

BLA

Equipment and support for simultaneous interpretation in multilingual gatherings

BLA is a non-profit autonomous collective formed and maintained by volunteers involved in grassroots activist groups and networks across Europe. We work with the principles of horizontal self-organisation, consensus decision making, as well as DoItYourself and open-source tools.

BLA wants to help reduce domination and power systems linked to language

We consider that every person is involved and actively part of different power systems which lead to oppression and privilege, based on social categories (such as class, race, gender, age, culture, language abilities, ...). We believe neutral positions do not exist in such power systems and that these dominations are present and active in group discussions.

Language is power

Because some languages were, and still are, brutally imposed by colonial power relations (like English, French, Spanish, ...), these languages and people who speak them still dominate in multilingual transnational meetings. Therefore people who speak 'minority' languages often don't understand well and/or don't feel confident enough to contribute to assemblies which use dominant languages. We are also aware that 'on the spot' interpretation techniques (consecutive interpretation, whispering) have limits and often involve longer and more tiring meetings. We want to use BLA's technical equipment in multilingual meetings in order to allow people to listen to and express themselves in a language in which they feel comfortable understanding and speaking.

BLA wants to help fighting domination linked to language abilities by making them visible and making equipment for simultaneous interpretation in different languages available

In practice we use two different techniques depending on the context. For small groups sound is spread through wires to headphones for participants through self-made electronic boxes called 'spiders'. For bigger groups interpretation is spread using radio waves, and each person can listen to the frequency of their desired language with a portable radio.

When we support an event we take care of bringing and managing the equipment, we help interpreters and participants to use it and to get familiar with simultaneous interpretation.

We do not provide interpretation skills: people organizing an event are the ones looking for interpreters. Interpreters do not have to be professional, volunteers can usually manage it well.

BLA aims to support horizontal, self-organized groups and collectives active in social movements and struggles; especially those opposing capitalism and struggling against domination and power systems

Contact us under bla@inventati.org or visit us at bla.potager.org