

# temporary anti-capitalist teams

## introduction

### what is TACT?

The anti-Capitalist movement is spread across the world, it is as global as Capital. The public face of that movement is the spectacular actions and protests that sometimes occur - Genoa, Seattle, J18, May Day. But in the background are small acts of resistance which occur every day, carried out by groups and individuals who (consciously or not) are acting as part of a bigger whole. People acting in their own way, with their own concerns and struggles. Sometimes those struggles coincide with others and a more effective challenge can be made - individual refusal broadening out into a genuine and fundamental challenge.

These shifting connections and allegiances are a vital part of the anti-Capitalist movement. Part of the task of that movement is to generate awareness that these everyday struggles are part of that greater whole, to give practical support and resources and articulate that sense of solidarity. One of the ways that this can be done is to celebrate that resistance, lending it a name that draws it into the sphere of our activity. The anti-Capitalist movement is not without its problems - Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams are one way that we can try and overcome some of these difficulties and make a more effective challenge to Capital.

The idea of the Temporary Anti-Capitalist Team is a response to the need for greater coherence and inclusivity. There are Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams working all over the world all the time - every time a group of workers comes together in self-defence for industrial action or even collective bargaining, that is a Temporary Anti-Capitalist Team in action. Whenever people come together in forms of activity that step outside of the domination of Capitalism, that is a Temporary Anti-Capitalist Team in action. When a community works together for its own purpose in defiance of the bureaucracy of the State that is a Temporary Anti-Capitalist Team in action. And when the groups and collectives that make up the movement are doing what they do best, that too is an Temporary Anti-Capitalist Team in action. Sometimes the "Teams" overlap and coalesce, sometimes they are more "Temporary" than at others, sometimes the link to "Anti-Capitalism" is not so clear. But a TACT is not a form of organisation, it's an idea - about society and struggle, about interaction and collective response, an expression of resistance.



### what's it for?

The idea of TACT is to give a name to our activity and to be able to make links with others who are already active. To articulate opposition in a useful way and draw others, already carrying out similar work under a different name, into a wider movement of overlapping action and commonality, explicitly locating them within a wider struggle. A network of Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams can bridge the gaps between local action and global issues, overcoming the fragmented nature of our struggles. TACT can draw people together across geographical divides in both practical and political ways. Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams are designed for one reason only: to make our resistance to Capital more effective. We want to help bring a better world a step closer.

No-one has to leave their existing group to join a TACT - it is an idea, not an organisation - it is enough to understand that this is the nature of what you are doing and that you are part of a larger whole which needs your support and which will in turn lend support to you. It's not a question of asking people to join, it's a process of recognition of being a part of a greater whole, recognising commonality in the struggles of others - there is no membership drive, no monolith to be built - it cannot be a process of uniformity. No-one is being asked to organise their own struggle in a different way (or being told how to struggle), but to be part of a network providing practical and political support where it's wanted, to work together with others where things coincide, where it's useful. Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams are a powerful way to make dynamic networks of support and communication within the anti-Capitalist movement and to connect the local with the global.

### how does it work?

It can be a group of people who come together for a specific project which gnaws away at some aspect of Capitalist social relations: perhaps for a few hours, maybe for a few days or weeks. When the project has served its purpose they move on to something else.

It could be a long-term organisation, or a coming-together of several existing groups to work with each other using TACT to facilitate that connection and overcome the chauvinism and sectarianism which can sometimes plague our attempts to build bridges. It could be workers within industry reaching out to supporters in other sectors, or completely outside of that industry (or outside of all industry) using TACTs to create a useful network. People acting locally in one country in solidarity with people in another: explicitly linking their struggles by using a Temporary anti-Capitalist Team.

People confronting Capital directly, or people building alternatives. A collective response to our political and economic situation, a response that exists as a dynamic, a process of struggle that is recognised as a part of working class activity - not outside or 'other' - but within it and of it.

