

Action Training Manual

International Edition

Based on the German-language training manual by
Skills for Action
www.skills-for-action.de

June 2021

Published by
KURVE Wustrow
Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action
www.kurviewustrow.org

IMPRINT

Published by:

KURVE Wustrow

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Account for donations:

IBAN: DE50 4306 0967 2041 6468 00

BIC: GENODEM1GLS

Authors / Editors: Skills for Action, www.skills-for-action.de

Date of Publication: June 2021

Supported by the German Civil Peace Service Programme (Ziviler Friedensdienst)



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FOREWORD BY KURVE WUSTROW

KURVE Wustrow – The Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action – was founded in 1980 with the aim of turning concerns about violent conflict, environmental degradation and social injustice into conscious nonviolent action. We are based in Wustrow, in the Wendland region in the northern part of Germany. The place was chosen because a nuclear waste disposal site as well as a nuclear power plant were supposed to be built in this region. None of these facilities have ever been completed. After more than 40 years of nonviolent resistance, only in October 2020 the idea of a nuclear waste disposal site was finally given up by the German authorities. Our local nonviolent struggle was pretty successful – but more change is needed and we have to stay alert...

From the start, we as KURVE Wustrow tried to support the anti-nuclear movement as well as the peace movement with training in nonviolent action, and continue to do so in recent years for a broader range of issues and conflicts in our society.

KURVE Wustrow also works internationally. Many activists from around the world come to our English-language trainings on nonviolent conflict transformation at our training venue in Germany or take part in our online trainings. In the framework of the Civil Peace Service (Ziviler Friedensdienst) we cooperate with social movements and non-governmental organisations in conflict areas like Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine/Israel, Sudan, Ukraine and the Western Balkans.

We aim for learning from each other on eye-level. With this manual we would like to make experiences gained in the German context available to an international audience. We are aware that these are context-specific and would like to stress that any activists have to carefully analyse their local context and have to check how the tools and methods entailed in this manual might have to be adapted. We and our international partners are curious to receive feedback and suggestions how these tools and methods worked or were adapted. Also, we would like to learn about from your own experiences – feel free to contact us at KURVE Wustrow!

In 2011 we conducted an action training for the first time jointly with the network of Skills for Action. We appreciate very much the great efforts they put into collecting and developing all the training material and are very happy that our cooperation now culminates in this international edition of their Action Training Manual.

FOREWORD BY SKILLS FOR ACTION

Skills for Action is a network of left-wing action trainers in German-speaking countries that is primarily active in and for social movements. We focus on training people to take part in civil disobedience such as blockades.

We believe that it makes sense when activists prepare for actions together during training sessions. Action training improves collective agency and the safety of people taking part in civil disobedience.

We have been collecting materials for training workshops since our founding in 2007. This has involved collecting methods that have been used for action training in various countries since the 1970s, but we have also developed our own completely new approaches. The German version of this handbook was first published in 2013 as the result of a process of working through and summarising our shared experiences. The information and methods presented in this handbook have proven both important and useful in our training work. Moreover, this handbook serves as a foundation for training new trainers and conducting action training sessions.

We have published this handbook in English to make our experiences and the methods that we have gathered available to an international audience; this English version is based on the 2017 German-language edition. The training methods presented here are used in a similar form in various left-wing training structures, such as in Poland, the UK, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic.

Nonetheless, this handbook was developed in German-speaking countries, and mainly reflects the experiences made in Germany. It was developed within a particular context that includes a certain legal framework and experience of how police react during demonstrations. It also grounded in the traditions and debates that have characterised social movements in German-speaking countries, and it is situated within a particular cultural context. Moreover, it is important to remember that German-speaking countries are (currently) democratic and, in principle, based on the rule-of-law – this does not mean that political activists do not face repression in these countries, but that they have a different scope for political activism than people living under authoritarian political systems. However, the more likely that emancipatory political action is to face repression, the more important it is for activists to be well prepared – this is one of the reasons why we publish this handbook in English.

In order to do justice to different contexts, we have replaced information in this international edition (e.g., about laws) that was very context-specific with more general information. We have also tried to explain aspects such as historical events that may be less familiar to an international audience. And we have only included English-language publications in the bibliography.

However, trainers should still check very carefully whether the approaches presented in this handbook make sense within their contexts and whether they should be adapted. This may mean trying out the methods presented here and then use the experience gained to adapt and supplement them. The modules presented in this handbook, therefore, are not instructions on how action training ‘must’ be undertaken; rather they provide suggestions and ideas about how to do so.

Section A of the handbook ‘Background’ provides general, more conceptual considerations about action training and civil disobedience. Section B ‘Training modules’ presents modules that can be combined depending on needs and the group in question. Section C ‘Training schedules’ demonstrates how action training workshops can be structured. Section D ‘Schedules for different training sessions’ describes the methods that Skills for Action have developed for particular

occasions and specific issues.

In our experience as trainers, it is often useful to make certain content available to participants and to enable them to look up further legal and technical information. These materials are compiled in Section E: 'Handouts'. The handouts provided in this concluding section enable people to search for more information and methods, and to contact and network with other individuals and groups involved in action training. Section F 'Further reading and resources' contains a list of online resources useful for action training.

We would be very happy to receive feedback from international trainers about their experiences with this manual and the methods it describes. We have been offering Train the Trainer workshops in English in irregular intervals for several years now. Although they normally take place in Germany, these workshops can also be provided in other countries on request. If you are interested in a training session, please get in touch. You can reach us at skillsforaction@immerda.ch.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the financial support provided by KURVE for the international edition of this handbook, without which it would likely not have seen the light of the day.

A 1 | SKILLS FOR ACTION AND ACTION TRAINING IN GERMANY

Skills for Action and action training in Germany

We are a network of action trainers who are active in left-wing, progressive social movements. We offered dozens of training sessions and workshops for activists to prepare for the blockades in the run-up to and during the 2007 G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany. In recent years we have expanded our circle of trainers. We have conducted action training to prepare student strikes, protests against nuclear transports, climate summits and camps, and to block neo-fascist marches, and many other types of protests.

We offer training for new activists and experienced people, for individuals who want to participate in actions as well as for existing affinity and action groups who want to prepare together. Action training can be part of a larger political campaign, serve as preparation for taking action against the next neo-fascist march, or be undertaken during a conference.

We come from different backgrounds, and our views and ideas are correspondingly diverse. However, we share the view that training sessions should be based on an emancipatory approach. We aim to empower people to think critically about hierarchies and various forms of oppression – and to change them. This also means that we take a clear stance against right-wing tendencies, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, classism and other forms of discrimination and oppression. We deliberately remain unaffiliated with any party, church or other major organisation. From actions in the countryside to those in city-centres – we share an undogmatic approach towards civil disobedience, we like to jump (ideologically as well as literally) over trenches. Our motto is: We take part in actions, but you are the action!

Although we see ourselves as progressive and leftist, we unfortunately also reproduce structures that we intend to overcome, and there is still a lot of work to be done to make our network more diverse and inclusive. Until 2014, mainly cis-male¹ individuals were active in the network. This is something we wanted to change; now a roughly equal proportion of trainers define themselves as male or female. However, we have made less progress in other respects: we still have very few trans/non-binary individuals in our network. Most of us are white and are German native speakers; very few trainers in our network are black, indigenous or people of colour (BIPOC). Most of us do not have a working class background – and we could add a long list of other issues here.

In recent years, we have tried to work as much as possible in pairs so that our workshops are conducted by trainers with different genders. We have also offered training sessions exclusively for individuals who identify as non-cis-male and BIPOC. These are, perhaps, some of the most obvious changes in our work – but perhaps also some of the easiest ones to make.

Dealing with gender dynamics and other hierarchies and forms of oppression within our network is more challenging – and this concerns both our meetings and our training sessions. Some of the

¹ 'Cis' is used to refer to a person whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. Thus, a cis-male is a person who was assigned as male by their family/society at birth and who identifies as male. Conversely, 'trans' describes a person whose gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. Thus, a person who was assigned as female at birth, but identifies differently (e.g. as a male or non-binary), would be 'trans'. Not all non-binary persons describe themselves as being 'trans', however.

questions that we are currently dealing with are: Who is active in our network, and who is missing? Who is visible? Who is heard, and who is not? Who requests training and feels at ease in our workshops and who does not? Our aim is to create a space that is friendly and respectful and in which people, no matter who they are, feel comfortable, and are empowered to take part in actions. Undoubtedly, we often fail – but we keep trying.

A brief history of Skills for Action

In 2007, the G8 states met for a summit in the small German town of Heiligendamm. The BlockG8 campaign was formed to organise protests against the meeting, and it involved a broad alliance of different left-wing groups and organisations in Germany. This was important because it took place after a period of several years, during which different left-wing groups had been hesitant to cooperate with one another.

The alliance against the G8 summit identified the need for training workshops aimed at mobilising people and preparing them for blockades. Yet there was a lack of suitable trainers. Therefore, two trainers who were still active took the initiative and organised a train-the-trainer workshop. The participants of the workshop went on to establish the ‘Trainings for G8’ network and held countless training workshops before the summit – some were attended by over one hundred participants. The two-day blockade of the G8 summit in July 2007 constituted the largest civil disobedience campaign in Germany to date, with around 10,000 participants forming two large blockades. Despite a repressive police strategy, the blockades were successful. The media was full of images of thousands of activists forming ‘fingers’ and walking across fields and passing through police lines. The campaign’s approach was considered to be a clever tactic that left the police with very few options.

After the summit, the Trainings-for-G8 network decided to continue their work under the new name Skills for Action. The trainers wanted to use their existing training approach to offer training to people and groups from various (left-wing) political backgrounds. The approach was (and continues to be) focused on civil disobedience, affinity groups, communication and decision-making in and between affinity groups, passing through police lines, blockades and legal aid for activists.

Since then, the trainers from Skills for Action have usually offered at least two train-the-trainers workshops each year and have conducted numerous training sessions in many different places in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Once people began using civil disobedience to block neo-fascist marches and during protests against major infrastructure projects, such as the Stuttgart 21 train station project, a new demand for training emerged in other political contexts. In more recent years, a lot of training work has taken place within the climate justice movement.

Skills for Action held its first English language Train-the-Trainers workshop in 2016. The workshop was aimed at activists from several European countries who were preparing for the first mass civil disobedience against lignite mining organised by the German Ende Gelände network. In the period that followed, Skills for Action became more involved in networking with other European action training networks. At the same time, our trainers began offering more international (and English-language) training sessions in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic and, to a lesser degree, in other European countries.

Training collectives in Germany since the 1970s and their global influences

Training collectives were formed in Germany in the mid-1970s, following the model used in the USA, where the use of training sessions to prepare for political action dates back to the 1930s. These training sessions were, in turn, significantly influenced by the experiences and approaches developed by the Indian independence movement. Furthermore, the civil rights movement in the US used exercises and roleplay to prepare for dealing with racist situations. For example, Rosa Parks, who refused to vacate her bus seat for a white man in the USA in 1955, thus sparking the Montgomery bus boycott, had taken part in training beforehand. That bus boycott was of central importance to the US-American civil rights movement.

Training methods for nonviolent action developed in the USA also formed the basis of training for nonviolent actions in Germany. In 1977, the first country-wide meeting of training collectives took place in Germany to enable trainers to coordinate and share their experiences. More interest in training developed in the wake of the large actions undertaken by the anti-nuclear movement from the end of the 1970s to the mid-1980s and the peace movement. By 1983, thousands of people involved in the peace movement had taken part in training workshops and there were regional trainer organisations in about 30 towns and cities. At the end of 1983, the USA stationed Pershing 2 missiles in Germany, despite resistance from the peace movement. Consequently, the movement and most of the training collectives collapsed, since there was little demand left for training. However, some of the initiatives that emerged at that time were able to extend their work into other fields and are still active today. These include KURVE Wustrow and the Centre for Nonviolent Action in Baden, Germany.

The massive increase in racist attacks on ‘foreigners’ and the attacks on shelters for asylum seekers throughout Germany in 1992 and 1993 led to a renewed interest in taking action. Trainers who were still active as well as established educational institutions developed concepts and training workshops to deal with situations marked by violence and threatening behaviour; these were also inspired by the US-American civil rights movement and neighbourhood organisations. However, the main focus was on how individuals could deal with violence, not on using political action to address social and structural racism. The increasing interest expressed by various educational institutions and social groups in training courses on communication, creative conflict resolution and dealing with the escalation of violence led training work to become professionalised, but also to become de-politicised.

At the same time, there was a lack of strong protest movements in the 1990s. The collapse of the Eastern bloc and far-reaching neoliberal restructuring led to massive changes to social movements and the left. This led to the emergence of many non-governmental organisations that focused on expertise, lobbying and negotiations instead of grassroots protest and pressure from below. Nonetheless, action training was offered and in demand in some contexts in Germany: Until the mid-2000ies, the peace movement undertook rather limited and individual actions; in addition the more radical environmental movement was active, in particular during the annual transports of nuclear waste. The successful blockade of the World Trade Organization (WTO) conference in Seattle in 1999 led to the development of a worldwide movement committed to protest and direct action. This movement also used action training to prepare for protests and blockades at political summits – the protest in Heiligendamm/Germany is just one example. In more recent years, the Ende Gelände network and other climate justice groups have successfully employed civil disobedience. Actions that have involved several thousand participants blocking coal mines and trains have garnered

widespread media attention and a lot of support. This has popularised civil disobedience again and today it is used more widely, including in protests against evictions of tenants and collective spaces, as well as against the car industry and industrialised agriculture.

Over the course of the past 40 years, actions have changed a lot in Germany; the field in which action training sessions takes place has also expanded. Some of the actions undertaken by the peace movement in Germany at the beginning of the 1980s were purely symbolic actions and the participants did their utmost to convey the most harmonious and peace-loving image possible (the participants even let the police see the plans they were making in advance). In contrast, the aim of the blockades during the G8 summit in Heiligendamm and later actions was to establish effective blockades and to maintain them as long as possible, thus visibly opposing the political 'system'. As such, goals that used to be important, such as encouraging political opponents to change, have become less prominent in action training, and have been replaced with aspects such as creatively preparing for more confrontational mass actions.

Sources and further reading

History of non-violence training in USA: <https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/node/40461>

A 2 | TRAINING: A SPACE FOR EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION AND SELF-EMPOWERMENT

We provide action training because we believe that it is far better that people prepare for civil disobedience before getting directly involved. In addition, we consider our training methods to be relevant for emancipatory political activism and for organising more generally.

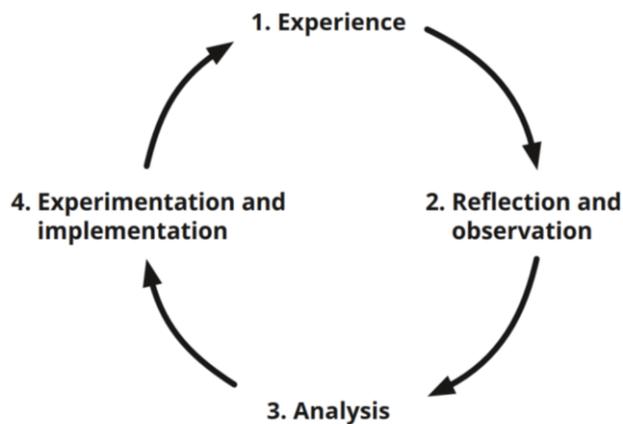
Training sessions are not lectures. Training involves gaining practical experience, trying things out, working things through, and thinking about what you have experienced. By way of contrast, lectures involve one person speaking with the other people listening. Training is not emancipatory per se: the training offered, for example, to police, soldiers and managers does not usually produce emancipatory results. Whether training is emancipatory depends on the appropriate combination of the contents presented, the methods used, the didactical concept underlying the training session, and its purpose.

The training concepts used by Skills for Action have developed out of a long tradition of action training in Germany, which, in turn, has been significantly influenced by the approach used by the US-American civil rights movement. Many left-wing and progressive German educational approaches are inspired by ‘popular education’ or the ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire as well as the ‘direct education approach’ and ‘empowered learning’ used by the US-American training groups Training for Change and Rant Collective. Therefore, these concepts and approaches can provide some guidance about the roots of our training concepts. Our workshops focus on the experience and needs of the participants; we aim to empower people to question, think about and actively change hierarchies and the dynamics of oppression.

Training goals: sharing experiences and experimenting

In our understanding, training sessions are not merely about providing participants with a pre-determined set of information and skills. Rather, training sessions are interactive processes in which everyone’s experiences are brought together. Trainers are facilitators not teachers; and we facilitate, for example, by asking questions. If needed, we provide participants with ways of dealing with different action-related situations and we create a space in which they can try out and consider these methods. The goal is not simply to share opinions, but to bring the knowledge and opinions in the room together and ensure that everyone gains some new insights.

We aim to make training workshops safe spaces in which participants can try out new things, gain new experiences and undertake reflection. Participants should have an opportunity to find out if and how they want to engage in specific types of action. It is a good idea to ensure that training workshops use a transparent and flexible structure that meets the participants’ different needs and requirements.

Figure 1: The experiential learning cycle

As trainers, we try to be aware of the diversity among the participants, whether this concerns gender, ethnicity, class, physical or psychological abilities, or the ways in which people express themselves. Trainers should use language that is accessible to everyone. If necessary, it is worth discussing the hierarchies present in training groups (see also A4 ‘Role as a trainer’). Whatever the case, diversity should be viewed as a useful resource during the training process.

Our training workshops are based on a mix of methods that fit the needs of different types of learners, offer variety, and the possibility to hear, see, feel and act. This includes the use of spoken and visual input, work in small groups, practical exercises and roleplay. People learn differently: whereas some people prefer clear definitions, others are inspired by impressive stories; some people remember visualisations, others think back to the practical exercises they have participated in.

While we set out some methods in this handbook, it is important for trainers to adapt their methods to the respective context and group. Ideally, methods should build on the knowledge and experiences that participants have and should neither be too “boring” nor too challenging. For example, when developing scenarios for roleplay, real-world examples from actions that have taken place in the respective country/region are a good place to start, even though they may have to be simplified. By using real-world examples from your context, you can ensure that the scenarios are realistic and that they enable participants to draw on their own experiences.

In contrast to other settings (e.g. schools or other contexts where participants do not participate voluntarily), the people who attend action training workshops are usually highly motivated. Therefore, the primary task of trainers is to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe and can enjoy themselves. If trainers succeed in creating a safe environment, participants will make positive experiences at the workshop, which may even build their confidence and strengthen their motivation to participate in an action. Linking different parts of training workshops and actions to the rich history of social movements and their successes can counter feelings such as ‘activism is pointless’.

As action trainers, we need to ensure that we remain informed about developments within social movements and continually reconsider which (new) content and methods best fit their needs. In action training workshops, there may be a tension between what is needed for a specific action and more general goals such as self-empowerment, participation, grassroots democracy, autonomy and emancipation. Thus, trainers have to consider whether a short (for example, a two-hour) training

session would actually be useful and at which point workshops turn into events aimed at mobilising people for an action, instead of providing the space and time needed for emancipatory experiences.

Goals of action training

- Increase individual and collective capacities to act
- Strengthen motivation and self-confidence
- Organisational, physical and mental preparation for actions
- Increase capacities for self-empowerment and personal responsibility
- Individual and collective discussions about goals, expectations, hopes, fears, limits concerning actions
- Gain experience and knowledge (of useful techniques and legal issues etc.)
- Strengthen team spirit and group awareness

Sources and further reading

350.org, Training theory: The experiential learning cycle,

<https://trainings.350.org/resource/https://trainings.350.org/resource/the-experiential-learning-cycle//>

A 3 | ROLES OF TRAINERS

Introducing yourself as a trainer to the group is an important part of every training. It entails clarifying which role you see yourself in as a trainer.

At Skills for Action, we mainly view ourselves as facilitators who manage a space in which people can share their experiences. Learning from one another is key to this work. This is why it is crucial during every module to ask people about their experiences, and to enable them to gain experiences through games and exercises and to discuss them in the group.

However, if there are time constraints, none of the exercises seem to fit the group, and none of the participants has any experience (this never really happens), trainers can provide a presentation in front of the group. Normally, you should absolutely avoid adopting the role of a teacher. Having the same person talk and the same people listen throughout an entire training session is not a good idea – training sessions are not lectures.

The trainer's experience with actions, organising, repression etc. should only become part of the training session if appropriate. By sharing our own experiences during training sessions, trainers can demonstrate their competences, and this might be necessary in highly heterogeneous groups or in groups in which someone acts as a “big shot” activist. Demonstrating expertise can also help provide direction to inexperienced groups. However, you should avoid establishing too much of a hierarchy between yourself as a trainer and the participants.

Inexperienced groups, in particular, may really want to know as clearly as possible what is going to happen at a particular action. It is obviously a good idea to share experiences, but it is important that people understand that every action is different. Moreover, training sessions are not and should not become events aimed at providing information about an action! Make sure that the difference between training sessions and informational events is very clear and point people in the right direction if they request information.

It is also important to be conscious about the picture that we draw of a particular action (and whether it is wise to provide any details about a specific action at all). Even the choice of modules can paint a certain picture; therefore, modules should also be chosen carefully. For example, if you include a module about dealing with police dogs or pepper spray, you imply that it is possible or perhaps even likely that police dogs or pepper spray will be used against activists at the action. It is important to realise that it is impossible to completely resolve the dilemma between conveying the fact that we cannot know exactly what will happen during a particular action, and choosing certain scenarios for practical exercises.

One way of addressing a participant's curiosity about a specific action is to ask the action's organisers to give a short input about the action at the beginning or end of a training session; it is also worth making sure that you can point participants to other sources of information about an action such as a website or an informational event.

If a workshop is being held to prepare for a particular action and the trainer will also be attending the action, it might be advisable to mention the different role that the trainer will have at the time.

During actions, trainers are not people's 'helplines', nor are they present to advise activists and affinity groups during tricky situations.

Roles and tasks of trainers

As a trainer during training session you should:

- Introduce yourself, explain your role
- Let people get to know each other and make them feel welcome and comfortable in the group
- Explain what will happen throughout the training session and its overall aims
- Ask the participants what they expect from the training session
- Set some rules and requests or ask the group what they want to agree on for the training session. Some examples include:
 - Confidentiality: it is great if participants share what they have learned with other activists after the training session, but they should not share other participants' personal details or stories
 - No pictures should be taken during the session; no photos on social media
 - Develop an inclusive atmosphere: all questions and levels of experiences are welcome
 - Ensure that everyone takes care of themselves and each other, and are aware of whether the people around them are OK, while still remaining within their limits. It is always possible to step back and e.g. leave roleplay. No-one needs to explain why they are doing so.
- Attend to people's needs, requests, fears and problems appropriately (an approach focused on the participants and their needs)
- Deal with interruptions first: if something is disrupting the training session, deal with it before you continue
- Create a calm and comfortable atmosphere with no interruptions from the outside
- Make everyone feel welcome: be inclusive, especially with people on the 'margins' of the group (i.e. people who differ from the group's 'mainstream' due to their age, gender, skin colour, but also due to their dress-code, experience or ways of expressing themselves)
- Include breaks in your schedule (as well as time to eat and drink)
- Provide the participants with enough time to chat a little during the exercises and roleplay
- Enable, inquire about, pass on and think about experiences (experience-based approach)
- Introduce your own experiences and new information appropriately
- Help people to transfer what they have learned and experienced to the action/their everyday life as an activist
- Encourage participants to try out new things during the exercises and roleplay instead of merely talking or listening to you
- Enable participants to try out the different roles present in roleplays (conduct roleplays several times)
- Draw attention to situations that potentially pose a risk of injury; ask people to be careful; agree on a sign to stop the exercise
- Facilitate, encourage discussion and reflection
- Address all participants; ensure everyone has a chance to speak, encourage participation

- If necessary, assert yourself; interrupt people who talk a lot, but do so in an appropriate manner; keep an eye on the group as a whole
- Motivate people (actions make sense and are fun!) without ignoring possible dangers and negative experiences
- Speak clearly and avoid jargon and “insider language” wherever possible; if you have to use it, explain what you mean
- Actively listen: ask questions, check back, summarise what someone has said
- Mind your own language and wording so as to protect yourself from repression, but also try to find the right words to address the participants
- Be honest, authentic and credible. If you do not know something, cannot answer a question or do not have any experience in a certain area, be open about this. Offer to find out more information and to answer the question/provide the information later or rely on the group to answer such questions
- Ensure competence in methods: know different methods, games, exercises, and when and how to use them
- Protect yourself from liability issues

Related modules and material

A 2 | Training: a space for emancipatory education and self-empowerment

A 5 | Protecting ourselves against repression as trainers

B 1 | Starting a training session

E 6 | Tips for organising action training sessions

Sources and further reading

War Resisters International, Check-list for Facilitating a Training,

<https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/node/5214>

A 4 | CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE – DEALING WITH A COMPLEX TERM

The action by Rosa Parks in the USA is a famous example of civil disobedience. In 1955, Rosa Parks ignored racial segregation regulations while travelling on the bus and was arrested and fined for her actions. Soon after, Martin Luther King and others organised the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which triggered numerous protests in the USA and forced the authorities to desegregate buses and trains. Starting in the 1980s, the term ‘civil disobedience’ became less common but activists began using it once again from the late 1990s onwards. The landless movement in Brazil, which has regularly occupied fallow land on large estates for the last 30 years, is a further example of a campaign of civil disobedience. The movement attempts to have the land that they occupy officially expropriated in order to ensure that the promises made by the Brazilian government to implement land reform are at least partially met. Protests and demonstrations that take place despite being banned are also examples of civil disobedience. The demonstrations and revolutions that occurred in many countries during the Arab Spring from 2010 onwards or the Gezi Park protests in Turkey in 2013 are impressive examples. Strikes can also be a form of civil disobedience – school pupils involved in Fridays for Future have been calling for school strikes for the climate since 2018. Their strikes involve civil disobedience as they refuse to attend school despite the fact that they are legally obliged to do so.

