

Solidarity Knows No Borders



Organising Workbook



tools, stories
and ideas for
organisers

How to use this workbook



The Solidarity Knows No Borders Organising Workbook is a collective learning resource for organisers working towards migrant justice.

This workbook was originally created as a resource for Solidarity Knows No Borders

Solidarity Knows No Borders (SKNB) is a community of migrant organisations, groups and individuals, working in solidarity, to end hostility and racism against migrants and refugees. Together we are demanding dignity and justice for all.

The first version was made in the run up to a week of action in 2021 where over 60 groups came together across the country to organise against the hostile environment & immigration system.

To create the world we want, we must build our power as a progressive movement for social justice that does not leave anyone behind.

This toolkit is for you to use, adapt and share with your community. In the spirit of learning together, we recognise that this is not a definitive guide.

We learn from past organisers, as well as comrades, friends and those organising now.

You can find a full list of SKNB members on our website:

www.sknb.org

Throughout this workbook, you will find exercises and things to do either on your own or collectively.



Wherever you see the SKNB swallow, there is space for you to add your own text and writing.

There is also lots of space around the text for you to make notes and add thoughts or drawings.

What is in this workbook?



Introduction

About this workbook and key words

What is organising?

Introduction to organising and case study from CARAG

Understanding power

Exercises to get to understand power

Sharing power

Learn more about how organisers share power

1 - 2 - 1 meetings

Introduction to relationship building

Power Mapping

Exercises to understand where you're at

Action planning

Plan what you want to do, where, how and why

Strategy and tactics

Exercises on developing collective strategies

Evaluation

Taking time to reflect

Collective joy and rest

Celebrating our community and wins

We've decided to use an open binding for this workbook, so you can add and remove pages.

Organising changes all the time, so we'd like this workbook to be an open and living process, rather than a finished book.

We also hope to translate this workbook into many different languages soon.

Add your extra pages index on the right.

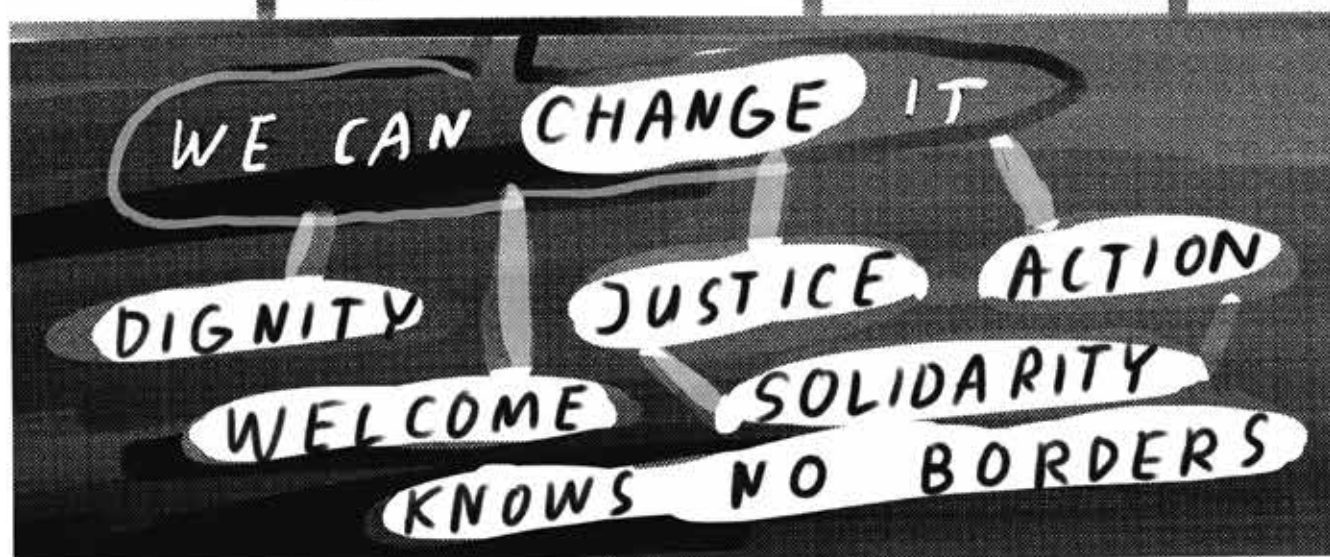


THE UK'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM IS

HOSTILE

BY

DESIGN



Hostile Environment

Over the course of the last decade, migrant communities have faced an increasingly restrictive system which has embedded immigration controls across society, including into education, housing, and healthcare.

Built on a colonial legacy of state racism, The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and its subsequent Rwanda plan is the latest in a long line of tactics to criminalise migrants and deny their dignity and freedom.

The Illegal Migration Act has made it virtually impossible to claim asylum in the UK. Governments of all political parties continue to surveil, impoverish and harm migrants, especially those from the Global Majority.

In 2010, Theresa May coined the phrase 'Hostile Environment' to describe a set of anti-migrant cultural practices, policies and laws.

"Under the hostile environment, employers, landlords, NHS staff and other public servants have to check your immigration status before offering you a job, housing, healthcare or other support." (Liberty UK)

Border Abolition

"What we call border abolition is concerned with expanding the freedom to move and to stay. This does not mean advocating for free movement in the world as it is currently configured, but rather for transformation of the conditions to which borders are a response.

Abolition is concerned with presence (the presence of life-sustaining goods, services and practices of care) as well as absence (of violent state practices like detention and deportation).

Accordingly, border abolition seeks to dismantle violent borders, but also to cultivate new ways of caring for one another, nurturing forms of collectivity more conducive to human flourishing than the nation-states we currently inhabit.

Border abolition is a revolutionary politics situated within wider struggles for economic justice, racial equality and sustainable ecologies, based on the conviction that there will be no liveable futures in which borders between political communities are violently guarded."

Gracie Mae Bradley and Luke de Noronha,
Against Borders: The Case for Abolition



Organising

Organising is a way of building people power for social change, through trust and bringing together people who want to take action around shared injustice.

We need to build our collective power to achieve meaningful change.

This starts with listening to the concerns and motivations of people about their lives and communities.

There is not a one size fits all model to community organising. But there are some methods that have been tried and tested in many different settings and across diverse issues.

We believe we all have something to offer. We have solutions to the oppressive structures we are facing. Organising seeks not just to win demand but a substantial and long-term redistribution of power.

Building our power is a process and it takes time!

Ultimately, we learn through doing and together we can collectively organise for change.

Understanding power

In organising, we define power as the ability to act.

Typically, power is associated with having money, political or a political weight through a hierarchical position. Most people, migrant justice organisers included, don't have that kind of power. Nor do we want to emulate the power structures that currently exist.

Our power comes from us.

This is called horizontal or relational power. If enough of us work together we can change things for the better.

People's power is effective when we are organised – when we have the ability to act in solidarity.