Here are just some of the examples of how Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams could work:

- **A one-off event** organised by a group of people from a variety of organisations. TACT could break the ice, showing the participants what they have in common, and provide a framework where people can work together and stay in touch after the event.
- **A campaign** which touches on the work of groups which have different agendas and priorities (for example, between a workplace and its local community). Using the idea of Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams can allow those groups to make connections whilst respecting each others different approach to the campaign itself.
- **An issue** which affects people worldwide could be communicated directly to people as a local issue by using networks of TACTs around the world. By communicating through the TACT network, that local issue can be shown to have a global effect and allow people to make that connection.
- **Local groups** in regional towns working together are frequently beset by sectarianism and poor communication. By declaring themselves to be Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams, barriers can be broken down and a comprehensive network of communication relied on, making use of the limited resources that small groups have and building something bigger and more effective.
- **Individuals** dispersed across a wide geographical area can use the TACT website to find other people interested in the same issues or in working together in the same area.
- **Building direct links** between anti-Capitalists in different countries. Using the understanding of TACTs as a reference, groups can reach out around the world
- **Sharing skills.** The TACT website can be used as a skills bank, to enable contacts between groups and individuals for mutual support and assistance and practical solidarity.

## why?

We put this booklet together to try and make real some of the ideas that are going on in TACT1 at the moment. You don't have to agree with our suggestions for how TACT can work. You don't have to share our analysis of recent history, of organisation or of Capitalism. The ideas are there for you to take away or throw away, it's up to you. There cannot be an agreed "line" to take, TACT is purely an idea, not an organisation. Interpretations are open to all. The idea is inclusive, not exclusive: we value difference, not conformity.

Following this introduction, this booklet explores some of the ideas that are behind the name TACT:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Temporary       | - looking at examples of past and present struggles              |
| anti-Capitalist | - an analysis of Capital, class and the anti-Capitalist movement |
| Teams           | - the importance of finding ways to organise ourselves           |

# tact:temporary



We talk about TEMPORARY anti-Capitalist Teams, because we recognised from the start that we don't have all the answers. We know that throughout history different struggles have come and gone, good ideas and bad ideas have sprung up, been tried, been left behind. The important thing seems to be to realise our mistakes, learn from them and move on. The very nature of our struggles emphasise the fleeting allegiances that are built: we are a fluid and changing dynamic of ideas, we could not stand still if we wanted to.

For most of the last century, and beyond, mainstream politics has almost been *defined* by the pursuit of permanence. In monolithic parties that cling to their dogmas and their belief in their ability to lead us. In the relentless accumulation of power by fossilised states. In the security blanket of redundant ideology. Politics has been stuck in the Stone Age. The fissures in the rock have been obvious for decades but in recent years they have simply become too large to ignore. The old ways of organising are no longer viable and new ways are emerging.

People throughout the world are realising that the established structures no longer have the answers. As Capital made its globalisation more explicit, so have the forms of our resistance spread around the world. In 1990 a group of activists and local people occupied a row of houses due for demolition to make way for the M11 link road to Stansted airport. Claremont Road in Leytonstone (East London) was transformed from a suburban street to an autonomous community space. The houses were splashed with murals. Cafes sprung up in living rooms. Those involved weren't part of a group or a party. They just wanted to stop the link road. But Claremont Road also became a celebration of independence. When the bulldozers came, the activists chained themselves into the houses and onto a vast structure of scaffolding running across the roofs. The eviction took days. The celebration was temporary. Now a motorway slices through the heart of Leytonstone. But the legacy of Claremont Road has been longer lasting.

*“we could not stand still if we wanted to”*

The road protests evolved into urban street parties. City arteries were taken over by a swarm of revellers who transformed the space from carbon-monoxide expressways to a temporary zone of free expression. Possibilities became realities. Trees were planted in the fast lane. Children played in sand pits on the hard shoulder. These were fleeting glimpses of hope which spurred future acts of defiance. Their vision was not limited to environmental issues, reaching out to striking Liverpool dockers and confronting the G8 when it came to Birmingham. An extraordinarily successful assault by thousands of people on the institutions of the City, on June 18th 1999, was perhaps the crescendo of this current of struggle.



On New Years Day 1994, the Zapatistas rose against the corrupt and racist Mexican State and the impending introduction of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). Although under daily attack by paramilitary forces their struggle has been extremely successful (all the more so since their calls for international assistance have been answered by struggles around the world). In Chiapas the autonomous town councils practice direct democracy as a means of daily resistance.

More recently in Italy, activists, inspired by the Zapatistas, have occupied vast tracts of urban land to make sprawling social centres. The centres are outside State control, they have their own nurseries, health centres and a range of facilities available to all. The Social Centres are an attempt at a more durable approach, a means to allow progressive ideas to take root. But at heart they are evolving and shifting to face new circumstances. They are not shackled to a given ideology or an organisation. They are infinitely flexible to new ideas. The Social centres have spread through Europe and are emerging as a new force for change and a powerbase for transformation.

