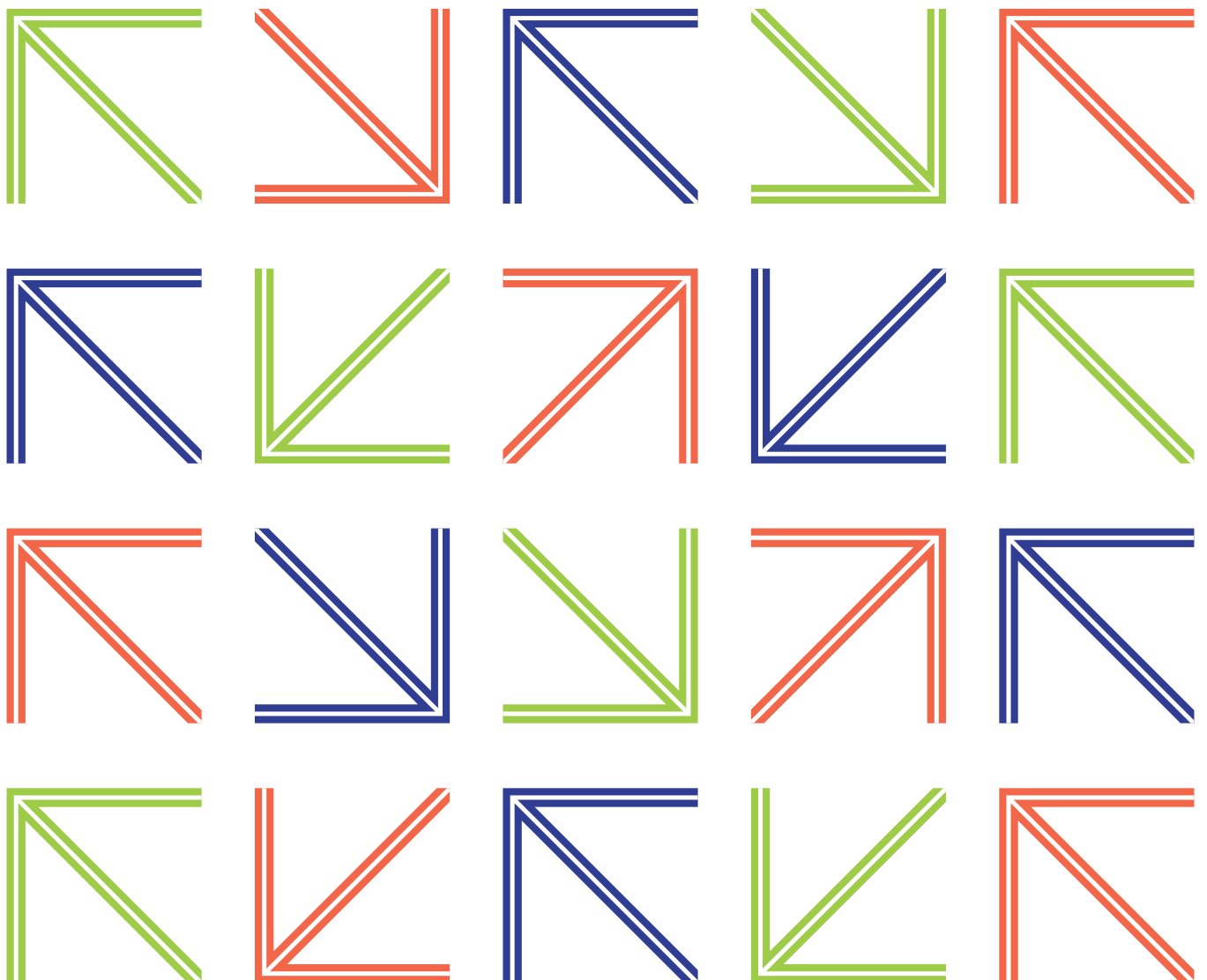# TOWARDS A LEADERFUL PEDAGOGY

Stories, learnings and inspiration by trainers, for trainers

TOWARDS A LEADERFUL PEDAGOGY

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→ Introduction

→ Getting Ready

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→ How We Want To Show Up

→ Conclusion

Introduction

This handbook is a beautifully subjective exploration of something we are referring to as 'leaderful pedagogy'. We wrote it as an accompanying tool for the curriculum we have been assembling to develop the practice of 'leaderful organising.' This was in turn a result of field research that our team did to survey a broad set of activists and organisers working in different parts of Europe about their understandings and practices around the concept of leadership. We imagine the target audience for this handbook to be other experienced trainers who are interested in how to use their training practice to foster a more leaderful movement for social and environmental justice.

Embodying 'leaderfulness'

The team who worked on developing these materials is a group of experienced movement-makers and trainers, who decided to write this handbook as a collection of our experiences. It brings together our general knowledge, as well as the experience we had together working as a training team. You will see we largely chose to write it in the first person and illustrated the points we were making with personal stories from our work.

In many ways, the method we used to write this handbook reflects the leaderfulness of our group itself. When we started this project, we did not all know each other. But over the course of meeting, struggling, studying, writing, and training together, we have grown into a functioning group. Each of us still retains our personal approach, but we have also found ways to weave together our different personalities, skills, and ways of viewing the world into a collective whole. It has not always been easy – we have had to work through conflict and disagreement at times – but in walking this path together, our sense of commitment to each other and the results of our shared work have grown.

A story shines through

Even though we have written this in multiple voices, a collective story does shine through. It is the common thread that unites the sections of this handbook. The story goes something like this: **leaderful pedagogy is about attending to the details**. It is about getting the space right and thinking about the physical and emotional needs of a group. It is also about making clear assessments of what a group needs to learn based on making detailed evaluations of where the group is stuck and what they need to move forwards in their learning process.

Leaderful pedagogy is **about what happens in the training space and what happens outside of it**. Training can happen in any number of places – formal and informal – and training needs to be rooted in a cycle of praxis[1] in which participants are doing, reflecting, and doing again – all while applying new insights and skills learnt.

Leaderful pedagogy is **about modelling the change we need to see**. We must put our values into practice in the training space, and we can only do that if we take the time as trainers to build 'the container before the container.' In other words, we must do the work of aligning our individual practice and approaches as trainers to ensure that we are modelling the kind of leaderfulness we want training participants to embrace.

And finally, leaderful pedagogy is **about seeking justice**. We are not creating leaders or talking about leadership in order to reproduce an oppressive system. We are doing it to subvert a system based on the misapplication of power and models of top-down, unaccountable leadership.

1 Praxis is a term used in many contexts, but in the educational context it is often associated with the work of Paulo Freire. In his groundbreaking book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire defined praxis as 'reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed.' Freire, P. (1970), Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Bloomsbury Academy, p. 126.

Our bio's or 'who-we-are-as-trainer-stories'

The trainers below have written and contributed to this handbook. They will take you on a journey based on their backgrounds and experiences. We wanted to highlight that in this handbook we speak with different voices. There is never one right way to train or facilitate. By sharing our personal experiences sprouting from our work, we hope to spark ideas and insights that can contribute to your work.

In our bios at the end of the handbook, we give you an idea of our pedagogical approach(es), facilitation styles and facilitation challenges. We also reflect on our organisational backgrounds, our experiences and our social rank.
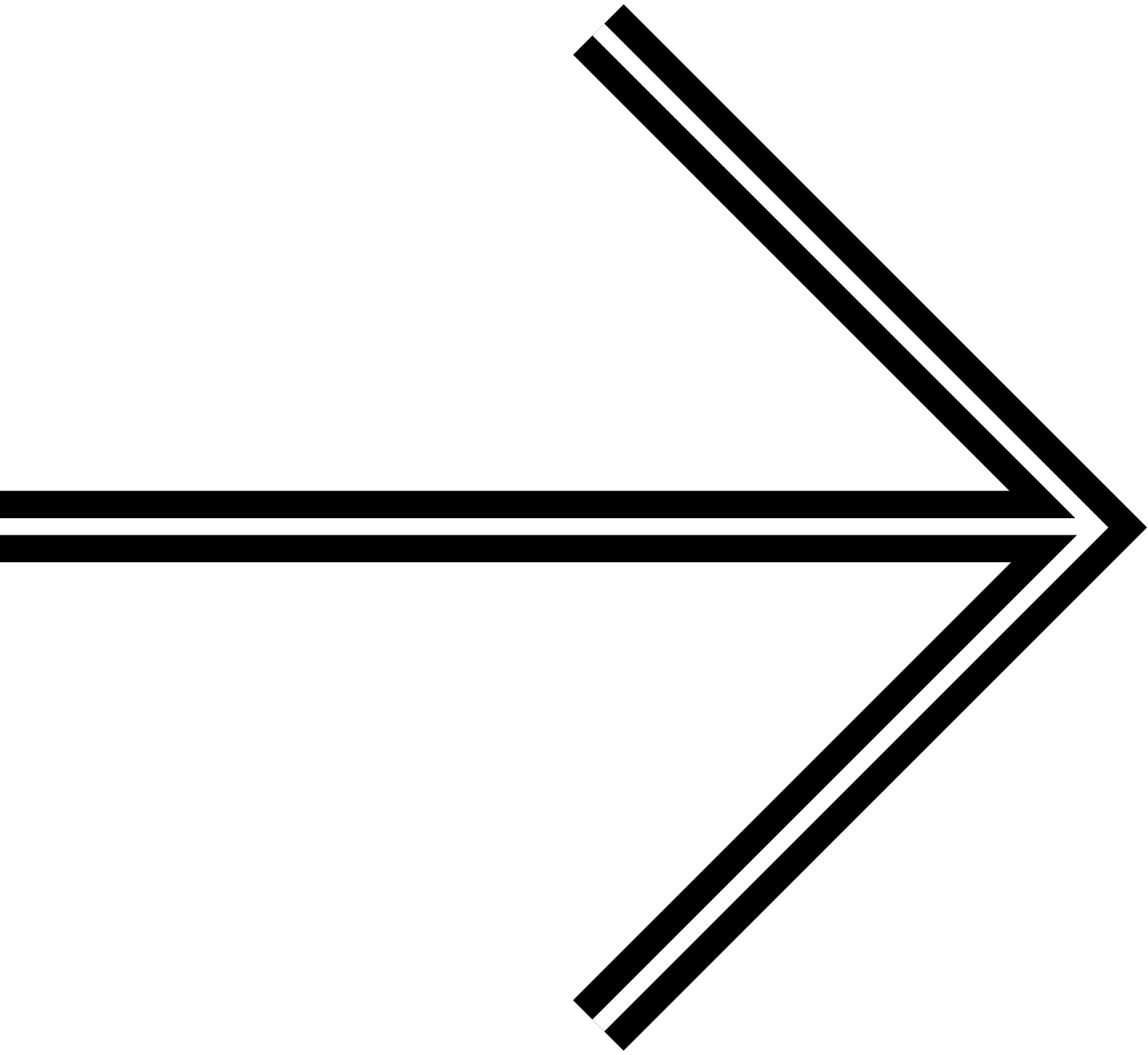
So, what will you find in this handbook?

This handbook is to be used as an accompaniment to the curriculum. If the curriculum is the 'what,' this handbook can be thought of as the 'how.' It covers a wide range of things to think about when planning a training – from different approaches, to identifying the learning needs of a group and designing training sessions, to facilitation styles and some of the theoretical approaches that inform our pedagogy.

Importantly, we also make clear that training is not an end in itself. As one chapter states, 'the revolution will not be workshopped.' In other words, training is a means to an end. The effort we make to take the long walk with people and organisations – through accompaniment, mentorship, and other forms of on-going support, is designed to help our people, our organisations, and our movements develop their capacity to unlock new power. And we do this by developing a leaderful approach to our work.

Each section in the handbook is signposted with a short blurb describing what you will find inside, and each section is followed by a set of questions that are designed to help you reflect on how to apply the content to your own work. Additionally, we really wanted to bring some of our own stories into this handbook, so you will find these sprinkled throughout the text, as well as longer stories highlighted in pull-out boxes.

We make no claim to anything here being a complete exploration of any topic. We are proud of the work we did together to create this, but we treat this handbook as an invitation to others to make their own contributions to the conversation on leaderful pedagogy, rather than it being the final word.

We hope this is helpful to your work. Happy reading!

Taking stock: mapping the learning community

Leaderfulness begins with the preparation of a training and thinking about our participants – how do we make sure this happens? This section challenges us to think about the preparation we do for a training as the first step in embedding leaderfulness into the experience. Preparation is about more than just a process of copy-pasting together an agenda and sending out an invitation. Instead, we need to apply a 'fresh pair of eyes' to every new training, in writing, in communicating our values and in our first contact with participants. Equally important, we ask ourselves how do we design trainings for different kinds of groups based on their existing (or lack of) relationships and the power dynamics between them?

The before-the-training process is my favourite part. By trying to mentally prepare myself and ensure that the vision of what I want to achieve is clear, I can make sure that I have laid out the foundations of the training – even when the participants are still an abstract thought. With time and experience, I have come to see that I am really good at preparing trainings. Before, as I have done so many of them, I automatised the before-process, which resulted in a simple copy-paste from best practices. However, **training preparation is about more than just a soulless plugging-in of pre-set training formats**. Ready-made formats are helpful, but incorporating evaluation and a 'fresh view' of each training can make it more beneficial, applicable and valuable to participants.

In the preparation phase, I try to adopt a 'fresh set of eyes', unburdened by my supposed experience with this material, and I ask myself: 'What is the goal I want to achieve?' The answer to this basic question will inform my next steps, which are, among others, the language I use when writing the invitation and the process of selecting participants.

In the organisation I work for, we try to **express our values by incorporating them into the way we train others**. Values and value-based framing is an important aspect of leaderful organising and I believe it should get the spotlight in the presentation of the training. For example, will asking for gender pronouns in the application form put people off if we are targeting rural areas where these concepts are not talked about as much as in activist urban areas? We had this discussion once, having realised that our trainings attract 90 women or non-binary or queer people, with fewer cis men. Some of them had left confused or weird comments in the application at the mention of pronouns. With our instinct fearing that this will put cis men off, we still decided to continue with it because it shows the type of values we wanted our space to uphold, and clearly sets the tone. Why not prepare people up front? This can and will be a turn-off point for some, or for others it can be a chance to step out of their comfort zone and into the learning zone.

