# ARTS ACTIVISM TOOLKIT

# DISRUPTION DISOBEDIENCE & CREATIVITY

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'In this country everyone dreams. Now it is time to wake up'

*(Subcomandante Marcos, 1994: 50)[1].*

# Welcome!

This Arts Activism Toolkit can be used to stimulate thinking, reframe dominant stories and issues, understand the places in which you live and work and build creative relationships and practices across campaigns. It contains workshop activities, case studies and discussion tasks in order to share some of what is inspiring us in our own campaigns and endeavours across the globe. We believe that there is a need for us to engage with our oppressions, and work to understand what stories have been told that have shaped our existence; but then, in order to move beyond just naming injustice, we need to imagine a world yet-to-come.

The three of us have collaborated since 2018, with Alex and Ally working together in South Africa since 2001. We've built up a range of experiences in organising, building collectives, and generating arts activities in communities such as prisons and secure hospitals as well as with young people living on the streets in South Africa and also in landless people's movements in Asia and climate justice in the U.K., amongst others. Throughout our work, separately and together, is a commitment to co-producing creative forms of resistance and imagination of alternatives.

This toolkit emerges from our participatory arts project that was located in Cape Town, South Africa, with partners Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education. Our work in #ImaginingOtherwise reminded us of the value of sharing capacity building activities in arts-based approaches. We hope to offer inspiring ways for activists to engage with learning activities alongside examples and potential outcomes that have been valuable in our practices of creative resistance. If you work with young people and are looking for an accessible way for them to engage in arts activism, you might start off with our Youth Art Toolkit, available to download for free. (https://www.tshisimani.org.za/wp-content/uploads/IMAGININGOTHERWISE_WEB-toolkit-final.pdf)

# How to use the toolkit:

You don't need to be a practicing artist with a huge amount of confidence in your skills - the toolkit gives some ideas, activities and examples to inspire you. If you identify a gap in your skillset, maybe you can forge a new collaboration with those who can support you to build capacities.

Chances are, you are already practicing and working through many of these ideas. The toolkit is not only aimed at beginner activists, but offers approaches, tasks and workshop plans for working through some creative interventions. Give it a go - you may find some new case studies or learning that allow you to put some ideas into action!

You are warmly invited to engage in the toolkit in any way that suits you – by printing or saving individual activities, or working through the 'learning' activities in groups or alone. Do let us know how they work for you!
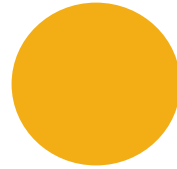
In solidarity: Alex, Paul and Ally

[1]Subcomandante Marcos (1994) 'The Southeast in Two Winds
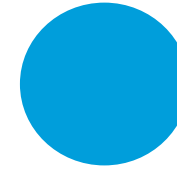A Storm and a Prophecy'.
*Available: https://schoolsforchiapas.org/library/southeast-winds-storm-prophecy/*
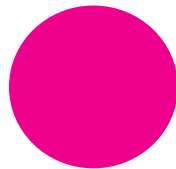
# KEY CASE STUDIES
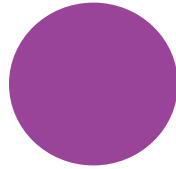
**Clown Army, U.K.**

**Land Occupation in Bangladesh and Brazil**

**6 million+ Charitable Trust**

**The 'Squares' movements**

**Climate Camps in Europe**
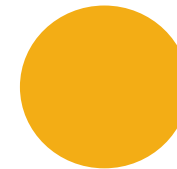
**Flash Mobs for indigenous rights Canada**
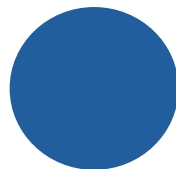
**Climate Games, Paris, France**

**Wadzanayi Farm, Zimbabwe**

# CONTENT

## Welcome!

Arts Activism Toolkit - disruption, disobedience and creativity

# CONTENT

'**TO BE TRULY VISIONARY WE HAVE TO ROOT OUR IMAGINATION IN OUR CONCRETE REALITY WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY IMAGINING POSSIBILITIES BEYOND THAT REALITY** '

*(BELL HOOKS 2014: 110)* [2]

## What is Arts Activism?

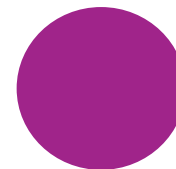Arts activism can provide a 'free space' for developing ideas and practices that challenge dominant ideas and stories. It can ensure that protest actions not only gain public attention but are also framed so that oppositional ideas and solutions are given 'air-time' in the media. Anyone can create banners, signs, costumes, gifs, photos, films made on one's phone in order to communicate to wider audiences such as the general public or the media. We aim to offer activities, discussion points and practical ways for you to get creative with your activist endeavours.

## Arts Activism can:

- *Engage new audiences*
- *Build capacity*
- *Spread messages*
- *Make space for lived experience*
- *Counteract and extend dry/ factual contributions to resistance*
- *Inspire other activists*
- *Share knowledge and understanding in and through the body*
- *Build creativity and enhance the 'voice' of a collective*
- *Undermine the usual voices (powers-that-be)*
- *Surprise and convince the public*
- *Provide a connection between the personal and the political*
- *Be fun!*

hooks, b. (2014). Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics. London: Routledge.[2]

## Arts Activism relies on:

- **Recognition and resonance**: all you need is a desire to convey something - no need to be a confident artist!
- Using **resources** of the group: sometimes it's worth partnering with people who have some arts skills/ are confident to guide and support (but it's also great to learn by doing!) and it builds a **repertoire** of skills,
- **Solidarity** amongst group members: a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach requires community building, which is an outcome of the collective 'making' process. Much arts activism involves play as part of the process of learning, creativity and participation.



**Youth site specific performance:** Injabulo Anti-Bullying project in South Africa devised a theatre piece about inequalities in schooling and performed it in a library with audience placed outside looking in. This positioning mirrored how many poor and working class youth feel about being shut out of resources such as libraries and only dreaming of being able to access these resources (Photo by Tshisimani).

We will introduce some creative approaches and it is also valuable to approach arts activism as an opportunity to grow and experiment with innovative ways of working even if your collective has got an existing practice. While you're using this toolkit, you'll want to build in time for **reflection**: consider your capacities, numbers, skills, contacts, tactical know-how alongside talents and abilities.

## Risks:

Before we move into the learning, a note of caution: Many cultural and political contexts are experiencing changing power regimes that seek to limit freedoms and police the public with impunity. Most of the ideas, tools and tactics we offer here are fun and engaging, but if you are using them in protests, they may also provoke! The consequences may be enhanced surveillance, harassment, police violence, or arrests. Please take your wellbeing and safety seriously by building into your plans support for arrest and train your collective in the specific tactics that may be needed to avoid (known) dangers. This might also include specific tips and advice about what to carry and what to leave at home; having numbers of specific lawyers to hand on a piece of paper in case phones get damaged or lost; and having basic first aid training in case needed. There are usually grassroots organisers that are accustomed to keeping care and advocacy at the forefront and you might find one in your context that does this important work. It is not about a quick march into arrests, police cautions or violations. We know that many regimes are punitive and laws are often not in the public's interest, so therefore your planning must take account of the risks that are specific to your context so that everyone involved is informed about their roles. [3]

It is not about a quick march into arrests, police cautions or violations. We know that many regimes are punitive and laws are often not in the public's interest, so therefore your planning must take account of the risks that are specific to your context so that everyone involved is informed about their roles [4].

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[3] For example you might use resources that can help you in case of suppression – RiotID https://riotid.com/; or Queercare in the U.K. provides a lot of resources to support people undergoing psychiatric sectioning. They have produced resources on COVID safe protesting too: see https://wiki.queercare.network/Protesting_Safer_in_a_Pandemic_Protocol

[4] For more on performance, police violence and solidarity see Walsh A. & Tsilimpounidi, T. (2015) 'Virtues of Violence: A testimonial Performance or an Affidavit of Lies, Excuses, Justifications', in Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies. 15(3): pp. 180-189.

*arts activism is about play it contains 'dangerous' ideas seeks to change the narrative and build visibility*

**Young people perform resistance in a site of circulation -** a Cape Town Taxi Rank as part of the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education 'Our 68' youth arts festival in 2018. (Photo by Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education)

## Introducing Key Terms:

In this toolkit we provide ideas on how Arts activists develop tools, rituals and materials for resistance.

## Key Term: Resistance

Resistance refers to any action that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to society. These actions may be open and confrontational, or hidden and range from the individual to the collective.

## Key Term: Rituals

Rituals are fundamentally about change. An effective group ritual requires a clear sense of purpose, engagement of all the participants, a strong sense of unity, an element of repetition - and, perhaps, the challenging of norms and taboos. Protest as ritual is essentially a performance, a form of play. In arts activism, the signs, the chants, the songs, the clapping, the marching: they are all acts of directed and focused intent.

**Extinction Rebellion (XR) 'Red Rebels' U.K.** (Photo by Paul Routledge).

The Red Rebels are dressed in red to symbolise the dancer associated with runaway climate change. Characterised by slow, choreographed movement, their presence at protests has become an important **ritualised** perfomance of the climate emergency

# Build relationships and solidarity

## Key Term: Relationships

Relationships get generated when people engage in activities, actions and events with others and in so doing develop and deepen feelings of togetherness, trust, friendship and love. Face-to-face communication helps establish bonds between people. Collective activities facilitate the exchange of experiences and ideas between arts activists. They enable connections and exchanges between people to be made, for example through the recognition of common opponents and common ground.

## Key Term: Solidarity

At root, solidarity refers to the identification of common ground between people (such as unifying values and organisational principles). Solidarity requires the recognition of our mutual existence as people concerned with injustice and inequality and with a desire and dream to confront and change it. It necessitates building relationships with others, and in so doing opening up the possibility to be transformed by those others.

Solidarity is developed through interpersonal communication, the exchange of information, the mobilization of collective resources, the development of mutual support and the collective experience of arts activism at particular protests. The practice of solidarity entails powerful emotional ties between arts activists. It is our ability to transform our feelings about the world into actions that inspires us to participate in political action. Shared bodily and emotive experiences such as feelings of excitement, fear and joy, help create shared memories and stories of those experiences, as well as shared strategic repertoires.

# Generate resources and repertoires

## Key Term: Resources

*Resources are the stock or supply of materials and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively. These include:*

- Personal resources such as time, energy, creativity, and interpersonal **relationship.**
- Organisational **resources** such as people, money; community groups or institutions (e.g. churches, mosques), social networks; and the importance of leaders as political catalysts who have the capacity to mobilise and organise helps to produce, distribute and manage resources and symbols.
- Creative resources or **repertoires**, such as skills, stories; songs; and social media etc.

**Performance Activist Tandile Mbatsha; SJC Right to Protest march,** Cape Town 2019.

## Key Term: Repertoires

A repertoire is the stock of skills or types of behaviour that are used in Arts Activism. The political message is expressed through the medium of transmission. Powerful cultural repertoires are attuned to your local or national culture and expressed through songs; graffiti; street art; street theatre; photos; testimonials; manifestos; videos; eye witness reports; images; the live-streaming of events; and digital platforms.

Repertoires are key **resources** that can:
- help create protest cultures and identities;
- convey emotions;
- build capacity by not relying on individuals;
- transmit protest actions, ideas and demands;
- enable the sharing of information;
- educate and sway public opinion;
- generate solidarity.



**SJC Right to Protest march,** Cape Town 2019. Creativity and energy expressed in the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) Right to Protest South Africa (photos by Tshisimani, Centre for Activism Education).

**Red Lines Protest with Inflatables, Paris, France** (Photo by Paul Routledge).

Climate activists painted and adorned in **solidarity** with the motif of the 'Red Lines' protest in 2015. Inflatable cubes provided a **repertoire** of easy to construct and move barricades.

## Experiment with new ways of seeing, speaking and being:

### Key Term: Reframing

Reframing is a process of replacing an old story with a new one. It requires thinking about how an issue or story is currently framed (e.g. identifying its underlying assumptions and biases) and then widening, narrowing or shifting the frame in order to present a different story. Stories and images can illustrate and dramatize particular societal conditions and influence how people feel about such conditions. They are deployed in order to show what is at stake in a particular struggle (rather than telling people what to think about that struggle).

## Create reaction, recognition and resonance

### Key Term: Reaction

Activism usually wants to elicit a reaction - you want the people who hold the power to make the changes you want to see unable to ignore you. A reaction is sought and expected, and activists should be prepared to react and possibly weaponize that reaction. Plan accordingly to avoid harmful or dangerous reactions (such as police violence). Arts activism aims for **recognition** and **resonance.**

### Key term: Recognition

The political message in arts activism is determined by which audience activists are trying to reach; and how the message is **reframed,** received and interpreted. The goal of arts activism here is for people to recognize what you are doing because it is something they have experienced.

### Key term: Resonance

Resonance in arts activism refers to how particular stories or images generate feelings, thoughts or memories in others that challenge dominant ideas, practices and stories. Messages that are conveyed emotionally and sensually can break up prejudices and habits in people. Through the opening up of

emotions, arts activism can serve to 'de-programme' everyday behaviour and can generate bonds of **solidarity**; creating emotional **resonance** between arts activists, other activists, and the public.

## Target sites of intervention

### Key Term: Sites of Intervention

Sites of intervention are spaces within a system where activists can apply pressure in order to disrupt its functioning or argue for change as part of broader strategic goals of campaigns. These spaces can be both physical places (such as streets) and conceptual spaces including people's ideas and assumptions about the way things are.

### Key term: Reflection

Arts activism requires reflection after an action or campaign to enable better and more effective actions in the future. This is discussed in the last section of the toolkit.

**Tokolos Stencil Collective 'M for Marikana',** Cape Town, South Africa.

Tokolos is a collective of anonymous graffiti artists that uses the art form to raise questions about inequality, injustice and government's failings. This collective sprung up around Cape Town between 2014 and 2016 created stencils that can be copied and used by anyone. They found key sites around the city to highlight political issues through hundreds of spray painted stencils on carefully chosen sites. In this example, the iconic figure of the 'man in the green blanket' from South Africa's Marikana massacre is juxtaposed with the McDonalds 'M' to highlight and **reframe** the link between corporate greed, capitalism, and the political elite exemplified by SA's current president Cyril Ramaphosa who is implicated in the Marikana massacre.  As an ex-unionist, Ramaphosa is now one of South Africa's richest men (Photo by Tokolos Stencil Collective)[5].

