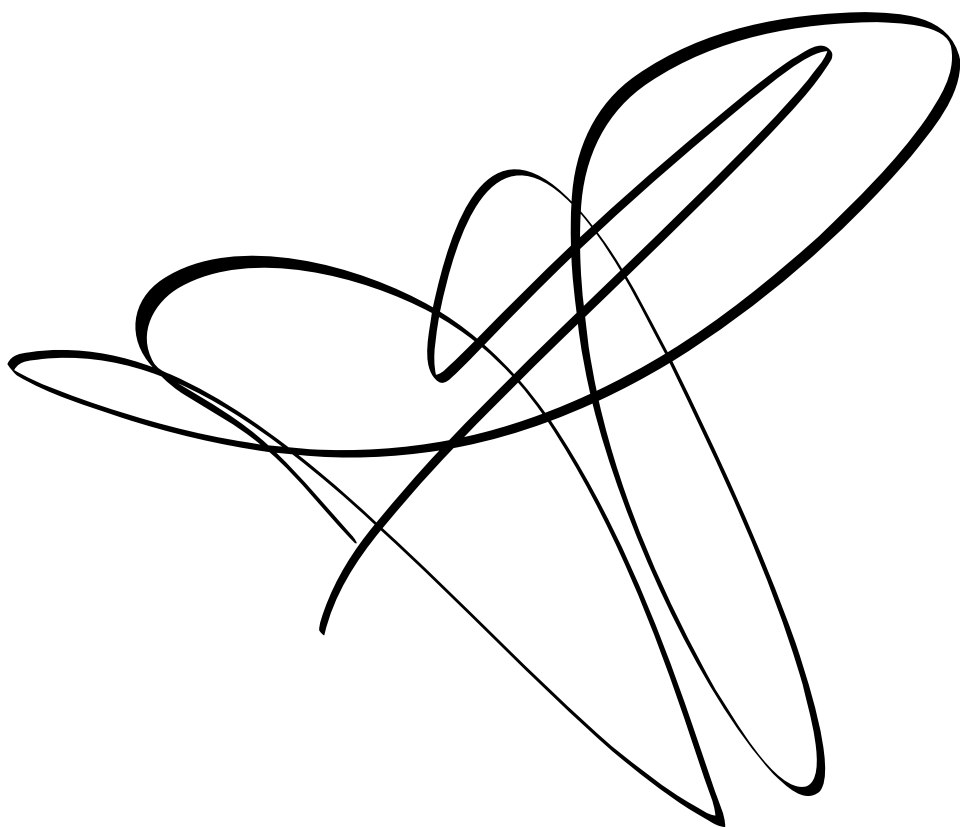


Mapping Abolitionist Futures



a workshop guide in two parts



Download this zine as a PDF here and find out more about the project:

[hypermagazine.ch/
mapping-abolitionist-
futures](https://hypermagazine.ch/mapping-abolitionist-futures)

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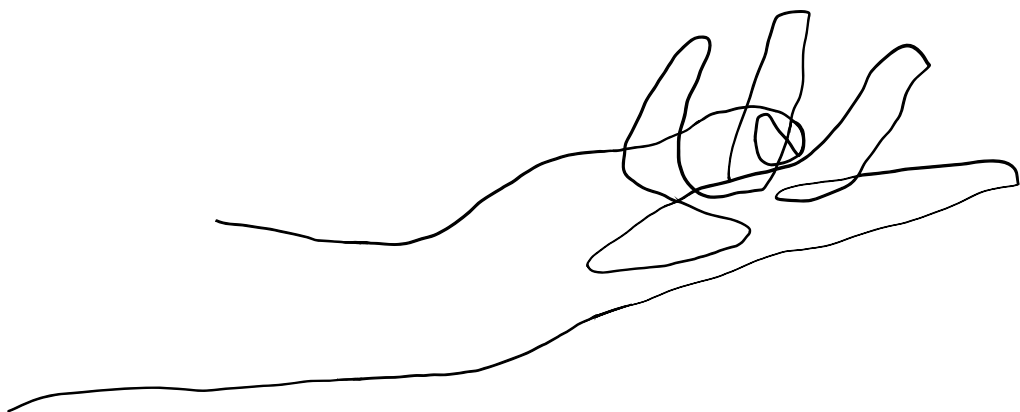
Introduction

What is mapping for abolitionist* futures?