In this way, I also try to model the expectations I have from participants. Am I looking for active participation or self-organisation? Am I looking for a certain level of knowledge about the topic? In my view, communicating expectations is as important as communicating the objectives of the training, which could lead to less of a culture shock or let down of expectations for the participants. I try to be as honest as possible, with the fewest number of words needed to explain what I offer and expect.

The selection process obviously depends strongly on how I initially answered the question of what I want to achieve. I am a fan of having a clear set of criteria upfront, but I have had moments of experiencing tensions regarding the need to gather either a 'homogenous' or a 'diverse' group of participants in terms of their backgrounds or experiences. The fact that I always try to keep in mind is that going to activist trainings is often a question of privilege.

Once our training group that at the time only had a year of experience, had a two-hour debate about which participant to accept for a training. Prior to this, we hadn't agreed or even talked about having a clear set of 'boxes' we wanted the participants to fill. The only box that existed was 'youth.' The budget was extremely tight, and it really came down to 'only one more person… but which one?.' One was a teenage leader of a student group with little experience but a lot of energy and access to certain structures. The other, was a person working in a sports betting shop, with no higher education and whose motivation was not as elaborated as the first one, but had the same level of enthusiasm. By selecting one of these two people, we were actually deciding on our approach, which in retrospect, should have been decided earlier. It came down to choosing between 'this person can hopefully influence others' and 'this training can hopefully make a difference in someone's life,' – an opportunity that might not be offered to this person again. Not having a clear set of guidelines of who we wanted to work with and what impact we wanted to have, we were extremely conflicted by this. Nowadays, even with an existing idea of criteria, I still find myself in this situation. We might never be able to comprehend or address all the intersectionalities of a participant's life, but I still believe that when there is a gut instinct about accepting someone who might not fit our self-made norm of the 'perfect participant', it might be worth having a discussion about it, and possibly even revaluating our own expectations and criteria.

Lastly, I try to remember that my **first contact with a participant** isn't when they are entering the training space and we are shaking hands. It's actually the first email I send to them. I believe that even virtually I can set an example by creating spaces that are welcoming, inviting and creative. Offering the chance to take co-ownership of what we are doing as a group is the first example of modelling leaderfulness. Participants might want to lead on workshops, hold open space debates, take over certain tasks or offer something else that I hadn't even thought about.

I have experienced situations where I felt like my offering of co-ownership was mostly symbolic and performative, as I didn't really expect something would be offered. I needed time to learn how to engrain this prospect into the essence of the training – to understand the beautiful possibility of making changes depending on the bursts of leaderfulness coming from participants. What I also do, whether in the application form, survey or email, is actively ask participants well in advance about their needs, leaving myself enough time and capacity to change the programme, logistical arrangements or even the venue if needed. After asking about their needs, I am transparent about what I can or cannot provide, which hopefully allows participants to make informed choices about their participation. If you have doubts on what would work best for someone, don't make assumptions, ask them.

Regarding the final composition of the group, one thing is certain: **I will encounter various kinds of group dynamics**, in particular in some sensitive moments in the group's 'forming' and 'storming' stage, which usually occur in the first two

days of the training (more on that in chapter 3.2.). Regardless of whether I'm working with a group of individuals who haven't met before or with a well-established group, what I find most important is to bring awareness to the life of that group. What backgrounds are the participants coming from? What sectors of the broader movement do they represent? Does the group consist of any non-binary people? Are the majority cisgender? Having answers to these questions is a starting point for designing leaderful trainings as well as anticipating and reacting effectively to challenges that may come up during the training itself. Time will reveal whether things will or will not come to fruition, but preparing possible mechanisms that allow me as a facilitator, and the group, to reveal these potential dynamics is important. It allows us to address them and navigate through the challenges, and can create important learning moments during the training process that contribute to a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

Personally, I find coming to an already existing group both powerful and challenging. I perceive groups as organisms and while working with the 'new group' I see this organism growing and developing. I feel that as a facilitator I grow together with that group. On the flip side, coming to an 'existing group' can lead to being easily absorbed by its dynamics, so special thought must be put into that.

As well as differentiating between 'new versus existing groups', in the preparation process I find it important to know what the **group's common identity** might be, as it might change my approach in content or facilitation style. It doesn't mean that I can't do the activities I had originally planned, but the way I approach them will be different.

The application form will tell me more about the profile of the participants; their needs and expectations as well as specific things to take into account. Running a training of trainers will mean that learning is more about developing competencies that enable the passing on of knowledge to future participants. There should already be some level of shared familiarity with the theoretical foundations of the content. If the topic is new, I tend to send reading materials beforehand and debrief each of the activities on a meta-level: how to practically use this tool in future training events. If I'm working with a group who might not share the particular 'training / content' vocabulary, I try to reduce or adapt the content to the group's background as much as possible. It might require me to do extra research specifically on the perspective of that group, or to ask a colleague who has more insight or experience, and to learn from them.

→ Do you always use a ready-made programme design, or do you adapt it and tweak it a bit every single time you do a training?

→ What do you accentuate when presenting your training? Do you use value-based framing?

→ What does your first contact with the participants look like? Do you only offer logistical information or do you already offer co-ownership of the space?

→ What information about your participants will be most useful for you to prepare for the possible group dynamics that might occur?
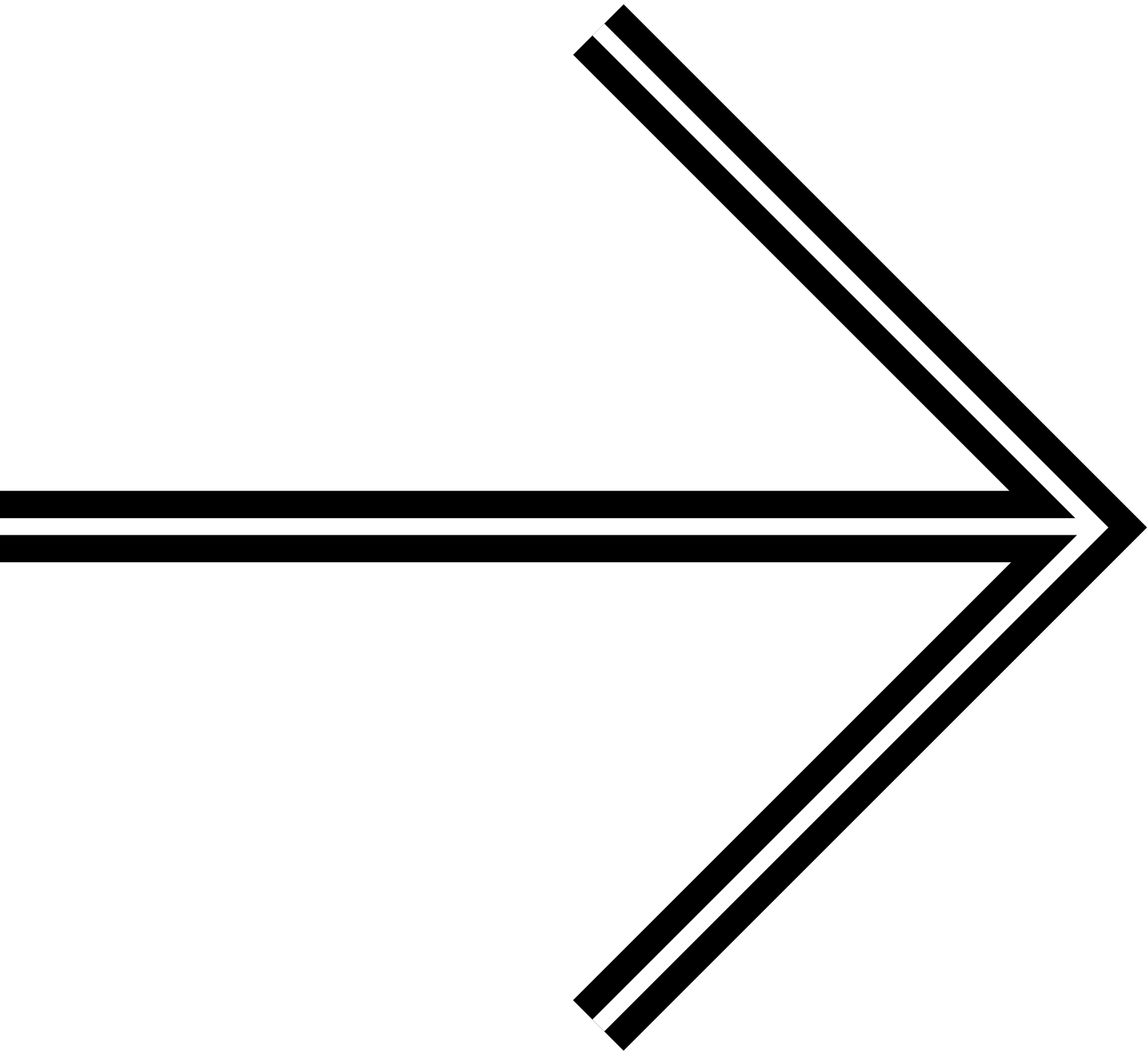
Homes do not emerge, homes are built: the practical arrangements

Beyond the basic checklist of things to think about as we prepare for our trainings, what are the things that might not be so obvious? This section dives deeper into the idea of preparing a training and training space by applying the framework of 'mainstream and margins'. It discusses the need for clear two-way communication with participants and how to meet the needs of different learners. And because, 'liberation starts in the small details,' this section also provides a checklist of things to prepare that may be less obvious or (wrongly) considered as being just 'nice extras.'

Over the years I have learnt that inspiring content only makes up half of the learning environment. **The physical space is as much part of your container building and a factor in providing a safe learning environment for participants**. I have too often thought about it as a matter of basic requirements and 'nice extras' (and I still sometimes slip back into this!). However, in practice, by not giving sufficient attention to the so-called 'nice extras' you might end up reproducing unhelpful mainstream standards. And as such, reinforcing these from the start of your training. The mainstream-margin framework (more on that in chapter 2.1.) guides my thinking, not only for training design but also for the physical space in which the training takes place.

As an example, as a person who is white, middle-class, secular, <u>able-bodied</u> and <u>neurotypical</u>, I may make choices around setting up a space that are guided by mainstream norms related to these identities if I'm not sufficiently reflective and aware of my conditioning. This mean that I might more easily overlook, not fully realise, or sometimes even push aside, the impact these choices can have on participants. For example: a space can reflect whiteness through the objects present in it (like books, pictures or posters only written by or portraying white people). Being non-religious, I might not consider the importance of having a space for prayer. In order to create more welcoming spaces for a range of identities, make sure that you inform yourself about what you might not have taken into account due to your specific social positioning. Another way of identifying your awareness gaps is to get **different perspectives from (your) co-trainers**. Inquire specifically in relation to your mainstream identities, as building awareness around those usually takes more time and training.

It is important to balance different needs and to take into account a variety of learning styles. For example, taking out all kinetic energisers to make the training accessible for people with limited mobility, would not meet the needs of kinetic learners (and there are loads of energisers that are accessible!). **Adapt exercises but don't assume what people can or cannot do**.

A co-trainer once pointed out how disturbing the sound of moving chairs on floors was to them. So now I have a kit of felt padding in my materials box. More importantly, the 'good' news is that even though my noise threshold might be higher, I also benefit from less noise, auditory input and enhanced acoustics. Liberation starts in the small details.

The start of a checklist of often left out elements:
→ Pay extra attention to various elements related to the sound design of the space (echoes, outside disturbances, …). Ask yourself the question: what do good acoustics mean in practice?
→ Check the lighting (fluorescent tubes for lighting can be very disturbing).
→ Think about potential smells (yummy food smells might activate stomachs and lessen focus).

→ Verify how the ventilation is set up (mechanic ventilation might create unwanted background noise).
→ Ensure that the space allows for private group comfort (see story below).
→ Check if toilets are marked as being gender neutral. You might want to put up a sign asking people to sit down while peeing.
→ Besides wheelchair accessibility, you can also check that the stairs are not too steep and that the terrain and space are easy to navigate.
→ Prevent visual overstimulation. It is best to start with flipcharts folded up. Clear out flipcharts that are not relevant to the current content over the break.

If you think this list is exaggerated, reflect on where this voice might be coming from. Instead of looking at different needs from a mainstream standard as restrictions or challenges, start seeing them as things that benefit everyone.

Private group comfort

During a training, we had a fixed room designated for our group. Once we were in the venue, we noticed that the place was very dark, took quite some time to heat up, and unforeseen repairs needed to happen right by the room. No other spaces were available for us to use. We started improvising and went outside to look for a spot. Luckily, thanks to the sunny weather conditions, this was an option. We moved from a porch to a patio close to the street. We felt the restlessness of the group. We had explained the difficulty of the situation to the participants and involved them in the problem-solving. Yet we had underestimated the impact of being in spaces where other people could just pass through or by. It was only when we settled in a space a bit further away in a natural setting, that we realised that it was what we needed. As a result of moving spaces, some participants named a feeling of lack of safety, which in turn affected the building of our group container. In order to rebuild a sense of safety and belonging which is usually achieved through settling into a space, we initiated a process to create a song and dance for our group.