Around the world ordinary working class people are making the links. We draw inspiration from a wide variety of struggles: social, political and economic. From links between peace activists in the UK and workers struggling with the harvest in Palestine; between action against the chain-stores on the high Street and the maquiladoras in the sweatshops of the 3rd World; anti-debt campaigners and anti-privatisation campaigners; community activists in Brighton working with striking SITA refuse workers to help them win a strike; the wide variety of anti-Capitalist positions that have come together against the war in Iraq. Wildcat strikes, local actions, sit-ins, occupations, the events at the G8 summit in Genoa, the European Social Consulta: all organised by changing networks of people, united temporarily for a purpose before moving on. None of these ideas are perfect, there is still so much more for us to do, but it's all we have right now. We hope that the ideas around Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams can help to circulate these struggles, bring them together and help our resistance to grow.



Across Europe autonomous groups are mobilising against ever more repressive immigration controls and the escalating persecution of refugees. The NoBorders network is a loose web of interaction that transforms disparate groups of activists into a single cohesive force. The network has no base and no office. The network is simply the information held by those involved and the communication between them. Border camps are agreed and direct actions are co-ordinated. The resistance has no centre. A series of temporary collections of people and ideas coalesce at one point in space and time to continue the struggle. Once the action is completed the elements melt back into the fabric, to reform some place else some time later in a new shape with new objectives.



In Argentina, economic collapse at the hands of the World Bank/IMF has seen millions spontaneously take to the streets. The anger of the people has built new political structures. Where the old politics hides in palaces and grand offices, the "assembleas populares" (popular assemblies) meet in the parks. Common space for the politics of the commons.

Ordinary Argentinians have learnt to organise without organisations. Food is distributed, services traded, local issues are discussed. Political parties have no part to play. Workers re-occupy their old factories. The jobless 'piqueteros' occupy the road. Banks workers block the security vans that syphon Argentina's money to offshore bank accounts. The assemblies split and merge. They are fluid entities adapting to the fast deteriorating situation. They have become the expression of popular will as the old truths have been revealed as lies. They are temporary. They are anti-Capitalist. They are Teams.



# tact:anti-capitalist

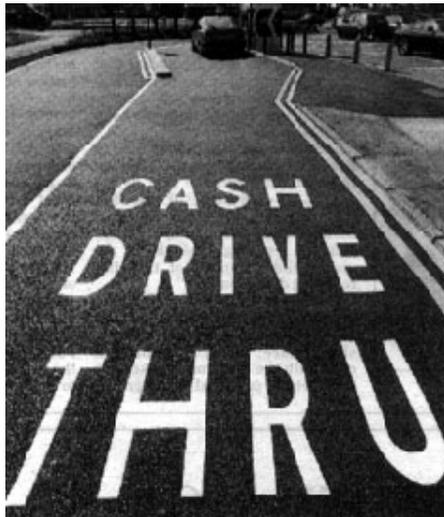
## *Capitalism - the system that unites us in struggle*

Some people talk about Capital as if it is outside of our everyday lives - a shadowy conspiracy, a bunch of men with fat cigars in a smoky room. Perhaps they might identify Capital as the banks, the bosses or the multinational corporations. But Capital is not something separate from our lives, it is not something we could simply smash with a stone (if we could get hold of enough stones). It's not just about profit, not just about money, it's the way we relate to each other and the society we are part of - in our street, at work, in our towns, cities, nationally, globally.

Capitalism isn't the bank - the bank is just symbol of Capital. The bosses aren't Capital, they are just the scum which floats to the top. Not multinationals, Governments or markets either, they are just the structures of Capital. Capital is more than the sum total of 'Capitalists' or Capitalist companies. Capital is a **social relation**. Capital is the way we live, the way we reproduce ourselves and our world - the entire organisation of society as it is today: economically, politically and socially. Capital is the reduction of *everything* to a commodity: us, our labour, our ideas, our lives, our loves, our children, our hopes, our dreams.

Capital condemns us to a lifetime of work - every advance in "productivity" turns out to be another opportunity to impose more work. Every aspect of society has become a function of work - even unemployment, reproduction and education. Every minute of that work is a minute worked for Capital. Of course we have to make a living - but the Capitalists are making a killing! Every profit made is a profit for the Capitalists. Every effort is a commodity to be bought and sold. Capitalism makes our "free" time into work time, lives like a parasite off the efforts of our labour and creates a world of alienation. Alienation from the things we produce, from our values, from each other, even from ourselves.

