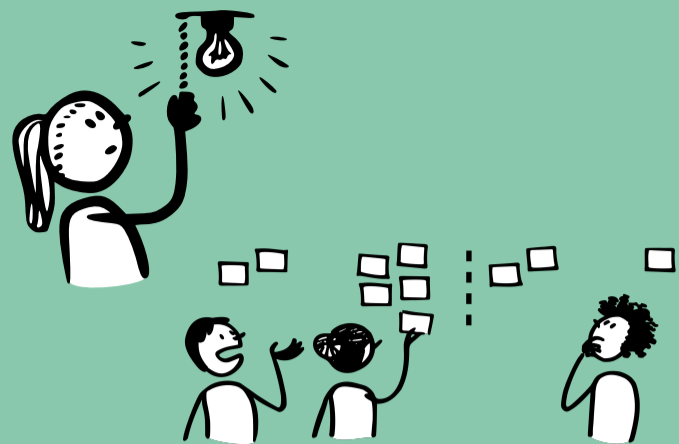


Controversy

Is this a controversy? 2

Drawing boundaries?!..... 6



These materials were developed as part of the “OERLe BNE” project. The aim of the project is to promote the participatory design of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) in the second phase of teacher training.

The focus is on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which is being established as an integral part of modern teacher training in Saxony-Anhalt. The materials are the result of close cooperation between the Geography Education Department at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU) and the State Institute for School Quality and Teacher Training Saxony-Anhalt (LISA).

The materials were developed in cooperation with the seminar locations in Halle and Magdeburg and are based on practical, participatory approaches. These materials are intended as dynamic resources that are openly available for further use, adaptation and dissemination in line with the OER movement. When using them, please note the following licence information:



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Is this a controversy?

... an opinion line on the term "controversy"



Goal: Participants will be able to define "controversy" and will be familiar with the Beutelsbach Consensus as a frame of reference.



Contents: Controversy and Beutelsbach Consensus



Materials needed: Pens and paper for the participants, handout "Dealing with controversy in the classroom"



Time: 30 min

In summary

In political education, engaging with controversial topics is essential for fostering critical thinking and democratic judgment. This exercise explores which topics are truly controversial. The Beutelsbach Consensus serves as a framework for developing criteria for addressing controversy in the classroom. This reflection is particularly important in the context of education for sustainable development: sustainability issues - such as climate change, social justice, and economic responsibility - are often socially contested and characterised by ethical and scientific uncertainties.

1

Positioning on Controversy (Plenary Session)

Participants take a position on various statements by classifying them as "controversial" or "not controversial."



2

Controversy – Defining the Concept (Group Discussion)

Participants discuss characteristics of controversy. A shared definition is then established.



3

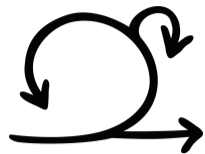
The Beutelsbach Consensus as a Framework for Controversy (Plenary Session/ Individual Work)

Participants learn about the Beutelsbach Consensus as a framework and explore the boundaries of controversy, scientific orientation, and fundamental values.



Is this a controversy?

... an opinion line on the term "controversy"



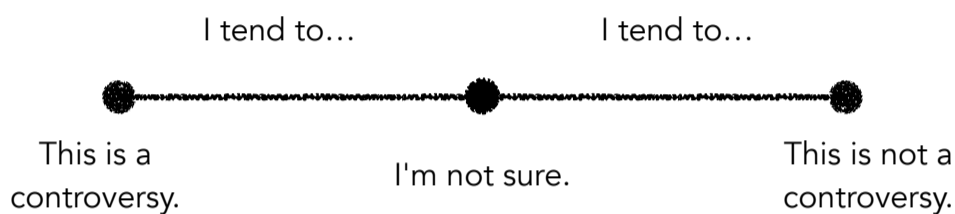
Suggested procedure

1

Positioning on Controversy (Plenary Session)

Introduction to the „Opinion Line" Method

Participants are asked to position themselves along an imaginary line.



Conducting the "Opinion Line"

Various statements are presented, and participants take a position on them. At least one controversial statement (e.g., a universal basic income should be introduced) and one statement that is not controversial (e.g., climate change is man-made) should be selected. Depending on how the participants position themselves, they can either exchange views in groups or share a brief summary from each group. The topics and number of statements will depend on the participants.

A universal basic income should be introduced.

Climate change is man-made.

Immigration to Germany should be more strictly regulated.

Freedom of expression should have limits.

Consciousness is the result of complex neuronal processes and can ultimately be explained physically.

The wealth tax must be increased.

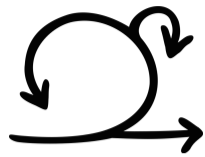
Humans have landed on the moon.

Nuclear energy is one way to generate sustainable energy.

Genetic manipulation of embryos should be permitted.

Is this a controversy?

... an opinion line on the term "controversy"



Suggested procedure

2

Controversy – Defining the Concept (Group Discussion)

The participants' final position can serve as a basis for group formation. Working in groups, they collect key characteristics of a controversy and record them in writing. The ideas are then presented.