These examples demonstrate that the term ‘civil disobedience’ is used by activists and movements in many different countries. The concept of civil disobedience can be interpreted in quite different ways, however. This became apparent, for example, in the context of the BlockG8 campaign at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007, where Skills for Action was formed.

A ‘classical’ understanding of civil disobedience, which is based on the views of theorists such as Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, is often present in public debates (e.g. in the media, research, and on websites such as Wikipedia). In this view, civil disobedience entails a nonviolent approach in which actions are usually publicly announced, legitimised in moral-ethical terms, and appeal to a general sense of justice. This approach often goes hand in hand with attempts to de-escalate particular situations, such as by communicating with the police, and viewing opponents, not as enemies, but as potential future allies. Therefore, illegal actions are only taken once all other options have failed. The people involved in civil disobedience take public responsibility for their actions and also bear their (legal) consequences. Their actions address a specific injustice and are not aimed at fundamentally questioning ‘the system’.

Conversely, some activists criticise the term civil disobedience because they feel that it distracts from structural violence, such as the destructive power of corporations, or social structures such as racism and patriarchy. They are also concerned that by referring to their own actions as ‘nonviolent’, other activists open up a division between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ activists, and that this can be used to criminalise the ‘bad’ activists. Activists who subscribe to this view of civil disobedience might choose to mask their faces when taking part in actions, might try to avoid arrest or at least have no intention of getting arrested; they might push back against the police in order to break through police lines, or deliberately cause damage to objects. In doing so, they do no longer abide by the rulebook of a liberal-democratic society and, instead, aim for a different society altogether.

In many cases, people with vastly different views, political cultures and backgrounds are involved in preparing (larger) actions, action training or participate in the actions themselves. In Germany, agreeing on an ‘action consensus’ has proven to be a good way of forging cooperation among people with different ideas. An action consensus was first used in Germany during the blockades of the G8

summit in 2007. Action consensuses are used to define the aim of an action, its form ('What are we going to do?') and what is to take place during the action ('How are we going to do it?'). In terms of the latter, statements such as 'We will not escalate the situation' are employed, instead of the term 'nonviolent', which was commonly used in Germany in the 1970s. Use of this wording shows that people from different (left-wing) political backgrounds are interested in cooperating, and that they intend to bridge their differences on strategy and put aside debates for the sake of working together.

Even when an action consensus has been agreed upon, activists may still need to discuss and decide how to act in specific situations, since action consensuses may be formulated vaguely. If a collectively-planned action is to work, people need to agree on the limits of acceptable behaviour. In principle, an action consensuses involve agreeing 'not to do absolutely anything and everything' in a given situation. Only through commitment, transparency, accountability as well as successes at the political level can the trust grow that is needed to enable cooperation between people across the (left-wing) political spectrum.

Skills for Action trainers have always seen it as their task to enable discussions about different understandings of civil disobedience during training sessions; participants might have divergent views and these may become clear when different groups and individuals prepare actions together. The aim is not to make everyone accept a particular 'universal' definition of civil disobedience; rather, trainers can emphasise the grey areas and contradictions in each definition. This encourages discussion about issues such as 'What does 'nonviolent' actually mean?', 'Where does it start?' and 'Where does it end?'. When people realise that supposedly 'obvious' definitions amount to little more than specific individual positions, they can think about different views and speak about their actions and experiences in much more detail. Doing so also reflects the aim of acting collectively, responsibly and transparently during actions. Of course, this is just as much true of actions that do not use the term 'civil disobedience' but that use an action consensus and are inspired by 'civil disobedience'.

Table 1: Stages of escalation in nonviolent campaigns

Stage	Subversive action	Constructive action
Aim		Demonstrate alternatives to the system as a whole or parts of the system
1st stage of escalation	Protest (leaflets, demonstrations, etc.)	Functional demonstration (teach-ins, sociodrama, scientific reports)
2nd stage of escalation	Legal non-cooperation (boycotts, strikes, slow-downs, emigration, etc.)	Legal innovative activities (taking on new social roles, creating independent media, education facilities, alternative companies, democratic forms of organisation etc.)
3rd stage of escalation	Civil disobedience (openly and nonviolently disregarding laws), in the form of either civil disobedience aimed	Civil usurpation (occupying land or buildings, establishing

	at reform or revolution	institutions of self-government, etc.)
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Adapted from Theodor Ebert: 'Gewaltfreier Aufstand. Alternative zum Bürgerkrieg' (1970)

Related modules and material

B 4 | Civil disobedience

Sources and further reading

War Resisters International, <https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en> (database including examples of nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience in many countries)

A 5 | PROTECTING OURSELVES AGAINST REPRESSION AS TRAINERS

In this section, we describe our experience with the forms of repression that have occurred as a result of training work and against trainers. Skills for Action mainly offers training in German-speaking countries and thus most of our experiences stem from these countries. The situation may be considerably different in other countries. Nonetheless, we would like to share our experiences as they may prove useful to other people. It is important to consider whether there is a risk of repression in your particular context and, if so, what this might entail. Nevertheless, this should not prevent you from engaging in training, but ensure that you are better prepared to deal with repression if it occurs.

Training for civil disobedience (including blockades) is legal in German-speaking countries. It may even be protected by the legal rights to freedom of speech and assembly. Nonetheless, the authorities have regularly taken action against training workshops. In order to help you react appropriately in such cases and to make such repression more difficult in the future, the following provides some examples of the various forms of repression that might be used against training sessions.

Repression can be directed at training workshops, the people who organise them or the trainers themselves. We are not aware of cases where trainers have been directly targeted by the authorities. However, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that the authorities might do so in the future, particularly because they have taken various forms of action against training workshops and the people who organise them in the past.

From a legal point of view, one pitfall for trainers in Germany is the ban on ‘incitement to commit criminal acts’ in the Criminal Code. Other countries may also have relevant provisions in place, and, as a trainer, you should be aware of them.

There can be a certain tension between the legitimate need for trainers to protect themselves, such as against charges of incitement, and the character of training sessions, which are often organised to prepare people and to mobilise for specific events. In contexts in which trainers might be at risk of repression (e.g. in the form of criminal charges against them), trainers can minimise the hazards they face by adapting their behaviour. This includes avoiding statements that could be interpreted as encouraging participants to engage in illegal acts. However, doing so might not always be in line with participants’ expectations and the purpose of training sessions. To avoid using terms that could be employed to build a criminal case, it may be helpful for trainers to think about the vocabulary they use and, if necessary, to practice using different terms aloud beforehand. Examples include replacing terms such as ‘cops’ with ‘police officers’ (as ‘cops’ or other terms such as ‘pigs’ could be construed as insulting to police officers) or saying ‘moving through or around obstacles such as police lines’ instead of ‘breaking through police lines’.

In the past, people who have organised training sessions in Germany have faced the following forms of threats/ harassment/legal consequences:

- A town/university reacted to media reports about training sessions by announcing that they would no longer provide rooms to the organisers and/or by cancelling the rooms that they had promised shortly before training sessions were to take place.
- A town threatened to revoke the non-profit status (or to withdraw public funding from) an

organisation that had arranged a training session.

- A camp (that was officially registered as a political rally) was could only take place on the condition, imposed by the authorities, that it not be used to plan, prepare or carry out any misdemeanours or criminal offences. During negotiations, the police and authorities made explicit reference to the planned action training sessions; the police explained that they would evict the camp if activists used it to practice moving through police lines.
- A public authority announced that an otherwise legal political rally would be banned because action training was to be provided at the rally. The authorities argued that training potentially constituted or could lead to an administrative offence or criminal act being committed.

Publicly announced training events and those that are open to the public are more likely to be subject to repression; therefore, it may be better to avoid announcing them altogether or at least referring to them differently in some situations.

As trainers, you should think about how you will deal with potential repression. When Skills for Action trainers face repression, we prefer to deal with such situations offensively, through resorting to the concept of civil disobedience to underline the legitimacy of the planned actions and the training sessions that are being held to prepare for them. In other words, training sessions can become part of an action themselves and repression can also be used to gain media coverage. However, approaches can differ and it may be worth adopting a more pragmatic approach and considering whether it would be better to postpone or modify a planned training session.

A 6 | DEALING WITH MEDIA COVERAGE OF TRAINING SESSIONS

If training sessions are to take place as intended, as far as possible, they should be safer spaces in which participants can make their own experiences without feeling as if they are under observation (see also section A2). Everyone acts differently when the media is present, and people may also be concerned about the repression that could result from reports published in the media.

In our experience, the following provides a useful approach to dealing with media requests in the context of training sessions:

- Instead of opening up prolonged discussions about whether it is important that training sessions gain media coverage, trainers can simply state that journalists are not allowed to attend ‘normal’ training sessions. This approach is not directed against journalists but rather at maintaining the safety of the space.
- Trainers (or organisers of training workshops) can communicate to journalists that watching a staged training workshop provides them with much better pictures and reports than they would otherwise receive, and that they will be invited to watch a roleplay that is usually used during the training. This also saves the journalists time because they no longer need to attend the whole training workshop. Journalists can also be invited to specific training sessions for media representatives (see below).
- During trainings for media representatives, trainers can emphasise their role as facilitators as well as the self-organised nature of the session, which means leaving the decision about the participation of media representatives to the participants themselves. Extended discussions about this topic should be avoided, though.

During a session, trainers can suggest the following approach: if someone feels uncomfortable or has a problem with journalists being present, no journalists will be allowed to attend. In order to ensure that this issue can be discussed properly and quickly, ask journalists beforehand to describe exactly what they have in mind or want to report about (e.g. whether and when photos/footage/videos will be taken), so that the participants understand exactly what is intended. It is important to remind the participants that the press will not always report positively about them, and that even journalists who appear to be friendly and well-meaning may still paint the participants in an unfavourable light, use photographs to do so, and write unpleasant commentaries about them. In our experience, at least one participant is usually against having journalists present during a training session; but this may be different in other contexts.

Training sessions for journalists

In many cases, media reports about a campaign and/or upcoming action are essential to mobilising support. We have used the following options successfully to guarantee that training sessions can take place in a safe space, while still providing journalists with useful material.

- **Staged training sessions:** If a training group does not want journalists to be present, trainers can ask whether any of the participants would be willing to provide a roleplay demonstration in front of journalists. This could take place during a break or after a normal training session. In most cases, people agree to take part in a roleplay in which ‘activists are being carried away by police’, as this provides the best photo opportunities. Staged

trainings not only provide journalists with the images that they want, but also reduce the likelihood of journalists turning up to normal training sessions.

- **Training sessions for journalists:** Training sessions can also be offered directly to journalists – either together with ‘normal’ participants (after this has been discussed and agreed upon with the participants), or just for journalists.

If you are planning a training session specifically for journalists or want to invite them to certain parts of a training session, think about the resulting images and the message that you intend to convey. Journalists are often interested in photos that demonstrate a lot of action. They are usually less interested in affinity group meetings and more interested in situations where people are moving through police lines. If you act out both situations, they are more likely to use the photos or film of the latter. Images of activists moving through police lines may look chaotic and even violent; the playful atmosphere that was present in the training session may no longer be clear from the pictures. As such, demonstrating situations in which ‘activists’ are being carried away by the ‘police’ may be a better choice.

B 1 | STARTING A TRAINING SESSION

At the beginning of a training session, trainers should make it clear that the session should be a space that is as safe as possible, and that enables participants to act out forms of behaviour, gain experience, and speak about their expectations, intentions, fears and needs regarding planned actions or actions in general. The participants should also be allowed to express their emotions and to do so in a compassionate, non-discriminatory atmosphere.

The participants should feel encouraged to ask questions if they have not understood something or if there is something that they would like to know more about – there are no stupid questions.

Trainers should point out that it is up to the participants to decide what they want to say about themselves (or about actions that they have attended or plan to attend) during the introduction round and the training session.

There may be participants who:

- have physical or health restrictions
- made bad experiences during physical education at school
- do not wish to be touched by others
- have experienced traumatic events

or who have other reasons that affect the way in which they participate.

Therefore, it is important to explain at the beginning that the training includes exercises and roleplay. If participants do not wish to participate (for whatever reason) in an exercise or roleplay, if they are uncomfortable in a particular situation, if they wish to stop or do not want to be touched, then the participants can and should indicate this before or during the exercises or roleplays. Trainers should make clear to participants that it is always possible to not participate in a specific exercise or roleplay; participants should never be forced to take part in exercises or roleplay.

While performing the games and exercises, the participants should be careful, mindful and considerate; this also helps to avoid injuries.

Additionally, a clear and unambiguous stop signal should be agreed upon beforehand, which can be used to stop an exercise or game immediately (for example, if someone experiences pain during the “eviction” of a blockade). Shouting “stop, stop, stop!” can serve as a clear signal. In addition, it has proven advantageous for trainers to use a whistle as a stop signal during training sessions with over 30 participants.

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

Trainers may also wish to explain that participants should not take photos of each other without prior consent.

Sources and further reading

350.org, How to Build Safety in a Group,

<https://trainings.350.org/resource/how-to-build-safety-in-a-group/>

B 2 | GAMES & CO

Introduction

Warm-ups, energisers and games form an important part of training sessions. They encourage participants to get to know each other in ways that are not usually possible during conversations and they help establish a good group atmosphere. It is very important to ensure that participants feel comfortable as this also improves participation. Sitting and talking, or listening to other people for long periods, can be quite tiring, and energisers can be used to keep everyone alert. It is crucial to plan enough time for these activities. When choosing a particular activity, trainer should make sure that the participants have the physical abilities to participate and that the activity is also culturally and socially appropriate in the respective setting. Whether the participants will feel comfortable conducting activities involving physical contact is likely to depend, among other factors, on how well they know each other.

The following sets out a number of games that are useful for training, but that can also be used by activists during actions. These games are very helpful when people start getting bored or cold during blockades.

It is worth asking the participants to suggest an energiser or game, and to facilitate the activity. This actively involves the group in the training session, and hands over facilitation for a short period to a participant.

Exercises/games that can be used at the beginning of training sessions and as warm-ups (e.g., after a break)

Three-legged race

Duration: 10 – 15 minutes, including evaluation

Number of participants: at least 5; up to 50

Large space needed (move chairs etc. to one side)

Game

This game can be played with one, or ideally two, groups at the same time. Both groups face each other, standing between 10 and 15 meters apart, with the trainer in the middle. The members of each group stand next to each other, with their feet/ankles touching those of the person next to them. Very large groups can be divided into smaller groups. The maximum group size is about 10 people.

The aim is to reach the middle of the room where the trainer is standing as quickly as possible. However, the participants are only allowed to move if their ankles are touching those of the person next to them. If this is not the case, the entire group has to go back and start again. The trainer makes sure that people's ankles are touching and sends the groups back to the start if needed.

A story can be used to explain the game and demonstrate its relation to blockades: 'Imagine you are in one of two groups standing on a street leading to a crossroads. Some Nazis are approaching from the left, and you intend to block their path. The police are coming from the right and they aim to stop you. You need to get to the crossroads as quickly as possible before the police and the Nazis do. This prevents the game from turning into a competition between the two groups, as when either

group arrives in the middle, the crossroads has been blocked and both groups have won!

De-briefing

Once the game has finished, the trainers gather the participants into a circle and ask them to briefly describe how they felt, what they think about their group, and what they did as a group. Ask them how the game might be linked to actions and action training. Some common issues that the participants may raise include: communication, cooperation, taking care of and supporting each other, taking decisions, and acting as part of an affinity group. The trainer can add any aspects that have been forgotten, such as accepting people's mistakes (i.e., accepting the fact that mistakes occur, and the consequences – in this case, having to start again). The trainer can also point out that these issues are exactly what the training session is about.

If you play the game at the beginning of a meeting, there is no need for a detailed evaluation (not all of the participants need to speak); if the game is used more intensively with an existing group, you can speak about the roles that different people have within the group, hierarchies etc. in more depth.

Objectives

- Enhance and train communication skills
- Raise awareness about central aspects of cooperating within a group (being considerate, supporting each other, joint coordination)
- Preliminary exercise on decision-making

Mass uprising

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: at least 2 (however, if there are only 2 participants, call the exercise 'uprising').

Game

Two people sit on the floor back-to-back and attempt to stand up without putting their hands or arms on the floor. After this, the entire group sits on the floor in two lines back-to-back. People who are sitting next to each other link arms and everyone tries to get up together. There is no need for an evaluation at the end of this game as it is only aimed at motivating the participants.

Objectives

- Encourage and motivate the participants
- Raise awareness of and strengthen coordination within the group

Buddy and cop

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: between 5 and 50

Large space needed, move aside any chairs or other objects to ensure that there is enough space

Game

The participants stand in a circle. Everyone chooses one person as their ‘buddy’ and another as their ‘cop’. The participants need to try to get between their buddy and their cop. After the trainer has explained the game, the participants need to quickly and silently (i.e., without revealing their choices to anyone) choose their buddies and cops and remember them. The game starts on a signal provided by the trainer. The game can be ended when the chaos has subsided and an instable equilibrium has been reached – or if it seems that the chaos is never going to subside.

De-briefing

As long as the main aim of this activity is to motivate the participants, there is no need for a de-briefing. If a de-briefing is needed, trainers can ask the participants how they felt during the game and why the game might be linked to actions (e.g., keeping an overview in complex, fast-moving situations; taking care of members of your affinity group).

Objectives

- Provide motivation using a fast-moving game
- Strengthen people’s abilities to gain an overview during chaotic situations

Monkeys and storks

Duration: 5 - 10 minutes

Number of participants: between 12 and 50

A short movement game that is best played outdoors on grass that is good as a warm-up.

Game

Everyone in the group is asked to choose whether they want to be a monkey or a stork. They should not tell anyone what they want to be. Monkeys scratch under their armpits and run across the field with their legs apart. Storks walk around with their legs stretched out and their arms formed into a beak. The monkeys and storks each belong to different teams. Each team has to try to catch members of the other team while walking in the manner described above. If someone gets caught, they transform into one of the other animals and act accordingly.

De-briefing

Not needed

Objectives

Motivation; fun

Rock – paper – scissors

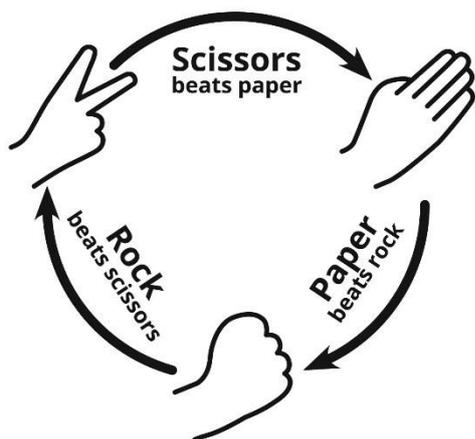
Duration: 5 - 10 minutes

Number of participants: between 12 and 50

Game

Trainers encourage the participants to walk around the room. As soon as they come into contact with someone else, they should play 'Rock – paper – scissors'.

The participants count together from one to three, and then form one of three shapes with their outstretched hand: a 'rock' (a closed fist), 'paper' (a flat hand), or a pair of 'scissors' (a fist with the index finger and middle finger extended, forming a V). 'Scissors' is identical to the two-fingered V sign (indicating 'victory' or 'peace') except that it is held horizontally instead of upright in the air.



Rock beats scissors ('rock crushes or blunts scissors'), but loses to paper ('paper covers rock'); paper loses to scissors ('scissors cuts paper'). If both players choose the same shape, they replay the game immediately.

The loser becomes the winner's 'fan': e.g. if Player A wins, Player B becomes Player A's fan. Player A now continues looking for new opponents and the 'fan' (Player B) follows Player A wherever they go. When A starts playing against a new opponent (Player C), the fan supports A by repeatedly calling out A's name, and, for example, clapping their hands. If Player C already has a fan (Player D), this person cheers on Player C. Once this round has been completed, everyone joins

the new winner. So, if Player C beats Player A, Player C now has three fans: A, B, and D who all walk behind Player C in a row. The groups continue getting bigger until there is a final game, and one winner.

De-briefing

Not needed

Objectives

- Motivation; fun
- Cheering on fellow activists creates a good atmosphere

Methods for getting to know each other

The methods for getting to know each other set out here are not intended to place people under any form of pressure. Therefore, no methods are described that, for example, expect people to remember everyone else's name as fast as possible.

Traditional round

Participants state the name they want to be called during the training session, pronoun, where they live, background, etc.

A more creative round: participants state their name, favourite food and their 'secret power' –

something that they are able to do that the group might not expect.

Running around the room

Everyone runs slowly around the room in no particular order. Whenever two participants come face to face, they stop and shake hands or feet. They state their name but do not say anything else. They make eye contact and shake hands/feet. The group continues doing this until everyone has met. As an alternative, the game can be restricted to three meet-ups. Afterwards, brief conversations take place: Who are you? Why are you here? What are your expectations? In addition to either of the two variations, you can also ask the participants to make name tags for themselves.

Sociometry/Positioning in space

During a sociometry exercise, the participants respond to questions asked by the facilitator by placing themselves in a space in the room. The trainer assigns different answers to different corners of the room. It is also possible to create a map, use a line-up, or opposing poles (ranging from ‘a lot’ to ‘not very much’ or from ‘yes’ to ‘no’). The participants position themselves according to their responses. People can also position themselves on two axes at the same time (e.g., first axis: a lot of experience with affinity groups (AGs)/not much experience with AGs; second axis: good experiences with AGs/bad experiences with AGs).

After each question, the trainer briefly asks the participants why they are standing in a particular location. It is only possible to enable some participants to speak when playing this game with larger groups. As a trainer, try to avoid always talking to the same participants, and perhaps avoid those who generally speak a lot anyway.

Examples of sociometry used to help participants get to know each other

- ‘Where do you live?’ – participants position themselves on a map according to the place where they live (North – South – East – West). Once all participants are standing on the map, have them briefly name the town in which they live (if several people come from the same town, they can state which neighbourhood they live in).
- Activities, group affiliations, interests in certain topics etc. are assigned to specific corners of the room: e.g., everyone who goes to school in the first corner, everyone who studies at university in the second one, everyone who works or is unemployed in a third one. It is not necessary to discuss the details.
- On special occasions, it can also be interesting to ask about hobbies or professions. For example, during training sessions for an anti-GMO action it can be interesting to find out which people have a background in agriculture/horticulture/plants and which do not. Those with some background in these fields can then briefly explain what they do. In this case, this would highlight people’s motivation and the ways they are affected by GMOs.
- ‘How much experience with demonstrations do you have?’ One pole is ‘none at all’, the other one is ‘lots’.
- ‘Blockade experience’, ‘afraid of the police’, ‘afraid of blockades’, ‘want to do a blockade’ – ask these questions after having assigned a place in the room for ‘none’ – ‘a bit’ – ‘a lot’.

The participants stand in a circle. A statement is made and everyone who the statement applies to steps into the circle, e.g., 'I've participated in a training session before', 'I've participated in a sit-in'. You can also ask the people who stepped into the circle for more details.

Representing expectations in a circle

Everyone stands in a circle. Trainer invite anyone with an expectation about the training session to step into the middle and explain it briefly. The other participants step into the middle of the circle if they share the expectation, half-way into the circle if they partly share the expectation, or stay where they are if they do not share it at all.

Representing concerns in a circle

Trainer invite anyone with a particular concern about the training session (or an upcoming action) to step into the middle of the circle and state what it is. The other participants position themselves accordingly (see representing expectations in a circle).

Methods for different occasions

Whisper groups

This method lasts no more than 5 minutes and involves the participants talking to each other in groups of two or three. It is a useful way of motivating the participants again after a longer period of input, as it provides them with an opportunity to share their thoughts and develop their ideas. Groups can be formed by having the participants talking to the people sitting next to them, or by asking them to form groups themselves (of no more than three people!). It is also possible for people who do not know each other to talk to each other and to get to know each other.

Whisper groups can provide a brief feedback to the larger group. However, there is no actual need for feedback, as the discussions undertaken by the whisper groups can also result in brain-storming on an issue together with the whole group. Whisper groups can be used to develop ideas for conflict resolution and to resolve dead-ends as they help people to make decisions about how to continue the group process.

Hassle line

This method was originally used in non-violence training to portray a conflict between two people facing one another.

Method

The entire group forms two lines that face each other. Each line is assigned a different role. The two people facing each other work together. It is also possible to form a third group/line that observes the others. The trainer explains the roles/tasks and provides people with time to think about how to play their roles.

The roleplay then takes place, with the trainer usually pausing it after around 1 to 3 minutes. After this, roles are swapped with one line taking a step to the right or left (the person at the end of the

line moves to the other end) so that everyone is now facing someone else. The exercise can be conducted using different topics and conflicts, and with roles such as one activist remaining within the action consensus/another who does not; one blockader/one employee wishing to enter the building being blockaded (or a passer-by); one journalist/one activist.

De-briefing

The de-briefing takes place in a circle. Various questions can be asked: What was said/done? What were the reactions like? What was the body language like? What did people try to do? What was the resulting dynamic like? Which ways of acting were the most useful? Did people share similar experiences? What can we conclude from this?

Methods for evaluating and concluding a training

I'm going to pack my bag for the action and take...