[5]For further reference see https://www.groundup.org.za/article/tokolosies-graffitti-bomb-brundyn-gallery_2420/ https://africasacountry.com/2014/01/we-send-our-tokoloshe-to-battle-with-those-trying-to-make-us-forget-the-atrocities-of-Marikana

# CASE STUDY
# CLOWN ARMY



**Clown Army U.K.** (photo by Rabbitman).

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) was created by arts-activists of the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (Labii), as a way of combining **repertoires** of clowning and nonviolent direct action to protest against a key site of intervention, the G8 meeting in Scotland, U.K. in 2005 and the 'war on terror'. The G8 (group of eight nations) – which consisted of the U.S., Canada, Japan, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Russia – held annual summits where top government officials discussed issues such as the management of the global economy, terrorism and climate change.

Activists were trained in basic skills of clowning and Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) drawing upon the personal, organizational and creative **resources** of the Labii. Training enabled activists to develop **relationships** of trust and **rituals** of play that were important when they acted together in protests. The Clown Army wore refashioned army uniforms to associate themselves with the war on terror.

Military uniforms were deconstructed, decorated and subverted e.g. by wearing colourful feather boas, attaching fluorescent pink cloth onto the uniforms as stripes, lapels etc. Rebel clowns also wore clown face make-up. The clown faces were masks providing protection from police surveillance and also exaggerated the absurdity of the notion of a 'clown army'. The clown uniforms and make-up were an attempt to undermine and **reframe** the intimidation and violence of both the war on terror and the policing at protests. They served to magnify activists' commonality while at the same time attracting media attention.

The Clown Army protests used play, humour and satire to communicate their **resistance** to the G8 and war on terror. This was achieved through performing clown army 'operations' under the heading of the 'War on Error' that parodied and **reframed** the war on terror. The War on Error was a struggle waged against the political 'errorism' of wars for oil (such as the war in Iraq); the economic 'errorism' of neoliberalism, and the environmental 'errorism' of over-consumption and fossil-fuelled economies.

The Clown Army brought together two cultural figures in society – the clown and the soldier – that were easily **recognised** by the public. By getting people to laugh at the notion of an army of clowns, they were able to create an intimacy between the Clown Army and the public, and encourage active participation from the public. For example, the Clown army tried to mock the stop and search 'anti-terrorist' laws, which have regularly been used to intimidate protesters. They did this through the **repertoire** of filling their pockets with deliberately ridiculous objects such as strings of sausages, feather dusters, underwear, rubber ducks, sex toys etc. In the event of a stop and search by the police, such items would have to be laid out on the street by a rebel clown and documented by the police. Such humour helped to undermine feelings of fear and doubt amongst activists and the public while mobilising feelings of **resistance** and **solidarity.**

# LEARNING: Call and Response

## (see Reaction/ Recognition/ Resonance)

We are starting our first activities using the metaphor and practice of call and response. For us, this idea of an initial offer and listening and responding is crucial for creative arts activist practice. It is also foundational to practices in radical theatre in community contexts, as Jan Cohen Cruz has explored [7].

'Call and response' is a mainstay of traditional storytelling, found in oral traditions across the world. It also features across art forms in these ways:
- In song, a solo voice may sing a line to be repeated by a chorus.
- In oratory, a speaker may provoke a rhythm of call and response, using repetitive phrases.
- A key phrase signals the start of a story, and the community knows they can gather round.
- In dance, one movement phrase is echoed and changed (called a motif).
- The storyteller or *griot* may use familiar characters, images or phrases to hook the listeners in: their responses signal that they are still listening.
- In protest, a community leader may shout out a phrase and a crowd repeats it – louder, in different voices, in multiple voices.

In improvisation, we use a frame of 'yes, and': where an initial offer is always received and developed further – taken up and built into something new. In a story, that could look like one person offering a first line that is agreed with a 'yes, and...' developed further.

A: "On Saturday, Gift found a discarded shoe near his house"
B: "Yes, and... it was way too big for him so he put on three socks"
In other words, though we 'accept' the offer, we use our own imaginations, perspectives and energy to change it – transform the conditions, circumstances or implications in some way.

If we practice 'yes, and' in a group context, we imagine it in a circle: a story building line by line with each person agreeing and furthering the story. Sometimes – often – it becomes unwieldy and outrageous and hilarious and silly and full of mischief. As a way of getting your group to create together, try this exercise of each person saying one line of the story, and the next person starting with 'yes, and...'.

- It doesn't have to be a direct or realistic response that stays in the same 'world' or reality that is in the offer, but it does have to build from the 'call and response' ideology.
- It could be that the offer is not quite what we would have anticipated, or the offer transforms by the time it gets round the circle and reaches you.

**This is a profound lesson in listening**, receiving the 'stimulus'/ message that *you are actually sent* and not the one you plan for. Call and response is also a format in Black intellectual life with examples from Audre Lorde and James Baldwin (1984)[8] to Kathrine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter (2015)[9] forming a conversation/ dialogue between practice and thought, using anecdotes, metaphor and conversations as modes to move between arts and activism.

**Call and response in practice**, and how we are asking you to use it throughout the toolkit:
Thinking about a stimulus campaign, intervention or artwork, reflect momentarily in pairs:
- What do you notice? What do you see? Describe/ note down the qualities.
- Do you have any clarifying questions that would help you to respond? Try not to overthink this part because much of the time, we fear our response may be wrong or that the creators' ideas are more important.  Ie: instead of 'what do we like?' or only responding to what we understand, we are open and curious about where we might find entry points into things we are offered – the call is accepted, and our response enables something new.

**Guiding questions to put 'call and response' into action**
As you work through this toolkit, you can reply/ make notes/ respond in questions or through artforms or in electronic form like a tweet. Your response is not about being 'correct', but about engaging deeply and imaginatively, and responding from your unique perspective.  Ask yourself again after a conversation: 'What do you notice?' (theme/ shapes/ influences/ or anything about the work – don't worry about what you think the creator meant yet).
- What feelings or concepts are arising for you?
- How does it connect to (or diverge from) your experience?
- Is there any question you would like to ask the creator about their intention/ context or form?
- What else would you need to know to have better access to this work/ example/ intervention?
- How might you take this idea into your own experience/ expertise/ artform? What would you want to respond with?

# LEARNING: Mapping your Neighbourhood and Community

Learning about the neighbourhoods and communities where we live and from where we can build **relationships** and campaigns is an important first step in arts activism. Learning about where you live and the broader issues that have impacts on where you live helps you to create actions and interventions that resonate with other people's concerns and thus helps you build support and momentum for your campaigns.

**Aims include:**

- Educating yourself about your neighbourhood and community.
- Considering what issues concern you and others.
- Researching the cultural, economic and political context in which people live and what motivates them (i.e. people's values, beliefs and lifestyles; their sense of place).

We can learn in so many different ways: via sharing knowledge and experience, learning from books or sources, and in creative methods that may introduce new skills into our existing understandings. In this part, we propose bringing different aspects of yourself to the activities without privileging 'facts' – because we are looking at how you feel, and how that constructs and constitutes your experience of place.

[6] We have used this form of 'call and response' in Changing the Story's Youth Research Board with young activists from different countries responding to one another's arts interventions by producing a new artwork/ response in dialogue.

[7] Cohen-Cruz, J. (2010) Engaging performance: Theatre as call and response. London: Routledge.

[8] Lorde, A. & Baldwin, J. (1984) 'Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation Between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde'

https://mocada-museum.tumblr.com/post/73421979421/revolutionary-hope-a-conversation-between-james

[9] Wynter, S. (2015) On being human as praxis. Edited by K. McKittrick. Durham: Duke University Press.

*In Octavia Butler's The Parable of the Sower,*

*the protagonist  Lauren says:"Your teachers Are all around*

*you. All that you perceive, All that you experience, All that*

*is given to you or taken from you, All that you love or hate,*

*need or fear Will teach you-- If you will learn".*

*– Octavia Butler* [10]

One of the most important ways that we experience the world around us is through our bodies and emotions. This approach comes from feminist geography, and from performance and is widely practiced in communities of resistance. So as a creative workshop, this is a way of opening up for creative responses to place and space – firstly by slowing down and observing.

[10] Butler, O. (1993/ 2004) Parable of the Sower. London: Headline Books

## ACTIVITY 1: Developing mapping beyond the 'real' physical landmarks around us

### Discussion and action based

**Aims:** Using all our senses, to start thinking together about,

space
Power
Stories in spaces / communities

### Two things are important starting points:

- Safety & Security (this might change the choices you make).
- Dignity when we tell stories (representation matters and everyone has their story – so we aim to move beyond stereotypes)

This activity involves researching your neighbourhood through walking, or navigating slowly. Either alone or in a small group, walk or move around your neighbourhood or local area. Try to look differently at what's around and open your mind to what's seen and what's unseen. If that's not possible, you can remember and visualise in as much detail as possible. Start by observing houses, streets, buildings, parks, traffic, shops etc and then thinking about what sights, sounds, smells and feelings we associate with those places.

**Some questions to ask yourself and your group as you are walking:**

- Why is this place interesting/ unique/ special?
- What do people know / how do they behave when they come here (such as 'everyone knows not to have their bag open or use their phone...')
- What stories/ histories/ interesting facts do you know about particular places?

What appeals to belonging do we associate with particular places (who is included and who is excluded)?

What power stories are hiding inside particular places?

If you were leading a guided tour through your neighbourhood, which places would be important destinations and why?

Who would be the audience for your tour and why? If you changed audiences - what would you show to some and not others?

Through this discussion we move to Activity 2, and begin to create experience maps i.e. creating images and story-maps of particular places in our neighbourhoods and communities [11].

[11] We explored this in relation to racial profiling of #ImaginingOtherwise young people in museums in this piece from (2021) Walsh, A., Visagie, A., & Rousseau, H. 'Permanent crisis of visibility': Young working class Capetonians in Zeitz MOCAA. Engage the International Journal of Visual Arts & Gallery Education. Issue 42.

**Starting out with maps, #ImaginingOtherwise,** Cape Town, South Africa (Photo by Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education).

These mapping activities are ways of using any resources you have without feeling the need to be accurate, or outstanding in your representational choices - words/ symbols/ pictures can do the work of representing your ideas. Part of the value of using the artforms is to move away from how we usually talk about spaces. Graphics, symbols, colours and labels can help us see places differently.

# ACTIVITY 2: Experience Maps

**Individual or group task, Creative and discussion based**

**Materials:** pens, paper for taking notes; colours/ or materials for collage; mobile phone for recording images, sounds, commentary. Use things around you accordingly.

**Purpose:** to use art forms to help us share the emotions/ experiences/ senses of how we navigate spaces with others.

**Step 1:** One person chooses a place (or perhaps two or three places) visited and experienced from Activity 1. Choose the senses and feelings to describe these places. This is our experience map of the place.
This exercise can be repeated until everyone in the group has shared their experience maps.

## Questions to consider:

· What happens if we overlay our experience maps over one another ?
· Might we discover something new about how others experience places?
· Are there stories of power in these experience maps? e.g. We might get a profound understanding about perceptions of safety in different kinds of places.
· Think about how 'real' these places are, and if others share similar or different feelings about a particular place.

**Step 2:** Now think about different types of places that you have experienced in your neighbourhood. Take the following headings as a starting point:
· places of the unexpected
· places of fear
· places of uncertainty
· places of significance
· places of hope

Attempt to draw/ describe/ list or imagine in great detail an example that fits the description of each place. Try and start from a real life place – later you can expand or fictionalise. If you don't want to share events that are difficult, choose another place.

- Try and map out or use the senses to explore these places.
- Use any techniques that work for you to collect your ideas or responses (poetry, collage, soundscape).
- Are particular places shared by others in the group? What does this suggest?

## ACTIVITY 3: Identifying places not often seen

### Group task: collecting materials

**Materials:** pens, paper for taking notes; colours/ or materials for collage; mobile phone for recording images, sounds, commentary. Use things around you accordingly. Following on from Activity 2, the group can choose 3 little-known places in their area (e.g. a train station, street market, an old alleyway, etc). We can use the group to crowdsource what we know about these little-known places. Each person can collect more info about those places, like images, sounds, smells, etc.

- If you can, record some sounds 'in the field' (without interfering with anyone's privacy).
- You could also make a group soundscape if you imagine the spaces and 'conjure up' the site with a soundtrack of work, mechanical sounds or nature sounds that signal that kind of place and its activities.

**Places of hope and uncertainty, #ImaginingOtherwise** (Photo by Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education).

The young people in #ImaginingOtherwise were invited to use all the art forms to express their social contexts, and some used these mapping activities to imagine the neighbourhood they would want to see, with access to resources, social housing for all and provision of welfare for those that are usually excluded.

## ACTIVITY 4: Improvisation task: Find a way to give a 'tour guide' impression of a place

### Creative task: solo written activity or discussion-based

Focus on the 'ordinary/ everyday' places that you already started to think about in Activities 1-3.
Each person chooses one place to describe and discuss.

**Step 1:**

- Break into pairs. Discuss each person's chosen place and imagine moving between them – as though you're taking your guests there.
- Places can be about what we need to know – e.g.: 'be careful when you cross that ditch because some people have fallen in!!'
- You could use humour here but remember it's better to 'punch up' (see page 44) , not 'punch down' – so if you are making fun it could be like this:

**Character 1:**

Welcome to my district, where there is no running water. There is only a puddle of muddy water.

**Character 2:**

'This is the local dam in my area. We are so proud of it, and the councillors look after it so well. You can see the natural beauty'... ('This bush is called a rubbish bush').

**Step 2:**

Bring the group together.

- Discuss three, four or five examples and imagine moving between them – as though you're taking your guests there.
- As in Step 1 places can be about what we need to know and we can use humour remembering to 'punch up'.