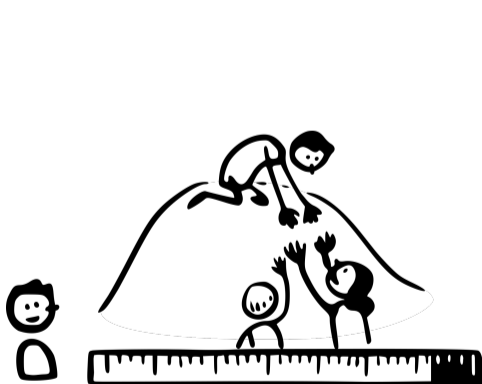
In summary: Controversy

Controversy means that there are conflicting viewpoints or scientific findings, and the negotiation is taking place in an open process (Ohl, 2023).

3

Beutelsbach Consensus as a Framework for Controversy

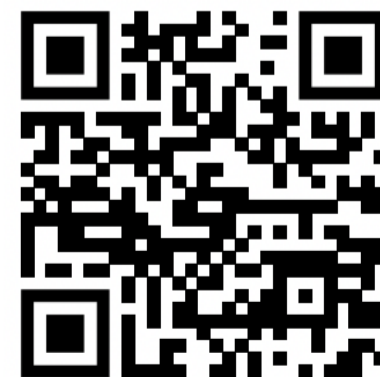
The Beutelsbach Consensus will be presented to participants as a framework, and the limits of controversy (fundamental values: human dignity and scientific orientation) will be defined. This can be presented as input and supported by the attached handout.



Differentiation options

- Clarifying terms before positioning
- Selecting statements for positioning
- Individual research on the frame of reference and limits of controversy, e.g. self-study unit

Good connection with "drawing boundaries?!"



<https://bne-oer.de/beutelsbacher-konsens/>



Handout: Dealing with Controversy in the Classroom

Beutelsbach Consensus

I. Prohibition of Indoctrination: It is not permissible to overwhelm students - by any means whatsoever - with desired opinions and thereby prevent them from forming their own independent judgment.

II. Principle of Controversy: What is controversial in science and politics must also be presented as controversial in the classroom.

III. Student Orientation: Students must be enabled to analyse a political situation and their own interests, as well as to seek ways and means to influence the existing political situation in line with their interests (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2011).

Must all positions that appear in social discourse then be represented in the curriculum?

No, controversy has its limits, namely...

Science is based on controversy. It involves currently valid findings that are legitimised by the ever-present possibility of criticism from other scientists. Current scientific findings, for example on climate change, are a key reference point for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Oberle, 2025). There is scientific consensus that climate change is caused by humans and that it poses high risks to the lives of people currently and in the future (Lynas et al., 2021).

scientific orientation

Controversy

Free and democratic basic order: fundamental values

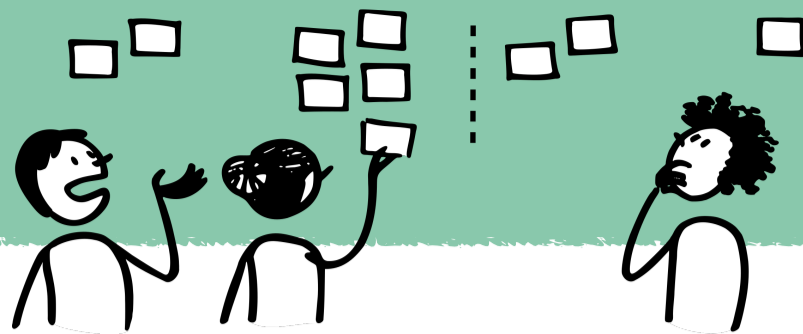
Article 1 of the Basic Law: (1) Human dignity is inviolable. To respect and protect it is the duty of all state authority.

(2) The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every human community, of peace and of justice in the world.

Article 20a of the Basic Law: The state, also in its responsibility towards future generations, protects the natural foundations of life and animals within the framework of the constitutional order through legislation and, in accordance with law and justice, through the executive and the judiciary.

Draw boundaries?!

...a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



Objective: Participants will be able to select reasoned perspectives on dealing with climate change and/or gender-inclusive language, which must be considered in accordance with the principle of controversy.



Contents: Perspectives on dealing with climate change and gender-inclusive language, taking into account the principle of controversy.



Materials needed: Material "Perspectives on dealing with climate change", Material "Perspectives on 'Gender-inclusive language'", red thread, moderation cards and pens



Time: 70 min

In summary

This exercise helps participants critically examine perspectives on climate change based on the criteria of scientific rigour and fundamental values. They learn to distinguish between legitimate controversies and scientifically or ethically untenable positions. Reflecting on controversy is relevant because it helps avoid false balance in the classroom. In the context of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the exercise strengthens the ability to critically assess sustainability-related topics and recognise social inequalities in the climate discourse. A fact-based approach fosters participants' critical thinking skills.

1

Drawing Boundaries (Group Work) (pp. 7-12)

Participants include or exclude perspectives on dealing with climate change and/or gender-inclusive language in accordance with the principle of controversiality. They use the criteria of "science orientation" and "core values" and may establish further criteria.



2

Discussing Arguments (Plenary Session) (pp. 13-17)

Participants discuss which perspectives were excluded, which criteria were used for this, and, if applicable, identify forms of discrimination.



3

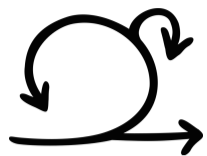
Transfer: Excluded, Now What? (Plenary Discussion) (p. 18)

Participants discuss how to deal with perspectives that contradict a science orientation and/or core values.