One way of summarising what should be taken to an action is to play a memory game that is well-known in Germany: 'I'm going to pack my bag and take....'. However, this game should not be played with the aim of memorising everything that people intend to take with them, but as part of a relaxed round where everyone can mention something that they consider important. The difference here is that there is no need to repeat what other people have said. People might list:

- My affinity group
- A first aid kit
- Water-proof clothing
- Strong shoes
- Playing cards
-

I'm going to take [...] with me from the training session

Do a round with the participants on what new, useful or special insights and experiences they will be taking home from the training session; things that will be useful for upcoming actions, everyday life, their group etc.

Traditional feedback round

Everyone provides brief feedback about the session and focuses on the following aspects: What did I like in particular? What did I not like so much? Which proposals or ideas do I have for doing things differently? What do I think should have been covered?

Sociometry for feedback

Trainer encourage the participants to step into the middle of a circle and say something about the training session. Participants who fully agree with the statement also step into the middle of the circle. Those who do not remain where they are, and others position themselves relative to how much they agree. People can be asked for details as to why they agree/disagree.

Objectives:

- Gain an overview of the mood within the group
- A quick method of evaluation

Collective pats on the shoulder

The participants and the trainer stand next to each other in a circle; everyone turns a quarter to the right so that they are now standing behind each other. Everyone then puts their right hand on the left shoulder of the person in front of them and their left hand on their own right shoulder. The group then gives each other appreciative, supportive pats on the shoulder. This can be accompanied by praise such as 'well done', or 'I hope the action goes well'.

Sources and further reading

Training for Change, Games,

https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/games/

Training for Change, Closing circles,

https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/closing-circles/

War Resisters International, Parallel lines (also known as 'hassle lines'),

<https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/resources/2017/parallel-lines-also-known-hassle-lines>

B 3 | THE AIMS OF ACTIONS

Introduction

This module is intended to encourage people to think about their motivations, reasons, aims and hopes for participating in a specific action or in actions in general. The module also enables participants to make their aims clear and to understand those of other participants.

As participants sometimes have (very) different motivations, reasons, aims and hopes, sharing their views can provide other people with new arguments and insights. If there is enough time, discussions such as these can even develop into debates about political tactics and strategies.

At the same time, talking about aims and reasons for participating can encourage people to take part in an action and in actions in general, and provide them with an opportunity to practice speaking about what they want to achieve. This can be useful during mobilisation or even during actions when talking to the press, passers-by, etc.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: at least 15 minutes, depending on the method and the size of the group

Number of participants: possible with a large group

Material: pens, posters and cards; but materials are not really necessary

Different questions and methods can be used or combined depending on the amount of time available.

Process and methods

Questions to work with include:

- ‘Why do I intend to take part in the upcoming action (blockading a Nazi demonstration or a Castor transport, squatting, etc.)?’
- ‘What do I hope the action will achieve?’ ‘What has to happen for me to consider the action a success?’
- If a workshop is not preparing a group for a specific action: ‘Why am I involved in political action?’ and ‘What do I hope to achieve with political action?’ or ‘What was the last action that I took part in, and what were my reasons for doing so?’

Methods

a) The group stands in a circle. Each participant can then move to the centre of the circle and provide a reason why they intend to participate in the action. The other participants can then move closer to the middle if they share this reason; or remain where they are if they do not. They can also position themselves in the circle in accordance with how much they agree with what has been said. Trainers can briefly ask the participants why they are standing in a particular position as this ensures that other views are also heard (duration: short).

b) Buzz groups: groups of 2 participants speak for up to 5 minutes about a selected question. The groups should consist of participants who do not know each other (or who do not know each other

well). Follow up with brief reports to the whole group (duration: medium).

c) Work in small groups on a specific question or several questions. The groups should write down the results and then report to the whole group (duration: long).

B 4 | CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Introduction

This module prepares participants for civil disobedience (CD), whether or not a particular action uses the term itself. The aim is to enable the participants to become aware of their own criteria, reasons, motivations and justifications for CD. At the same time, the module facilitates an exchange about different understandings of CD and helps them understand that there is no universally accepted definition or form of CD.

If the training session takes place before a specific action, it is important to ensure that the participants understand the need to agree on what can and cannot be done at a particular action, and of doing so before the action takes place. Therefore, this module stresses the need for an action consensus. An action consensus is a document agreed upon and published before an action takes place stating what activists can and cannot do during an action.

This is a short module. If more time is available and the participants agree, it can be extended to include work in small groups or a longer input by the trainer.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: 30 mins

Number of participants: possible with a large group

Material: posters and pens, example of an action consensus (see box below)

Process and methods

Time	Objective	Method	Material
10 mins	Understand the term civil disobedience and emphasise the existence of different understandings of CD	Brainstorming with all of the participants (trainers write answers on a poster): what does CD mean to you? Can you provide any examples of CD? How can CD be defined?	Poster and pen See box below for people connected with CD, and examples
5 mins	Find areas of agreement/disagreement	Ask participants which aspects are essential to CD. Circle/underline the aspects on a poster.	Poster and pen
10 mins	Gain a deeper understanding of different positions	Short discussion with participants about different views and ideas regarding CD. Trainer should briefly explain the 'classic' understanding of CD, and	Optional: quotes about CD from various authors (copies or written on poster), see quotes below

		what has changed	
5 mins	Understand the action consensus	If the training session is to prepare for a specific action that uses an action consensus, introduce the action consensus (otherwise use the example below). Explain the benefits of an action consensus	Ideally, copies of the action consensus

Additional options (if more time is available)

- Ask participants to discuss certain aspects of CD in small groups and to report back instead of doing everything together (10 minutes for discussion in small groups, time for reporting back depends on overall group size – should not be more than 3 minutes per small group).
- Trainers provide examples of previous actions and ask participants to position themselves in the room depending on whether they view the action as CD. The trainers then ask participants to explain their views (10 minutes).

Content

What is CD and how and why is it used?

- Conscious, deliberate violation of/ignoring laws
- Escalating a conflict or making it public; gaining support
- Means of last resort after all legal means have failed vs legal means have been used (protest, public campaigns) before, but not necessarily been exhausted
- Justified by resorting to legitimate cause; recognised by a constitution or international law vs moral/ethical justification vs radical-democratic justification (the latter does not refer to a state or constitution)
- Not for private reasons and beliefs or for reasons of individual self-interest
- Non-violent (no violence against people or objects) vs nonviolent against people, but includes damage to property – trainers could point out that the debate about violence/non-violence can be complicated and that some groups entirely avoid the terms in their action consensus
- Publicly announced vs prepared and implemented secretly, but with public responsibility taken afterwards
- Only certain actions are permitted; announced beforehand
- Willingness to deal with the consequences (juridical, financial, criminal sanctions, compensation for those affected by an action etc.) vs possible (partial) attempts to avoid the consequences
- Recognition of the opponents (e.g., police) as human beings (rather than seeing them merely as performing a certain function)
- Symbolic vs direct action

- Distinction between legal vs illegal and legitimate vs illegitimate
- Individual protests vs mass actions

Specific forms/examples of CD

There are numerous well-known and lesser-known actions that constitute CD. You can provide a selection of historical, current, international and regional examples. The list that follows sets out a number of suggestions. Trainers should ideally be able to provide participants with a few details/answer questions about these examples:

- Rallies/demonstrations that have been banned
- Sit-ins
- People locking themselves onto something
- Squatting (streets, trees, houses, squares, material)
- Hiding or housing people despite it being banned (e.g., church congregations hosting refugees in their church or people hiding war resisters)
- Pulling up train tracks to stop nuclear waste transports
- Destruction of genetically modified organisms; destruction of military material by conscientious objectors
- Women publicly stating that they have had an abortion (when illegal); boycotting a census
- Refugees refusing to adhere to a legal obligation to remain in a certain area
- Strikes by workers or students
- Women driving in a country where it is illegal and publicising their actions via social media
- A captain of a ship rescuing refugees who docks at a port despite a ban on doing so to enable the refugees to disembark and apply for asylum or another legal status (Italy)
- Women refusing to comply with an obligation to wear a headscarf (headscarf boycott)

Quotes about civil disobedience

The following box contains quotes about CD that trainers can use to raise awareness about the different understandings of CD. It can be helpful if trainers know a bit of background about each of the authors. Other people with prominent connections to CD include Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi and Rosa Parks.

Box 1: Quotes about civil disobedience

‘Civil disobedience is a public, non-violent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of government.’ *John Rawls*

‘Change from below, the formulation of demands from the populace to end unacceptable injustice, supported by direct action, has played a far larger part in shaping British democracy than most constitutional lawyers, political commentators, historians or statesmen have ever cared to admit. Direct action in a democratic society is fundamentally an educational exercise.’ *Tony Benn*

‘Colourful demonstrations and weekend marches are vital but alone are not powerful enough to stop wars. Wars will be stopped only when soldiers refuse to fight, when workers refuse to load weapons onto ships and aircraft, when people boycott the economic outposts of Empire that are strung across the globe.’ *Arundhati Roy*

‘The purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.’ *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

‘An opposition that is not directed against a specific form of government or certain conditions within society, but against a society’s system as a whole, cannot restrict itself to the permitted. [...] Direct action is a means of democratization of change, albeit within the established system.’ *Herbert Marcuse*

Action consensus

An action consensus serves to make it easier for people to participate in an action because participants know what to expect and that the action will be implemented in a manner that they are comfortable with. An action consensus can also be useful for providing information about an action to a wider audience.

Example of an action consensus

These are the core elements of an action consensus used by Dresden Nazifrei, a group that aimed to block a march by neo-fascists in the German city of Dresden. The action consensus stated:

- We will use civil disobedience against the neo-fascist demonstration.
- We will not be the source of escalation.
- Our blockades are formed by people (as opposed to e.g., barricades).
- We support everyone who shares our goal of stopping the neo-fascist demonstration

Related modules and material

A4 | Civil disobedience – dealing with a complex term

B 5 | AFFINITY GROUPS

Introduction

People who take part in training sessions immediately before an action (e.g. at a camp) do not always belong to an affinity group (AG). In such situations, it can be helpful to stress that no-one has to join an AG to take part in the training session. It is also worth explaining that AGs that are set up during training sessions are for training purposes only (although activists who have already formed an AG and are attending the workshop together can participate in roleplay as part of their AG). If the participants would like to join an AG, a separate workshop can be offered for them to do so.

Duration, number of participants, and materials

Duration: 20 minutes

Number of participants: possible with a large group

Material: pens and two posters

Process and methods

Time	Objective	Method	Material
10 mins	Understand what AGs are, and why they are used	Ask the participants to explain what AGs are, and why they are used; note the answers to the second question on a poster.	Poster and pen
10 mins	Understand how AGs are organised	Ask the participants what the members of an AG should do before and after an action; note the answers on a poster.	Poster and pen

Additional options (if you have time):

- Ask participants to work on either of the two questions in smaller groups and to provide a presentation of their results (small group work for 5 to 10 minutes; presentation: maximum 3 minutes per group).
- Ask the participants to form a fictive affinity group and discuss points that you have identified in response to Question 2 (What are AGs used for?), such as their experience or concerns about a specific action. Ask them to set out the results of their discussion (10 minutes in affinity groups; 5 minutes for evaluation).

This handbook also includes a checklist for affinity groups that can be provided to the participants (see E 1 | Checklist for affinity groups); however, please do ensure that the checklist is suitable for your respective context.

Content

What are AGs and why are they used?

- People join AGs to participate in actions as part of a group.
- AGs discuss, plan, prepare, carry out and evaluate the actions that they are involved in.
- AGs provide organisational and autonomous structure to large actions.
- AGs protect individuals and offer mutual practical and emotional support, before, during and after actions. They are aimed at preventing activists from becoming isolated during actions – although everyone should be prepared for this situation in case they do get split off from the group.
- Mutual trust, and similar goals and needs as well as a commitment to take care of each other are fundamental aspects of AGs.
- The size of an AG depends on the action and the people involved. Usually, 4 to 8 people are a good size for an AG. Smaller (3 to 5 people) or larger (10 to 15) groups can also be formed. Although, it is more difficult to keep larger groups together, larger AGs can assume responsibility for bigger and more complicated tasks.
- Actions are usually coordinated by organising AGs as part of a spokes' council/delegates' meeting (for more information about spokes' councils/delegates' meetings, see module B 6 | Decision-making and consensus).

How are affinity groups organised?

Forming an AG

- Possible criteria for the formation of an AG: 1) Same/similar action level (what exactly does everyone want to do during the action? What level of confrontation are people comfortable with?) 2) Members of the AG already know one another well and trust each other.
- Groups of people with a similar level of experience have advantages, but it is helpful to enable inexperienced people to participate in experienced AGs.

AGs should prepare for an action by:

- Participating in action or blockade training as an AG, as this helps people to get to know each another better and to practice behaviour and decision-making during an action etc.
- Practicing fast consensus-based decision-making.
- Gathering information about what is likely to happen, the surroundings, and the things that activists should bring with them.

AGs should discuss:

- Previous experiences; fears, aims, motivations, and the needs and requirements of individual members in the context of the action
- Names and dates of birth (in case the legal team needs to be called).
- Addresses, phone numbers or other ways of contacting each other (to get in touch later, and in case of legal consequences).
- Medical conditions/issues.
- Availability (How much time does everyone have?).

- Individual and collective limits in terms of the action: it is not necessary to reach a final decision on this issue before the action takes place, but you should have an understanding of everyone’s boundaries. It may be useful for the group to plan to divide at some point, so that the whole AG does not have to leave if some members reach their limits.
- Possible repression and legal consequences, and how to deal with these issues collectively.

AGs should agree on:

- A buddy system: two people stay together during an action, no matter what – particularly if it is not possible for the whole AG to do so. If the two people are of the same gender, they may even be able to stay together if they are arrested or taken into custody.
- Discuss and agree on situations in which the AG will split up or be dissolved.
- Participation in the spokes’ or delegates’ council as part of the overall coordination of the action (alternating delegates or the same delegate?).
- A name for the affinity group (an unusual word that can easily be called out and that is clear and easy to understand), so that people’s real names do not have to be used. This is also a faster way of getting the group back together if it does split up.
- Decision-making (e.g. consensus, voting, delegating certain decisions).
- Hand signs that you can use for communicating in hectic and stressful situations (e.g., pointing in directions while running; or to indicate that you want to ‘come together to discuss something’, etc.).
- Meeting points for before, during and after the action.
- Division of tasks, depending on the action and the group, e.g., one person has the map, one person has a first aid kit, another provides information (via a ticker, Twitter, a phone line etc.).
- Behaviour towards the police.
- Behaviour towards other people or groups who do things during the action that do not reflect your ideas, needs or the action consensus.
- Ideally, a way of/time for evaluating the action afterwards.

AGs should evaluate and review the action together

- What did everyone feel like as part of the AG? How well did the action go?
- What worked well? What did not?
- Has there been any repression, or could repression still happen? Agree on what to do in case repression does occur (such as swapping contact details to stay in touch).

Related modules and material

B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

D 1 | Forming affinity groups workshop

E 1 | Checklist for affinity groups

Sources and further reading

Nicola Paris, Affinity Groups for Non-Violent Direct Action,

<https://commonslibrary.org/affinity-groups-for-non-violent-direct-action/>

Seeds for Change, Affinity Groups, <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/affinitygroups>

B 6 | DECISION-MAKING AND CONSENSUS

Introduction

For Skills for Action, bottom-up consensus decision-making is an essential element of actions and progressive political organising. A fundamental aspect of consensus decision-making is respecting individual and group autonomy. Hence, learning about consensus decision-making is a crucial aspect of our training sessions.

During actions, decisions are discussed and made by/between affinity groups. As such, we tend to deal with decision-making and affinity groups at the same time. Some participants may not have heard of consensus decision-making and may only be familiar with majority voting. Other people may have made bad experiences with consensus decision-making, usually due to processes that lacked structure or appropriate facilitation. Training sessions provide all of these individuals with the opportunity to develop new and ideally more positive perspectives on consensus-based decision-making.

This module is based on a specific approach to consensus decision-making that is relatively widely used in social movements in Germany, but that is also practised in other countries such as the UK. There are, of course, other ways of making decisions by consensus. In addition, some movements, communities and groups have their own procedures and traditions for doing so and this module can be adapted accordingly.

Consensus decision-making requires even better facilitation than other decision-making processes. It is not usually possible for action training sessions to provide participants with an in-depth knowledge of facilitation or the necessary skills. Therefore, trainers should encourage participants to try out facilitation in their own groups outside of training, while pointing out that action training can only deal with facilitation in passing. Trainers could provide participants with information about where they can receive appropriate training. At the same time, it can be useful to point out that the important meetings during large actions (e.g. action plenaries) are usually facilitated by the people who organised the action. As such, participants at training sessions will normally only need to know how to facilitate discussions that take place within their own affinity groups.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: 45 minutes for the shorter version. If you want to conduct roleplay more than once or explain the different ways of making decisions in more detail, you will need between 90 and 120 minutes.

Number of participants: at least three affinity groups, each consisting of at least four people

Material: pens, large sheets of paper, a watch (for roleplay with time limits)

Process and methods

When discussing the roles of spokespeople/delegates¹ and facilitators, trainers should stress that

¹ See below on the terms spokescouncils and delegates meetings.

taking turns enables everyone to experience a variety of roles and to develop their skills. However, regularly swapping roles can contribute towards a lack of continuity in facilitation; this is particular challenging during long and complex decision-making processes.

Roleplay can be used to explain and practise decision-making by affinity groups and spokescouncils without the need for prior input. Depending on the amount of time available, trainers can decide how many details they share on different methods of decision-making to share. Whatever details trainers decide to include, it is essential to explain the core principles of consensus decision-making.

Time	Objective	Method	Material
5 mins	Participants understand the roleplay; form AGs for the training session	Explain the roleplay and ask the participants to form AGs consisting of between 4 and 6 people for the training sessions (or splits the participants up themselves). If AGs are taking part in the training, they can also participate in the roleplay as part of the AG. Participants briefly introduce themselves in their AGs.	None
5 mins	Participants understand the scenario	Describe the scenario (see below) and allow time for questions at the end. The trainer states that the delegate meeting will take place in 5 minutes.	None
5 mins	First round of roleplay (decision-making in an AG)	AGs discuss the scenario and make a decision. Trainers can increase the pressure while they are doing so by making announcements such as '3 minutes until the delegate meeting, please hurry up!'	None
5-10 mins	Roleplay evaluation	Ask the AGs whether they came to a decision and, if so, how they did so (e.g., by consensus, with or without facilitation) and asks whether everyone feels like they were listened to etc. The participants often want to talk about their decisions at this point, but it is important to focus the conversation on 'how' the decision was made.	None
10-15 mins	Participants understand consensus-decision making and delegate meetings	Describe procedures used to make consensus-based decisions (speak about advantages and disadvantages, consensus levels, and briefly about other forms of decision-making) as well as delegate meetings. Depending on the group in question, the topics could be worked out together by the group.	Poster depicting consensus levels; poster depicting a delegate meeting
15 mins	Second round of roleplay (with delegate meeting)	Participants return to their AGs. Explain the second scenario and provide enough time for the AGs to make decisions. The roleplay then moves on to a delegate meeting facilitated by a trainer.	None

5-10 mins	Evaluation of roleplay	Ask the participants about their views of what happened during the roleplay – the ‘delegates’ should be asked before the other participants. Trainers ask questions such as whether the members of the AG feel as if the consensus developed by the delegate meeting corresponds to their AG’s consensus, etc.	
5 mins	Summary of what has been learned and closing	Summarise key findings.	

Variations

The following variations can be tried out depending on the amount of time available:

- If there is very little time available, conduct the roleplay once – either with a delegate meeting (total time required: approx. 45 min) or without one (total time required approx. 30 min).
- During the input block, the trainers can also speak about how to make decisions quickly and encourage the participants to try out these methods during the second round of roleplay (additional time required: approx. 10 min).
- If more time is available, both rounds can be conducted with a delegate meeting; two participants can facilitate the delegate meeting during the second round. The facilitation conducted by the participants should also be evaluated (additional time required approx. 15 minutes).
- Collect ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of decision-making during the input block and present them in more detail (additional time required 15-20 min).

Scenarios for roleplay

The following scenarios are representative of actions in Germany. Training sessions undertaken in other contexts should use scenarios that are relevant to the local setting. However, these scenarios should still be of a similar length/level of detail. During training sessions, participants tend to want to know a lot of details about the scenarios. Trainers can point out that activists do not normally know everything about what it is going to happen during an action and that there are always lots of uncertainties (e.g., about the way in which the police will react).

Scenario 1: Quick decision-making

You are at the G8 summit and want to set up a blockade. As part of a group of more than 2000 people, you have walked through forests and fields and you have now reached an access road to the summit. You are standing on the road together with around 300 people; the remaining 1700 people are on another section, about 1 km further to the north. Police with water cannon are approaching from the south. Some affinity groups are already sitting down on the street, others have yet to decide what they want to do. Someone shouts: ‘Delegate meeting in 5 minutes, then we’ll decide what to do!’ You have five minutes to discuss what to do in your affinity group, before sending a delegate to

the meeting.

Scenario 2: Decision-making when more time is available

You are in the rural area of Wendland, a region in Germany where anti-nuclear protests have been taking place for many years. You are taking part in a protest triggered by nuclear waste being transported via train and trucks to a local storage facility.

A huge delegate meeting is being held in an anti-nuclear camp on the night before the action. The delegate meeting is discussing the type of action that people want to take part in on the following day and the action consensus. About 50 delegates are participating in the meeting. There are many different proposals and a heated debate: some people want to remove the gravel from the railway tracks (making it impossible for trains to use the tracks), others consider this to be too confrontational and would rather conduct a sit-in on the tracks. Someone proposes that people should get together in smaller groups that could act independently from one another depending on what people want to do. However, no consensus is found for this proposal either. Moreover, some affinity groups would like to get together to form a larger group, head to the tracks and divide up into smaller groups (or 'fingers'). After some time, the meeting takes a break so that the delegates can go back to their affinity groups and discuss what they would prefer to do. The affinity groups are also asked to discuss the action consensus and whether to split up into fingers. The delegate meeting intends to reconvene later and to come up with a consensus about the action to be taken on the following day.

Content

Consensus

Consensus means many people agreeing on the same proposal.

A consensus is an attempt to take into account the interests and needs of everyone involved in a decision as far as possible and comprises a group attempt to develop a collective solution.

This form of decision-making is radically different from what most people are used to: 'democratic decision-making' is usually taken to mean majority voting. Majority voting means that one proposed solution 'wins' over others – as the majority have voted for it. In the run-up to majority votes, people attempt to promote their proposal – often eloquently, loudly, or repeatedly – in the hope that this will lead as many people as possible to endorse it. Consensus decisions are taken in a completely different way: a consensus is reached by listening to each other and working together on proposals, especially with people whose ideas differ from our own.

Consensus decision-making requires practice – on the part of the people involved and the facilitators. Since new people also join experienced groups, it is often helpful to remind ourselves that consensus decision-making not only involve a different procedure, but also a different form of communication.

Consensus decision-making is:

- cooperative, integrative and solution-oriented.
- creative. A number of motivated people participate; different concerns and ideas can be heard and are taken seriously.

- participatory. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the decision-making process.
- activating. If everyone takes a decision together, implementation becomes a lot easier.
- a way of decision-making that can foster interaction, help develop new approaches and strengthen a group's team spirit.
- respectful of the needs and concerns of everyone involved.
- not about finding a weak compromise, but an approach that helps develop a nuanced picture of various opinions.

Consensus decision-making enables us to develop a nuanced picture of the opinions that exist within a group. This is because consensus decision-making involves several steps and more categories than just 'yes' or 'no'.

Group members can express their position using one of the following categories during consensus decision-making processes:

- Full approval or support
- Minor concern
- Major concern
- Abstention: I cannot or do not want to take a position on the proposal. Yet, if necessary, I will help implement the decision taken.
- Standing aside: I cannot support the proposal, but I do not want to prevent the group from adopting it. I 'stand aside' and will not help implement it.
- Veto: this proposal is unacceptable, since it contradicts our group's shared values or fundamental principles (like an action consensus), endangers people etc.

Undoubtedly, one of the strengths of consensus decision-making is that it uses these categories to clarify different positions. Yet these same categories also lead to one of the problems inherent in consensus decision-making: the fact that people may question whether a consensus is actually a 'real' consensus.

There are a number of different views about this issue. Some people view proposals to have been adopted by consensus if there is no veto; this results in a relatively 'weak' form of consensus. Other people argue that a decision can only be viewed as a consensus if everyone involved in the process is also willing to implement the decision. In this view, there is no consensus if people (or a certain number of people) 'stand aside' or express 'major reservations'. In this case, only 'strong' consensuses are accepted as real consensuses. However, distinguishing between strong and weak consensuses is not as easy as it may seem: How many people need to express major reservations and/or stand aside before a consensus can no longer be viewed as such? Is one person enough? If so, major reservations would basically constitute vetoes, making the differentiation between the two categories pointless. It is important for trainers to be aware of these issues, and to point the participants in the right direction to make sure that they too are aware of them.

Typical problems when trying to find a consensus

- If real consensus is to be found, it is essential that the people involved are not afraid of

expressing their opinions frankly and openly.

- A ‘fake consensus’ may arise if people agree to a proposal that they do not actually support. This may occur because people want to speed up the process or because some people are more willing than others to step back instead of having their opinions heard.
- Although it is important to ask participants whether they approve of a proposal, it is also crucial to ask whether they have concerns about or disagree with the proposal; otherwise, these views can easily be overlooked.
- Consensus decision-making means dealing with the challenge of involving everyone who wants to or will have to implement the decision.
- Arriving at a consensus can be a very long and bumpy ride. Consensus decision-making can also take more time than other forms of decision-making (e.g., majority voting). Practice and experience can help groups learn about and ‘own’ consensus decision-making processes.

