

# **Skills for Action**

Handbook for action trainings  
(excerpts)

Version 05/2017

## **Core modules of an action training**

The **most fundamental elements** that should be introduced in a basic training for joint actions of civil disobedience are:

### **B1: Welcoming and introduction to the training**

- Short greeting, introduction of the trainers and s4a
- Clarification on participation in games and exercises
- Presentation of program and content

**Time:** approx. 5 minutes

### **B2 Getting to know each other and expectations towards the training**

- see module: Games, exercises and procedures for warming-up and getting to know each other, small and large group work, evaluation and conclusion

**Time:** approx. 10 minutes

### **B4 Civil Disobedience**

- short exchange about what Civil Disobedience is and why it is used

**Time:** approx. 15 minutes

### **B5 Affinity groups**

- Explaining and forming groups for the training
- Remarks for the participants on forming their own affinity groups for an action

**Time:** approx. 30 minutes

### **B6 Decision-making and consensus**

- role-play: games on decision-making using the affinity group formed in the training
- evaluation and introduction to consensus and methods of decision-making

**Time:** approx. 45 minutes

### **B7 Five-finger tactic and overcoming police lines**

- explanation: what is the 5-finger tactic?
- practice: using role-play (playing police and activists in changing roles) to overcome police chains

**Time:** approx. 45 minutes

### **B10 Blocking techniques**

- Open question and collection: What kinds of techniques for blocking and being carried away exist?
- Trying it out in affinity groups

**Time:** approx. 40 minutes

### **B12 Introduction to Anti-Repression**

- How should you behave and what should you bring with you?
- No detailed legal aid – this should be done apart by those associated with preparing the individual actions.

**Time:** approx. 15 minutes

### **Conclusion and farewell**

- See module B2: Games, exercises and procedures for warming-up and getting to know each other, small and large group work, evaluation and conclusion

**Time:** approx. 5 minutes

**Modules that can be included** in trainings **for people with more experience** in actions of civil disobedience are:

**B3: Aims of actions**

- why are we doing this action?
- whom are we addressing?
- what do we want to achieve?

**Time:** approx. 15 minutes

**B8: Flowing through police lines in narrow situations** (city concept)

- explanation: what can we do if we cannot spread out but still want to overcome a police line
- practice: using role-play (playing police and activists in changing roles) to overcome police chains

**Time:** approx. 45 minutes

**B9: Overcoming “Hamburger fences”**

- explanation: How to overcome a typical police fence (“Hamburger Gitter”)?
- practice: participants help each other trying out to climb over the fence

**Time:** approx. 15 minutes

**B11: Dealing with employees, residents and passers-by during blockades**

- open questions: how to prepare for communication during a sitting blockade?
- practise: role plays with hassle lines
- example: letter to employees or residents

**Time:** approx. 45 minutes

**Further modules for specific trainings are:**

**D1: Forming affinity groups**

A training where “real” affinity groups are formed to go to an action together

**Time:** 45 minutes

**D2: Organize the mob**

Role play for affinity groups to learn how to organise a group of people in a stressful situation, how to initiate deli-plenaries etc.

**Time:** 2.5 hours

**D3: Anti-Repression Workshop**

Details discussion about how to face repression self-confident and collectively.

**Time:** 2.5 hours

**D4: Introductory press and interview trainings**

Learning how to talk to journalists and into cameras/microphones during an action

**Time:** 1 hour

**D5: First Aid Training**

What to bring to an action to be prepared for first aid, how to give first aid to others etc.

**Time:** 2 hours

**D6: Training the trainers**

Prepare people for becoming action trainers themselves

**Time:** 2.5 days (one intense workshop weekend)



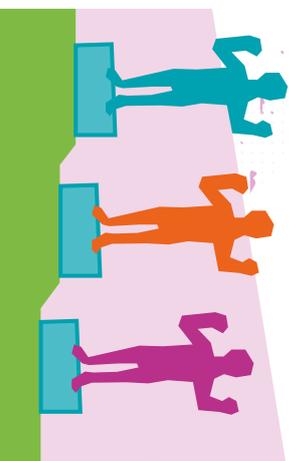
# KEY DEFINITIONS

## EQUALITY AND EQUITY

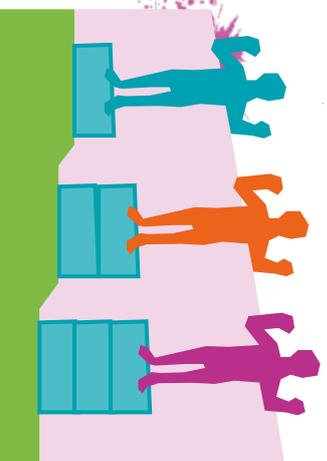
Equality is the recognition that all human beings are of equal worth, deserving dignity, equal rights and equal access to resources, including knowledge and finances. There are two different ways of thinking about equality.

One is equality of access - giving everyone exactly the same opportunities. However an equality of access approach fails to recognise the concept of "fairness", whereby discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability and geography can prevent groups in society from achieving equal outcomes, even when they are given the same opportunities. The concept of equity intends to remedy those issues by determining whether resources are distributed fairly among people.

In order to achieve real equality we must name and address discrimination. We must work in solidarity with discriminated groups to remove barriers to the equal participation of all. Often this means redistributing resources, in organisations, communities and society, to ensure equal outcomes for all.



EQUALITY



EQUITY

## RACISM

Racism is defined by the UN Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1969):

**'ANY DISTINCTION, EXCLUSION, RESTRICTION OR PREFERENCE, BASED ON RACE, COLOUR, DESCENT, NATIONAL OR ETHNIC ORIGIN, WHICH HAS THE PURPOSE OF MODIFYING OR IMPAIRING THE RECOGNITION, THE ENJOYMENT OR EXERCISE ON AN EQUAL FOOTING OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOM IN THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, OR ANY OTHER FIELD OF PUBLIC LIFE CONSTITUTES RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.'**<sup>1</sup>

Racism has two 'ingredients': prejudice and social power. A prejudice is a (usually negative) judgement of people based on stereotypes, misinformation or false assumptions. All people can be prejudiced. Prejudice becomes racism with the addition of power – when the person or group who are prejudiced have the power to treat the people they are prejudiced against differently. Racism can take different forms. It can manifest itself in a rather straightforward manner<sup>2</sup> (for example neo-nazi attacks against refugees) or in more pervasive way (for example organisational ways of working that privilege white knowledge) particularly because of the historic injustices of empire and continued exploitation of the Global South by the North, there continues to be a white supremacist culture today. The majority of social power is held by white people, and both western cultural norms and ways of working dominate.

## RACISM PREJUDICE SOCIAL POWER

## WHITE PRIVILEGE

White privilege refers to the situation whereby white, Western people have not earned their societal privileges. These automatic, inherent societal privileges can be social, economic and political, whereas non-white people may receive disadvantages under the same circumstances.

White privilege can sometimes seem hard to see for people who were born with access to power and resources – or who benefit from being "socially white". However, it is very visible for people of color who have not been born with this privilege.

In her article, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," Peggy McIntosh<sup>3</sup> says white privilege is really "unearned power conferred systematically". Like other forms of privilege, white privilege is not something that is earned or achieved. Instead, it is something that is just given to those who are born into the dominant social power group.

## XENOPHOBIA

The Oxford English Dictionary defines xenophobia as the 'dislike of, or prejudice against people from other countries'.<sup>4</sup> Originally the word xenophobia stems from two Greek words 1) xenos: meaning 'the stranger' and 'the guest' and 2) phobos: meaning 'fear'. Literally, xenophobia can be understood as 'fear of the stranger', but usually the term is taken to mean 'hatred of strangers'.<sup>5</sup>

It is often difficult to differentiate between racism and xenophobia as motivations for behaviour.

Xenophobia and racism can and do sometimes overlap, but they are different.

Xenophobia implies behaviour based on the idea that the someone is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation. Racism usually involves a distinction based on physical characteristic differences, such as skin colour, hair type, facial features, etc. this is not always the case with xenophobic behavior or attitudes.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Environmental racism acknowledges the reality that minority populations around the world – intentionally or unintentionally – often face the worst effects of environmental hazards, such as air pollution, and dumping of waste – including toxic waste.<sup>6</sup> Studies show people of colour have higher chances of living near industrial areas, major roads, mines, power plants and dumps. Both in the North and South, people of colour have higher rates of illnesses due to air, water and soil pollution. It also acknowledges that these communities are often denied the right to a healthy and good quality living space and amenities such as parks, and have the least access to resources and power to challenge this injustice.

## SEXISM

Sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination. Given the historical and continued imbalance of power, where men as a class are privileged over women as a class (see male privilege below), an important, but often overlooked, part of the term is that sexism is prejudice plus power.

Thus feminists reject the notion that women can be sexist towards men because women lack the institutional power that men have.

However, this does not mean that women being prejudiced about men is acceptable. Men are undoubtedly affected by sexism, but because of their privilege they don't experience it the same way that women do. This difference in experience is acknowledged through the distinction of sexism versus gender-based prejudice.

Furthermore, there are different kinds of sexism besides the most popular, mainstream one that is considered to be hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism, for instance, is quite widespread but it is often not recognised as such. There is also unintentional sexism which is an inevitable occurrence considering human nature – more often than not when one has not experienced something first hand they assume things that may be incorrect. Nevertheless, while intent isn't wholly unimportant, it also shouldn't be used as an excuse not to examine one's own behaviors.

In the end, though, the important thing to remember is that sexism is defined by the result and not the intent, so when people are called out for having said something sexist, it's not a comment on their intent or character, but rather on the message that was conveyed.

## MALE PRIVILEGE

Male privilege is a concept used to examine the social, economic, and political advantages or rights that are made available to men solely on the basis of their sex. (e.g. - the use of male pronouns in language to refer to both sexes; the preference for sons in some cultures). A man's access to these benefits may also depend on other characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, and social class. The tendency to use intent, rather than result, to measure whether something was offensive and inappropriate (and therefore sexist) is tied into male privilege and the way that it enables sexist practices to be seen as normal. Male privilege is often examined alongside the concept of patriarchy within the feminist movement, while many men's rights activists dispute the existence of male privilege and patriarchy in modern western society.<sup>7</sup>

## ABLEISM

Ableism is a form of structural oppression, discrimination and prejudice against people who physically challenged or differently abled. Unlike other forms of oppression (racism, sexism etc) ableism is sometimes invisible, as it has less to do with having people with different disabilities and more to do with assumptions about "normal" ability status.<sup>8</sup> Ableism is further compounded by factors like gender, queerness, race, class, age, and colonialism, among other oppressions. It must be part of any conversation regarding intersectionality – and yet, even in social justice spaces, it often isn't.<sup>9</sup>

## CLASSISM

Classism is prejudice against people based on their socio-economic status or their perceived social class. Classism can be described as "systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It's the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class."<sup>10</sup>

## HOMOPHOBIA

An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g. fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discrimination) that one may have towards members of the LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. The term is extended to bisexual and transgender people as well; however, the terms biphobia and trans phobia are used to emphasize the specific biases against individuals of bisexual and transgender communities.<sup>11</sup>

## TRANSPHOBIA

Transphobia has been defined by the Crown Prosecution Service:

**'THE FEAR OF OR A DISLIKE DIRECTED TOWARDS TRANS PEOPLE, OR A FEAR OF OR DISLIKE DIRECTED TOWARDS THEIR PERCEIVED LIFESTYLE, CULTURE OR CHARACTERISTICS, WHETHER OR NOT ANY SPECIFIC TRANS PERSON HAS THAT LIFESTYLE OR CHARACTERISTIC. THE DISLIKE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE SO SEVERE AS HATRED. IT IS ENOUGH THAT PEOPLE DO SOMETHING OR ABSTAIN FROM DOING SOMETHING, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT LIKE TRANS PEOPLE.'**<sup>12</sup>

As with all other prejudices, transphobia is based on misconceptions and negative stereotypes about a group of people (in this case the trans community or those who are perceived to be trans) that are used to "justify" discrimination, harassment and even hate crimes. Transphobia (or less commonly trans "prejudice") is a range of antagonistic attitudes and feelings against trans-sexuality and transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity.

Researchers describe transphobia as emotional disgust, fear, anger or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who do not conform to society's gender expectations, and say that although it is similar to homophobia, racism and sexism, those attitudes are becoming generally considered unacceptable in modern society, whereas some individuals still maintain transphobic views without fear of censure.