Draw boundaries?!

...a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



Suggested procedure

1

"Drawing Boundaries" (Group Work)

The aim of this exercise is for participants to be able to include or exclude perspectives on dealing with climate change and/or gender-inclusive language in accordance with the principle of controversy. They will use the criteria "science orientation" and "fundamental values," which were developed in the exercise "Is this a Controversy?"



Participants form groups and receive the task description, perspectives (pp. 7-8 / pp. 10-11), moderation cards, pens, and a red thread.

Tasks:

1. You will receive various perspectives on dealing with climate change and/or gender-inclusive language. Taking into account the Beutelsbach Consensus and the principle of controversy, categorise these perspectives into two groups:

Within the red line – Perspectives that are considered equal and should be discussed in class.

Outside the red line – Perspectives that can be excluded because they are not scientifically sound or violate fundamental democratic values.

2. Discuss together which further criteria you will use to organise the perspectives. In addition to scientific orientation and core values, you can define further categories and note them on index cards.

In brief: Controversy surrounding climate change

Regarding climate change, there is a scientific consensus (99.9% of scientists in publications addressing climate change) that it is caused by humans and poses high risks to the lives of current and future generations (Lynas et al., 2021). The approach to climate change is a subject of considerable debate, with various strategies such as economisation strategies (CO₂ taxes), technological solutions (renewable energies), consistency strategies (recycling), and sufficiency strategies (degrowth). The question "What should we do?" is closely linked to the question "Who bears the responsibility?" - therefore, perspectives often overlap with forms of discrimination such as racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and ageism. However, this does not mean that teachers need to address all these positions in their lessons. The restriction of positions to be treated as equal in the context of ESD can be legitimised by reference to fundamental values (human dignity as a central basic principle) and by the principle of scientific orientation (Oberle, 2025).

Material: Perspectives on dealing with climate change

Important tips for saving CO₂

1. Use green electricity.
2. Be sustainable and mobile – use a bicycle, bus, or train instead of a car or plane.
3. Eat fewer animal products and buy regional and seasonal food.
4. Regulate your heating consciously.
5. Use your washing machine efficiently – washing in cold water and filling it to capacity saves energy.
6. Choose energy-efficient appliances.
7. Reduce data usage – streaming and cloud services consume a lot of energy.
8. Buy secondhand items and use them for longer.
9. Avoid waste and recycle.

Climate Money – A Socially Just Carbon Pricing System

Climate money is intended to fairly distribute the burden of carbon pricing. Revenues from carbon taxes or emissions trading are paid out as a lump sum to all residents. Since lower-income households often produce fewer emissions, they benefit particularly from this reimbursement. This ensures that climate protection is socially just and avoids financial disadvantages.

Constitutional Reform for the Rights of Nature

The "Rights for Nature" initiative calls for a constitutional reform to grant nature independent rights and strengthen its protection. It criticises the fact that existing environmental laws are often subject to economic interests and fail to prevent environmental destruction. The proposed reform adds the dignity of nature to human dignity and obligates the state to preserve the natural foundations of life. Furthermore, nature is to be granted legal capacity and better protected under the law. The constitutional amendment stipulates that every living being has a right to a life in accordance with its natural environment.

Climate Hysteria and Gender Distribution – A Critical Perspective

The Fridays for Future demonstrations reveal a striking pattern: up to 70% of participants are female. According to the WHO, these activists' truancy from school is a sign of disrupted daily life behaviour, which could indicate a mental disorder or an irrational belief. Historically, hysteria has been primarily attributed to women, and this phenomenon is now reflected in the climate movement – young women portray themselves as victims of the climate crisis, thereby gaining public attention. Despite the lack of scientific evidence for anthropogenic climate change, these activists behave as if the threat were real and imminent. Positive effects of global warming, such as improved agricultural yields and fewer cold-related deaths, are ignored. Those who nevertheless believe in the climate catastrophe are acting irrationally and are swept away by an ideologically driven zeitgeist that makes young women particularly vulnerable.

Population Policy as the Key to Climate Protection?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report outlines measures to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius – a goal considered virtually unattainable. Previous climate protection measures have had little effect, while the world is heading towards warming of up to five degrees Celsius. However, one crucial aspect is consistently overlooked: population growth. Particularly in Africa and parts of Asia, populations are growing rapidly, which researchers believe could further drive CO₂ emissions. Scientists argue that targeted family planning programs could contribute to reducing emissions in the long term. However, IPCC reports continue to avoid this topic, even though it could be crucial for sustainable climate policy.

CO₂ Storage

Underground CO₂ storage (Carbon Capture and Storage, CCS) is considered a potential solution for reducing greenhouse gases. In Germany, a CCS project was carried out in Ketzin from 2008 to 2013, safely storing nearly 68,000 tons of CO₂. Studies show that Germany potentially possesses over ten gigatons of storage capacity, but there are competing uses for these geological formations, such as geothermal energy. While Norway has been injecting CO₂ into former gas reservoirs since 1996, Iceland is pursuing a different approach with the CarbFix project: there, CO₂ is mixed with seawater and mineralised.

Degrowth – Sustainability Instead of Growth

Degrowth describes a society that moves away from constant economic growth and instead focuses on well-being and ecological sustainability. The movement emphasises solidarity, cooperation, and sufficiency instead of competition and overproduction. Practical measures include reduced consumption, democratic participation, and regional economic cycles. The complete decoupling of growth and resource consumption is rejected. Degrowth distances itself from discriminatory critiques of growth and calls for a just transformation.