## ACTIVITY 5: Encouraging people to reveal the unseen about a place
### Creative place-making task

One extension to Activity 4  can be to reveal past stories, memories or 'hidden histories' about a particular place. In the context of post-conflict settings, these can be profound stories of forced removals (such as District Six in Cape Town), or they can be evocative stories of the past.

"on my corner, there is a multi-space community centre that has the library, my doctor's surgery and the benefits office. But my friend Janet told me a story about the early 90s where that block used to be a notorious pub that was full of gang action, drugs and weekend fights. It is also where she had a motorbike accident one night and broke her leg, so now, even though  it's in the past… and I never saw that side of it, I think about it as Janet's accident at the scary pub space".

- Each person in the group chooses a particular place that they know about in their neighbourhood and shares any past stories, memories or 'hidden histories' about that place based on their knowledge and experience.
- Discuss how such stories, memories and 'hidden histories' change or enhance our understanding of a place.

# LEARNING: Generating issues for action

- **Purpose:** to engage with new groups, community members to discover what problems people face.

- **Tool:** Using a 'code' or 'trigger'

  Codes are tools that attempt to make the familiar world unfamiliar to people and thereby generate thought, analysis, and action.  A code or trigger is designed to stimulate both thoughts and feelings. A code/ trigger can be a photograph that you take in your neighbourhood; a documentary film; a theatre performance or other cultural artefact that deals with a concrete situation that a particular community is familiar with and has strong feelings about. This can generate discussion between people; help people make connections between different issues; and help people search for alternatives to the problems that they face.

### Examples
- A photograph of a busy street with dense traffic, might be used to stimulate discussion about road safety; air pollution; or perhaps the lack of public transport
- A short piece of video footage from a mobile phone taken in a marketplace might be used to stimulate discussion about food prices; food shortages; or health inequalities.

# ACTIVITY 6: Building visual engagement around  a campaign theme

## Creative task

Use a photograph to act as a means to generate discussion (e.g. a 'typical' urban street scene).
Get people to sit in a circle to discuss the photograph:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ask people to describe what is in the photograph. | What do you see? |
| Ask people to discuss what they think the people in the photograph feel about the situation they are in. | What is/ are the problem/s? |
| Ask people to discuss what they feel about the situation that they think is taking place in the photograph. | What happened? |
| Ask people to discuss why they think this was happening in their community. | How does this relate to your life? |
| Ask people to discuss what we as a group think that they could do to change such a reality. | What can we do about it? |

Place key issues onto large pieces of newsprint or flipchart paper or as post-it notes on a wall as a collective documentation of your discussion.

**Punk Aerobics crew 'Sweaty Assets'** present the gender pay gap during a Union Strike in the U.K., 2020

As part of their union strike rally, Paul and Ally visually presented the statistics with measuring tapes at the specific university, when compared to men: White women earn 15% less; Asian women earn 22% less; Black women earn 39% less (photo by Ally Walsh).

'[P]eople who imagine that history flatters them (as it does, indeed, since they wrote it) are impaled like a butterfly on a pin, and become incapable of seeing or changing themselves or their world' (James Baldwin, 1985: 410)[12]

# LEARNING: How Power works

The next consideration after mapping our communities is how power operates between people, and between institutions and ourselves. This can help us understand the causes of why our neighbourhood and communities are the way they are and the broader political and economic contexts in which they are located. One of the influential geographers who has influenced our thinking is Ruth Wilson Gilmore, who provides a great working definition of racism as the 'fatal coupling' of power and difference [13]. Using the example of racism was important in our project because systemic racism continues to shape everyday life in South Africa. While you're reading the next part, that definition might be useful to hold in mind

## Power, institutions and us

These are 3 ways of describing power, who has it and how it works; although it's important to recognise that some individuals may hold power in one position (eg: male) but be disempowered in another (e.g.: level of education). Understanding how the power is in operation is a great step as we start to move towards **resisting, reframing** and refusing how power acts upon us.

## Power over:

Powercube defines power over: 'Having power involves taking it from someone else, and then, using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining it. In politics, those who control resources and decision making have power over those without' [14].

## Power with:

can be understood as collective strength: finding common ground despite differing needs and interests. Powercube reminds us that this understanding is 'based on mutual support, **solidarity** and collaboration, 'power with' multiplies individual talents and knowledge'.

An example here is the youth arts training developed by South Africa's GALA Queer archive to engage communities on LGBTQI participation with a facilitated process 'Creative Resistance'. Their aims include building awareness and generating community **solidarity** with LGBTQI youth[15].

## Power to:

Can be understood as the individual and collective ability to

create alternative ways of living, thinking and protesting (e.g. see repertoires and resources)

The 'power to' approaches can be seen in examples such as:

- Abahlali base Mjondolo (a grassroots shack dwellers' movement that campaigns against evictions and for public housing in South Africa).[16]
- The EZLN Zapatista women's movement of water defenders gathered to build capacity in resisting the patriarchy in Chiapas, Mexico. [17]
- The Bangladesh Krishok Federation farmer's movement who occupy fallow land, build homes on it and farm it

[12] Baldwin, J. (1985). White Man's guilt. In The price of the ticket: James Baldwin collected nonfiction 1948-1985. New York: St Martin's, pp. 409-414.

[13] Wilson, R.G (2002) Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography, The Professional Geographer, 54:1, 15-24

[14] Adapted and extended from: <https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power/>. Also see Alexander, J.C. (2011) Performance & power. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[15] Marnell, J. & Khan, G.H. (2016) Creative resistance facilitation manual: Participatory methods for engaging queer youth. GALA: Cape Town.

[16] See their website for campaigns: https://abahlali.org/

[17] See https://wagingnonviolence.org/2018/04/zapatista-women-inspire-fight-against-patriarchy/

**Brazil Solidarity Network:** A giant puppet is an example of activists' power to create, and provides the focus for activists from the Brazil Solidarity Network who are protesting the burning of the Amazon forest at the Brazil consulate in San Francisco, U.S. (Photo with permission by David Solnit).

## Intersectionality & power:

As legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, different oppressions come together to intersect in different ways. She speaks of how being Black AND a woman AND working class structures the ways you are seen, and how you are treated by the law. In terms of how power operates in society, one may very well  oppression in one dimension (e.g. gender) but be wielding power in another (e.g. race). [18]

## Reflection/ critical considerations:

- Who, in your community, has power? And who must 'be empowered'?
- They are also not 'fixed' positions that we occupy only with a given title. But power, in all its various forms, is often upheld by institutions and relies on stories to perpetuate itself.

## Privilege:

We can understand that 'privilege' is possessed, even if it is unearned. For example, white people need to learn that they carry privilege to move, belong, and access much more without the need for any skills or harder work than anyone else in the global majority! Many white people find a journey to recognising their privilege painful because it asks them to recognise how they benefit from power structures that open doors, rather than close them.

## 'Punch up' tactics:

This describes a 'David and Goliath' approach, such as when those with less power act to show up those with most power. There are many activist actions that draw attention to inequalities in power by using satire, play or what we will call 'punch up' tactics – that is, using whatever force we have (mass mobilisation/ creative spectacle/ noise or disruption) to challenge and expose those with power.

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[18] Crenshaw, K. (1991), Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stanford law review, 43(6): pp. 1241–99
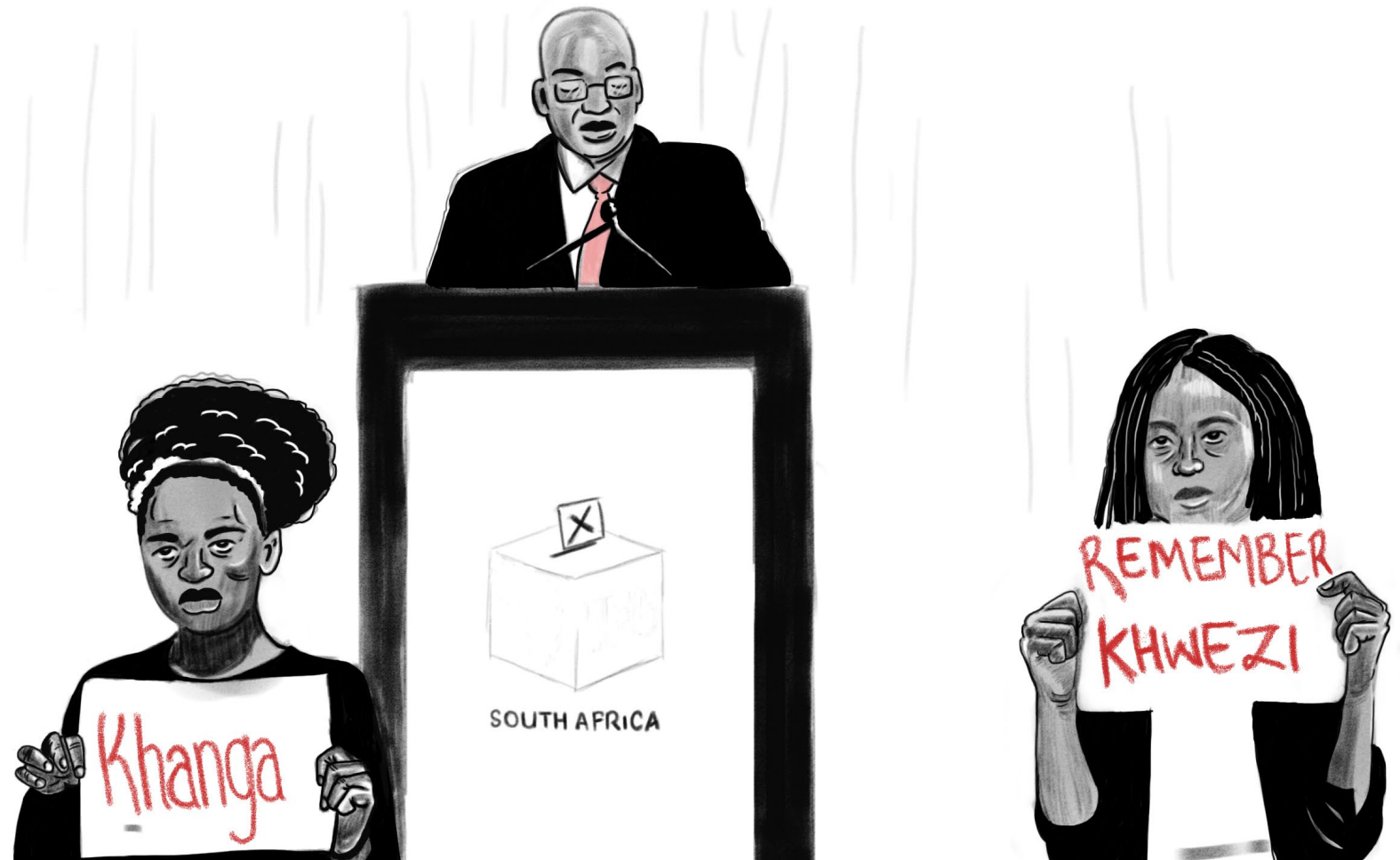
**Remember Khwezi protest,** South Africa 2016 [19]  illustration by Icephe.

Activists must sometimes use ingenuity to enable the message to be spread at high-security events where big spectacles may not be possible, and use of props not allowed. In South Africa, while former president Jabob Zuma was on the podium during local election announcements, activists made an impromptu decision to make a statement as it was the anniversary of Zuma's rape trial.  They stood and faced those assembled and captured for international media the signs 'remember Khwezi' reminding the viewers that Zuma was charged with rape.

[19]  See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/09/south-africa-zuma-rape-protesters-disrupt

Their action highlighted his crime and formed a visual moment of power - the president, the media and the pull of focus from one form of state power (democratic elections) to another (the ruling party's continued support of the president). These young activists made the power play visible, with silence, symbolism and few words.