> an analogue watch to support a phone-free environment
> hourglasses to support time sharing
> patch of felt padding to put under chairs and tables if needed
> blue-tag to stick flip-charts up
> post-it, tape, coloured markers
> inspiration list of energisers
> my little tool to celebrate risks taken, tasks done...
> beautiful trouble card deck or tarot / Dixit cards, to bring in unexpected guidance during check-in rounds
> cards to form groups / buddies
> literature to support you in your facilitation or that can serve as inspiration to participants
> a mobile speaker with a (spotify) playlist


This is a picture from my basic toolkit.
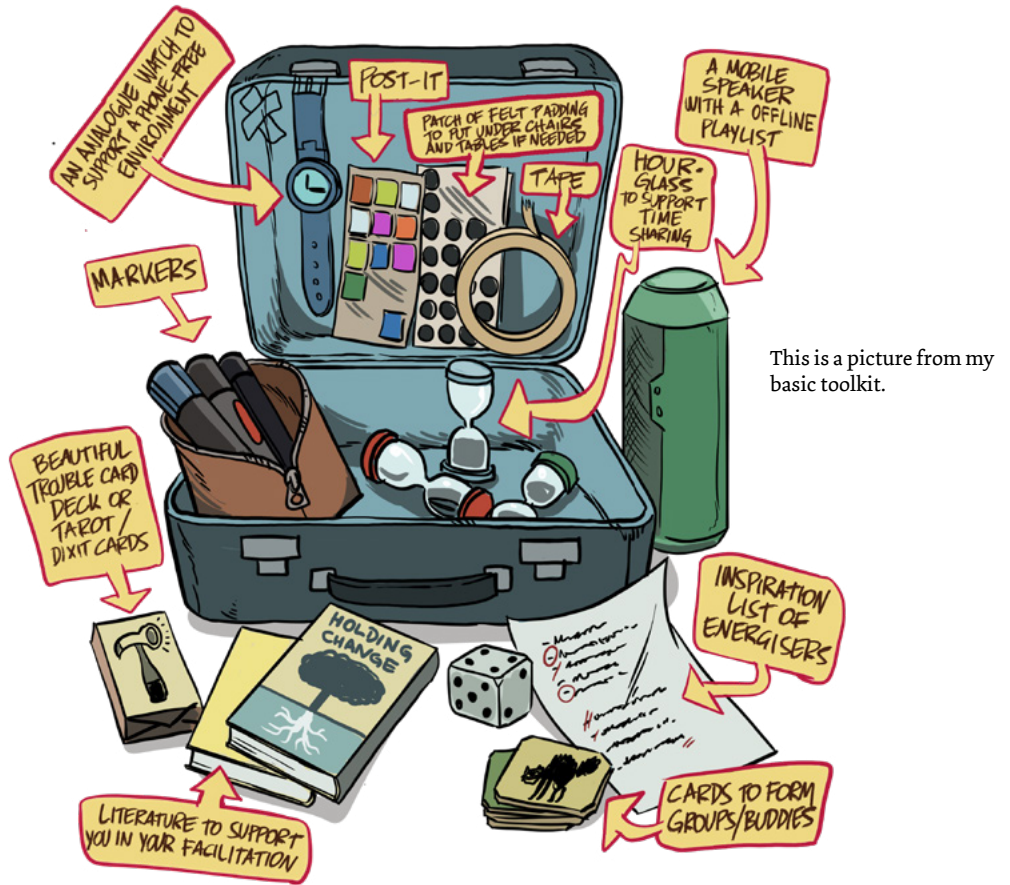
To welcome people into the space, I often do a diagnostic exercise in the beginning of the training to spot marginalised music styles. In the break I ask people currently in the margin to add a tune to the playlist. A detail like this might support them to feel seen in this part of their identity.

I also like to have printouts of back-up plans, previous training sessions and flip-charts to make emergent design possible and less stressful. You might also want to think of extra spaces or places to facilitate the exchange of informal learning on the spot. This can take the form of an empty flipchart to collectively draft a list of inspirational literature/music/movies... A designated spot for a pop-up library can also support this.

→ Am I aware of which identities I hold and how these might impact the choices I make on practical arrangements?

→ Do I have the habit of considering practical arrangements enough ahead of time so changes and choices can be made?

What about you? Think about it!
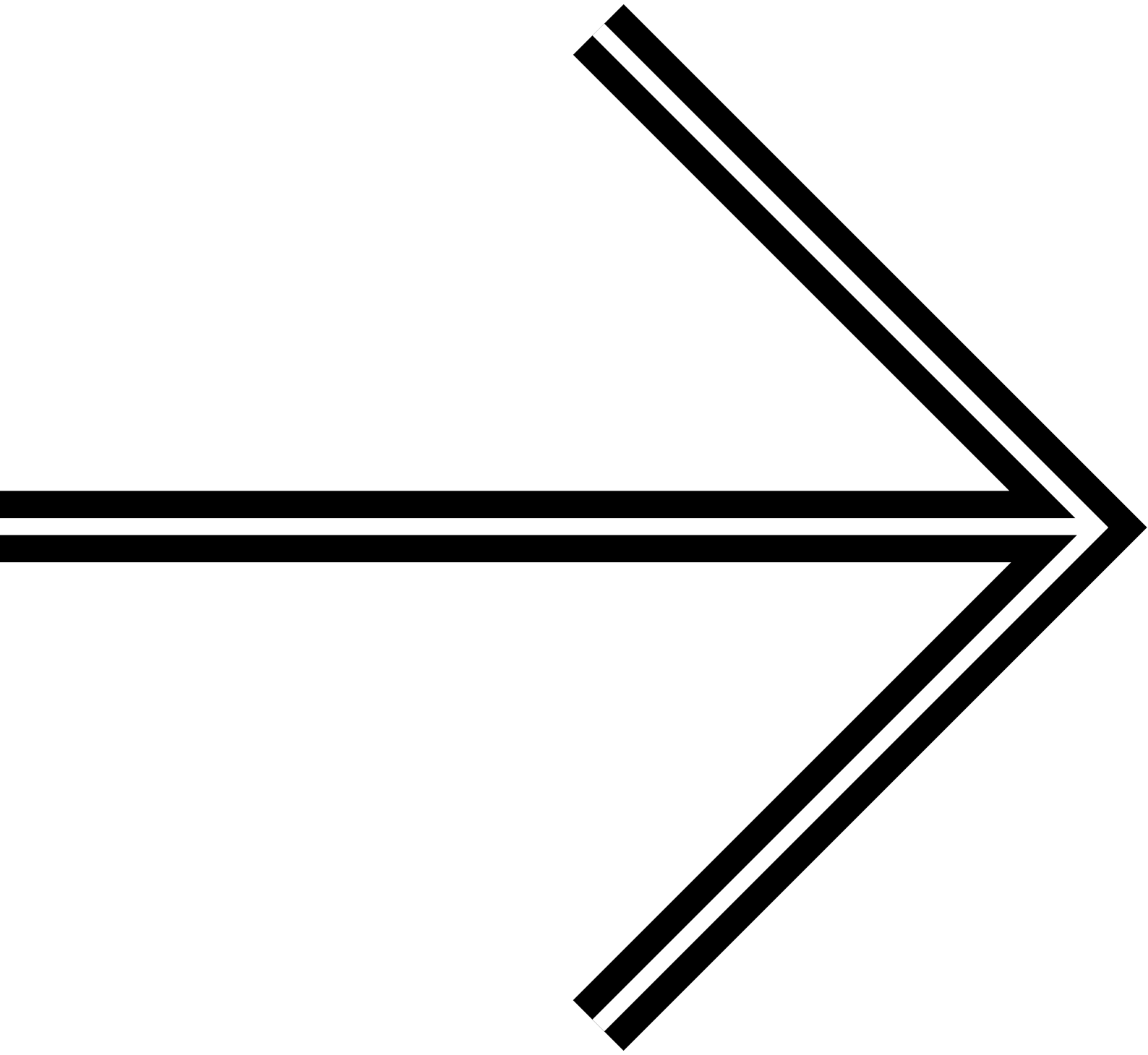
Unlocking power: pedagogies for liberation

What are examples of participatory education, and does all participatory education point towards liberation? This section gives an overview of a couple of important centres of thinking on the concept of participatory education methodology: the world of 'popular education' pioneered by Paulo Freire and 'direct education' developed by the US-based organisation, Training for Change. This section reminds us that we stand on the shoulders of many traditions, and that these traditions all lead us to understanding that a leaderful pedagogy is strongest when it offers both a language of critique (analysing the causes of injustice) and a language of hope (analysing possibilities for change).

As I dived into the wonderful world of adult education (and more specifically 'activist education'), I came across a seemingly never-ending stream of inspiring methodologies and tools. I was glad to find that there are different frameworks and traditions promoting participatory education. Some of them have been sources where I continue to replenish my practice, and others I have just encountered a few times at various crossroads while doing the work. Over the years, I have continued to build my own toolkit in close collaboration with many other trainers, learning together how to build many roads to leaderful learning.

Sometimes there seems to be an overemphasis on finding 'the right tool', but a tool is just a tool. Choosing 'participatory education' doesn't necessarily contribute towards empowerment or liberation, as people are often trained to participate in their own oppression. As Audre Lorde taught us: 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,'

Popular Education

I remember when I first heard of Paulo Freire. It was my father who gave me a little Dutch book on 'philosophers of the third world' when I was a teenager. It was a subject he had explored in his own youth and now he was passing on the torch. One of the five thinkers presented in this document was Paulo Freire. Freire was a radical educator who lived and worked in Brazil, and the tradition of popular education as a social movement practice is probably still strongest in Latin America. I found it quite complicated to be honest, and I would never have imagined the influence Freire would later have on my thinking.

What brought me back to Freire – five years or so later – was a growing discomfort between my activism in the climate justice movement around the time of COP 15 in Copenhagen (2009) and the realities of the struggles connected to this movement in the Global South. How could a privileged activist, like myself and many others active in the movement in Europe, contribute to 'climate justice' in a meaningful way?

But sometimes the right training offer appears in your mailbox at the right time. I attended a training in the UK that was heavily influenced by 'popular education.' I soon learned that this educational approach, as used in social movements, is commonly associated with the work of Paulo Freire – especially his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed.' The book is both a criticism of traditional education, as well as being a call for a different type of education, one firmly rooted in the real experiences of people and directed at their liberation.

Freire warned that **traditional education does not serve the interests of the people learning but has a clear goal to reproduce the system – with all its unequal power relationships – as it is**. To achieve this, traditional education is based on a method in which learners are considered empty containers to be filled with the knowledge of a teacher. Haven't we all been there? I was lucky to have

had many dedicated and generous teachers even in traditional education, but the system is clearly designed to make people a part of the world as it is, and not to have them question and re-make this world.

To subvert this oppressive model of 'banking education,' as he called it, Freire proposed an approach often described as 'problem-posing' education, where a teacher creates a 'code' representing the situation a community or group has to deal with. A code is a symbolic representation of a problem or injustice, which allows participants to 'read' and analyse the situation together. In doing so, they engage in a process of critical thinking and development of critical awareness, described by Freire as **'conscientização' (conscientisation)**. Freire sometimes talked about this learning process as learning to 'read the world' – which I love – and it has inspired me to use different methods to create codes in my own workshops, from developing a theatre scene, to using drawings, or even performing a rap song. Because even if you work in a country where most people can read the world, people sometimes need to be challenged to read the world around them critically.

I had to get used to the process of popular education in which the teacher does not offer ready-made answers, but rather supports a group in developing answers together. In the West we often use the term 'facilitator' for the role a teacher plays in this type of education. However, Freire himself was highly critical of the term 'facilitator' and what it implies. He asserts that the role of a teacher comes with a certain responsibility which goes beyond 'facilitating' a learning process. **Indeed, while one of the cornerstones of popular education is starting where a group is at, you don't want to end there**. Sometimes a group will get stuck and at those times it is crucial for a popular educator to challenge the group to move forwards.

Freire was not alone. There have been many – often unrelated – efforts to develop alternative and liberatory forms of learning and educating. Two examples include the work of the Highlander Folk School, which played a crucial role as a catalyst for empowerment and learning in the civil rights movement in the US; and the Modern School movement started by the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer in the early 20th century. But I want to talk about another: direct education.

Direct Education

In my view, in many popular education traditions, the outside world is recalled and represented by codes within the workshop space and learners are asked to collectively analyse them. In this method of developing liberatory strategies one could say that learners look outwards. From my experience, in direct education on the other hand, the focus is less on 'a political reading of experiences' / 'the world' outside the room and rather on what happens in the room. For this purpose, exercises and group challenges are used to elicit certain group dynamics.
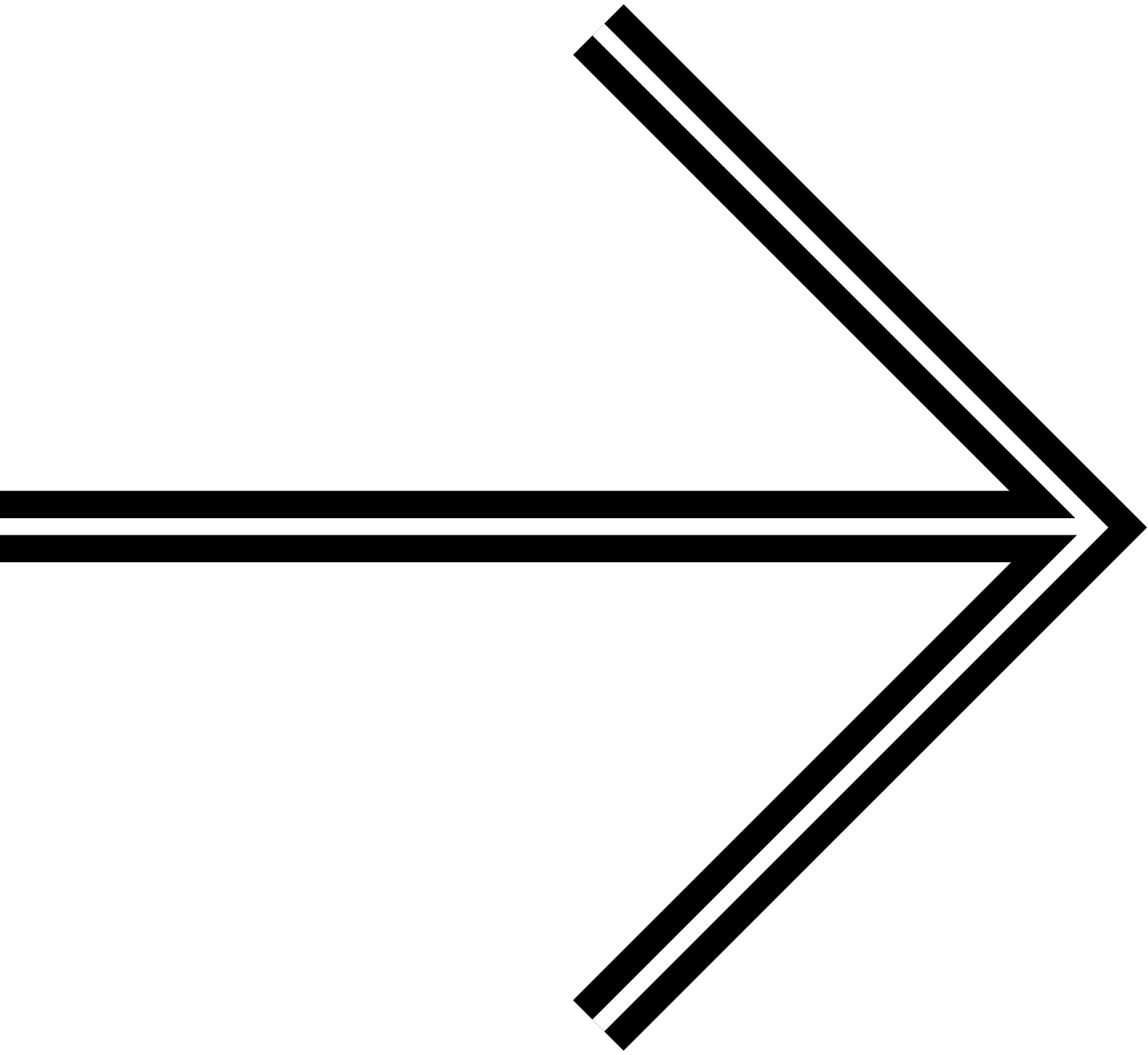
The US-based organisation Training for Change (TFC) has played a crucial role in developing the direct education method which builds on popular education traditions. In their words, direct education means education that directly confronts and challenges the current system of injustice – which includes how people are taught.