The trans feminist theorist and author Julia Serano (2007) argues in her book *Whipping Girl* that transphobia is rooted in sexism. She locates the origins of both trans phobia and homophobia in what she calls "oppositional sexism": the belief that male and female are "rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and non-overlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires".

Serano contrasts oppositional sexism with "traditional sexism", the belief that males and masculinity are superior to females and femininity. Furthermore, she writes that trans phobia is fueled by insecurities people have about gender and gender norms.

## CIS-NET PRIVILEGE

The term cisgender refers to when someone's gender matches their birth assigned sex and, by extension, when a person's gender matches the gender others perceive them as.

While cisgender refers to someone's sex and gender appearing to align, cisgender privilege speaks to how perceived gender/sex alignment means not having to think or address topics that those without cisgender privilege have to deal with, often on a daily basis. It's worth pointing out though that many gay, bisexual and lesbian people do have cis privilege and so this isn't something that divides down lines of sexual orientation.<sup>13</sup>

## WHITE SUPREMACY

The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that white supremacy is "the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society". This term can also refer to the privilege that socially white people benefit from through a political or socio-economic system over people of colour; from various different ethnic groups at both individual and collective levels.<sup>14</sup> White supremacy exists in everyone and it can be difficult to tackle because people tend not to take responsibility.<sup>15</sup> It is sustained by socially white people, whether consciously or subconsciously and is reinforced through patterns of language, thought, symbolism, humor etc. and exists across all areas of society (economy, education, media, law, politics, religion, etc.).<sup>16</sup>

## CAPITALISM/ NEOLIBERALISM

Capitalism is system characterised by the accumulation of profit through private property. The definition given the Oxford dictionary is of "an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state". Capitalism itself was built on colonialism, which was historically justified by racist doctrines and practices. Capitalism is also built on the gendered division of labour. Some of its principal components are consumerism, economic and political domination. Whereas capitalism is the most prevalent economic system in the world, it can take different forms, in which the market is more or less regulated. In that regard, neoliberalism is a liberal doctrine that favours free-market capitalism. Neoliberalism is often used to describe economic and social policies, that favour the privatisation of public services, such as water, energy, health, education & so forth.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/discrimination/>  
<sup>11</sup> <https://en.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195320194.003.0001/ack-rgz20the%20diversity%20of%20race.pdf>  
<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/xenophobia/>  
<sup>13</sup> Serano, J. and Biles, P. B. (eds). 2001. *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Elsevier Oxford Science Ltd.  
<sup>14</sup> <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195320194.003.0001/ack-rgz20the%20diversity%20of%20race.pdf>  
<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/xenophobia/>  
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## **B1 Getting started with the training**

At the beginning of the training, the trainer should make it clear that the **training should be a safe space** in which the participants can test out modes of behaviour, gain experience, and be able to **speak about their expectations, intentions, fears, and needs regarding an upcoming action or actions in general**. The participants should also be able to open up emotionally in such a sympathetic, non-discriminatory atmosphere.

At every point, the participants should feel welcome to ask any question whatsoever if they don't understand or would like to know more about something – **there are no stupid questions**.

The trainer should point out that the participants should decide for themselves **what they choose to say about themselves** (or about actions which they have done or plan to do) during the introduction round or the training.

There may be participants who:

- have physical or health restrictions
- have had bad experiences during physical education in school
- don't wish to be touched by others
- have had traumatic experiences
- etc.

It is therefore important to explain to the participants at the beginning of the training that **there will be exercises and role playing**. If they (for whatever reason whatsoever) do not wish to participate, if it's too much for them, if they wish to stop or not be touched, then the participants can and should indicate this before or even during the exercises. **It is always possible NOT to participate in an exercise or role play**.

While performing the games and exercises, the participants should be careful and mindful of each other and take each other into consideration, **to avoid injuries**.

Additionally, a **stop signal** must be agreed upon which is clear and distinct, and which will be used when an exercise or game must be stopped immediately (for example, if someone experiences pain during an eviction of a blockade). A very loud “**stop stop stop**” should be yelled and can serve as such a signal. It has proven advantageous during trainings with over 30 participants for the trainer to have a **whistle as stop signal** in addition to the agreed-upon signal.

**Legal Disclaimer:** Indicate to the participants that the training is a self-organized recreational activity and that the trainers and organisers assume no responsibility whatsoever for accidents, etc.

## **B2 | Games, exercises and methods for warming-up, getting to know each other, working in small and large groups, evaluation and concluding trainings**

### **Content:**

**I: Warming up**

**II Getting to know each other**

**III Different Occasions**

**IV Evaluation and conclusion**

-----

### **I Warming-up exercises to be used in the beginning of training or as an *energiser***

#### **1. Ankle race**

Duration: 10 – 15 minutes, including evaluation

Number of participants: at least 5, maximum 50 persons

Space: sufficient space

#### **Game**

The game can be played with one, ideally two groups at the same time. Both groups stand facing each other, at a distance of 10-15 meters. The members of one group stand directly next to each other, with the feet/ankles of those standing next to each other touching and everyone facing the respective other group and the trainer. The trainer is in the middle between the two groups. When the group is very large, it can be divided into smaller groups. The maximal group size is about 10 persons.

The task of the groups is to move as quickly as possible to the centre of the space where the trainer is. Yet they are only allowed to move while their ankles continue to touch those of the group members next to them. When the contact is lost, the entire group goes back to its starting position and starts all over again. The trainer pays close attention that the ankles continue to touch and sends the groups back to their starting positions if needed.

A „story“ that can be used to explain the game is related to a blockade: „Imagine you are two groups on a street that leads to a cross-roads. From the left, some nazis are approaching and you want to block their way and from the right police are coming and want to stop you. You need to try to arrive at the cross-roads as quickly as possible – before the police and the nazis who also walk with their ankles touching.“ This also prevents the game from turning into a competition between the two groups: once the first group has arrived to where the trainer is, the cross-roads is blocked and both groups will have won!

## **Evaluation**

Stand in a circle with all participants immediately after the game and inquire about their experiences, how they felt, how they experienced their group and what they did as a group. The participants can briefly share their views. After this, ask them what the game might have to do with actions and action trainings. Probably, the participants will respond by mentioning aspects such as: communication, cooperation, taking care of each other, supporting each other, taking decisions, acting within an affinity group... The trainer can add aspects not mentioned, such as being lenient vis-à-vis mistakes made and tolerating such mistakes (i.e. accepting the fact that mistakes occur as well as their consequences and starting all over again); s/he can also clarify that it is precisely these issues that the training is about. When you play the game at the beginning of the meeting, the evaluation can be brief (only some participants say something); when the game is used for working more intensively with an existing group you can reflect more extensively on the role different people have within the group, hierarchies etc.

## **Objectives**

- Enhances and trains communication skills
- Creates awareness among participants for central aspects of cooperating within a group (being considerate, mutual support, joint coordination)
- Preliminary exercise on decision-making

## **2. Mass up-rising**

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: at least 2 (when there are only two participants, the exercise is called „uprising“).

## **Game**

First two persons sit down on the floor back to back and try to get up without putting their hands/arms on the floor. After this, the entire group sits on the floor in two lines back to back. Persons sitting next to each other link their arms and then everyone tries to get up together. As the objective of the game is to get people to be active, there is no need for an evaluation.

## **Objectives**

- Activating and motivating the participants
- Creating awareness and strengthening coordination within the group

### **3. Pendulum | pyramid | stage-diving**

Duration: at least 5 minutes

Number of participants: at least 10 participants

#### **Game**

Everyone is moving in the room. One participant shouts: “pendulum”, “pyramid” or “stage-diving” (everyone can shout whenever s/he feels like it). The other participants react accordingly. Pendulum: all participants form a narrow circle around the person who did the shouting. Subsequently, the person in the middle of the circle drops (careful: do maintain some body tension, feet remain on the ground). The circle supports the person and moves him/her within the circle like a pendulum. “Pyramid”: all participants form a pyramid by kneeling on their arms and legs and piling on top of each other. The person who shouted “pyramid” will go on top. “Stage-diving”: The person is lifted up by the others and carried through the room.

#### **Evaluation**

If the main objective was to get people to become active, no evaluation is needed. Otherwise, you can ask participants how they felt during the game.

#### **Objectives**

- Strengthening or building trust among the group
- Strengthening coordination within the group
- Activating participants through a body-focused game

### **4. Buddy and cop**

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: 5-50 participants

#### **Game**

All participants position themselves in a circle. The trainer explains: Every person is to choose two other persons. One of these persons his/her “buddy”, the other one his/her “cop”. All participants need to try to position themselves in space in a way that the respective buddy is located between the participant and the cop. After the trainer has explained the game, all participants need to quickly and silently (i.e. without revealing their choices to anyone) choose their buddies and cops and remember them. Following a

signal by the trainer, the game starts. The game can be ended when the chaos has subsided and an instable equilibrium has been reached – or in the alternative if the chaos goes on indefinitely.

### **Evaluation**

If the main objective was to get people to become active, no evaluation is needed. Otherwise, you can ask participants how they felt during the game.

### **Objectives**

- Activating participants through a very dynamic game
- Strengthening each individual's skill to maintain a good overview in chaotic situations

### **5. Run & stop**

Duration: depending on group size

Number of participants: 5 minimum, 10 maximum – if there are more participants, form groups

### **Game**

From a distance of several meters, one person runs at full speed towards the group which is lined up in several rows and will stop the running person. Important: The person must not jump into the group or approach it with his/her hands/feet first. Let the participants decide for themselves if they want to try running or not (usually, not everyone wants to do it); also, only those comfortable with standing in the first two rows of the group should be placed there.

### **Evaluation**

Questions:

“How did you feel while running?”

“How did you feel when you were part of the group?”

### **Objectives**

- Create a sense of mutual trust among the group
- Get a sense of how it feels to run against a crowd
- Realise that it is possible to be in the first row when supported by a group

## **6. The floating stick**

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: ca. 6 – 12

Material: a long stick, e.g. broom stick, bamboo stick etc.

### **Exercise**

Participants need to form two groups of equal size and stand in two parallel lines facing each other. The distance between the two lines should be short enough for people in both lines to be able to touch each other with their arms stretched. All participants must bow their arms to bring them in a rectangular position in front of their chest, with their pointing fingers extended. The extended Index fingers of all participants must be at the same height roughly and directly next to each other. After explaining to the participants their position, the trainer explains the game: A stick is put on the line of index fingers. All participants must continuously touch the stick with their fingers. The contact must always be there. The aim of the game is to put the stick onto the floor together while it still rests on the fingers of all participants. After this explanation, the trainer puts the stick onto the extended index fingers, thus starting the game. If there are more than 12 participants, you can do two runs of the game after each other.

### **Evaluation**

The following guiding questions could be used: „What happened? What did you do? How did you feel? How did the group react? What was the resulting dynamics? Who had which role? How did you solve the task?“

### **Objective**

- Activates the participants. It is very suitable as an energiser as it often has a surprising effect
- Creates awareness for the need of jointly coordinating the group

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## **II: Games for getting to know each other at the beginning of or during a training**

The games for getting to know each other are not to create any kind of pressure. Therefore, there no games are presented here that are aimed at people remembering everyone else's name as fast as possible!

## **1. Traditional style round**

Participants all say their names, cities, context....

More creative round: Participants say their names, favourite dish and one thing that only they are able to do or have.

## **2. Running in the room**

Everyone runs slowly through the room, in no special order; people meet each other while doing so. Whenever two participants meet, they will stop and shake hands or feet. Apart from mentioning their names they do not talk, but only make eye contact and shake hands/feet. The group continues doing this until everyone has met everyone else. In the alternative, running can be restricted to three encounters. Afterwards, there is a brief conversation about questions such as: Who am I? Why am I here? What are my expectations? In addition to either of the two variations, you can ask the participants to make name tags for themselves.

## **3. Sociometry/Positioning in space**

During a sociometry exercise, the participants respond to questions asked by the moderator by positioning themselves in space. The trainer assigns different possible answers to different corners of the room. It is also possible to create a map or a number line, or opposite poles as options for answers (much – little; yes – no). The participants position themselves according to their response, either in the corners, at the poles or in between. When doing the constellation it is also possible for people to position themselves on the two axes of a coordinate system at the same time (e.g. first axis: much experience with affinity groups (AG) – little experience with AG; second axis: good experience with AG – bad experience with AG). After each constellation the moderator briefly interviews the participants and tells them why exactly they positioned themselves in the exact spot where they are. In larger groups, you can only interview some participants by way of example. Be careful to not always interview the same participants or those that anyway talk a lot.