Some further examples of activists using creativity to draw attention to power and privilege are:
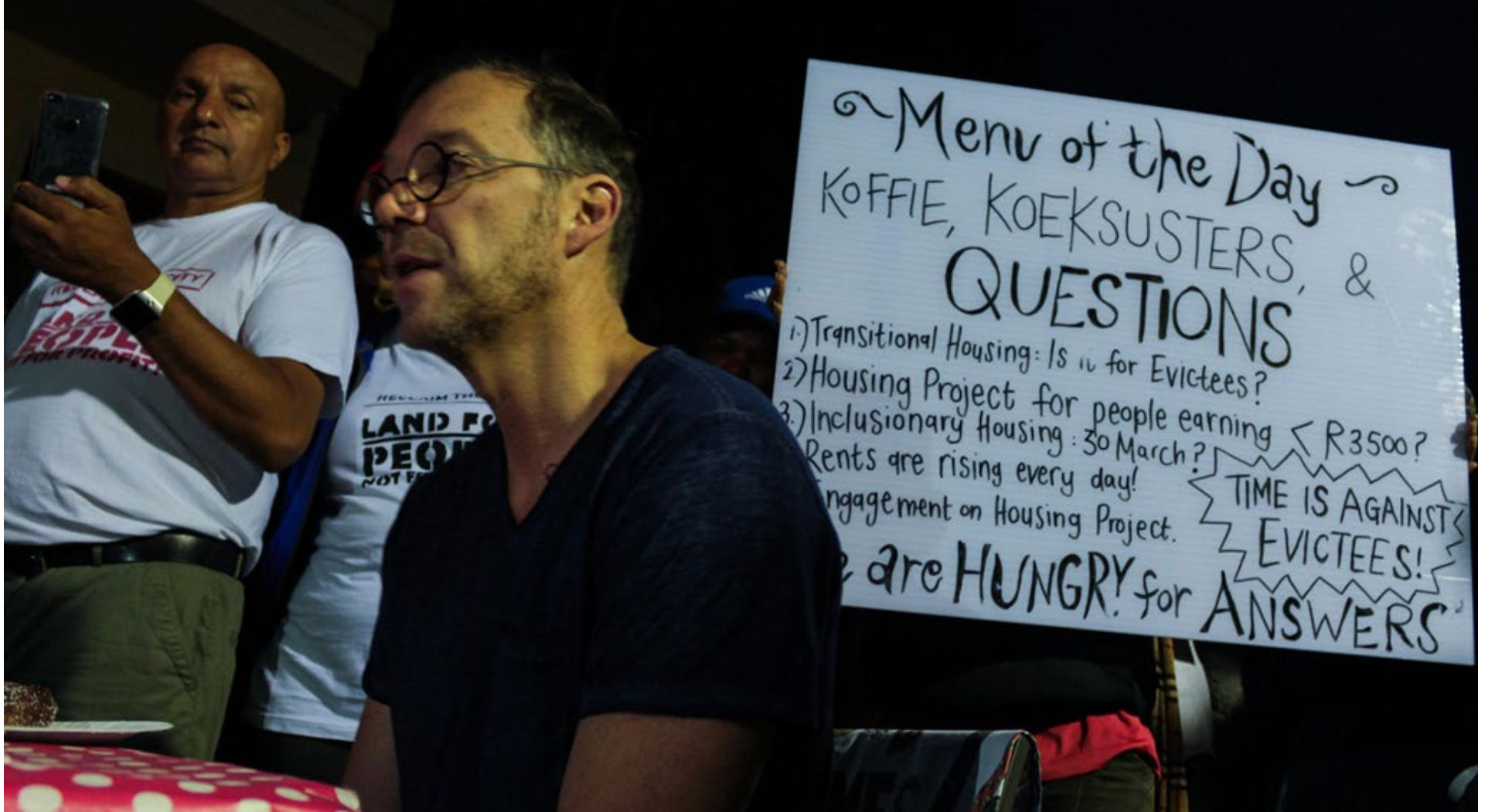- Street theatre/ large puppets satirising politicians or the elites such as Bread and Puppet Theatre in the U.S.
- Disability Justice activists in the U.K. used slogans, painted in pink: 'Piss on Pity' in a prominent place to challenge prejudices.[20]
- In Cape Town, Reclaim the City activists staged a 'funeral' with zombie politicians to protest outdated and prejudicial housing policies.[21]
- In the U.S., activists tricked a National Rifle Association (NRA) spokesperson into giving a graduation speech to 3440 empty chairs - representing young lives lost to gun violence.[22]
- Irish feminist performance activist Margaretta D'Arcy has campaigned since the 50s by occupying sites of circulation such as airport runways to stop military stopovers by U.S. planes.[23]
  She has also been instrumental in the campaigns for abortion rights for women in Ireland.

[20] See https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/04/disabled-people-fight-equal-rights-exhibition-manchester

[21] See the article 'Satire and the City' https://www.groundup.org.za/article/satire-and-city-zombies-and-dead-president-protest-cape-town/

[22] See Betancourt (2021) Ex-NRA chief tricked into speech. The Guardian.  https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/24/nra-video-david-keene-gun-violence-change-the-ref

[23] https://www.contemporarytheatrereview.org/2015/margaretta-darcy/

**Reclaim the City (RTC), Cape Town, South Africa** (Photo used with permission from Reclaim the City).

Reclaim the City: Urban housing activists' Accountability breakfast. RTC were having trouble getting the local councillor responsible for housing to answer their questions. So, a group of activists set up a breakfast table in the early morning outside his house with coffee and sweet pastries. In this creative example, the activists use the element of surprise and warm hospitality **to challenge the power and privilege** of politicians, by coaxing him from his own home, to talk about housing over a meal with a community threatened by evictions due to gentrification and a lack of a social housing policy.

# Case Study: Land Occupation in Bangladesh and Brazil

In both Brazil (since 1985), and Bangladesh (1992) the rural poor have **occupied sites of production**- unused land in order to grow food and survive.

Organised by farmers' resistance movements in both countries, who belong to the international farmer's network La Via Campesina (LVC, The Peasant's Way), they have also built their own homes and dug wells to access water. In Brazil farmers have also built their own schools and hospitals. In both countries poor farmers working together in **solidarity** have gained control over land and the means of feeding themselves. Brazilian farmers' traditional **repertoire** of mistica – a non verbal, **ritual** performance acted out by activists to express their goals and dreams – has been incorporated into the opening ceremonies of all international LVC meetings.

**Punching up, Mistica, LVC Meeting, Jakarta Indonesia, 2013.**
Activists satirise business people trying to make money out of the hard work of peasant farmers (Photo by Paul Routledge).

## ACTIVITY 7: Mapping Power

**Personal reflection or discussion based**

Can you name a few different examples of each of these?

Power over

Power with

Power to

- Can you think of a way that different forms of power are systematic, storied or repeated to form 'the way things are'.
- Have you identified any examples of when activists have used different tactics to 'punch up', which means challenging the presumptions of who is allowed to challenge whom?
- What might you need to decide about safety/ planning if you are working on such activities?

## ACTIVITY 8: The pillars of power

**Discussion based**

Using a specific example, you are going to think about the 'pillars' that uphold the chosen example of impacts of power. This is a means of preparing strategies to overcome these issues.

The problem or injustice we are using as an example is that in many countries, girls leave school early for a number of reasons, including parental/ societal aspirations for their girl children. They may have faced sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies. What are the behaviours, attitudes or structures that uphold the problem and how does this relate to power?

Low aspirations for girls

Girls primed for Reproductive labour

# Girls leaving school early

Reinforcing gendered roles in work and family

Girls face sexual abuse/ teenage pragnancy
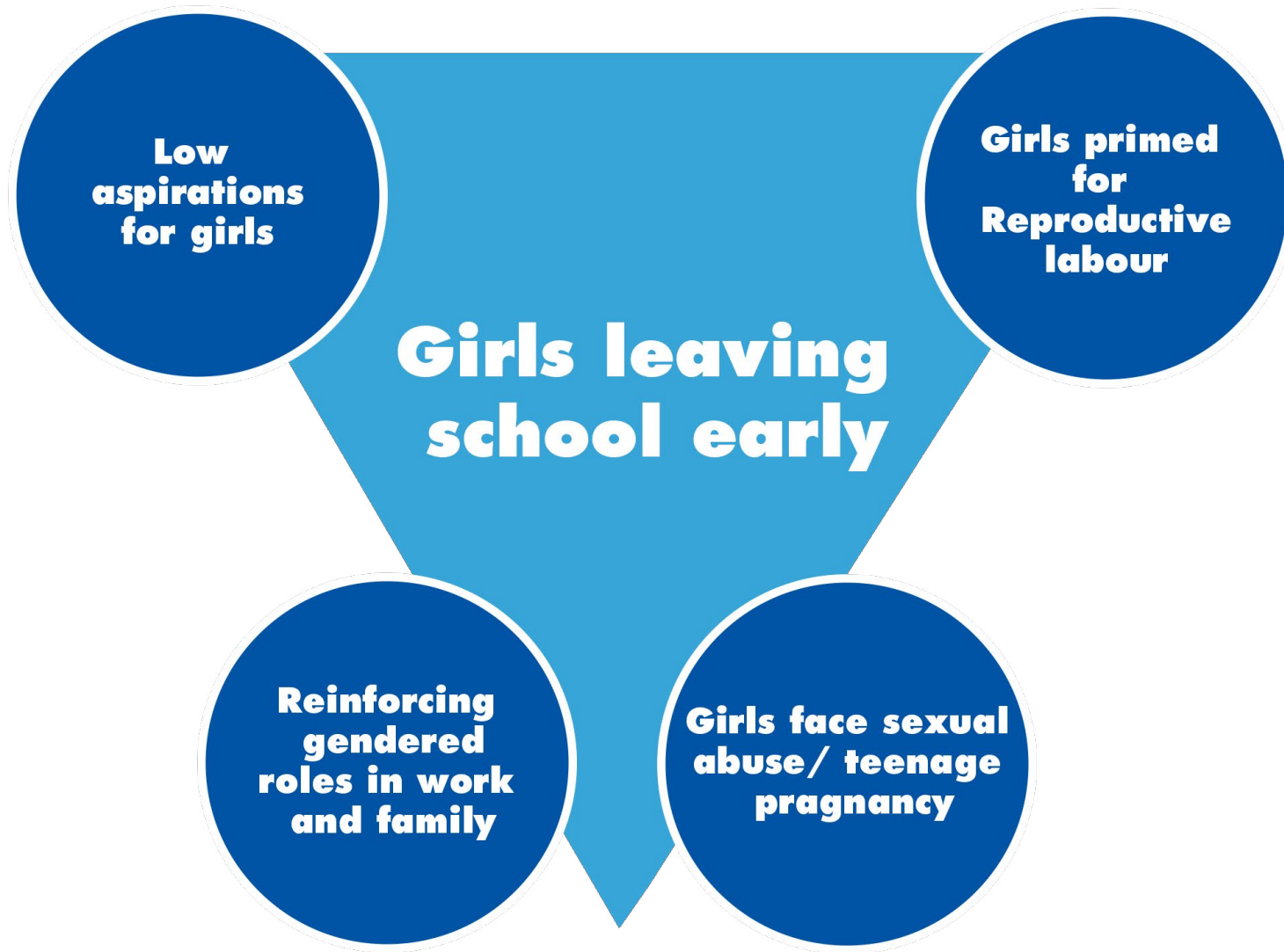
**Illustrated by** Icephe.

In your own example, thinking of a social issue that concerns you, or your movement:

- In the triangle, what is the problem/ oppression, or injustice you would want to address?
- What are the institutions, stories, agreed upon systems that are in place that hold up this problem?
- What principles underlie these pillars?
- How could we question, **reframe**, challenge or weaken these pillars in a campaign?

Sometimes artists use ways into 'problems' that help unsettle the usual pillars of power. For instance British South Asian artist Raju Rage has invited communities to participate in 'Recipes for Resistance' - one of the strands of that project included exploring food inequalities and different intersecting forms of discrimination (racism and transphobia) while preparing food and eating together. [25]

## Institutions

One way of taking this forward is the notion of 'pillars of support' (as a companion to the idea of 'pillars of power') might help discuss how power is not a monolith, but is instead supported by different institutions; targeting these institutions and getting their support or solidarity can make a significant difference for activists. The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) has some useful resources on this. [26]

## ACTIVITY 9: Status Card Game using playing cards

The first part of this activity is about crowdsourcing how the group perceives power structures to be at work in a particular site/ context/ location.
From this starting point, we can then begin to think about how we might
**reframe** such power structures and how they work.
**Materials:** a deck of playing cards
**Role types:** head teacher, govt official, shop owner, landlord, chief, prison officer etc.
(you could choose job roles, social roles or specific roles that relate to the conditions that concern your activism).

**Step 1: articulating levels of power**

The idea is that you identify 'characters' at each 'level' - so an Ace is the lowliest on the scale, moving up until we reach the highest levels of status (these could be operating visibly, e.g. CEO/ Chief psychiatrist/ or invisibly, e.g. politicians or distant decision-makers).

This is a collaborative/ co-created activity that helps to generate discussion about power, status and privilege.

We have used this in:
- a psychiatric hospital with patients identifying how status structures their experience in schools, with youth exploring what learners adopt status roles and beyond to how power is experienced in staff to different degrees;
- with students working in marginalised communities looking to understand how status informs daily life.

**Adaptation:** You may want to play it as a game that borrows from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed toolbox, where job titles or names of roles in society are stuck onto their backs, e.g.: politician, cleaner, student, migrant, etc.[27]

[25] See http://www.rajurage.com/2020/02/recipes-for-resistance-2/

[26] https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/resource/pillars-of-support-2/#:~:text=By%20themselves%2C%20rulers%20cannot%20collect,or%20even%20milk%20a%20cow

[27] Boal, A. (2002) Games for Actors and non-Actors. Translated by Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge.

**Status game with students at University of Leeds** (photo by Fenia Kotsopoulou from a workshop with Kelly di Bertolli with permission).

**Step 2: organising levels of power**

- Each person is given a card which they do not see - they may hold it behind their back. Everyone else moves around and treats them as though they hold that level of power - this could be in how they speak/ what they say and how their body language works.
- What happens when one person of a lowly status meets a person with a higher status?
  The players are trying to do two things: in the first step, they are negotiating the roles and discussing status in the context. When, in step 2, they are given a card that matches a role in the context you are exploring, they will begin to move around and explore, treating others as the sign (with words) or card (with symbols) as though they are bestowed with a specific status. In this step (because they don't know their card), they are trying to work out **from others** and how they respond/ what their conversations and actions are, what kind of status **they** may hold.

**Step 3:**

- After some time of enabling the group to treat each other according to the status on the label or card, bring the group together.
- Then you get the players to all line up in a line from low-to-high status by negotiating without looking at their own cards. This negotiation can be done in silence - ie, miming relations of bodies; or there can be discussion (without mentioning the status title).
- Afterwards you discuss and debrief about how status 'performs', and what cues they were looking for to understand what power/ status they held in relation to others. Thinking about how status is performed opens up ideas about how we can reframe the taken-for- granted 'status' of government officials; business leaders; educators, etc. Once we have thought about how power and dominant stories (common sense) operate we can begin to think about responding to and **reframing** such stories through our Arts Activism.

# Case Study:

# 6 million+ Charitable Trust Reframing Narratives on Refugees through Ritual

Based in Yorkshire, 6 million+ runs creative arts projects with refugees and local communities. They exchange and express stories of the Holocaust, genocides and contemporary persecution. Using the arts, their activist agenda is to challenge discrimination of any kind and work towards a kinder future [28].

Weeping Sisters is an example of **ritual** procession, Yorkshire, U.K.: giant puppets made by artists and refugees based on individuals murdered during the Holocaust and more recent genocides, accompanied by live music from each culture represented. As well as creating figures of Jewish and Gypsy women from World War II, they have also created figures from Syria, Bosnia, Burundi and Kurdistan, always involving some people in the group whose origin is in the community being commemorated. Their intent is to **reframe** narratives on refugees, forging **relationships** and solidarity through the making, and the spectacle of the annual community-based procession.

Building **resources** and **repertoires:** they work with a textile artist to make the body and costume and a sculptor to make the hands and face. Each figure is created over a six week period. Every January, close to Holocaust Memorial Day, they process the Weeping Sisters through the streets of their local town, which requires official permission and rehearsal for the movement of the puppets and the accompanying live music. These processions are acts of public witness as well as calls to action for a kinder world, and draw attention from the public, social media and the press in a much wider and more diverse way than even the best indoor events can.