Capitalism is a society divided by class: between the elite that run society and everyone else who has to do the work that makes that society function. At its bluntest, between bosses and workers. This is one of the fundamentals of the way Capitalism works - it cannot operate any other way. We don't create this division, Capital does. Class analysis is a tool that we can use for change: understanding our divided society doesn't perpetuate the problem, it helps us figure out how to build a classless society. Some people say that class doesn't mean anything anymore, it's irrelevant (although a recent MORI survey found that 68% of people in the UK said they were



"working class and proud of it"). But our reply to that would be - what has changed? There are still very rich and very poor. There are still bosses and workers (even though the boss may tell you you're part of one big "team"), we still sell our labour to survive. The factory chimneys are disappearing, the mines are closing down, but the social relations of Capitalism remain the same, whether you're working behind the counter in Tesco's, in a call centre or bringing up kids. Class is not about accents, ABC1's, wages, geography or aristocrats, it's about social, political and economic power. Class is not an object, it's not a fixed position, or a Cosmo checklist, it's a dynamic social relationship: it's located in the relationship between Capital and the workers. That relationship, based as it is in the conflict between the ruling class and the working class, will always be a struggle. The middle class really are the piggies in the middle. They are the functionaries of Capitalism: they are both exploiter and exploited, they have some small privileges but no real security, they have the power to sack workers, but can also be sacked. Margaret Thatcher once said that we are all middle class now, that there was no such thing as society. She can say what the fuck she wants, but it doesn't change anything: the



working class remains the class with revolutionary potential, because we are the majority class exploited by the minority, we are the ones with nothing to lose and everything to gain. In the end, it's neither the ruling class nor the middle class that is the enemy: it's the social relations of Capital.

Capitalism is a world of struggle. Some people will only see that struggle from Capital's point of view, always seeing working class people as victims, ignoring the battles and victories that have been achieved by the working class, and waiting for Capitalism to collapse from its own contradictions. They see Capital as the cartoon fatcat with a whip and a cigar. We see Capital in a different way: would-be managers riding a tiger's back trying to coerce or cajole their mount along different lines of development, frequently coming

within a hair's breath of falling off when the tiger rears or comes to a sudden halt, always in danger of the tiger turning around and ripping these upstarts from its back. We can carry this metaphor too far, for the working class "tiger" is actually a multitude, but the point is made - Capital struggles to hold us every day. The class struggle is not a one-way street.

Capital is a world of pain. Where children die needlessly in their thousands every day from starvation and disease. Where wars are fought for oil. Where the safety of workers comes second

***"Capital struggles to hold us every day"***

to the profit they produce. Where the resources of the world can be plundered and sold. Capital fosters racism and sexism to divide working class people, to build false barriers between us. For the bosses Capital means freedom, common sense and efficiency. They have all the democracy they need in the market - money talks! But their efficiency is built upon waste: the waste of lives and the waste of resources. They allow us the freedom to choose between different brands

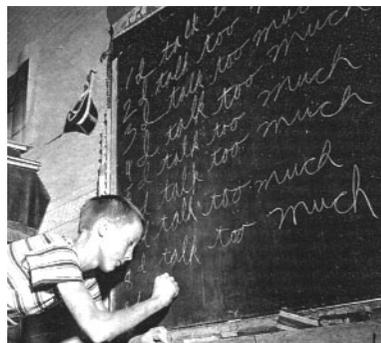


of shampoo, but we can create other choices: we have the sense to hold everything in common, to create real freedom and real democracy. To be human at last, not workers, not consumers, not commodities. Capital is not the "end of history", it's not inevitable, it's not the only alternative.

### *anti-Capitalism - the movement of movements*

The anti-Capitalist movement is the sum of all the struggles against Capital. It's a continuum of groups and individuals with a huge range of viewpoints and politics. It's not a coherent organisation, but a current, a circulation of struggles, a movement of movements. For us it is this diversity that is one the joys of being part of the anti-Capitalist movement. The diffuse nature of the movement means there can be no fixed positions, no leader and no monolith to follow (although some have tried!). We are united by our opposition to Capital, not by the direction we are all headed in.