### **Examples of sociometry for purposes of getting to know each other**

- “How old are you?” – participants position themselves according to their age in a semi-circle/U-shape (so that everyone can see everyone else); at one end the youngest person, at the other end the oldest one. Afterwards, either be silent after or have each one quickly state their age.
- “Where do you live?” – participants position themselves on a map according to the places where they live (North – South – West – East). Once all participants are placed on the map, have them briefly name all cities (for big cities, where there are several people, mention also the parts of the cities).

- “Where were you born?” – participants position themselves on a map according to their place of birth (North – South – West – East). Once all participants are placed on the maps, have them briefly name all cities (for big cities, where there are several people, mention also the parts of the cities).
- Activities, group affiliations, interests in certain topics ... distributed to the corners of the rooms: e.g., everyone going to school in the first corner, everyone studying at university in the second one, everyone working or unemployed in a third one. It is not necessary to discuss the details here.
- On special occasions, it can also be interesting to show certain hobbies or professions. For example, for an anti-GMO action it can be interesting to ask who has some background in agriculture/horticulture/plants and who does not. Those with some background in these fields can then briefly explain what exactly they do. In this way, individual motivations and ways of being affected by GMOs can be made visible.
- “How much experience with demonstrations do you have?” One pole is “never been to one”, the other one is “been at hundreds”.
- Three spots in the room “none” – “little” - “a lot”; participants position themselves for topics such as “blockade experience”, “being afraid of the police”, “being afraid of blockades” “want to do blockade”.
- Representing experience in a circle: All participants stand in a circle. A statement is made and everyone to whom the statement applies steps into the circle, e.g. “everyone having participated in a training before”, “everyone having participated in a sit-in”. Possibly, you can ask the people that stepped into the circle for details.

### **Representing expectations in a circle:**

Everyone stands in a circle. Whoever has a specific expectation concerning the training steps in the middle of the circle and says so. The other participants step into the middle of the circle if they share the expectation, half-way into the circle if they share the expectation to a limited degree, or remain outside if they do not share the expectation.

### **Representing concerns in a circle:**

Whoever has a certain concern in relation to the trainings (or an upcoming action) steps into the middle of the circle and states his/her concern. The other participants position themselves accordingly (see above: representing expectations).

### **III Exercises for different occasions**

#### **1. Whisper groups**

Short period of maximal 5 minutes, during which participants can talk to each other in groups of two or three. This method is also useful to activate participants again after a longer input, to give them an opportunity to exchange thoughts and develop ideas of their own. Groups can be formed by having persons sitting next to each other talk to each other, or participants can be asked to form groups themselves (but no group with more than three people!). Also, those that do not know each other yet could talk to each other, thereby getting to know each other. The questions/topics result from the previous input and are explained clearly by the trainer. The feedback from the whisper groups to the larger group can be done through brief reports. However, there does not necessarily need to be an explicit feedback, the discussion in the whisper group can also inform the brain-storming on a subsequent issue which is done in the larger group. In situations of conflict or dead-end whisper groups can also be used to develop ideas for conflict resolution and the continuation of the group process.

#### **1. Hassle Line**

Originally, this exercise was used in non-violence trainings to play a situation of conflict between two persons facing each other.

##### **Exercise**

The entire group stands in two lines, always two persons facing each other; these two persons will play with each other. Each line is assigned a different role. It is also possible to form a third group/line observing the others. The trainer explains the roles/tasks and give people a little time to think about their roles. Then the role play takes place, with the trainer usually interrupting after 1-3 minutes. After this, roles are exchanged with one line moving sideways by one person (the person at the end of the line moves over to the other end); the result is that two new persons now face each other to interact. The exercise can be done for different topics and different lines of conflict, e.g. with the following roles: an activist keeping within the action consensus/another one who does not – a participant in a blockade/an employee wishing to enter the building blocked (or a passer-by) – interviewer/activist.

##### **Evaluation**

For the joint evaluation in a circle, different questions can be of interest, e.g.: „What was being said, done? What were the reactions, the body language? What did people actually want to do, what was the resulting dynamic? Which ways of behaving turned out to be good/appropriate? Were there any experiences shared by many/all and what would be a conclusion from this?

## **2. Forum theatre**

The forum theatre is a core method in the theatre of the oppressed according to Augusto Boal. It presents the audience with a scene that ends in a bad and unsatisfactory way. A “joker” (moderator) encourages the audience to bring the scene to a better end by themselves acting in the theatre performance. During the training, a simplified form of forum theatre can be used in which a few participants enact a scene showing a problem/conflict/critical situation. The other participants watch the scene. Afterwards the scene is enacted once more with those having watched the scene previously taking over certain roles (either by stepping in for some of the previous actors or by creating new characters); they try to bring the scene to a different/better ending. In this way, different types of behavior can be tried out directly without lengthy discussion about how to behave.

The task of the trainer in his/her capacity as a joker:

Encouraging the participants to try out different ways of behaving in a playful way, instead of just describing them. Each time the scene has been enacted the joker asks the audience what they have seen, makes them give a short description and then inquires whether anyone has an idea how people could have behaved and reacted differently.

### **Evaluation**

After the scene has been played several times and there are no new ideas any more, an evaluation can be done with all participants. During the evaluation, the group should try to define which ways of behaving are helpful and should potentially be continued to be used throughout other methods.

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## **IV: Methods for evaluating and concluding a training**

### **1. I am packing my suitcase for the action...**

In order to summarise what is important to have available at the action, the memory game, well-known at least in Germany “I am packing my suitcase and I will take with me...” can be played. However, this should not be played with the aim of memorising everything, but in a relaxed round where everyone can mention a thing they consider important, without having to repeat what others said, e.g.

- my affinity group
- first aid kit
- water-proof clothing

- robust shoes
- ID card
- ....

## **2. „I am taking with me from the training ...”**

Do a round with the participants on what new, important or special insights and experiences each person takes with him/her from the training – for upcoming actions, every-days life, the political group etc.

## **3. Traditional-style feedback at the end**

Every person provides a brief feedback on the following aspects: What did I like in particular? What did I not like so much? What proposals and ideas do I have for doing things differently? What did I miss?

## **4. Sociometry for evaluation**

### **Exercise: Presenting opinions and statements in a circle**

Everyone stands in a circle. Participants are invited to step forward into the middle of the circle and to make a statement that in their view is representative of the module or entire training. All participants that fully support the statement will also step into the middle of the circle. If they do not support the statement they remain where they are or position themselves in between. After each statement people that support or do not support a statement can be asked for details.

### **Objectives:**

- Get an overview of the mood in the group
- No huge amount of time needed for evaluation

## **5. Collective shoulder pats**

All participants and the trainer position themselves next to each other in a circle, then everyone makes a quarter turn, meaning they now stand behind each other in a circle. Now, everyone gives the person in front of him/her a friendly pat on the shoulder, thereby giving him/her power, courage and a relaxed attitude for the action.

# Handbook for action trainings<sup>1</sup>

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## C2 / Sequence of basic training 6 hours

### 1. Welcoming and introduction to the training

- Official welcome
- Trainers introduce themselves as well as s4a
- How to deal with press, see module: dealing with press in trainings
- Information, see module: introduction to the training: information about participating in games and exercises
- Presentation of program and content
- Warm-up game

time: 15 minutes

### 2. Getting to know each other and expectations towards the training

- Round of introduction and expectations towards the training, see module: games, exercises and procedure for warming-up and getting to know each other, small- and large-group work, evaluation and conclusion

time: 10 minutes

### 3. aims of actions

- exchange about aims of participating in action(s), see module: aims of actions

time: 20 minutes

### 4. civil disobedience

- quick exchange about civil disobedience, see module: civil disobedience

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<sup>1</sup> The Translation is based on the „Handbuch für Aktionstraining“ written by trainers of the network *skills for action!* The text was translated into English by various people that's why there are differences in style and format! The order of the chapters is different but the titles of the chapters are similar to the titles of the „Handbuch für Aktionstraining“!

time: 15 minutes

#### **5. affinity groups**

- explaining and forming for the training
- information about own future affinity group formation for the action
- see module: affinity group

time: 30 minutes

#### **6. 5-finger tactic and overcome**

- What is the 5-finger tactic?
- Practicing overcome by means of role-playing games
- See module: 5-finger tactic and overcome police chains and module overcome in narrow situations

time: 60 minutes

### **Break**

time: 10 minutes

#### **7. Decision making and consensus (detailed)**

- perform role-playing games for decision making with formed affinity groups
- evaluation and introduction to consensus and methods of decision making
- See module: decision making and consensus

time: 60 minutes

### **Break**

time: 10 minutes

#### **8. Blocking techniques**

- Collection: what kind of blocking techniques are there?
- trying out in affinity groups
- See module: simple blocking with the body

time: 40 minutes

#### **9. Repression and legal aid**

- See module: overview and introduction to law enforcement and legal aid

time: 30 minutes

#### **10. Conclusion**

- discuss open questions
- See module: games, exercises and procedure for warming-up and getting to know each other, small- and large-group work, evaluation and conclusion
- Game: I pack my bag for the next action and take with me...

time: 10 minutes

## **B4 Civil Disobedience**

### **Preliminary notes for trainers**

This module aims to prepare for actions of civil disobedience (CD) and actions which are inspired by CD, even if the term CD is not used. The participants (P) should become aware of their own personal criteria, reasons, motivations and justifications. The goal is to reach an exchange over different understandings of CD and to realize that no universal definition and praxis of CD exists. In regard of a planned action, the P should be sensitized how important it is to communicate about concrete behavior and actions, to agree on a consensus of action, to stick to the plan and to spread it respectively.

This is a short module. If more time and interest by the participants is at hand, it can be extended in small groups or an intensive input by the teachers can be given.

### **duration, number of participants, materials**

duration: 30 minutes

number of P: possible with a large group

materials: posters and pens, examples of a consensus of action (i.e. Dresden- free of Nazis, see insertion)

### **consensus of action Dresden- free of Nazis**

- we will display civil disobedience against the Nazi demonstration
- we will not be the source of escalation
- our blockades are human-blockades
- we show solidarity with everyone sharing the goal to stop the Nazi demonstration

### **process and methods**

- meeting with all P: What is your understanding of CD? What are parts of CD for you? What kind of people, actions, ..., do you associate with CD? --> write it down

on posters, gather ideas

- ask: What is essential in your opinion to CD? Which criteria/characteristics are essential? --> mark/circle/underline on poster
- short discussion about the different and opposing opinions and ideas regarding CD. Name shortly what is part of the classic understanding of CD, and what has changed!
- present functions of a consensus of action on an example. If a specific action is planned, you can use the consensus of action of that event

## **contents**

poster with collection of criteria, characteristics, aspects and thoughts regarding CD:

### **What is CD, how and with which goal is it used?**

- conscious, intentional violation/ignoring of laws
- to dramatize, make a conflict public, get sympathies
- final resort after all legal means have failed vs legal means have been used (protest, public campaigns) before, but not all legal means have been exhausted
- justified with legitimate emergency (according with the constitution) vs morally-ethically justification vs radical-democratic justification ( no positive reference to state and constitution)
- not for private reasons and believes or for reasons of individual self-interest
- non-violent (against persons or objects) vs mostly non-violent against persons but including property damage
- publicly announced vs prepared secretly but take public responsibility (e.g. destruction of military material of the "*Pflugschar-actions*")
- well described, contained actions and behavior during the campaign
- willingness to deal with the consequences (juridical, financially, punishment, reimbursement for victims etc.)
- deliberate acceptance of punishment vs possible (partial) avoidance of punishment
- recognition of the counterparts as human beings ( not as an abstract role or function-owner)
- symbolic campaign vs direct campaign
- differentiation between legal - illegal but legitimate - illegitimate
- individual vs mass action

### **How to organize CD?**

- grass-root- democratically/ consensus
- good preparation
- consensus of action: " What we are going to do"
- declaration of intentions
- support, broad alliances
- legal aid

### **Known personalities**

Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Theodor Ebert, ...