Decision-making and facilitation in affinity groups

General points

- Facilitation makes it easier to conduct group discussions and to identify proposals that are acceptable to the group.
- Using hand signals speeds up the process and makes it easier to provide feedback. Hand signals are essential in larger groups, but can also support decision-making in smaller groups.
- Facilitators have various tasks. These include clarifying the topic and the aim of the discussion, structuring it, summarising interim results, and identifying solutions and proposals that might be acceptable to the group as a whole.
- Facilitators should adopt an empathetic, inquiring stance, respond to questions and concerns, and remain neutral. They should not comment on what other people are saying and should wait their turn to speak if they want to express their personal views.
- Facilitators should monitor the atmosphere in the group, identify points of conflict and deal with them.

Tips for facilitating consensus decision-making processes

- In order to establish whether a consensus can be reached about a certain proposal, facilitators should not merely ask whether people support a proposal, (‘Who agrees?’), but also whether anyone has any concerns/disagrees with the proposal (‘Does anyone have concerns?’).
- Arriving at a consensus often involves making a proposal, the facilitator testing for consensus, and abandoning or adapting a proposal until one is found that the group can accept.
- People in the group can use the categories described above to express their opinions in a more nuanced manner. If the group wants to test a proposal for consensus, the facilitator can ask everyone to demonstrate their positions with a show of hands.

- Using the categories helps the group gain a clear picture of how strong and viable a proposal is and who would support its implementation.

Decision-making during actions

During actions, groups of activists have to make decisions such as where to go to and whether to remain where they are and do so quickly in difficult situations.

Practicing decision-making within a particular time span (ranging from between several seconds and 15 minutes) can be helpful. If there is very little time for taking a decision, it is important to avoid arguments about minor issues. Heated debates about people's concerns or fears are unhelpful and facilitators should intervene to prevent them.

It can be useful to point out that decisions are often taken during actions without knowing everything about a particular situation. Moreover, it is often better to take a decision and do something, than not to do so.

The following three methods are particularly suitable when decisions have to be taken quickly.

- *Temperature check*: if there is a proposal, phrase it as a question and have a round where everyone answers yes or no. This can also be done non-verbally (and more quickly) when the participants use hand signs. This will demonstrate whether it makes sense to continue with the proposal. It is important that the group understands that the result is not a vote and only aimed at showing the potential viability of a proposal.
- *Quick rounds*: these are different from rounds in which everyone explains their view in detail as they involve everyone saying just a few words/one sentence. The participants should not repeat anything that has already been said. The facilitator should ensure that people do not speak too long, intervene if they say more than two or three sentences, while remaining friendly and *neutral throughout*.
- *Adopt the first acceptable proposal*: if there is not enough time for discussion, facilitators can ask the participants to make a quick proposal and check whether it has the support of the group. The first proposal that is acceptable to everyone is implemented. No discussion takes place as to whether a better solution might be found.

Other methods of decision-making

At times, it can make sense to use less-consensus based decision-making methods. Affinity groups need to talk about this beforehand and agree whether they want to use these methods. This also means developing a consensus about when other methods are acceptable. Doing so ensures that these decision-making methods are not completely disconnected from consensus. However, if this is to work, people in the group need to trust each other. Some of the following forms of decision-making may be more appropriate for deciding on (technical) details than on important issues.

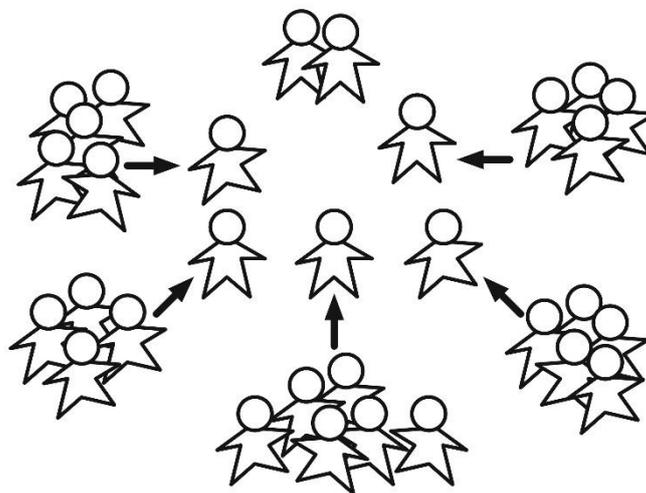
- *Mandate to decide for the group*: the group chooses one person or more to make decisions about certain issues. The group should discuss this thoroughly and be very clear which decisions the person is allowed to take, and how group members can raise objections. In practice, this method is often used by affinity groups during actions to decide where to go. If one person knows the area particularly well, they can be given a 'mandate to choose the

route'. This prevents the group from having to stop at every corner to discuss which way to turn. The group should run through the entire action beforehand in detail so that the person with the mandate understands everyone's concerns and interests. They can then take these into account when making decisions.

- *Tossing a coin and deciding by chance*: if there is no time for discussion, if people are unable to decide, or if all proposals seem to be equally good or bad, you can decide by chance. One way of doing so is by tossing a coin. It is often better to take a decision and act than not to do so. The motto for this kind of decision-making is: 'any decision is better than no decision'.
- *Voting*: some affinity groups agree by consensus to vote in certain situations. This needs to have been discussed and agreed upon beforehand.

Spokescouncils/delegates' meetings

'Spokescouncils' and 'delegates meetings' used to refer to different types of meetings. Spokespeople had no authority to take decisions, but facilitated communication between their affinity group and a council. Delegates had a stronger mandate and a higher degree of discretion; they did not need to continuously consult their affinity groups about every single detail. However, as these terms are now often used interchangeably, people need to decide which type of mandate they want to provide their spokesperson/delegate with. Both types of mandate can be used during actions to enable grassroots, consensus-based decision-making. Usually, each affinity group sends one representative to a meeting.



One version of a spokescouncil/delegates' meeting that can also be used in training sessions is the 'blossom model' (or 'inner circle, outer circle'). The spokespeople/delegates sit down in a small circle. Everybody else remains in their affinity group and assembles behind their representatives (sitting, squatting, standing). These people form the 'petals'. Everyone can listen to the discussion taking place in the inner circle and the people in the petals can speak to their representative and vice versa.



It can be difficult to take decisions by consensus in a manner that everyone is happy with when many people need to take a quick decision. It is important for participants in training sessions to understand that good decisions in the spokescouncil/delegates' meeting depend on affinity groups having discussed several different options, as this is the only way that their representatives will be able to express a view in the larger meeting.

Related modules and material

D 2 | Organise the mob workshop

E 2 | Consensus

E 3 | The consensus fish

E 4 | Hand signals for meetings

E 7 | Tipps for a delegates' meeting/spokes council

Sources and further reading

Seeds for Change has a lot of excellent resources on facilitation and consensus decision making:
<https://seedsforchange.org.uk/resources>

Various resources on consensus decision-making can also be found at
<https://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/>

Tree Bressen, The top 10 most common mistakes in consensus process and what to do instead,
<https://treegroup.info/library/Top-10-Consensus-Mistakes.pdf>

B 7 | THE FIVE-FINGER-TACTIC AND PASSING THROUGH POLICE LINES

Introduction

The five-finger-tactic is based on the idea that a large group of people can split up into several small 'fingers' and, if necessary, into affinity groups and individuals. The tactic is used to pass around or through police lines (such as to reach a blockade) when several different routes can be taken. The tactic enables people to pass through police lines with little to no physical contact between them and the police. It works best if there is enough space for the police to spread out – i.e. on open fields and in parks – and this is where the tactic was developed. Nevertheless, it also provides useful insights for urban situations with limited available space. These situations are also dealt with in module B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces.

The five-finger-tactic was developed by the anti-nuclear campaign 'X-Tausendmal quer' in Germany at the end of the 1990s. Many participants in action training sessions (at least in Germany) will have already heard of the five-finger tactic or even used it in some form. Their experiences can be useful in training sessions but these participants will also be able to learn something new. In Germany, this tactic has proved very successful. However, it may be of limited use in other countries where the police reacts very differently. Local trainers should assess whether it is relevant to the local context or needs to be adapted.

The module begins with roleplay and no explanations are provided; this enables the participants to immediately swing into action and to gain valuable experience.

It is particularly important for trainers to be mindful of their language during this part of the workshop: use 'five-finger-tactic' and 'passing through' or 'overcoming' police lines, instead of 'breaking through' police lines.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: between 45 and 60 minutes, depending on the time available and the number of times the roleplay needs to be conducted

Number of participants: at least 10; there is no upper limit

Material: pens, posters/placards, tape, bottles/jars or similar for marking the areas occupied by the police

The use of props makes the roleplay more realistic: police batons can be rolled-up newspapers or posters, or foam tubing (approx. 60-80 cm long, can be found in DIY centres); pepper spray can be made from water sprayers; and banners can be made out of large pieces of fabric/tarps (approx. 3m x 1.5m)

A large space is needed for this module and it should ideally be conducted outside on soft ground (in case people fall over).

Process and methods

Before beginning the roleplay, the trainers should remind the participants about the stop signal that was agreed upon at the beginning of the session. Everyone should immediately stop whatever they

are doing as soon as they hear the signal (such as someone shouting ‘stop, stop, stop’). If you have not done so yet, agree on a stop signal now. Makes sure that it is clear that everyone can use the signal at any time during the roleplay for any reason.

The number of repetitions can be adjusted depending on time and size of group. However, we recommend conducting the initial roleplay and going through the more advanced scenario twice.

The time needed for de-briefing will depend on the number of participants and how actively they were involved in the discussion.

Time	Objective	Method	Material
15 mins	Participants gather initial experiences with passing through police lines (from the perspective of a police officer/activist)	Explain the aims of the module, make clear that participation is voluntary (due to running, bodily contact, etc.) and describe the risk of injury as well as the stop signal Initial roleplay (see below)	See above
5 mins	Debriefing of initial roleplay	Participants stand or sit in a circle Use the explanation provided below	
10 mins	Participants understand the aim and how the five-finger-tactic works	Input by trainers about the five-finger tactic and police lines (see below); trainers elicit information from participants and add information as needed Trainers can use the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has already taken part in an action where people passed through police lines? How well did it go? • What is the five-finger-tactic? • What is it used for? • What impact does it have? 	
15 mins	Participants gain experience of the different ways of passing through police lines	In-depth roleplay (1st run)	See above Poster including the figures about the police/finger (see below)
10 mins	De-briefing	Participants stand or sit in a circle As above, but trainers should also show the participants the posters including the	Poster including the figures about the police/finger

		figures about the police/fingers and explain as needed	(see below)
15 mins	Participants gain experience of the different ways of passing through police lines	In-depth roleplay (2nd run; different set-up)	As above Poster including the figures about the police/finger as set out below
5 mins	De-briefing	Participants stand or sit in a circle De-briefing, as above	Poster including the figures about the police/finger as set out below
5 mins	Final de-briefing/transfer	Participants stand or sit in a circle Final de-briefing/transfer as below	

Initial roleplay

Scenario

An action is taking place and a group intends to form a blockade but comes across a police line. The group attempts to pass through it.

- Two groups form (police and activists) at a ratio of 1 to 2. Both groups stand apart, so neither group can hear what the other is saying.
- Police line up between two marked points. The larger the spaces between the police officers, the easier it is to pass through the police line. The police are ordered not to let anyone pass through the line (but because this is a training session, and we want to avoid injuries, no one is allowed to use force; safety is our priority!).
- The activists need to find the best way of passing between the two points, despite the fact that the police are blocking their way. They need to agree upon a course of action quickly, and to test it out instead of talking at length.
- When the start signal is sounded by the trainer/s, the activists should attempt to pass through the police line.

Please note: this scenario builds on experiences of police behaviour in Germany. If you are based in a different country where the police use an entirely different approach, the scenario may need to be adapted.

De-briefing

- Ask the police: What did the activists do? How did that affect you as a police officer? How did you feel and react?
- Now ask the activists: Who passed through the police line without any physical contact with the police? Who passed through but made physical contact with the police? Who did not pass through? What was your plan, and did it work? How did the police react? How did you feel?

Content

- The five-finger-tactic is based on the idea that a large group can split up into several small ‘fingers’ and, if necessary, into affinity groups and individuals.
- It is used to pass around or through police lines en route to a specific place (such as a blockade) when several different routes can be taken.
- The tactic enables people to pass through police lines with little to no physical contact.
- It confuses the police because it is more unpredictable than the movements of a closed group.
- The five-finger-tactic can only be used effectively when there are more activists than police, when there are gaps between police officers or when it is possible to create such gaps. It is not possible to pass through a closed police line (at least not without physical contact).
- When forming a line, police officers in Germany are normally under orders to prevent people from passing through instead of detaining or arresting them. If police officers detain someone, they can no longer prevent other people from passing through the line. This is why this tactic is so successful. Ultimately, it is a question of police capacity and the orders that they have received; as such, there can be no guarantees that it will work.
- It is important for activists to focus on the spaces between police officers, instead of the police officers themselves, as people usually do.
- A sufficient number of activists passing through a police line is the decisive factor for the success of the tactic. Once enough people have passed through, additional spaces are opened up, the police become confused, and this enables even more people to pass through. This usually leads to the dissolution of the police line, because it becomes pointless. This then enables anyone else who has not yet passed through the line to do so.
- In contrast to the common tactic of using affinity groups, the success of the ‘five-finger-tactic’ is highly dependent on the ability of groups to split up. If necessary, affinity groups may have to split up into their individual members who then pass through the gaps without stopping to wait for the rest of their group. The group reforms after having passed through the police line.
- Individuals can also approach police officers directly, stand in front of them and talk to them or distract them in some other way so that other people may pass through the line. If more gaps start to appear or the police line is disbanded, the people providing the diversions will also be able to pass through the line.
- Activists can practice passing through tight police lines: ask them to put their hands up, and to move to one side of a police officer. They then take a step forward using their foot which is furthest from the officer first before walking past the officer. They then turn on their own axis (pirouette), keeping their back turned towards the officer. The rotation movement makes it difficult to stop the person, while also avoiding any appearance of aggression.
- Police cordons can be approached in different ways: ‘offensively’, such as by moving quickly, using banners to protect people at the front and shouting slogans etc. But it is also possible to adopt a calm and relaxed approach: moving slowly, not hiding behind banners, activists holding their hands up to show that they do not intend to be violent. There is no ‘best practice’, but it is important to let participants practice both methods so that they can find out which they feel more comfortable with. The police will usually react according to the way in which they are approached. Their response may therefore reflect how threatened they feel. If people are more active, the police are more likely to use force. But, bear in mind that whether the police use violence will depend mainly on their orders, which, in

- turn, depends on political decisions. Again, these will differ from country to country.
- Police violence in Germany usually takes the form of pushing, kicking and hitting; the use of fists or batons, but also horses and dogs. The police may also use pepper spray to stop people passing through their lines.
 - If the police know where an action will take place, they may use fences to cordon off the area (see module B 9 | Climbing over crowd barriers).
 - A quick way of holding a particular space is to sit down before the police can push you away.
 - The structure you choose for your fingers and affinity groups will depend on a particular action. The fingers and affinity groups may walk next to each other or behind one another. They can split up and pass through the line and do so either forwards or sideways. The ‘five-finger tactic’ can also be used to overstretch a moving police kettle (i.e. when the police are kettling a moving demonstration) so that gaps begin to appear between the police officers, allowing people to pass through.
 - As trainers, you may wish to check whether there are any potential legal consequences associated with using the five-finger tactic in your country and to share that knowledge with the participants.

In-depth roleplay

The roleplay explained above is repeated, but this time the participants can try out different ways of structuring the fingers, affinity groups and how they act, as well as different ways of passing through the police line. The roleplay should be conducted at least twice, so that all of the participants can take on the role of the activists and the police.

The trainers instruct the participants playing the activists to try out a particular scenario. It may be useful to show participants posters containing the figures set out below. In order to ensure that participants are able to experience the different tactics that can be used, they can also try to pass through a police line as a block first.

The trainers should point out that in a real situation the police will probably use more force than occurs in the roleplay.

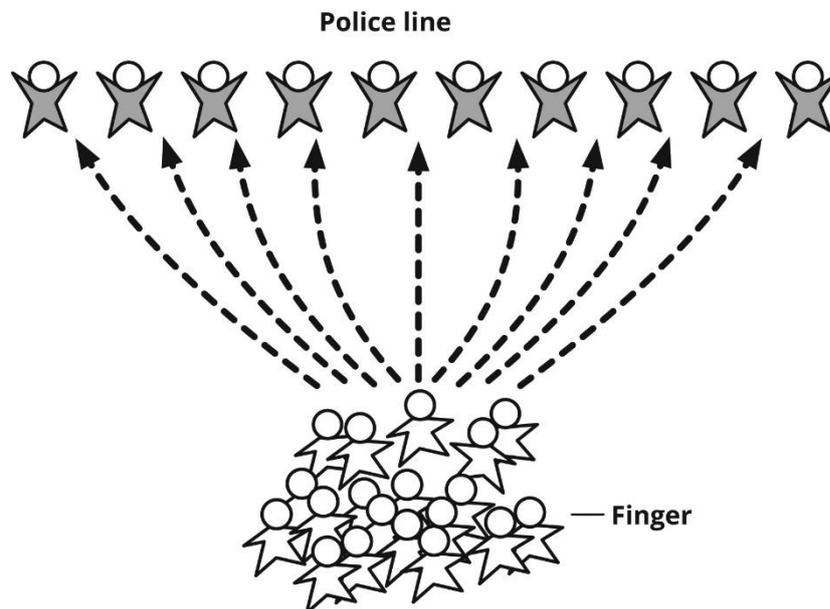
Scenario I: In the countryside (a lot of space)

Rural areas are usually spacious. Natural obstacles like ditches and fences can be crossed easily. In these circumstances, activists should take advantage of the available space by fanning out from the finger as soon as possible.

The activists should move as far away from one another as possible as soon as they are close to the police line. It can make sense to split up hundreds of meters before they reach the line. This overstretches the police line and widens the gaps between the officers.

Countryside scenario

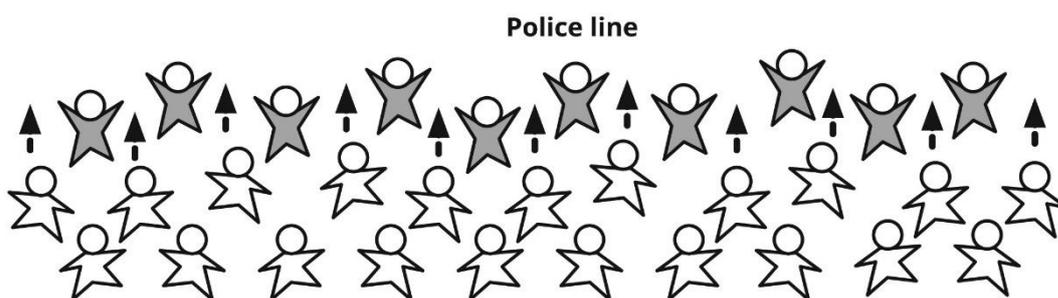
Image 1



The finger fans out as broadly as possible and the entire available space is used.

Countryside scenario

Image 2



The entire finger has fanned out as much as possible, pulling the police line apart. The demonstrators now form a line themselves and everyone tries to use the gaps between the police officers.

In extreme cases, the finger may only be a single line of people facing the police line. The police may

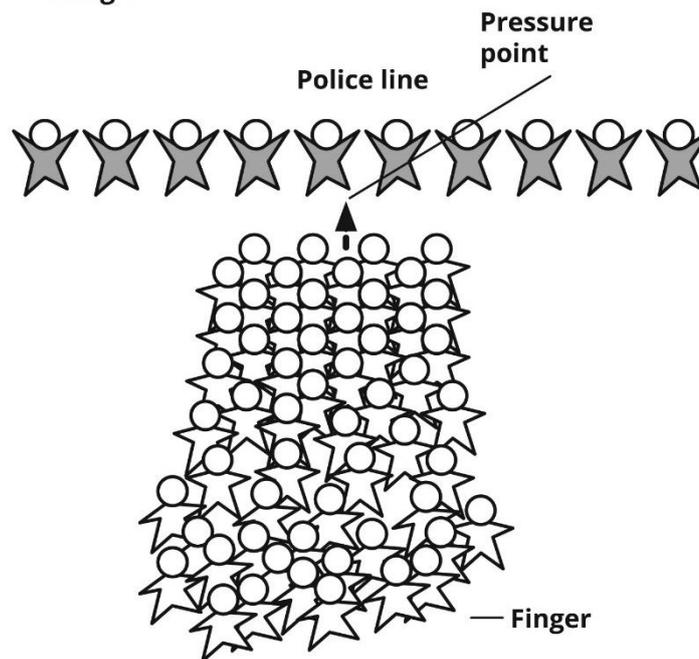
try to close any gaps by swinging batons, kicking (watch out for their legs and don't trip up!) and by moving around a lot.

Scenario II (urban area)

Activists create a pressure point in the middle of the police line. They then use the gaps between the police officers to pass through the line.

Urban scenario 1

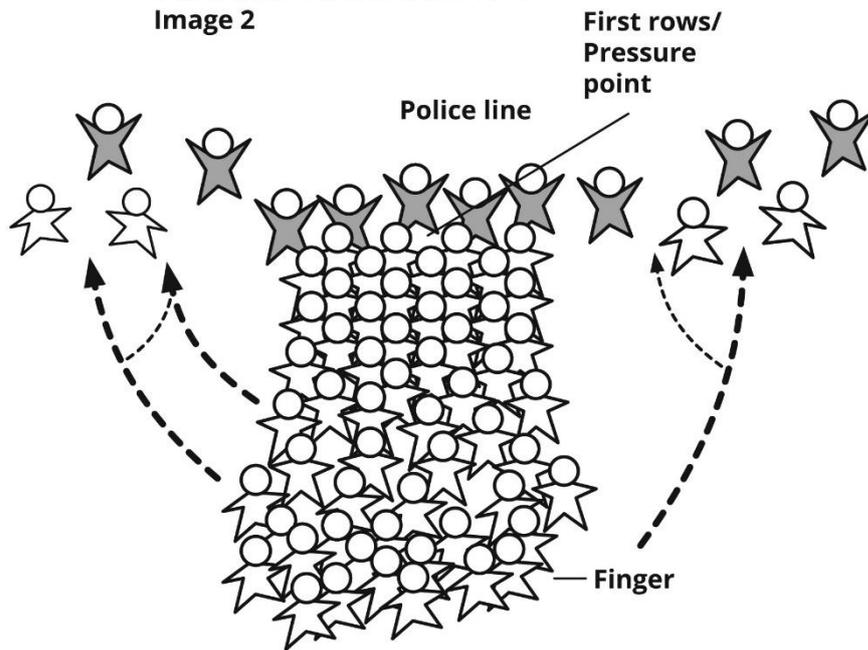
Image 1



- The finger moves together towards the obstacle.
- The first rows generate a 'pressure point' on the police line.

Urban scenario 1

Image 2



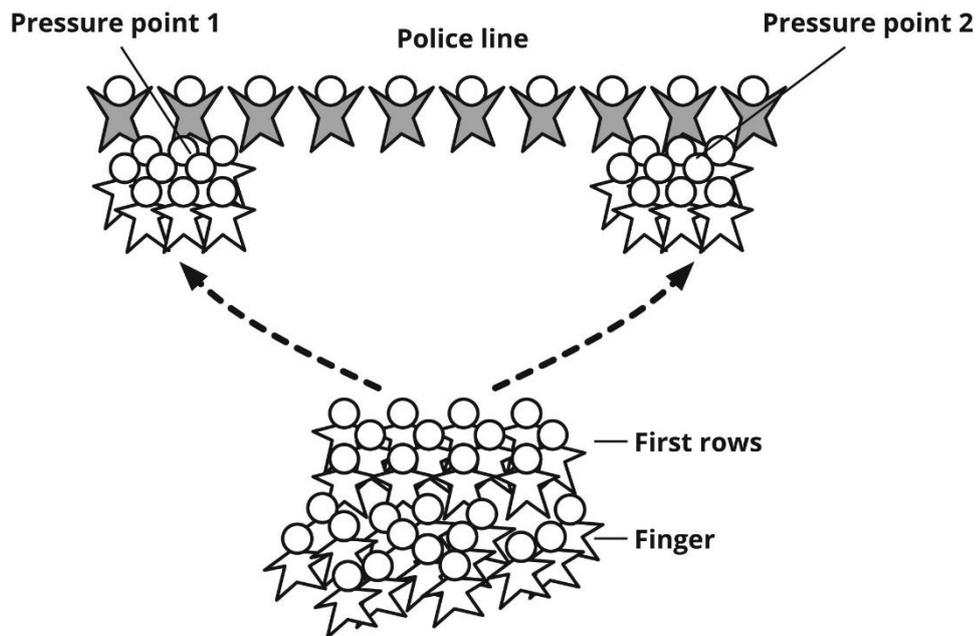
- The police focus on the pressure point in the middle.
- Larger gaps appear between the police officers at the ends of the line.
- The back rows fan out and use these gaps.

Scenario III (urban area)

Activists create two pressure points (one at each end of the police line) and pass through the middle.

