



NORDIC VOICES FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY - TOOLKIT

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. POSITIONALITY & SOLIDARITY *(UNDERSTANDING POWER)*

How does being a Nordic actor shape the power you hold — and how does that influence what you define and practice as “solidarity”?

What assumptions do you carry about Nordic models, values, or expertise?

2. DECISION-MAKING & ACCESS *(LOCATING POWER)*

Where are key decisions (priorities, funding, method, strategy) made in your work?

What would it take to shift that decision-making power to the global majority?

3. RESOURCES & CONTROL *(REDISTRIBUTING POWER)*

Who ultimately has control over resources and risk in your partnerships?

What kinds of risks do you carry in your work and in what way do they differ from the risks carried by your partners? Who ultimately carries the risks?

What would equitable sharing of both look like in practice? What does it take to get there?

4. ROLES & RELEVANCE *(REDEFINING ROLES)*

When and where is your organisation adding value to a partner, cause or project?

When might stepping back, following, or supporting others lead to more just outcomes?

What does taking on a supporting role look like for your organisation?

5. ACCOUNTABILITY & CHANGE *(COMMITTING TO SHIFTING POWER)*

Who is your organisation accountable to?

What concrete changes are you willing to make to redistribute power?

Erika Eva Kuittinen as part of the Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity toolkit

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

As a form of practice

What if standing in solidarity is a set of skills that can be practiced? Or a sensibility that can be cultivated?

These practices described are to support the future images envisioned at the Conference on Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity and to help us to move towards them.

Erika Eva Kuittinen as part of the Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity toolkit

Our world is collapsing in many senses. Simultaneously the development organisations are facing unforeseen hardships. This is a time in history where we need forms of solidarity the most. Many feel hopeless, because as much as we need solidarity we also see selfishness, indifference and weariness rising.

But we are not without agency. The vision calls for active solidarity, a choice made even when it comes at a cost. This practice asks: what does a person need, on the inside, to sustain that choice when it gets difficult? While solidarity itself cannot be forced into being, the inner ground it grows from can be tended. We will offer a practice to tend that ground: to strengthen the inner resources that make solidarity not just possible, but genuine rather than performative and sustainable rather than reactive.

Standing in Solidarity includes two practices that you can practice at home, at work, or facilitate to your own community. The first one is Standing like a river, where we look at what kind of posture we may need to stand in while the storms are howling. The second is the Ground of solidarity, exploring how connectedness and compassion can be cultivated for solidarity to grow as a possibility.

Standing like a river

Often in our modern world we understand standing as something solid in the sense of established and unmoving. Perhaps we think of a building or a concrete wall. However, the world around us is changing faster than ever before. It requires us to learn new ways to operate on all levels, individually, organisationally and globally.

I would like to suggest a new image for standing to better suit these turbulent times. A new posture to stand in.

What if we stand like a river? A river stays still, yet always moving. There are rivers that have been around for millions of years. But the water has kept changing and moving. Water also overcomes anything, as described in the Tao Te Ching. Not because it's hard but because it's soft. It adapts to changes, it softens the sharpest edges and even if it dissolves into clouds and rain, it never vanishes.

Erika Eva Kuittinen as part of the Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity toolkit

*Water seems so soft, weak, yielding
Yet easily overcomes the hard and strong.
It has no equal.
The soft overcomes the hard,
The weak overcomes the strong.
This is easy to understand
But rarely put into practice.*

-Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, 78

The first part of the practice is a guided somatic exercise to stand like a river. We will learn to stand rooted, finding the energy and flow in our body and then combining these two. If we regularly practice this way of standing, we will start noticing our nervous system calming, our presence deepening, and our mind growing more flexible. This practice helps us to act from a place of mindful presence rather than panic or rigidity.

It is from this settled place that we can start to feel what we might otherwise be too rushed or too guarded to notice: that we are not separate.



PRACTICE: STANDING LIKE A RIVER

Erika Eva Kuittinen as part of the Nordic Voices for Global Solidarity toolkit

Ground of solidarity

We can read about solidarity as a choice and still find ourselves wondering: why do so many people seem unmoved, not necessarily cruel, but simply indifferent? Perhaps it is not because they are selfish, but because understanding something intellectually and feeling it in the body are two very different things. What if solidarity cannot be forced into existence, but emerges naturally when the conditions inside us are right?

Solidarity may be born when we truly understand our connectedness to someone and feel compassion for them. Acts of solidarity follow from understanding that there is no me without the other, and from feeling the suffering of another being. In those conditions, the active choice the vision calls for does not feel like sacrifice. It feels like the only coherent response.

And this is why the inner work matters. Connectedness and compassion are not soft alternatives to action. They are what makes action possible and sustainable. Without them, solidarity risks becoming an obligation, something we perform until we burn out. With them, it becomes something we cannot easily abandon, because we have felt, in our own bodies, that we inter-are.

Connectedness, or interconnection, means that in this ecosystem nothing exists in isolation. Even our own existence is possible because of all the trees, soil, animals, microbes, grandparents and stars. According to Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh it could be called interbeing. There is no separation. When we understand this, we realize that doing a good deed for a bug is doing a good deed for myself, and being kind to myself is doing a good deed to the world. Because we all inter-are.