## Concrete forms of CD

rallies/ demonstrations despite prohibition, sit-ins, chaining on to something, squatting (of streets, trees, houses, squares, material), religious asylum, destroying of train-treks against nuclear-transport (German: Schottern), destruction of GMO-fields (campaign: *Gendreck weg*), destruction of military material (*Pflugschar Bewegung*), conscientious objection, self-declaration of abortion (campaign *we have aborted*, 1972), boycotting population consensus, open violation of duty to present an address of residency

## continuative modules

A4 Civil Disobedience - dealing with a complex term, Page 16

## references and further reading

Andrea Pabst: "Ziviler Ungehorsam: Annäherung an einen umkämpften Begriff" in: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, 25-26/ 2012

## B5 / Affinity group

### *Introductory remarks for trainers*

This unit has been conceptualized as part of an action training. Often people take part in trainings right before actions (e.g. at an action camp) and don't already have an affinity group (AG). In that case it might be helpful to stress **that AGs for the action don't have to be formed or aren't formed during this training**, and that what you are doing are only role games. People who are still looking for an AG for the action can be offered a separate session to find an affinity group (c.f. Unit about finding an affinity group).

### *Duration, number of participants, material*

Duration: 30 minutes

number of participants: possible with a big group

material: pens, 2 posters

### *Process and methods*

a facilitated session with all participants on the topic of these two questions

-What are affinity groups, what are they used for?

-How does an affinity group organise in practical terms?

Prepare posters with the title "affinity groups", below two columns with the titles „what/why“ and „how“. Have the participants share their preexisting knowledge and write it down on the posters. The trainer should add points that are missing.

### *Content*

→ *What are affinity groups and what are they used for?*

-In an AG, people join who want to participate in an action together.

-Within an AG, an action is discussed, planned, prepared, carried out and

**evaluated.**

-AGs are the organisational and autonomous **base of bigger actions.**

-AGs **protect each individual** and serve the purpose of offering mutual **support**, both practical and emotional, before, during and after an action. They are supposed to prevent people from being isolated – still everyone should be prepared for the case that this might happen during the action nonetheless.

-**Mutual trust, similar goals and needs** as well as the strong **will to look out for one another** are crucial basics for the functioning of an AG.

-An **AGs size** depends on the action and the people involved. Usually 4-8 people is a good size. Smaller (3-5 people) or bigger (10-15) groups can of course also be formed. But increasing numbers make it harder to keep the group together!

-Usually, coordination of the action as a whole takes place via the **coordination of all AGs in the spokes council.**

**→ How does an affinity group organise in practical terms? Forming an affinity group**

-possible preconditions for the formation of an AG: 1.**same/similar levels of action** (what exactly does one want to do during the action, which confrontational level is one ready to enter?) 2.**members** of the AG already **know one another** well and have a high level of **mutual trust.**

-**exchanging information** about **former experiences, about fears, goals, wishes and needs.**

-groups homogenous regarding their experiences can have their advantages, on the other hand it might be very useful for inexperienced people to be in an AG together with more experienced people.

-participating in action trainings or blockade trainings together as an AG, to get to know one another better, practice behaviour, decision making etc.

-practicing fast decision making (in consensus) (→ unit on decision making and consensus)

**cf. unit D1 / Forming an affinity group p.88**

**→ Preparing the action**

-agree on a **name for your affinity group** (an unusual word that can easily be shouted and can't be misunderstood), so that you do not have to shout peoples real names around. Also, it's faster to get everyone together.

-**exchange of information: your full name** and date of birth (in case the legal team needs to be called), your address or other **ways to contact each other** (to get in touch later, in case legal consequences are to be expected).

-exchange of information about **medical conditions/restrictions**

-exchange of information about the **time frame** (who has time for how long?)

-exchange of information about **motivations, goals, hopes for the action.**

-exchange of information about **individual and collective limits** regarding the action.

-discuss your behaviour towards the **police.**

-discuss **possible repression and legal consequences** as well as a common way to deal with it.

-behaviour towards other people or groups who do stuff during the action that doesn't go well together with your own ideas and needs.

-**buddy-system**: two people stay together during the action, no matter what – in case it's not possible for the whole AG to stay together. If buddies are only men or only women they have a chance of staying together after being arrested or taken into custody.

-discuss and agree on situations in which **the AG will split or dissolve**.

-discuss your mode of **participation in the spokes council** for the overall coordination of the action (alternating spokes or one spoke?)

-agree on tactical **handsigns** you can use to communicate in hectic and stressful situations (e.g., pointing directions while running, “come together to discuss something“...)

-set some **meeting points** before during and after the action.

-**specific preparation of the action**: what does the scenario look like? The surroundings? What do we have to take with us? What will we have to pay attention to? Etc...

-division of tasks, depending on the action and the group, eg: 1 person with a map, 1 person with a first aid kit, 1 person channeling information out (ticker, Twitter, Info-phone...) etc.

→ *Evaluating and reviewing the action together*

-**How** did the individuals feel, **in the affinity group, with the action?**

-What worked well, what didn't?

-Has there been **repression**, or could repression still follow? Find specific **agreements** (exchanging contact info, ...) in case of repression.

### ***Additional units***

D1 / Finding and forming an affinity group

### ***Sources, more information***

War resisters international: „Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns“, 2009: [www.wri-irg.org/system/files/Handbook\\_for\\_Nonviolent\\_Campaigns.pdf](http://www.wri-irg.org/system/files/Handbook_for_Nonviolent_Campaigns.pdf)

x tausendmal quer: „Blockadefibel. Anleitung zum Sitzenbleiben“, 2010; [www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf](http://www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf)

„Zusammen mehr erreichen. Kleiner Ratgeber für Gezugsgruppen“; [www.rhffm.blogspot.eu/files/2010/06/bezugsgruppenreader2.pdf](http://www.rhffm.blogspot.eu/files/2010/06/bezugsgruppenreader2.pdf)

Nancy Alach: Bezugsgruppen und Unterstützung, [www.dissent-archive.ucrony.net/dissent-wiki/wiki/Bezugsgruppen.html](http://www.dissent-archive.ucrony.net/dissent-wiki/wiki/Bezugsgruppen.html)

## **B6 / Decision making and consensus**

### ***Introductory remarks for trainers***

s4a considers **processes of basic-democratic consensus** that build on the autonomy of all individuals and groups involved a substantial characteristic of not only actions,

but of emancipatory political organising itself. Hence, engagement around consensus is of high significance in the training.

**The topic of decision making is dealt with in the context of affinity groups during the action trainings**, since affinity groups are the structures in and between which decisions have to both be discussed and be made. Again and again there are participants in action trainings who have never heard of consensus before and are only used to majority voting. At the same time some people might have had their bad experiences, usually with processes of consensus that were unstructured and either badly facilitated or not facilitated at all. To both the training will offer the opportunity to make some new experiences.

Decisions of consensus can draw a very differentiated picture of the opinions in the room, due to it being a multileveled system with more categories than just “yes“ and “no“. That is, without a doubt, one of its strengths. Then again this already shows one of the **basic problems of decision making via consensus**, because ambiguous situations regarding a proposal for consensus may arise, e.g. the question: “At what point do we have a real consensus?“ There are a couple of different views. Some take a proposal to be a consensus if it isn't vetoed. Here, a relatively “**weak“ consensus** still definitely counts as a consensus. On the other hand some take it to be a basic precondition for a consensus that all people involved, if possible, will participate in its implementation. This implies that “standing aside“ or expressing “strong concerns“ (at least if there are relatively many of the two) is not in line with a consensus. This view only accepts “**strong“ consensuses** as real or right consensuses. But it's not that easy to draw a line between a strong and a weak consensus: How many strong concerns and stand-asides does it take for a proposal to not be a consensus? Is one person enough? If that were the case, expressing a strong concern would basically be upgraded to a veto, making the differentiation pointless. A slightly different view would be this: rather than asking whether it is a strong or a weak consensus, one can ask **whether the consensus is viable**, or how many concerns and stand-asides would make it non-viable. This means that one has to consider: will it even be possible to implement the plan/procedure successfully if so many concerns are being expressed? The facilitators should keep this question in mind and bring it up in ambiguous situations. **For the training it is rather important** that the trainer is aware of this problem and uses specific questions and hints to sensitise others. It is also an important part of trainings dealing more deeply with consensus and facilitation.

**Hereafter we will use the term “spokes council“ synonymously with “delegates plenary“**, although originally they were two different concepts. “Spokespeople“ have no authority to decide themselves, but rather allow for communication to take place between their affinity group and the council. “Delegates“ have a larger scope without always having to consult their affinity group about every single detail of a decision. It can be noticed that over the last years people started using the phrases synonymously during actions. Each person and affinity group has to decide themselves how much of a mandate they award their spokesperson/their delegate.

When discussing the **tasks of spokespeople and facilitation** one should accentuate that alternating these tasks enables all people to make experiences in these fields and further develop their skills. Still it can be an advantage to ensure some continuity in facilitation and not alternate all the time, especially in long and complex processes of decision making.

To explain and practice decision making in affinity groups and the spokes council, **you can simply start of with a role game without giving any previous input.** Depending on the amount of time you have you can decide in the phase of debrief and evaluation how far into detail of the different methods you want to go. The core principal “consensus“ though should be elaborated on in any case.

### ***Duration, number of participants, material***

Duration: 45 minutes for the shorter version. If you want to do more than one role game and present the different forms of decision making in more detail, its 90-120 minutes.

Number of participants: at least 3 affinity groups with at least 3 people.

Material: pens, posters. A watch to take the time (for role games with a time limit)

### ***Different scenarios for the different role games***

#### *→ role game scenario 1*

**Decision making with little time:** You are at the G8-summit and want to block it. You trekked through forests and fields with more than 2000 people and now reached one of the summit's access roads. You went onto the street with around 300 people, the other 1700 are at another spot on the street, about 1km further north. Police with water cannons is approaching you from the south. Some of the affinity groups within your group of 300 already sat down, others are standing around undecided... Someone is shouting: “Spokes council in 5 minutes, then we'll decide what to do!“ You've got 5 minutes for your affinity group meeting, then you'll send your spokesperson to the spokes council.

#### *→ role game scenario 2*

**Decision making with more time:** There is a huge spokes council being held at an anti-castor-camp in the Wendland the night before the action. You discuss which kind of action you actually want to choose for the following day and also what the action consensus is going to be. About 50 spokes people take part in this plenary. There are a lot of proposals and heated debates: some want to “schotter“ (remove the gravel from beneath the rails), others consider that to be to confrontational and would rather sit on the rails. Thereat the proposal develops to organise in smaller groups and act independently to meet the different needs. This again raises some dissent: Some would like to stay together, to try and reach the railtracks organised as two or three “fingers“. After some time the plenary is interrupted for the spokespeople to go back to their affinity groups and get some feedback on which kind of action they consider most useful. The questions regarding the action consensus and the small groups are also supposed to be discussed there. Afterwards the coucil is supposed to continue to formulate a consensus on what the action on the following day is going to look like.

## ***Process and methods***

- The participants come together in **affinity groups** to do the following: get to know each other a little, find a name for their affinity group, name a spokes person. Previously existing affinity groups can form a group in the training, too, to further develop their own process.
- The trainer drafts one **scenario** (cf. examples below). The method used is called “dilemma-situation“, as it is a situation where there is not one apparent, simple, definitely right decision to be made, but a number of different proposals for action can come up, depending on the people and affinity groups involved. The affinity groups should decide quickly (5 min) what they want to do and then send a spokesperson to the spokes council to coordinate with the other spokespeople.
- During the **spokes council** a consensus between the affinity groups should be developed (in the training, the council can easily be done in the blossom-model, see below).
- During the spokes council the trainer presents themselves as facilitator and will ask for all the delegate's decisions, going round. Depending on what the spokespeople bring to the council, the trainer will as an exmple either facilitate towards a common decision or another round of affinity group meetings.
- After the role game is finished or stopped, there will be an **evaluation of the spokes council**. The trainer, using their own faciliatation, explains the role and tasks of spokes councils, consensus and facilitation. (→ more on spokes councils: cf. unit “Schedule for a delegates plenary/spokes council before actions“).
- To **evaluate the decision making that took place in the affinity groups**, the trainer first asks the spokesperson how decisions on their group were made, how they discussed and what difficulties they had. Once the spokesperson is finished, the other members of the affinity group are invited to add from tehir point of view.
- You might want to write down some of the important methods and aspects on posters during the evaluation.
- Present different **methods of decision making**, add those that haven't been mentioned yet.
- If there is enough time left: Do another role game with a new scenario, where participants can take the role of facilitation during the spokes council and can try out the methods of decision makng that were presented.
- Final evaluation/reflection**: “Which new experiences/realizations did you have?“

## ***Content***

### **→ consensus**

#### **Consensus is:**

- agreeing on a proposal that is supported by a wide base/many people.
- cooperative, integrative and solution-oriented.
- creative. A number of motivated people participate, concerns and ideas from different angles can be heard and are taken seriously.
- participatory. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the decision making process.
- activating. If everyone is making the decision together, it makes implementing it a lot easier.
- a way of decision making that can help to react to one another, find new approaches and strengthen the groups team spirit.

