



# WORKING WITH CARDS

## A general introduction

According to learning and educational research our ability to learn is improved if we are not restricted to hearing, but have the chance to 'discover' and connect immediately with our own experiences, thereby anchoring learning more solidly in the brain. As part of the CLIPS methodology it is favored to make use of methods that give participants an active role, as opposed to primarily listening or reading.



## CLIPS METHODOLOGY - The use of CARDS

To optimize learning, participation, joy and impact of working in and with community groups, any input can and should come in diverse forms. The use of cards to spark reflection and dialogue is therefore explored and recommended in the work with groups.

Generally, cards offer the opportunity to convey the essence of what intends to be shared, in a form of a headline or a title on a card. By using an image, the room for self-interpretation opens further.

The cards give an impulse for the participants themselves to share their experience, ideas and thoughts about an issue, support dialogue and encourage exploration of perspectives and reflections on a certain topic.

As a facilitation tool, the inclusion of cards offers the ability to retain a discussion at an abstraction level where it may seem easier for participants to speak, describe and contribute with perspectives on their views in a way that can be both understandable and inspiring to others, but is still kept 'safe' for the participant.

Cards can encourage and support participation while creating a safe space as it offers a room of opportunity with an inbuilt freedom of choice. Participants can choose to go as high or deep as they want with the assistance of a card or they can choose to stay closely connected to the interpretation of an actual image or text, offering a chance for participation and contribution without the risk of exposing his/herself to participate more than what feels safe in the specific context and situation.

### Facilitated process

In a group there will often be some people with a deeper knowledge or experience about a subject matter. The cards further serve to instigate the sharing of this knowledge and have people participate on their different levels. The facilitator takes the role of connecting, summarizing, deepening and adding perspectives. This makes a training session much more diverse, offering participants an experience where content matters are treated deeply and participation is high.

### - or cards as part of group culture

Furthermore, cards can become an integrated way of working for community groups to deepen or explore a topic also without an external facilitator, counting on the wisdom of the group and preferably previous experience working with cards. As such, the use of cards has the potential to form a transformative and effective basis for meta-communication in communities.



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# INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Cards can be both general - where participants intuitively connect to an image or a text - and specific, where cards are designed for certain processes, but can still be applied in multiple ways.

There are numerous ways to work with cards. The intention is to use them as giving an impulse enabling participants to think about an issue themselves and dive into expressions about it, with the cards as a dialogue tool, to spark conversations. Furthermore, they can be used as an idea generation tool.

There are many issues related to the initial stages of any community project. In this context, the tool can be used to create communication and dialogue across the involved actors and, based on images and/or text, install possible solutions to challenges being discussed. In this way a common foundation can be found or a strategy be put forward. In CLIPS, we operate with several sets of cards, which will be shortly introduced here.

Following the many advantages of cards as facilitation tools, development of additional types of cards are encouraged, but the examples mentioned are what have been tested and can be recommended, by the CLIPS project. Detailed instructions for each type of cards can be found in the METHODS section (Community Cards, Ecovillage Playing Cards) and TOOL section (Pick a Picture).

## IMAGE CARDS

CLIPS uses three different types of image cards:

- 1) A collection of cards consisting of images used as representation for community values, priorities and activities. Could be images glued on decks with shared dinner situations, a windmill, a local shop, children playing etc., as representations of the different motivations of creating a project, together. The facilitator designs his/her own set of cards, adapted to the cultural context.
- 2) Ecovillage Playing cards is a set of cards developed by GEN. They consist of images and texts describing the elements within the four dimensions of sustainability, supplemented by integrated design cards. A floor mat has been developed, to arrange the cards in a mandala. Detailed descriptions are found in the tools section, a CLIPS version in the methods section. Can be used to explore motivation, priorities, strengths/weaknesses and set strategic direction, in a community project - aligning to the wheel of sustainability, in all its five dimensions.
- 3) Pick a Picture cards is a tool consisting of a number of general (but well thought out) images, where a variety of associations can emerge, thereby initiating dialogue and reflections. Are often used for check in and check out, but also to express longings, dreams, motivations, in a process.

## TEXT CARDS

CLIPS Community Cards is a set of 12 cards expressing values found significant for community life. They are primarily used to increase the awareness of the participants to reflect on what is needed to build a thriving community. Some of the cards can be part of the intention of a community, but also strategies and structures can be developed for each card.

In all above examples, be it images, text or icons - or combinations - the cards function as voice cards, where associations can emerge and thereby initiate dialogue and reflections on values, thoughts and interpretations, that are immediately attributed to a topic.



# WAYS OF WORKING WITH CARDS

Cards can be both Here a few ways to work with cards, where all can and should be adapted to the actual situation:

## Working in larger groups (min. 8 people)

- The facilitator briefly presents the cards, maybe through a few sentences to each or some of the cards, as examples. The cards are put in the middle of the circle.
  - Participants are asked to form groups of 2-4 (depending on the size of the whole group) and to pick some of the cards (each group an approximately equal amount, until all cards are taken).
  - The small groups are given time (10 minutes per card they have) to discuss the cards, to share their experiences, ideas as well as challenges they see emerge from the content of each specific card.
  - The groups report in plenary, sharing the essence of their discussion.
- At this point the facilitator adds what s/he thinks is missing.
- The cards can be used to visualize the essence of the points by portraying them on the wall.

## Working in smaller groups (max. 8 people)

- The facilitator briefly presents the cards, saying a few sentences to each or some of the cards. The cards are put in the middle of the circle.
- The participants are invited, by intuition, to grab a card and then share their experiences about it, their insights about the content of the card, and any potential challenges they might see in it.
- Have a group conversation about the content of each card.

## Using the cards as an invitation for creative work

The cards can be used as an invitation to process the information on the card in a creative way. Participants are asked to each take a card that appeals to them and to use artistic means to express the content of the card. There are different possibilities:

- Take a sheet of paper and create a drawing that illustrates this card (in this case, the papers can be put on the wall to visualize this content during the training).
- Form small groups and invent small sketches about the content of the card. Show them in plenary.
- Gather afterwards, in the full group, the impressions and insights of all participants and add what is still missing from the content you want to convey.

## Using the cards as 'Tarot-Cards'

(applicable to the "Community Cards", not to the "Ecovillage Cards")

Warning:

This method is very inspiring for some groups, whereas others get into strong resistance doing it. It is recommended to only use it with groups that have some kind of spiritual background or openness.

- Put the cards in the middle, with the backside on top, so the content cannot be read.
- Ask the participants to draw one of the cards each. To live up to the content of the card is their task.

They shall think about this card and its content as often as possible during the day, in different situations, and ask themselves if that attitude can support them in any way.

- In the evening: Debriefing and speaking about the experiences that the reflection about the cards caused.

## Using the 'card of the day' or 'card of the week'.

Alternative in longer courses or in communities that have a daily/weekly tuning-in:

Draw one of the cards every morning as the 'card of the day' or 'card of the week'.

## WHY WE WORK WITH CARDS?

To sum up, cards are flexible in use and can be developed and used for a variety of purposes. They are playful and interesting and groups and individuals tend to remember a session for long, having worked with cards. In CLIPS the development of and use of cards are encouraged to enhance participation and perspectives on the CLIPS focus areas.