If we're going to build a national movement of migrants and refugees powerful enough to win then we need to build our power.



EACH +



ONE



= BRING
ONE



Loraine from Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group (CARAG) explains how they started organising.

Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group secured housing for refused asylum seekers in the middle of the pandemic and now run one of the only self-organised shelters for people seeking asylum in Coventry.

Through the process of organising for housing we learned a lot and built our collective power.

CARAG is a collective of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. The majority of CARAG members face homelessness while we navigate the hostile environment and violent asylum and immigration system. As a group we are tackling our own homelessness because we believe everyone should have somewhere to call home.

Our resilience is our resistance.

In addition to homelessness, mental health issues and isolation, we experience many other challenges and don't have access to basic necessities such as food and clothing.

We found each other and built a community and started looking around for solidarity.

So in 2018 we arranged a session with Migrants Organise to hear more about community organising. Around 20 of our members and supporters attended.



They asked what is the most pressing problem you want to tackle first.

Everyone in our group said homelessness.

After we agreed on what the problem is, we made a connection to the bigger issue of the hostile environment policy.

That is a big national issue so we needed to focus on what we can do locally for the problem we have. First we did a power analysis – who we are, who we know, are they likely to understand and support us or are they against us.

We did a basic power mapping research on the day – how many people are affected, what's the solution according to them, who is doing what etc. and we looked at who has the power to make difference and who do we know.

We realised that we have the power too – because power is the ability to act and when we came together we felt safe and able to take action together.

At the end of the day as one of our members put it: “We’re ready to turn our pain into anger, our anger into motivation, and motivation into success!”

Then we started working on our action plan – what research we need to do, what alliances we need to build, what action we need to take and how to evaluate it.

We made a plan and started having one-to-one meetings. We already learned how to share our story in a way that is powerful and safe for us.

We spoke to different organisations and individuals exploring solutions and where people are at with the homeless issue. I remember doing at least 20 one to one meetings and I recorded them all in a notebook to keep track of the people and issues.

All this was to understand where people and different organisations in Coventry were at, what they do and can they be our allies. We also attended lots of meetings and participated in networks. We learned about all kinds of issues and campaigns such as Patients Not Passports and many others like the Solidarity Knows No Borders movement.

Through our organising we were able to secure a five bedroom apartment to house destitute migrants in Coventry and set up CARAG housing foundation.



We keep each other safe. And we continue to organise and push for change locally and nationally.

PEOPLE

POWER

IS

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

UNLIMITED

Sharing power

Organising places less burden on a few. It helps us grow our organisation without being trapped in a binary of leaders and followers.

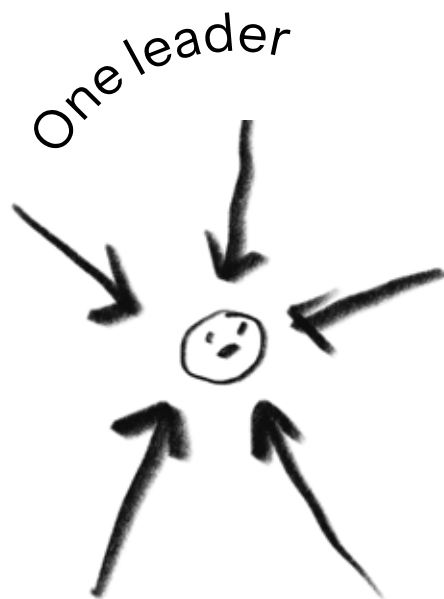
Organising is dependent on building relationships of trust and sharing responsibilities as a team.

People and communities that are experiencing problems also have the solutions to them.

You might have heard about 'lived experience' and 'experts by experience' - in this context, this refers to people who are on the sharp end of hostile environment immigration policies.

These are important concepts in organising too - centring people who are most affected. The main challenge that organising presents is moving from sharing stories and experiences into collective actions for change.

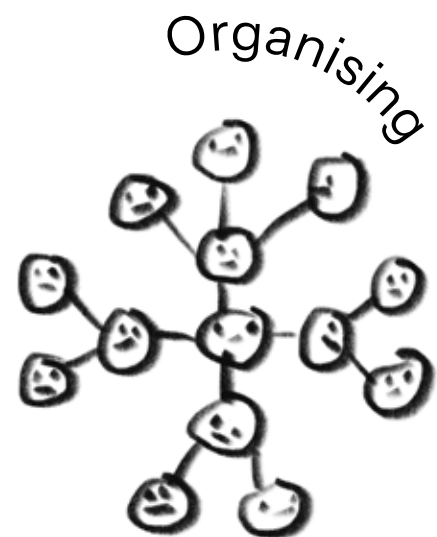
And for that, we need to have a plan.



The 'dot structure' of one leader in the middle is often not sustainable.

These teams tend to be small and centred around individual self-selecting 'leaders'.

Imagine what happens if the "dot" in the middle disappears

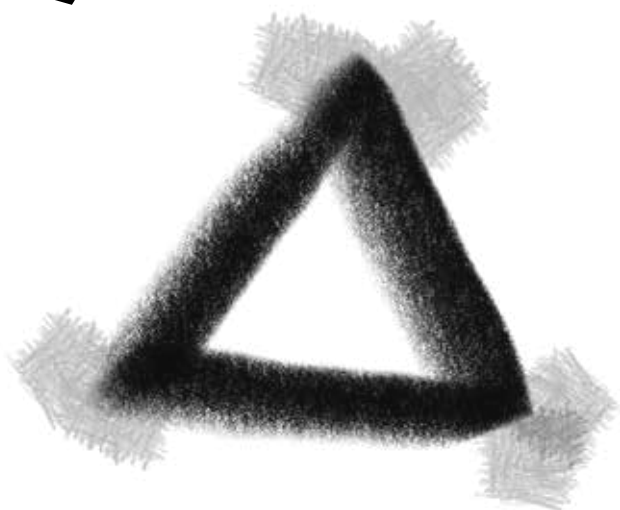


The 'organising structure' involves bigger teams and collective leadership and decision making which prevents burnout, but requires us to shift from our usual ways of thinking and doing actions for justice.

To achieve resilience and sustainability we take time to train and grow, so that we can take on different tasks and roles.