- respectful towards the needs and concerns of everyone involved.
- not a weak compromise, but is able to draw a differentiated picture of varying opinions.

### → ***basic tips on the process of consensus***

- To check for consensus for a proposal, you shouldn't ask for approval ("Who agrees?"), but for concerns and dissent ("Does anyone have concerns?").
- Decision making in consensus is oftentimes a process in which proposals are made, checked for approval and dissent, scrapped or changed, until the proposal is found for which there is consensus.
- Using the levels of consensus (see below) helps the group to get a clearer picture of how strong and viable the decision is and who would support its implementation.

### → ***Checking the levels of consensus***

Checking the levels of consensus gives the members of the group the possibility to further differentiate their opinion. If there is a proposal for consensus, the facilitator checks for the different levels and the group members raise their hand accordingly.

-**full approval**

-**small concerns**

-**abstention:** I cannot or do not want to take a position on that proposal. If necessary, I will help implement the consensus.

-**strong concerns**

-**stand aside:** I can't support the proposal for consensus, but I do not want to obstruct the decision. I "stand aside" and might not be helping with the implementation, though.

-**veto:** this proposal for a consensus can not be decided and realised, since it contradicts common values, ground principles (like the action consensus...).

### → ***Possible problems when trying to find a consensus***

- Precondition for a real consensus is that no one involved is afraid of expressing their opinion frankly and openly.
- Having the problem of a "make-believe-consensus" can be the case if people agree to a proposal they aren't actually okay with, for example if they do not want to obstruct the process, or if they, more than others, are willing to step back and not have their opinion heard.
- It's important to pay attention to not only asking for approval, but to explicitly inquire about concerns and dissent regarding a proposal for consensus, because otherwise concerns can easily be made invisible in overall approval.
- To be oriented towards consensus means to deal with the challenge of trying to have everyone involved (if possible) want to implement the proposal. Of course this can only be based on people's voluntary participation and hence is a very high demand.
- Finding a consensus can at first be a really long and bumpy ride. Practice and experience can help groups to learn and "appropriate" consensus.

### → ***Facilitation***

#### → ***General points***

- Facilitation simplifies discussions in groups and finding a consensus.
- Using handsigns speeds up the process and makes it possible to give more feedback.

(cf. “Part 5: Material“ in this manual).

-Facilitation has the task to enunciate both topic and target of a discussion, to structure it, summarise interim results, propose practices, and to carve out solutions and proposals for consensus. While doing that, facilitation takes on an empathetic, questioning attitude, responds to questions and concerns, is neutral, doesn't unobjectively comment on contributions and will put their own name on the list of speakers when they want to express their own opinion. Facilitation pays attention to moods and disruptions and tries to iron them out.

-It makes sense to agree on who is going to facilitate when, and whether everyone is okay with that before doing a spokes council. That way, the facilitators can prepare themselves. Also, it takes less time.

-In big spokes councils one might consider having a team of two do the facilitation and another one be a “filter“. The facilitation can split the tasks: one can keep the list of speakers and make sure that everyone who wants to say something can do so. They can also keep an eye on the time. The second person concentrates on the process of the discussion and might make suggestions regarding the structure of the discussion or proposals for a consensus. The third and “filtering“ person can be approached by people who want to ask questions or “feed in“ points they consider important to the facilitation, but not do it in the plenary itself. Usually such a team of facilitators isn't needed in discussions in smaller groups (eg. affinity groups).

### → *More methods and tools*

#### → *Tendency-check*

If the facilitation team realises that there are several proposals being discussed simultaneously and it doesn't seem to be clear which one is supported best, it might help to put the proposals into perspective. Each proposal is given points on a scale from **1=yes, I'm in favor**, **2= I don't care**, to **3= no, I'm against it**. One after the other, the proposals are enunciated as very clear questions, then checked. To rate the proposals, people can hold up the number of fingers according to their approval or disapproval. Fingers/points for each proposal are counted. The ranking shows how well supported a proposal is – the fewer points there are, the better the support. The results are only a tendency, not the final results of the process of making a decision in consensus.

#### → *Empathic summarising, proposals for consensus*

The options for action that might lead up to the proposal for consensus might not always be obvious. After a round in which everyone can express their opinions on a question or a problem, or in which different options for action have been shown, facilitation summarises the opinions in a proposal for consensus. This proposal can again be accepted or rejected using another method.

#### → *Forming smaller units of decision making*

It might help to break up the situation using another step of mediation once it seems as if it's not possible to make a decision at the moment or the process is stuck. One of the tasks of facilitation is to suggest such measures and then facilitate the smaller units.

#### *a) Council for a proposal*

The group appoints a sub-group consisting of only a couple of members whose task it is to develop a proposal for consensus. The members of this council should alternate. If a group that is going to make a decision already consists of several sub-groups, the transfer to a spokes council is easy.

### ***b) Spokes council in the blossom-modell***

A variant of a spokes council is to have it take place in the so-called blossom-modell (or “inner circle, outer circle”). The spokes people sit down in a small circle in the middle. Everybody else (the affinity groups) assemble behind their spoke (be it sitting, squatting, standing up) – they are the petal to their person in the inner circle. The discussion in the inner circle can be listened to by everyone. People in the petal can communicate their issues with their person in the inner circle. The people in the inner circle can consult their petal if they need feedback.

### **Under pressure – quick decision making**

Where to move, whether or not to stay are decisions groups have to make quickly in dicey situations. Practicing methods to make decisions within a timespan between **several seconds and 15 minutes** can help. It is important to avoid discussion in which people argue about content of any kind in situations like these. Heated debates about people's concerns or fears are not helpful. Facilitation should intervene in cases like these. The following three methods are especially suitable for decisions in which a consensus has to be prepared/found quickly.

#### **→ *Yes-No-Check***

If there is a proposal: phrase it as a question and have a round where everyone answers either yes or no. This method shows a clear tendency whether it even makes sense to investigate the direction the proposal is going to any further. It is important that the group understands that the result is only a tendency and not a majority vote.

#### **→ *flashlight***

Different from a round in which everyone's complete opinion is checked, in a flashlight everyone only says a few words/one sentence. Points already mentioned shouldn't be repeated. Facilitation has to keep an eye on people's speaking time and intervene if people say more than two or three sentences. Stay empathetic/benevolent, though.

#### **→ *first proposal that is consensus gets picked***

If there is no time for discussion due to the overall situation, a quick proposal is made and checked for whether or not it would be a viable consensus. If it is, it's implemented, hence, there is no discussion whether or not there might be a better solution.

#### **→ *Other forms of decision making***

At times it might make sense to use forms of decision making that are less consensus-oriented. This implies that affinity groups need to talk about this beforehand and agree to these methods – to have a consensus on NOT deciding using consensus during a certain time or situation. Therefore, these other forms of decision

making are not completely disconnected from the principle of consensus. You need a very high amount of mutual trust for this procedure.

→ ***Head/mandate for decision making***

The group beforehand agrees on one person or more who will make the decision for the group. It should be discussed thoroughly and made very clear for which decisions they have this authority, and how people can object. Practically this method is often used when decisions about routes or the direction of movement have to be made. If one person knows the surroundings particularly well, they can be awarded the “mandate for routes“ to not have to stop at every crosssection and discuss on whether the group wants to turn left or right. Beforehand people should discuss the whole action in detail for the head to know everyones concerns and interests well enough to be able to include them in their decisions.

→ ***Tossing a coin***

If there is no time, people can't seem to be able to agree and/or all the proposals seem to be equally good or bad, you might let chance decide, eg. by tossing a coin. In many cases it's better to induce a decision and act accordingly than to not be able to act at all. The motto for this kind of decision making: any decision is better than no decision.

→ ***Voting***

Some affinity groups agree in consensus on taking votes in certain situations. This needs to be discussed well beforehand.

***Additional units and material***

D2 / Organize the mob	p. 90
E2 / Handout consensus	p. 121
e3 / The consensus fish	p. 122

***Sources and additional literature***

Werkstatt für gewaltfreie Aktion Baden: “Konsens. Handbuch zur gewaltfreien Entscheidungsfindung“ (2004) (a handbook on “nonviolent decision making“)

x tausendmal quer: “Blockadefibel. Anleitung zum Sitzenbleiben“, [www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf](http://www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf)

# **B10 Basic blocking with the body**

## **Preliminary notes for trainers**

This module focuses on **basic forms of blocking with the body, blockades in the forms of sit-ins or standing up, alone or arm/leg-locked with others**. More complex forms of blockades with other materials (chains, locks, Lock-Ons, tripods, tunnels etc) need intensive preparation and should be taught by persons who are skilled at those techniques.

The participants (P.) can learn and try out various methods of basic blocking with the body. They will further experience the process of eviction by the police and police-methods used to clear the premises.

If possible it is good to practice sit-ins and the eviction on soft floors (gras). The trainer should advise caution for nobody to get hurt. P with back problems and such should consider not participating.

In case someone wants to stop, a signal to stop should be agreed on (shouting "stop, stop stop", whistle)

## **duration, numbers of P, materials**

duration: 45 minutes

numbers of P: possible with few P, for roleplaying at least 8 persons

## **process and methods**

- form a circle with P
- trainer asks: **Who knows methods for blocking** which are possible by using the body (no materials like lock-ons, etc)?
- if a P mentions a method (i.e. sitting down and acting heavy, lying down), ask P to come to center of circle and to demonstrate. 2 additional P should act as police and try to remove/evict the other P as to show how the mentioned blocking method looks and acts (making yourself heavy, dragging on the floor, "package")
- trainer adds further methods and demonstrates them with help of the P
- for practices the P should meet in their reference groups. They can **try out several methods**, each person should, when removed by "police", make themselves heavy and be dragged, or form a package and get carried away at least once. **Ever P should also act as police and try out the evicting process.**
- after trying out gather in large circle and ask about experiences/opinions: "What worked well? Problems/risks/etc ? How did you feel as blocker/police?"
- short exchange/discussion: "What was effective? How did that feel?"

- **explaining of process and methods used by the police during an eviction.** Can be asked in large circle and then add missing things
- explaining **legal background information**
- if enough P, **do blockade-roleplaying** with all P:  $\frac{1}{3}$  acts as police,  $\frac{2}{3}$  block an area. The blockers get 3 minutes to discuss which method to use. The police has to clear the area (without hurting any P).
- **short evaluation:** "How did blocking/clearing go? What was tried out, what was experienced? What was good/bad? What could be done differently?"
- **change roles** redo role-play
- **final evaluation and transfer:** What did the P learn in this module?

## contents

### sit-ins

- compared to standing, sitting calms the whole scene
- the area becomes more clear viewed compared to standing
- clear message: we are sitting here and we are not leaving!
- can't be cleared by pushing and thrusting
- police has difficulty to clear pathways
- when police talks to protestors they lean over the sitting people, can lead to an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness and exposure

### different body postures during sit-ins

- alone
- forming a **package**: tuck up one's legs, fold the arms under the legs, hold body tension. get carried away like that. Has the advantage that blockers keep control over their body (concentrating on him-/herself and body-tension), the head stays up and protected. If blocker doesn't want to get carried anymore, he/she lets go of her arms and will fall feet first to the ground. The police is used to this sitting-technique. It is rather easy for them to clear, as two officers lift the squatter by placing hands under arms and legs and carry the person as a package. But there is no guaranty the police will apply this technique (*see below*)
- when police is clearing, loosening of body tension and **letting oneself hang and making oneself heavy**. This is more difficult for the police. For the blockers this makes the eviction less predictable and less controllable
- **locking arms/hooking in** with sitting neighbour (talk about it first)
- hook in as a block with person before and behind when sitting in rows
- support the co-squatters to confuse police (verbally, stroking, etc)
- locking arms in a circle
- ...