Urban scenario 2

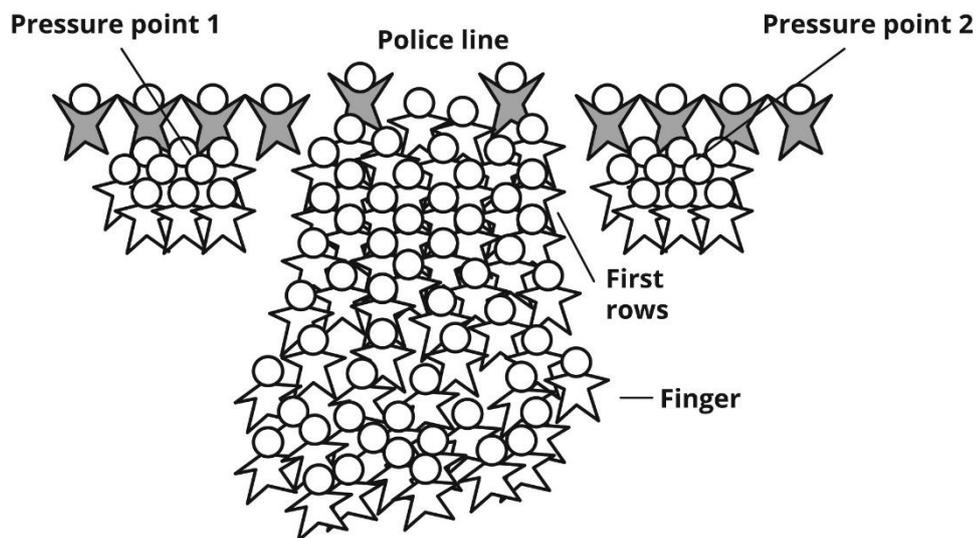
Image 1



- The first rows split in the middle and move towards different ends of the police line.
- Two 'pressure points' are generated at the ends of the police line.

Urban scenario 2

Image 2



- The police focus on the pressure points on the ends of the line.
- Gaps open up in the middle of the police line.
- The rows that follow use these gaps.

Final de-briefing/transfer

Ask the participants to form a circle and ask them:

- How did you feel?
- What insights will you be taking with you from this section of the training?
- Have you got any questions?

Related modules and material

B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces

B 8 | DEALING WITH POLICE LINES IN NARROW SPACES

Introduction

This module ties in with module B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines, but it delves deeper into situations where activists have very little space to create and use gaps. The module is aimed at ensuring that participants realise that they can also pass through police lines in narrow spaces. However, it is more difficult to do so and the tactics applied do not always work perfectly. The module is also aimed at providing participants with a feeling for and the ability to judge when and how to pass through police lines in these situations. Instead of carrying out the module as a whole, some of its individual elements (see below) can be used as part of the basic ‘Passing through police lines’ module. In order to avoid incriminating themselves, trainers should be aware of what they say and how they say it.

It is particularly important to create an atmosphere that enables participants to try things out while also providing the space that people need to discuss their concerns and limits. As such, participants should be encouraged to experiment during roleplay. However, it is perfectly acceptable if someone does not want to take part. People who do not wish to participate can still add valuable points to the discussion that takes place afterwards.

Duration, number of participants, materials

Duration: about 60 minutes

Number of participants: best conducted with at least 12 people

Material: pens, posters, adhesive tape, markers to mark the edges of the space used for the roleplay

The use of props makes the roleplay more realistic:

- police batons can be made out of rolled up newspapers or posters, or foam tubes (approx. 60 - 80cm long, available in DIY centres)
- pepper sprays can be represented by water atomisers
- banners can be made from large pieces of fabric or tarpaulin (about 3m x 1.5m)

Process and methods

Duration	Aim	Methods	Material
5 mins	Understand aims and basic rules	Explain the aims of the module, make clear that participation is voluntary (due to running, bodily contact, etc.) and describe the risk of injury as well as the stop signal	
10 mins	Prepare roleplay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the scenario • Participants form two groups: a group of police officers and a group of blockaders in a ratio of around 1 to 2 • Ask both groups to stand apart so that the police cannot hear what the 	For material see above, distribute accordingly to police or activists

		<p>blockaders are talking about and vice versa.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the police officers to form a line between two markers. The distance between the markers must be close enough to enable the police to stand almost shoulder to shoulder. Explain that the police should not let anyone through the line (but, since no-one should be injured during training, make sure that they don't use physical force!) 	
5 mins	Conduct roleplay; participants try out methods	<p>Blockaders start trying to pass through the line</p> <p>Finish the roleplay when all of the activists have passed through the line or when the stop signal is sounded</p>	
10 mins	Discussion	<p>Ask the participants to gather in a circle</p> <p>De-briefing as below</p>	
10 mins	Participants get to know different methods	<p>As a trainer ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has ever been to an action where activists passed through a line in a narrow street? How did it go? How can it work? <p>Collect ideas; input; trainer adds what has not been mentioned</p>	
10 mins	Roleplay; participants try out methods	<p>Preparation and implementation as above, but with different methods</p> <p>If possible, participants should swap roles</p>	As above
5 mins	Discussion	<p>Ask the participants to gather in a circle</p> <p>Evaluation as below</p>	
5 mins	Closing round/transfer	<p>As a trainer asks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you? What will you be taking away from this part of the training? 	

Role-play

Scenario

You are on a large anti-fascist demonstration. Together with around 300 people, you want to reach the route of a neo-fascist march so that you can block the street. You have already got relatively close to the route, but a police line is blocking your path through a narrow street. You want to pass through the police line to reach the route of the neo-fascist demonstration.

De-briefing

- First ask the police: What did the blockaders do? How did that affect you? How did you feel? How did you react?
- Then ask the blockaders: Who got through without touching the police? Who got through but was touched by the police? Who didn't get through? What was your plan and did it work? What did the police do? How did you feel?

Content

Activists could use the following methods to pass through police lines in narrow spaces:

- *Using speed and surprise:* each affinity group comes together and its members line up in single file. The line moves quickly towards the police. In response to a signal, each affinity group splits up and everyone tries to pass through the police line quickly but in a 'relaxed' manner. Activists try to find a makeshift way of crossing the line or running through, especially at the edges. These situations are very chaotic for the police. Using a sidestep is also a good way of passing through a police line (see the 'pirouette movement' mentioned in module B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines).
- *Passing through as a block:* the affinity groups each form a row and come together as a block, with several rows behind each other. The first row should firmly lock their arms together. The people in the second row have their arms free so that they can push the front row forward. The block should not move too fast towards the police line and there should be enough space between the rows so that no-one falls over. However, it is important not to slow down. The block should try to gather strength and momentum (e.g., by shouting slogans). Shortly before reaching the police line, the block starts moving a little faster. When the block arrives at the police line it initially pushes forward, which surprises the police and throws them off balance. The first row usually becomes squashed and mainly forms a passive barrier at this point. If the participants have not already mentioned this, the trainer needs to point out that people in the first few rows can come under a lot of pressure when using this technique.

As the police are now in such close proximity to the first row, they do not have enough space to move back and hit demonstrators with full force. Instead, they often use the short end of their batons to poke people in the front row in the stomach and/or kick them in the shins. If the initial push forward by the block was timed well and was strong enough, it pushes back the police line and opens up gaps. However, in many cases, this situation results in a longer phase of pushing back and forth. This makes it difficult to develop enough momentum to open up gaps and to use them. If the block carries a banner, it can be used to protect the first rows, for example, against pepper spray. However, banners also prevent gaps from being used by individuals and small groups, and, instead, they can only be used by the entire block.

Trainers should be familiar with potential legal consequences when activists move through police lines in this manner and discuss them with participants in the training workshop.

Related modules and material

B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines

B 9 | CLIMBING OVER CROWD BARRIERS

Introduction

The police in Germany often try to stop people from blockading streets and squares by setting up fences and crowd barriers. However, these barriers are far more like obstacles that can be overcome than actual barriers that prevent people from passing through. It is certainly possible to climb over crowd barriers in Germany if they are being guarded by a small number of police officers. In this module, the participants get a feeling for crowd barriers and the ways in which they can be overcome.

Climbing over crowd barriers may lead to legal problems depending on local laws and the particular situation. As such, trainers should understand the relevant legal framework. At the same time, it only makes sense to include this module if the police in a particular area actually use these barriers. Finally, it is very important that trainers focus on what they say and how they say it to avoid incriminating themselves.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: at least 30 – 40 minutes (depending on group size)

Number of participants: people can practise climbing over the barriers by themselves; but at least 3 participants are needed to help with the roleplay

Material: a sturdy fence or barrier that is about 80 cm high and accessible from both sides

Process and methods

Time	Aim	Methods	Material
5 mins	Introduction, gain an understanding of the topic and the goal of the module	Input from the trainers	
5 mins	Introduction to the scenario and task (optional)	Input from the trainers – see below; include a note on the risk of injury	Fence/barrier with space in front and behind it
10 - 15 mins	Practise climbing over the barrier (optional)	Participants climb over the fence/barrier individually	Fence/barrier with space in front and behind it
10 mins	Evaluation (optional)	As a trainer, ask the participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you try out? • What went well? What didn't work? 	
15 mins	Input on dealing with barriers	As a trainer, ask the participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has ever come across a crowd 	

		barrier during an action? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did it go? • How can people climb over them? Add whatever still needs to be mentioned and demonstrate the best way of overcoming crowd barriers.	
10 - 15 mins	Practise climbing over the barrier (with help)	Depending on the time available, participants can try out different ways of overcoming the barriers Explain the stop signal or agree on a stop signal with the participants if this has yet to be done	Fence/barrier with space in front and behind it
5 - 10 mins	Evaluation	As a trainer, ask the participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What went well? • What didn't work? 	
5 - 10 mins	Final evaluation and transfer	As a trainer, the participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you? • What are you going to take away from the session? 	

Role play

Crowd barriers are blocking access to the location of a planned blockade. There are either no or very few police officers standing behind the barriers. The participants should get a feeling for the barriers and their own physical ability to climb or jump over them. They should try to get over the barriers by themselves. Because of the risk of falls or injuries, only one participant should try to cross the barrier at a time. The trainer and/or participants should stand next to the barrier to make sure that no one falls, and provide assistance if necessary.

Content

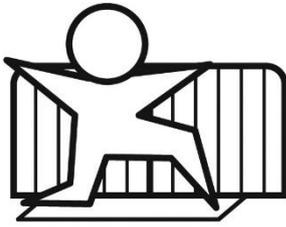
Forming a step

People can form a step to help other people climb over a crowd barrier:

- One person goes down on one knee and leans their shoulder against the barrier.
- They kneel on the floor with the knee that is furthest away from the barrier.
- This leg should now be in a straight line that is vertical with the hips and upper body.
- The other leg is placed in a right angle on the ground, with the foot stable and the thigh leaning against the barrier.
- People can now stand on the person's upper leg (not their knee!) and use it as a step.
- This leg should be held firmly against the barrier in a stable position. People who use the 'step' often do so by pushing themselves upwards, this places a lot of weight on the leg.
- People who have climbed over the barrier now help other people to do so by standing on both

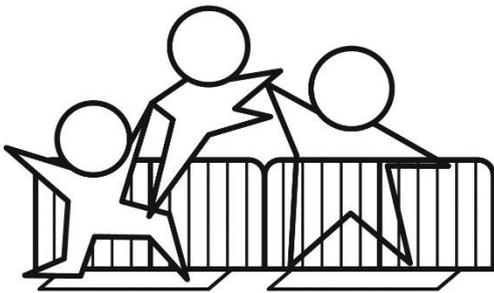
sides of them and supporting their arms and body.

Many people can overcome obstacles without help, but a step makes it easier and encourages other people to do so.



Dynamic situation

- Affinity groups quickly approach a barrier.
- One person kneels down and forms a step.
- The other members of the affinity group use the step to climb over the barrier.
- The first person to climb over the barrier helps the others to do so.
- Finally, the person who formed the step climbs over the barrier.



Static situation

- A large group of activists are standing close to a crowd barrier. There is very little room to move around.
- Allocate roles in the affinity group: at least 2 people create enough room by leaning back and pushing away from the barrier.
- One person uses this space to go down on one knee and form a step.
- The other members of the affinity group use the space and the step to climb over the barrier.
- This can be done at several places on the same barrier at the same time.

Opening crowd barriers

- Some crowd barriers can be taken apart by lifting the pin out of the eyelet located at the bottom of the barrier. This is not possible if the pins are fixed.
- Pull the barriers back quickly. It is important that nobody is standing on the barriers while this is done, and several people will be needed to pull the barriers back.

- It is worth starting with the outer barrier if possible, because it is not usually attached to other objects and may be free standing.

Both tactics (climbing over and opening crowd barriers) can be combined, e.g. once enough people have climbed over a barrier, they can help by pushing the barriers from the other side.

Related modules and material

B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces

B 10 | BASIC (SOFT) BLOCKADES

Introduction

This module focuses on soft blockades: blockades that are formed by activists using their bodies. People can participate in soft blockades by sitting or standing apart or linking their arms/legs together. Detailed preparation is needed for more complex blockades involving the use of technical equipment such as chains, lock-ons, tripods, tunnels etc. (hard blockades). These techniques should be taught by trainers with appropriate experience.

In this module, participants can get to know and try out various forms of blockading using their body. They can also take part in roleplay (an eviction) and learn about the techniques used by the police in such contexts.

Ideally, sit-ins and evictions should be practised on soft surfaces (e.g. grass). Trainers should advise participants to use caution in order to avoid injuries. Participants with any physical problems such as back pain should consider not participating. Participants can use a stop signal that has been agreed upon in advance (e.g. shouting 'red' or blowing a whistle) to stop the roleplay at any time. Trainers should ensure that all participants understand that they must immediately stop whatever they are doing if this signal is sounded.

It is useful to speak about your own experiences during this module, and to enable the participants to do so as well. However, it is important to make clear that these stories are individual experiences and that things will be different in each case. Some participants tend to emphasise particularly dramatic or negative experiences. As such, it may be important to set a balance to ensure that other participants do not become alarmed.

Duration, number of participants, material

- Duration: min. 45 minutes
- Number of participants: possible with a small number of participants; roleplay needs at least eight people

Process and methods

Time	Objective	Method
10 – 15 mins	Participants gain a basic understanding of different blockading techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone forms a circle. • As a trainer, ask the participants: Who knows any blockading techniques that only require your body/can be done without equipment? • If a participant mentions a technique (i.e. sitting down and making oneself heavy or lying down), trainers ask them to come to centre of the circle and demonstrate it. Two additional participants should act as police and try to remove/evict the participant

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add further techniques and demonstrate them with the help of participants (see below) • Ask participants about the pros and cons of different techniques, and provide extra information as needed (see below)
10 mins	Trying out different techniques	<p>Participants form groups of three.</p> <p>Groups try out the various techniques, and take turns to act as protesters or police officers.</p> <p>Trainers should warn participants not to injure their backs.</p>
5 – 10 mins	De-briefing for exercise	<p>Tell participants to form a large circle and ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well? • What problems or risks did you encounter? • How did you feel when blockading or acting as a police officer?
15 mins	Participants understand what can happen during evictions of blockade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants about their experiences with evictions of blockades by the police. • As a trainer, add information that is missing about the process and methods used by the police during an eviction. This is likely to be different in different countries. • Provide relevant legal information.
15 mins	Roleplay (optional)	As below
5 - 10 mins	De-briefing for roleplay (only needed if roleplay takes place)	<p>As a trainer, first ask the ‘activists’ and then the ‘police’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the blockade/eviction go? • What did the participants try out and which experiences did they gain? • What went well/not so well? What could have been done differently?
10 - 15 mins	Roleplay, 2nd run and de-briefing (optional)	As above, but some participants switch roles
5 mins	Final de-briefing/transfer	<p>As a trainer, ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel? • What did you learn from this module?

Roleplay: eviction of a blockade

If possible, try out the following roleplay with all of the participants. One third of the group should act as police and the remainder are the protesters conducting a blockade.

- The activists are given three minutes to discuss which blockading technique they want to use.

- Police have to clear the area (without hurting the activists). Activists who have been evicted are not allowed to return to the blockade. If necessary, activists who have been evicted can adopt the role of police officers and help with the eviction
- Trainers should remind participants about the stop signal before the roleplay begins, or agree on one with them if this has yet to be done.
- Trainers may need to stop the roleplay after a while if the ‘police officers’ are unable to evict the blockade. The roleplay can be stopped as soon as the participants have gained a sense of what a blockade involves.

Content

Trainers should ensure that the following aspects have been discussed:

Sit-ins

General points:

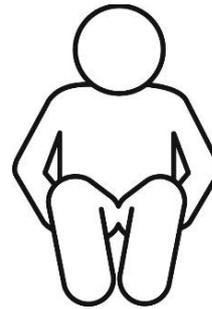
- Sit-ins are generally calmer than blockades involving people who are standing up. It is also easier for activists to see the surrounding area if they are sitting down.
- Sit-ins send clear messages: we are sitting here and we are not leaving!
- Sit-ins cannot be evicted by pushing people away.
- It is difficult for the police to clear pathways through sit-ins.
- When the police talk to activists, they tend to lean over the people sitting down; this can cause activists to feel powerless and exposed.

Body postures to use during sit-ins

Different postures can be adopted during sit-ins:

- Each activist can sit by themselves.
- Activists can form ‘parcels’ by drawing their knees towards their body, folding their arms under their legs, and maintaining body tension. People who are carried away in this position retain control over their body (by focusing on themselves and body tension), and can keep their head up and protect it. If an activist does not want to be carried any further, they can let go of their legs and their feet will fall first to the ground. The police are used to this technique. It is quite easy for them to evict a blockade of people sitting in this manner, since two officers can lift a person by placing their hands (or a baton) under the person’s arms and legs and carry them away. However, there is no guarantee that the police will apply this technique (see below).

'Parcel' position for sitting in a blockade



- When the police evict a blockade, activists can also relax their body, let themselves 'hang' and make themselves heavy. People who do this are more difficult to remove. However, removal is less predictable and less controllable.
- Linking arms with neighbours (talk about this first) can be done in different ways. Activists can form a block by linking arms with the people next to them while sitting in rows or in a circle.
- Verbal support for fellow activists can confuse the police.

Standing blockade/pushing blockade

- More flexible than sit-ins.
- Can be cleared by the police by pushing people away.
- Activists run the risk of being crushed by pushing when evicted.
- Activists are at eye level with the police; therefore, they may no longer feel as powerlessness and of being at the mercy of the police.
- If pepper-spray, tear gas, etc. are used, the entire blockade can withdraw at the same time.

Creative, playful blockades

- Streets and squares can be squatted or blocked using theatrical methods (as done by groups such as Reclaim the Streets).
- This type of blockade can appear more open and less confrontational than traditional blockades such as linked-arm sit-ins. This may make it more difficult for the police to use force against activists. Passers-by may also be attracted to this form of blockade when they happen in urban areas. On the other hand, the police can usually evict such blockades quickly, because this form of blockade is not very robust.
- Examples are samba or other music groups (e. g. Rhythms of Resistance), dancing, chair blockades (e.g., for older people), playing football, playing frisbee etc., and street theatre.

Evictions

How the police evict blockades varies in different countries. Trainers should have information about this topic (including related legal aspects), and, for example, have participated in blockades

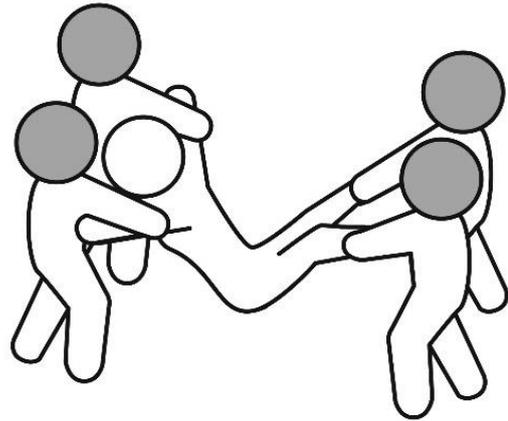
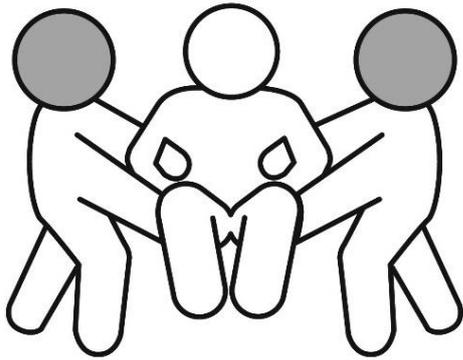
themselves.

In addition to local circumstances and laws, the methods used by the police depend on a variety of factors: the way the activists behave, the urgency of the situation, and the presence of the press, lawyers and other observers. Ultimately, the methods they use are mostly based on political decisions. Therefore, there is no ideal way of behaving during an eviction, although there are various options.

Trainers should discuss the following points with participants:

- Legal or formal procedures (e.g. announcements) that the police need to comply with before evicting a blockade.
- It is sometimes possible to stand up and leave a blockade just before or even during an eviction. This is particularly the case with larger blockades. In addition, it is usually possible to stand up and let the police lead someone out of a blockade. This possibility gives people who do not want to be carried away the opportunity to participate in a blockade. Of course, it is useful if as many activists as possible do decide to be carried away, because this form of eviction takes much longer and sends a stronger signal of resistance. It is important to explain to participants that they will often have a chance to stand up voluntarily, and that it is perfectly fine to do so. The training sessions offers a good opportunity to try out how it feels to be carried away, and then to decide whether to do so in a real life situation.
- Police techniques typically used when evicting a blockade, i.e. the manner in which the police force people to leave the blockade, touch and carry people etc. (see figures below). This could include informing participants about painful grips that the police use.
- Brutal police behaviour is often aimed at intimidating activists in the blockade, so that many people leave without having to be physically removed.
- Violence is often deployed by police when an eviction needs to take place quickly and/or when few officers are available.
- If people in the blockade link arms with the people next to them, all participants need to agree to do so. They also need to agree on a signal to release each other; otherwise, pain and injuries might occur. If the police use batons as leverage to 'unlink' people's arms and legs, it is important to let go of one another immediately as bones may be broken otherwise.
- Unannounced and secret lock-ons/chains in larger sit-ins or standing blockades are dangerous. Police may not be aware of/forget about them in the turmoil, and this endangers the people who are chained to each other or an object. Hard and soft blockades should be kept apart for safety reasons.

Positions in which police officers often carry activists from a blockade



Related modules and material

B 11 | Dealing with people on the street

Sources and further reading

War Resisters International, Blockades: a short guide to getting in the way, <https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/resources/2018/blockades-short-guide-getting-way>

War Resisters International, Tools for grounding, protecting and blockading, <https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/node/40563>

Rhythms of Resistance, a network of action samba bands, playing for all kinds of socio-political and ecological causes: <https://www.rhythms-of-resistance.org/>

B 11 | DEALING WITH PEOPLE ON THE STREET DURING BLOCKADES

Introduction

This module is about situations in which activists conducting a blockade are confronted by people who would like to pass through the blockade (e.g. employees at a company headquarters that is being blockaded, passers-by, local residents etc.). The module provides for a roleplay that enables participants to put themselves in the position of different actors. This helps them understand how to explain why they are conducting the blockade. In turn, this can de-escalate potential confrontations and help maintain the blockade. It is important to explain the aim of this module to the participants.

It is essential that people carrying out a blockade provide information to anyone who wishes to pass through their blockade. It can be useful to prepare a flyer/letter for the training session (see below for an example letter containing information for employees). During the training session, the participants undertaking the blockade can use the flyer/letter to explain what they are doing.

In our experience, approaching and talking to employees, passers-by and local residents etc. while maintaining a blockade is an effective way of dealing with their presence. Some activists should speak to these people a couple of meters away from the blockade and explain what is going on. The other activists should then continue to stand or sit behind them in chains and link arms. This enables blockades to be maintained more effectively and helps avoid confrontation. People who would like to pass the blockade realise quickly that they will not be able to do so without using physical violence. If the participants in the training session do not come up with the idea of approaching people and linking arms, the trainer can suggest that they do so.

Blockading public city streets can quickly lead to a number of fundamental questions: Will we let people pass through if they live on the other side of the blockade? What about children? What about people who have a doctor's appointment? Will we let employees of businesses other than the one we are blockading pass through? How can we find out whether people are telling us the truth (doctor's appointment, their home) and do we really want to ask people for proof of what they are saying (by showing us a note from a doctor; their ID with their address etc.)? And if we do let people pass through, are we still conducting a blockade?

Clearly, blockades may appear simple at first sight, but they can become quite complex. This situation can be broached in the following manner: after conducting a more simple roleplay that includes blockaders and company employees, a more complicated roleplay can be undertaken that also includes passers-by, local residents, police and paramedics etc. Blockades can be large or small and the participants can either sit down or stand up.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: ca. 45 – 75 minutes

Number of participants: up to 30

Material: pens and large sheets of paper (not essential)

Process and methods

A roleplay takes place and is followed by a hassle line. This enables the participants to participate in/observe a roleplay before trying out whatever they observed. It is also possible to conduct just one exercise – either the roleplay or the hassle line – depending on the participants' level of experience, and the time available. Roleplays can also be repeated less often, and other methods can also be added to the module. Trainers should adapt the scenario to the local context.

None of the methods should be used for too long (the hassle line should be shorter than the roleplay). If there is enough time, it is always a good idea to repeat an exercise.

The time needed for the debriefing will depend on the number of participants and how actively they participated in the exercises.