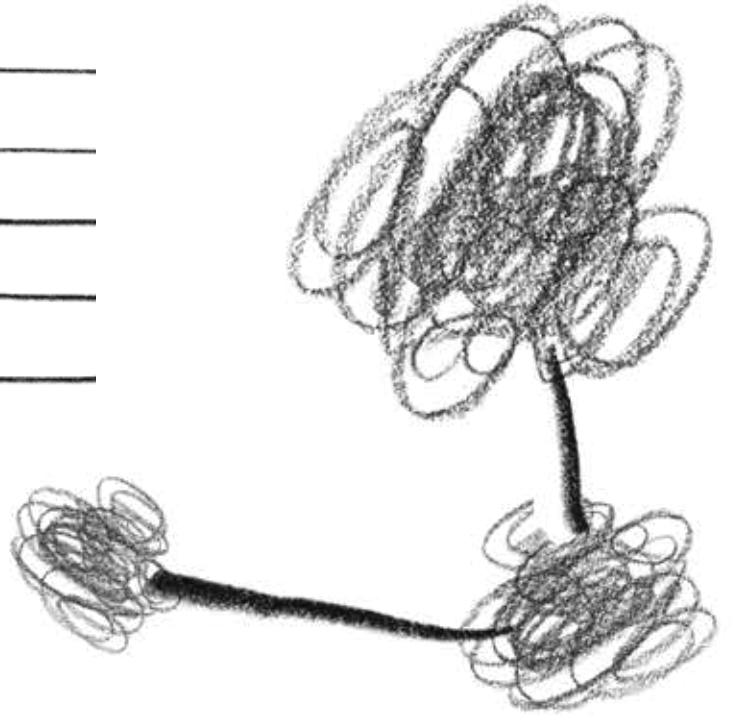
What shape is your team?



How do you share power?



How are you building
relationships?



"Move at the speed of trust." adrienne maree brown



1 - 2 - 1 Meetings

Trust is the cornerstone of organising and the way we build trust starts with conversations we call 1-2-1s.

These conversations are structured to help us share our stories and hear and understand what people feel and think about the issue of concern.

We are listening with clear and open intent to explore if there is a common ground for us to take public action together.

In order to build trust, we start by sharing what we care about and why, what we are doing about it, and with whom. This doesn't need to be your whole life story but a short way of opening conversation relationally and with transparency.

We make a clear distinction between what is private (and we choose not to share) and what is personal but relates to our public organising intentions.



1-2-1 meetings can be done anywhere: coffee mornings, door-knocking, house meetings etc. We start with people around us - our friends, our members, the people we work with, study, or worship with.

The next stage is to reach out to people we never meet or talk to, people we meet at the school gates, in community centres, mosques, and churches, trade union meetings, etc.

When we listen, we make a connection and we start to build trust and understand where there might be intersecting issues and ways to organise in solidarity.

We do not have to agree on everything, as long as our values are in alignment, that is often enough to grow our power and take action.

We expand our people power and organising circle by asking people we meet to introduce us to other people they know who share similar concerns and we connect them with people we know. That is usually our first shared action - we open doors for each other.

After we have done our 1-2-1s, issues will emerge, but we need to go back to the constituencies or communities we are organising with to listen more, to prioritise, issues, hopes and concerns - to build common ground.

1-2-1s are intentional!

Listening

radical

is





Introductions

Why are you here?
What brought you to
organising?

What are your values?

Who are you?

What change would you like to see
in the world?

Listen

Don't assume, stay open

What do they care about
and why?



What are they doing about it or
prepared to do?

Are they prepared to organise for
action?

Ask

Is there anybody else I should
meet with?

1-2-1 meetings lead to group meetings.
They prepare us to come to these meetings in
the spirit of trust, respect, solidarity and action.

Group meetings start with rounds. This is an
opportunity for us to introduce ourselves, share
our names and pronouns (they/she/he/...).

As we are connecting for public action, rounds
start with a question that helps build trust and
common ground.



What does solidarity mean to you?

What has given you hope recently?

What's an issue that makes you angry?

How do you rest and recharge?

In large meetings, rounds may take a lot of
time, that is why we limit each contribution to
approximately two minutes, but everyone has a
chance to speak, to tell their stories of self and
to put forward their ideas and experiences.

In a smaller meeting, we can afford more time
for rounds, but they are still structured around
and related to our organising for public action.

Power Mapping

For the kind of systemic change we seek, we need to establish where the power lies. This may be political power, or it might be the power of money. This first step of this action planning is called power mapping.

In our organised communities, after we have done our listening and 1-2-1 meetings, and established what the issues are and what solutions we want to see in place, we come together and look at who are our allies and who are opponents in our way.

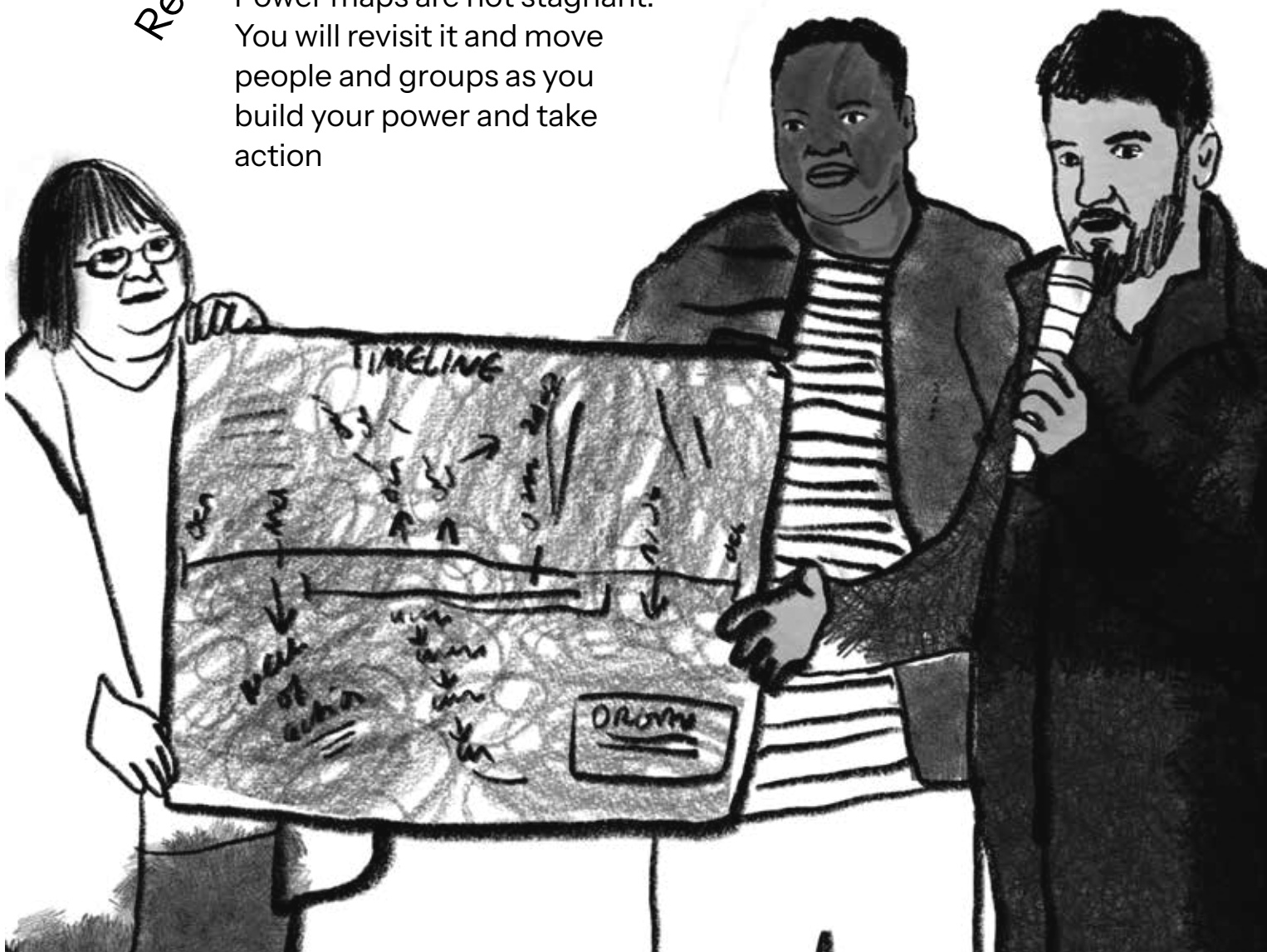
In power mapping, we name individuals and institutions and place them on the power map. We also map our power – what skills, knowledge, resources, and connections we already have and what we need to make a change.

