

**Discourse Analysis Exercise:
Identifying the organizational ‘discourse’ on participation**

This tool was developed by Irene Guijt for a *Learning Trajectory on Power Analysis*, for PSO (Netherlands), 2007.

The tool is designed to help programme staff identify and analyse the discourse of their own organisation, in this case in relation to ‘participation’. The exercise can be adapted however to focus on other words or concepts.

Staff were asked to bring copies of key policy and communication documents from their organisation to the workshop. The exercise was introduced with a brief powerpoint about what ‘discourse’ is and why it is important (see below)

Time: 1 hour

1. Pick two of the documents you brought that you think are most likely to or should contain the ‘company line’ on how the organization views citizen participation or civil society organisation participation.
2. Skim through the document until you identify those sections that are most focused on this topic.
3. Identify which words are used to describe ‘participation’ or which words are not used where you might expect them to be present.
4. See if there is a pattern that can be identified - a strong focus of some kind, a glaring absence of another kind, an inconsistency (strong and political statements in one section and weak statements elsewhere), perhaps a contradiction
5. Identify for yourself what you find are the most striking and perhaps surprising aspects of what you have found about the ‘discourse’. Don’t forget to notice what is missing.
6. In plenary, share the 2 or 3 most striking, striking, contradictory features.

Introductory powerpoint for this exercise:

