



At the expense of others?

workshop concept



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Short workshop description

In the workshop "At the expense of others?" we shed light on the modern, often invisible structures of exploitation that constitute an essential part of Middle European prosperity and well-being. To do so, we work with the concept of the Imperial Mode of Living (Wissen/Brand, 2017) which provides an explanatory approach for the contradictory observation: although there is increasing knowledge about the climate crisis and social inequality, both are coming to a head. This observation begs the question: How is this possible, and why does change take so long?

We explore these questions by using the example of car mobility, which the KAUZ-video about the Imperial Mode of Living outlines. Based on this video, we discuss the key messages of the concept. In a second step, we link the concept to our daily life experiences and ask the crucial question of how we are involved in the Imperial Mode of Living and where we can oppose it. The workshop consists of a mix of audiovisual input, discussion, reflection and group exercises.

The workshop can be conducted in person or online and lasts 3 hours.

Workshop objectives

- offer a system-critical perspective on social and ecological problems by introducing the concept of the Imperial Mode of Living
- reflect and discuss one's entanglements in the Imperial Mode of Living
- Identify opportunities to oppose the Imperial Mode of Living

Target group

The workshop is intended for a broad audience without specific prior knowledge about the Imperial Mode of Living from the age of 16 up. More specifically, it addresses people who rather benefit from the Imperial Mode of Living and are willing to reflect one's entanglement into stabilizing power structures. The ideal group size is between 12 and 20 participants.



Workshop overview (3 hours in total)

time	name of activity		activity description	method
10'	1	welcoming & organizational matters	At the beginning of the workshop, it is important to plan enough time for a relaxed arrival and welcoming of the participants. Afterwards, you (the trainer of the workshop) can discuss the necessary organizational questions.	/
15'	2	check-in: reasons for hope	Check-ins are a simple tool for setting the ground for a lively workshop. The opening question in this activity ("What was the last thing/ the last situation that made me optimistic about the future?") aims to energize the participants and let them approach the workshop from a personal level. Furthermore, check-ins help to get to know each other and become accustomed to speaking.	Exchange in small groups
45'	3a	introduction to the concept Imperial Mode of Living	In this activity, you introduce the Imperial Mode of Living concept and discuss it with the participants. The basis for this is an explanatory video produced by K.A.U.Z., which explains the concept using the example of car mobility.	video and reflection
10'	break			
40'	3b	Conversation café	Based on the harvest of the video (Activity 3a), you discuss open questions in a conversation café. This method supports a structured discussion in small groups.	Specifically structured discussion in small groups
5'	4	unlearning routines	This interactive exercise is intended as a stand-alone energizer while linking activities 3 and 5 by bringing in the personal level of the Imperial Mode of Living. Thus, this activity is embedded in the overall workshop content because unlearning social routines can be an essential step in overcoming the Imperial Mode of Living.	interactive energizer
45'	5	The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life	This activity aims to link the rather theoretical concept of the Imperial Mode of Living with the daily life experiences of the participants. Furthermore, you identify opportunities to move towards a solidary mode of living. It consists of a silent and a subsequent open discussion.	Silent discussion on flipcharts and open discussion
10'	6	closing	A final round allows the participants to conclude the workshop and is already the first feedback for you. In addition, you should give time for anonymous, written feedback.	/



Activity 1: welcoming & organizational matters

overview	At the beginning of the workshop, it is important to plan enough time for a relaxed arrival and welcoming of the participants. Afterwards, you (the trainer of the workshop) can discuss the necessary organizational questions.
time	10 minutes
material	visualization of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshop programme (e.g. written on a flipchart) • workshop objectives • welcome-poster • group agreement (Appendix 1a)

Instructions

The most important thing to take care of in this activity is to create a space in which the participants feel welcome. At the same time, all organizational matters should be cleared up in this activity so that the participants can focus on the workshop content afterwards.