Carbon Tax – An Effective Climate Protection Instrument

A carbon tax provides a financial incentive to reduce emissions by making climate-damaging products more expensive and climate-friendly alternatives more attractive. It helps to directly price the costs of environmental pollution into the market and promotes sustainable innovation. Countries like Sweden have demonstrated that a carbon tax can effectively reduce emissions without weakening the economy.

Save lives with your donation

Your regular donation enables reliable aid and sustainable improvements for people in need. Through targeted initiatives, families receive vital food and learn to grow their own food despite drought and prolonged dry seasons. Many affected individuals report that these programs have given them new hope. Together, we can help even more people and give them a future free from hunger.

The ban on plastic straws – A step for the environment

Since July 3, 2021, plastic straws have been banned in the EU to reduce the environmental impact of single-use plastics. Millions of plastic straws were thrown away every day, contributing to the pollution of seas and landscapes. The ban is part of a comprehensive strategy against plastic waste, which also includes other single-use products such as plastic cutlery and to-go packaging. Businesses and consumers are increasingly turning to sustainable alternatives such as paper, glass, or stainless steel straws. Despite some challenges in the transition, the ban is seen as an important step towards a more environmentally friendly future.

Draw boundaries?!

...a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



The material, "Perspectives on Dealing with Climate Change," was created using the AI Microsoft Copilot based on the following sources. It was edited and revised by humans.

Texts	Based on
Population policy as the key to climate protection?	Müller-Jung, J. (2018). Ein Tabu brechen. Bevölkerungswachstum begrenzen. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/mit-bevoelkerungspolitik-den-klimawandel-stoppen-15788619.html#abschluss
Climate Hysteria and Gender Distribution – A Critical Perspective	Klein, M. (2019). <i>Die Klimahysterie ist weiblich</i> . https://sciencefiles.org/2019/05/31/die-klimahysterie-ist-weiblich/
Save lives with your donation	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e. V. (2025). <i>Mit ihrer Spende den Hunger besiegen</i> . https://www.welthungerhilfe.de/regelmaessig-spenden
Important tips for saving CO ₂	Greenpeace e. V. (2025). 11 Tipps für mehr Klimaschutz im Alltag. https://www.greenpeace.de/klimaschutz/klimakrise/10-tipps-klimaschutz-alltag
Constitutional reform for the rights of nature	Ax, C. (2025). <i>Rechte für die Natur - Initiative für eine Grundgesetzreform</i> . https://www.rechte-der-natur.de/de/initiative-grundgesetzreform.html
CO ₂ Storage	Wessel, G. (2023). Mit Technik gegen die Erderwärmung. Können Innovationen das Klima retten? https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/mit-technik-gegen-die-erderwaermung-koennen-innovationen-100.html
Degrowth – Sustainability instead of growth	degrowth.info (n.d.). <i>Was ist Degrowth? Eine Definition oder was "Degrowth" für uns bedeutet</i> . https://degrowth.info/de/degrowth-de
The ban on plastic straws – A step for the environment	Generated without a textual basis by AI; a similar position can be found here: Press and Information Office of the Federal Government (2025). Ban on single-use plastics. https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/schwerpunkte-der-bundesregierung/nachhaltigkeitspolitik/verbot-von-einweg-plastik-1914312
Climate money – A socially just CO ₂ pricing system	Deutscher Ethikrat (Ed.). (2024). <i>Klimagerechtigkeit. Stellungnahme Deutscher Ethikrat</i> .
Carbon tax – An effective climate protection instrument	Generated by AI without a text base

Material: Perspectives on "Gender-inclusive language"

The Gender Asterisk and the Invisible Majority

I view the current debate surrounding gender-inclusive language, and especially the gender asterisk (*), with great concern. What I observe is that women and small minorities are being linguistically equated, even though women constitute the majority of the population. For decades, I, along with other feminists, have fought for a language that makes women visible - away from the generic masculine, which veils and renders women invisible.

Today, however, it seems as if gender-inclusive language is pushing women back into the background. The demand for a balanced gender ratio is now being interpreted as linguistically equating women and transgender people, even though women represent the actual societal majority. I find it unfair that the concerns of women, who have been structurally disadvantaged for centuries, are being sidelined. Discrimination against women functions fundamentally differently and is a societal problem, while the transgender minority is numerically small. With the gender asterisk, I see an exaggerated linguistic emphasis that effectively makes women "disappear."

Why Gender-Inclusive Language Works: Scientific Findings

Gender-inclusive language plays a central role in reducing stereotypes and gender-specific prejudices and increasing the visibility of women and other genders. Two seminal studies underscore this effect. Sara and Daryl Bem (1973) conducted an experimental study that showed that women feel less addressed by job advertisements written in the generic masculine. This reduced address negatively impacts the likelihood of them applying. Bem and Bem concluded that gender-specific language patterns have direct consequences for the behaviour and perception of potential female applicants (Bem & Bem, 1973). A more recent study by Kollmayer et al. (2018) investigates whether gender-inclusive language helps overcome cognitive gender stereotypes. The results show that texts using gender-inclusive language make thinking more flexible and significantly increase the mental representation of women. This effect is independent of the reader's gender. The study authors emphasise that gender-inclusive language can reduce so-called "male bias," thereby weakening stereotypical role attributions (Kollmayer et al., 2018). These research findings demonstrate that gender-inclusive language is more than just a fashionable linguistic trend: it has measurable social and psychological effects that contribute to equality. In educational contexts, it can be used strategically to break down stereotypical ideas in the minds of learners and promote the inclusion of all genders.