[28] Contact: kim.strickson@6millionplus.org. For more info: https://www.facebook.com/6MillionPlus

**The 6 Million+ Charitable Trust puppets,** (photo by Malcolm Johnson).

*'Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.'*
*From an African proverb and cited*
*by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.*

# LEARNING: Control myths and power in the age of fake news [29]

## see Power; Reframing

There are many reasons we may want to move away from origin stories, which are those our culture, family of origin, or schooling may have taken for granted. These approaches are often presented as 'fact', even though these stories have changed over time, and range from widely accepted beliefs.

All societies have **'control myths'**, ways of thinking as constructed stories that uphold power dynamics (Reinsborough & Canning, 2010), for example:

- 'education lifts us out of poverty';
- 'There is no alternative to capitalism';
- 'if we work hard enough we will succeed;'
- 'men have different abilities to women';
- 'policing is about protecting the community';
- 'states work in the best interest of their citizens';

They can also be represented in ideas that are widely accepted:

- Culture as 'the way we do things around here' (Edgar Schein, 2015)[30] .

- Even ideas about borders of nations are accepted as true or real, when they are actually agreed-upon stories (maintained by force and violence). The status quo is upheld by general consensus that

is informed by control myths and enforced by  institutions.

**Consent model:** Control mythologies create consent and prop up power structures by legitimizing institutions and the status quo. These ideas are explained in the work of Antonio Gramsci as 'hegemony'. He says there's a kind of common-sense that is enacted through lived practices, that over time form dominant ways of thinking, or ideologies, that need to be disrupted [31].

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[29] Reinsborough, P. & Canning, D. (2010) Re:Imagining Change – How to Use Story-Based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World. Oakland: PM Press.

[30] Kuppler, T. (2015) Edgar Schein in Culture. https://www.leadershipandchangemagazine.com/edgar-schein-on-culture/

[31] See Routledge, P. (2015) 'Engendering Gramsci: Gender, the philosophy of praxis and spaces of encounter in the Climate Caravan, Bangladesh' Antipode  47, 5, 1321-1345.

## How do the powerful benefit from 'control myths'?:

- They rely on a sense of consensus 'this is the way things are' (for instance, 'women are the only people that can properly care for children').

- These ideas can control how we think and what we can imagine.

- They serve to maintain the structures of power and privilege.

- They operate by 'common-sense' ideas that rely on systematised stories about 'progress', 'capitalism', or what counts as a 'family'; they can silence critical questions by virtue of how well established they are (with a chorus of 'there is no alternative').

- Because they are often so bound up in how we come to know about the world, it can seem we are questioning the very foundations of the world.

*'Control mythologies are exposed and assumptions are challenged, making the status quo untenable. People-power mobilizing narrative offers a new story. When stories change […] power can shift' (Reinsborough & Canning, 2010: 26).*

## Activity 10: Recognising the constructions of fake news

**Personal reflection/ discussion based**

- Have you heard a piece of information (on the news, from a friend, etc.) that you did not believe?

- Why didn't you? Take a moment to write down some of your own 'narrative filters' for information. (These are things that may 'flag' characteristics of 'fake news' to you).

- What makes you believe? Disbelieve?

- Do you recognise any conflicts of interest in the piece? (e.g. article written by someone funded by big business).

- What kind of source material are we talking about? (characteristics of type of publication: blog/ news article/ peer reviewed research as well as characteristics of author: are they writing from a wealth of expertise/ experience/ prior track record)?

- What are the implications of believing this approach to information? (e.g. we may spread confusing messages or conspiracy theories that can frighten others into actions they may not otherwise have chosen).

# Case Study :
# The 'Squares' movements, Egypt and Tunisia

The 2010 and 2011 'Arab Spring' protests across North Africa challenged unemployment, poverty, government corruption and disinformation. In Egypt, protestors occupied a **site of circulation**, Tahrir Square, which was a potent symbol of Egyptian nationhood and rebellion. Activists deployed collective **resources** to create an encampment of tents, with electricity rigged from street lights, street hospitals, waste and recycling stations, a prison, supervised day care facilities, food stalls, barricades, stages, and a microphone and loudspeaker in order for speeches, news and debates to take place during 'open mic' sessions. A key artistic tactic was the use of graffiti art on walls all over Cairo. Protesters could express themselves and counter misrepresentation in local media, and shed light on the political dynamics of the time. The murals also exposed the transgressors and advocated rights for victims .[32]

From here they challenged the government and called for the end of the military regime of President Hosni Mubarak. Such encampments **resonated**  with activists in other countries and became a common **repertoire** in similar protests that occurred across North Africa and in parts of Europe.[33]

[32] See https://www.dw.com/en/how-egypts-street-artists-documented-the-2011-revolution/a-56312962

[33] For more on graffiti as a tool for resistance see Walsh, A. & Tsilimpounidi, T. (2011) 'Painting Human Rights: Mapping Street Art in Athens' in Journal of Arts and Communities, 2(2): pp. 111-122.

## ACTIVITY 11: Questioning Control Mythologies

**Personal reflection/ discussion based**

Is there a control mythology you once believed, but now question, challenge, or refute?

Faith-based
Gender crime US/them
Unearned privilege
welfare
Ability/disability
relationships
race/ethnicity stereotypes

**Mind map, or write your responses to these questions :[34]**

- When did you start to challenge the conventional story, or accepted 'truth'?
- Was there a person, incident, media piece, or experience that led you to question your existing beliefs?
- How are you cross-referencing experts to consolidate your position rather than relying on single sources/ websites that may hold extremist views?
- What lessons do you draw from this experience?
- Are there any conflicts or tensions in your experience, and how might they change over time?

[34] Adapted and extended from Reinsborough & Canning, 2010: 26.

# LEARNING: Building Relationships for disruptive creative actions

- The types of **relationships** that you may form will depend in part on the scale of the issue you are concerning with and the action/strategy that you wish to conduct. Such **relationships** form the basis of **solidarity.**

## Create an Affinity group [35]

Numbering between three to fifteen people, affinity groups consist of a group of people who share common ground and can provide supportive, sympathetic spaces for its members to listen to one another, share concerns, express fears, etc. In affinity groups, people provide support and solidarity for one another. They tend to enact a consensus form of decision-making, are non-hierarchical and participatory, and deploy flexible modes of action. Affinity groups will frequently join together with other affinity groups for political actions, but retain their own separate integrity, and course of action, within the context of broader struggles.

## Build an Organization

For larger scale activity beyond the affinity group (e.g. neighbourhood and community level organisations; regional or national organisations you need to create a community of interest)
(see 'Mapping your Neighbourhood and Community').

- Get involved in community organising amongst different sectors over time (e.g. churches; mosques; unions).
- Think about who else to collaborate and communicate with.
- Think about how the relationships that you build will be affected by the tactics you use. Over time you might need to think about broadening your community of interest through networking (see 'Define your Spectrum of Allies' pg 70 ) (see 'Mapping your Neighbourhood and Community, pg 27).

[35] Adapted and extended from Routledge, P. (2017) Space Invaders: Radical geographies of protest. London: Pluto Press.

# Case study:
# Climate Camps
# in Europe

Climate Activists working in affinity groups constructed encampments close to **sites of destruction** (such as coal burning power stations and airports with their associated fossil fuel emissions ) and attempted protests to close down those sites. Week-long camps were established with activists living in tents; medical and media facilities; kitchens; meeting and cinema spaces with sound systems etc. all powered by renewable energy. The camps provided direct action training; skills workshops and discussion groups for people to learn about climate change and protest **repertoires and resources; build relationships** and **solidarity** with each other and plan alternative futures.

**Climate Camp, U.K. 2009:** The welcome tent (Photo by Paul Routledge).

## LEARNING: Devising an Action/Campaign

A key element of arts activism is to reshape the world around you to make demands, send messages to policy makers and the public, and to fashion alternative ways of thinking and living.

To devise a plan to get from where we are at, to our goal ('what do we want?') you will need to:

- **Dream:** Have a group discussion about what visions of a better world people have. For example: we envision a city with less air pollution. Follow up questions regarding this issue are: What is working? And What is not working?
- **Set Goals:** What do we think we can do to solve or address this problem? For example, taking the issue of air pollution: a goal might be to end the planned extension to a particular road; or airport.
- Decide what **resources**/skills/**repertoires** you need to achieve the goal.
- Consider your capacity and **resources:** numbers, skills, contacts, tactical know-how and abilities.
- Think about your message and **reframing** of an issue.
- Consider your **repertoires** of action.
- What/Who is your target? What is the influence that the target has on your goal?
- Think about the effectiveness of a strategy in relation to your goals and your previous knowledge of actions (e.g. **resonance** of your action with the public or media).
- Fit your tactics to your strategy: how will tactics impact the target? How might the target react?

*'To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality'* (bell hooks 2014: 110).

# ACTIVITY 12: Define your Spectrum of Allies

## Purpose of the exercise:

- To understand who our allies and opponents are.
- To help in realising that tactics need to be planned in relation to how much they do or do not attract key allies and move people towards being active allies.
- To encourage more optimistic mobilisation efforts through realising it is not necessary to win over the opposition to our point of view.
- To invite people into the fascinating complexity of strategizing.

In most social-change situations there is a struggle between those who want the change and those who don't. On the one hand, there are people who are active supporters of the change—not just people who believe in the change but people who are taking actions to make it a reality. On the other hand, there are people who are active opposers, people who actively take actions to **prevent** the change.

However, **most** people are somewhere between. Societies include a range of groups that can be put on a spectrum from closest to the point of view of your group to farthest away. This spectrum of allies illustrates this point (see the diagram on pg 70).

The goal of the spectrum of allies is to identify different people—or specific groups of people—in each category, then design actions and tactics to move them one wedge to the left. In most social-change campaigns it is not necessary to 'win over' the opponent to your point of view. It is only necessary to move the central pie wedges one step in your direction. That means our goal is not to convince the fossil fuel industry to end themselves. Instead, it is moving the rest of the society to shut them down.
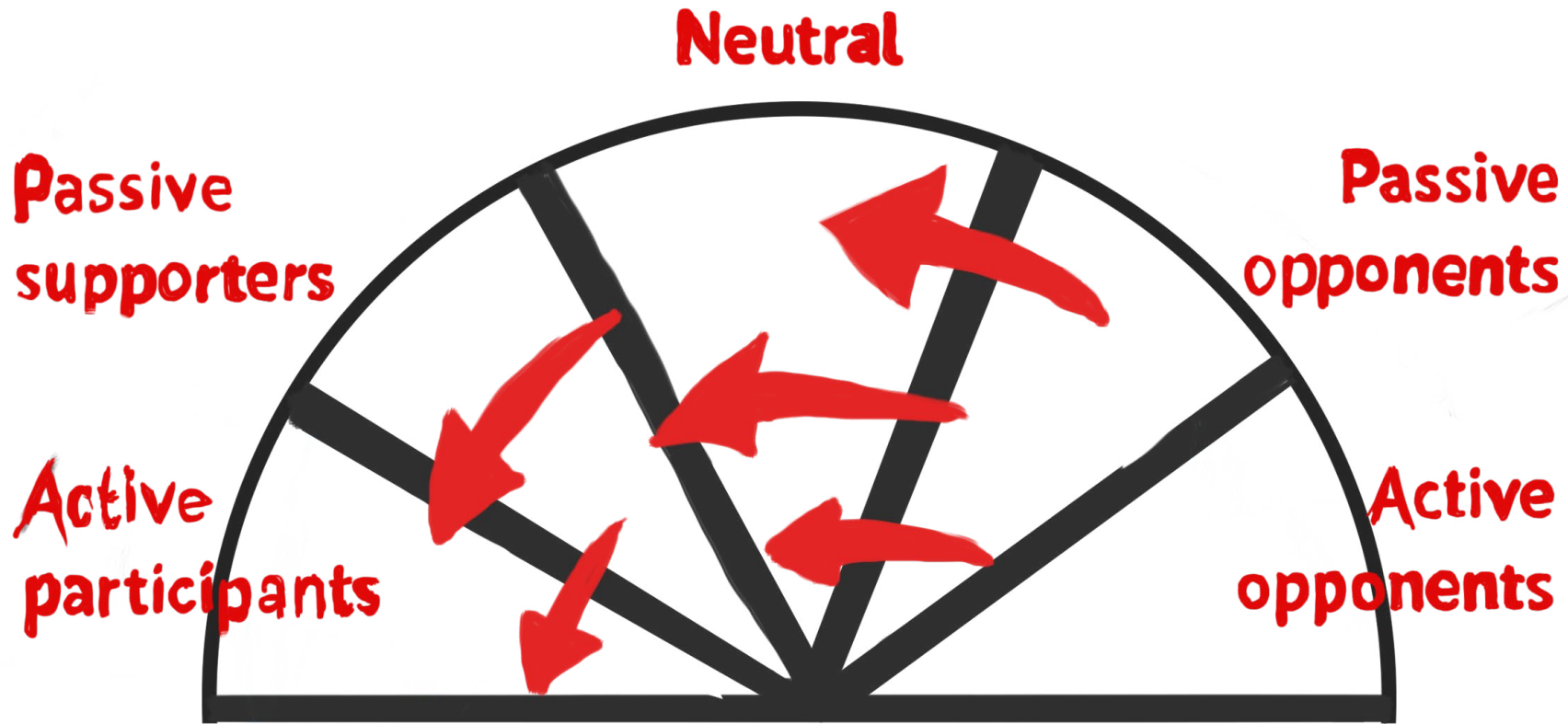
**Spectrum of Allies,** Illustration by Icephe, adapted from TrainingForChange.org.

# Case study :
# Flash Mobs for indigenous rights

A flash mob is an unrehearsed, spontaneous and dispersed mass action, such as an impromptu demonstration. It has become a common **repertoire** for a variety of protest actions. Groups of people congregate in public spaces to engage in particular creative or artistic acts of **resistance** before dispersing again. Flash mobs are organized through virtual and viral means (e.g. emails, text messages, word of mouth; blog posts; social media platforms etc.).