Time	Objective	Method	Material
5 mins	Warm up	Warm-up game	Depending on exercise
5 mins	Participants understand the method	As a trainer, introduce the objectives of the module and the scenario (see below for an example)	
15 mins	Participants gain experience of the overall situation	Roleplay – see below	Optional: distribute flyer/letter
10 mins	Discussion	Participants stand/sit in a circle As a trainer, ask questions (see below)	
10 min	Participants gain experience of the overall situation	Repeat role play (see below) Conclusion of role play (leaving role)	Optional: distribute flyer/letter
5 min	Discussion	Participants stand/sit in a circle As a trainer, ask questions (see below)	
10 min	All participants gain experience of speaking with people stopped by the blockade	Hassle line 1st run (see below) Conclusion of roleplay (leave role)	
5 min	Debriefing	Participants stand/sit in a circle As a trainer, ask questions (see below)	
5 min	All participants gain experience of speaking with people stopped by the blockade	Hassle line 2nd run (see below)	

5 min	Discussion	Participants stand/sit in a circle As a trainer, ask questions (see below)	
10 min	Transfer, consolidation	Participants stand/sit in a circle As a trainer, ask the following questions (as needed): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What new experiences and insights did you gain from the exercise? • Are there any issues that require further clarification or that might even have to be added to the concept behind the action or action consensus? • Are any further preparations needed for an upcoming action involving a blockade, e.g. a leaflet for residents, employees etc.? 	

Roleplay

Roleplay, 1st run

- Form three groups: 2-4 participants for the blockade, 1-4 observers, 1-4 employees
- Describe the scenario and assign a space for each group; limit the space according to the scenario (passage, walls of houses).
- The following is an example scenario: there are about 1,000 people blocking the entrances of the European Central Bank. About 40 people are sitting and standing in the street.
- Explain the situation and the objectives separately to the different groups:
 - Blockaders: you began blockading the street early in the early morning. Employees are now beginning to turn up for work. They want to get to work and that means passing through the blockade to get to the building.
 - Employees: you want to/need to get to work. You do not support the blockades and are concerned about getting into trouble with your boss etc.
 - Observers: you are observing what is happening and what each group is doing.
- Each group has 5 minutes to think about what they want to do before the roleplay starts.
- The scenario should be played out as realistically as possible as soon as the trainers provide the start signal. Duration: ca. 5 minutes.
- The roleplay stops on the trainers' stop signal.
- The trainers conclude the roleplay by asking everyone to leave their role (e.g. by symbolically shaking it off).

De-briefing (roleplay, 1st run)

Everyone comes together in a circle. Start with the blockaders, then the employees and finally the observers. Guiding questions for the de-briefing:

- What do you think about the situation? How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What did the other people do?
- Did you have a strategy? If so, what was it?
- What didn't go so well? What would you do differently next time?

The observers can comment on what other people say and what they observed.

Roleplay, 2nd run

Switch roles, repeat the scenario.

You can make the situation more realistic and complex by adding additional roles:

- Local residents who want to go home (or to make things even more difficult: children/young people)
- Passers-by who have an important doctor's appointment or who need to get to the airport; nationals of other countries who need to extend their visa today
- Police who use the employees as a pretext to threaten to evict the blockade
- Union representatives who consider themselves to be mediators between the activists and the workers they represent
- Car drivers who threaten to drive into the blockade

De-briefing (role play, 2nd run)

As before, the blockaders speak first, then the other people who were directly involved, and then the observers. If new roles have been added: Which decisions were particularly difficult to make? What additional information does the group need in respect of letting people pass through the blockade? Does this apply to everyone or just specific people?

Hassle line

Hassle line, 1st run

Ask the participants to stand in two lines about one meter apart facing one another. People who are standing directly in front of each other should speak to each other. One line consists of the blockaders, the other one of employees (passers-by etc.). The trainer needs to decide and explain whether the participants are only allowed to talk to each other or whether they can also do other things such as approach and touch each other.

The trainer explains the situation: a confrontation is developing because the blockaders do not want to let the employees (who want to/have to go to work) to pass through the blockade. Give the participants a minute to assume their roles, and then sound the start signal. First round: everyone acts at the same time for between 30 seconds and one minute. End the exercise by sounding the

stop signal. The trainers conclude the hassle line by asking everyone to leave their role (e.g. by symbolically shaking it off).

De-briefing hassle line (1st run)

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

Hassle line, 2nd run

Conducted in the same way as the first round, but the roles are reversed. One line moves one step to the right or left so that everyone is now speaking to someone else. The lines also swap roles so that the people who acted as blockaders now play the role of employees (and vice versa).

Discussion: hassle line (2nd run)

As above, but can be kept shorter.

Related modules and material

B 10 | Basic (soft) blockades

B 12 | REPRESSION AND LEGAL ADVICE: OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The objective of this module is to ensure that everyone who participates in an action is aware of and able to assess the consequences of their participation. At the beginning of the module, it is useful that trainers explain that they are not lawyers and, thus, may not be able to answer every question; instead, they can only provide a basic overview. There is no need for nor is it possible to provide detailed legal advice during action training; this particularly applies to information about specific cases and issues. When participants have questions that touch upon issues that are not covered in the following (and that go beyond what a trainer wants to speak about or feels confident answering), trainers can ask participants to contact legal advice groups and organisations, lawyers and the organisers of a specific action or campaign. Presentations about repression should be realistic and demonstrate that, although repression exists and may even be severe, it is still possible to deal with, prepare for, and protect oneself from it.

Experience has shown that it is better to present this module by providing input and subsequently answering questions instead of opting for the more typical interactive approach. Moreover, it is more important than usual to adopt a more stringent approach to moderation and to ensure that participants understand that the workshop is not the place to ask highly specific questions. Most participants will have either already experienced repression or heard of other people's experiences. Speaking about repression can lead to intimidating and detailed reports and stories. On the one hand, these stories tend to take up a lot of space and time; on the other hand, they are of little value for learning, and can even 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 where legal assistance groups/lawyers provide legal advice.

The details that trainers mention will vary depending on the respective legal framework and the types of police behaviour that participants are likely to come across. As a trainer, you should conduct relevant research before the training session to ensure you are up-to-date.

Duration, number of participants, material

- Duration: 40 mins minimum
- Number of participants: possible in a large group
- Material: pens, large sheets of paper, cards, legal advice brochure for all participants (when available)

Process and methods

At the beginning of the module, the trainer explains that there are often grey zones when it comes to legal matters; the trainer informs participants that conclusive statements about the legal consequences of a specific action are often not possible as the consequences depend on political decisions, prosecutors, judges etc. However, past experiences can be used to assess probabilities and risks. It is important to paint a realistic picture of potential risks. For example, whereas some criminal law provisions may be associated with maximum sentences that sound scary, the actual criminal sanctions (if any) that activists are likely to face in the context of nonviolent action are

usually much lower.

It is important to conclude the module with optimism, particularly due to the numerous types of repression that have been presented: repression is meant to deter people from taking action. This is its essential function. Therefore, it is important that everyone reflects on how far they are prepared to go; this should also include thinking about potential consequences and how to deal with them.

Supporting each other and providing help with legal issues are important ways of ensuring that no one is left alone with repression. Affinity groups, legal assistance groups, lawyers etc. have an important function to fulfil in this regard. It is crucial to deal with repression openly, to talk about it, to speak about fears, and to avoid becoming intimidated or isolated by repression. For example, fund raising parties can be organised to cover the costs of court cases, while also being fun and helping to raise public awareness. No one should be left to face repression alone.

Time	Objective	Method	Material
5 mins	Clarifying objectives and content of module	Input by trainer, including disclaimer	
20 mins	Relevant laws and police behaviour	Input by trainer (see below) Participants can ask questions	Posters with core terms
10 mins	Dealing with repression	As a trainer, ask participants what we can do individually and collectively against repression Collate answers and add them to the poster	Poster
5 mins	Conclusion	Point participants to additional sources of information, including where to find support after the action (if available)	

Content

General

- The basics of an action: preparation; what should be brought to the action and what should be left at home
- The function of the legal team (if it exists) 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 that we may have to overcome. At the same time, we can be at the mercy of the police during and after an action, and normally have limited means 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.

- The police occasionally try to mobilise the public and media against protests and to raise doubts among sympathisers by disseminating false information (e.g. the rebel clown army having filled their water pistols with acid)
- The media can provide a certain degree of protection during mass actions of civil disobedience. Therefore, sometimes hand-picked, trustworthy journalists may be asked to accompany an action ('embedded journalists'). The same is true when people with a certain degree of authority (e.g. members of parliament) are invited to observe an action.
- If an action has been stressful (e.g. because people have experienced violence) it is useful to spend time sharing experiences in a safe environment afterwards.

Relevant legal topics

Trainers should talk about relevant laws when participating in actions in their respective contexts. The following list comprises topics that are relevant in Germany; the list may look very different in other countries:

- Legal rules on assemblies
- Orders to leave and bans on remaining in a certain area
- Legal rules about the use of physical force by the police; the actions that they might take, e.g. leading or carrying people away, punching or kicking people and using painful grips. It can also be useful to talk about the equipment that the police may use, e.g. batons, tear gas, pepper spray, dogs, horses, water cannon vehicles, tasers or rubber bullets.
- Laws on detention/arrest as well as what to expect when detained/arrested and what people should do in this case (see also D 4 | Workshop: what to do if you are arrested?)
- The types of offences that activists can be charged with and their likely consequences (e.g. fines). These could include trespassing, rioting, destroying property, attacking police officers etc.
- How to deal with repression (e.g. talking to your affinity group, getting in touch with the legal team, hiring a lawyer, filing an appeal).

Related modules and material

D 3 | Anti-repression workshop

D 4 | Workshop: what to do if you are arrested?

Sources and further reading

Guide for activists on how to protect themselves during protests, <https://protestos.org/>

INTRODUCTION TO PART C

The following section of the handbook sets out various training schedules: one for an introductory training session, two for extended training sessions, and one for an advanced training session.

These training schedules vary in length and are composed of modules presented in Section B. The three different kinds of training address different target audiences and can be used in different situations.

The introductory training session provides a foundation for all types of actions and is generally aimed at people with little experience. The extended introductory training also provides basic knowledge and skills, but goes further. Therefore, it either explores a particular module in more detail or involves the addition of an extra module or set of modules to prepare activists for a particular action (e.g. the two modules for actions in an urban setting B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces and B 9 | Climbing over crowd barriers). The advanced training session does not usually include the basic modules on affinity groups, civil disobedience, or blockades (if it does, only very short versions of these modules are presented). The advanced training session builds on these modules and is aimed at people who have already participated in introductory training and/or have experience with actions.

We believe that certain modules are indispensable and need to be included in all types of training. Depending on the schedule, decision-making and consensus, the 5-finger tactic, and overcoming police lines should be covered in-depth wherever possible. These modules include core competencies that activists need when undertaking actions and that can be challenging to implement. As such, we recommend including these modules in advanced training sessions and conducting them in detail.

Of course, these training schedules only serve as guidance to trainers. In principle, the various modules in this handbook can be freely combined. However, it is important to ask yourself which target group a training session is intended for, and to adapt the training session to the needs and expectations of the participants.

C 1 | INTRODUCTORY TRAINING SESSION (SHORT VERSION, 3.5 H)

1. Welcoming and introduction to the training session (approx. 5 mins)

- Short greeting, introduction by the trainers and about Skills for Action
- Clarification on participation in games and exercises, see B 1 | Starting a training session
- Dealing with media coverage during training sessions (not a discussion), see A 6 | Dealing with media coverage of training sessions
- Presentation of the schedule and what it covers

2. Getting to know each other and people's expectations of the training session (approx. 10 mins)

See B 2 | Games & Co

3. Civil Disobedience (approx. 15 mins)

Briefly share experience about civil disobedience, see B 4 | Civil disobedience

4. Affinity groups (approx. 30 mins)

- Explain about and form affinity groups for the training session
- Inform participants about forming an affinity group for a future action
- See B 5 | Affinity groups

5. Decision-making and consensus (approx. 45 mins)

- Roleplay about decision-making using the affinity group formed in the training session
- Introduction to consensus and decision-making methods
- See B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

Break (ca. 15 mins)

6. 5-finger tactic and passing through police lines (approx. 45 mins)

- Introduction: What is the 5-finger tactic?
- Practice using roleplay
- See B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines

7. Blockading techniques (approx. 40 mins)

- Collating ideas: What kinds of blockades can be conducted?
- Trying out the blockading techniques in affinity groups
- See B 10 | Basic (soft) blockades

8. Action basics (approx. 15 mins)

- Keep it short
- How should you behave and what should you bring with you?
- No detailed legal advice – this should be done separately (e.g. by the legal team)
- See B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction

9. Conclusion (approx. 5 minutes)

See B 2 | Games & Co

C 2 | INTRODUCTORY TRAINING SESSION (LONG VERSION, 6.5 H)

1. Welcoming and introduction (approx. 15 mins)

- Welcome
- Trainers and Skills for Action introduce themselves
- Dealing with the media coverage during training sessions (not a discussion), see module A 6 | Dealing with media coverage of training sessions
- Presentation of schedule and what it covers
- Clarification of participation in games and exercises, see B 1 | Starting a training session
- Warm-up game, see B 2 | Games & Co

2. Getting to know each other and expectations about the training session (approx. 10 mins)

See B 2 | Games & Co

3. The aims of actions (approx. 20 mins)

Share views about the aims action(s), see B 3 | The aims of actions

4. Civil disobedience (approx. 15 mins)

Briefly share experiences about civil disobedience, see B 4 | Civil disobedience

5. Affinity groups (approx. 30 mins)

- Explain about and form affinity groups for the training session
- Inform participants about forming an affinity group for a future action
- See B 5 | Affinity groups

Break (15 minutes)

6. 5-finger tactic and overcoming police lines (approx. 60 mins)

- Introduction: What is the 5-finger tactic?
- Practice using roleplay
- See B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines

Break (15 minutes)

7. Decision-making and consensus (approx. 60 mins)

- Roleplay about decision-making using the affinity group formed in the training session
- Introduction to consensus and decision-making methods
- See B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

8. Blockading techniques (approx. 40 mins)

- Collating ideas: What kinds of blockades can be conducted?
- Trying out the blockading techniques in affinity groups
- See B 10 | Basic (soft) blockades

Break (10 minutes, as needed)

9. Repression and legal advice (approx. 30 mins)

See B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction

10. Conclusion (approx. 10 mins)

- Discuss open questions
- Game: I'm packing my bag for the action, and I am going to will take a/an ...
- See B 2 | Games & Co

C 3 | INTRODUCTORY TRAINING SESSION FOR ACTIONS IN AN URBAN SETTING (6.5 H)

1. Welcoming and introduction (approx. 15 mins)

- Welcome
- Trainers and Skills for Action introduce themselves
- Dealing with the press during training sessions (not a discussion), see module A 6 | Dealing with media coverage of training sessions
- Presentation of schedule and what it covers
- Clarification of participation in games and exercises, see B 1 | Starting a training session
- Warm-up game, see B 2 | Games & Co

2. Getting to know each other and expectations about the training session (approx. 10 mins)

See B 2 | Games & Co

3. The aims of actions (approx. 20 mins)

Share views about the aims action(s), see B 3 | The aims of actions

4. Civil disobedience (approx. 15 mins)

Briefly share experiences about civil disobedience, see B 4 | Civil disobedience

5. Affinity groups (approx. 30 mins)

- Explain about and form affinity groups for the training session
- Inform participants about forming an affinity group for a future action
- See B 5 | Affinity groups

Break (15 mins)

6. 5-finger tactic and overcoming police lines (approx. 60 mins)

- Introduction: What is the 5-finger tactic?
- Practice using roleplay
- See B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines

7. Passing through police lines in urban areas (approx. 30 mins)

- Passing through police lines in urban areas/confined spaces, see module B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces
- Climbing over crowd barriers, see B 9 | Climbing over crowd barriers

Break (40 minutes)

8. Repression and legal advice (approx. 30 mins)

See B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction

9. Blockading techniques (approx. 40 mins)

- Collating ideas: What kinds of blockades can be conducted?
- Trying out the blockading techniques in affinity groups

- See B 10 | Basic (soft) blockades

10. Decision-making and consensus (short version, approx. 40 mins)

- Roleplay about decision-making using the affinity group formed in the training session
- Introduction to consensus and decision-making methods
- See B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

11. Conclusion (approx. 10 mins)

- Discuss open questions
- Feedback and closing, see B 2 | Games & Co

C 4 | ADVANCED TRAINING SESSION

Modules that can be included in training sessions for people with more experience

B 3 | The aims of actions (approx. 15 minutes)

- Why are we conducting this action?
- Who are we addressing?
- What do we want to achieve?

B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces (approx. 45 minutes)

- Explanation: What can we do if we cannot fan out but still want to pass through a police line
- Practice using roleplay (and playing police officers or activists and then changing roles) to pass through police lines

B 9 | Climbing over crowd barriers (approx. 15 minutes)

- Explanation: How can we climb over typical police barriers?
- Practice: participants help each other to climb over the barrier

B 11 | Dealing with people on the street (approx. 45 minutes)

- Discuss: How can we explain what we are doing during sit-ins?
- Practice: roleplay with hassle lines

Specific training sessions

D 1 | Forming affinity groups workshop (approx. 45 minutes)

A workshop to form real affinity groups so that participants can go to an action together

D 2 | Organise the mob workshop (approx. 2.5 hours)

Roleplay for affinity groups to learn how to organise a group of people in a stressful situation, and how to initiate a spokes council etc.

D 3 | Anti-repression workshop (approx. 2.5 hours)

Detailed discussion about how to face repression confidently and collectively.

D 4 | Workshop: what to do if you are arrested? (up to 90 mins)

Discussion and role play on what might happen in detention and strategies for dealing with it.

D 5 | Train the trainers workshop (ideally 3 days, e.g. Thursday evening until Sunday lunchtime)

Prepare people to become action trainers themselves

D 1 | FORMING AFFINITY GROUPS WORKSHOP

Introduction

The aim of this module is to provide activists with the opportunity to join an affinity group (AG). During this workshop, it is particularly important to create an atmosphere in which people can get to know each other, feel comfortable and talk openly about their aims, hopes, fears and limits. One good way of doing so is to begin the session with some introductory games (see module B 2 | Games & Co).

This workshop can be conducted for shorter or longer periods of time depending on the situation. Experience has shown that a moderated AG workshop is very useful for people who do not belong to an AG and who have joined an action at short notice. This applies even if the workshop takes place immediately before (or during) an action and only lasts for 15 minutes. However, ideally, several workshops should be conducted before major actions, with at least 45 minutes allowed for each session.

Duration, number of participants, material

Duration: 15 mins for a very short workshop, 75 mins for the longest version of the workshop

Number of participants: can be conducted with small or large groups

Material: pens and posters

Handout: E 1 | Checklist for affinity groups

Process and methods

The longer version of the workshop includes the entire module (B5) on affinity groups that forms part of action training (see below). The workshop can be shortened if the trainer provides a lot of the input instead of collating ideas from the participants. The shortest version of the workshop involves a brief explanation of what AGs are, what they are used for and what to take into account when joining one. Trainers can help people to get to know one another by asking a few questions and encouraging participants to speak to each other and find people to form an AG with them. This workshop is based on the principle that it is always better to participate in an action as part of an AG than without one.

Duration	Aims	Method	Material
5 mins	Welcoming, introduction and overview	Introduction by trainer. If necessary, a short round where participants can state their (action) names, preferred pronouns, etc.	
10 mins	Introductory games (optional)	See Module B2	
15 - 20	Participants	As a trainer, ask 'What are AGs?'	Two posters with

mins	understand what AGs are, what are they used for, and how they work	Moderated discussion with the participants based on the following questions ‘What are AGs used for?’ and ‘How can AGs be organised on the practical level?’ See Module B5: Affinity Groups Write down the answers on posters	the heading ‘Affinity groups – The How’ and ‘Affinity groups – The Why’ Handout: Checklist for affinity groups
5 - 10 mins	Participants understand what spokes/delegate councils are and roughly understand what they involve	Input from trainers (see Module B5 and Handout E12)	If necessary, a poster illustrating a spokes/delegate council
10 - 15 mins	Participants get to know each other	Sociometry, e.g., based on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Where do you live?’ Participants line up as if they were standing on a map along a north-south and an east-west axis • Participants line up according to their experience with actions. From ‘None/hardly any experience’ to ‘I’ve forgotten how many actions I’ve been on’. Avoid hierarches between participants or enabling people to present themselves as ‘cool’ compared to others who are assumed to be ‘clueless’. • Participants line up between two poles: from ‘Very little experience with AGs’ to ‘A lot of experience with AGs’. • Limits: ‘Imagine you are on a blockade that is being cleared. How would you behave?’ Line up ranging from ‘I’d leave immediately when told to do so’ to ‘I’d let myself be carried away.’ • Depending on the time available, further questions can be asked; it is also possible for the participants to ask the questions 	
15 - 20	Participants form	Methods: see below	

mins	affinity groups		
5 mins	Conclusion, further direction	Encourage new AGs to use the checklist for affinity groups and to prepare themselves accordingly. If necessary, provide information about the next spokescouncil, training sessions, etc.	

How to find an affinity group

- People can start to look for an AG directly after or even during the sociometry, e.g. trainers can encourage participants to talk to the people around them. Trainers need to check whether participants are actually doing this, and enable those who are to continue doing so without stretching other people's patience.
- Buzz groups: people talk to each other in pairs or threes and start a conversation. These groups then add several more participants to find out whether they get along. It can be helpful if the trainer asks some questions.
- Guided conversations: participants walk around and greet each other. When a signal is sounded, they come together with one other person to share views about a previously asked question about AGs. If these participants want to form an AG with one another, they should be encouraged to stay together. If this is not the case or not the case for everyone involved, a new question should be asked, etc.
- The trainer draws an imaginary line and divides it into different sections (e.g. in the case of a sit-in: 'I'd leave when told to do so by the police', 'I'd be carried away as a parcel', 'I'd link arms/legs and make it as difficult as possible for the police to carry me away', etc.). The participants line up according to what they are prepared to do. Participants with similar intentions can then speak about forming an AG. When this method is used, the sociometry questions should not be asked.

Related modules and material

B 5 | Affinity groups

B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

E 1 | Checklist for affinity groups

D 2 | ORGANISE THE MOB WORKSHOP

Introduction

The aim of this module is to train affinity groups (AGs) to reorganise groups of between 50 and 200 people that have split up during the confusing situations that can arise during actions. If activists are able to get back together, they can continue making decisions and take further action. This module provides tips for convening and facilitating spontaneous spokescouncils (SCs) and offers participants the opportunity to practise doing so through roleplay. The module is particularly aimed at people who already have a certain level of experience, preferably including of facilitation.

Duration, number of participants, required material

Duration: approx. 2.5 hours

Number of participants: at least 3 AGs (around 15 participants)

Material: posters, cards, pens, descriptions of scenarios that can be read aloud, a map, cards providing information including about the participants' roles, and, if deemed useful, a copy of the handout " " for each AG

Process and methods

The following schedule involves using two scenarios that were developed in Germany. They are described below under 'Scenarios'. As it is important to choose scenarios that are suitable for the (local) context in which this training takes place, trainers may need to adapt them or develop your own scenarios.

Duration	Objective	Method	Material
10 mins	Getting to know one another (only necessary if the participants don't know each other)	Introductory round to find out people's names, where they are from, the group they belong to, etc. Sociometry, e.g., on the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has ever been on an action attended by lots of people or AGs but where very little communication took place between them? Who has been a delegate at a spokescouncil? Who has already moderated an SC? 	
5 mins	Form AGs	Use existing AGs. Divide anyone left over into an AG for the workshop, e.g., by counting the participants	

20 mins	Draw up guidelines for organising	<p>Ask the participants to imagine an action where several AGs and individuals have come together in one place. There is no organisation between the AGs; no spokescouncil has taken place, and it is unclear what action can be taken. What would need to be done for your AG to convene and facilitate a spokescouncil?</p> <p>Write down the answers on the cards</p> <p>Conclude by sorting the cards into a guide, for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain information: contact the people running the campaign, the information hotline and the scouts. 2. Choose a place for the SC to take place. 3. Distribute roles: facilitation, filter, AG delegates; someone to collect information, someone to walk around with a megaphone and to announce the meeting 4. Draw up at least one proposal: What is the aim of the action? What action can be taken in the current situation? 5. Convene the spokescouncil 6. Facilitate the spokescouncil 	<p>Cards and pens</p> <p>Pin wall for pinning/adhesive tape for taping things to a wall (alternative: lay them out on the floor)</p>
20 mins	Develop guidelines for spokescouncil facilitation	<p>Ask the participants how they would plan a spokescouncil.</p> <p>Write down the answers on the cards, arrange them, and add any missing information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself briefly: 'We are the AG that spontaneously decided to convene this spokescouncil'. Describe the roles. Ask whether the people present consent to you facilitating the meeting. • Ask everyone: Is everyone okay? Is anyone injured? Does anyone still need treatment? Has anyone been arrested? Is everyone accounted for, etc.? • Define the length of the SC • Ask everyone: Are only delegates present? Are all AGs represented? • Ask everyone: How many people are we in total? Delegates: How many people are in your AGs? If some 	<p>Cards and pens</p> <p>Partition wall for pinning/adhesive tape for sticking things to the wall (alternative: lay them out on the floor)</p>

		<p>people do not belong to an AG, and if there is enough time, AGs can be formed, otherwise the first thing to decide on in an SC is whether individuals are allowed to participate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask everyone: What is the current situation? If deemed necessary, collect information (but keep it brief) or have the information collector (not the facilitator) briefly describe the situation and ask whether anyone has anything to add. • An AG delegate (not the facilitator!) should put forward at least one proposal (or question). Start a discussion to see whether there are other options • Find out where the participants stand on the issue (this is NOT a vote!) • Do people need to go back to their AGs so that they can make a decision, or can the delegates make decisions/is the situation so risky that action must be taken immediately? • Agree on a time for the next SC (if needed) 	
5 mins	Break		
10 mins	Prepare roleplay: facilitation of an SC for scenario 1	<p>Describe scenario 1(Duckburg) and hang up the map of the town.</p> <p>Each AG runs through the guidelines for organising and facilitating a SC that have been compiled in the training session for their specific scenario, and prepares to facilitate an SC.</p> <p>Cards containing information (phone hotline, scouts) are only provided to some AGs afterwards by the trainer. This leads to a situation (and this often happens in reality) in which different AGs have different levels of information</p>	<p>If deemed necessary, printed descriptions of the scenario</p> <p>Printed cards containing certain information (phone hotline, scouts etc.)</p>
15 mins	Roleplay: facilitating an SC for scenario 1	<p>Select or let the group select an AG to facilitate the SC (based on what the AG has prepared)</p> <p>Provide each of the remaining participants with instructions about the role that they should play, with each acting as a delegate of a fictitious AG (allow them some time to prepare)</p>	Printed role cards

		Participants simulate the SC (trainers may have to interrupt it at some stage)	
10 mins	Reflection	<p>Ask the facilitator of the SC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think went well? • What do you think didn't go so well? • Have you got any ideas about how things could be improved? <p>Ask the other participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What parts of the facilitation went well? • What didn't go so well? • Have you got any ideas about things could be improved? <p>Ask everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was difficult when preparing the facilitation? 	
10 mins	Break		
15 mins	Prepare roleplay: facilitation of an SC for scenario 2	<p>Describe scenario 2 (Wendland)</p> <p>Each AG runs through the guidelines for organising and facilitating a SC that have been compiled in the training session for their specific scenario, and prepares to facilitate an SC.</p> <p>Cards containing information (phone hotline, scouts) are only provided to some AGs afterwards by the trainer. This leads to a situation (and this often happens in reality) in which different AGs have different levels of information</p>	<p>If deemed necessary, printed descriptions of the scenario</p> <p>Printed info cards (info phone)</p>
15 mins	Roleplay: facilitating an SC for scenario 1	<p>Select or let the group select an AG to facilitate the SC (each AG will have prepared differently)</p> <p>The trainer provides each of the remaining participants with instructions about the role that they should play with each acting as a delegate of a fictitious AG (allow them some time to prepare)</p> <p>Participants simulate the SC</p>	Printed role cards
10 mins	Reflection	<p>Ask the facilitator of the SC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think went well? • What do you think didn't go so well? • Have you got any ideas about how things could be improved? 	