Preserving the Order of Creation and the Natural Order of Gender

The official position of the German Bishops' Conference (DBK) on gender and gender-inclusive language is characterised by the conviction that gender is a God-given biological reality that cannot be arbitrarily altered or defined as a social construct. The DBK views gender mainstreaming and gender-inclusive language practices with some skepticism, as they are understood as ideological concepts that call into question the traditional understanding of man and woman as well as the order of creation.

The DBK emphasises that the natural order of gender forms the basis for marriage, family, and social coexistence. For example, the assumption that gender mainstreaming automatically leads to equal opportunities is rejected as naive by some members of the Bishops' Conference. Official declarations and statements warn that reducing the body to a "free commodity" and re-evaluating homosexuality, intersexuality, and transsexuality could violate the divine order.

For Clear Language and Inclusion

The CDU justifies its ban on gender-inclusive language in schools by arguing, among other things, that the use of gender-inclusive forms such as asterisks, underscores, or colons is confusing and exclusionary for many people - especially migrants and people with visual or hearing impairments. These groups could be disadvantaged in language acquisition and communication by the complex new spellings. Furthermore, the CDU places great importance on students adhering to the official rules of German orthography, which currently do not include gender-inclusive special characters. The CDU views the introduction of such forms as a form of political activism that jeopardises clarity and ease of understanding. This leads to uncertainty and can impair the learning process. Therefore, the CDU advocates for clear, understandable language that excludes no one and does not hinder school education.

Material: Perspectives on "Gender-inclusive language"

Political Mandate Instead of Natural Language Change

In the gender politics debate, it is often claimed that the generic masculine makes women linguistically invisible. This equation of the grammatical form "masculine" with biological maleness is misleading. The generic masculine serves as a linguistically economical, unmarked form, chosen whenever gender is irrelevant and no additional information is needed. Communication generally favours the shortest and most efficient form of expression, with context and world knowledge supplementing the meaning - not grammatical form alone.

Contrary to the claim that gender-inclusive language forms are natural language change, asterisks, gender gaps, or other creative forms are politically mandated interventions in established language structures. Natural change arises through analogous formation processes within the language system, as with the word "Gästin" (female guest), which developed according to the pattern "Rat – Rätin" (councillor – female councillor) or "Arzt – Ärztin" (doctor – female doctor). In modern language forms like "Studierende" (students) or "Teilnehmende" (participants), it becomes clear that participial forms only work grammatically as a gender-neutral solution in the plural; in the singular, the gender difference remains ("ein Student" vs. "eine Studentin"). Furthermore, in German, such participles are only formed for processes, not for permanent states ("Teilnehmende" works, "Einwohnende" does not). The attempt to categorically avoid all masculine forms therefore leads more to grammatical and semantic absurdities than to genuine equality. Creative forms like the gender asterisk do not conform to official orthography and are therefore errors.

Why Gender-Inclusive Language Is Important to Me as a Non-Binary Person

As a non-binary person, I often feel invisible in language. The traditional binary gender system - male or female - simply doesn't reflect my identity. When language always refers to "students" or "employees," I feel excluded and undervalued. This affects not only my daily well-being but also my participation in society.

Gender-inclusive language, for example, through the use of gender asterisks (*) or neutral forms like "students" or "employees," allows me to find myself reflected in language. It's an important step toward making diversity and respect visible. When language is inclusive, it becomes clear: there are more than just two genders. This gives people like me the feeling of being recognised and accepted.

Furthermore, gender-inclusive language isn't just a symbol; it has real positive effects on the mental health of people who don't fit into traditional categories. When I am addressed incorrectly (misgendered), I experience emotional distress and feel my identity is not respected.

It's understandable that language needs to change, and that this can sometimes feel unfamiliar. But this transformation is necessary so that language reflects the reality of many people and no one is excluded. For me, as a non-binary person, gender-inclusive language is therefore not a matter of fashion, but a fundamental prerequisite for social participation and respect.

Gender-Inclusive Language in the Neoliberal Context

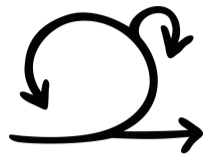
Gender-inclusive language, which aims to make all genders visible, is often placed within a neoliberal framework that understands equality as individual responsibility. Women and other marginalised groups are primarily addressed as self-reliant market participants, while structural power relations and social inequalities are largely ignored. Equality becomes an economic calculation primarily intended to increase efficiency and competitiveness, while social justice is sidelined in favour of growth. Women are seen as genderless subjects in the market, whose reproductive activities are rendered invisible. At the same time, the state's withdrawal from social responsibilities leads to an increased burden on women, for example, through a lack of childcare options, while they are expected to compete in the labor market. Ultimately, gender-inclusive language can also be symbolic politics, demonstrating superficial progress while profound social and political changes fail to materialise, thus leaving existing power structures unchallenged.

The material: Perspectives on "Gender-Inclusive Language" was created with Perplexity AI based on the following sources. It was edited and revised by humans.