Some people don't like this diversity. They worry that grounding ourselves in negativity stifles the positive aspect of anti-Capitalism: we are after all trying to build a better world, a world without hunger, without war. A world of genuine democracy and freedom. They think that focussing on what's bad about Capital might make us look bad. But we don't need to crush our diversity to change the world. There are as many alternatives as there are anti-Capitalists. The networks of resistance are our strength. The power of the anti-Capitalist movement is its potential to build a real (not just ideological) political struggle of the world's working class against global Capital.



But local work in communities or workplaces is at a very low level, and that which does take place has no clear reference to being part of a greater whole or global movement. Many activities are purely self-referential (and only of interest to other "activists"). There is a sense of detachment from everyday life and from struggle, leaving activities isolated from cultural and political reference points. Many working class people feel the anti-Capitalist movement is "nothing to do with me". There is no

obvious way for people to make connections with the anti-Capitalist movement or to see their own struggles in the context of that movement. Many people's implicit anti-Capitalist struggles are not recognised as part of the movement, either by themselves or the rest of the movement.

There are many pressing problems:

How we can translate anti-Capitalist action into our everyday lives - at work, at home, in our communities? How can we celebrate everyday struggles as anti-Capitalist struggles? How can we build communities of resistance that relate to local, national and international issues? How can we work together while respecting our differences? How can we build links that span the world? How can we progress from a protest movement into a social movement?

It's crucial that the tentative international links that exist between anti-Capitalists are strengthened into real connections: not just of solidarity and support, but in the exchange of ideas and information. Whatever is done, it must be relevant and inclusive. Anti-Capitalists need to be part of working class struggle, not apart from it.



# tact:teams

There has been an underestimation - at times, by ourselves - in our own ability to get things done through collective organisation; indeed, in today's fragmented and individualistic society, the idea of acting collectively is often seen as revolutionary a concept as the revolution we are ultimately working towards!

Throughout our lives we've been told what to do and how and when to do it - or that we're not clever enough to make effective change and should leave things for 'those who know better'. Not surprising perhaps, that a bit of self-doubt creeps in - if you're told you're shit and stupid for long enough, it's easy to believe it's true - but are we to allow the journey to our better society to be no different?

We have no need for leaders to tell us what to do; nor indeed, for Parties of professional revolutionaries. We know where they've led us in the past - history is littered with examples of the parties and people who thought they knew what was best for us, and look where it's got us! We know what to do - we need to organise ourselves, to work together collectively, and to have confidence in our own abilities. It is equal and active participation - not 'title' or 'position' - that's important. And it's the struggle which counts, not whose name is on it.

The secret to success, as the saying goes, is through teamwork. Strength in numbers. Everyone working together. While doubtless true, teams may be constructed in any number of different ways, and the nature and organisational structure underlying them will have an impact on how ultimately successful - or not - they may be. There is no pre-determined method or formula of how people should come together and organise, and what works today may well not work tomorrow - that's the beauty of it! What's important is that the people involved decide themselves how the team should be organised - collectively, democratically and equally. Undoubtedly there will be mistakes - indeed, failures along the way - though there will be many successes too.

Teams, we think, are best when they're non-hierarchical (some call it horizontal organisation) and inclusive, with the nature and methodology of the team reflecting the ultimate goal - a truly democratic and dynamic society. A society in which diversity, equality, mutual respect and change are welcomed. Formal hierarchies - committees, leaders, chains of command - are stifling and restrictive structures, often not allowing the free-flow of ideas or information, nor bringing out peoples' true potential. Hierarchies (including the informal "invisible" kind) allow the 'leadership' to steer the team towards their own ends, rather than meeting the needs and goals of the collective from which it is comprised.

# tact



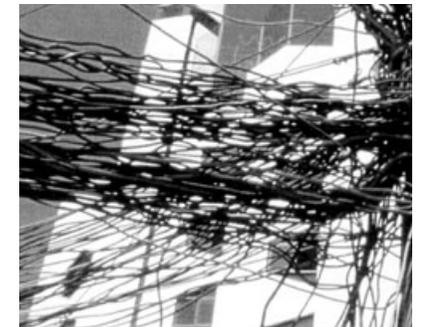
Though a team could be formed from what at first glance might appear to be a disparate set of groups and individuals, what draws them together is a commonality of purpose - an idea, an action, a struggle. Indeed, a team might not need to be together in the same room, city or even country, for people to feel part of the collective! Often, the traditional Left has only looked to the workplace as the vehicle of struggle, neglecting the "social factory" outside. Inclusive teams can bridge this gap. Teams can be a convergence of commonality, of shared experience of struggle: organised bottom-up rather than top-down, from grassroots community organisations to rank and file workplace organisations.