### standing blockade/ pushing blockade

- more flexible than sit-ins
- can be pushed aside

- when evicted by pushing the blockers can get squeezed pretty rough
- in difference to sitting, the police os met on "eye-to-eye"-level, less feeling of powerlessness and being exposed to polices will
- if pepper-spray, teargas, etc is used the whole block can withdraw more orderly

### **Creative, playful forms of blocking**

Streets and squares can be obtained, squatted or blocked by ways of theater-like actions, similar to campaigns like *reclaim the streets*. This form appears more open and less confronting than explicit blockade actions like sit-ins with arms looking. This can raise the bar to use force for the police. Also passers by may be attracted to this form of blockade, if the blockade happens in urban areas. On the other hand is a forced eviction by the police quickly achieved because this form of blockade is not very robust.

### **examples:**

- samba- or other music-groups
- dancing
- chair blockade (i.e. for older people)
- playing soccer, frisbee, etc
- Street-theater
- ...

### **Eviction-situations**

It is important to let the P know that the approach of the police varies. Whether they evict, which methods and the amount of force are subject to various factors. The method of eviction depends on the behaviour of the blockers, the urgency of the situation and the presence of press, lawyers and other observers. In the end it is mostly a political decision whether and how the eviction will take place. Therefore there is not just one possible way to act in case of eviction, but rather various options.

### **Following points should be discussed:**

- If the police considers the blockade an unapproved assembly, there are usually 3 loud warning before an eviction, requesting the partakers to "leave this unapproved assembly, otherwise the assembly will be broken off with all adequate means". However, there is no guaranty that there are 3 warnings or that everyone hears all warnings.
- After the three warnings, the police will come in small groups to the blockers at an orderly eviction. They ask every single one if they come with them **voluntarily or not**. If the blocker stands up him/herself, the police will accompany him/her to the spot of identity verification or the spot where the blockers are released respectively. If the blocker doesn't get up alone, the officers carry the person or force him/her verbally or with a pain compliance

hold (painful grips and locks, see below) to walk alone.

- When blocking every person can decide for him/herself if he/she wants to leave the blockade before the 3rd warning (no administrative offence will be charged), wants to walk alone or get carried away or to lock in with the neighbours to make the eviction more difficult for the police.
- The police has generally the right to use "adequate means/force" to execute the eviction. That includes pain compliance holds (pressure on eyes, nose, voice box, underneath the ears, twisting joints and thumbs, ...), using batons, pepper-spray, water cannons.
- the brutal behaviour of the police often has **the goal to intimidate the blockers**, so that many will leave the blockade voluntarily
- violence is also often displayed when the eviction needs to take place quickly and/or few officers are at hand
- if the blockers lock arms with their neighbours, all participants need to agree to it. A signal needs to be agreed upon on which the hooking is released as it may result in pain and injuries otherwise. If the police uses batons as leverage to "free" arms and legs, the hook needs to be released immediately as it quickly leads to broken bones.
- Unannounced and secret chaining on to subjects or lock-ons are dangerous in a sit-in or standing blockade. The Police might not be aware/forget in the turmoil, which endangers chained people. **The separation of technical and pure body blockades** is better/safer.
- After the eviction the police can verify the identities of the blockers hold them in custody until the occasion of the action has passed. Often the blockers are released without having their identity verified at very big and unclear blockades or if the police lacks the resources to identify everyone. Then the blockers are released behind police barriers without any consequences.

### **a not on the law**

- Participation at an unapproved assembly on public ground, a common street or square is a **minor breach of law**, just like a **parking violation**. There have been verdicts in the past, which judged passive and non-violent sit-ins not as constraints or other offences (Federal Constitutional Court 1995). Consequently it is only a minor breach of the law to get carried away by the police. The consequence can be a fine which varies from country to country but is never higher than 100,-. In some areas there can be an additional "carrying-away-fee" which can be up to 200,- €
- If the blocker does **not show a passive, non-violent behaviour it exceeds a minor breach in law**. If a person is actively resisting by holding on, kicking and boxing, twisting arms and legs out of the grip etc. it can be considered as "resistance" or attempt to bodily harm or criminal assault. Also if blockers that locked arms with neighbours are "freed" and then re-hook the arms it is considered resistance. Take care of reflex-like movements, like rapid extending of arms and legs, which the police can interpret as intentional

kicking and boxing.

- Blocking of highways, train tracks, runways of airports or private properties can be considered as different areas of the law, for example "disturbance of public companies", "dangerous interaction with traffic", "domestic disturbance", etc. Depending on the planned campaign it is important to inform beforehand.

- **Blocking of an approved demonstration or rally is a special case.** So far (March 2013) a criminalization of non-violent blockades is not possible through the "law of assembly" ("prevention of approved demonstration and rallies"). But several states write new amendments and changes to the law in this area.

### **final evaluation and transfer**

Ask P: "How are you doing? What are you taking along from this training?"

### **continuative modules**

E4| Information on law-assistance and repression      Page 123

E5| Paragraphs from the law of assembly and criminal code      Page 137

### **references and further reading**

x tausendmal quer: "Blockadefibel. Anleitung zum Sitzenbleiben", [www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf](http://www.x-tausendmalquer.de/fileadmin/x-tausend/dokumente/Blockadefibel.pdf)

References: German original written by “Skills 4 Action”, translated by “KoKo”.

## **5-Finger Tactic**

### **Introduction – Notes for the facilitators**

The 5-Finger Tactic was developed by the campaign “X-tausendmal quer” at the end of the 1990's as part of the anti-nuclear protest and blockades of the CASTOR-transport (transport of highly radioactive waste) in Germany. The tactic enables groups of blockaders to flow through loose police cordons, or even police kettles. Before this tactic was used, it was common to build compact blocks of people who hooked arms to overcome barriers made by police. This practice has been replaced by this so called “Flowing through” (“Durchfliessen”), ideally used on open terrain as in the case of the rural areas of the “Wendland” where this tactic was first used. Since then the 5-Fingers Tactic has also been used in rather restricted areas like cities.

Many people have heard of or even now the 5-Finger Tactic already. This knowledge can be very useful for the training.

Be careful to use the expression “5-Finger Tactic”, “Flowing through” or “Passing through” - rather than “breaking” through police cordons - to help avoid negative reactions from the state.

The exercise starts with a role play, without any explanations, in order get the participants moving and let them experience the tactic instead of just explaining it.

*Note: In Germany this tactic as been proven successful. The same doesn't need to be true for other countries where police may react very differently to this tactic. Also any comments on legal issues are only valid in Germany. For other countries please check with your local Legal Team.*

### **Time, Number of participants, Material**

Duration: at least 45 to 60 minutes, depending on length and number of repeats of the role play  
Participants: at least 10, no upper limit, but ideally there should be at least one facilitator per 20 participants.

Material: pens, flipchart paper, tape, bottles/cans or similar to model movements of demonstrators and police.

Optional materials to make the role play more realistic:

- as police baton: rolled newspapers/flipchart paper or pipe insulation (foam material for insulating pipes, available from DIY stores)
- as pepper spray: plant mister, bottles with sports caps
- banner or other piece of tarp or canvas (3m x 1,5m)

### **Stages of the exercise and Methods**

- Initial role play and evaluation
- Collect ideas and other input for “5-Finger Tactic” and “Flowing through”
- Advanced role play, including repetition and evaluation
- Practice some more advanced scenarios
- Final evaluation

### **Introducing the role play**

**Scenario:** during an action a group of protesters who intend to form a blockade is stopped by a loose police cordon. They should try to overcome the obstacle.

- Form two groups: police and protesters, with approximately twice as many protesters as police. Separate the two groups so they can not hear each other talking.
- Place the police along a line between two marked points – the bigger the gap between the police officers, the easier it will be for protesters to pass through them. Give the police their orders: they should not let anyone pass through, but they should not use violence to prevent

- it. Remind them that this is only a training and we do not want anybody to get hurt.
- Activists are instructed to think about the best way to pass between the two marked boundaries, despite the police presence. Ask them to come up with some quick ideas, and to just try them out, rather than discussing possibilities for a long time.
- Agree on an emergency signal (safe word) to stop (e.g. “Stop-stop-stop”). If anyone says this then *everyone* should immediately stop what they are doing.
- Protesters advance and try to pass through the police cordon.

### Evaluation

- First ask the police for their impressions. E.g. what did the protesters do? In what way did their action affect you? How did that feel? How did you react?
- Then ask the protesters. E.g. did anyone manage to get through without any physical contact with the police? Who did not get through? What was your original plan, and did that work out? What did the police do? How did you feel?

### Collect input

#### **Collect and if necessary take notes on flipchart paper**

Has anyone already participated in an action with “Flowing Through”? How did that work? What is the “5-Fingers Tactic”? Why did people use that tactic? What effect did it have?

**Input** (*Facilitators may add anything that hasn't been said*).

- “5-Fingers Tactic” means that a **big group** (“**arm**”, “**closed hand**”) splits into several “**fingers**” and, if necessary can split further into **affinity groups** or even **individuals**.
- It is used to flow through or get around police cordons or other police barriers or obstacles to reach a certain target (e.g. target for a blockade).
- It offers the possibility to pass the police with little or no physical contact.
- It can confuse the police, as movement of several fingers is less predictable than that of a block of people.
- The “5-Fingers Tactic” can only be used successfully if the **activists outnumber the police**, or if there are large enough **gaps between the police officers**, or if it is possible to create those gaps. It is impossible to flow through a tight police cordon (at least not without physical contact).
- When cordoning off an area the police are usually ordered **not to let anybody pass through**. Their order is usually *not* to get hold of people or even arrest them. If a police officer grabs a person, he or she then isn't able to hinder others from passing. This is why the tactic is very often successful. But note that police reactions, including the level of violence they are allowed to use, cannot be predicted, since their actions will depend on what orders they have been given.
- It is important to **concentrate on the gaps** instead of concentrating on the police officers.
- The success of that tactic relies on **a sufficient number of activists managing to pass through police cordons**. As the police get confused, additional gaps appear, allowing more people to get through. This often leads to the complete disintegration of the police cordon, so that everyone can then pass through unhindered.
- In contrast to the common tactics of affinity groups, the success of the “5-Fingers Tactic” is highly dependant on ability of the groups to split up. **If necessary an affinity group may have to split into single members that pass alone through gaps without stopping to wait for their group**, and only reforming after successfully passing the police cordon. In this way the larger action group is more likely to achieve its aim when individuals or affinity groups are acting independently.
- Single persons may also **approach police officers directly**, standing in front of them talking or otherwise distracting them, so that others may pass either side
- If after a while more gaps appear or the police cordon disbands, those providing diversions

will also be able to pass.

- You could practice “**Passing-movements**” for tight cordons: hands up, go to one side of a police officer. With the foot furthest from the officer take a step forward, past the police officer, and at the same time turn around your own axis (pirouette), keeping your back turned towards the officer. The rotation makes your movement difficult to stop, while at the same time avoiding any appearance of aggressiveness.
- There are different ways to approach police cordons: “offensive”, can mean moving quickly, using banners to protect those at the front, shouting slogans etc. On the other hand, a calm and relaxed approach: slow, not hiding behind banners, hands half up, to show that you do not intend to be violent. There is no “best practice”, but it is important to let participants practice both methods to find out which they feel more comfortable with.
- The police will usually react according to how they are approached. Depending on how threatened they feel, the violence of their response may also differ. The more “offensive” the protesters are, the more likely it is that police will use force against them. But bear in mind that **whether the police use violence** depends mainly on their orders, which in turn may depend on political considerations and decisions. Again this will differ from country to country.
- Police violence will usually take the form of pushing, kicking or hitting, using fists or batons, as well as horses and dogs.. The police may also use pepper spray to stop people passing through.
- If the police know in advance where the action might take place they may use fences to cordon off these places.
- A quick way of holding a space is to simply sit down before the police can push you away.
- **Legally**, in Germany, flowing through a police cordon is not an offence. Generally speaking, only physical assault (e.g. holding on to an officer, attempting to escape from an officer who is holding on to you or actively defending yourself) is regarded as a crime. So far no prosecutions based on passing through police cordons are known.
- The **structure you choose for the arms/hands, fingers and affinity groups will depend on the planned action**. The fingers and affinity groups may walk next to each other or behind each other. The movements of splitting up and flowing through can have a forward or sideways momentum. For example with the “5-Finger Tactic” you could try to stretch a walking police kettle (i.e. when the police are kettling a moving demonstration) so that gaps are opened up between the police officers, allowing people to flow through.

### Advanced Role Plays

The role play explained above is repeated, but this time the participants can try out different ways of structuring the fingers, affinity groups and individuals, as well as different ways of passing through the police cordon. The role play should be practised at least twice, in order to give all participants the possibility to get to know the role of the activists as well as that of the police.