Noticing how 'mainstream and margins' play out and using this as 'living material,' rather than working from textbooks is a central practice within a direct education approach. Even though participatory training has become more widespread, this approach reacts to the fact that many approaches are still curriculum-centred - meaning that when a trainer designs a workshop, they review their own knowledge base to determine what they think is the most important information, then they deliver that information with the help of participatory exercises, and then tell participants what the answers are. In TFC's group-centred approach on the other hand, trainers see themselves as empowering people to discover their own expertise and that of each other. They believe that cross-culturalism and a commitment to anti-oppression shows up at every level of facilitation (the design, the exercises used, training content, etc.).Therefore, constant attention is paid to the dynamics of a group's mainstream and margins, and the facilitator needs to be ready to support the group to go deeper.

As the group dynamic, and what is alive within a group, is so central in direct education, one of the core practices in the approach is '**emergent design**': the process in which the training agenda – staying loyal to the learning goals – is highly flexible and adaptable. In an emergent design process, facilitators monitor the needs of a group and change course when things arise that need to be addressed. How does the group respond to conflict? Is there conflict in the room? What is coming up for the group in response to the workshop and what changes can be made to move the group forward toward their goals? We will develop this more in chapter 3.3.

→ What are the best participatory tools in your toolkit to draw out knowledge from participants? How do you make sure they are used in an empowering way?

→ What methods have you not yet mastered that would help you to support the people you work with?

→ Are there ways you can invest in your own skill set?

What about you? Think about it!

Holistic and transformative learning

How do we engage the head, the heart, the hands, and our intuition in the practice of a leaderful pedagogy? This section begins by placing different learning styles in the context of an approach to 'holistic learning'. That is, the kind of learning that accounts for the the rational, the feeling, the sensing, and the relational dimensions of who we are. It also centres the idea of leaderfulness in the learning process by examining the way in which individuals learn in the context of an interpersonal dynamic which requires a heavy emphasis on relationship and trust-building in the learning environment.
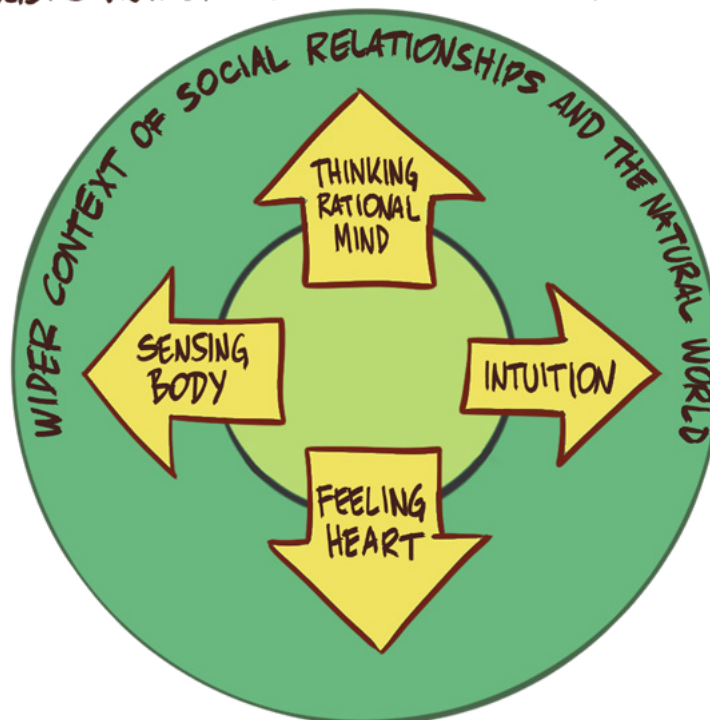
Throughout the development of my own training practice and that of the Ulex Project, we have always taken a holistic approach. We understand holistic education as being holistic at various levels, addressing the whole person and addressing the person in relationship with those around us and in relation to the wider world. It's the kind of learning that accounts for the rational, the feeling, the sensing, and the relational dimensions of who we are.

Being motivated to support capacity-building for wider societal transformation, has led me to giving more emphasis to the inter-personal aspects of transformation - aiming to help shift people away from overly individualised ways of seeing and acting. This approach recognises that the personal is nested within the inter-personal, that the inter-personal is nested within the socio-political, and that the socio-political is nested within the ecological. Learning and effective practices for transformation need to attend to each of these layers and to the connections between them.

HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE PERSON IN CONTEXT

WIDER CONTEXT OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE NATURAL WORLD

THINKING RATIONAL MIND

SENSING BODY

INTUITION

FEELING HEART

Taking a holistic approach, I try to design a balance of sessions that addresses all of the capacities that humans use to engage with our world – one that supports critical reflection, emotional literacy and the powerful learning that comes through the body and senses. All of this is most effective when it is pursued in solidarity with others. Leaderfulness is something that needs to be embodied between us. There is a transformative power in working with others. Having this in mind, I try to design training sessions that recognise the mutually reinforcing relationship between building collective agency and personal empowerment – balancing the complementary spirits of autonomy and cooperation.

Action-Reflection Learning and Holistic the Approach

Telling, showing and doing are all ways of learning. Each has their place. One of the most effective ways I have found to integrate them into training design is by using an Action Learning Methodology. It incorporates them all, but places emphasis on learning from experience by supporting deep reflection, analysis, and testing. In an activist education context, we have found that additional emphasis needs to be put on reflection, in part as an antidote to the activist propensity towards action. It can be useful to think about how sessions and workshops can help people move through the phases of the action learning cycle. We often start with reflection, taking experience to mean what people already bring with them. We will set up an activity that evokes an individual or group's experience which serves as the basis for their reflection and analysis.

Learning Styles

The holistic view of the self I described is derived from a Jungian understanding of the person. It can help us to plan sessions that meet a wide range of diverse learning styles. While we can all learn something from almost any type of workshop activity, each of us usually has one predominating or preferred style which will support our learning more effectively. Some people approach tasks or experiences either by watching others involved in the experience and reflecting on what happens (reflection / watching) or through 'jumping straight in' and doing it (active experimentation / doing). Others learn best through transforming experience
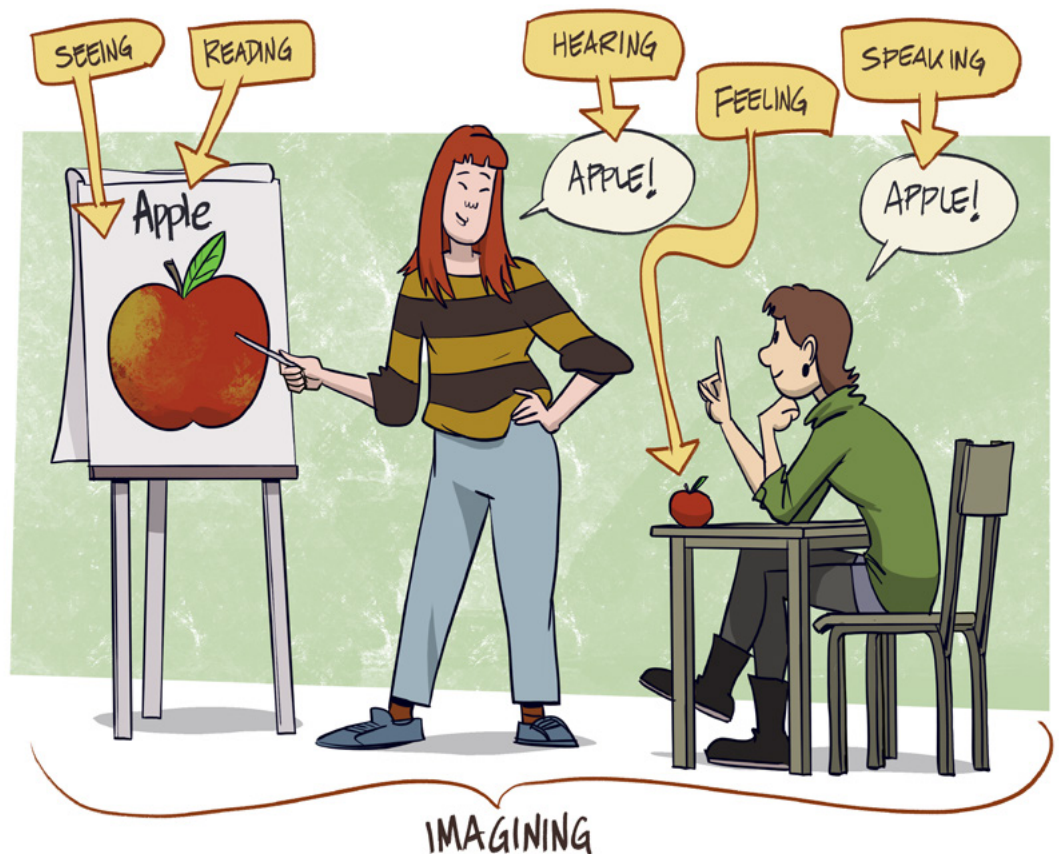
into something meaningful, gaining new information by thinking, analysing, or planning (analysing / thinking) or through experiencing the concrete, tangible, felt qualities of the world (experience / feeling). It is useful to design sessions and combinations of activities that provide variety that can meet different peoples preferred ways of learning. For more on this search *David Kolb Learning Styles*.

Other considerations for holistic and transformative Learning

Based on my own training experience there are a couple of additional comments that are especially relevant to holistic learning design.

DUTY OF CARE
A lot of learning for leaderful organising has the potential to elicit strong emotional responses and involve participants facing challenging experiences related to self and collective discovery. It is essential that anyone facilitating this work reflects on how well they or those around them will be able to hold and support other learners through such processes.

EMOTIONAL WORK
I need to consider my own capacity and the capacity of the group to hold challenging or strong emotions. It is important that I as a facilitator develop my own emotional literacy and consider my own capacity to hold the emotional response of others, bearing in mind the potential to be triggered and affected by the work myself.

BODYWORK, CONSENT AND TOUCH
When I work with sessions that involve 'embodied learning' and somatic activities, I try to give special consideration to various aspects of inclusion as well as approaching questions around consent, personal boundaries and touch.

→ What ways do you prefer to engage with the world? And how do these shape the way you design trainings?

→ What kind of work can you do for yourself and your training colleagues to strengthen your ability to hold spaces where interpersonal challenges can arise, and strong and sometimes difficult emotions can surface?

What about you? Think about it!

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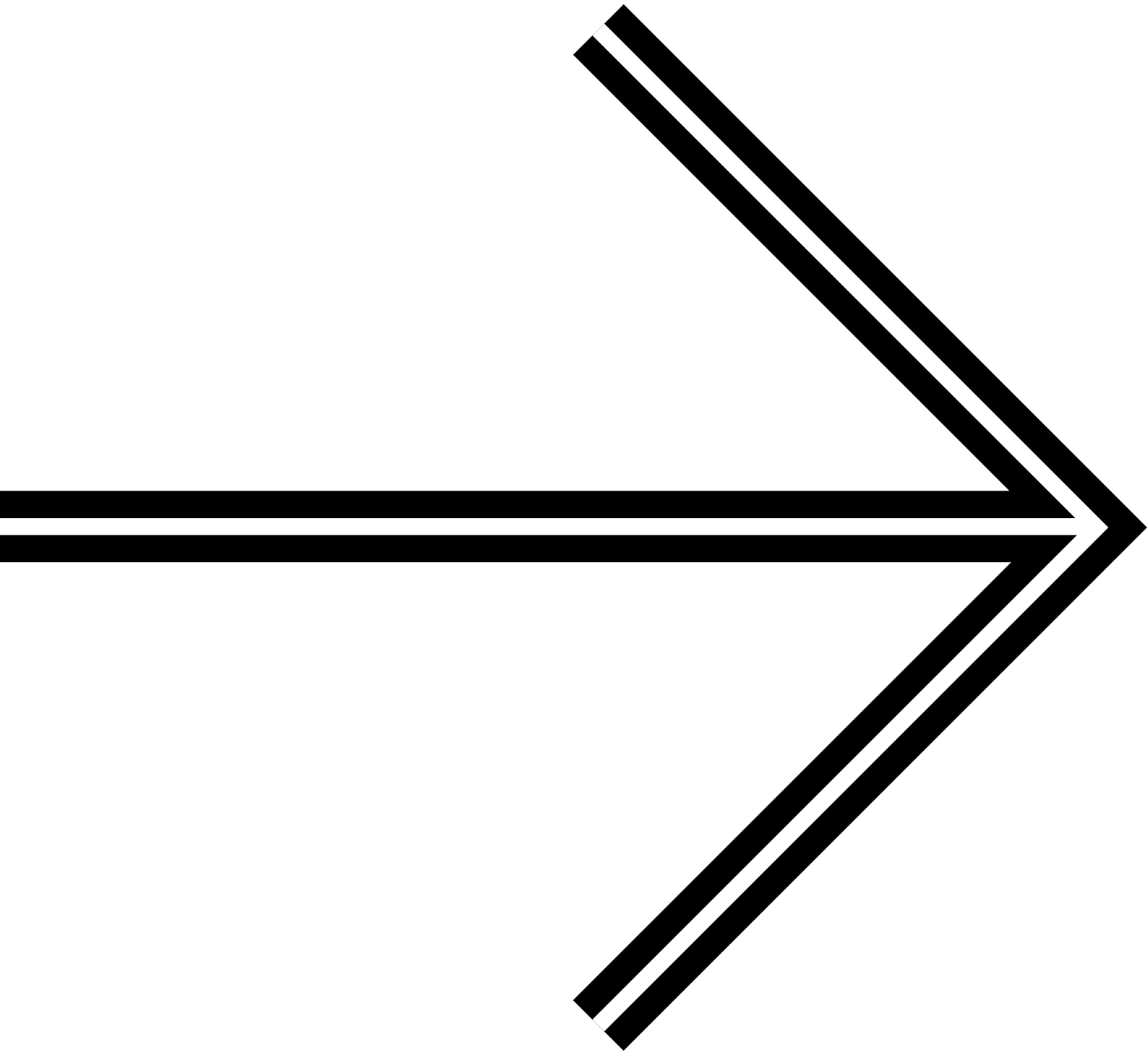
On the menu: learning objectives!

