

Playing for Life: the game of strategy

Objectives:

- 🕒 To richly (or 'thickly' to use Clifford Geertz's term) describe people's stories about strategy and campaigning.
- 🕒 To elicit special skills and knowledge around strategy and tactics, movement building and theories about how social change happens.
- 🕒 To reflect on and appreciatively evaluate past campaigns and actions, either successful campaigns or those that have not yet fully achieved the stated goals.
- 🕒 To disseminate knowledge about previous campaigns of nonviolent action.

Time needed: 1-3 days (or over several sessions) depending on the context and group.

Resources needed:

- 🕒 Newsprint – enough for each person, lots of coloured pens and paper,

A note for facilitators:

This process guide uses football (soccer) as a metaphor and conversations about football as scaffolding to elicit participant's skills and knowledge about how to develop and wage effective strategy. If football is not a shared passion amongst the participants it is possible to adapt this process guide to other team sports.

This process can also be used as a way to mentor or debrief activists.

Assumptions:

- 🕒 That there will be a diverse stock of 'strategies' employed by participants in their respective struggles and in their efforts to maintain/sustain their campaigns. Consequently this process guide works best with more experienced campaigners who are looking for opportunities to reflect on and perhaps document their work.
- 🕒 Strategies and tactics these will be shaped by values and by culture as well as by participant's own experience and knowledge
- 🕒 Narrative ideas (like this process guide) can be used to elicit and richly describe diverse strategies and tactics in ways that will make them more available to draw upon in the future
- 🕒 Narrative ideas (like this process guide) can also assist participants wanting to develop their strategy skills.
- 🕒 Rich descriptions of strategy that emerge in the course of the exercise below can be documented (in diverse forms/media) and shared between people within and across campaigns and between movements (even in different countries) in ways that acknowledge and sustain current struggle.

How it's done:

The 'Game of Life' process has 7 parts.

PART I: Conversations about diverse football strategies

Begin a conversation about football (and/or another team sport) and its significance. Perhaps start talking about who is their favourite team, favourite player, what are their strategies. What is a time when their favourite team had the odds against them but they still managed to win? What did they do? What are a whole range of different football strategies? You could interview the coach a bit about this.

Then ask questions that elicit different sorts of strategies, questions that expand the definition of what constitutes 'success'. For example, ask questions about:

- 🕒 Strategies to win the game
- 🕒 Strategies not to lose the game
- 🕒 Strategies to win the tournament
- 🕒 Strategies to win the tournament next year (not this year)
- 🕒 Strategies to keep the team together
- 🕒 Strategies to lift spirits

Have all this conversation about football first. Encourage and support people's excitement and passion about the game.

PART II: Campaign Team Sheet

The next step is to break people up into campaign groups so that each group is working on the same campaign; a campaign that they have personally been involved in. It is possible that people can do this as individuals or pairs instead of small groups.

After people have broken into smaller groups (or individuals or pairs) ask each campaign group (or individual or pair) the following questions. It is a good idea to have these questions written up on flip chart so everyone can see them. The facilitator can then read through the questions, clarifying their meaning as necessary:

- 🕒 Who are the coaches of their campaign?
- 🕒 Who are the goalkeepers (who protect their campaign goals)?
- 🕒 Who are their key defenders?
- 🕒 Who are in the attack - helping them to score (doesn't have to be individuals, can also be institutions, God, the ancestors etc. It is important that the facilitator gives broad examples, encouraging people to interpret each question broadly).
- 🕒 What are the other key roles or positions in your campaign team? Who plays those roles in their campaign? For example, who is the person who brings the oranges at half time and what do the oranges represent in your campaign? Who is in reserve but hasn't yet played?
- 🕒 Who is on your team that has passed on? (People who are no longer alive but who have played critical roles?)
- 🕒 Who are the spectators? Who is cheering them on, hoping they do well? (As the facilitator reads this question encourage the participants to name

and find space for children, next generation, and older generation, ancestors, the land, other species, to be included on the campaign team sheet.)

- ⌚ What does this team stand for (campaign values/beliefs)?
- ⌚ What is the campaign theme song? If don't already have one ... come up with some key words that could be a song, or choose an existing song as their theme song? (This works really well with groups that love to sing, play music and write songs.)
- ⌚ Invite people to name their team. Does their team have a logo? Uniform?
- ⌚ Are there any important sponsors?
- ⌚ Does the team have any special manuals or 'rulebooks' they use?
- ⌚ Etc. Etc.

