

**Workshop: „Change the world & start with the wo/man in the mirror
Public space activism – volunteering of another kind”**

Date, Time: Wednesday, 28.09.2011, 9:45 – 12:45 and 14:15 – 17:15

Workshop also held at aces Academy, March 2011 in Prague

Date, Time: Thursday, 31.03.2011, 10:30 – 12:30 and 14:15 – 16:15

Trainer: Barbara Sieberth, free lance trainer, Verein Kopfstand

Workshop content/theme

Using public space for active citizenship-activities to make small and fun impacts on your local community by supporting a certain issue.

Aims

Volunteering has many faces. Activism in public space exists since many years, and especially young people have developed very creative ways of spreading their message to others. To be a volunteer for an active society using public space, that should be open for everyone.

The aim of this workshop was to get a take a look of what is happening in this field already, to get inspired and then to try one activity, but also to reflect on “own use” of it at home and/or at school.

Method(s)/Approach

1. We started by introducing each other in the context of volunteering. Who has been a volunteer, in what field?
2. To explore the field of volunteering – we worked on following questions, first in groups of 2-3 participants, then we shared in plenary:
 - a. What is volunteering?
 - b. Who benefits?
 - c. What motivates?
3. In a next step, we looked at several examples of public space activism (which are available on youtube – see following links):
 - a. **Free Hugs** by Juan Mann
Youtube-Video http://youtu.be/vr3x_RRjdd4
Background story: <http://www.freehugscampaign.org/>
 - b. Example for **Guerilla Gardening**:
Youtube-Video <http://youtu.be/ssz8AvCrqoM>
Background info (UK, as the video): <http://www.guerrillagardening.org/>
 - c. **Flashmob** of a young anti-nuclear-power group in Salzburg:
http://youtu.be/_j6IMMUb7qM

- d. **Smartmob / Freeze** in Grand Central, New York City
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwMj3PJDxuo&feature=player_embedded
- e. **Parking days – Dublin 2011:** <http://youtu.be/UnDrk2zQPf0>
Background info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Car-free_movement

Each short film was discussed in terms of *useful? *can it happen in my community?

After looking at all videos, we agreed on activities we want to try out ourselves in the nearby subway station – tried it out & came back for a short evaluation/reflection.

First group:

- * tried free hugs

- * prepared a “freeze” to be held during dinner time

Trying out “Free Hugs” for the first time was a welcome experience for most participants. Some were also watching and feedbacking to the group.

The freeze was also an idea by the first group – with the offer, that the second group might want to join? The plan was, to freeze at a signal at the beginning of dinner – with the message to say “Thank you” to the ACES team for a good conference.

Second group:

- * tried free hugs

- * tried guerilla gardening by putting paper flowers to the nearby mall, that had flower pots without flowers. We changed that 😊

- * joined the first group with the “thank you aces – dinner freeze”

Also in the second group, young people and their teachers were excited to try something new and have immediate results.

In both groups, the discussion around “volunteering” were quite interesting, as “helping others” to “feel good with like minded people” showed the wide range of effects of volunteering.

In both groups we had an intense discussion what kind of activities are good for what kind of message. Big revolutions need something more powerful than a flashmob, but on a community / school level it’s easy and fun for young people to get active with similar activities.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

See links above

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

See above and pictures below.



Pictures from Academy 2011, Prague (similar Workshop)