How do you determine what needs to be learnt in a training? And what role does training play in a cycle of 'praxis' involving learning and doing? This section dives into how one might think of developing learning objectives for a training, especially one that aims to embody 'leaderful pedagogy.' It is a process that involves evaluation, identifying contradictions, responding to feedback, and committing to the longer-term process of accompanying people and organisations on their learning journey. As the section points out, all of this is done in the context of supporting our movements to take more effective steps forwards in the direction of justice.

As much as I love the work of running trainings and developing political and strategic education curricula, in my experience it is not an end to itself. Rather, **training and education are tools we use to advance our movement practice.**

Paulo Freire famously said, 'what can we do now in order to be able to do tomorrow what we are unable to do today?'. I have found in my work with the European Community Organizing Network that a training – finely calibrated to the current learning needs of a group of organisers – is the thing we can do today. It can help movement leaders (and those in the process of stepping into their own capacity to lead) take huge steps forward in their work by opening conceptual doors that seemed firmly locked, or gain confidence in their ability to act. And **a well-executed training, with clear objectives, can translate into real and effective action on the ground.**

Learning objectives can take many forms, from identifying a key competency a participant should have to naming a 'soft skill' or change in attitude that would help people advance their movement work. I have found the process of identifying learning objectives to be an emegent one, based on dialogue.. In other words, I do not assume I know what the objectives should be before I start. 'Training' itself can take many forms. Sometimes it happens in a formal sense, in a room with people sitting in a circle. Sometimes it happens one-to-one in something that we more likely might call mentorship… or even just 'hanging out.' In my experience, training happens on a spectrum, but the instincts to identify the things people need to learn are the same. The work of turning that insight into 'learning objectives' is similar, whether one is developing a weekend-long training for a group of people, or if one is just hanging out with people at the weekend.

I see the deep injustices in the world, and I recognise the ways in which profound power imbalances in society lead to those injustices. I feel called to keep walking towards a vision of the world as it should be, not settling for the world as it is. Therefore, the work I do as a trainer – whether in a formal or informal context – is always moving in that direction. When you strip away everything else, for me the idea of identifying 'learning objectives' is simply about finding the thing that we need to learn today so that we are able to do more in our struggle for justice tomorrow.

Recently, I was invited to run a training for a group of organisers from Poland who were thinking about how to engage in the political process. With elections coming up in their country, the participants – all of whom were already engaged in community organising projects in their region – were eager not to sit the election campaign out. At the same time, they held a lot of negative emotions and contradictory ideas about what it meant to be involved in the political process.

So my first step as a trainer was to meet with the organisers of the training to ask what they hoped to get out of the event. What power did they hope to build? What questions were people wrestling with? Where were people getting stuck? Once I had an idea of this, I was able to develop a training that spoke to those questions, and – more importantly – got the participants themselves to talk deeply and openly about those questions.

Making evaluations, identifying contradictions and setting learning objectives

Part of the work of building a leaderful movement is evaluating our organisations – whether they are small collectives or large organisations with staff, or anywhere in between. When the authors of this handbook began the process of developing a curriculum and learning framework on leaderfulness, the first thing we did was field research. We set up interviews with a wide variety of activists and organisers working in various movements and types of organisations all over Europe. We asked people what came to mind when they heard the words 'leader' and 'leadership,' and if the term 'leaderfulness' meant anything to them. We recorded those interviews and we compiled the findings into a study which provided the foundation for this project. This is a clear example of a formal evaluation process of the movement at a pretty broad scale.

But even if this had been a small, informal process, the thing that I am always listening for is where the contradictions are. Where are the parts where the door squeaks and doesn't quite close? What are the things that come up for people when they say something but it doesn't quite feel right – even to them. In other words, where are people struggling?

I then **move from this process of pinpointing specific contradictions to mapping them**. One of the ways I have done this is to evaluate an organisation based on the 'principal contradiction' under which it is labouring. Then I map out the related contradictions. In other words, what is the overarching thing that people are struggling with, and what are the different ways this manifests within the organisation's internal practice and culture as well as the work it does in the world.

To be clear, I don't look for contradictions in order to 'admire a problem,' rather, I do this because contradictions can lead to a new understanding. For example, if

people are struggling with the contradiction between their aversion to the idea of 'leaders,' but at the same time they are feeling stuck and disempowered by the fact that their organisation is lacking internal accountability and verging on dysfunctional – all because of a desire to reject a negative image of 'leadership' – perhaps there is a synthesis of these two contradictory positions that can unlock a new way of doing things. In this project, we have identified one possible synthesis of these two ideas as being something called 'leaderfulness,' or 'leaderful organising.' As trainers, we then set about developing learning objectives that would help people in our trainings on leaderful organising to deeply embody this concept such that it could show up in their work.

I am strongly biased towards developing learning objectives that help people drive towards their own understanding, not the synthesis that I or someone else would impose on them. This does not mean that I don't come in with a goal, or no clear idea of the shifts that the movement should make. It also does not mean that as a trainer I am against making presentations or doing things "from the front of the room." But it does mean that I am biased towards developing training materials that create the container for people to ultimately come to their own conclusions and feel a sense of ownership and agency.

To conclude, leaderful organising is about both creating more leaders and enhancing the quality of collective leadership within our organisations and our movements. **Setting the objectives for what our movement needs to learn in order to get there is a practice of democracy and is rooted in deep listening**. We are looking for the places where our movement is struggling – the contradictions – and we are pursuing a new synthesis from these contradictions that can help us unlock new power in our struggle for justice. As practitioners committed to changing the world, we must be ready to go on the long walk and struggle together with the people we train – each with things to learn and with things to teach.

→ Think about a time when you did not stop to make an evaluation of the work you have done in the past. What effects did this have on your organisation?

→ If our definition of a contradiction is two tendencies that pull your organisation (or you personally) in two different directions, what is the main contradiction shaping your work right now?

→ How would you design a training to explore that contradiction and possibly lead towards a new synthesis for your work? How would you define the objectives of that training?

What about you? Think about it!

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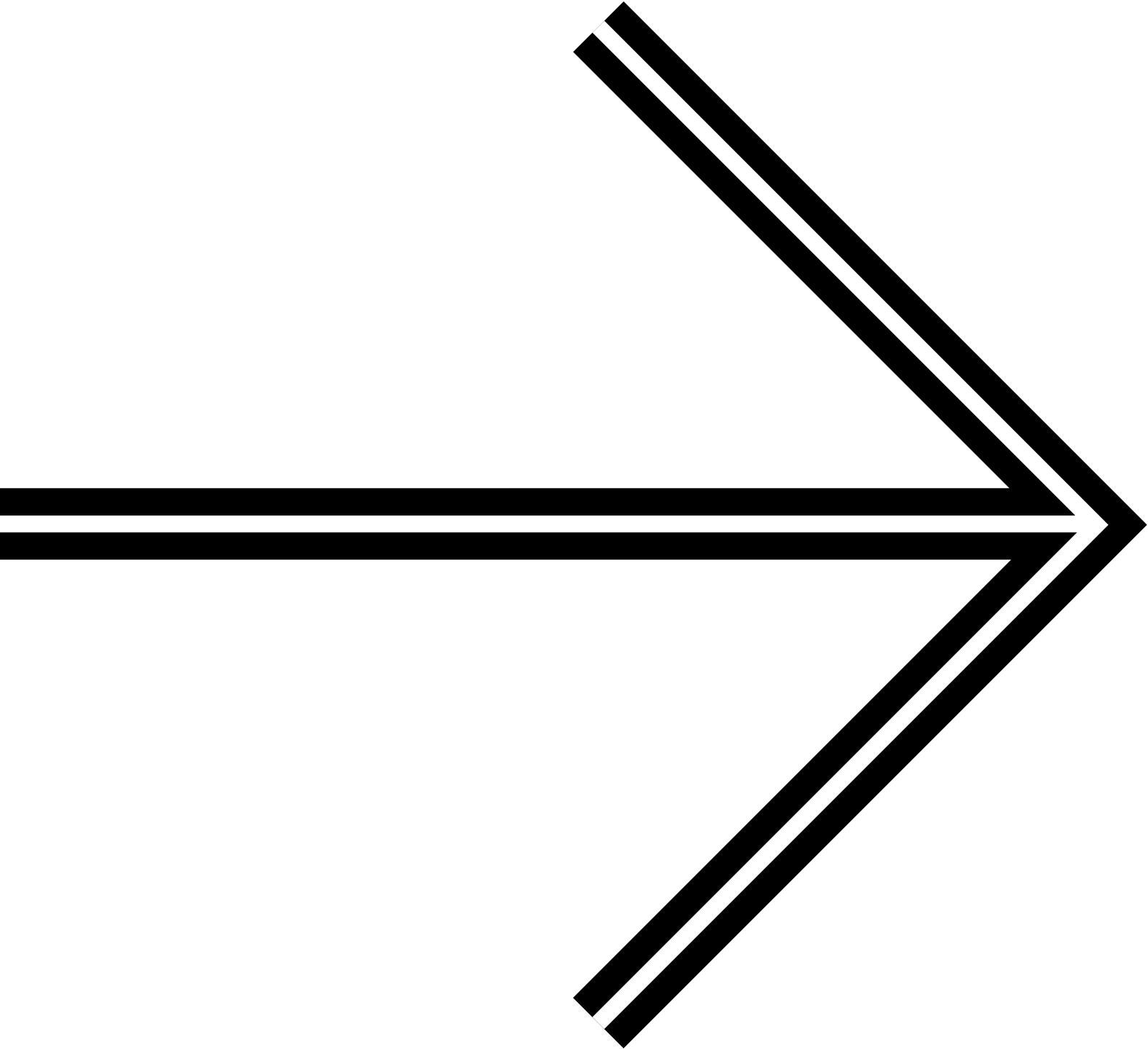
Case study: centring learning needs

What assessment tools and frameworks are there to evaluate learning needs for a leaderful training? This section makes clear that 'leaderfulness' is not only a personal quality, and so trainings designed to develop leaderfulness must have in mind the full spectrum where change needs to happen: at the individual, organisational and societal levels. Achieving an impact at the societal level is made possible through personal and organisational transformation, so when planning a training learning assessments should focus on those levels. In this case study, we offer an example of how the authors of this handbook tried to take into consideration learning needs and learning objectives while designing and delivering a training together on the topic of Leaderful Organising.

Based on the work we've done at the Ulex Project over recent years, we've found that effective learning for leaderfulness needs to be grounded in addressing specific challenges and needs. As a kind of transformative learning, supporting changes for individuals, groups, and their movements, it needs to be concrete rather than abstract and merely theoretical. This means that we make efforts to build into our training design space for learners to reflect upon and analyse their needs and the challenges they face. That enables us to build learning journeys that are relevant and transformative.

This case study shares the multi-layered competency framework created by the authors of this handbook for a training on the topic of Leaderful Organising. We present it as one of the tools for both trainers and learners to practice reflection and make assessments of a group's learning needs. In our design of the training, we wanted to include **a way to assess mid-course on how to proceed with the content for the second half of the programme**. Our goal for the first half of the training was to familiarise participants with the ten key competencies and qualities that we defined as supporting leaderfulness in our movements. The way we see leaderfulness is that it involves the development of personal qualities, and it is something that needs to be embodied collectively, as a quality within our groups and movements.
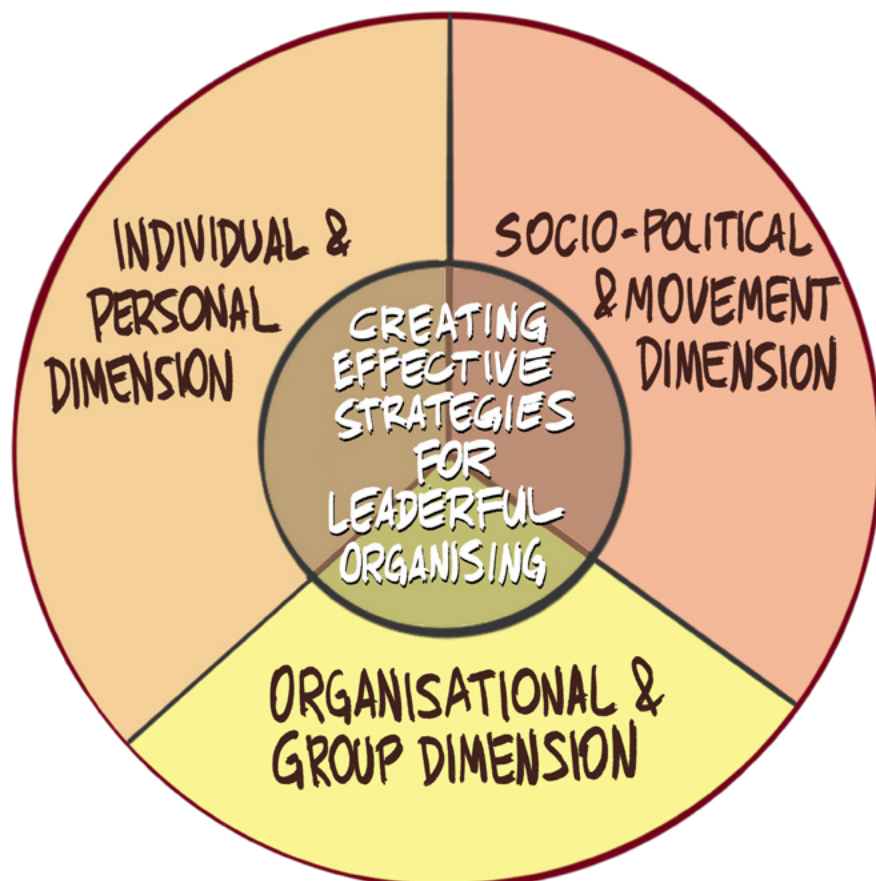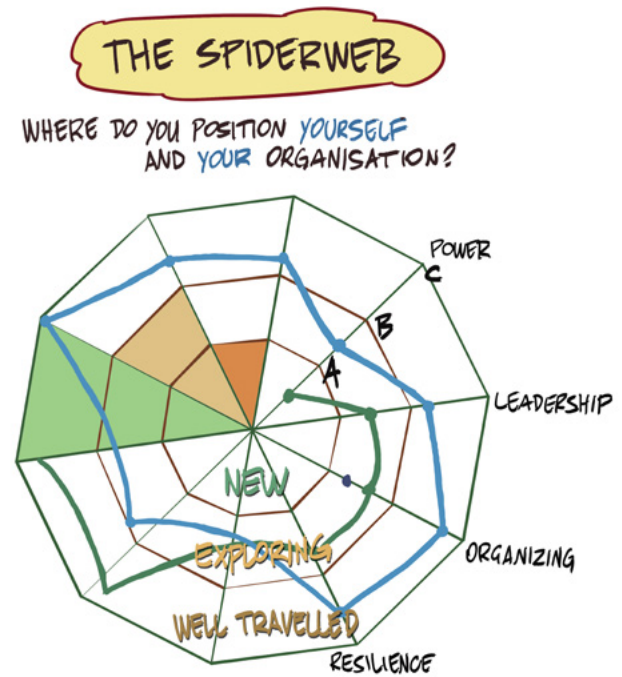
We find that addressing challenges and having an impact at the social and movement level is generally mediated through changes at the organisational level. So for this training we designed **a tool to support learners and their organisations to reflect on their needs in relation to leaderful organising**.

