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Evaluation allows us to learn from our experiences. Always everybody makes some kind of informal evaluation of an event - be it personal reflections, talking it over with friends, or a meeting of a group of core organisers ('leaders'). What we propose here, however, is that there be a structure for feeding back lessons from an event. Rather than leave evaluation to chance or confined to an elite, it should be set up as a planned and collective activity - valuing the input of people who have played different roles, who bring different kinds of experience and even 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, they give us the chance for honest feedback on the process and content of the work and help us 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 on the matter. It is also important to point out what was successful as well as what went wrong / Begin with positive evaluations wherever possible. The structure of the evaluation should be planned carefully.

Some of the most obvious points brought 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 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 attention 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 or scared or in some other way were put off getting more involved. Maybe a military base entrance was blockaded for a longer time, but the action reached fewer people or was somehow less empowering. This means that criteria for evaluation need to be linked with the strategic purposes of a particular event.

Here we present you with a check list that can help you in the evaluation of an action but can also be used in other areas of your work:

Action Evaluation

1. Vision – Strategy - Objectives

Was there an overall vision/strategy/objective?

Was it relevant to the problem/conflict?

Did the participants know who initiated the action?

Were the participants aware of the vision/strategy/objectives?

2. 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?

3. 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?

Was the necessary community feeling developed?

4. 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?

5. Organisation

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

Was it organized in a democratic way?

6. Impact

A. 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?

B. On those to whom it was addressed

Was it understood?

Were the 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?

C.On others

Did they understand it?

Were they alienated by it?

Did it have any unexpected results?

Were people moved in our direction (neutralized, attracted, catalyzed)?

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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