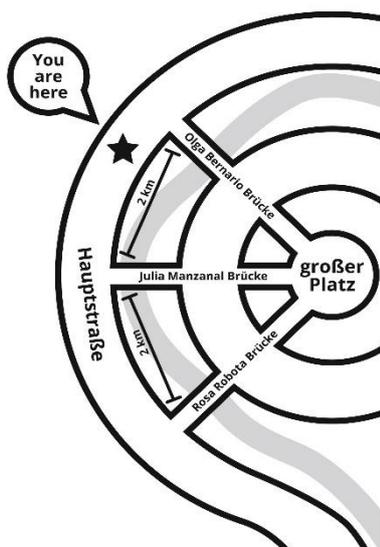
		<p>Ask the other participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What parts of the facilitation went well? • What didn't go so well? • Have you got any ideas about things could be improved? 	
10 mins	<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Feedback about the workshop and suggested methods</p>	<p>Lightning round</p> <p>How do you feel? Does anyone have any questions? What are you going to take with you from this workshop?</p>	

Scenarios

The following describes two scenarios based on experiences in Germany. Trainers should check whether they are suitable for their context, and, if necessary, adapt them or develop their own scenarios.

Scenario 1: Duckburg

You are in Duckburg. It's a nice sunny day. You want to prevent a Nazi rally from taking place, but the Nazis aren't marching along the announced route. Several AGs that are similar in size to your own have left the planned route of the antifascist demonstration and are travelling east to block the Nazi route. You are with other groups on the main street (marked * on the map). You have a map of the town that mainly shows the river dividing the town in half, and the bridges. You have been provided with the number of a hotline to phone for information, and a scout is close by.



Information cards: Information from the hotline and the scouts

Hotline: Scenario 1 The Nazis are gathering on the eastern side of the river in the town's main square. It may still be possible to cross the river via Roza Robotka Bridge.	Hotline: Scenario 1 The Nazis are gathering on the eastern side of the river in the town's main square. It may still be possible to cross the river via Roza Robotka Bridge.
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Hotline: Scenario 1 The Nazis are gathering on the eastern side of the river in the town's main square. It may still be possible to cross the river via Roza Robotka Bridge.	Hotline: Scenario 1 The Nazis are gathering on the eastern side of the river in the town's main square. It may still be possible to cross the river via Roza Robotka Bridge.
Hotline: Scenario 1 Olga Benario Bridge: water cannon has arrived, but the bridge is wide and there are only about 10 police officers standing on it. Julia Manzanal Bridge: 10 police officers with dogs are on the bridge; there is a chance of crossing this bridge.	Hotline: Scenario 1 Olga Benario Bridge: water cannon has arrived, but the bridge is wide and there are only about 10 police officers standing on it. Julia Manzanal Bridge: 10 police officers with dogs are on the bridge; there is a chance of crossing this bridge.
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Role cards for AG delegates

Your AG is from the area and you know that the best route to the main square is via Julia Manzanal Bridge.	Your AG doesn't want any contact with dogs.
Your AG is not in the mood for walking the long way to the third bridge.	Your AG does not trust the phone hotline.
Your AG agrees with some of the things that are being said.	Your AG does not know the area, and does not want to be in the front row.
Your AG doesn't really want to be in the front row, but would take on this role if absolutely no-one else will.	Your AG doesn't want to waste time talking; you want to get moving now!

Scenario 2: Wendland

You are in the rural area of Wendland, surrounded by fields and woodland. It's cold and rainy. You want to block a nuclear waste transport. The nuclear waste is being transported by train, so you'll have to get on the tracks to do so. The first attempt to get on the tracks using the 5-finger tactic failed as the fingers fell apart and people were injured. Around 100 people are meeting in the woods within sight of the tracks. Police officers are guarding the tracks and standing ten meters apart.

Information cards: Information from the hotline

Hotline: Scenario 2: Scouts are in your area and they can lead you to a good position.	Hotline: Scenario 2: Scouts are in your area and they can lead you to a good position.
Hotline: Scenario 2: Scouts are in your area and they can lead you to a good position.	Hotline: Scenario 2: Scouts are in your area and they can lead you to a good position.

Role cards for AG delegates

Your AG wants to get on the tracks straight away.	Your AG is cold. You are wet and tired, and don't feel like doing anything more today.
Your AG wants to wait for the scouts and find another place to go to.	Your AG is prepared to form the front row.
Your AG wants to get away from the tracks and build barricades on forest paths.	You haven't got any experience with the 5-finger tactic/passing through police lines and are sceptical. Your AG doesn't want to be in the front row.

D 3 | ANTI-REPRESSION WORKSHOP

Introduction

The aim of this workshop is to develop a self-confident, active approach to collectively dealing with repression. The workshop encourages people to think and speak about repression while demonstrating that it is both possible and makes sense to prepare and ready yourself for repression. In order to do so, the workshop demonstrates approaches that can be used to deal with repression in its diverse forms.

It is particularly important to establish an open and trusting atmosphere at the beginning of this workshop. This can mean asking participants who speak too much, or who are keen to emphasise their own experiences of repression, respectfully but firmly to provide space for other participants.

If the workshop takes place in a context in which the participants have probably already faced stark experiences of repression, consider in advance what impact this could have on the workshop and how you should approach this situation. There may also be other reasons to adapt the following approach to ensure that it reflects the needs of your group. It is important to conclude the module with optimism; repression is meant to deter people from taking action (see also the recommendations for trainers in B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction).

Duration, number of participants, material required

Duration: at least 2.5 hours

Number of participants: no more than 20 to 25 people; so that an atmosphere of trust can be established

Material: pens, cards and paper for posters

Process and methods

Duration	Objective	Method	Material
5 mins	Participants understand aims and programme of the workshop	<p>Explain that the workshop aims to provide approaches that can be used to deal with repression and that participants can apply in their political contexts.</p> <p>Encourage participants to talk about their experiences, but also to consider whether they are comfortable sharing their experiences with the group.</p> <p>Introduce the programme for the workshop.</p>	Poster explaining the programme for the workshop

15 mins	<p>Getting to know the group's and each other's experiences</p> <p>Conclusion: We have all experienced with repression and have discovered ways to deal with it!</p>	<p>Round where people state their name, the town they live in, the group they belong to, etc.</p> <p>Sit/stand in a circle.</p> <p>As a trainer, name specific forms of repression; people who have already experienced them stand up briefly/come to the centre of the circle. Name the typical forms of repression found in the context in question (e.g., breaking up demonstrations, arrests, etc.).</p>	
15 mins	<p>Learning about people's motivations, political views, etc.</p> <p>Make people's motivations for participating in an action clear.</p> <p>Enable participants to understand their own reasons for doing so.</p>	<p>Participants stand in a circle.</p> <p>Whoever wants to describe their motivation, reasons, or views, can stand in the centre of the circle and do so. The participants then stand closer to or further away from the centre of the circle, depending on how much they agree with what has been said.</p> <p>As a trainer, write down the participants' main reasons on cards and hang the cards up on the wall.</p> <p>If possible, and particularly if the group is preparing for a specific action, ask 'Why am I going to protest against...?'</p>	Cards and pen, tape or similar for hanging them up
1 min	Establish a definition of repression for the workshop	Present a definition of repression on a poster: 'Repression is what prevents us from doing what we want to do politically'.	Poster with definition
15 mins	Understand that diverse forms of repression exist	<p>World café where 2 to 3 participants speak for 5 mins about 'What specific forms of repression can I think of?'</p> <p>Participants write the results on cards and hang their cards on the wall; group the cards if necessary.</p> <p>If necessary, differentiate between 'social' (family, loss of friends, etc.) and 'political' repression (state repression).</p>	Cards and pen, tape or similar for hanging them up

		As a trainer, provide a brief overview of the cards, but only go into detail if uncertainties need to be cleared up.	
10 mins	Understand factors that make people worried about repression	<p>Input by trainers with poster</p> <p>Repression worries me...</p> <p>... if I don't know what will happen/am unsure about the consequences</p> <p>... I have to deal with repression by myself.</p> <p>... my health/livelihood is threatened.</p> <p>... I feel powerless.</p> <p>... I feel pressure to have to change/can no longer be myself.</p> <p>If more time is available, this can be done as a round/ world café.</p>	Poster showing factors
10 mins	Break		
Optional: 15 mins	Relaxing and getting to know relaxation exercises (grounding/centring/ etc.)	Depending on the trainer's skills, a small practical exercise can be conducted at this point.	Fantasy journey, grounding, centring etc.
30 mins	<p>Participants become aware about (re)sources that help people deal with repression</p> <p>Participants are convinced that they can actively deal with repression</p>	<p>Collect ideas by having the participants call them out during a round, take notes on cards.</p> <p>Group into five areas, as shown below; add as needed.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>(This can also be done in small groups, before coming back together with everyone.)</p>	Poster and pen
5-10 mins for each type of repression	Participants understand legal options to deal with different form of repression	Input by trainers, depending on the types of repression that are likely in the respective context, e.g., arrests, raids.	Optional: posters with information

5 mins	Optional: Transfer to political contexts of participants	Invite participants to talk about repression in their own contexts, and particularly about the resources available to them. Question: 'What can you do to ensure that repression and resources are discussed in your group?' Briefly collect ideas.	
15 mins	Closing	Short round: 'What am I going to take with me from the training session?'	

Content

Below are some potential answers to the question 'What helps me deal well with repression? What helps me handle repression?'. If participants do not mention these points, trainers can share them with the group.

- *Beliefs and ideals*: My belief that I am doing the right thing, that 'I am right', the meaningfulness of my actions, my determination, the knowledge that my actions are necessary, that there is no other way, while still remaining true to myself.
- *Support and solidarity*: Knowledge of experiences of repression and solidarity; solidarity expressed by other activists; unexpected solidarity expressed by other people; support even in supposedly apolitical cases (e.g., outside of actions, emotional support, listening, caring).
- *Ability to act*: Maintaining my ability to act and exercise control over myself despite repression or the threat of repression; information about types of repression and what will probably happen; my rights and possibilities; my unpredictability; legal assistance; my inner calm; my ability to act even in the face of repression: singing, playing games, calling out slogans, having fun in custody; talking to other people about rights and behaviour when arrested; using court cases for political impact and publicity; etc.
- *Other people's experiences*: Understanding that other people have been through the same thing; speaking openly about our experiences.
- *Support and trust*: The knowledge no-one will turn their back on me merely because I made a mistake when I was faced by repression.

D 4 | WORKSHOP: WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE ARRESTED?

Introduction

Police may react to demonstrations or protests by taking activists into custody and/or making arrests. This module is intended to provide participants with advice about what is likely to happen if people are taken into custody and which laws apply in these cases. The module gathers ideas and encourages participants to think about what can be done if they or other people are taken into custody with the aim of reducing feelings of helpless and enabling them to act individually, or better still, collectively and supportively.

The module is based on the experience that people are often not (particularly well) prepared for being taken into custody; being taken into custody can lead to both physical and psychological stress and even traumatic experiences. However, it is also important to realise that many people have made positive experiences in custody and have even enjoyed themselves at least to a certain extent. This module is aimed at enabling people to take individual and collective decisions about how to act in police custody. Moreover, it encourages the participants to consider which actions they can take, and what they are likely to need whilst in custody. Due to the fact that they cover similar subjects, this module can be combined well with module B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction or D 3 | Anti-repression workshop.

The laws governing when and how the police are able to take people into custody or make arrests, how people should be dealt with in custody, and the actual way in which the police do so are extremely different throughout the world. Trainers should know about these issues before conducting training. Therefore, we can only deal with some of the issues that are likely to crop up in the majority of cases.

Duration, number of participants, material required

Duration: as input/discussion 30 – 45 minutes; roleplay lasting up to 90 minutes

Number of participants: also possible with a small number of participants

Material: posters, cards, pens

Process and methods

Time	Aim	Methods	Material
5 mins	Opening; participants understand the aims and content of the module	Input from trainers	
15 mins	Legal regulations relating to custody/arrest	Input from trainers	If necessary, pre-prepared posters listing the most important points
15 mins	Roleplay	Roleplay (see below)	Cards explaining roles (or the trainer explains a role to each participant)

			If possible, create a space in the room that can be used as a 'holding area', e.g., by marking out a 'cell' using chairs
10 mins	Debriefing	<p>Ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel in the situation? • What went well? What didn't go so well? • What would you have liked the group to have done differently? 	
20 mins	Sharing experiences about police custody	<p>Ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What experience have you made in custody? • What did you try to do and how did it go? <p>Add anything that is missing.</p>	If necessary, visualise strategies on posters
5 mins	Conclusion and transfer	<p>Ask participants what they will take home from the module</p> <p>Encourage participants to think about the needs that they are likely to have in custody and the strategies that they would like to try out.</p>	

It is crucial to ensure that the participants have a realistic picture about custody and are not put off by reports about particularly negative experiences. Moreover, it is useful to emphasise the different actions that people can take while in custody and to explain how they can cope with stressful experiences.

Variations

- If you do not have very much time, gather answers and experiences with the participants using relevant questions (see below under 'Content'). Add and explain anything that is missing. If more time is available, roleplay can be carried out, as this enables the participants to consider the issues in more depth.
- If you have more time, the roleplay can be repeated and participants can be encouraged to implement what they have learned during the first round.

Roleplay

Trainers should adapt the following scenario and roles to the local context.

Scenario

You are sitting together in a cell in a police station. You were blockading a Nazi demonstration and were taken into custody by the police. It is unclear how long you will remain in custody. Some people do not have any ID with them and do not intend to tell the police who they are.

Roles

Possible roles:

- You are in a really good mood; you laugh a lot and do not take things seriously.
- You are exhausted and just want to sleep.
- You want to sing with the others to stay in good spirits.
- You do not have any ID with you and are wondering whether you should tell the police who you are because you may not be released otherwise.
- You are really hungry and thirsty.
- You need the toilet.
- Your arm hurts because the police were really rough when they evicted your blockade.

Further roles that can be used depending on the group:

- You are really nervous and on the verge of having a panic attack because the tiny holding cell makes you feel claustrophobic.
- You are scared and want to get out of the cell as soon as possible.
- You want to annoy the police and so you make a lot of noise.
- You do not know anyone in the group and you have a bad feeling about this.
- You have already been in custody many times before and you think you know better than everyone else about what is happening/what is going to happen. The other people just haven't got a clue.
- You are happy that you were arrested because you think it will increase the political impact of the blockade: 'The police and government are going to get really bad press because so many people have been arrested.'

Roles are assigned by drawing a card from a pack. Participants can play their roles freely; there is no need to exaggerate when acting. The roles should be assigned multiple times. Everyone should try to play their role as best as they can.

The trainer stops the roleplay after a certain time.

Large groups can be divided into several smaller groups that conduct the roleplay together. It is also possible for 8 to 10 participants to take part in the roleplay, while the others watch.

Content

Some of the information that should be provided includes:

Legal rules governing police custody/what actually happens in custody

- Under which conditions can the police take people into custody and/or make arrests in the respective legal context?
- What rights do activists have in custody/after an arrest?
- What can activists expect in custody? Where will they be held? How can they expect the police to behave? Will food, drink and medical care be provided? What chance will they have of contacting someone on the outside, etc.?
- Activists may also be questioned and subjected to identification procedures or physical searches in custody. How can activists deal with this situation?
- Holding cells can be tapped, so do not talk about past or future actions whilst in custody.
- As phones may be taken from activists, activist should either not take one with them or encrypt it beforehand and switch it off. Encryption only works when a phone is switched off. In some countries, anonymous SIM cards are available. These can then be used together with (cheap) phones that are only used for actions and that cannot be traced back to any particular activist. These phones should also be encrypted wherever possible. No contact information should be stored on them and they should only be used for actions. If phones are stored in a suitable protective cover (a Faraday bag), it is impossible to locate them even if they are switched on.
- It is usually advisable for activists not to talk to the police about their actions or anything they are charged with while in custody. They should not sign any documents, either. Anyone who has decided to leave their ID at home should avoid accidentally stating their name, city of origin, etc.

Dealing with people's needs whilst in custody

It is important to realise that different people can have very different needs whilst in custody. It is essential that this is taken into account and that people accept each other's limits. Needs may include:

- Rest, relaxation, more information about what is happening, control of the situation, stress reduction
- Dealing with anger and frustration about being held in custody and the treatment received by the police
- Dealing with fears and the feeling of being at someone else's mercy
- Medical treatment
- Fighting boredom, remaining in good spirits

Therefore, it may be difficult to reconcile different people's needs: it is impossible for someone to get the quiet they need if other people are shouting slogans. As such, it is important to talk to each another and to understand each other's needs. This involves finding a compromise and taking everyone into account, especially people who are feeling low.

Examples of how to behave in custody:

- Quiet and relaxing behaviour: storytelling, singing, games, massaging, meditating etc., sleeping (if possible). Some people may feel more comfortable if they know that someone else intends to stay awake while they are sleeping and will wake them up if need be.
- Putting pressure on the police: being loud, making noise, shouting slogans, using passive resistance when the police attempt to remove people from the holding cell (for finger

printing/photographing etc.). It is important to consider how the police may react if this is done, as well as the individual and collective consequences of doing so. It can be useful to discuss these issues beforehand as a group.

On release

- Can legal or political action be taken against the fact that people were held in custody/arrested?
- Is there any emotional/psychological support available to help people deal with their experiences? This can include sharing what happened with an affinity group, and, if necessary, the use of specialist services.

D 5 | TRAIN THE TRAINERS WORKSHOP

Introduction

Train the Trainers workshops (TtT) are very important to Skills for Action since we also developed out of a TtT. Since then, we have used our own TtTs to help numerous activists develop the capacities to facilitate action and blockade training, and this has also continuously expanded our network.

TtTs help participants to develop the skills to facilitate action and blockade training workshops themselves. In addition to providing relevant information, TtTs focus on methods and communication skills, the political and emancipatory approaches associated with action training, and the concepts behind Skills for Action.

If TtT workshops are to be successful, it is essential that they foster a trusting atmosphere between members of the group and that the participants have a certain level of experience. When announcing TtT workshops, we always make it clear that TtTs are aimed at people from political backgrounds with at least some experience in civil disobedience. Ideally, participants should have already participated in action/blockading training. In some cases, we even stipulate that the participants need to belong to a specific group and/or to have taken part in action/blockade training sessions.

In our experience, TtTs are best provided by a team of between two and four trainers that is as diverse as possible. This has several advantages. First, it enables different perspectives and experiences to be represented during the workshop. Second, different participants are better addressed by different training styles; third, it enables the workload to be better distributed. Finally, it also illustrates the point that Skills for Action training sessions are ideally conducted by a team of trainers.

The important role of feedback in TtTs

Our TtTs provide training by example: the participants take turns to facilitate the various methods, exercises and games conducted during the training themselves. This enables them to undertake (elements) of training, and, therefore, to try out the trainer role and to receive feedback while doing so.

The modules included in a TtT are generally implemented in the same manner as they would be during a 'normal' Skills for Action training session. However, at the end of each module, feedback is provided to the participants in the training role, in addition to a phase of meta-reflection.

The participants in the training role receive feedback from other participants and the TtT trainers. This feedback is intended to provide encouragement, address any issues that might have cropped up, and to suggest improvements that could be made. The feedback is based on the following questions:

- What did I like? What can I learn from? (It is important to ensure that detailed feedback is provided here; some trainers call this feedback a 'warm shower'.)
- What didn't I like so much?
- How could I have done things differently?

Meta-reflection involves thinking about and discussing the content, process and, above all, the methods used during the workshop. 'Could the schedule have been drawn up differently or

implemented in a better way? What are the points that we especially need to focus on when applying a particular method?’ This phase is referred to as meta-reflection because action training modules always conclude with a phase of reflection. Therefore, it is important to separate these different levels of reflection from one another. This can be done symbolically, such as by pretending to put on a ‘meta-reflection hat’ or by ‘taking off’ an imaginary suit so as to separate each role. During TtTs, participants learn on several levels: by trying things out and receiving feedback, but also by observing the approaches used by the TtT trainers.

Applying the new training skills

The development of new training modules has proven an important aspect of TtTs: the participants and trainers use upcoming actions and issues to decide together which training modules would be useful in these cases and how the methods could be applied. In doing so, new trainers learn how to develop scenarios and methods in line with the approach used by Skills for Action. This involves trying things out, gaining experience and thinking things through. It also helps new trainers to realise that they too have their own skills and the ability to develop new training approaches. This can be especially important in international TtTs as it results in new scenarios and modules that are relevant to a particular context.

In order to enable the participants to apply what they have learned, it is a good idea to ensure that they facilitate a training session together with a more experienced trainer soon after the workshop. Arrangements to do so can be made towards the end of the session.

It is also important to include new trainers in any existing networks, or to establish new ones, e.g., email lists (see also A1).

Preparation

In the run-up to a TtT, the trainers or local organisers need to:

- Find a suitable space to conduct the TtT
- Organise catering and accommodation
- Organise evening entertainment (e.g., relevant films)
- Email the participants useful information (including the times when the workshop will start/finish; directions; costs; a reminder that active participation is expected; a note that TtTs are for people from political backgrounds with experience in civil disobedience and, ideally, who have already participated in an action training workshop etc.)

TtTs require the same materials that are needed during ‘normal’ action training, this includes poster-sized paper/flipchart paper, cards, adhesive tape and pens.

All of the participants should be provided with a Skills for Action training handbook; the modules and methods described in the handbook also serve as a template for implementing the modules during TtTs.

Schedule

It is always worth drawing up a detailed schedule for a TtT and explaining the tasks that each trainer will take on during the workshop.

It is a good idea to offer TtTs from Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon (or with the same amount of time on other days of the week). At the very least, they should be run from Friday in the early afternoon to Sunday afternoon. The following sets out a schedule for a TtT from Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon. If a different period is used, the schedule will have to be adapted accordingly.

It is important to incorporate games throughout the TtT, and trainers should encourage the participants to run these activities themselves. Participants can either choose their own activities or use some of the options described in module B 2 | Games & Co.