Idle No More, a Canadian grassroots movement for indigenous rights, have combined flash mobs with traditional music and 'round dances'. [36]  Round dances have different **ritual** and spiritual meanings across Canada, and have been used as expressions of friendship and **solidarity.** Round dance flash mobs - with circles of people linking hands and singing and dancing to the beats of drums - have taken place in malls and public spaces across Canada and the United States since 2012 (Routledge, 2017).

[36] See http://www.idlenomore.ca

**The Spectrum of Allies** also reminds us there is a need for many roles. Different actions will reach folks at different places in the spectrum, so there are many ways to support a campaign, from lobbying politicians to marching in the streets.

This tool also evaluates our work (see **Reflection**). Can we show that we are measurably moving some segment of people over to our side? If not, we need to rethink our strategy.

- Identify an issue of importance to you and your group/neighbourhood/community
- Think about the possible stakeholders and allies beyond your group who might also be interested in this issue. Allies can be both individuals and groups.

Consider:

- How will our actions affect and influence these stakeholders?
- Who are we targeting?
- Will our action help us to do outreach to, recruit or partner with groups that share (or could share) our strategic priorities/goals?

Take some time to fill out your own spectrum of allies chart with specific people and groups.

**Note that you need to be specific to make this tool work.** "The public," for example, is far too broad to reach, and your strategy will suffer as a result. Instead, identify specific groups—groups that have a phone number, or an address — a group you could attend a meeting of, or meet with a leader.

Think of specific individuals, both politically influential, but also socially influential, like elders and community leaders (See **Power Mapping**).

Share reflections and lessons in the whole group. The group may realise it needs to do more research.

Or it may have important, interesting debates about where people are on the spectrum.

Notice which slices your group knows a lot, or a little, about. This shows which groups you should try to meet with in order to know more about that wedge of the spectrum of allies. Create a plan to reach out to them.

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37 see TrainingForChange.org; 350.org

**SWEAT Decriminalise Sex Work,** Cape Town, South Africa.

Part of the Sex Worker's Education and Advocacy Taskforce's (SWEAT) creative campaigning in South Africa includes trying to Conscientise as many people as possible to see sex work as legitimate work. As part of their Decriminalise Sex Work campaign they worked with a church in central Cape Town to reframe moralistic judgements around sex work. The use of signs and spectacle asks Christians to potentially become allies in thinking about what morality might mean when Jesus supported sex workers.

Some other examples include:

- Jordanian activists fighting for an expansion of public transportation realised they wanted to involve people who rode buses, but didn't know them. So they hung out at bus stops and rode the bus to initiate one to one conversations about public transport with people.
- Another example is Freedom Theatre in Jenin, Palestine: through performance the 'Freedom Bus' seeks to build awareness and generate solidarity initiatives. The company has a long legacy of rights based in the west bank [38]



A giant puppet of the North Carolina Climate Justice Theater Procession leads the People's Climate March consisting of a spectrum of allies from trade unions, indigenous people and environmentalists, in Washington DC (Photo by Amanda Robertson).

[38]See https://www.thefreedomtheatre.org/

# LEARNING: Thinking about your Action Logic

Action logic is directly related to the goals of campaigns or protests. It frames and informs a particular protest through crafting maximum storytelling impact. In order to influence public perception, protestors need to communicate effectively, by telling compelling stories grounded in folks' real life experiences that address directly the social or political problem in question (see **recognition**). To do this **reframing** is critical: replacing an old story with a new one that widens, narrows or shifts the frame.

Consider:

- Who are you trying to reach?
- How will you frame an issue of conflict?
- What types of story or imagery do you need to deploy to show what is at stake in your campaign?
- How can you challenge 'common sense' thinking on an issue and in so doing express alternatives and solutions?
- Consider the tone of your messaging (is it angry, somber, funny etc?). Humour can help to open up folks to the alternative story that can create or provoke a shift in the public conversation on an issue.
- How and what will your choice of tactics communicate to audiences/ targets/ allies?
- Is it understandable and persuasive?
- Important also to question how you are inviting your target audience to respond/ react/ participate in playful ways. How is their presence/ participation inviting play?

### Creating Irresistible Images [39]

Creating examples of spectacles in Kenya, activists graffitied slogans on piglets and poured blood on the streets outside parliament for them to feed on, to highlight greed, specifically an obscene pay increase for MPs. In Uganda, a group of unemployed youth stained pigs and piglets yellow, the colour of the corrupt and autocratic ruling party, to highlight youth unemployment and state corruption. In both cases,the image of greed is immediately **recognised**. Letting live animals loose in public spaces created a **spectacle** of chaos as uniformed police and military tried to catch the animals and contain the critique. In so doing, security forces are caught up in the absurdity of running after and locking up the livestock.



Illustration by Icephe.

**Other examples are:**

- 2017 mass street protests of up to two million people on the streets of Hong Kong using yellow umbrellas - subsequent protests used many different colours.
- 'Carhenge': Activists protesting the building of the M77 motorway close to low income communities created 'Carhenge' an art-activist installation consisting of nine cars buried in a circle engine-down in the M77 roadbed - **a site of destruction** and **circulation.** Evoking the U.K.'s prehistoric stone circle - which would be **recognised** by the public, Carhenge **reframed** people's common sense assumptions about car culture to highlight the system's irrationality - the poisoning of the air that we breathe by increasing amounts of exhaust fumes, or 'carmageddon'.

[39] Bogad, L. (2016) Tactical Performance: The Theory and Practice of Serious Play. London: Routledge.



**'Carhenge' Anti-Roads Protest**
(Photo by Paul Routledge).

## Images Using Light and Colour

- Blackout protests in Nepal during Nepal revolution, 1990
- Candlelit vigils conducted after state violence
- Red Shirts (anti-coup protests in Thailand)

In 2020 in Richmond VA, U.S, Black Lives Matter activists protested the murder of George Floyd by a police officer by targeting a **site of Commemoration,** of the Confederate General Robert E Lee statue, by projecting an image of George Floyd onto the statue with the message of **resistance** 'BLM, No Justice, No Peace'. Deploying a **repertoire** of image making and projection skills, the action challenged and **reframed** everyday thinking about police behaviour. The message continues to **resonate** with African American and Latino communities throughout the U.S. who are the primary victims of police violence.
(Illustration inspired by photo documentation).

**George Floyd projection on Robert E Lee Statue in Richmond, Virginia, U.S.** illustrated by Icephe.

**Using colour as spectacle in Sex Worker Advocacy** (SWEAT), Durban, South Africa. (Photos by SWEAT with permission).

At the global conference on HIV held in Durban in 2012, SWEAT (Sex Workers and Education Task force) set up a digital clock in the main session to time how long it took before a presenter mentioned sex work. This was to highlight the invisibility of sex work in conversations around HIV and to encourage prolific speakers to consider sex workers within their policy and research.

Activists used red umbrellas a key symbol throughout the conference to identify their cause that included the #SayHerName campaign which gives names and history to sex workers who have been murdered yet are erased as people in media through headlines such as "sex worker murdered".

# Actions and interventions using humour

- Larry Bogad worked with costumed activists to 'deliver democracy' dressed as U.S. mailboxes to draw attention to the postal ballot scandal in the 2020 U.S. elections, while signing up voters to the electoral roll.

- In London, U.K. 2018, a mass protest was staged against President Trump's visit to the Houses of Parliament at that **site of decision.** Art Activists deployed the **repertoire** of creating a large inflatable of the President **reframing** him as a spoiled baby. In so doing, they transformed power relations by making a powerful President an object of fun and ridicule; gained media attention; and generated **resonance** amongst both protestors and the viewing public.
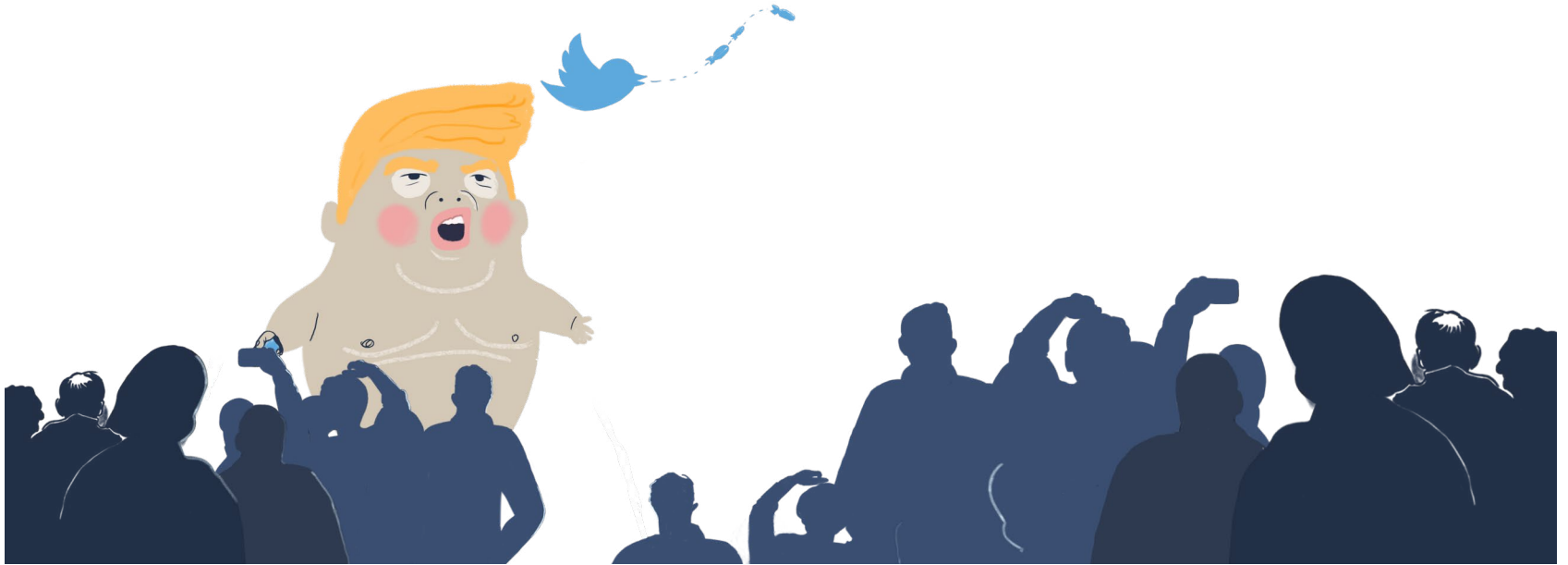
**Trump Baby inflatable in London,** U.K, 2018  illustration by Icephe.

# Case Study:
# Climate Games

Climate Games took place during the climate justice protests in Paris in 2015, that accompanied the twenty first United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting (also known as the Conference of Parties, or COP 21). Created by activists from The Laboratory of the Insurrectionary Imagination, Climate Games' repertoire merged direct action on the streets with a website and app to create a real-time crowd sourced mapping of climate justice protests in Paris and across the world.[40]

Drawing upon the motif from the film *Hunger Games,* Climate Games were a set of protest 'games' played between mobile climate justice packs (variously named affinity groups) and their opponents, the police (named 'team blue') and corporations (named 'team grey').

Activists in **affinity groups** targeted different **sites of intervention** – streets, corporate offices, government buildings etc and used the **resource** of an open source smartphone app available on the Climate Games website to report their protest actions in real time by uploading onto a digital map (or 'gaming field'), photos, reports and video material of their actions. Protestors could also upload information about the location of opposing players (teams blue and grey) in the global gaming field. Through this digital platform, climate justice activists were able to **reframe** the site of the UNFCCC meeting in Paris as a 'gaming field' of direct action protests and provide online space for activists to discuss such protests and present oppositional discourses surrounding the COP21.

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[40] See https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/uc-davis-led-performance-artists-dressed-mailboxes-will-pop-4-american-cities-wednesday

[41] The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (2015) 'Hacking the COP: The Climate Games in Paris 2015' EJOLT Report 23: 'Refocusing resistance for climate justice. COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris' Retrieved from: http://www.ejolt.org/2015/09/refocusing-resistance-climate-justice-coping-coping-beyond-paris/

**Banner-making climate games** (Photo by Paul Routledge).

## LEARNING: Mapping Sites of Intervention[42]

In this learning section, we are offering some indicative examples of the different 'sites' that could be opportunities to locate your arts activist actions. These titles come from Paul's research into activism which he wrote about in his book Space Invaders (2017). Although there are hundreds of examples we might choose, we are giving only a few of each type to show how the arts action intervenes and disrupts. You will best be able to judge your context and perhaps add more examples in your discussions.

# Types of site of intervention

**Sites of production** are places such as factories, schools, universities, studios, art spaces.
- Actions: school strikes; producing banners; flags; screen prints; occupying factories. for example: BIO.ME/VIO.ME in Greece which is an autonomous factory that has been taken over by workers that continue to function as a co-operative, producing environmentally friendly cleaning products since 2014 [43].



**School Strike4Climate, Leeds, U.K. 2019.** (Photo by Paul Routledge).

[42] This draws upon and extends the original idea of 'points of intervention' created by the smartMeme Collective. See Verson, J. (2007) 'Why we need cultural activism' in Trapese Collective (eds). Do It Yourself London: Pluto Press pp. 171–186.; Routledge, 2017.