We began by trying to understand **what personal and collective qualities were needed to support a leaderful approach to organising**. This led us to devise a two-layered framework that identified, on one hand, the personal qualities, skills, and understanding that are needed, and on the other hand, the collective practices, structures, and culture that support leaderfulness.

This brought us to identify ten key areas, each with a personal and collective aspect (A short description of each of these competence areas can be found in our competence framework). These are:

Competency area	Personal dimension	Collective dimension
Power	Awareness of power and privilege	Distribution of power and influence
Leadership	Embracing leadership	Leadership development structures
Values	Grounding in values	Active solidarity practices
Responsive action	VUCA Skillsets (Volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous)	Systemic approach and VUCA practices
Resilience and Regeneration	Personal resilience	Regenerative practices (including a culture of care)
Transformative Collaboration	Skills for collaboration	Collaborative structures and practices
Organising	Building relationships	Building power
Strategy	Strategic mindset	Long-term vision and plan
Ongoing learning	Self-reflection and learning	Collective reflection and learning
Communication	Communication skills	Structures and practices for including all voices

We then developed questions related to each of the different areas to support the reflection by participants. They could then map their 'score' onto the self-assessment tool such as this:

THE SPIDERWEB

WHERE DO YOU POSITION YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANISATION?

POWER

LEADERSHIP

ORGANIZING

RESILIENCE

NEW

EXPLORING

WELL TRAVELLED

We supported their mapping by showing an example of a filled-out map: Individual:
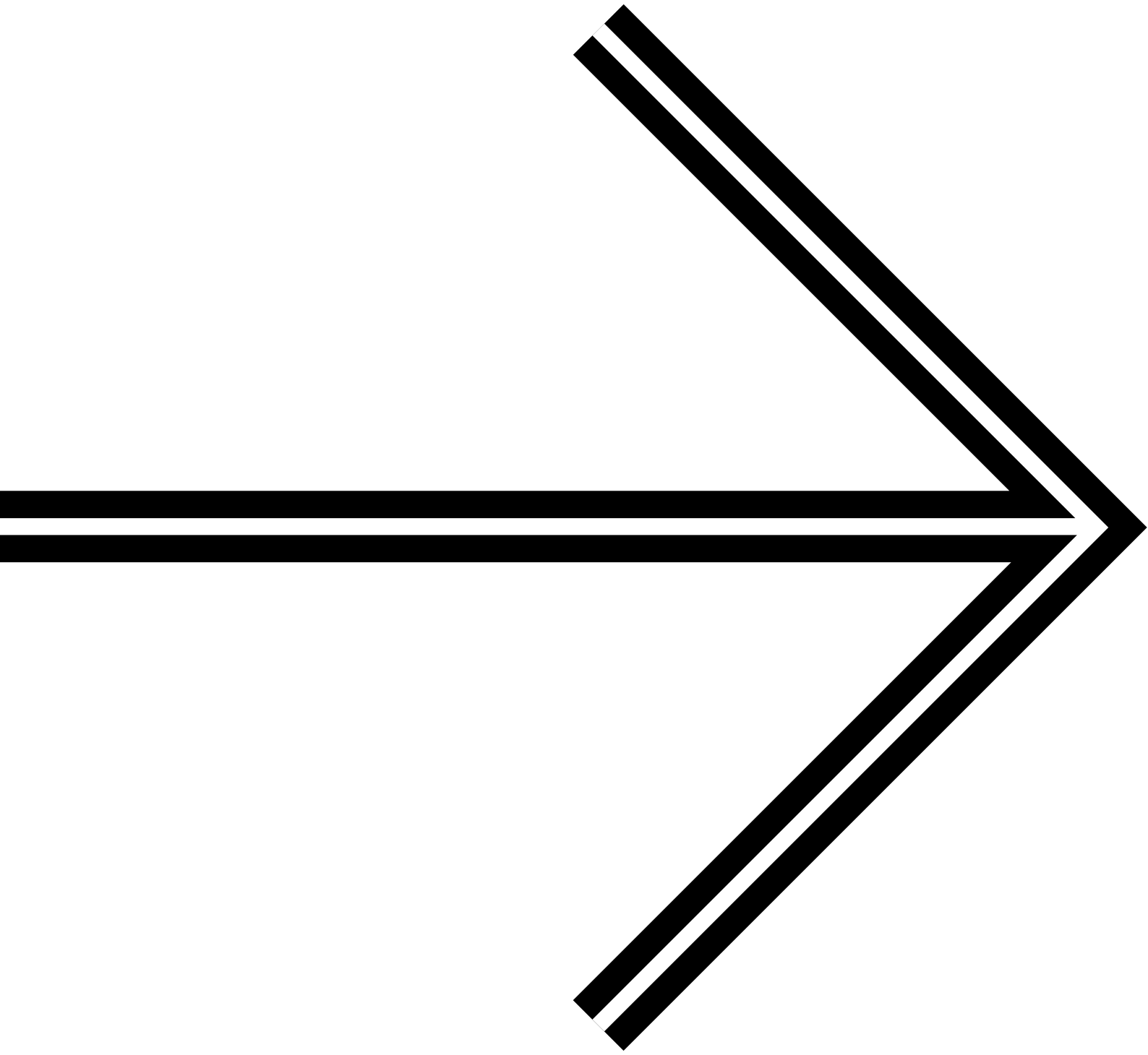

Layered for individual and group or team:

With the information we gathered from these assessments we were able to make decisions about areas of priority for the training. At the same time, the exercise offered an important opportunity for learners to reflect on themselves, enhancing their self-awareness and their organisational awareness. Additionally, we made some time after the personal reflection for them to share these web diagrams with people from the same organisation. Here the goal was to help them to build an understanding of the challenges they face, and the aspirations they share collectively.

→ Do you find these 10 competency areas and this 'spiderweb' self-assessment tool useful?

→ How do you generally evaluate the needs of the participants at the midpoint of a training?

→ Do you offer the participants some other way of mapping and reflecting on their journey so far?

What about you? Think about it!

The building blocks: session types

What are the components that make up a training? This section provides an overview of the kinds of sessions that one should include in a training design, with a short description of the beauty of each of them. It covers the importance of having sessions that allow people to warm up and build the 'container' to hold the group's learning, as well as to exchange, evaluate, plan and experiment. It also introduces the example of 'action learning groups,' a form of group work that facilitates deeper peer learning and sharing among participants.

I love adapting the basic skeleton of a training to the peculiarities of a specific group and context. What sessions to include? As trainers, we're like magicians mixing recipes, knowing that every single session type is bound to inspire some form of leaderfulness on an individual or group level, be it theoretical, emotional or practical. My main inspiration for my training skeleton, that I've been adapting ever since, came from one that I've first encountered at a training at Ulex. The authors of this handbook have put together a similar one during the aforementioned training on 'Leaderful Organising'.

Before getting into it, it's important to highlight the one thing I believe to be the queen of all sessions: a nice, long break. People need that sweet, informal time. Without free time to relax, eat, talk about nonsense or stare blankly at the flowers in the garden, the emotional and intellectual information they've gained from other sessions might become overwhelming. Several times I have noticed that 'more free time' was almost always mentioned in evaluations of past trainings.

Never underestimate the power of a break! Want to sacrifice the break for more in-depth discussion on oppression because 3 hours weren't enough? Hmmm, could work, but tricky!

When the need for a break comes into conflict with the need to get real

I was co-facilitating a session where a discussion of oppression had stirred up emotions and some pretty deep conversations. As facilitators, we were being mindful of the time and were trying to end the session as scheduled so that people could have a break. However, our efforts to do that were perceived as being uncomfortable given the topic and trying to prevent things from getting real. In retrospect, a better way for us to have handled the situation would have been to be more transparent with our thinking and just say something along the lines of 'we know this is a really important discussion, and at the same time we are holding the importance of making sure you get a break. One option is that we go for a bit longer if people agree and then do xyz with the break time and the next session.'

9:30 – 10:00	MORNING SESSION
10:00 – 10:30	DAILY CHECK UP IN BASE GROUPS
10:30 – 12:00	CONTENT SESSION 1
12:00 – 12:30	BREAK, SWEET INFORMAL TIME
12:30 – 14:00	CONTENT SESSION 2/GROUP WORK/EVALUATION SESSION
14:00 – 16:30	LUNCH BREAK, SWEET SWEET INFORMAL TIME
16:30 – 18:00	CONTENT SESSION 3/GROUP WORK/NEXT STEPS
18:00 – 18:30	BREAK, SWEET INFORMAL TIME
18:30 – 19:00	BASE GROUP TASKS OR REFLECTIONS

This is how a spacious daily schedule (with sufficient break time) can look like in a larger training.

Besides breaks, and the obvious 'main sessions' that carry the thematic content of the training, here are some other building blocks of a training design:

Getting-to-know-each-other session

Regardless of whether I'm doing a half-day or seven-day training, this is always my opening session, because including some tools at the start can 'make or break' the container we are building to make participants feel comfortable. Regardless of whether the participants already know each other, have met briefly, or are complete strangers, my recommendation would be to never skip this session. From experience, the participants are more eager to step up and lead on certain discussions or processes that entail opening up or being vulnerable in front of others after they have had the chance to chat with everyone on important or unimportant matters. I think carefully about the questions and games I'm presenting to the group in this phase. There is a balance to be struck between activities that are safe enough but also incite the mind and energy of both extroverts and introverts.

Base groups

Including time for people to meet in base groups in your design can provide an extra level of trust and relationship-building between participants. It also supports learning and/or the delegation of tasks, which increases the sense of ownership participants feel over the training space. I usually include base groups when the training is longer than 2-3 days. I save space for them to meet regularly, every day, at the same time. However, be aware that randomly dividing new participants into base groups could get tricky. Several different unhealthy dynamics can play out (based on different identities, experiences, habits, insensitivities…). I try to think ahead based on the information I have of participants beforehand. The groups'

tasks can be adapted to the context: from general maintenance and cleaning tasks, to emotional and creative ones. What I find most important in base groups is that they collectively evaluate each day of the training, forming circles in which every person gets to share how their day went.

Morning sessions

I have found that it's very beneficial for the group to provide a time slot at the start dedicated to practical concerns (which can be repeated daily). Morning sessions are typically laid-back. I sometimes need to remind myself to take it easy and shake up the 'warden' energy that peeks in whenever I see people missing from the morning circle. It's ok, let it be… This session is about creating spaciousness to focus on learning. It allows participants to settle into the space and relaxes them for the next sessions by making sure they express everything they need to and know what is in store for them later. I like to get creative with how I structure a morning session. It can be a time when base groups perform or when a simple game is played. I would advise leaving room for questions like: how did you sleep? How do you feel? Do you want to share something with the group? It's valuable that they verbalise how they are feeling that day and if they need anything.

Group work sessions

Apart from letting me off the hook as a facilitator for a couple of minutes or hours, I find group work to be essential for practising and embodying leaderfulness. Group work nurtures the idea that we all possess knowledge and initiative and can learn and be inspired to think or act by others.

Example of group work – Action learning groups

As trainers we might forget that a lot of the knowledge in the room is in the experiences and expertise that participants bring along. And even when we remember, we need to look for opportunities to decentre our role.

One deliberate way of doing so is by setting up a space for what we call 'Action Learning Groups'. An action learning group is a small group of people that come together to explore specific cases. Every case is a challenge actually faced by one of the people in the group. An Action Learning Group can be formed within an organisation, thereby offering a way to become more familiar with each other's work and engage in peer learning, or it can consist of members of different groups that are committed to learning together.

There are different processes that can be followed by an Action Learning Group, but all involve at least a few clear phases: (1) a 'case giver' presents a case and challenge; (2) others in the action learning group ask questions to make the case clearer; (3) a new set of questions aims to help the case giver gain a fresh perspec-

tive and new insights. Although immediately resorting to advice is generally explicitly avoided, in some formats there is an opportunity to offer advice later on in the process while other models steer clear from any form of advice. Often the case giver will sum up any new insights or next steps at the end of a process.

As a trainer, or as someone who is mentoring an organisation, the people we are working with can start to rely too heavily on our contributions. It can have the effect that they don't trust their own strategic judgements and instincts about what they need to do next. If persists, it is the opposite of a leaderful pedagogy! Therefore, the deeper message embedded in the Action Learning Groups is that participants are ultimately responsible for their own learning and their own work. They develop a sense of confidence that they can be protagonists in the story – and to see this happening as a trainer is to see leaderfulness sprouting up like the new green shoots of spring!

In a training that forms base groups, a one hour time slot could be reserved in the program for base groups to try out action learning together, with every participant of the group being the case giver for a day.