It is a helpful reminder that we are not alone in our struggle and we have a lot of power.

Power mapping often shows us that we have more power than we assumed.

Remember:

Power maps are not stagnant. You will revisit it and move people and groups as you build your power and take action





Step 1

Define power. Think about where it is located on a local, national and international level.

people with the most influence

people who are strongly against our aims

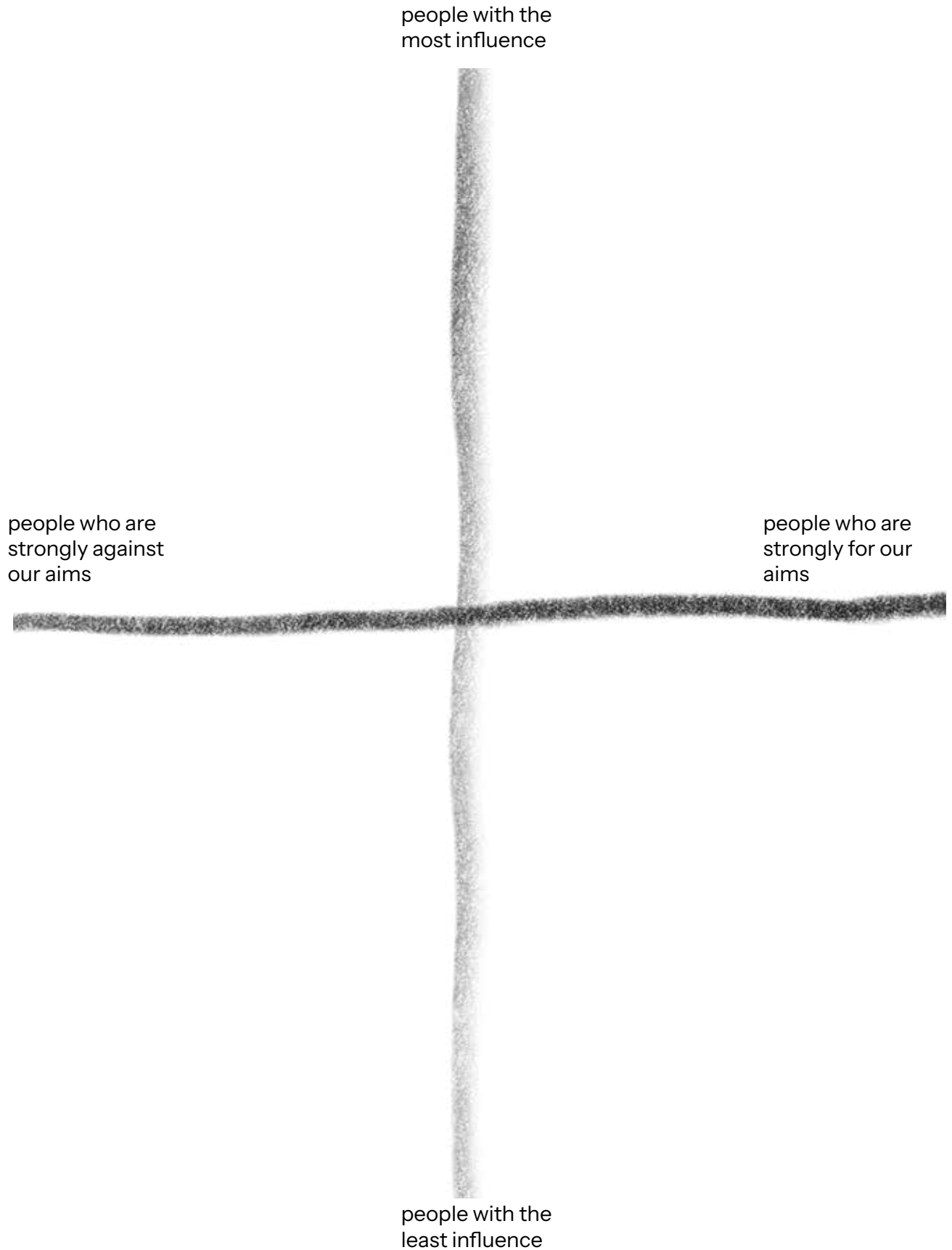
people who are strongly for our aims

people with the least influence

Step 2

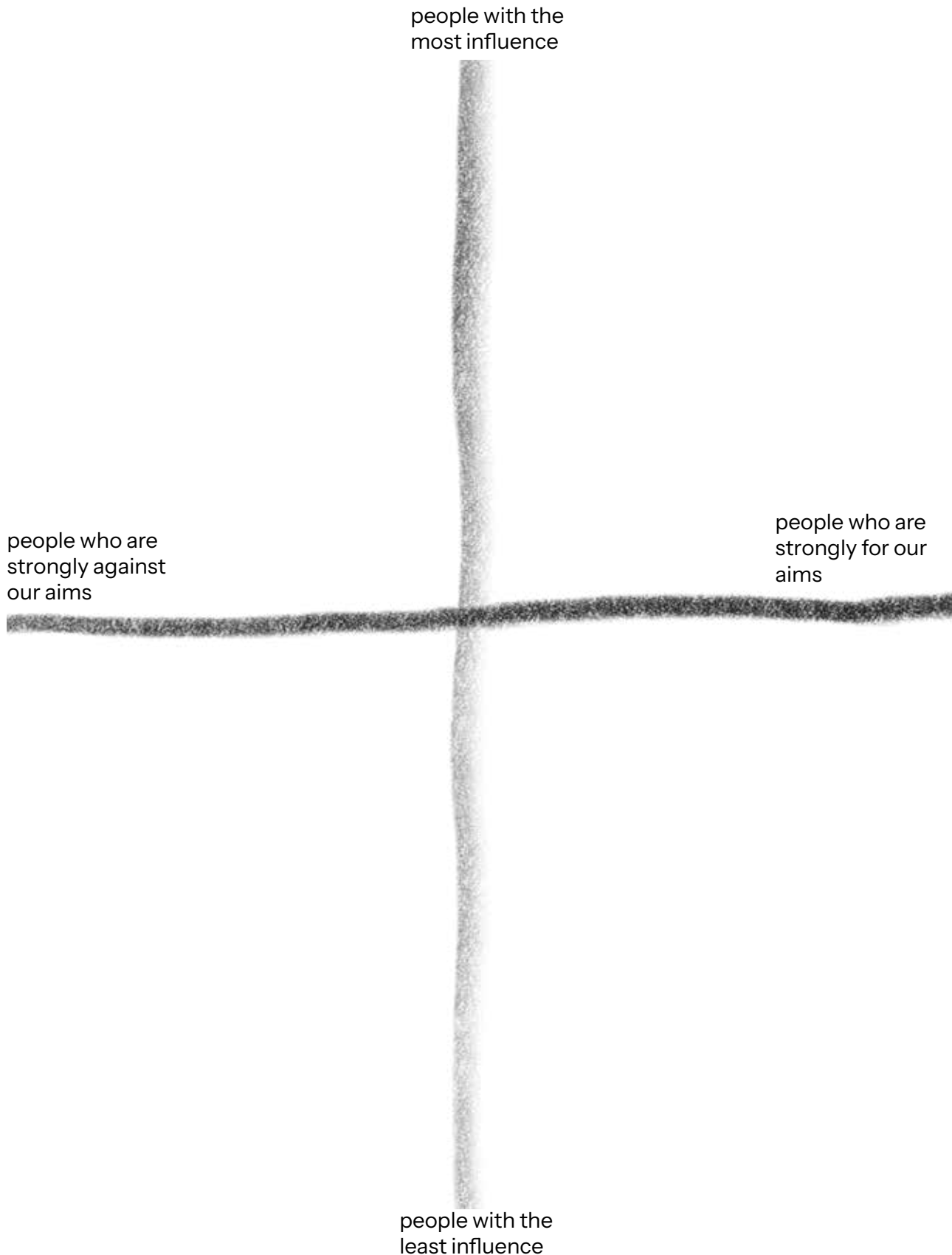
Identify key decision making organisations and institutions:

Who cares about the issue you care about and where are they on this power map?



Step 3

Identify key decision making people. Who in your group knows is connected to these key individuals and how? Or who might know somebody who knows somebody? Who has relational power in the group and who can they reach out to?



Action planning

After power mapping, you can identify opportunities for connection and actions.



What does a successful reaction look like and how does it fit with our strategic demands for change?

Handwritten lines for notes:

Can we imagine what this change feels like?

Handwritten lines for notes:

Are we demanding what we truly want and need?

Handwritten lines for notes:

Or are we just tinkering around the edges and getting small concessions or even worse, wasting our time?

Handwritten lines for notes:

Research is an important part of organising.



We may need additional resources to find out who else is doing the work we're doing.

What's our context:
Who else is doing the work?

Can we support, collaborate and complement?

What are political structures and policies that impact on our work?

Are there any important events, elections, anniversaries we need to be are of?

Are there any statistics, data, reports that might be useful?

