

Evaluation allows us to learn from our experiences. Usually people informally evaluate an event, be it through personal reflections, talking with friends, or meeting with a group of core organisers. It is important though to also have a structure for evaluating an event. Rather than leaving evaluation to chance or confining it to an elite, it should be set up as a planned and collective activity that values the input of people who have played different roles, who bring different kinds of experience, and who have different levels of commitment. Preferably everyone who participated in an action or in organising an event should be encouraged to take part in evaluating it.

When evaluations are a regular part of our work, we have a chance for honest feedback on the process and content of the work and a way to improve in the future. Bear in mind that there will be considerable differences of opinion and that it is not necessary for the group to come to agreement. It is also important to point out what was successful as well as what went wrong; begin with positive evaluations whenever possible. The structure of the evaluation should be planned carefully.

Some of the most obvious points to bring up in an evaluation might be quantitative: 'we handed out so many leaflets', 'we attracted so many people', 'we gained so much media coverage', 'we blocked a road for so long'. If such information is important in evaluating the campaign development, make sure that somebody is monitoring it, that you have a way of counting the number of protesters, that a media group collects information about coverage. However, sometimes the numbers game can distract from the main purpose, especially in the case of repeated protests. Maybe more protesters arrived, but the action made less impact and first-time protesters felt useless, got bored, scared, or in some other way were put off. Maybe a military base entrance was blockaded for a longer time, but the action reached fewer people or was somehow less empowering. Criteria for evaluation need to be linked with the strategic purposes of a particular event, and take into account how participants experienced.

Below is a checklist to help you in evaluating an action; it can also be used in other areas of your work.

Vision, Strategy, and Objectives

Was there an overall vision/strategy/objective?

Was it relevant to the problem/conflict?

Did participants know who initiated the action?

Were participants aware of the vision/strategy/objectives?

Principles and Discipline

Was there a clear discussion and agreement on discipline for the action?

Was it followed during the action?

Were the planned tactics and those actually carried out consistent with the discipline?

Did any of the participants feel that they themselves or others failed to follow the agreed-upon discipline?

Preparation and Training

Was the preparation/training appropriate?

Was the preparation/training adequate?

Did it actually aid the participants in coping with the unexpected?

Did it meet the needs of those involved?

Did it meet the expectations of those involved?

Did the necessary community feel developed?

Tactics

Were the planned tactics adequate?

Were the tactics, as planned, actually carried out?

Did they meet the needs and expectations of those involved?

Were unexpected problems adequately dealt with?

Was this done in a way consistent with the discipline/vision/objective?

Organisation

Did the structure/organisation of the action fit its objective/strategy/vision/discipline?

Was it organised in a democratic way?

Impact

On the participants

Was it relevant?

Did it invite/create participation?

Did the participants feel in control of the action?

Did it increase the initiative and confidence of the participants?

Did the participants feel supported by each other?

On those to whom it was addressed

Was it understood?

Were objectives reached?

Did it close or open options for further action and communication?

Were there responses from individuals (opponents) that differed from the institutions that were a part of it?

How did these responses relate to the objectives of the action?

On others

Did they understand it?

Were they alienated by it?

Did it have any unexpected results?

Were people moved in our direction (neutralised, attracted, catalysed)?

This evaluation form was developed at the International Seminar on Training for Nonviolent Action held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in July 1977.

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