You should clarify and communicate the following points:

- introduction of yourself
- context of the workshop → Why is this workshop taking place?
- what can participants expect? → Show schedule and objectives of the workshop
- facilitators request (you find a suggestion for such by Adrienne Maree Brown in appendix 1a)
- attendance record if required
- ...

You can adapt this list according to the context and the needs of the workshop.

General remarks:

This part usually takes longer than you think, but it is still important not to spend too much time on organizational details here. It is helpful to think thoroughly in advance about what information is needed. Furthermore, it might be beneficial to prepare visualizations of the timetable, the workshop objectives etc., to make it easier for the participants to follow the given information.

Remarks for online implementation:

If you conduct the workshop online, there is room to clarify technical issues, how to use the chat etc. You find a suggestion for chat characters to moderate discussions in the virtual space in Appendix 1b. Instead of flipcharts, you can prepare a simple slide show.



Activity 2: check-in "reasons for hope "

overview	Check-ins are a simple tool for setting the ground for a lively workshop. The opening question in this activity https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4c5e_hmsWM ("What was the last thing/ the last situation that made me optimistic about the future?") aims to energize the participants and let them approach the workshop from a personal level. Furthermore, check-ins help to get to know each other and become accustomed to speaking.
time	15 minutes
material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart "reasons for hope "with the guiding question on it • Index cards • Markers/ felt-tip pens for each participant

Instructions

Step 1: Send the participants into small groups of 3 for a brief exchange (7 min.) on the question: "What was the last thing/ the last situation that made me optimistic about the future of this world?". You can form the groups the following way: Take the number of participants and divide it by three. Start to count the participants up to this number and then start again with one. Now all the ones, twos etc., gather. In this way, you should receive groups of three people each by avoiding that it's always seat neighbours who end up talking with each other.

Step 2: During their exchange on the guiding question, each participant shall write down a keyword related to their situation discussed on an index card.

Step 3: Back in the whole group, each participant says their name, and in one sentence, the situation discussed while pinning the index card on a flipchart. In this way, you get an impression of the discussions in the small groups.

General remarks:

If less than 12 people attend the workshop, the participants can answer the question more extensively in a circle one after the other instead of forming small groups before.

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 1: For the discussion in groups of three, you create break-out rooms and randomly assign the participants.

Step 2 & 3: If you conduct the workshop online, you invite the participants to briefly describe their situation in the chat and then read it aloud.



Activity 3a: Introduction to the Imperial Mode of Living

overview	In this activity, you introduce the Imperial Mode of Living concept and discuss it with the participants. The basis for this is an explanatory video produced by KAUZ, that explains the concept using the example of car mobility.
time	45 minutes
material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projector • Speakers • Laptop • Index cards in two different colours • Markers/ felt-tip pens for each participant • Two flipcharts (titles: "key messages"& "question marks")

Instructions

Step 1: You show the KAUZ-video on the Imperial Mode of Living, which lasts 17 minutes and is available under the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4c5e_hmsWM

The video is in English, subtitles in German, Croatian and Italian are available.

Invite the participants to take personal notes while watching the video.

Step 2: Group the participants into pairs with their seat neighbour and hand out five index cards in two different colours for each couple. In pairs, they now write down notes on index cards about two aspects:

- What are the key messages about the Imperial Mode of Living you got from the video? (index cards in colour 1)
- Which questions or discussion points do you have? (index cards in colour 2)

Each pair should collect a maximum of three statements on the first question and two statements on the second question. Step 2 lasts about 10 minutes.

Step 3: First, you collect the key messages, which they got from the video about the Imperial Mode of Living. You pin the aspects on a flipchart titled "key messages". If a statement is unclear for you or the other participants, discuss it briefly.

Step 4: Now, you collect the discussion points and open questions. Again you pin the aspects on a flipchart titled "question marks". If a statement is unclear for you or the other participants, discuss it briefly.

General remarks:

You find further reading on the Imperial Mode of Living in appendix 2.



If you don't have much time, you can also show a shorter version of the video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQuXWMqY1xs>

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 2: For the discussion in pairs, you create break-out rooms and assign the participants randomly.
Step 3 & 4: Instead of flipcharts, you can collect the statements on an online whiteboard. You find different suggestions for online whiteboards in appendix 3.