Once you have clarified the list of questions, eliminating any that are not relevant and adding specific questions that the group identifies as important, ask each campaign group (or individual or pair) to create a TEAM SHEET for their campaign. Ask each campaign group (or individual or pair) to draw the team sheet (a picture of a football field) and get them to identify their team, draw them on the team sheet, and draw in the responses to the questions above. Drawing the team sheet could take 1-2+ hours.

If the group is musical give them extra time to write songs about their campaign.

The next step is to invite each group/individual/pair/campaign to share their 'team sheets' with each other. If they have songs invite them to perform their songs.

When each group/individual/pair/campaign shares their 'team sheet' evoke sporting atmosphere and ritual with cheers. If you have face and body paint you can invite people to paint themselves.

Give plenty of time to laugh and celebrate each group's presentation.

PART III: Responding to fouls and injuries

Return to the large group. Initiate a conversation about football again. Ask what kind of injuries do people get when they play football? Elicit and list different kinds of injuries, making sure that not only physical injuries are listed but also other kinds of injuries such as lack of confidence, losing heart, butterflies before the big game etc.

Elicit and write up these kinds of questions:

- ⌚ How do people respond to those injuries?
- ⌚ What happens when star players are sent off?
- ⌚ Is there a first aid kit? What is in it?
- ⌚ How is morale strengthened?
- ⌚ Who are your team's medics, physiotherapists, sports psychologists etc.?
- ⌚ How have you kept your team healthy? Is there a special diet? Exercises? Training? How essential is team practice? What does that look like for your team?

- 🕒 Ask what about fouls? What kinds of red and yellow cards has your team had to deal with?
- 🕒 Have you ever had a referee that was biased or corrupt? How did you respond?
- 🕒 How did you maintain discipline and focus in the midst of provocation?
- 🕒 Etc. Etc.

Invite people to return to their campaign group/individual/pair and discuss how they deal with injuries and fouls.

Ask them to draw and write their responses on their campaign team sheet and then share this in the large group. As groups present how their team has responded to injuries and fouls the facilitator may need to elicit some of the stories about how they responded, asking questions like, “where did your idea for that strategy from? Does it have a particular history or is it connected to a particular tradition or another community? Or can you tell me a story about how you did x? Or how you did you manage to hold onto discipline in the face of so much provocation?”