Texts	Based on
The Gender Asterisk and the Invisible Majority	Pusch, L. F. (2023). GENDERN: FRAUEN VERSCHWINDEN. <i>Emma</i> , 23(5), 38-39. https://www.emma.de/artikel/diese-minderheit-verdraengt-die-mehrheit-340515
Why Gender-Inclusive Language Works: Scientific Findings	Bem, S. L., & Bem, D. J. (1973). Does sex-biased wording in job advertisements affect hiring decisions? <i>Journal of Applied Social Psychology</i> , 3(1), 91-103. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1973.tb01008.x Kollmayer, M., Pfaffel, A., Schober, B., & Brandt, L. (2018). Breaking away from the male stereotype of a specialist: Gendered language affects performance in a thinking task. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , 9, 985. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00985
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Political Mandate Instead of Natural Language Change	Stathi, K. (2022). <i>Sprache hat nicht die Funktion, Gerechtigkeit abzubilden</i> . Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. https://www.uni-muenster.de/news/view.php?cmdid=12807
Gender-Inclusive Language in the Neoliberal Context	Soiland, T. (2005). Gender: Kritik oder Bestandteil des neoliberalen Regimes? https://forschungsnetzwerk.ams.at/dam/jcr:3e539950-925b-4443-a737-c2a1233915e1/Tove_Soiland_2005_gender.pdf Wichterich, C. (2007). Globalisierung und Geschlecht: Über neoliberale Strategien zur Gleichstellung. <i>Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik</i> , 6(7), 686-695. https://www.femme-global.de/fileadmin/user_upload/femme-global/themen/globalisation/economy/Neolib_Gleichstellung.pdf Winker, G. (2007). Traditionelle Geschlechterordnung unter neoliberalen Druck. In: Groß, M. <i>Queer- / feministische Kritiken neoliberaler Verhältnisse</i> . Unrast: München. S. 15-49. https://www.gabriele-winker.de/pdf/Kritiken_Geschlechterordnung.pdf

Draw boundaries?!

...a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



Suggested procedure

2

Discussing Arguments (Plenary Session)

A possible argument regarding which perspectives could be excluded from instruction, taking the Beutelsbach Consensus into account, can be found on page 15.



Possible starting points for discussion in the plenary session could be:

- What differences emerge?
- Which perspectives were discussed in particular?
- Are you unsure about which perspectives?
- What other criteria did you consider?

If it becomes apparent during the discussion that the participants do not recognise forms of discrimination, a more in-depth exploration of these forms can be incorporated. For this purpose, the forms of discrimination (page 17) are distributed to the participants and assigned to the perspectives.

Possible task: Analyse in which perspectives the following forms of discrimination occur.

In brief: Discrimination and climate change

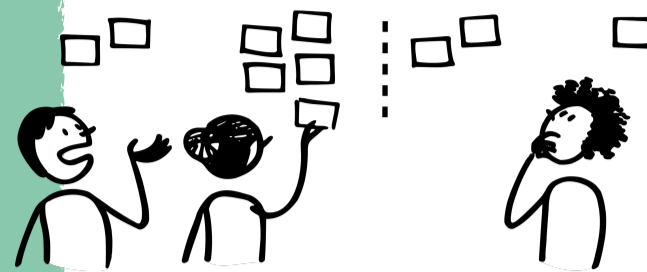
Climate change does not affect everyone equally: Social inequalities influence who is most affected, who has access to protective measures, and whose voice is heard in political decision-making processes.

Many marginalised groups - especially people in economically disadvantaged regions or communities that already experience discrimination - are disproportionately affected by environmental crises. Racism and classism are evident, for example, in the fact that low-income and non-white populations often suffer more from pollution or live in areas with increased climate risk. Ableism plays a role when disaster preparedness and adaptation measures are not tailored to people with disabilities. Sexism can lead to women receiving unequal resources or opportunities to participate in climate policy and adaptation strategies. Age discrimination is evident in the fact that older people are often particularly affected by the direct impacts of climate change, such as increasing heat waves or extreme weather events. At the same time, current political and economic decision-makers - often from older generations - implement long-term climate protection measures, while young people, who will feel the future consequences most acutely, often have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making. Therefore, discussions about approaches to climate change must always include a critical examination of social power relations and structural discrimination.

Possible argument

In summary

The task can be solved in various ways, especially when further criteria are considered. In one interpretation of the Beutelsbach Consensus, perspectives that are incompatible with a scientific orientation or the core values may be excluded. The reasons why perspectives might be excluded are briefly outlined in the table.