What else might be useful or potentially an obstacle in our organising?

What are the known and hidden histories of our organising ?





Strategies and Tactics

A strategy is the design of a campaign combined with an analysis of power relationships.

Strategy is about shifting the relationship between you and your target with the outcome of gaining support for your issue.

Often the idea of a strategy is confused with the word tactic. Tactics are the individual steps in carrying out the strategy, which is your overall plan.



No one single tactic is useful all the time

Only use a tactic when it can be effective in the context of your goal and your power relative to the power of the authority you are negotiating with.

Some groups get comfortable with a tactic (e.g. protesting at council meetings) and do it over and over, without reflecting on its effectiveness.

Through trying out different tactics, we can sharpen our strategy: We're constantly responding to new laws, reactions and our own capacity. As our lives change, we might have more or less time, money and energy. Checking in with ourselves and reflecting on our strategy and tactics keeps our organising sustainable.

Remember group actions are more effective than individual ones.



A strategy chart has five major elements to consider.

What are our goals?

Is our organisation or group ready and resourced?

Long - term (e.g. next 10 years)

Long - term

Short - term (e.g. next month)

Short - term

Right Now!

Right Now!

Who is affected by our strategy?
Who are our allies and opponents?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard sheet of stationery. The edges of the paper are slightly irregular, suggesting it might be a scan of a physical document. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

Tactics: Who will do what with whom, when?

[illegible]

Targets: Who do we want to put pressure on?

[illegible]

Actions

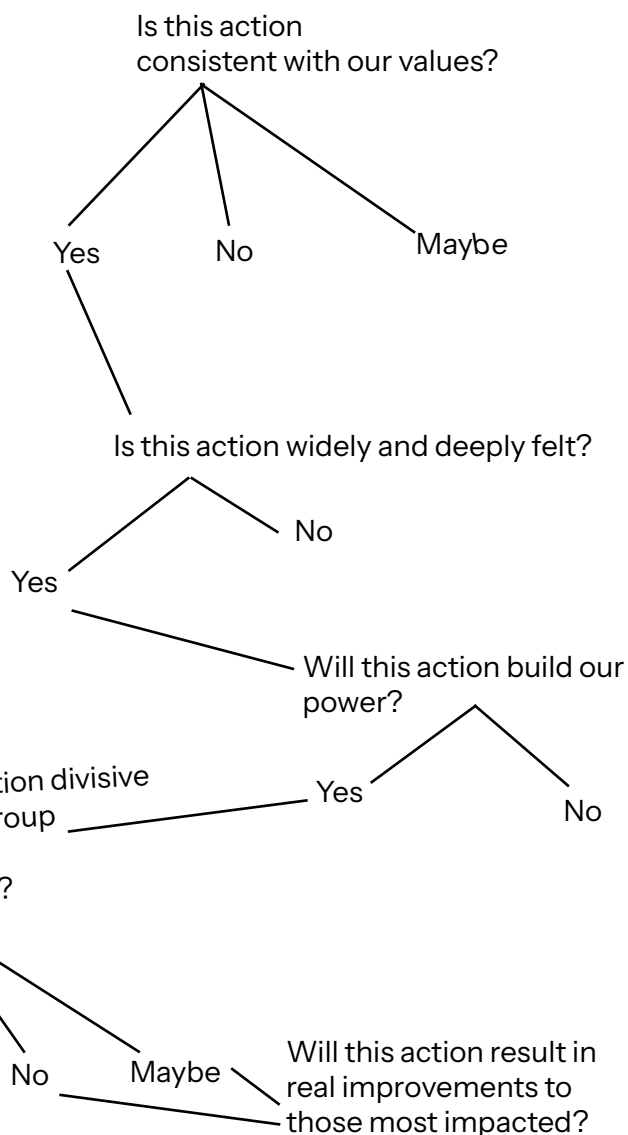


In actions, we come together to exercise our power and take risks.