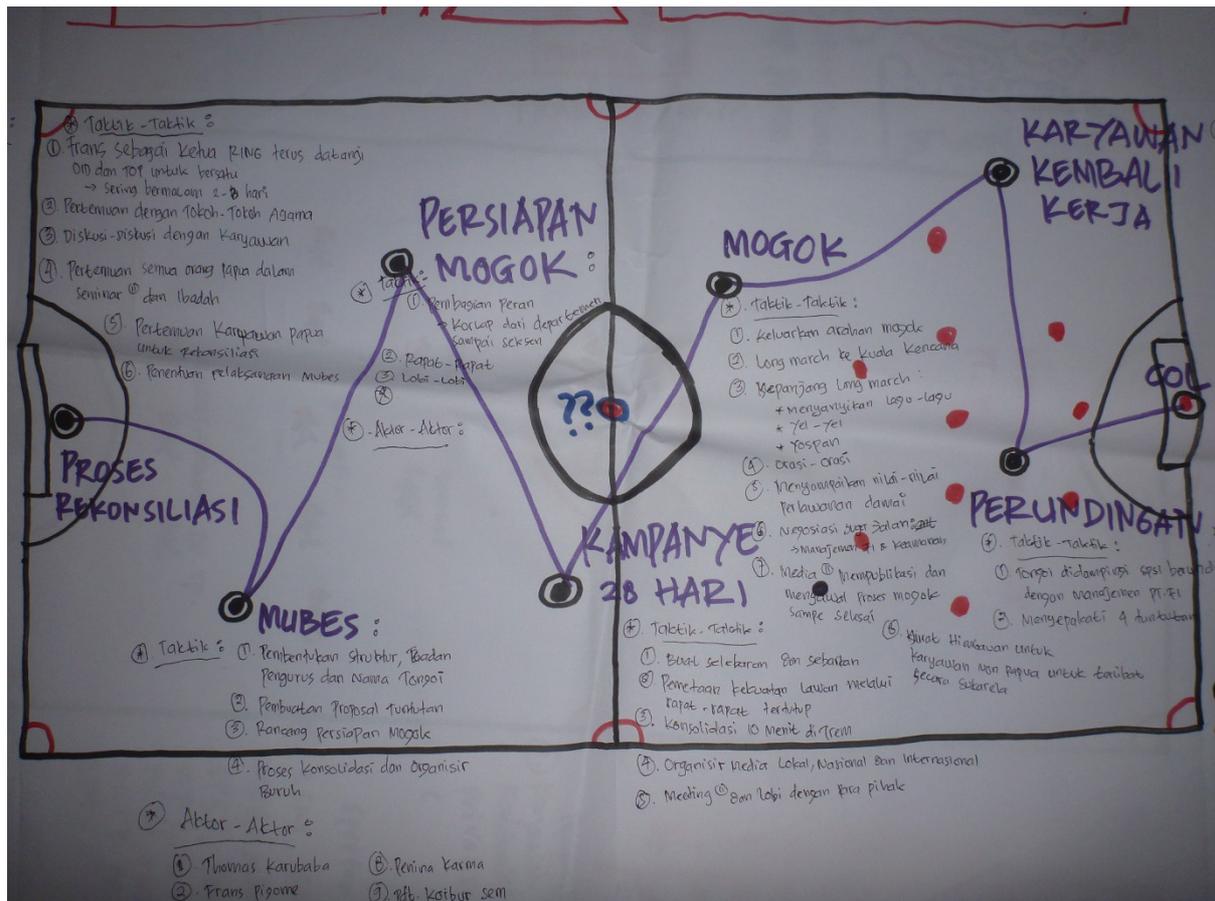
This part of the process will take at least 2+ hours.

PART IV: The Strategy Board

The next step is to map a goal, strategy and tactics used.

Ask people to return back to their campaign group/individual/pair. Ask them to name one goal that their team (campaign) has ALREADY achieved.

Ask them to draw a new football field and illustrate how this goal was achieved as if it was a goal in football. For example, the strategy board below illustrates how ‘Tongoi Papua, an independent union of West Papuan mine workers at the giant Freeport/Rio Tinto Copper and Gold mine won a 100% wage increase.



Above: Tongoi Papua's campaign began with reconciling competing factions (*proses rekonsiliasi*). After that they held a gathering (*mubes*) where the problems West Papuan mine workers faced could be discussed and strategies and tactics debated. The next step was preparing to strike (*persiapan mogok*) followed by a 28 day campaign (*Kampanye 28 hari*) in which a diverse range of tactics were employed. When Freeport still did not concede to Tongoi Papua's demands 9,000 mine workers walked off the job. When the company agreed to negotiations (*perundingan*) they went back to work (*kembali kerja*). Finally (*gol*) they achieved nearly 100% wage increase for the lowest paid worker.

Ask each group/individual/pair/campaign to include all the people/groups who were involved and to describe the parts they played. To make this really relevant to strategy ... get them to mark on the strategy board the key strategies and tactics that were used ... to get the ball from one part of the field to the next. (Like the Tongoi Papua strategy board above.)

PART V: Re-enactment

This is the fun part! Invite each group/individual/pair to re-enact the goal as a drama, as if you are at the main stadium on grand final day. Ask someone to be the commentator. The commentator's job is to retell the goal... all the steps that took place. I guess it will be something like "Here we are at xx stadium and it's the [name of campaign team] versus the [name of the opponent]. It's been a tough

team's strategies) might be useful now?

Again, it is really useful to document these, perhaps not just on flip chart but to think about how they might be creatively recorded and shared (photos, pictures, drama, music etc.)

Source:

David Denborough, Dulwich Centre with Jason MacLeod. (See also an earlier version developed by David Denborough, 2008, 'Chapter Five: The Team of Life: Offering young people a sporting chance in Collective Narrative Practice: responding to individuals, groups and communities who have experienced trauma, Dulwich Centre Publications: Adelaide, pp. 99-126)

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