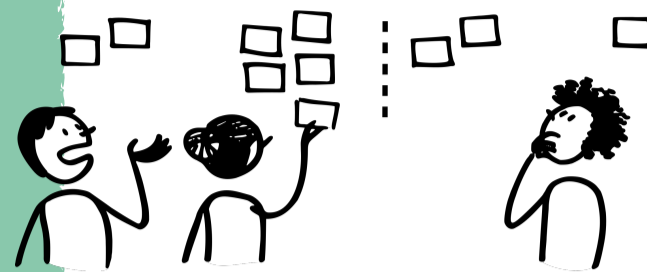


Texts	Exclusion is possible through, for example,
Population policy as the key to climate protection?	<p>Scientific rigour: The statement emphasises population growth in Africa and parts of Asia as a driving factor for rising CO₂ emissions. This ignores the (historical) causation of climate change, particularly by industrialised countries, as well as structural inequalities.</p> <p>Core values: The argument can reinforce racist narratives if it implies that people in certain regions bear the primary responsibility for global environmental problems.</p>
Climate hysteria is female.	<p>Scientific rigour: There is a scientific consensus that climate change exists.</p> <p>Core values: Discrimination against women and young people who want to contribute their perspectives through protests and are classified as "mentally ill".</p>
Nutrition despite drought	<p>Core values: The argumentation reinforces racist stereotypes: People in the Global South are portrayed as helpless, while donors in the Global North are depicted as saviours. This supports colonial narratives such as "white saviorism" (the desire to help while ignoring one's own involvement in exploitative relationships).</p>
Important tips for saving CO ₂	<p>Core values: Some of these tips may be perceived as classist or ableist because they presuppose certain social and physical conditions that are not equally available to everyone. For example, not everyone can afford energy-efficient appliances. People with mobility impairments often rely on cars if public transportation is not accessible.</p>
Constitutional reform for the rights of nature	
CO ₂ storage	
Degrowth – Sustainability instead of growth	
plastic straws	<p>Fundamental principles: People with disabilities could be unintentionally disadvantaged. The ban on plastic straws ignores the fact that some people with certain physical limitations or illnesses rely on plastic straws because alternatives like paper, glass, or metal are not accessible to everyone.</p>
Climate money – A socially just CO ₂ pricing system	
CO ₂ tax – An effective climate protection instrument	

Possible argument

In summary

The task can be solved in various ways, especially when further criteria are considered. In one interpretation of the Beutelsbach Consensus, perspectives that are incompatible with a scientific orientation or the core values may be excluded. The reasons why perspectives might be excluded are briefly outlined in the table.



Texts	Exclusion is possible through, for example,
The gender asterisk and the invisible majority	<p>Scientific orientation: The text argues that women are being pushed back in their visibility, but studies (such as Kollmayer et al., 2018) show that gender-sensitive language significantly increases the visibility of women.</p> <p>Core values: The text's argument is that the concerns of minorities (in this case, for example, trans, intersex, and non-binary people) should not be given equal status with the majority. This contradicts the principle of equal treatment and participation, as well as the protection of minorities, and discriminates against these individuals.</p>
Preservation of the order of creation and the natural order of the sexes	<p>Scientific orientation: This position is based on a theological worldview that constructs a binary gender relationship. This position contradicts scientific findings from biology, medicine, psychology, and social sciences that gender is diverse and shaped by social and cultural factors.</p> <p>Core values: This position negates the identity and participatory rights of homosexual, intersex, and transgender people by claiming that they violate the "divine order." This systematically excludes minorities.</p>
For clear language and inclusion	<p>Scientific orientation: The claim that gender symbols confuse or exclude people across the board is not clearly supported by empirical research. Friedrich & Heise (2019), on the other hand, demonstrate that gender-inclusive language does not impair the comprehensibility of texts.</p> <p>Fundamental values: The position of foregoing gender symbols for the sake of comprehensibility for certain groups ignores the rights and needs of non-binary, trans, and intersex people, whose social inclusion and visibility in the school setting are subject to fundamental rights such as anti-discrimination and participation.</p>
Political directive instead of natural language change	<p>Scientific orientation: A study by the University of Würzburg (Rothermund & Strack, 2024) demonstrates that simply knowing the generic intention of the masculine form is insufficient to counteract this male bias. The generic masculine evokes predominantly male associations in readers, which reduces the visibility of women and other genders.</p>

Friedrich, M. C. G. & Heise, E. (2019). Does the use of gender-fair language influence the comprehensibility of texts? An experiment using an authentic contract manipulating single role nouns and pronouns. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 78, 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.1024/1421-0185/a000223>

Kollmayer, M., Pfaffel, A., Schober, B., & Brandt, L. (2018). Breaking away from the male stereotype of a specialist: Gendered language affects performance in a thinking task. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 985. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00985>

Rothermund, P., & Strack, F. (2024). Reminding may not be enough: Overcoming the male dominance of the generic masculine. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 43(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X241237739>

Material: Forms of discrimination

Analyse in which perspectives on dealing with climate change the following forms of discrimination occur.

Classism "refers to structural discrimination based on occupation, education, income, and class background."

Classism and Climate Change

- Less responsibility: lower income, less consumption, smaller carbon footprint
- The working class is more affected by environmental destruction and often has fewer opportunities to protect itself from it
- Government climate policies (e.g., carbon taxes) often hit poorer people harder

(Education for Utopian Change, 2022, pp. 4-5)

Ableism refers to the discrimination against people with disabilities.

Ableism and Climate Change

- People with disabilities are more severely affected by emergencies resulting from climate change.
- This increased vulnerability is not taken into account in environmental policy decisions or emergency and evacuation plans.
- The perspectives of people with disabilities are not considered in climate protection measures.

(United Nations, 2020, pp. 3-4)

Racism is an ideology that devalues people based on their appearance, name, (perceived) culture, origin, or religion.

Racism and Climate Change

- Racism as justification for the colonial era, exploitation of colonies as the basis for industrialisation (and the release of greenhouse gases)
- Due to structural discrimination, BIPOC are disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change
- BIPOC perspectives are severely underrepresented

(Ituen & Tatu Hey, 2021)

Sexism describes the discrimination against people based on their assigned gender.

