

Group activities

1. *The pointy end of global climate change*

Submitted by: Blanche Higgins, RMIT University, Australia

Activity description

1. Watch the trailer for the award-winning 2010 film *There Once Was an Island: Te Henua E Noho* <http://www.thereoncewasanisland.com/>.
2. The activity is a role-play enactment of a conference that we imagine takes place in Auckland, New Zealand, to consider what should be done when the residents of the Pacific Island of Takuu are forced to abandon the coral atoll on which they and their ancestors have lived for thousands of years due to a devastating tidal flood.
3. Divide the group into the following five delegations – could be individuals – for the role-play: a) representatives of the island community; b) representatives of the New Zealand government; c) representatives of the Australian government; d) representatives of the Papua New Guinea government; e) representatives of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees.
4. Each delegation prepares for the meeting by considering what they can or cannot do in relation to the plight of the climate refugees.
5. Enact the round-table conference for whatever time can be allocated but no less than 20 minutes.
6. Hold a debriefing discussion in which all participants – no longer in their roles – discuss what it felt like to be in such negotiations.
7. Discuss the following: Did the talks make any headway? What were the biggest obstacles and what possibilities emerged from the talks?

2. *Environmental justice activity*

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Scenario

You – individual or group acting as an individual – are an environmental officer/planner working for a local council. The council has decided to build an e-waste recycling centre somewhere within its jurisdiction in order to reduce its ecological footprint. However, residents know that e-waste recycling produces some toxic air and water pollutants. You are responsible for recommending a preferred location for the plant to the elected council. The options are:

- An old industrial estate where the surrounding population has high numbers of refugees and recently arrived migrants, and where household income levels are generally low; or
- A park where the surrounding population is middle income and mainly white.

The options have been reported in the local newspaper and the residents in the vicinity of the park in question are up in arms about the possibility of losing the park.

Task

Make a clear recommendation and provide a dot-point rationale for your decision.

Discussion questions

1. To what extent do you think your own identity (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity) and life experience (e.g. family background and life history) influenced your decision?
2. What values underpinned your decision? Did they include considerations of equity, aesthetics, justice, social harmony?
3. Do you think your personal values are in line with those of people living in the community most directly affected by your decision? Do you think your personal values should carry more weight than those of the affected residents and, if so, why?
4. Can you justify your decision in terms of the RMIT Principles of Sustainability introduced in Chapter 2?