All TtTs need to include certain modules that provide participants with the skills to facilitate basic action and blockade training. These are:

B 4 | Civil disobedience

B 5 | Affinity groups

B 6 | Decision-making and consensus

B 7 | The five-finger-tactic and passing through police lines

B 8 | Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces

B 10 | Basic (soft) blockades

B 12 | Repression and legal advice: Overview and introduction

Thursday

- Welcoming and organisational matters
- Dealing with the media during training workshops
- Short introductory round
- Game
- Get to know each other in more detail (personal details, group membership, experience with training and various activities, etc.)
- Questions about the participants' hopes, concerns and anything special that they can offer during the works
 - Groups of two participants reflect on what they expect/hope for, any concerns that they might have (i.e., things that shouldn't happen), anything special that they can contribute (e.g., yoga classes in the mornings etc.)
 - Participants write their expectations/hopes on yellow cards, their concerns on red cards, and use green cards to note anything special that they can offer
 - Everyone then presents their cards; these are placed on a wall/on the floor etc.
 - The trainers then explain the schedule, make any necessary adjustments, and, if applicable, ensure that the participants understand which expectations cannot be met
- Presentation about Skills for Action and/or the respective local trainer network or collective and the history of action training
- Hopes about the time spent together
 - A brief moment of reflection for the participants: 'What is important for you in terms of our time spent during training?'
 - Collect these ideas on a poster as part of discussion circle

- Trainers add anything that they feel is missing (e.g., voluntariness, error-friendliness, personal responsibility)
- It is important that everything is clear. Ask the participants: 'Have you noticed anything, for example, shows that the workshop is being conducted in an error-friendly manner?'
- You can look at the cards during the morning check-in and judge the mood of the participants to see whether their wishes are being implemented
- Use of hand signals
- Training workshops to prepare for actions and for mobilisation – training workshops as emancipatory spaces for learning and self-empowerment including the goals of action training: presentation by the trainer or gather ideas with participants. This can be left out if there is not enough time.
- Spend end of the day together

Friday

- Check-in/spend the beginning of day together/organisational matters relevant to the day
- The role and tasks of a trainer: presentation using a list/poster or gather answers to the questions 'What is the role of a trainer? What are the tasks of a trainer?' Trainers add anything that is missing/provide comments
- Distribute the participants to the training modules (in small groups); include preparation time
- Civil disobedience
- Affinity groups
- Decision-making and consensus
- Spend the end of the day together

Saturday

- Check-in/spend the beginning of day together/organisational matters relevant to the day
- The 5-finger tactic and passing through police lines
- Simple blockading techniques with the body
- Dealing with police lines in narrow spaces
- Overview and introduction to repression and legal advice
- Depending on needs and the time available: additional modules such as B 9 | Climbing over crowd barriers or B 11 | Dealing with people on the street
- Spend the end of the day together

Sunday

- Check-in/spend the beginning of day together/organisational matters relevant to the day
- Depending on needs and the time available: develop new modules including training scenarios and methods
- Depending on needs and the time available: try out the new modules with the whole group; feedback and feasibility assessments
- Depending on needs and the time available: clarify anything that is unclear (can be done in small groups)
- Discussion about upcoming trainings and relevant dates for groups of experienced and non-experienced trainers

- Networking – share contacts and, if need be, network with other trainers or networks
- Conclusion/evaluation: briefly introduce the evaluation methods that are available for training workshops
- Overall evaluation of the TtT

E 1 | CHECKLIST FOR AFFINITY GROUPS

Forming an affinity group (AG)

- Possible criteria for the formation of an AG: 1) Same/similar action level (what exactly does everyone want to do during the action? What level of confrontation are people comfortable with?) 2) Members of the AG already know one another well and trust each other.
- Groups of people with a similar level of experience have advantages, but it is helpful to enable inexperienced people to participate in experienced AGs

AGs should prepare for an action by:

- Participating in action or blockade training as an AG, as this helps people to get to know each another better and to practice behaviour and decision-making etc.
- Practicing fast consensus-based decision-making.
- Gathering information about the expected scenario, the surroundings, and the things that activists should bring with them.

AGs should discuss:

- Previous experiences; fears, aims, motivations, and the needs and requirements of individual members in the context of the action
- Names and dates of birth (in case the legal team needs to be called).
- Addresses, phone numbers or other ways of contacting each other (to get in touch later, and in case of legal consequences).
- Medical conditions/issues.
- Availability (How much time does everyone have?).
- Individual and collective limits in terms of the action: it is not necessary to reach a final decision on this issue before the action takes place, but you should have an understanding of how far everyone is willing to go. It may be useful for the group to plan to divide at some point, so that the whole AG does not have to leave if some members reach their limits.
- Possible repression and legal consequences, and how to deal with these issues collectively.

AGs should agree on:

- A buddy system: two people stay together during an action, no matter what – particularly if it is not possible for the whole AG to do so. If the two people are of the same gender they may be able to stay together if they are arrested or taken into custody.
- Discuss and agree on situations in which the AG will split up or be dissolved.
- Participation in the spokes' or delegates' council as part of the overall coordination of the action (alternating delegates or the same delegate?).
- A name for the affinity group (an unusual word that can easily be called out and that is clear and easy to understand), so that people's real names do not have to be used. This is also a faster way of getting the group back together if it does split up.

- Decision-making (e.g. consensus, voting, delegating certain decisions).
- Hand signs that you can use for communicating in hectic and stressful situations (e.g., pointing in directions while running; or to indicate that you want to ‘come together to discuss something’, etc.).
- Meeting points for before, during and after the action.
- Division of tasks, depending on the action and the group, e.g., one person has the map, one person has a first aid kit, another provides information (via a ticker, Twitter, a phone line etc.).
- Behaviour towards the police.
- Behaviour towards other people or groups who do things during the action that do not reflect your ideas, needs or the action consensus.
- Ideally, a way of/time for evaluating the action afterwards.

AGs should evaluate and review the action together

- What did everyone feel like as part of the AG? How well did the action go?
- What worked well? What did not?
- Has there been any repression, or could repression still happen? Agree on what to do in case repression does occur (such as swapping contact details to stay in touch).

Source: Skills for Action, Action Training Manual, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

E 2 | CONSENSUS

A consensus takes into account the interests and needs of everyone involved in a decision as far as possible and comprises a group attempt to develop a collective solution. A consensus is reached by listening to each other and working together on proposals, especially with people whose ideas differ from our own. Consensus does not only involve a different procedure than other types of decision-making (notably majority voting), but also a different form of communication.

Consensus decision-making is:

- cooperative, integrative and solution-oriented.
- creative. A number of motivated people participate; different concerns and ideas can be heard and are taken seriously.
- participatory. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the decision-making process.
- activating. If everyone takes a decision together, implementation becomes a lot easier.
- a way of decision-making that can foster interaction, help develop new approaches and strengthen a group's team spirit.
- respectful of the needs and concerns of everyone involved.
- not about finding a weak compromise, but an approach that helps develop a nuanced picture of various opinions.

Checking levels of consensus

Consensus decision-making enables us to develop a nuanced picture of the opinions that exist within a group. If the group wants to test a proposal for consensus, the facilitator can ask everyone to demonstrate their positions with a show of hands.

- Full approval or support
- Minor concern
- Major concern
- Abstention: I cannot or do not want to take a position on the proposal. Yet, if necessary, I will help implement the decision taken.
- Standing aside: I cannot support the proposal, but I do not want to prevent the group from adopting it. I 'stand aside' and will not help implement it.
- Veto: this proposal is unacceptable, since it contradicts our group's shared values or fundamental principles (like an action consensus), endangers people etc.

Tips for facilitating consensus decision-making processes

- In order to establish whether a consensus can be reached about a certain proposal, facilitators should not merely ask whether people support a proposal, ('Who agrees?'), but also whether anyone has any reservations/disagrees with the proposal ('Does anyone have concerns?').

- Arriving at a consensus often involves making a proposal, the facilitator testing for consensus, and abandoning or adapting a proposal until one is found that the group can accept.
- Using the categories below helps the group gain a clear picture of how strong and viable a proposal is and who would support its implementation.

Typical problems when trying to find a consensus

If a real consensus is to be found, it is essential that the people involved are not afraid of expressing their opinions frankly and openly.

- A ‘fake consensus’ may arise if people agree to a proposal that they do not actually support. This may occur because people want to speed up the process or because some people are more willing than others to step back instead of having their opinions heard.
- Although it is important to ask participants whether they approve of a proposal, it is also crucial to ask whether they have concerns about or disagree with the proposal; otherwise, these views can easily be overlooked.
- Consensus decision-making means dealing with the challenge of involving everyone who wants to or will have to implement the decision.
- Arriving at a consensus can be a very long and bumpy ride. Consensus decision-making can also take more time than other forms of decision-making (e.g., majority voting). Practice and experience can help groups learn about and ‘own’ consensus decision-making processes.

Source: Skills for Action, Action Training Manual, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

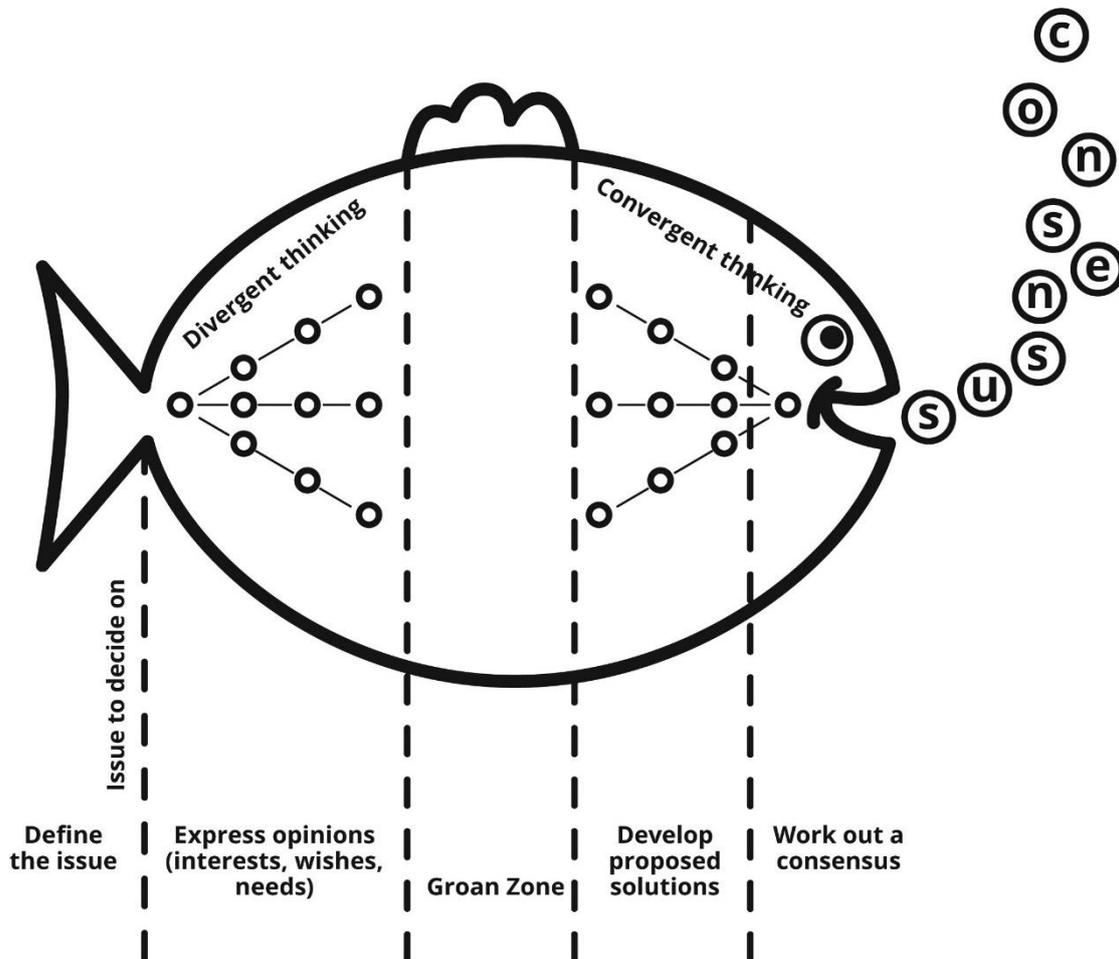
E 3 | THE CONSENSUS FISH

Divergent thinking

- develop alternatives
- enable a free and open discussion for all
- collate different points of view
- do not wrap the problem up in logic

Convergent thinking

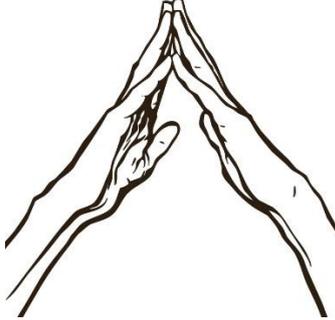
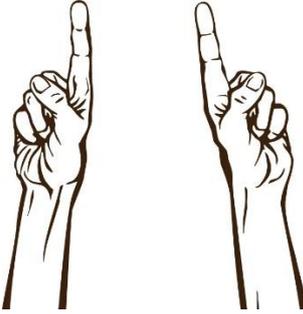
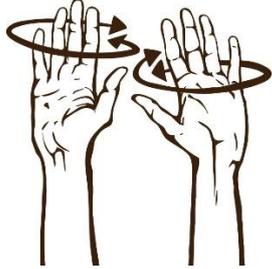
- evaluate alternatives
- summarise key points
- sort ideas into categories
- come to a general conclusion

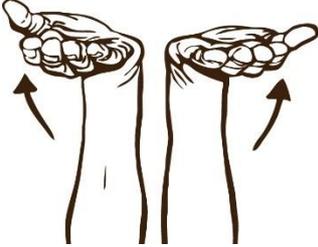
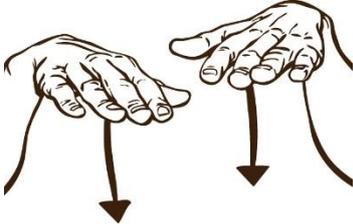
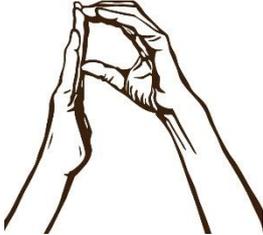


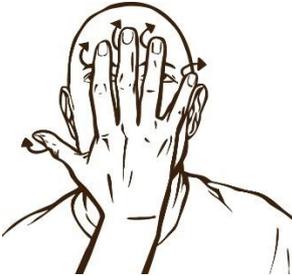
Source: Werkstatt für Gewaltfreie Aktion Baden, Handbuch zur gewaltfreien Entscheidungsfindung, 2004

Translation by Skills for Action, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

E 4 | HAND SIGNALS FOR MEETINGS

<p>'Meeting! Come to the meeting!'</p>	
<p>'I want to say something' or 'I want to ask something'</p>	
<p>'I have a direct answer to the question that you just asked and can answer briefly'</p>	
<p>'I agree with what has just been said. I like this idea/support the proposal'</p>	
<p>'I disagree with what has just been said. I don't like this idea/don't support the proposal'</p>	

<p>'Veto! I am completely against this idea/this suggestion out of principle!'</p>	
<p>'Please, speak louder. It's hard to understand you'</p>	
<p>'Calm down, stay matter-of-fact, take it easy' or 'Please speak more slowly. I can't keep up'</p>	
<p>'I don't understand. I need a translation' or 'I'm still interpreting, please wait a moment'</p>	
<p>'Please be quiet. Quiet!' ('Stop talking!')</p>	
<p>'I have a suggestion about how we can continue the discussion'</p>	

<p>'I need a break' or 'Let's pause for a moment. I have a very important organisational point that can't wait.'</p>	 <p>A line drawing of a hand with the index finger pointing upwards and the palm facing downwards, held horizontally.</p>
<p>'I understand what you are saying. Come to the point. You are repeating yourself and going around in circles' or 'I think we are going around in circles'</p>	 <p>A line drawing of two hands held together in a circular motion, with a curved arrow indicating the direction of movement.</p>
<p>'I'm confused. I don't get it. I don't understand what this is about.'</p>	 <p>A line drawing of a hand with fingers spread, held up to the forehead, indicating confusion.</p>

Source: Skills for Action, Action Training Manual, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>, original source: <https://diskussionshandzeichen.wordpress.com/materialdownloads/>

E 5 | DEALING WITH THREATENING SITUATIONS

The following provides advice for dealing with threatening situations. We recommend that you prepare for threatening situations by practising in safe settings and by speaking to people in your affinity group. This will help you better understand your own abilities and limits, and you can also discuss the issue of safety/protection within the group. Doing so also helps groups to be better prepared for dangerous situations. Although the view that ‘Nothing will happen anyway!’ might sound enticing, it merely means that no-one will know what to do if something actually does happen.

1. Be prepared!

Make sure you know about possible threats that are close to your location (whether you are staying in a camp or a house, etc.) and look for contact people. Have you thought about how you might react in different threatening situations? How are individuals in the group likely to react and what reaction would they like to see from the group as a whole?

2. Stay calm!

Try not to panic; avoid making hasty movements, because these can provoke reflex counter-reactions and escalate the situation. Keep a clear head and try to gain an overview of what is happening: How many people are involved? What do they want? How willing do they appear to use violence? Is alcohol playing a role in the situation? Who is close by, and who can help? Check whether anyone in your group is panicking, and how everyone in the group is feeling.

3. Get active!

Try not to become paralyzed by fear! Fear can slow down the speed at which you can make decisions.

4. Don't take on the role of the victim!

Take the initiative and make your opinion very clear, e.g. ‘Leave us alone!’ Consider whether you should record a threatening situation. If you decide to do so, tell everyone what you are doing, e.g. ‘We are filming you making these threats!’

5. Maintain contact with the attackers

Establish/maintain eye contact and communication with the attackers. But also try to keep an overview of the situation.

6. Talk and listen!

Make sure that you speak loudly, calmly and clearly! Listen to what the attackers are saying. You can learn a lot about their intentions by doing so.

7. Do not threaten or insult the attackers!

Criticize their behaviour, but do not be degrading.

8. Wherever possible, avoid any form of physical contact!

Physical contact usually involves crossing a person's personal limits and can lead to further aggression.

9. Ask for help!

If bystanders are nearby, speak to them directly and ask them to help you, giving specific instructions: ‘Hey, you in the red jacket! Can you call.../get...’.

10. Be realistic!

Considered and calm action is far better than seemingly heroic deeds or taking incalculable risks.

Source: IJGD, adapted by Skills for Action, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

E 6 | TIPS FOR ORGANISING ACTION TRAINING SESSIONS

Skills for Action has a website and an email address that people can use to find out more information and to book training sessions. However, the following sets out a number of points that regularly come up and the have proven useful for organisers of training sessions; different points may be relevant in other countries.

Announcing a training workshop

- Before publicising a workshop, contact the trainer to make sure that the information you are providing is correct and that expectations can be met; this also helps ensure that organisers and trainers do not face repression.
- It is particularly important to clearly state how long the workshop will last for. Doing so enables participants to ensure that they can stay for the entire training session. There are several reasons why it does not make sense to participate in a small section of a workshop, or to arrive late or leave early. This should be made clear when publicising the event.

Space and materials

- Workshops need suitable spaces. The space needs to be large enough to accommodate the expected number of participants, as well as the practical exercises. In addition to seating, please ensure that you have the necessary floor space or an area that can be cleared so that the practical exercises can take place.
- If the temperature and weather conditions permit, the practical aspects of the workshop (and perhaps the entire training session) can be carried out outdoors, such as in a quiet park.
- Flipcharts and pin boards are useful, but not essential if posters and notes can be hung up in the room.
- If organisers are unsure about the suitability of a particular location, they should ask the trainers.

Duration and content

- Depending on the content, workshops can last from between three hours to several days. The short version of basic action training provides an introduction to blockades and lasts for between 3 and 4 hours; the more detailed version lasts for between 5 and 6 hours. Certain content can either be dealt with in an in-depth manner or left out completely depending on the length of a particular workshop.
- As a rule, we do not conduct training sessions that take less than 3 hours. It is very difficult to share experiences, convey relevant content and conduct practical exercises in a shorter period.
- We are happy to adapt our workshops to the organisers' needs and contexts. However, trainers must have been clearly informed about any special requests, needs or expectations in advance.
- Basic action training is not aimed at providing information about a particular action or issue. Moreover, it is not, and cannot replace the need for, detailed legal training. However, up and coming actions can be dealt with during training sessions if it makes

sense to do so within a particular framework. At the same time, it is important to present and discuss agreements that have been made about such actions (the action consensus, the structure of the spokesperson's council, etc.) during the training.

- We view training courses as protected spaces, and the media are not permitted to report from within our workshops. If organisers would like to involve the media, work with the trainer to find a suitable way of doing so (see module A 6 | Dealing with media coverage of training sessions).

Travel expenses and fees

- It is important for us at Skills for Action to ensure that training workshops can be carried out despite a lack of funding. However, organisers should – at the very least – reimburse trainers' travel costs.
- The trainers and the Skills for Action network are happy to receive fees/reimbursement of expenses. Our rates may also depend on the organisers' financial situation. We ask organisers with better levels of resources for a fee, but we can help small self-organised groups to apply for funding or provide them with free workshops if necessary. Fees are negotiated individually, and depend on what is customary locally.

Text for announcing a introductory training working (template)

Action training 'Dealing with police lines & blockading'

Where? xxx

When? xxx

Duration: xxx hours (including breaks).

Please note: it is important to arrive on time and to ensure that you have enough time to take part in the entire workshop. It does not make sense to arrive later or to leave early.

This training workshop provides participants with an opportunity to share experiences, use practical exercises to develop individual and collective capacities, break down fears and to gain new experiences. In the workshop, we will focus on civil disobedience, people's motivation and goals and their worries and anxieties; affinity groups as the foundation of actions, decision-making in and between affinity groups, blockading techniques using the body, introductions to legal issues and advice on repression and how to deal with it.

Source: Skills for Action, Action Training Manual, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

E 7 | TIPPS FOR A DELEGATES' MEETING/SPOKESCOUNCIL

The following sets out questions and ideas that can be useful when facilitating spokescouncils that happen right before large actions.

Experience has shown that it can be useful to have a team of several facilitators. Depending on the kind and size of the action and the spokescouncil, this can include:

- the actual facilitators, preferably two people. Their tasks include: collecting points for discussion, keeping a list of speakers, calling people to speak, providing structure to the discussion, making procedural proposals, formulating proposals for consensus, checking for consensus etc.
- the filter: a person who can be approached by anyone who has a question or information from outside the spokescouncil. As the name suggests, this person 'filters' these questions and information and, where appropriate, passes them on to the facilitators.

First spokescouncil

Usually, the first session of the spokescouncil is held on the night before the action. The team of facilitators should keep the following important points in mind:

- Ensure that everyone has enough space so that they can see and hear what is going on and there are no interruptions from outside. All spokespeople should move close together, e.g., by having those in the very centre sit down, those in the ring around the centre kneeling and those on the outside standing up, forming a circle around everyone.
- The facilitators should ask whether there are journalists/people from the press present. If there are, kindly ask them to leave the spokescouncil. In most cases there will be a group of contact people for the press to go to. The spokescouncil is supposed to be a closed, safe space without the media.
- Does someone need interpreting? If so, who can provide whisper interpretation? Organise corners for interpretation, explain the 'L' hand signal for interpreters (see also: Hand signals in Section E of this handbook).
- The facilitators should welcome everyone, and introduce themselves. The facilitators should briefly explain that they are prepared to facilitate, and why that is the case. Then you should ask whether anyone objects to the team facilitating the spokescouncil.
- Briefly explain what a spokescouncil is and ask whether there are participants who do not have an affinity group (AG). If necessary, you can organise a session for people to find affinity groups after the plenary (see also: Finding affinity groups in Section 4: Other training sessions and workshops). Avoid long explanations of what AGs are during the spokescouncil!
- The facilitators can briefly introduce some remarks about facilitation, speaking and decision making, such as: 'Please raise your hands, we are keeping a speakers list', 'When you speak, do so clearly, loudly and briefly!', 'Use the hand signals!', 'The facilitators will try to find wordings for proposals for consensus' etc.
- Briefly explain hand signals people can use, which could include request to speak, approval, disagreement, direct response to a question, speak louder, I have understood, you don't

need to keep talking, interpretation, proposal on how to proceed, break, interruption due to something important, veto.

- Present the points for discussion and the schedule of the meeting; collect further topics.

The **following topics** often come up at spokescouncils:

- The scope of the action/the action consensus
- The latest information about the action
- Fingers, material for the action, embedded journalists, members of parliament or other ‘celebrities’ accompanying the action
- Behaviour on the way to the blockades and at the site (what to do in case of water cannons, kettling, police dogs, horses, etc.)
- The size of affinity groups and the number and size of fingers
- Practising how to form fingers
- What to take and what not to take to the action
- Information about the legal team, the information hotline, medics, etc.
- Time for questions

Second spokescouncil

A second spokescouncil can be held right before the action. Usually, the second spokescouncil is much shorter than the first. Topics and issues that come up include:

- A brief summary of the information provided during the first council
- New information and topics related to the action
- Answers by the affinity groups to any questions that they were asked to discuss at the first council (such as questions about the action consensus)
- Practising forming the fingers (only necessary if this hasn’t been done before or if there have been major changes to the plan!)
- Provide motivation!!!

Further spokescouncils and methods for taking decisions quickly

It makes sense to call for a spokescouncil during calm situations and when decisions need to be made that affect many of the people involved in the action. At the same time, meetings can also help stabilise situations and prevent people from wandering off, during, for example, blockades that have been continuing for a couple of hours. But even if you seem to have all the time in the world, it is still very important to keep time in check.

The following points can help you to get through a meeting quickly as a facilitator:

- Introduce yourselves and gain acceptance from the people present
- Ask whether everyone is okay: Has someone been injured? Did everyone manage to reach the blockade, etc.?
- Collect news; describe the current situation
- If questions or problems arise, ask the participants: ‘Does anyone have a suggestion?’

- In stressful situations, it is advisable to implement the first proposal that someone makes, assuming no-one has a veto.
- If there is a veto, a new proposal has to be found.
- Try to stick to one proposal at a time when checking for approval. Asking about several proposals at the same time usually causes confusion.
- Avoid questions with two answers such as 'Are you in favour of the first or the second proposal?', 'Do you want to stay here or go somewhere else?', etc.). Instead, ask both questions separately one after the other.

Source: Skills for Action, Action Training Manual, <http://www.skills-for-action.de/en>

F | FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

Different resources for activism, training, facilitation...

<https://seedsforchange.org.uk/resources>

<https://www.nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en>

<https://www.trainingforchange.org/tools/>

<https://commonslibrary.org/>

Digital security for activists: <https://ssd.eff.org/>

Street medic guide: <https://www.paperrevolution.org/street-medic-guide/>