Sexism in the climate change discourse:

- Women are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis due to structural sexism.
- Women are devalued based on stereotypes (e.g., emotionality instead of rationality).

(FUMA Gender & Diversity Center NRW, 2024)

Age discrimination describes the discrimination of people based on their age.

Age discrimination in the context of climate change

- Future generations' opportunities for health, freedom, and equal living conditions are currently severely limited (due to delays, inaction, and insufficient measures).
- Older people are particularly affected by the consequences of climate change, especially heat.

(Quent, Richter & Salheiser, 2022)

Draw boundaries?!

... a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



literature

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FUMA Fachstelle Gender & Diversität NRW (2024). *#Sexismus*. <https://www.gender-nrw.de/sexismus/>

Ituen, I & Tatu Hey, L. (2021). *Der Elefant im Raum. Umweltrassismus in Deutschland*. https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2021-12/E-Paper_Der_Elefant_im_Raum_-_Umweltrassismus_in_Deutschland_Endf.pdf

Lynas, M., Houlton, B. Z., & Perry, S. (2021). Greater than 99% consensus on human caused climate change in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. *Environment Research Letters* 16(11).

Oberle, M. (2025). *Grenzenlose Kontroversität? Zur Aktualität des Beutelsbacher Konsenses als Richtschnur politischer Bildung*. In T. Goll (Ed.), *Kontroversität: Grundlage und Herausforderung (nicht nur) der politischen Bildung* (S. 21-37). Wochenschau Verlag.

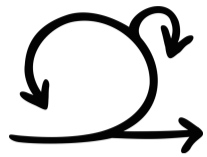
Ohl, U. (2023). *Kontroversitätsprinzip*. In D. Böhn & G. Obermaier (Eds.), *Wörterbuch der Geographiedidaktik: Definitionen, Klassifikationen, Diskussionen* (S. 164-165). Westermann.

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Quent, M., Richter, C., & Salheiser, A. (2022). *Klimarassismus. Der Kampf der Rechten gegen die ökologische Wende*. Piper.

Draw boundaries?!

... a matching exercise on the Beutelsbach Consensus



Suggested procedure

3

Transfer: Excluded – Now What? (Plural Discussion)



What does it mean to deliberately exclude certain positions? Does this restrict discussion and the diversity of opinions, or is it a necessary decision to uphold the principles of the Beutelsbach Consensus?

Should the excluded quotations nevertheless be incorporated into the lesson? If so, what might this look like?

In summary: Dealing with perspectives that contradict a scientific orientation and/or fundamental values.

Students encounter scientifically unfounded and discriminatory perspectives not only in the media but also in their immediate environment. Teachers are therefore faced with the challenge of addressing these issues sensitively without uncritically reproducing these positions. In political education, it is essential to critically examine problematic positions instead of presenting them as equally valid opinions. Not every perspective is based on scientific findings or respects fundamental democratic values, which is why it is necessary to differentiate between these positions. Positions that demonstrably violate established scientific facts or democratic principles should not be presented as legitimate viewpoints within a balanced debate. This prevents the so-called false balance, in which positions that violate scientific principles and/or fundamental values are given the appearance of being equivalent alternatives to sound facts.

Nevertheless, the targeted examination of such positions can be didactically valuable – for example, to recognise argumentation strategies and disinformation tactics. By systematically analysing problematic statements and refuting them with scientific findings, learners can understand how manipulation techniques work and how to counter them with evidence-based arguments. At the same time, a clear, science-oriented, and values-driven approach in political education fosters democratic judgment and the ability to reflect independently.



Good connection with "discussing options for action"

"This position contradicts established scientific knowledge. We only discuss topics where even experts have differing opinions."

Your position: You base your approach on scientific controversy: Only what is considered controversial in the relevant scientific debates is subject to controversial discussion. Scientific consensus is not controversial.

Your argument regarding inclusion/exclusion: "We must distinguish between scientific facts and opinions. Once the scientific community has reached a clear conclusion, it is no longer open to controversial discussion."

"Even though I find this position problematic, it exists in society and is relevant for students. This needs to be discussed."

Your position: What is controversially discussed in society and in the students' everyday lives must also find a place in the classroom - regardless of scientific evidence.

Your argument regarding inclusion/exclusion: "Students encounter all societal positions outside of school. We must reflect the real diversity of opinions and not artificially restrict them."

"This position violates fundamental rights/human dignity. This is not a legitimate standpoint in a democratic discussion."

Your position: Only topics that don't violate fundamental rights and human dignity are open to debate. They draw a clear line when it comes to unconstitutional or discriminatory positions.

Your argument for inclusion/exclusion: "Not everything is up for discussion. Positions that attack fundamental democratic values or human dignity have no place in school."

"This controversy shows that our system is fundamentally malleable. Instead of asking 'Does this belong or not?', we should ask: 'Who decides this and whose voices are missing from this decision?'"

Your position: They assume that every order is political and shaped by inclusions and exclusions. Controversy should not lead to consensus, but rather acknowledge conflict as productive. You ask: "What is actually being excluded and why?"

Your argument regarding inclusion/exclusion: "It's not about finding the 'right' controversy, but about making visible that every boundary is political. We must be able to debate what should be included and what should be excluded - even about the boundaries themselves."