In the society we live in, punishment is seen as a justified and effective means of moderating conflicts and preventing violence. Abolitionists, by contrast, argue that repressive* structures such as the police and violent punishments such as imprisonment not only perpetuate social injustices, but actually produce more violence. Instead, they propose tackling the causes of inequality and resolving conflicts through mediation and reparation rooted in social communities.

This workshop, which we have been developing since December 2024 in Basel and Milan, proposes a concrete engagement with abolitionist debates in two parts.

First, we collectively map* the spaces of control and oppression in our cities – where prisons are only the most visible architecture of a layered punitivist* logic. Where do people experience repression? Based on what categories is oppression applied upon specific bodies, identities and political positionings?



Secondly, we envision possible abolitionist futures by engaging in a time journey to a society as we would like it to be. What principles should this society be based on? How would conflict be mediated without resorting to punishing institutions?

Who is this workshop guide for?

This method can be carried out with students or activist groups. Shared activism, shared experiences of repression or similar can form the basis of the activity but are not essential. Diverse experiences and position(alitie)s within the group enrich the exchange.

Terms marked with an * can be found in the glossary on page 19.



Workshop instructions are marked with this symbol and formatted like this.

Workshop Overview

Goal This mapping encourages a discussion about the apparent as well as the less evident repression experienced by different groups in our society and visualizes it at the same time. Yet, it does not stick with the status quo. Based on our concrete living environment, it invites us to imagine the possibility of a society that mediates conflicts without reproducing systemic violence, based on the basic principles of responsibility and reparation.

Material

- Map base of our city ~A0
- A4 paper (at least 1 per participant)
- Pens (at least 1 per participant)
- Icons (copy template 10–12 times)
- Glue stick, scissors, crepe tape
- Different pens / colors and collage material (use what is already there or can easily be organized)

People A group of 5–20 participants

Time 3 hours

Process **Part 1 Mapping Repression**

We map where and how repression takes place in our city. Using different symbols, we visualize diverse forms and aspects of repression. Our goal is to get to know the group, analyze punitive structures and practices, and exchange concrete knowledge.

Part 2 Envisioning Abolitionist Futures

Following the mapping of repression, we will ask: What could an abolitionist future look like? What are our visions? In a collective writing exercise, we'll playfully imagine these futures before we visualize them on the map.

Part 1

Mapping Repression

To make sure everyone feels safe and empowered within the process, it's key to start the workshop with a round of introductions and to share the workshop plan. Who organized the workshop and in what context? What is planned with the results and in which longer-term strategies are they integrated? Which languages are familiar to everyone (who will provide whispered translation if necessary)? What other needs or limitations are there in the group?



Let's begin by mapping repression together. Place the A0 map on a table so everyone can gather around, add copied icons, write, and draw directly onto it.

The following questions can guide the mapping step-by-step.

1 REPRESSIVE INFRASTRUCTURES

«As you can see, we have already marked a few prisons and similar repressive places on the map. Do you know of any other such places – borders, asylum centers, psychiatric facilities, police stations?

Can you think of any other such places?» (If the appropriate icon does not yet exist, we can design it provisionally now)

2 SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

«Many of us have already been punished at some point – at school or by other authorities such as social services or youth welfare offices.

Do you know such places that you would like to mark on the map?»

3 «MOBILE REPRESSION»

«There are also other places where we experience control and repression – on the train when tickets are checked, police operations at demonstrations, evictions from squats, identity checks or similar.

Can you think of any other such repressive practices?»

4 STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION

«Can you think of where and how people are specifically controlled or oppressed? For example, based on categories like gender, sexual orientation, race, ability, class, age, or political expression...»

«Is there anything else you consider relevant on this map? If places are outside the depicted area, we'll note the location on a separate sheet or place the respective icon at the map border.»