[43] See https://unicornriot.ninja/2019/occupy-resist-produce-inside-the-self-managed-factory-of-vio-me/

**Sites of destruction** are places of resource extraction (such as gas fracking, new coal mining, deforestation) and associated infrastructures (such as airports, motorways, dams, pipelines and corporate headquarters). Actions: occupations and encampments; blockades.
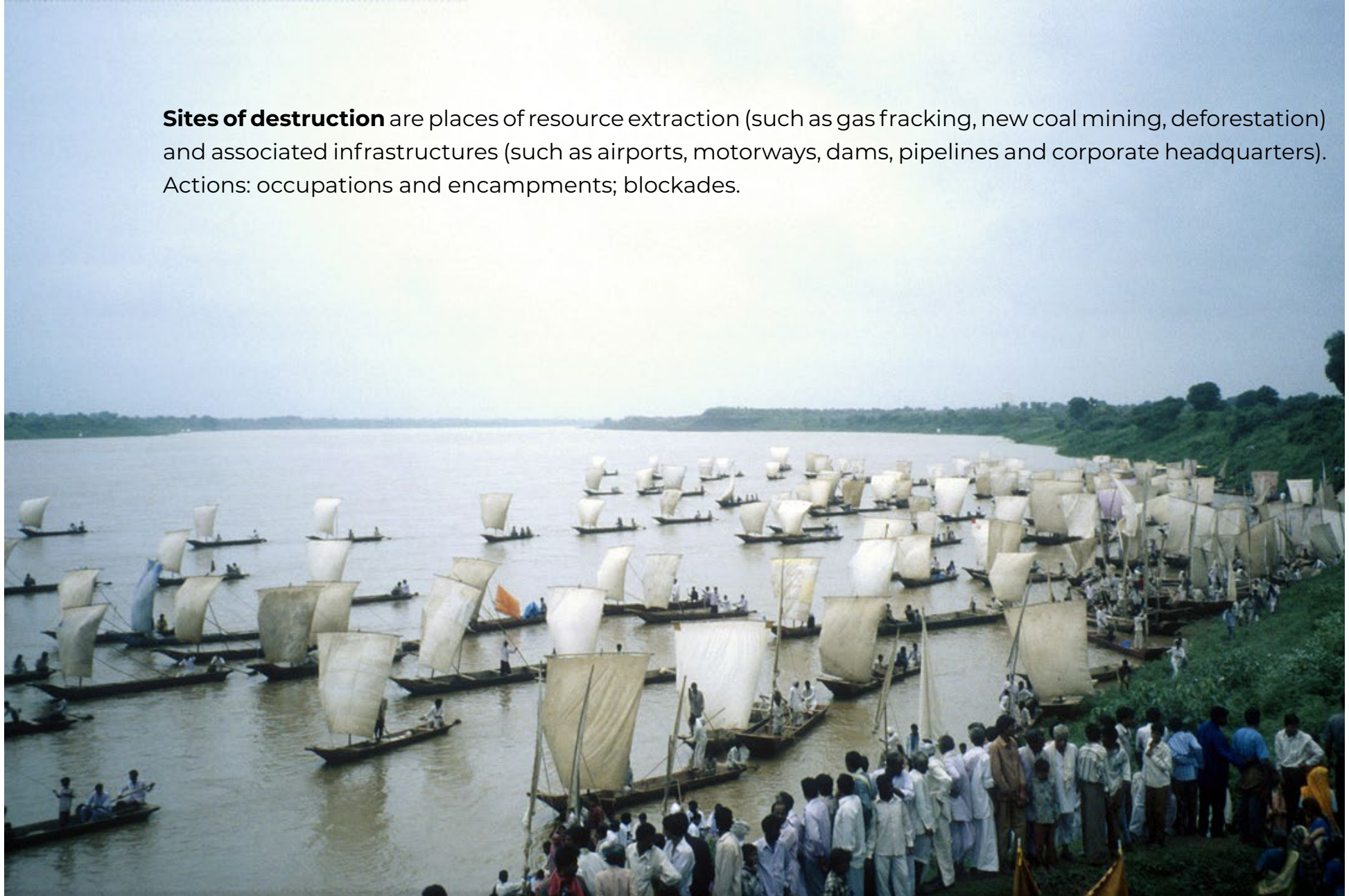
**Boat Demonstration Against Dams:** Fisherman protest against big dam on Narmada river, India 1999 (Photo by Paul Routledge).

**Sites of decision** such as governmental buildings or parliaments and corporate headquarters.
Actions: demonstrations, blockades, occupations,  for example
• Courthouse protests
• Feminist protests against conservative decisions in U.K. parliament

**Black Lives Matter irresistible image outside White House, Washington D.C., U.S. 2020**,
illustrated by Icephe.

In 2020 Black Lives Matter activists protesting racial violence by the police, targeted a key site of decision in the U.S., the White House in Washington, D.C. Deploying a **repertoire** of painting skills to cover the road leading to the Washington Monument with the message 'Black Lives Matter', activists challenged the political power of Trump's Government, as part of their **reframing** of everyday thinking about police behaviour. The message continues to **resonate** with African American and Latinx communities throughout the U.S. who are the primary victims of police violence.

**Sites of circulation** are about transportation and logistics such as roads, airports, ports, terminals, squares etc[44].

Actions: include occupations and blockades of particular infrastructures in order to disrupt the flows of resources, traffic and personnel upon which business and government depend, for example:

· Standing Rock Sioux protests against the Dakota Access oil pipeline, U.S. 2018 and beyond.

**Sites of consumption** are about capitalist consumption such as e.g. chain stores, supermarkets and art galleries etc.

Actions: consumer boycotts, market campaigns etc,for example:

Climate activists covered in molasses representing oil, to protest the sponsorship of art galleries by fossil fuel companies (Tate gallery, London 2011) [45].

**Liberate Tate/ Art not oil**
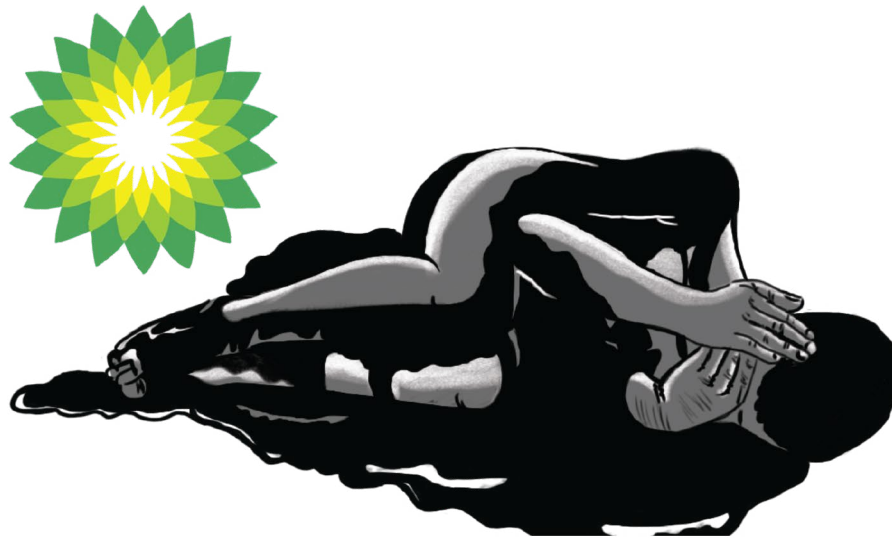
In 2011, Liberate Tate protested the funding of the arts by the fossil fuel industry by targeting **sites of consumption** such as the Tate Modern art gallery and staging activist bodies covered in molasses in the lobby to symbolise oil. In so doing they have **reframed** what was usually seen, heard and felt in an art gallery.

**Sites of social reproduction** are related to activities that perpetuate the conditions of society and help to uphold the structures of capitalist power (such as 5 day working weeks, gendered nature of labour and the demands of unwaged work). For example: places of housing, education, childcare, healthcare etc. Actions: demos, rent strikes, etc. at these locations.

- Rent strikes are a means of refusal and draw attention to the landlord classes and exploitation of the poor. Campaigns that take up mapping anti-eviction actions are ways of making these visible.[46]
- In Argentina, 300 worker controlled and operated workplaces have emerged in metal and ceramics factories; print-shops; grocery stores; media; clinics; newspapers, schools, hotels and bakeries.
- Sisters Uncut mounted occupation actions on the site of former women's prison HMP Holloway in North London to protest gentrification and a prison punishment systems. (Getting rid of the prisons systems),and housing movements are entwined in their actions, including participatory workshops imagining future uses for the site that had the people most affected by poverty and inequality at the forefront [47]

**Sites of potential** are actions that seek to stimulate the imagination concerning possible future scenarios about how to live, and attempt to actualise such alternatives 'on the ground'.

[44] See Anand, N. Gupta, A. & Appel, H. (eds.) (2018) The promise of infrastructure. Durham: Duke University Press; and Cowen, Deborah. (2014) The deadly life of logistics: Mapping violence in global trade. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

[45] Evans, M. (2015)  Artwash: Big oil and the arts London: Pluto Press.

[46] See https://antievictionmap.squarespace.com/

[47] See https://reclaimholloway.mystrikingly.com/

• The ZAD occupation protest encampment near Nantes airport: simultaneously a site of potential (living independently of the state); social reproduction (housing); circulation (proposed airport); and production (of food) [48].

**Sites of assumption** are actions that attempt to change how people think and feel about particular issues and necessitate challenging underlying beliefs, and control mythologies.
Actions: **culture jamming** to hijack events or mass popular spectacles using the images and signs of popular culture:
- Women occupy public gallery in the U.K.'s houses of parliament in an extinction rebellion protest.
- Brandalism is an anti-advertising movement started in London, U.K. in 2012 that has replaced outdoor advertisements with posters of art to create awareness on particular issues. For example, at the 2015 climate justice mobilisations in Paris, France 82 artists from 19 countries created posters using computer graphics that mimicked official advertisements in design and appearance, and replaced 600 public advertisements (on billboards, at bus stops etc.) with artworks to reveal the connections between advertising, consumerism and climate change.

**Sites of commemoration/memory** include statues; memorials; shrines.
Actions: challenge the original meanings and memories of these sites.
- Large scale image projections (such as the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko projecting archival images of enslaved or oppressed people onto important monuments)[49]
- toppling and defacing slaver statues and colonial statues [50].
- Rhodes Must Fall movement.[51]

**Sites of detention and containment** e.g. prisons; migrant detention centres.

[48] You can hear more from arts activist Jay Jordan in this podcast episode: https://www.coresist.org/calling-all-humans-podcast/ zad-the-diversity-of-resistance public-projections
[49] See https://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections

**Department of Happiness Affairs,** Sonke Gender Justice, 2018, South Africa.

**Ministry of Happiness Affairs,** Sonke Gender Justice, 2018, South Africa.

South Africa's Department of Home Affairs is known by all as an institution of unhappiness: long queues, lost papers, overworked staff and endless frustration. In April 2018 Sonke Gender Justice and other CSOs in Cape Town held a creative protest to draw playful attention to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers who were required to travel long distances across the country to renew their papers after the Department of Home Affairs closed the Cape Town offices. Creative, humorous and playful protest can often **resonate** with the public. "In an effort to bring more attention and colour to the dust and despair that characterise the conditions at Home Affairs, civil society hosted the Department of Happiness Affairs. Its aim was to show the Department of Home Affairs what services to migrants could look like – a welcoming, empathetic and receptive space, open to all asylum seekers and refugees who wish to apply for documentation in South Africa" [52].

[50] See the Guardian article by Gary Younge (2021) Why every single statue should come down.
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jun/01/gary-younge-why-every-single-statue-should-come-down-rhodes-colston

[51] Davids, N. (2020) The Beheading of Rhodes in Cape Town. LA Review of Books. 1 December.
[online] Available at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-beheading-of-rhodes-in-cape-town/

# ACTIVITY 13: Placing Creative Actions for Maximum Impact

- Brainstorm 'issues' that are important to the group.
- Use sticky notes and place them on a brainstorm board.
- Divide groups into subgroups.
- Each subgroup chooses an issue from the brainstorm board.
- Each group now takes 30 minutes to think of an action/protest that enables their issue of concern to be voiced. The group must decide which sites of intervention they would target that are relevant to their issue and concerns. E.g. If your concern is a government policy, then you might decide to target a **site of decision** such as a government building.
- On butcher paper make a chart with sites of intervention along the side and the groups along the top Groups can present their issue; their action; which sites of intervention they would target and why (see table pg 94).
  Consider:
- How does your site of intervention link to your target?
- Does the site of intervention show the problem and reveal the target?
- Does the site of intervention give your campaign Leverage (over dominant ideas?/ within interpersonal relations/in securing victories over opponents)?

[52] Pictures & text sourced from www.genderjustice.org.za

# TABLE

| SITES OF INTERVENTION | GROUP A | GROUP B |
|---|---|---|
| DECISION | | |
| DESTRUCTION | | |
| PRODUCTION | | |
| CIRCULATION | | |
| CONSUMPTION | | |
| SOCIAL REPRODUCTION | | |
| ASSUMPTION | | |
| POTENTIAL | | |
| COMMEMORATION | | |
| DETENTION | | |
| ADD YOUR OWN | | |

**An example using climate change: Mapping the technique**

Your group is concerned about climate change. You live near an area where gas fracking is due to take place. You might decide to target the following sites:

| SITE | TARGET | ACTION |
|---|---|---|
| Production / destruction | places of gas extraction/ fracking | occupation of the site; protest encampment |
| Decision | local government buildings or corporate headquarters of a gas company | demonstrations |
| Circulation | roads leading to and from the gas fracking site | blockades |
| Potential | people's imaginations | protest encampment showcasing renewable energy |

# Case Study: Stories of Significant Change Wadzanayi Farm / Lalapansi Story - by Savanna Trust

In 1983, 80 families from the Gokwe area (Zimbabwe) observed that their communal land was shrinking and as such failing to fully sustain their needs and that of their livestock. In response, the villagers resolved to embark on a relocation exercise in pursuit of alternative, adequate and fertile land. With the Zimbabwean government hands tied by the Lancaster Constitution of 1980 in as far as land re-distribution to the landless was concerned, the villagers' hopes for land dwindled.

The villagers were however determined not to play victim in the absence of government's assistance to their urgent need for land. Driven by unwavering will-power for a brighter future, the families mobilized resources, identified and purchased a **site of production,** Wadzanayi Farm located in the Lalapansi area of Chirumhanzu district. Wadzanayi Farm was partitioned into 170 households. The farm suddenly became green, teeming with the new settler's livestock. This shared success became the bedrock and strength of community **relationships.**

Outside Wadzanayi Farm, national politics was taking an ugly head in total contrast with the harmony in the farm. Eventually and sadly, the national politics cancer waltzed its destructive tentacles into Wadzanayi Farm in 2008. In a bid to control the farm, and true to Zimbabwean politics, the divide and rule game found turf at Wadzanayi Farm. New leaderships were suddenly imposed to fight and neutralize the farm, as it was regarded to be a stronghold of the opposition. This, in total contrast and conflict to the tried and binding people's elected leadership of the farm committee.

