

RANK



Rank “is the sum of privileges of a person or a role at a given time”

(Mindell, 1995)

Rank is a **combination of our privileges** with the specific position that each of us occupies in a particular system and moment.

Depending on the centrality or marginality of our position in relation to others, we can have **high or low rank**.

Rank is **dynamic**, depends on the **context**, and it exists **in relation** to other individuals.

Another challenge about rank is that when we have high rank, **we can't let go of it**.

Understanding rank dynamics helps facilitators recognize the diversity within a group, and how interactions between people occur. We can identify rank by noticing **double signals** - meaning signals of rank that are given without awareness. A person's high rank can be seen, for example, in their confidence or comfort in speaking in a large group, even if they are not necessarily aware of it.

Double signals and unawareness of one's rank often create tensions and conflicts in our relationships and in communities.

While we tend to recognize higher rank in others, we are often less aware of our own rank in a given situation, like for example, others are richer than us, have more power, etc. In other words, **we are more conscious of our low rank than of our high rank**. Being aware of our own rank allows us to own it and use it responsibly and cultivate more sustainable relationships with others.



Gaining **Consciousness of Rank** is an important process to prevent the abuse of power. When individuals become aware of their rank, they can choose to use it for the benefit of the entire group or system. Unconsciousness of rank can perpetuate suffering or abuse. Each person has high rank in some areas and lower rank in others; it is inherent to our nature of rank. Becoming aware of this and recognizing signs of high and low rank within ourselves is an essential process.



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Different types of Rank:

Our status in society is connected to the socio-economic position that people occupy in the social system, i.e. **the status a person receives based on what the mainstream culture values and supports**. It is also the structural rank associated with structural positions of power: parents/kids, faculty/ students, leaders/ subordinate staff, etc. Social or structural rank is seen in implicit or explicit hierarchies in our families, businesses, organizations and governments, associated, for instance with:

- Ethnic characteristics
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Religion or spirituality
- Physical and mental health
- Education (formal studies, diplomas, etc.)
- Family structure
- Abilities (physical, intellectual, emotional)
- Network of social contacts
- Appearance/conformity with dominant beauty standards
- Institutional rank*

Rank is, at the same time, **determined by the group or context** in a given moment. It can vary depending on familiarity with the group or the presence of newcomers. Contextual rank can also be the inverse of structural rank, such as in migrant groups, where both operate simultaneously. Factors influencing contextual rank include:

- The position in the formal hierarchy (if any)
- Time spent in the group (founder or new member)
- Personal relationship with influential individuals in the group
- Knowledge and experience in the field
- Access to key information, influential people or decision-makers
- Familiarity with the languages and codes of the group.



Is related to a **higher purpose** in life or an understanding of the meaning of one's life, even in the face of dramatic events, for instance:

- **Connection with something greater than oneself** (e.g. God, spirituality, an important cause)
- Having had experiences that expand one's understanding of life and death
- Knowing the meaning and purpose of one's life
- Feeling supported by a sense of justice or meaning
- Aligning one's actions with personal values

A **sense of balance and psychological well-being**, even in challenging situations, for instance:

- Self confidence and self-esteem
- Feeling that your viewpoints are valid, even when other people disagree
- Feeling loved
- Having overcome difficult periods, and the strength gained from this experience
- Ability to keep emotional balance in the midst of conflicts and difficulties
- Ability to work with or overcome complexes and difficult states of mind
- Inner peace
- Initiative
- Creativity and the belief in one's capacity to bring ideas to fruition

*Institutional rank: it refers to the understanding of institutional processes, documentation requirements, laws, the legal system, but also legal privileges and insider understanding that members of the police, lawyers, etc. may have. The latter is particularly relevant in the field of migration.