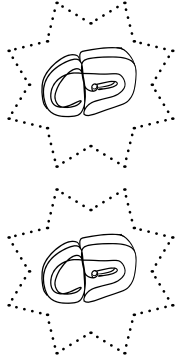


After reviewing the map together and exchanging brief thoughts about what we have mapped, we will take a short break before moving on to the second part.

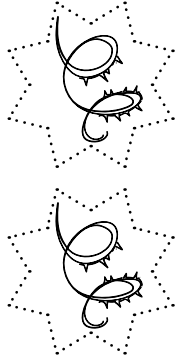
Copy Template

1. REPRESSIVE INFRASTRUCTURES

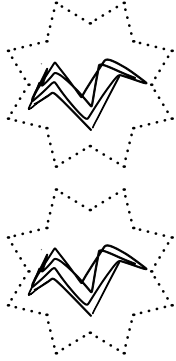
Prisons



Borders

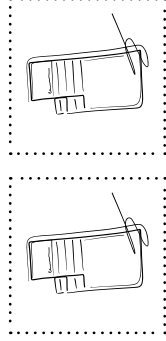


Psychiatry

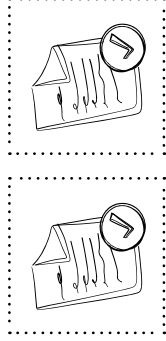


2. «MOBILE REPRESSION»

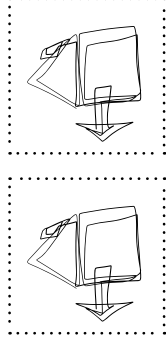
Ticket Control



Identity Check

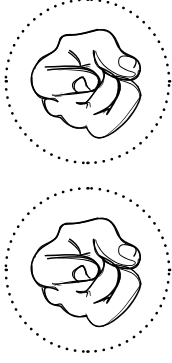


Evictions

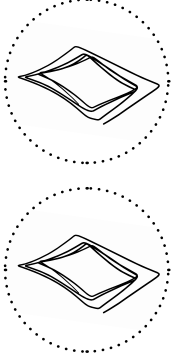


4. STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION

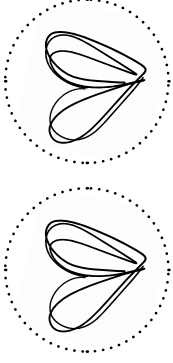
Racial Profiling



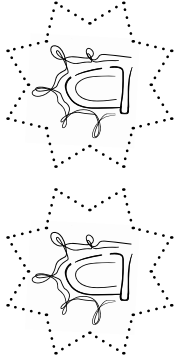
Gender Profiling



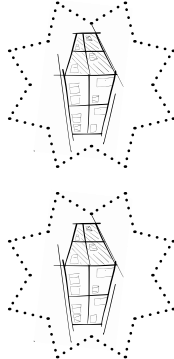
Sexual Orientation



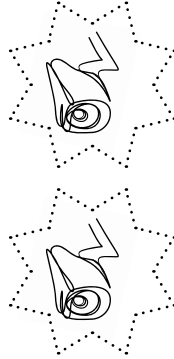
Police Stations



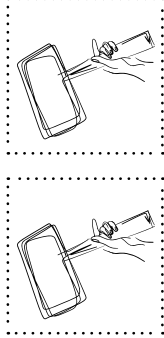
Asylum Camps



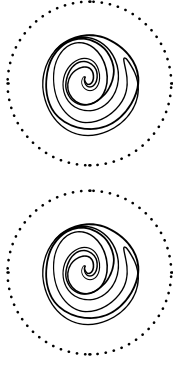
Security Cameras



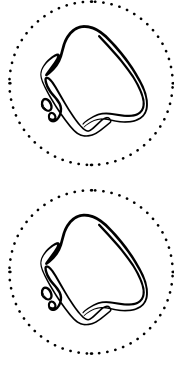
Repressive measures
during Demonstrations