### **Evaluation as explained above**

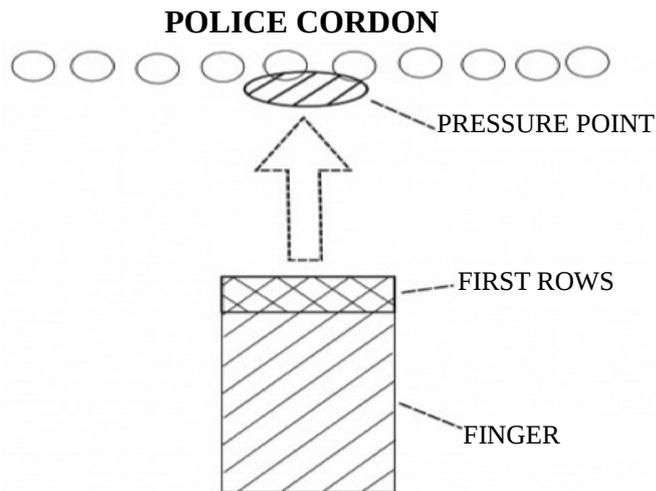
#### More Scenarios

##### **In urban areas (restricted space)**

In a town the amount of space available to manoeuvre in is often restricted. Streets are lined with fences, houses, parked cars etc. Here it is much more likely that protesters will have to make physical contact with the police in order to allow others to flow through a police cordon. In this case the first rows of the fingers can try to make the police concentrate on them, thus hopefully creating gaps between officers.

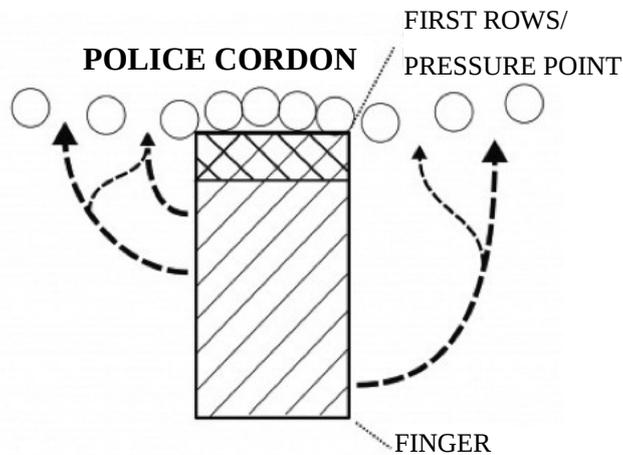
**Scenario Town I:** Create a pressure point in the middle, flow through between police officers

**Scenario Town I**  
**Picture I**



- Finger moves as a block towards the obstacle
- The first rows create a “pressure point” at the police cordon

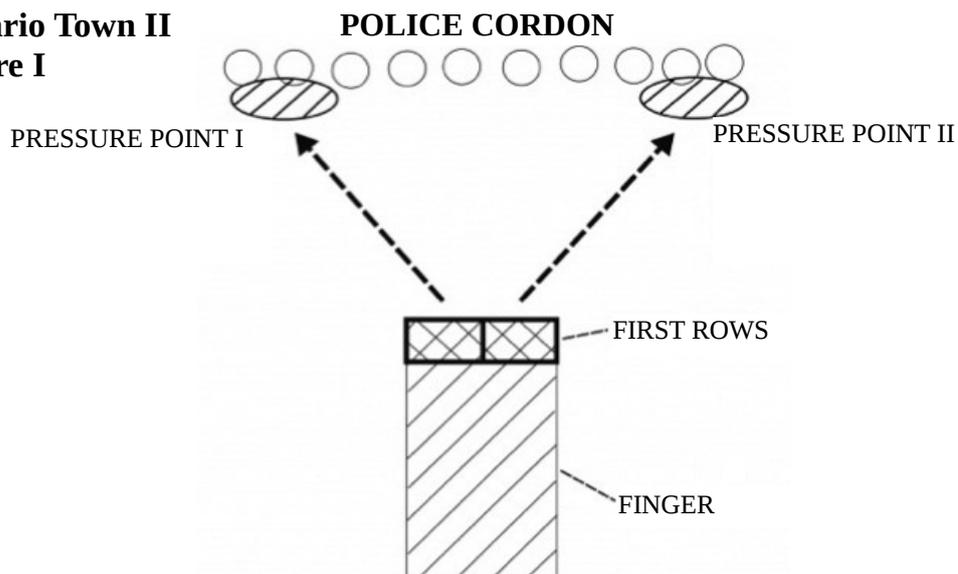
**Scenario Town I**  
**Picture II**



- Police concentrate on the “pressure point” in the middle
- To the side of the “pressure point” the gaps between the police officers get bigger
- Protesters at the back of the finger use these gaps to flow through

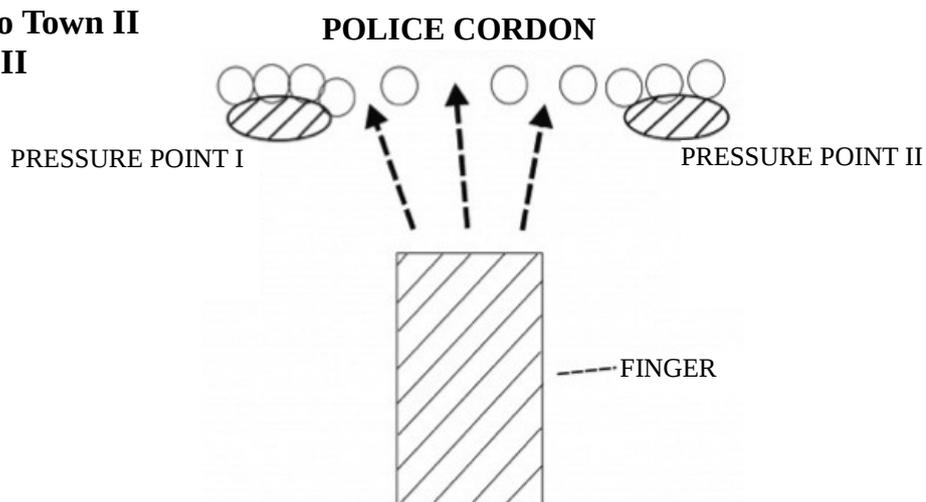
**Scenario Town II:** Create two pressure points at the sides, flow through the middle

**Scenario Town II  
Picture I**



- The first rows split into two and move towards the outer edges of the police chain
- At the edges of the police cordon 2 “pressure points” are created

**Scenario Town II  
Picture II**



- The police turn towards the pressure points on the edges
- In the middle of the police cordon gaps appear
- The back rows of the finger use the gaps to flow through

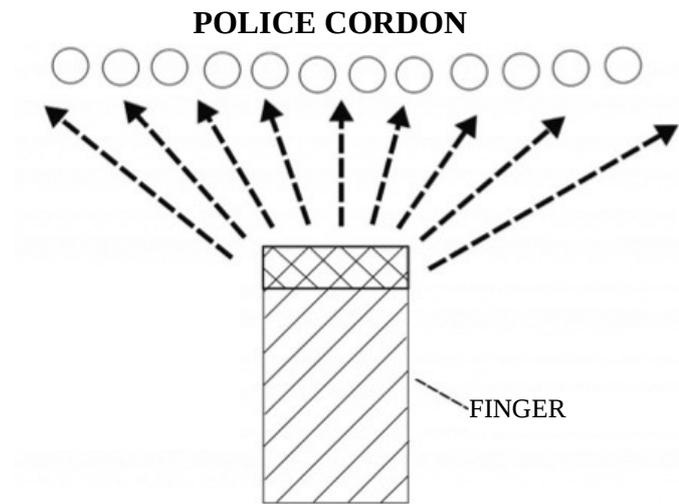
To experience the different tactics participants can first try to pass through as a block. The facilitator should point out that in a real situation the police will probably use more force than in the role play.

**In the countryside (lots of space)**

In rural areas there is usually lots of space. Natural boundaries like ditches and fences can be easily

crossed. In these circumstances one should take advantage of the available space by fanning out from the finger as soon as possible.

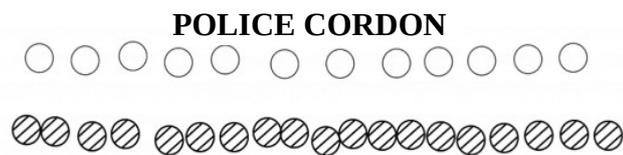
**Scenario Countryside**  
**Picture I**



- Fan should be as wide as possible
- Use all the available space

The protesters should move as far away from each other as possible as soon as they are close to the police cordon. Nevertheless it can make sense to split up already hundreds of meters before. In this way the police cordon can be stretched further and the gaps get wider.

**Scenario Countryside**  
**Picture II**



- The whole finger is fanned out as much as possible, which stretches the police cordon
- The protesters now form a line themselves and everybody tries to use the gaps created

In extreme cases, when reaching the police cordon, the finger is only a single human line facing the police and any gaps. The police will try to close any gaps by swinging batons, kicking (watch out for their, and your own, legs!) and by moving around a lot.

**Final Evaluation and Transfer**

Questions towards participants: How are you? What do you take with you from the training of the “5-Fingers Tactic” and “Flowing Through”?

## **B 11 Dealing with employees, residents and passers-by during blockades**

### **Introductory information for trainers**

This module is about situations in which those participating in a blockade are faced with persons wishing to pass the blockade (e.g. employees at a company headquarter that is being blocked, passers-by, local residents etc). Through role plays, the participants can put themselves in the position of different actors. In this way, they can develop options for how the participants in a blockade could act to explain the blockade and its reasons to other groups, to de-escalate any potential confrontation, while at the same time maintaining the blockade. Clarifying these aims of the module to participants is important.

It is very important that those carrying out a blockade provide information to those wishing to pass the blockade. It can be useful to prepare a flyer for the training (see below for an example of a letter containing information for employees). During the training, such a flyer/letter can provide arguments to those in the blockade. Past experience with blockades has shown that an effective way of dealing with the presence of employees, passers-by, local residents etc. is to actively approach and talk to them while at the same time carrying out a blockade in a determined manner: Some persons talk to those approaching the blockade a couple of meters in front of the blockade and explain the latter. The people taking part in the blockade stand behind them forming chains by linking arms. In this manner, blockades can often be upheld more effectively and with less confrontation. Those wishing to pass the blockade realize quickly that they will not be able to pass the blockade without physical violence on their part. If the participants in the training do not come up themselves with the idea of approaching people and forming chains, the trainer can suggest trying this approach.

Blockades on public streets in the middle of the city can lead quite quickly to a set of fundamental questions: Will we let people pass that live on the other side of the blockade? What about children? Those with an appointment with a doctor on the other side? Do we let employees of businesses other than the one we are blocking pass? How can we find out whether what people tell us is true (doctor's appointment, apartment...) and do we really want to check "papers" (confirmation by a doctor, ID with address...)? Yet if we let people pass, is this still a blockade?

**Thus, a blockade that may appear simple at first sight can turn into a quite complex situation.** In the module, this can be implemented in the following manner: after playing a simple situation (people blocking – employees) a situation with several actors (people blocking, employees, passers-by, local residents, police, medics) is enacted. The blockades can be larger or small, sit-ins or standing blockades...

There are various methods, each conveying a different perspective:

- See B2, games, exercises and methods for warm-up, getting to know each other, work in small and larger groups, evaluation and concluding a training, p. #
- The method "hassle-line" allows trying and practicing communication in one-to-one situations. The hassle-line can be used as a first step or later on to try different ways of behaving identified during a role play or forum theatre.

- The forum theatre method allows observers to contribute new options of action to a given fictive and enacted situation and trying them out.
- In a role play with several roles and observers a dynamic, complex situation can be rehearsed.

None of the methods should be used for too long (the hassle line should be shortest, the role play longest). If there is time, it is better to repeat an exercise 3-4 times.

### **Role-play:**

In the following set-up, a role play takes place first, followed by a hassle line. This allows all participants to try out in a one-to-one situation whatever they were able to observe in the role play. Depending on the level of experience of participants with actions as well as the time available for the training, it is also possible to only do one of the exercises (role play or hassle line).

