Collaboration requires a sense of solidarity and the ability to take pleasure in the work process. This may make it uncomfortable when someone disagrees with what the majority of the group seems to think. Highlighting the power structures of your work group can be particularly sensitive. Norm-creative innovation requires us to deal with criticism that brings up these issues. We must question our assumptions over and over again. This is a necessary part of the process that supports the innovation potential of the project.

It is often hard to be the person to point out the lack of a norm-critical perspective. The person who points out this lack of perspective destroys the illusion of agreement, thus challenging the ‘positive atmosphere’. This takes courage. This is particularly true because the criticism may be based on personal experiences that have provided insight about discrimination. There is a risk that the focus shifts from the problem to the messenger: the person who points out the issue may be accused of being a Killjoy. But the role is necessary: the killjoy makes sure the norm-critical perspective is actualized (for more about this concept, see The Promise of Happiness – Feminist Killjoys under Suggestions for Further Reading in the Guide).

In the game, this card is the Joker, the Killjoy who prevents us from losing the norm-critical perspective in the work process. Turn the card over for tips on how to use it during the work process.
Below are some suggestions for when to use the Joker and how to treat it during the work process.

★ The card bears the message. Focus on the card, not on the person who played it.

★ The card can be used at any time. This could happen when someone feels the process is at risk of losing a norm-critical perspective, or if the conversation is slipping back into a realm that feels safe and familiar. It could also be used if suggestions for solutions are stereotypical and groups of people are being defined too broadly.

★ The card can be used by anyone. The card should be easily accessible. Keeping it within easy reach of everyone is also a way of noting its importance.

★ The card has the highest value. This means everyone must stop and ask themselves what is happening when the card lands on the table.

★ The card is positive. Let being a killjoy be positive. The joker uses humour to “disrupt” does not have to be a negative