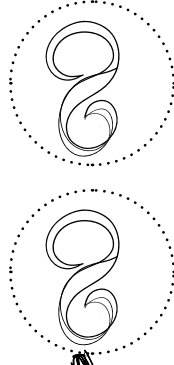
Ability



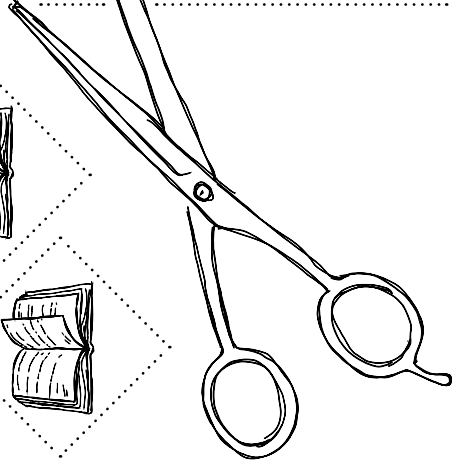
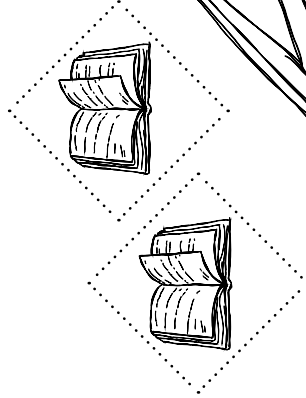
Class



Age



3. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



Copy this page 10–12 times.
Cut out the icons from the
copies. Keep one whole page
as a key and stick it to the
edge of the map.

Optional: To make the icons
stand out more clearly, color
them in. Use different colors
to visualize an additional
level of meaning.

Part 2

Envisioning Abolitionist Futures



**Invite two
volunteers to
read this dialogue
out loud together,
while the rest of
the group listens.**

A: What is abolitionism?

B: It is a movement that calls for an end to punitive institutions, especially prisons and the police. The first abolitionist movement fought for the abolition of slavery. Have you heard of #BlackLivesMatter? That's also an abolitionist movement. Proportionally, Black people and people of color are more often affected by the prison system and police violence.

A: Yes, I have heard of #BlackLivesMatter. But honestly, I can't imagine our society without prisons and police – how is it supposed to work without everything ending in chaos?

B: Abolitionism isn't only against something, but above all for something. The main aim is to make the police and prisons useless through systematic change. Ruth Wilson Gilmore puts it like this: «Abolition requires that we change one thing: everything.»

A: Couldn't we reform the police and create better, more humane prisons? Does everything really have to change?

B: The police emerged primarily to maintain racist and capitalist power structures. In the US policing emerged from the

slave patrols in the 1700s and 1800s that caught and returned runaway slaves. In the north, the first police department helped squash labor strikes and riots against the rich. It's no coincidence that the police, as an institution, is racist and violent – that's what it was created for!

A: So, as long as a society is racist, the police are also racist. But even in a society without racism, wouldn't there still be a need for something like the police?

B: Mariame Kaba* shows that the police and prisons don't do what they promise. They do not lead to less violence. Crime rises when more people live in poverty. But instead of fighting poverty, we lock people up – as if that would solve the problem! The police and prisons are not only ineffective, they are also huge sources of suffering and violence.

A: But aren't there cases in which these systems do sensible things? If an oil CEO were sentenced to prison for corruption, wouldn't that be just?

B: It might feel good, but it wouldn't lead to systemic change. The crime that this CEO committed could and would still happen, and our society would be

just as dependent on fossil fuels as it was before.

A: Okay, but let's be pragmatic: If your father was murdered, wouldn't you want the perpetrator to go to prison and the police to protect you?

B: Abolitionists do not assume that violence itself can be prevented. They understand violence as a systemic phenomenon, not as a character flaw. That's why the idea of prisons – that «bad» people simply must be locked up – doesn't work! The question is: How does an abolitionist society deal with violence? When violence happens, how can we meet the needs of the people affected and hold the perpetrator accountable?

A: Yes! And how do we get there?

B: Abolitionism doesn't want to replace prisons and police, but to abolish them. Not with one, but with millions of alternatives. No abolitionist claims that this is easy, but it is necessary. Social change is possible. The police, prisons and national borders are modern inventions by humans – which means we can create a society without them!

Can we imagine our city differently, without repression, but with mediating and healing – rather than punishing – ways of dealing with conflicts and occasionally also with violence?