### **Duration, number of participants, material**

Duration: ca. 45 – 75 minutes

Number of participants: up to 30

Material: possibly pens and large sheets of paper

Dauer, TN-Zahl, benötigtes Material Dauer: ca. 45-75 Minuten TN-Zahl: bis ca. 30 TN Material: ggf. Stifte und Plakate

### **Program and methods**

- Short warm-up/game for activating participants
- Trainers introduce the situation and the objectives of the module
- Role play, followed by evaluation
- Optional: role play 2<sup>nd</sup> time and evaluation
- Hassle line and evaluation
- Optional: hassle line 2<sup>nd</sup> time and evaluation
- Overall evaluation and transfer

### **Information on content**

#### **Doing the role play**

- Form three groups, 2/4 participants in the blockade, 1/4 observers, 1/4 employees
- Describe a scenario and assign a space to each group; limit the space according to the scenario (passage, walls of houses...). An example for a scenario could be Blockupy Frankfurt: There are about 1000 persons in the area of the European Central Bank, blockings its entries. In the street where you are, there are about 40 people sitting and standing.
- Explain to the different groups separately the situation and the objectives:

- For those involved in the blockade: in the early morning of the same day, you have successfully initiated a blockade of the street. Now, the first employees are approaching, wanting to go to work and to pass the blockade to reach the building of the European Central Bank.
- For the employees: You want to/need to go to work, because you have a lot to do. You have little sympathy for the blockades. You are afraid of getting in trouble with your boss etc.
- Observers: You observe what is happening and what each groups is doing.
- Each group has 2 minutes to think about how they want to act before the role play starts.
- Following a signal, the scene is played as realistically as possible. Duration: ca. 3 minutes.
- Following a stop signal agreed beforehand, the role play stops.

## **Evaluation**

Everyone comes together in a circle. Start with those involved in the blockade, then the employees and finally the observers. Guiding questions for the evaluation:

- How was the situation for you, how did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What did the others do?
- Did you have a strategy and if so which one?
- What did you not like that much and would have done differently?

The observers can comment on what was said previously and what they observed.

## **Role play, 2nd time**

- Switch roles, repeat scenario. By adding additional roles the situation can be made more realistic and more complex:
  - Local residents (even more difficult: children/young people): you want to go home.
  - Passers-by: you have an important appointment with the doctor, you need to go to the airport, you are foreigner and need to extend your visa today
  - Police: you use the employees as a pretext for threatening to evict the blockade
  - Representatives of the workers' council: You consider yourself to have mediating role between those in the blockade and your colleagues

## **Evaluation**

As before, those in the blockade speak first, then other persons, then the observers. If new roles were added: Which decisions were particularly difficult to make, what additional clarification is needed for the entire group in respect of letting people cross the blockade – generally or only for specific persons?

## **Finishing the role play**

Everyone is made to leave their role, by shaking, symbolically “undressing” the role previously played etc. Have a short break.

### **Hassle line, 1st round**

Ask the participants to position themselves in two lines at a distance of about one meter from each other, with two persons facing each other; these two persons look at each other and will interact. One line consists of those participating in the blockade, the other one of employees (passers-by...). The trainer needs to decide and explain whether the situation enacted will only involve the participants talking to each other or whether participants can also approach and touch each other etc. The trainer explains the situation: There is a conflict which is about those blocking not wishing the employees pass and the latter wanting/having to go to work irrespective of the blockade. Give participants a minute to get into their roles, and then a start signal. First round: Everyone acts simultaneously for between 30 seconds and a minute. End the interaction by giving a stop signal.

### **Evaluation**

Everyone in a circle: What did you do/say? How did you feel? Did body language play a role? What ways did you find to behave in de-escalating way in the conflict? Which arguments did you develop? What would you have liked to do?

### **2nd round**

Like the first round, but with switched roles. One line moves on to the respective next person, i.e. two new persons will interact with each other. The roles are shifted between the two lines; the line that previously blocked is now playing the role of employees. Finish: Leave the roles by shaking etc.

### **Overall evaluation and transfer**

“What new experiences and insights do I take from the exercise?” Are there any issues, that require further clarification in the view of the participants and that might even have to added to your joint understanding of the action or the action consensus? Are any further preparations needed for an upcoming action involving a blockade, e.g. a leaflet for residents, employees...?

## **An example: leaflet for employees used during Blockupy Frankfurt 2012**

Letter to the employees of the European Central Bank (ECB)

Dear Madam/Sir, dear colleagues,

as you may have heard, a blockade of the ECB will take place on 18 May. This means that on 18 May 2012 you are unlikely to reach your office in the ECB's building. This action is not aimed at you or any of your colleagues personally; instead, it targets the ECD as a main actor of the policies of the Troika – consisting of the ECB, the IMF, and the EU Commission. We are aware of the fact that these three actors are not the only ones to be blamed for the current problems; the French government and the German Merkel-Rösler government play an important role as well. Yet we do want to take our resistance against a crisis regime, which has brought misery upon millions of people in many countries of Europe, back to one of its points of origin: to the centre of the Frankfurt banking district, the seat of the ECB and of many powerful Germany banks and corporations. The ECB employees will not be the only ones affected by these actions – so will the employees of other banks and corporations.

**BLOCKUPY FRANKFURT!** Resisting the economic diktats imposed by the Troika and governments. For international solidarity and democratising all parts of our lives

**BLOCKUPY FRANKFURT:** we are, among others, groups and activists from the Occupy movement; initiatives of unemployed people; networks active on the crisis; critical trade unionists; activists involved in ATTAC, the environmental and peace movement, anti-racist as well as anti-fascist initiatives, groups and organizations of the radical left; youth and students' organizations; activists involved in local struggles, and leftist parties.

We will occupy on 16 and 17 May the facilities and central squares of the city, thus creating a space for us to engage in discussions and an exchange of views on various topics. On 18 May we will block the business operations of Frankfurt's financial centre, as a specific expression of our anger at the Troika's policies. Finally, on 19 May, we will gather in a big demonstration, with the aim of making the diversity of our protests visible. People from many countries and regions of the world will travel to Frankfurt and participate in the days of protest. Maybe you are thinking about supporting our actions as well? You would be most welcome. You will find more details as well as news on our actions at [blockupy-frankfurt.org](http://blockupy-frankfurt.org).

## **B12 Repression and legal aid: Overview and introduction**

### **Introductory information for trainers:**

**Attention: This information only applies for the German context!**

**If you prepare a group for an action outside Germany, the legal situation might be very different.**

**The objective of this module** is to make everyone participating in an action aware of the consequences an action could have and to enable them to assess these consequences. At the beginning of the module, trainers could make explicit that they are no trained lawyers and are thus not able to answer each and every question; instead, they will provide a basic overview. There is no need for nor is it possible to provide detailed legal counseling during an action training, especially not on specific cases or questions. When participants have questions that touch upon issues that are not covered in the following (and go beyond what the respective trainer wants to and is confident to answer) participants can contact legal aid groups and organisations, lawyers or those organising a specific action or campaign. Presentations on repression should be realistic and show that while repression does exist, including in severe forms, it is possible to deal with it, to be prepared for it and to protect oneself against it.

**For purposes of this module**, experience has shown that contrary to the normal interactive approach it is more appropriate for the trainer to provide input and subsequently answer questions. Moreover, a more stringent approach to moderation and making clear that specific questions cannot be answered are more important than in other modules. Experience has shown that most participants have either already experienced repression themselves or heard of other people's experiences. This can lead to intimidating and detailed reports and stories. These tend, on the one hand, to take up much space and time, and on the other hand be of little value for learning; in the worst case, they can lead to unwarranted fear of repression. If participants are interested in the topic, a specific anti-repression training can be offered or the action training can be held together with an event on legal aid by legal aid groups/lawyer or similar.

### **Duration, number of participants, material**

Duration: 30 min minimum

Number of participants: possible in a large group

Material: pens, large sheets of paper, cards, legal aid brochure for all participants

### **Structure and methods**

At the beginning of the module, the trainer should explain that there are often grey zones with regard to legal matters; s/he should inform participants that **conclusive statements about the legal consequences of a specific action are often not possible** as these consequences depend on political decisions, on prosecutors, on judges etc. However, there are certain experiences from the past that can serve as a basis for assessing probabilities and risks. **The trainer will give a presentation on important aspects of the following issues** (see information on legal aid and repression, p. #, articles from the law of assembly and the criminal code, p. #). Core

terms can be written down on a large sheet of paper or cards. If you prepare these beforehand, less time will be needed to complete the module.

- The basics of an action: preparing an action, what to definitely bring and not to bring
- Legal team during an action
- We do not need to think of the **police** as our opponent in mass civil disobedience actions. **The police are not the target of our actions, but an obstacle we may have to overcome.** At the same time, we can be at the mercy of the police during and after an action, mostly without having the option of protecting ourselves. The fact that police violence may not only cause physical pain, but also long-term trauma should not be underestimated. Depending on the details of an action, there will be communication with the police, but no cooperation!
  
- Order to leave a certain area and prohibition on staying in a certain area
- Dispersal of assemblies
  - According to German law, an assembly is in principle a group of more than two persons, even if the group has no leader.
  - In principle, an assembly is protected by the legal rules applicable to assemblies; an assembly needs to be officially dissolved by the police, before the police can apply certain measures defined in the police law. When assemblies are dissolved, the police have to refer specifically to “dissolving the assembly”. Frequently, the police forces announce three times that they will dissolve the assembly, before they take any other measures. However, from a legal point of view, the police are not obliged to make this announcement three times! The police only must ensure that everyone participating in the assembly has heard that the assembly is dissolved as well as the request to leave the place; making the respective announcement three times is an established practice in this regard.
  - Dispersal: Once the decision to dissolve the assembly has been taken, the police can disperse the assembly, including by using physical force.
  
- The police can apply physical force in the following ways, depending on what police considers proportionate and with the intensity of application depending on individual police officers:
  - Leading or carrying people away
  - Punching or kicking people
  - Painful grips
  - Batons
  - Tear gas
  - Pepper spray
  - Police dogs
  - Police horses
  - Water cannon vehicles
  - Tasers
  - Rubber bullets
  
- Difference between detention and arrest

- Difference between administrative infringements and crimes; fines and penalty orders (*Strafbefehle*)
- Daily fines and their significance (having a criminal record), police records
- Administrative infringements:
  - Participating in an dissolved or prohibited assembly
  - Sit-ins and being carried away by the police (similar to parking in the wrong place)
  - Calling publicly for committing administrative infringements
- Crimes
  - Using threats or force to cause a person to do, suffer or omit an act (no longer relevant for peaceful sit-ins, with the exception on the case law on the 2<sup>nd</sup> row)
  - Covering the face during an assembly
  - Using body protection in an illegal way during assemblies (so called passive armament)
  - Being the leader of prohibited assembly
  - Disrupting a registered assembly
  - Criminal damage
  - Causing bodily harm
  - Trespassing
  - Rioting/disrupting the public order
  - Dangerous disruption of road, train or air traffic
  - Incitement to criminal behaviour or instigation to commit a crime
- What to expect when detained/arrested:
  - During the act of being detained
  - When being taken somewhere else
  - Ascertaining your identity
  - Injuries
  - Damages to your objects
  - Measures to find out the identity of detainees persons
  - Interrogation
  - Attempts to intimidate or humiliate people (e.g. younger people being asked to take off all of their clothes during physical search)
  - DNA analysis
  - Rules on when people must be released
- Accelerated judicial proceedings
- How to deal with summons, fines and penalty orders: always file an objection until the deadline specified and talk to your affinity group, a legal aid group and if needed a lawyer!
- Mis-information campaigns by the police: The police occasionally try to mobilise the public and media against protests and raise doubts among sympathisers by disseminating incorrect information (e.g. the rebel clown army having filled their “guns” with acid...)

- Media can provide a certain degree of protection during mass actions of civil disobedience. Therefore, sometimes hand-picked, trustworthy journalists are asked to accompany an action (“embedded journalists”).
- If an action has been stressful (e.g. because people have experience violence) it is useful to spend time on exchanging experiences in a safe environment.

It is important to conclude the module with an optimistic perspective, despite the long list of different forms of repression presented: repression is meant to deter people from taking action. This is its essential function. It is therefore important that every person reflects about how far s/he is prepared to go; the reflection should also include thinking about potential consequences and how to deal with them. Mutual aid and support are important to ensure that no one is left alone. Affinity groups, legal aid groups, lawyers etc. have an important function to fulfill in this regard. It is crucial to deal with repression openly, to talk about it and our fears, to not let repression intimidate and isolate us. For example, solidarity parties can be organised to raise money for the costs of judicial proceedings, while also being fun and helping raise public awareness. No one should be left to face repression alone.