A fierce battle for the control of the farm raged Wadzanayi farm. Former allies who brought a dream to life against the challenges of the fear of the unknown became sworn enemies all thanks to politicians. Ideas or efforts to improve the farm were shot down, not for their lack of merit but, because they sourced from political adversaries. The result was developmental stagnation and the crumbling of a noble community venture and livelihood, which was a challenge to the existing **relationships.**
Having identified and familiarised with the Wadzanayi Farm tale, Savanna Trust included the Wadzanayi community in their conflict management project using theatre as a tool to deconstruct or to **reframe** the politician's manufactured division besieging Wadzanayi Farm. Bringing youths from the conflicting

families together, Savanna Trust initiated an intervention that used theatre to engage in conflict transformation. Ten young people were identified from the community and went through training in conflict transformation and the use of theatre for transformation by Savanna Trust.

After the training, the young people together with four facilitators from Savanna Trust, initiated a theatre for development process. The team carried out extensive research on the issues causing the conflict in Wadzanayi Farm. A public rehearsal process followed, with men, women and youths from the community attending and actively contributing to play creation. After ten days, a public performance was attended by three quarters of the Wadzanayi community, both elected and the imposed leadership and the local police. On a Saturday morning, the young people together with the Savanna Trust team carried out an interactive performance which stimulated a robust post performance discussion. A lot of issues that were raised by the play found resonance with the community challenges. It lit the fire which resulted in many other interventions taking place.

The process of building **resources** continued after the first performance with many other follow up performances based on issues raised. The young people were assisted by Savanna Trust to form a local theatre group which was named Wadzanayi Community Theatre, dealing with issues emanating from their community. By its mere composition, the group became a living testimony to the artificiality of that which has divided the farm community - thereby forging a wider **recognition** of the issues.
Follow up activities led by the local theatre team and Savanna Trust saw the revival of the community dip tank which had not been in operation for 2 years. The intervention also resulted in the staging of the Lalapansi Arts Festival (29-30 Aug, 2009) whose theme was, **Restoring Relationships, Transforming Communities – Building Peace.** The festival highlight was the official commissioning of the community's dip-tank revived by the artists and the community. This collaboration brought and gave former adversaries an opportunity to do something together that is mutually beneficial – just as when they moved from Gokwe. This facilitated the divided community members to re-find each other as they worked together for a common good. The process catalyzed the all-important **process of the restoration of community** relations. Shared by Daniel Maposa, Savanna Trust.

# LEARNING: Reflecting on your actions

This is one of the important parts of any arts activism intervention: a process of **reflection** that enables your collective to take stock of what worked and why, or reflect on what didn't work. It forms part of the action learning cycle: We are inspired by the work of Stephen Duncombe, who has written about being ethical in how we work to make political change.[53]
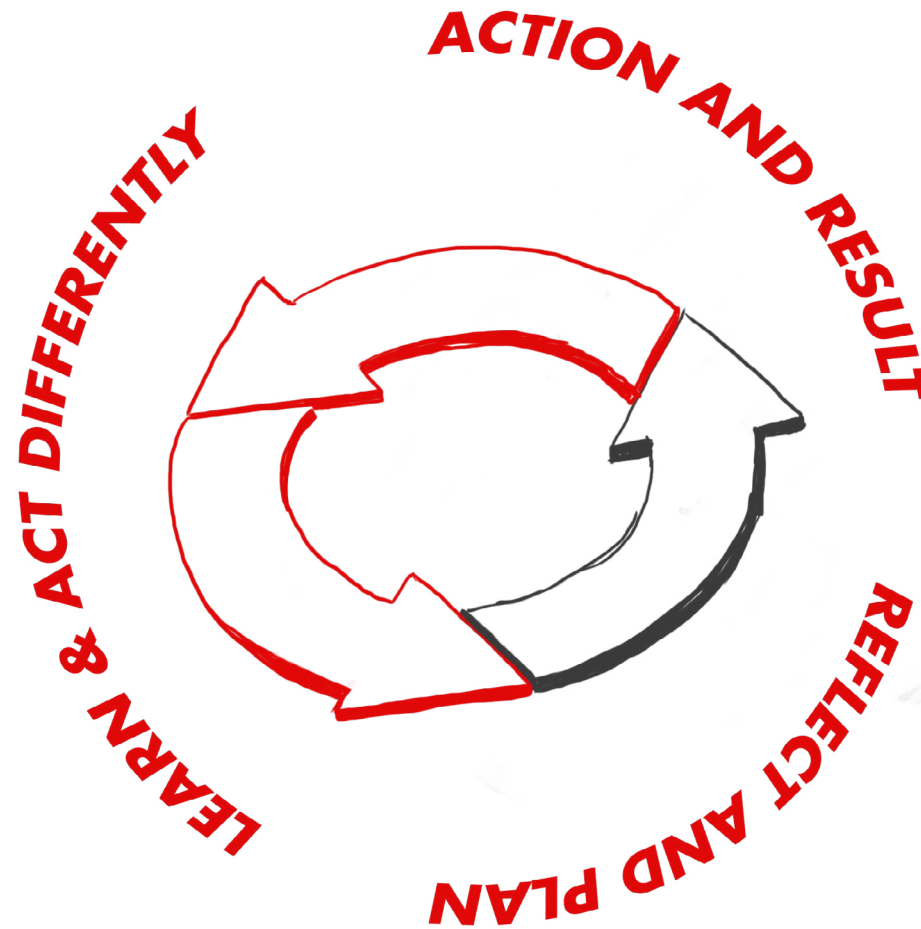


Action and result / Reflect and Plan / Learn & Act differently

- What **resources** and **repertoires** have been drawn on: which have you learned, enhanced, shared?
- How did it make you feel (creating, doing the intervention, group dynamics, **solidarity,** identity)?
- Campaign or action goals: how have the arts served your campaign?
- **Reaction, Recognition** and **Resonance:** does it reach the public? How does the public react? Is there media visibility and of what kind? Is there a sense of the message rippling out into the wider world? Sometimes an action isn't by itself the whole story: Is it part of something larger? i.e.: raising energies, supporting or sharing information with other protesters? In that case, how you measure success is not the same as if your intervention has a defined target or goal.

**Audience/ recipient/ target:**
Many actions target broader public through layers of communication, including.
- Other protesters
- The public
- The object of resistance (corporations, local councils, etc.)
- The state.

## Time: Critical mass and momentum over time

**Repetition** can be a significant practice – even if a single incident or action doesn't make the impact you'd hoped for, over time, repeated actions can be a powerful means of **resistance**. An important example of  this is to be found in 'Mothers of the Disappeared' movements' such as Argentina's Las Madres de la Plaza  de Mayo, mothers of the disappeared victims of the oppressive regime.[54]

[53] Duncombe, S. (2007) Dream: Re-imagining progressive politics in an age of fantasy. London: The New Press.

[54] See Taylor, D. (2001) Staging Social Memory: Yuyachkani. In P. Campbell & A. Kear (eds.) Psychoanalysis and Performance. London: Routledge, pp. 218-235; And Taylor, D. (2002) "You are Here" The DNA of Performance. TDR: The Drama Review, 46(1), pp. 149-169.

# Reflecting on what worked / didn't work

| | |
|---|---|
| You may find it useful to use these prompts to make notes on an intervention or action. These can be discussion based or notes for building up the **repertoire** of the collective. | Where and when it happened: Were these the most effective, depending on your intents? Might it work better somewhere else?/ at a different time of day? |
| What were the responses from the Spectrum of Allies? | What were the responses from the Spectrum of Allies? |
| Were humour and play involved? How did your approach work for the specific audience/ targets/ outcomes? | Did people get the message? How do you know – and what are your means of gathering that? |
| What went wrong – or what didn't work? (And don't worry if it's not always a brilliant or earth shattering event). | What would you do differently? (ongoing modification). |

# If/ when things don't work:

Don't be discouraged!

We don't always count things that don't work as 'failure' – but learning from when things are not as successful, especially at scale, or when there are wider circumstances beyond our control:

- Actions need rehearsal.
- Where possible, try them out in real time (sometimes planning or rehearsal has not accounted for the time things may take – for instance, certain kinds of climbing of monuments that require dexterity or skill).
- A large part of the preparation is about logistics (who does what, and when).
- Make sure you have accounted for unpredictable conditions (weather/ transport irregularities).
- Policing: have you discussed what to do if stopped by police? How the police respond can help improve future actions (eg: you might rethink where you'd been and what you were doing; or what happens if one of you is arrested? Do you have a plan?).
- Know the laws around protest: make sure at least one person understands what rights you have to protest and what the obligations of police are under these circumstances (for example, can you film or record? Are police obliged to give you their name if asked?).
- Safety / preparedness: how has your collective thought about and prepared for the safety of all involved – eg, migrant protesters may be treated worse by police if there are any arrests.
- Not everybody will be glad about your arts activism actions. This might be a point to reflect on but don't feel dissuaded from doing the actions. How you judge the effectiveness or success can be so varied.
- A particular action may be 'unsuccessful' but the wider campaign may grow in enthusiasm, or enhance membership.
- The collective may have found a way to forge solidarity and that goes a long way to building trust and energies for future campaigns.
- The long-term repetition of actions, reflections and further plans for actions may result in much wider change/ inspiring others/building capacities and networks that further the movement.

An example of an idea that did not work: Paul shared that as part of the anti-roads movement in the 1990s, activists had spelled out NO M77 (the name of the proposed road) on sheets and planned an early morning 'banner drop'. They weighed down the sheets with condoms filled with water – all of them burst as soon as they dropped the banners, which meant the message 'NO M77' was not visible all the time because of the windy conditions, with the result that the very spectacle of the action was not as spectacular as it could have been. The activists learned they needed to use metal rods instead.

## What playful disobedience comes next ?

**Gratitude and next steps:**

Now that you have engaged with these actions and reflections, we hope you are feeling more comfortable about using the arts in the widest possible ways to enhance disruption, deepen disobedience and spark communal creativity. We are aware that there are so many more examples we could have explored - and that there is so much to dialogue about in relation to contestation, resistance, collectives and power. But we want these dialogues to be in process and not finished, and so we sign off in recognition that these are initial offerings. We would love to hear about your actions, learning and how they impact your movements.

Thank you for journeying with us across countries, continents, issues and creativity. One thing to always remember is that whatever action you decide to do, it has to resonate with the context you are in. Ultimately, creative activism is about building joyful, life-long relationships. Even though our world is in a very messy place, there is joy, connection and creative responses to elite power that can be harnessed as a way to present alternatives, imagine a different world, and inject radical hope into activism. We believe that the arts and creativity are the building blocks to the change we want to see. Enjoy your own experimentations with arts activism, and please share them with us too.

**Stay in touch on twitter:**

@aylwynwalsh

@createactivism

#ImaginingOtherwise #ArtsActivism

# About the Authors

**Paul Routledge** is an Emeritus Professor in Contentious Politics and Social Change in the School of Geography, University of Leeds. He has been an activist since the 1980s involved in many campaigns including the anti-roads movement in Scotland; anti-dam resistance in India; the alter-globalisation movement, working with Asian farmer and indigenous people's movements (between 1999 and 2014) and climate justice (2008-present). He is author of Space Invaders: Radical geographies of protest (Pluto Press, 2017).

**Aylwyn Walsh** is Associate Professor of Performance and Social Change based at the University of Leeds. She is active in arts and mental health as well as climate justice movements in Leeds and has worked as an artist facilitator in prisons and criminal justice contexts, working with incarcerated people and those affected by criminal justice in both the U.K. and South Africa. Her performance work has appeared at the Berlin Biennale & South Africa's National Arts Festival and her recent book is Prison Cultures: Performance, Resistance, Desire. She has most recently led the project #ImaginingOtherwise about arts education as activism in Cape Town, South Africa. This follows work in the Eastern Cape (SA) and Mexico related to land, land rights and environmentalism.

**Alex Sutherland** is a current arts-educator-activist with the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education in Cape Town and a Research Affiliate at the University of Cape Town. From 2001 - 2017 she was Associate Professor in Applied Theatre at Rhodes University. She is passionate about devising theatre in unlikely spaces and has facilitated dozens of original theatre pieces with youth from a street children's shelter, men in prison, mental health care users in a psychiatric hospital, and young people from poor communities in Cape Town. Her current work involves developing arts-based pedagogies for political education with grass roots movements and organisations, supporting these movements to incorporate the arts in campaigns, education and activism, and facilitating access to the arts for political expression with young people. Her published research has focused on gender and theatre in prisons, the political possibilities of theatre spaces in rigid institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, and the development of politically engaged participatory arts methodologies with youth.

# Our project #ImaginingOtherwise

#ImaginingOtherwise is a collaborative project between Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education and project partners BottomUp based in Cape Town. Both organisations have a focus on education and development from a radical, grassroots perspective. The project is supported by researchers at the University of Leeds with funding from the Global Challenges Research Fund. #ImaginingOtherwise is one of the projects related to Changing the Story – a 4 year action research project in 12 different countries. The Cape Town team works collaboratively to engage young people in arts education activities, with a specific focus on arts activism. We worked with 25 young people for over a year during COVID conditions and nonetheless managed to explore the possibilities offered by the arts, exploring hope, fears, spatial injustice and imagined futures. Some of the activities in this toolkit are influenced by our process. If you are interested in finding out more about #ImaginingOtherwise, you can find some of our blogs, resources and documents online, free to access and use [54].

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[54] See Taylor, D. (2001) Staging Social Memory: Yuyachkani. In P. Campbell & A. Kear (eds.) Psychoanalysis and Performance. London: Routledge, pp. 218-235; And Taylor, D. (2002) "You are Here" The DNA of Performance. TDR: The Drama Review, 46(1), pp. 149-169.

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