Writing stories



Take an A4 paper and a pen for each participant and start writing by completing the sentences below. When you have finished the first sentence, fold the paper over so that the written text is on the back and pass it to the person on your left. This person then writes the second sentence and so on. Try not to look at your neighbor's written text.

- In the year 2025, the biggest problem was...
- To change this, people came together and decided to...
- To do this, they started to...
- A specific action was...
- At the end everyone said...



Now we invite you to share your stories with each other. One last time pass your paper to the person on your left. Then, one by one, read the story you're holding out loud to the group.

Visualize the stories



In the next step, we will try to visualize our dreams, wishes and visions of these liberating futures. Think about which story or which situation in one of the stories you could visualize particularly well. After this you can take a piece of paper and try to depict your thoughts. Feel free to use whatever craft method you know. As an example, you could paint, draw or collage with different pictures from magazines.

Share the stories



The last step of this task is to briefly explain to the group which story you have chosen and how you have tried to portray it. Then, place your visualization on the map where in our city you would like to see the story implemented and explain to the group why.

What next

We hope this zine helped you connect with ideas and practices around abolition. Maybe some things felt new, maybe some confirmed what you already sensed. Whatever the case: thanks for engaging!

Now, take a moment to reflect. What stuck with you? What's still circling in your mind? Share your thoughts in a check-out, with each other, or with us. We're happy to hear how the workshop went for you, what resonated, what challenged you, or what you're taking into your practice.

**Reach out to us via
endprisontime@hyperwerk.ch**

Glossary

Abolitionism:

describes both a theoretical approach and a political and social movement that works to overcome state institutions of violence such as prisons and police. In the tradition of the struggle against the enslavement of Black people, abolitionists emphasize the racist history of state apparatuses of violence and their complicity with forms of capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression.

Repression:

is the use of force to restrict and control a society, specific groups within a society or other groups of people. This act of force can be very visible and directly violent (e.g. police violence at a demonstration) or it can manifest itself in more subtle or indirect ways (e.g. video surveillance or disinformation campaigns).

Punitive:

relating to, involving, or with the intention of inflicting punishment; based on the assumption that punishment of certain conduct is necessary to mediate conflicts and even to promote personal insight and behavioral change.

Collective mapping:

or counter-mapping is a playful tool to take a joint look at spatial structures and processes, to question power relations and develop emancipatory strategies.

Mariame Kaba:

is a well-known abolitionist. She describes herself as an organizer, educator, archivist and curator. Her work focuses on ending violence, dismantling the prison industrial complex, transformative justice and supporting youth leadership development. She lives in New York City. You can find out more about her here: <https://mariamekaba.com>

Thanks

We humbly thank the pioneers of abolitionist movement and theory for generously sharing their inspiring ideas and opening them up to different contexts, as well as those who have made them accessible in German-speaking contexts.

We thank Francesca Cogni for initiating the process that led to this zine and for sharing with us Dropcity's invitation to the Prison Times exhibition.

Our profound gratitude goes to the activists of SOCS26 and ZAM and to the social workers of Comunità del Giambellino, for their generous and warm welcome in Milan, for embracing the process and for generously sharing their experiences on the maps and their visions in the stories.

The zine «We do this 'til we free us» by Lesegruppe at Zentrum Gender Studies greatly inspired us, both for the workshops and for the video that was part of the Prison Times exhibition. The dialogue on pages 14-15 was developed by them and adapted by us.

The mapping approach in this workshop is informed by counter-cartographic experiences in the context of kollektiv orangotango.

The layout and structure of this zine was inspired by «Access Questions for Self-Publishing» by Kaiya Waerea. Thank you for this beautiful resource!



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This workshop proposes a concrete engagement with abolitionist debates in two parts. First, we collectively map the spaces of control and oppression in our cities – where prisons are only the most visible architecture of a layered punitivist logic. Secondly, we envision possible abolitionist futures by engaging in a time journey to a society as we would like it to be.

2025

Mio Baragiola, Lotte-Mo Berkhan, Luana Capaul,
Luzia Graf, Ivana Jović, Julia Sahli, Paul Schweizer