Compassion is a skill that can be learnt. That's what Neuroscientist Dr. Dan J Siegel based on his research. Our nervous system can learn new paths if we practice. For example by becoming aware of our own body, we increase our capacity to sense another human

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The second part of the practice uses contemplative and somatic methods to cultivate connectedness and compassion. We will begin by becoming aware of our own body. We will remind ourselves that we are inseparable from others and practice sensing even the people and beings that are not closest to us. We will also practice self-compassion that is not apart from compassion for others, because we inter-are.

PRACTICE: CULTIVATING CONNECTEDNESS AND COMPASSION

Like a river, solidarity does not force its way. It finds the path that is already there, shaped by the ground beneath it. These practices are an invitation to become that ground. By remembering, again and again, that we inter-are.

What begins in a room, with one body, with one breath, does not stay there. It moves outward, into how we meet a colleague, how we respond to news from far away, how we decide what we are willing to risk and for whom. Like a ripple.

**VISUAL STORYTELLER
SHAZIA KHAN:
HOW THE EXPERIENCES
OF BELONGING INFORM
SOLIDARITY**

Visual storyteller Shazia Khan: How the experiences of belonging inform solidarity

Shazia Khan shared her professional story and what she aims to do through her photography.

She presented photographs of people and places from around the world. Weaving together the stories of her own journey and the experiences of those she photographed, she raised questions about how our experiences of belonging can inform our understanding of solidarity.



“ I have started dreaming about water. I sit by the sea, just sitting there thinking: This is endless. I simply cannot stop looking at the turquoise-blue water because it is so beautiful and it makes me so happy. I drink the water and refill my water bottle several times.”



Visual storyteller Shazia Khan: How the experiences of belonging inform solidarity

Shazia has made an effort to shine light on what is generally not centred in our society, to showcase stories that, because they do not fit into our general categories, are sidelined or invisible. She argued strongly against our current individualism and the loneliness it leads to.

She challenged us to meet and speak to people who are different from us. Maintaining general categorisations of people, which determines whether their voice is heard, is counteractive to solidarity. Determining who is seen and given voice also determines who has the opportunity to choose solidarity.

Solidarity has to stem from curiosity and a willingness to listen, so people can tell their own stories and choose how they are portrayed. This honours their own voice, so it can be heard without interpretation. As the foundation is the question of relatability: can we come out of the artificial boxes and recognise ourselves in each other?



Photos: Iida Valmé

**ARTIST MAJ HORN:
STANDING IN SOLIDARITY
WITH OTHER SPECIES**



Artist Maj Horn: Standing in solidarity with other species

Maj Horn introduced her artistic practice through a performance lecture centred on the idea of solidarity with different species. Working across the animal and plant kingdoms, she combines storytelling, theory, props, and personal experience to explore who we extend solidarity to — and what it might take to expand solidarity beyond the human experience. An example is the urban pigeon, that can be used as a lens to question the limits and possibilities of solidarity in everyday life.

Through the figure of the pigeon, Maj highlighted how certain species exist in a paradox of visibility and neglect. The pigeon is everywhere in the city, yet largely unseen, positioned ambiguously between nuisance and symbol — dismissed as a pest, while also carrying associations with global connection. By inhabiting the pigeon through costume and narration, she invited the audience to reconsider this familiar yet overlooked companion, and to reflect on how hierarchies of worth shape our attention and care. Maj's performance opened a reflective space for thinking about solidarity as a practice rooted in imagination, perspective-taking, and a willingness to shift our frames of reference.

The performance also situated the pigeon within a much broader temporal perspective. Referencing research into distant past and possible future climates, Maj framed the pigeon as a witness to environmental change — linking deep history with projected futures. In doing so, she connected the question of interspecies solidarity to ongoing climate transformations, asking what it means to stand in relation to beings that may outlast us, or bear witness to the worlds we are helping to create.



TOOLS FOR ADVANCING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Some of the main resources we referred to during the project

Tools for re-imagining and futures thinking

Global Fund for Community Foundations:

For the field, by the field: New resources for anyone involved in civil society re-imagining processes
<https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/news/for-the-field-by-the-field/>

Sitra - the Finnish Innovation Fund

Futuremaker's Toolbox
<https://www.sitra.fi/tyokalu/kevyt-treenisarja-kuvitteluun/>

Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies Applied Strategic Foresight Toolkit

[Toolkit for Applied Strategic Foresight](#)

The Futures Toolkit

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

International Civil Society Center

The Futures Toolkit
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c4493f057d859c0e8fa778/futures-toolkit-edition-2.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

TOOLS FOR ADVANCING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Some of the main resources we referred to during the project

To understand shifting the power and find inspiration

Peace Direct, Acápacá

Report From Aid to Solidarity based on consultations with civil society actors from the Global South on the future of international cooperation

Peace Direct

Report Decolonising Peace Direct, an assessment of Peace Direct's own efforts to decolonise its organisation

Partos Learning Hub

Where do we go from here? Navigating power inequalities between development NGOs in the aid system - Partos

New Humanitarian podcast: Decolonise How?

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/podcasts/decolonise-how>

To understand the context and driving forces

THE END OF NORDIC EXCEPTIONALISM? -report

8047-the-final-nail-in-the-coffin-for-nordic-exceptionalism.pdf

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