For many migrants and refugees these risks are significant. But we must not be silenced, and that is why our organised actions must be conducted in a mindful, informed and safe way.

In organising, everything that we do in an intentional, planned and organised way is an action.

Actions may be small, or they may be ambitious. But every action, no matter how small, is an intentional step towards the world we want to build - a world of abundance with dignity, freedom and justice for all.



Choose your action

Examples of actions from the SKNB community and beyond:

Abolish Reporting Campaign

organises solidarity actions, exhibitions and support for those forced to report to the Home Office.

They offer snacks and drinks to people queuing, curate exhibitions, workshops and talks about reporting.



Anti-Raids Networks

In 2021, people stopped an immigration raid at Kenmure Street in Glasgow by showing up in larger numbers and shouting at the Home Office to "Let them go! They are our neighbours!"

‘Spontaneous’ and responsive actions like this require ongoing organising and relationship building, so people turn out.

Local anti-raids network offer training and raise alerts alongside cop watch groups.



Migrants Organise Housing Action Group / Collective.

organises protests, actions and exhibitions to confront an accommodation provider. People in temporary accommodation are often treated with contempt and have to live in undignified conditions.

The Home Office outsources the delivery of services to companies like Clearsprings, Mitie or the ironically named 'Migrant Help' who make huge profits. Researching Home Office contractors can give you ideas for actions.

Groups like SKNB Merseyside and West London Resistance Collective have also resisted evictions in London and Liverpool. Many renters union, like Acorn or London Renters Union have turned out in support.

Right To Remain offers a free toolkit to learn more about surviving the UK's immigration system.

Joy Collective

Sounds of Solidarity

Dance against Deportations

put on dance parties to fundraise for legal aid, direct action or other financial needs.

By creating spaces of joy and solidarity, we energise each other to keep resisting.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants (LGSM) have put on performances like the "Homo Office" and regularly run ad-hacking campaigns, where they replace ads on public transport with their messages.





Actions against Deportation and Detention

Many groups organise to show solidarity outside detention centres. They send paper planes with Know Your Rights information to people locked up there.

Researching past protests, like the Shut Down Yarl's Wood movement, can introduce you to more strategies and tactics.

Bail For Immigration Detainees (BID) supports people held in detention with resources and a free-phone number people can call.

SOAS Detainee Support organises solidarity visits to people in detention.

They also share what they witness online, as there is little reporting on detention camps in the media.

WWW.SKNB.ORG

Other examples of actions are:
 Vigil of remembrance and solidarity
 Petitions
 Sit-ins and shut-downs
 Faith groups offering shelter and food
 ...

On the SKNB website you can find many more groups, actions and organisations to get involved with.

SKNB summits and meetings



SKNB hosts regular nationwide gatherings and zoom meetings, where we share actions and offer or ask for support.

Taking action is always e^xciting, make sure you have a plan and stick to it, but also enjoy it.

It is a celebration of our power and our hard work.

Checklist



What if it rains?

What if nobody shows up?

What do we know about the location?

Does our equipment work?

How do we get to the venue?

Actions are also supported by a communication plan:

What do you need the world to know?

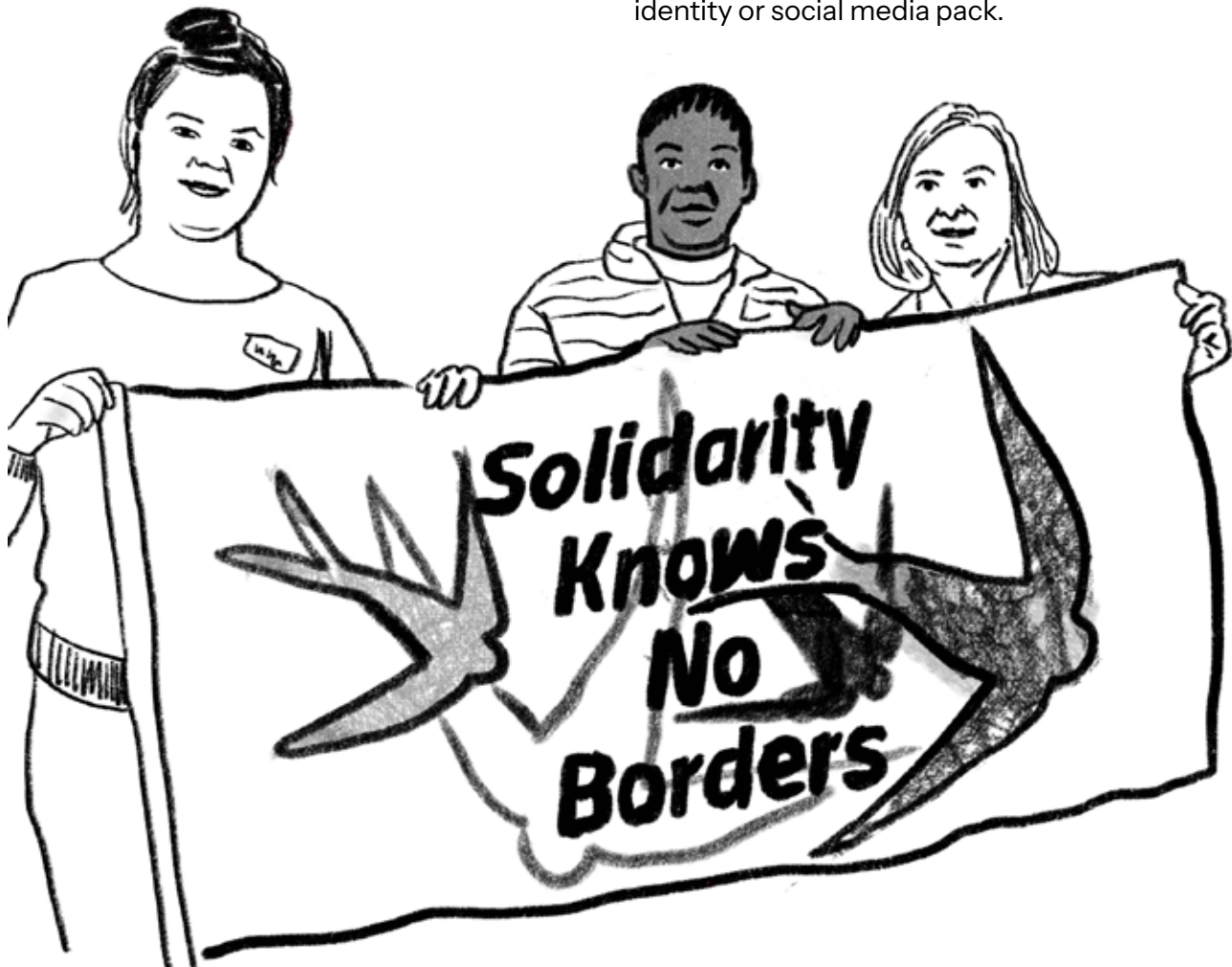
What is happening and why?

