tackling discrimination** through **civil society participation** in universities.

Toolkit Workshop

Identity

ACTIVITY

THE GAME OF IDENTITY WITH OBJECTS

🕒 90 MIN

INTRO

There are many ways of understanding identity. In one of them we could start by imagining it has two sides, like a coin, or that it works like dialogue or a game, shifting between two poles. On the one hand, identity is **something that is given to us**. We are constantly **positioned** in certain labels that are also in a hierarchical relation to others. Identity cannot exist without hierarchies, we are crossed by power systems that set certain limits for us. Going outside these **limits** is frequently penalized: it implies going through some sort of pain or, at least, an extra management. Positioning yourself might mean losing something, for example, what you were in the past. You lose that image associated with what was once important to you. However, it can also involve a benefit, since identity can be a comfortable place, a place from which you can claim, for example, political demands. This leads us to **the other side of identity**: there are times when one may choose to adopt an identity, either because it gives us a vision of ourselves that we like, or because it allows us to make certain things at a collective level (i.e. with the categories of "woman", "domestic and care worker", or "migrant"). So in identity there also is **also agency and a capacity to transform**. Identity is thus situated between these two poles: the one that is given to us, and the one that we choose to take; the one that limits us, and the one that gives us the possibility of doing certain things. And in this sense it is never static, but is **something that is constantly becoming** and that is built in the everyday, through certain ways of feeling and being in the world.

OBJECTIVE

Starting from the idea of the "identity game", the activity proposes to explore the "two faces" of identity. On the one hand, that which is given to us, and which we do not always like; on the other hand, that which we choose to take and that conforms our identity. The objective of the exercise is to reflect on the structural and systemic components of our identities, as well as on the spaces for agency or transformation we may have at hand.

STEP 0 - PREPARATION

Before carrying out the workshop, the facilitator will ask the participants to bring an object to class with which they identify with. The object may have a material or immaterial symbolic value. The purpose of bringing the object is to later share it in small groups.

Some examples may be offered to broaden the scope of imagination: a grandmother's recipe, a book showing the genealogy of the feminist movement, etc

Workshop guidelines:

- The class splits into small groups (3 people minimum per group) in order to create an atmosphere that facilitates group sharing.
- One or two spokespersons from each small group are designated. They will be in charge of taking notes of the group reflections and sharing final collective discussion.
- The facilitator introduces the structure of the exercise and the instructions for its two parts.

STEP 1 - THE IDENTITIES WE CHOOSE (30 MIN)

Instructions for participants:

Introduce the object you brought to the rest of the participants. To encourage dialogue and exchange, each person should speak for about 1 minute.

- All objects should be left on a table or on a visible surface, and each group should discuss some questions or comments on the meaning assigned to each object. Some of the questions may be prepared in advance by the facilitator. Suggested questions: What parts of your identity does your object refer to? What do you like about it, and is there something you dislike? What does it allow you to do? What functionality do these aspects of your identity give you in relation to yourself and to social groups around you? What identifies you with the object? These are discussed in the small groups for around 15 minutes.
- The "spokesperson" notes the group's reflections to be shared in the final part of the exercise.

STEP 2 - THE IDENTITIES THAT ARE GIVEN TO US (30 - 50 MIN)

Instructions for the participants:

In this second part of the activity, participants will take their wallets or purses and place on the table the objects they contain, so that they are aligned and visible to all the people in the group. This should always be done by respecting the personal boundaries each person feels comfortable with.

- Identify the social labels or forms of identifications that are associated with each of the objects in your wallet. Where do these labels come from? Who/what imposes them to us? Where are these labels placed in relation to other labels (examples: having or not having a student card; having or not having an identity card; sex that is assigned in it, etc.) Are there hierarchical relationships between these and others? Which ones? Which of these do you feel comfortable/uncomfortable with? Why so?
- Discuss how these labels or categories act in different social situations or scenarios (examples: in your day to day life at the University, in leisure situations, in how you transit the public space, in how you build your future plans). How does it help you in certain social situations to be or not to be associated with them and labelled accordingly? And in comparison with other labels? Can you identify any law(s) related to these labels? Which ones?

STEP 3 - PLENARY

Finally, for the closing plenary we invite you to initiate a collective conversation and reflection. The "spokespersons" will have noted a summary of all the small group reflections that have arisen in the two previous parts of the activity. During this final part, they will share these notes into the bigger group, always giving the option for others participants to comment if they wish to. You can find a list of suggested questions to facilitate the discussion in the Guide of the exercise.