Evaluation session

We've frequently had to cut time because of bad time management and the evaluation session would typically get sacrificed for more content or group work. By not getting feedback from the participants, we miss out on an opportunity to learn ourselves as facilitators. My tip is this: similarly to the break, which is holy, don't cut time for evaluations in the training design!

Next steps sessions

This session is another one that tends to be forgotten but is a crucial part of the participants' learning curve. While designing it, I try to focus on different aspects of what we've gathered as important to take home and apply to our lives and circles. I usually use a type of meditative exercise in the beginning, to summon back the *a-ha* moments. Then, through journalling, goal setting and sharing, we summarise concrete steps to take. The focus can be internal or external such as 'What do I want to introduce at home?' 'What do we believe would be beneficial for our group' or 'What changes will we propose when we get back home?'. If more people come from the same group or movement, it is useful that they have a chance to reflect together, as they might feel stronger in proposing the changes or following up when they get home.

Some ideas of other building blocks for your design (more on some of these in chapter 3.3.)

an open space session — participants organise themselves and lead sessions on different topics of their choosing – a definition of leaderfulness and self-organisation!

cultivating awareness sessions — for example morning meditations before breakfast and morning sessions.

late night movie / slam poetry sessions — optional after-dinner sessions with people sharing their favourite piece of art.

afternoon off session — the whole afternoon off to do whatever they want or need to do.

caucus spaces and sessions — a safer space where people with the same identity can come together and share experiences.

a mistica session — depending on the goal of the mistika, objects related to it that inspire emotional and spiritual connection are placed on the floor in a specific arrangement. Participants can then interact with it in a different way (touch, song, poetry, silence, photographs etc.).

→ Which of these sessions have you never tried before? Try to imagine incorporating them. How do they fit? Do they inspire initiative?

→ Do you feel you have enough experience to facilitate all of these types of sessions? If not, which ones and why not? What would you be afraid of? Who could help you prepare for them?

→ Do you feel like experimenting a bit with sessions next time? What do you hope to achieve with this experiment?

What about you?
Think about it!
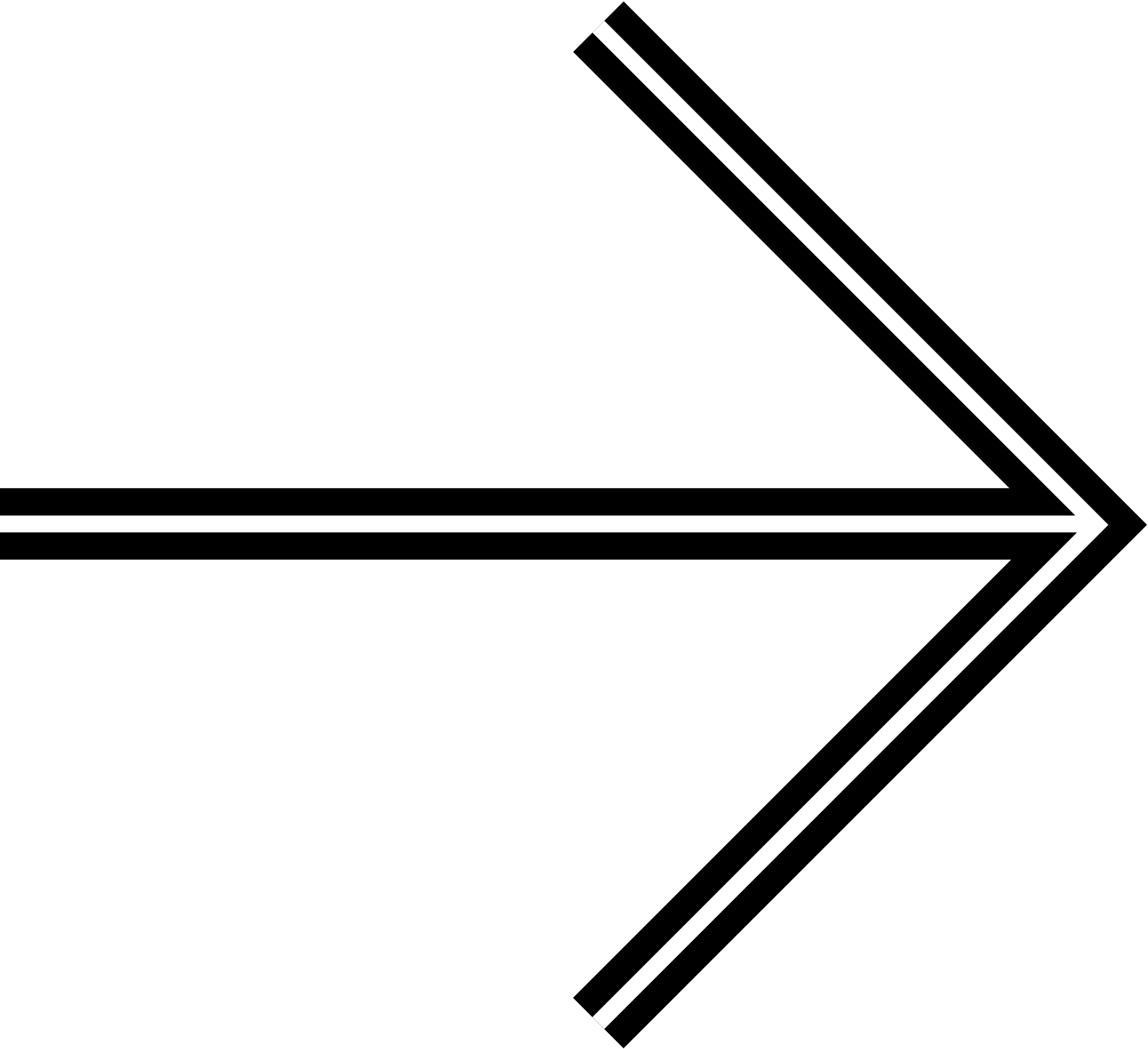
A guide to training design

How do we get into the details of designing trainings that speak to different learning styles? This section explores the process that one trainer takes to develop a training from scratch: starting with becoming clear of the goals that will guide and anchor her all the way to creating an agenda flow with timings. It also touches on ideas of creativity, co-design, risk-taking, pacing and expectations setting – to name a few!

When getting started with the process of designing trainings, how do I deal with that inevitable writer's block? And more importantly, how do I make design choices that support a transformative learning environment? Below is a guide to how I do it and what has influenced me in this process.

→ First, I formulate **my own goals**. This is to bring honesty and awareness to my own assumptions about what I think this group should learn. Asking myself this question also supports me to navigate my own insecurities about what might emerge or the things that I feel less confident with. I also look back at what created the initial need for the training and ask myself questions like: how did this request come about, who was involved in formulating it, and who wasn't?

→ Goals are my starting point, but also my anchor when I get lost in the process of design. Sometimes I just need to simply remind myself of the question, 'what should people have learnt?'

→ In the pre-course survey, I **scan for expectations** but mainly for mainstream and margin clues. I use this information as examples in my diversity welcome and it guides my choices on the initial exercises and prompts.

→ With the goals in the back of my mind, I then **brainstorm**. Using one colour of post-it notes, I transform the goals into topics or themes that can be covered. Then in another colour I think of all the exercises and tools I know that might fit this content. Some of the methods that support this brainstorming phase are going through previous programmes, talking through my ideas with other trainers, or browsing through toolkits of other training organisations on the specific topics.

→ I add a vague timing to my first selection so I can estimate if the **agenda feels spacious enough**. Importantly, I believe learning needs time and space. If I ask participants to take responsibility for their own learning it is also my responsibility to give them time to do that. Therefore, I make sure that my design includes the 'application' phase. It is also the case that people with marginalised identities may raise points that need to be discussed during the training – so I look to see if my rough agenda leaves room for that to happen.

→ I divide the content over the time available. With practice, I organically take the principles below into consideration while brainstorming and shaping the programme, but at this point, I do an explicit check mirroring my draft agenda to the principles.

→ … and then I check back in on the goals from the beginning

→ Once I have a final agenda, I put the different training parts into an excel sheet (the mathematics of timing are not my strength) I learned this technique from a co-trainer: you count the total amount of time in minutes, you discount the

breaks and then you add the estimated timings in a column next to the topics. And you check if it adds up ;).

I am more creative in my design when I can talk my ideas through with someone. Preparing with another person creates more sparks and brings what guides my choices to the forefront. Co-design is my absolute preference over preparing alone!

Which criteria can guide your design choices?

The list of principles and criteria below has been shaped by my learnings from training with Training for Change and writings from Adrienne Maree Brown. They guide me on the choices of what to include, when to include it, what to adapt, and how to identify gaps:

LEVELS OF DIFFERENTIATION
Is there sufficient differentiation in the activities and exercises to support the creation of a learning community on the one hand, and a supportive place for individual learning on the other? Especially for the start of the training, awareness of the cultural context of the group/groups is important. Is there a rather 'western' individualistic or communal cultural background (do I start from the 'I' or from the 'we'?) Have I allowed for a variety of formats of small groups and large? Have I mixed it up and used gallery walks, or closing reflections in pairs?

TIMING OF THE DAY
Does the learning level fit the natural energy and rhythm of the day? Parts that are heavier on theory tend to fit better in the morning and parts with more risk-taking that demand more energy in the afternoon. Time for application, emotional work and/or introspection and social time tend to be better in the evening.

DIVERSITY IN LEARNING STYLES (as well in modelling the exercises)
Do the activities – and the modelling I do of them – attend to different learning styles and are they placed in the programme in a variety of ways? Are these different learning styles modelled in my set-up? Do my explanations of exercises include these different styles as well? For example: I sometimes use physical objects, drawings or personal stories to explain an exercise instead of writing prompts on flipcharts or talking people through it. Since I live with the socialisation and ingrained idea that a 'proper teaching posture' is serious, I used to refrain from making colourful flipcharts; bringing in movement and dance; sitting on the floor while explaining, or using fruit to explain a model. When I started to be more creative in presenting exercises, I not only started to feel more authentic in doing so, I also discovered the magic that happens when I model 'allowing' for these other ways of being and then saw participants engaging more freely in the space.

RISK-TAKING ACTIVITIES

Does the design include exercises that evoke risk-taking? The reasoning behind this is that deeper learning takes place in the discomfort zone. The crucial premise of this, however, is that the learning container needs to be strong. Therefore, my design has to include 'diagnostic tools' – tools that can give me information to see if the container is strong enough. If I am not certain, this can lead to harm and might mean that an exercise I have planned has to be changed or moved.

LEARNING AT THE FOREFRONT

I check who (by the set-up and the style of the session) will be likely to get the most learning out of the exercise based on its design. During the training I keep checking which marginalised learning styles need more attention. I am super cautious about exercises where the experience of oppressive behaviour might be evoked. Mainstream identities in the group that are unaware of their power can cause real harm, so a leading question I often ask myself is: who might learn here, and at the cost of whom? Which (parts of) identities have an 'advantage' in this session?

EXPERIENCE – REFLECTION – GENERALISATION – APPLICATION (ERGA) FLOW

Last but not least: does the design at the level of the exercise, but also in subparts and with the training as a whole, follow the cycle of experience reflection, generalisation (making meaning) and bring it back to integration or application?

→ When you design trainings, how do you think of whose learning you are centring?

→ What are you doing to support the empowerment of people who may be at the margin of a learning group? Does the design allow people to fully participate in the group and in their own learning style?

→ Which structures, images, language and attitudes might be used that could exclude or make people feel part of the group?

What about you? Think about it!
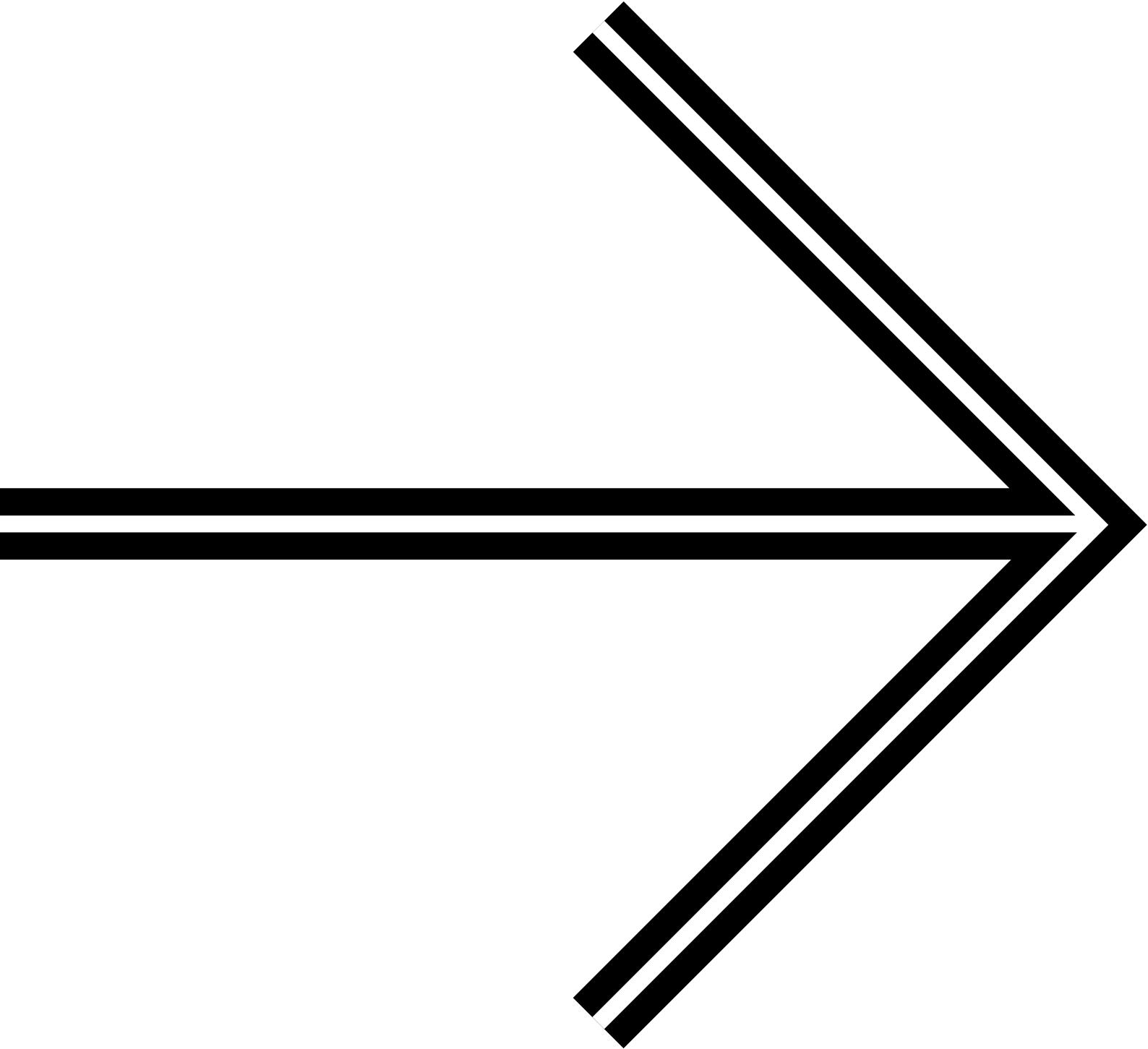
The revolution will not be workshopped: formats![2]

Trainings can't do it all, so what are some other forms that support the development of a leaderful organising practice? There are many ways to learn (and teach) about leaderful organising, so this chapter introduces a set of formats that consciously aims to create a learning environment for groups in a structured way, including some element of 'teaching' by a trainer or facilitator. After addressing these 'classic' formats, a set of complementary practices that support sustained and deeper learning is also introduced.