Who needs to know about it?

If mainstream media is not available or interested, could you make your own?

Can you agree on clear message to communicate?

You might want to create a shared visual identity or social media pack.



An easy way to structure action planning steps is the five Ws checklist:

Who will do
What
When
Where and
Why?





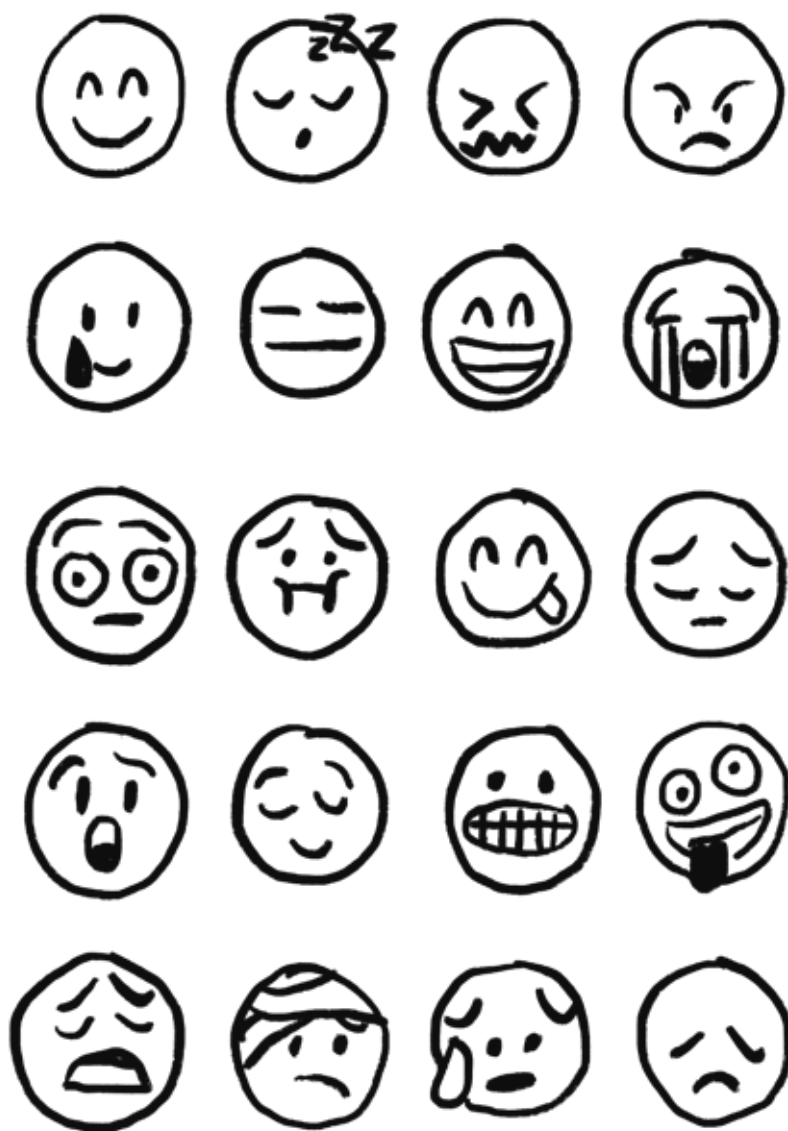
Evaluation

Everything that we do in organising we reflect on.

Regardless of how successful (or not) it is, we learn from it together.

If one person has a very different sense of what has happened, it is worth exploring that with them in the follow up one-to-one meetings.

How do you feel?



Do a short round and give everybody space to express their feelings.

You can ask people to just say one word if you are under time pressure. It can also be fun to check in by saying one emoji, for example: "I feel like the three sparking stars emoji today" or "I'm not sure where I'm at, I feel like the one which is upside down."

Did we achieve what we set out to achieve?

This reflects planning – everyone should know what was the aim of the action and if they don't the planning stage was not done right.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

What went well?

Ask people about the space, accessibility and other logistics, food, performance, travel, speakers etc.

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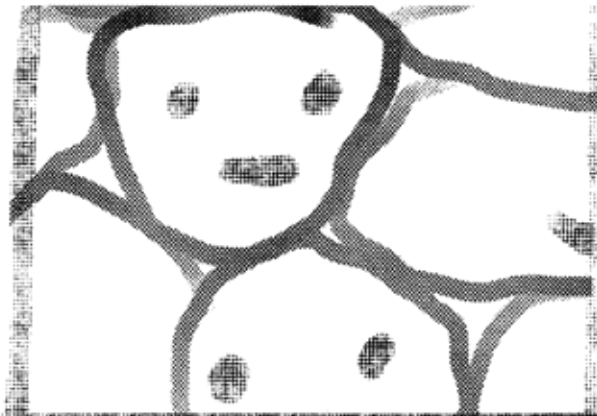
What could we do differently next time?

Invite critique, but make sure it is not targeted at one person. Foster open and honest dialogue lays the groundwork for better teamwork in the future.

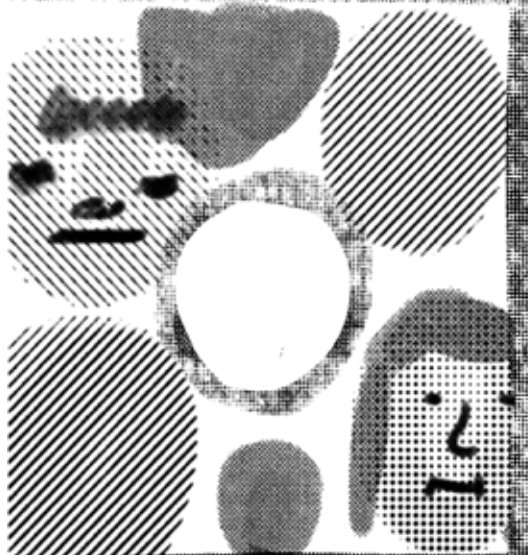
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Any appreciations or shout-outs?

VALUE THE
PEOPLE IN
THE BACK-
GROUND WHO
KEEP US
GOING




VISIBLE
+
INVISIBLE
WORK



those
who
nourish us



this work never stops

Collective joy and rest

We are growing our power and organising to resist the hostile environment and we are making progress, every day in many different ways.

But we also need to make space to listen to our bodies and needs, to rest and recover.

SKNB members care for each other collectively in many ways:

“Share food together, dance together, sharing hot cocoa and tea together and listening to music!”

“We check in with each other quite regularly, and have monthly in person meetings that are quite open discussions about what’s going on for everyone. I’d suggest creating some dedicated social/thinking spaces and events that aren’t centred around organising – I always like the idea of a book club or something food/art/outdoors related. Just space to enjoy and talk together, rather than only meeting to plan/organise.”