A short break of 10 minutes

Preparation during the break:

Step 1: The conversation café (activity 3b) will occur in groups of three or four. Calculate how many groups you have, depending on the number of workshop participants.

Step 2: You now cluster the index cards collected on the flipchart "question marks" according to content similarities. Try to group them in a way that you create as many clusters as groups. Think about which topics might be the most important/ interesting aspects to be further reviewed.

Activity 3b: conversation café

overview	Based on the harvest of the video (Activity 3a), open questions will be discussed in a conversation café. This method supports a structured discussion in small groups.
time	40 minutes
material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index cards • Handout "structure of a conversation café" – appendix 4

Instructions

Step 1: Discuss with the participants your proposal of clusters for a deeper discussion. Adapt the clusters according to their wishes.

Step 2: Put the index card clusters in different corners of the room. Now the participants arrange themselves around the topic cluster they are most eager to discuss. Invite them to find groups of three or four for each topic. If it turns out that there is a lack of interest in one of the topics, you can also leave it and instead let two groups of three or four discuss the same topic cluster. Encourage the participants to take responsibility for the process of finding groups of a similar size.

Step 3: Distribute one handout about the structure of a conversation café for each group and explain it.



A conversation cafe takes place in several rounds and lasts 25-30 minutes. It follows a specific structure, which ensures that each person gets the chance to speak during the exercise:

- Round 1: Individual reflection on the question (3 minutes in silence).
- Round 2: What is the first thing that comes to my mind when I think about this question? (1 minute/ person)
- Round 3: What do I think after the others have spoken? (1 minute/ person)
- Round 4: Open discussion (10 minutes)
- Round 5: Each person shares what they take away from the conversation (1 minute/ person).

Step 4: Now you gather again as the entire group, and each small group shares their primary outcomes of the café. You make notes on index cards and put them on the flipchart "key messages" to harvest the results of the different discussions.

General remarks:

each group should designate a timekeeper to keep track of the schedule.

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 2: You can prepare an online whiteboard with the topic clusters on it. The participants can now write their names close to the cluster they want to discuss.

Step 4: If the videoconferencing software offers the possibility to send messages to the break-out rooms, it can be helpful to give a progress report now and then (e.g. "You should soon start with round 2"). The schedule of rounds can be posted into the chat before the participants leave into their groups.

Activity 4: unlearning routines

overview	This interactive exercise is intended as a stand-alone energizer while linking activities 3 and 5 by bringing in the personal level of the Imperial Mode of Living. Thus, this activity is embedded in the overall workshop content because unlearning social routines can be an essential step in overcoming the Imperial Mode of Living.
time	5 minutes
material	/

Instructions

Step 1: Ask the participants to let their arms hang relaxed at the sides of the body.

Step 2: Now, ask them to cross their arms.

Step 3: Ask them to look at the back of their hands to see which one is on top.

Step 4: Let the hands hang relaxed again.

Step 5: Ask the participants to fold their hands again.



Step 6: as before, ask the participants to see which back of the hand is on top.

Step 7: Now ask who had the same hand on top twice - in most cases, this should be the vast majority.

Evaluation 1: "Almost all participants had the same hand on top twice. That makes sense - we usually cross our arms when we need to focus on other things. Once we find a position where our arms are good, we do it always the same way - after all, it would be a big waste of our brainpower to question how I cross my arms every time. Such routines are effective and allow me to focus on other things. As long as behaviours turn out to be effective, there is no reason to question them. However, in the context of the major crises of our time, our social routines do no longer fit. Developing new routines is an important step towards a solidary mode of living. That's why we're now practising breaking with our routines."

Step 8: Now, ask the participants to cross their arms the other way around. Doing this usually feels unfamiliar and a little strange. Wait until everyone has crossed their arms the other way.