As working class people, we know that individually we are denied access to power and that, correspondingly, unity is strength. Ultimately we know that it is the working class who will decide the best ways and means of its own organisation; underlying this is our refusal to accept that any one individual or social group be allowed to impose their vision of social organisation on others. Successful teams reflect this and will respect the diversity within the group, treating everyone as equals with the potential to contribute and shape success.

What's important is that we learn through a shared experience of the struggle. We need to learn from past successes - the soviets of 1905, the workers councils of 1956, the Asambleas Populares in Argentina right now - but we need to be ready to cast aside old methods when they are no longer productive, continually inventing new forms of organisation by making new links and connections, and absorbing new approaches. We need to learn to be fast, creative and dynamic - to be unpredictable, innovative and untrappable. Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams allow us to link the local, the international and the global perspective at the same time: relating the work of one team to another, making real the networks that connect us.

We learn by making connections, sharing experiences, and forming temporary - albeit at times tentative - alliances with other autonomous groups or teams. Groups will sometimes follow parallel courses, sometimes diverge, sometimes converge; sometimes touching others, sometimes going along side-by-side, sometimes separating. While this is important, we should not allow group chauvinism to continue to divide and weaken us.

The resulting empowerment can bring forth a flux of new ideas - we can learn things through working together collectively as equals which we couldn't do through fighting on our own. Collective action can alter people's perception of power, as it changes their situation from atomised individuals, cut off from each other, to the real power of worker solidarity. Especially when the action and solidarity among working class people spreads beyond "normal" channels and unites, bringing into active participation ever larger sections of our class and allowing us to speak of real change, not just dreams of change.



**CONTACT**

**tACT**

*temporary anti-capitalist teams*



*you can find out more about tact from:*

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*Ever felt frustrated that there are so many different groups out there working away in isolation?*

*Why can't activists find a way to work together, to pool resources and support each other?*

*Why isn't there a network that respects different ways of working, diverse political cultures and different priorities?*

*Why can't we connect the local with the global, why can't we work autonomously, why can't we get anywhere?*

**You don't have to be frustrated. There is a way we can work together. There is a network that can help people to help each other.**

TACT - Temporary Anti-Capitalist Teams, are a powerful way to make dynamic networks of support and communication within the anti-Capitalist movement and to connect the local with the global.

TACT is not an organisation you can join, its an idea you can use, like a network, to make links between groups and individuals in struggle. There is no particular ideology behind it, you don't have to leave your organisation to join, there's nothing to join - just join in!

TACTs can be big or small, local or international. They could be a team that comes together for a specific event, or a long-lasting network that connects individuals across the world. How you use TACT is up to you.

**temporary anti-capitalist teams**

**tact**

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tact@temporary.org.uk**

**tact1  
one tact among many!**

This booklet was put together by people involved in TACT1, which is based in London. Here are some examples of what TACT 1 has been doing over the last year:

d Building and running the TACT website [www.temporary.org.uk](http://www.temporary.org.uk). We have also been discussing projects with Rank and File workers groups and international activists to develop a web presence for their organisations in the UK.

d In solidarity with the Womble 7, anti-Capitalist activists who had been attacked by the police, we organised the "We Are All Wombles" campaign culminating in a successful demonstration outside Horseferry Road Magistrates Court in London on MayDay 2002. Five of the activists were completely cleared, the remaining two were fined a token £100.

d We organised a Community Activism workshop in London in July 2002, bringing together activists from across the UK and Europe to discuss the politics and practice of Community activism.

d We have been talking to Rank and File workers organisations about helping them to produce useful campaigning and publicity material, including leaflets and bulletins.

d Organising a monthly social event in London where anti-Capitalists of all flavours can get together socially in an environment of mutual support and discussion.

d Building direct international links with workers around the world.

You can post comments to the TACT website feedback pages by emailing [feedback@temporary.org.uk](mailto:feedback@temporary.org.uk)

You can subscribe to our monthly email news bulletin by sending an email to: [subscriberlist@temporary.org.uk](mailto:subscriberlist@temporary.org.uk)

To join the TACT email discussion list send a blank email to: [temporary-subscribe@lists.riseup.net](mailto:temporary-subscribe@lists.riseup.net)