Take a moment
to  be
still

Which season are we in?

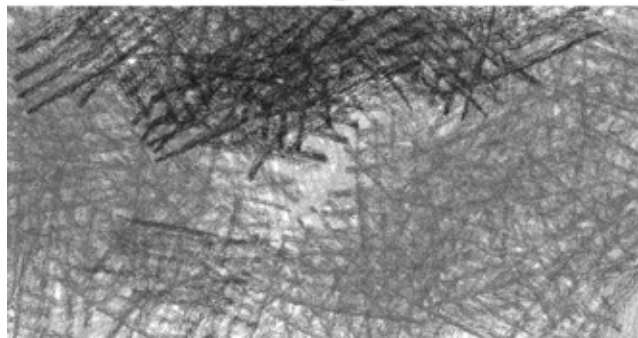


This metaphor of seasonality can be a useful way of grounding yourself, your collective or your organisation. The below is not a formula - your seasons might look different and that is ok!



Winter

Your organising might be going through a period of hibernation where you are trying to rejuvenate yourself, your body, your emotions, your capacity. You might also have a breakthrough, an insight that allows you to plan and imagine spring in your organising!



Spring

Life is opening up again, you've got energy to do more things and you're excited to get active again.

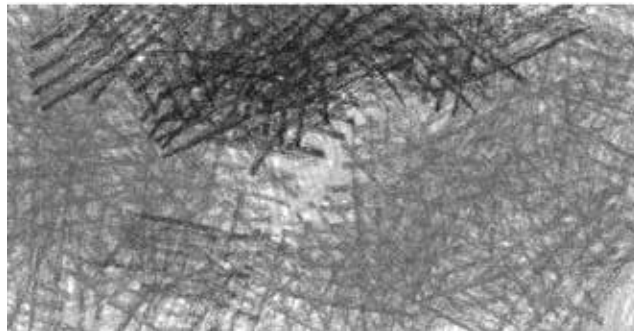
Sometimes your organisation needs to go through a Winter time, meaning a time of figuring out internally what it wants to do.

For example: a coalition taking time out to do some strategic planning - to take stock of changing context, pressures, capacity, to revisit values, aims, tactics and so forth.

Carlos Saavedra argues that when movements or organisations require a transformation, a Winter season (however that looks like for you and your people) is required.

For a lot of organisers it is difficult to be in a rhythm of seasons - because we feel that everything is urgent, the violence feels like it is always ramping up, and because of the productivist nature of the system of racial capitalism we are living under. But in order to have the energy to sustain us on the long road ahead (and prevent cycle of burnout) we need to fight against this urge to be in a 'summer' for years on end.

We have to take care of each other, to rest, re-strategise, reflect and make space for creativity to imagine the world we all want to live in.

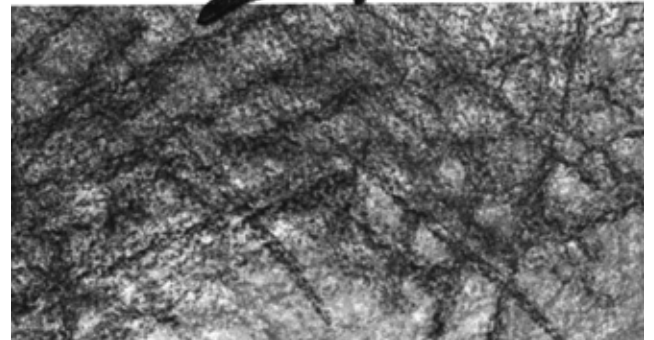


Summer

You feel very energetic and confident in your organising or leadership.

All systems are go, go, go!

Let's move around as quick as we can. There's so much energy!



Autumn

In this season, we are reaping the rewards of the work we've done and preparing for another cycle of winter.

SKNB
Organising
Wisdom

This is long, slow
and
intergenerational
work

Not everybody is
easy to work with.

Learn to manage
conflict!

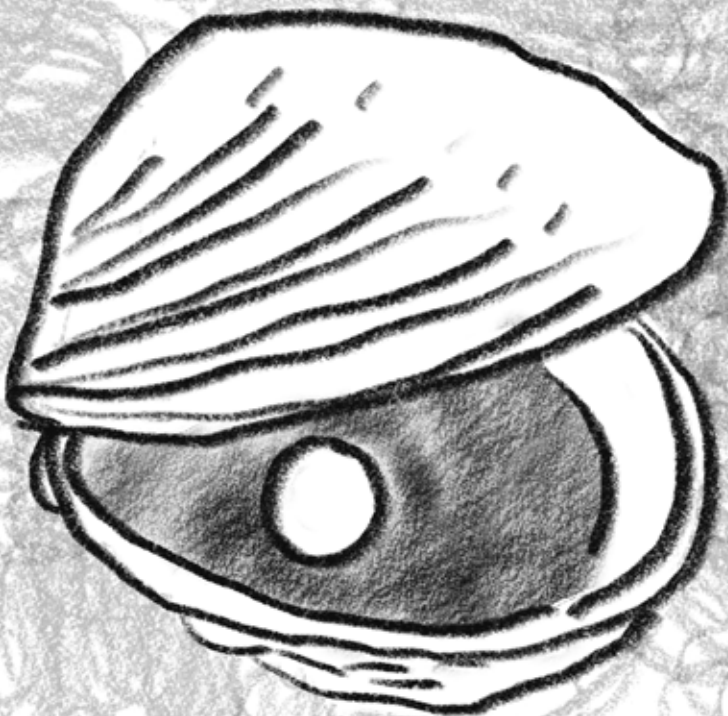
Never do for
others what they
can do for
themselves

There are
no small
victories

Sometimes winning is
loosing - do not get
coopeted and guard your
integrity

Nobody is going to
come to the meeting
unless they have a
reason to come to the
meeting

Nobody is going
to come to the
meeting unless
they know about
it



Join us!

Solidarity Knows No Borders (SKNB) is a community of migrant organisations and groups organising in solidarity to end hostility and racism against migrants and refugees.

We are a growing grassroots movement committed to building a world where all people live in safety, abundance, dignity and justice. Together we are demanding dignity and justice for all.

Join us to build a better world,
check out our journey and further
resources:

www.sknb.org

Stay updated on our actions:
[@FIRMCharter](https://twitter.com/FIRMCharter)

This workbook is designed in black and white to make it easier for you to print at home or work.

To order more printed copies of this workbook, please email:
hello@MigrantsInCulture.com



This workbook was made in 2023 by the Solidarity Knows No Borders community.

Texts by
SKNB members and Migrants Organise
www.sknb.org
www.migrantsorganise.org

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SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

Give agency
to all involved

Show up
even when it's
uncomfortable

BORDER ABOLITION

Borders are
new and can
be torn down

Nobody
is
disposable

WE ARE INTERDEPENDENT

Our
struggles
are linked

make
connections