Evaluation 2: "Congratulations, you did it. Now notice three things that are almost always true when we change our habitual everyday actions:

1. It is possible! You all crossed your arms differently than you are used to.
2. However, it takes a bit of thinking about it and possibly a few failed attempts before you get the hang of it.
3. At first, it may feel unfamiliar and irritating. However, it is worth trying it anyway.

General remarks:

Detailed instructions to the exercise are on page 14 in "The system thinking playbook for climate change" (2017). URL: <http://klimamediathek.de/wp-content/uploads/giz2011-0588en-playbook-climate-change.pdf>

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 7: If you conduct the workshop online, the participants can give feedback in the chat.

Activity 5: The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life

overview	This activity aims to link the rather theoretical concept of the Imperial Mode of Living with the daily life experiences of the participants. Furthermore, opportunities to move towards a solidary mode of living shall be identified. It consists of a silent and a subsequent open discussion.
time	45 minutes
material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six flipcharts • Markers/ felt-tip pens for each participant



Instructions

Step 1: You distribute six flipcharts (one guiding question each) around the room and present them shortly. Each time two questions belong together, thus try to place them close to each other.

Guiding questions:

- 1a) Where do I *benefit* from the Imperial mode of Living in my life?
- 1b) Where do I *suffer* from the Imperial mode of Living in my life?

- 2a) What makes me stick to the Imperial Mode of Living? *Inside myself* (doctrines, convictions etc.)
- 2b) What makes me stick to the Imperial Mode of Living? *From the outside* (external expectations, structures etc.)

- 3a) Where do I already oppose the Imperial Mode of Living?
- 3b) Where do I already experience elements of a solidary mode of living in my life?

Step 2: The participants walk around the room in silence and reflect on the questions. Ask them to write down their thoughts on the flipcharts. The participants may also react in written form to statements of other participants and, in this way, start short written dialogues on the flipcharts. You can play some quiet and relaxing music during this phase. This step lasts for 20 minutes.

Step 3: You now ask the participants to stop writing down things on the flipcharts, but go around and read what's on the flipcharts. You can do the same to see what's written on them.

Step 4: You gather again as the entire group. Now participants can comment and express themselves in an open discussion. You can also share your thoughts if the conversation stagnates. Try to find a good closure of the debate when the time is over.

General remarks:

This activity shall invite the participants to truly open themselves to the consequences of the Imperial Mode of Living. Therefore, it is crucial not to judge the shared experiences and thoughts of the participants but to treat them with respect.

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 1: Again, you can transfer this activity to an online whiteboard, which offers enough space for the participants to express their thoughts.



Activity 6: closing

overview	A final round allows the participants to conclude the workshop and is already the first feedback for you. In addition, you should give time for anonymous, written feedback.
time	10 minutes
material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback forms • Pens • One object which can be passed in the circle, e.g. juggling ball

Instructions

Step 1: Make clear that the workshop is now nearly over.

Step 2: Give the participants one minute of silence to review the workshop and reflect on the question: "What inspired me?".

Step 3: Make a short round and invite the participant to share one final thought briefly. You can pass an object, which indicates who speaks. The participants can also pass the thing without saying something.

Step 4: Close the workshop. There should be at least 5 minutes left for the participants to fill out anonymously a feedback form.

General remarks:

a feedback questionnaire might include the following questions:

- What was my "ahh!- moment"?
- What do I take away?
- What would I have liked to have done differently?
- Was I able to contribute in the way I wanted?

Remarks for online implementation:

Step 3: If you conduct the workshop online, the participants can also answer the final question in the chat.

Step 4: There are different options for simple online survey tools, which you can use for the feedback form, e.g. Survey Monkey or Qualtrics.



Material overview

What?	How many?	activity
Index cards in at least two different colours	At least one package	2, 3a, 3b
Markers/ felt-tip pens	each participant should be able to write at the same time	2, 3a, 3b, 5
Projector	1	3a
Speakers	1	3a
Laptop	1	3a
Handout "structure of a conversation café" -> Appendix 4	1 per group	3b
pens	each participant should be able to write at the same time	6
Feedback forms -> Appendix 5	1/ per participant	6

Flipcharts to be prepared

Title/keyword	activity
Welcome poster	1
Workshop timetable + objectives	1
Group agreement	
reasons for hope	2
Key messages	3a
Question marks	3a
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 1a	5
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 1b	5
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 2a	5
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 2b	5
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 3a	5
The Imperial Mode of Living in my daily life – question 3b	5

Appendix

Appendix 1a: facilitators request

- Listen from the inside out, or listen from the bottom up (a feeling in your gut matters!)
- Engage Tension, Don't Indulge Drama
- W.A.I.T.—Why Am I Talking?
- Make Space, Take space—a post-ableist adaptation of step up, step back - to help balance the verbose and the reticent
- Confidentiality—take the lessons, leave the details
- Be open to learning



- Be open to someone else speaking your truth
- Building, not selling—when you speak, converse, don't pitch
- Yes/and, both/and
- Value the process as much as, if not more than, you value the outcomes
- Assume the best intent; attend to impact
- Self-care and community care—pay attention to your bladder, pay attention to your neighbours

Source: [adrienne marree brown](#)(2017): [emergent strategy](#)

Appendix 1b: chat characters to moderate discussions in the virtual space

+ Consent

- Disapproval

* Request to speak

** Direct answer to what has just been said

I have technical problems, I need help

➔ Participants can write these signs into the chat to attract attention

Appendix 2: further reading on the Imperial Mode of Living (in E)

- Brand, Ulrich and Wissen, Marcus (2017): The Imperial Mode of Living. Everyday Life and the Ecological Crisis of Capitalism. Verso.
- Brand, Ulrich and Wissen, Marcus (2017): The Imperial Mode of Living. In book: Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics (pp.152-161)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316717147_The_Imperial_Mode_of_Living
- I.L.A.-Kollektiv (2018): At the expense of others. oekom. <https://www.oekom.de/buch/at-the-expense-of-others-9783962381561>

Appendix 3: suggestion for online whiteboards

- Spacedeck is a web-based software that lets you effortlessly combine all kinds of media on virtual whiteboards: text notes, photos, weblinks, even videos and audio recordings:
<https://spacedeck.com/>
- Crypt pad offers collaborative documents, whiteboards, spreadsheets etc. and is easy to handle: <https://cryptpad.fr/>
- OpenBoard is a cross-platform (Linux / Windows / macOS) interactive whiteboard application. It is currently maintained by the Education Department (D.I.P.) of the Canton of Geneva in Switzerland: <https://www.openboard.at/>
- Excalidraw is an open-source whiteboard tool that lets you quickly sketch diagrams that have a hand-drawn feel to them. Available directly online as a web app and also through CodeSandbox to easily see how the code works, and the app is available for self-hosting:
<https://excalidraw.com/>



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Additionally, some video conference tools have simple whiteboards integrated, e.g. BigBlueButton or Open meetings

Suggestions inspired by: <https://alternativeto.net/category/remote-work-and-education/interactive-whiteboard/?license=opensource>



Appendix 4: Handout "structure of a conversation café "

Copy the following text into a word document to use as a handout

A conversation cafe takes place in several rounds and lasts precisely 22 minutes. It follows a specific structure, which ensures that each person gets the chance to speak during the exercise. Make sure that you talk in the same order during rounds 2, 3 and 5.

structure

	Task/ guiding question	mode	time required in groups of 3 (in min.)	time required in groups of 4 (in min.)
Round 1	Individual reflection on the question	in silence	3	2
Round 2	What is the first thing that comes to my mind when I think about this question?	1 minute/ person	3	4
Round 3	What do I think after the others have spoken?	1 minute/ person	3	4
Round 4	Open discussion	Whoever wants to speak can speak	10	8
Round 5	Each person shares what they take away from the conversation	1 minute/ person	3	4
			22	22

Don't forget to designate a timekeeper in your group. The timekeeper is entitled to intervene if group members run overtime.

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