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2   A reference to a quote by <u>Gil Scott-Heron</u>

— *There is no teaching without learning*

Paulo Freire

I have a confession to make: the reason I love being a trainer is because I love to learn at least as much as I'm happy to teach. I learn when I open a book to find inspiration for my next workshop. I learn when I collaborate with other trainers and discover new ways to explore the same old topics. I learn when I hear participants reflecting on their own experiences, which might or might not be relatable to my own, as well as when they come with creative solutions which I would have never imagined. And I learn when a collective process unfolds, often unexpectedly, during or even in between sessions, that leaves all of us – trainer and participants - changed, even if it might take us much longer to grasp how.

I learn when things seem to work out exactly as I'd hoped during a session, but I learn even more when it all falls apart and I need to redesign.

So, let's go through what different formats offer us and how to use them to teach and learn about leaderful organising. Don't get too conflicted over the respective definitions of a workshop or a training. I tend to use the label of workshop for shorter, introductory sessions with an emphasis on 'exploring', whereas I prefer training for a somewhat longer, structured learning environment with harder learning objectives. But knowing what you do, why you do it and how you can do that, as well as being transparent with potential participants about what to expect is definitely more important than any strict definition.

Practice makes perfect: holding training sessions

— *We don't rise to the level of our expectations,*
we fall to the level of our training.

Archilochus

A training programme can be shortish (just one or two days) or a super intensive two-week programme. It can be residential, or people can go and sleep at home. A training programme can also be spread over a course of several weeks, potentially including 'readings' or 'homework' in between sessions. I always try to balance the ambition as reflected in the objectives and learning goals with the time I can expect participants to set aside to join a training.

When I want to support organisations to implement leaderful organising practices, I find it worthwhile to consider organising some training sessions. Acquiring new competencies and developing new practices is much easier said than done. Having a dedicated training programme can make a difference, as it offers participants a way to step back and move through a full action learning cycle to learn things which can afterwards be implemented in one's daily work.

The summer camp: if I can't dance, it's not my revolution[2]

Well, I'm not much into dancing myself, but I do love some fun! Many groups have found formats such as a 'summer camp' or 'summer school' a nice addition to the toolbox of group learning settings, as they offer a great opportunity to combine learning with creating community AND having fun!

Summer season can also mean less of a tighter work schedule for many potential participants and some spaciousness in both the agenda and the mind to prioritise diving deeper than you would be able to over a weekend during other seasons.

The challenge of having limited time

Sometimes I am just given a slot of a few hours. Or maybe a full day if I'm lucky. It often feels less than ideal. At times even almost an insult. Because, hey, don't they realise that this work deserves so much more?! How can we cover a subject such as leaderful organising in just 90 minutes?

I try to remind myself that it is okay to postpone or to reject a request if I feel I can't do a topic justice with the time I have been offered. Or I try to negotiate to being given more time. But even if two hours means just two hours, sometimes it might be a good enough opportunity to open the door just enough so participants can have a peak and long for more.

When running short workshops, I want to be especially aware of the fact that as a facilitator I will have to hold a lot of the group container as there isn't really time to have a very participatory process of getting to know each other, exploring boundaries, building trust or creating a group container. That means I might also choose not to use methods that would require more time to work through or close what you have opened up.

I remind myself that I don't have to cover everything in depth or show every thinkable angle when facilitating a short workshop. Of course, it's important to set realistic goals - where less is almost always more. And sometimes the best goal is just planting some seeds that leave people wanting more!

Complementary practices to enable leaderful organising

Creating training opportunities is an invaluable investment in a group's most precious resource: people. However, it's an illusion that all needs related to learning, organisational and self-development can be addressed by running training sessions. As I've experienced myself regularly after returning home after taking part in yet another inspiring training: putting the work into practice is always messier than I had anticipated! Having other enabling structures in place can make the difference between falling back into my own habits or really embodying whatever it is I have

learnt. Let's explore some complementary formats which can be used to nurture the development of the required competencies for leaderful organising.

Mentoring

Engaging in practices of mentorship within our social movements opens up rare opportunities for a longer-term, deep involvement in one's growth. When I look at my own growth as both an activist and a person, having a few people along the road choosing to commit themselves to mentor me has had a huge exponential impact on my learning. Equally, the lack of available mentors at some crucial junctures, has at times left me without clarity and guidance, resulting in painful mistakes that otherwise might have been avoided. I have also had to experience how taking this relationship for granted or reducing it to a transactional exchange of feedback or advice might contribute to the connection fading away over time.

Due to the personal relationship between a mentor and mentee, as well as the obvious difference in rank, awareness about the power relationship and ethical guidelines for mentors are important. Building and maintaining trust is a key ingredient of every successful mentorship relationship.

A commitment to offering mentorship is a beautiful practice for leaderful organising, as it supports and nurtures the growth of others and facilitates the distribution of power as much as it lowers the threshold to step into the shoes of someone who has held formal leadership roles before.

Job Shadowing

While finding a suitable mentor might not always be an available option, you might still benefit from seeing other people at work. Job shadowing is a practice in which you literally follow and observe someone else during their job. Different to mentoring, job shadowing doesn't need to imply a longer, more sustainable relationship.

Before I became an activist trainer myself, I shadowed a few other trainers in a way that gave me the confidence to start doing the job myself. Moreover, by shadowing not just one but several trainers, I could see the added value of a personal style, which encouraged me to integrate and consolidate my own way of doing the work. This can be interesting to do even if you already have a lot of experience. When an organisation wants to invest in leaderful organising, creating opportunities for job shadowing will help to build on each other's skills and experiences.

Coaching

A coaching practice is similar to mentoring in the sense that both are based on a one-on-one relationship, though a mentor takes on a much more personal relationship. Coaching also differs from mentoring by focussing more on specific tasks, objectives, or challenges, rather than on overall personal development.

Sometimes I ache for ready-made answers to whatever obstacle I have been facing, but in the end, I have to admit: nothing compares to the feeling when you figure it out by yourself. A good coach is an expert in deep listening and has a set of tools to probe a coachee to come to new insights. A coach does not offer the answers but asks the right questions to help a coachee create a path forward.

Consultancy

After having been an activist trainer for over fifteen years and having run campaigns for a long time, I started doing consulting by for other groups on topics such as campaign strategy. It's a precious gift to be trusted by others to see the ins and outs of their campaign work, but even more so when this helps me to accumulate best practices which I can then help to spread further. A good consultant will find a balance between 'working inside out' and 'working outside in.' Inside out means that the consultant will always build on the knowledge and expertise which is already available in a specific organisation. Outside in means that the consultant will also offer clear perspectives and specific advice, based on their expertise or on the experience of having dealt with similar cases.

When working towards social change, there's often so much ground to cover. However, that doesn't need to be a problem as long as you know where to find reliable external advice to fill in the blanks or help you move forward with an external perspective.

Study group or book club

As important as experiential learning formats are, sometimes I find it equally beneficial to tap into the wisdom others offer gracefully in books. When we started our project on leaderful organising, one of the first things we did was a literature review that enabled us to create a working definition of leaderful organising. Reading a good book by yourself is often a treasure. When you read it together, to analyse and discuss it as a group it can become the fuel of organisational change or a new, powerful strategy!

→ Which opportunities for ongoing learning are available in your organisation?

→ Which ones aren't currently in place but might be useful and are easy to introduce and test?

→ Do you see options for cross-movement or interorganisational learning? What are the organisations you might want to collaborate with to create these?

→ What would support your own learning? Could you shadow someone in their work to learn new ways of doing yours?

What about you? Think about it!
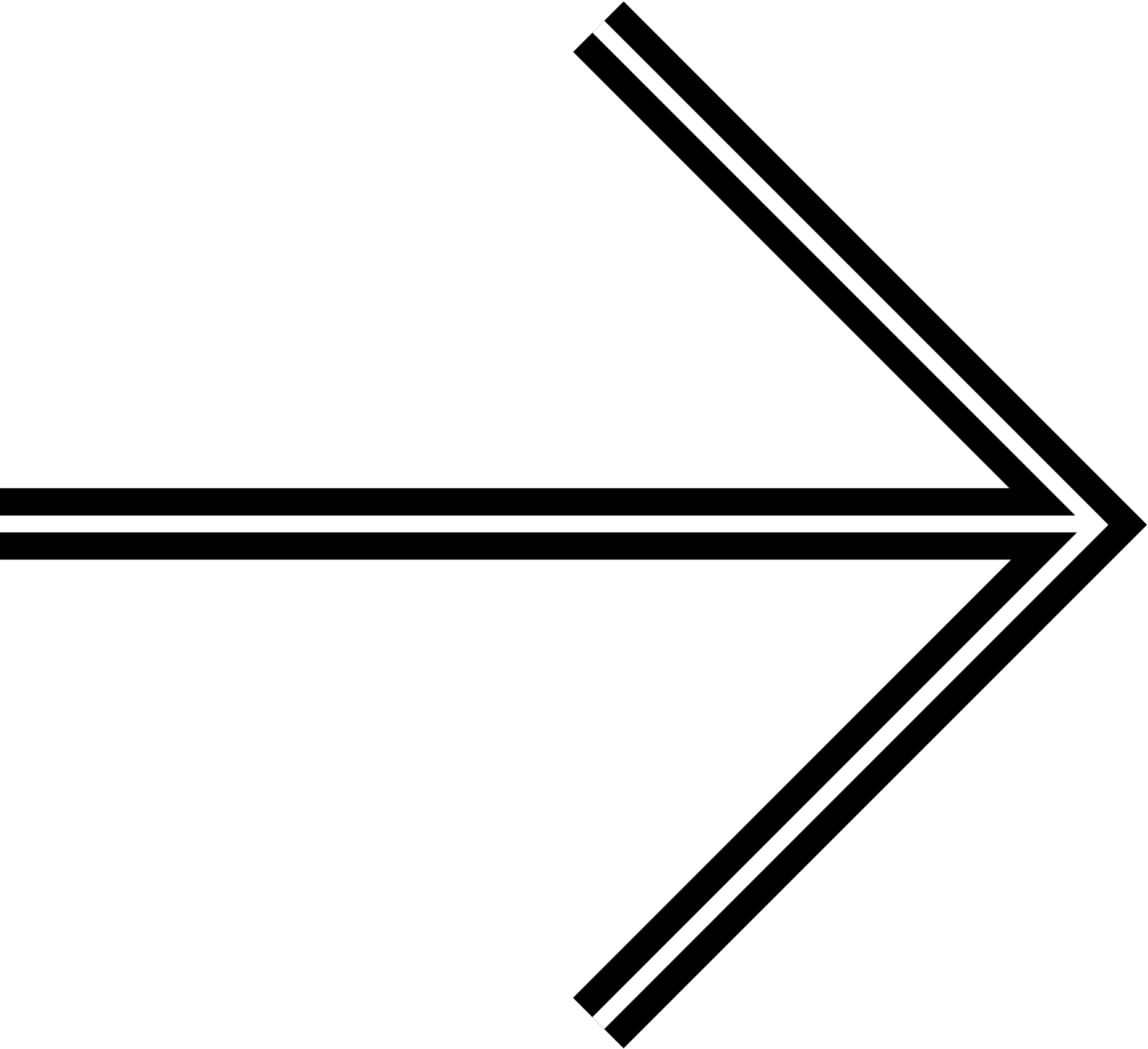
Co-facilitation and training teams

Co-facilitating is easier said than done. What steps do we take to ensure we model healthy and leaderful dynamics among the training team? This section gives examples of working with other trainers and provides helpful tips, roles, and a checklist of things to think about when building a high-functioning training team. The trust and understanding of different ways of working that we build with our co-facilitators is a prerequisite for developing a sense of trust and openness among training participants. We must attend to building this 'container before the container' with people with whom we are facilitating for the first time, as well as with those with whom we have worked for years. When we skip this step, participants can tell, and our trainings suffer.

A leaderful, well-established facilitation team is an important container for a group of learners, almost like a base which they lean back on. I've been giving trainings for a very long time and worked with a diverse group of trainers from different contexts, styles and cultures. Over the years I have worked almost in symbiosis with some trainers. However I have found that even with these people we still need to check how we are doing every morning, to ask what support we need from each other during facilitation, and to let each other know if any other issues are coming up from our private or work lives. In this way, we are attentive to each other's needs during the sessions or outside the sessions.

If you **know your trainer style**, meaning what type of facilitation you do, your strengths and weaknesses, this is a good place to start the conversation with other co-facilitators. From my experience, I find that our training styles are very much in line with our characters and political views. You may like strict programming, others may like flexible flows, you may be academic and give a lot of theory and others may use more experience-based activities; all these are part of our styles and none are better than others.

Do not try to fulfil the 'perfect trainer' profile – this will put a lot of stress on you and others. I think one good way of building trust among the co-facilitation team is to share our vulnerabilities related to our role.

Acceptance of our weaknesses as trainers makes the team stronger. Because by doing that you give a chance to other team members to support you, to hold you, and more importantly, it creates a bond within the team. **Talking about strengths and weaknesses** is a good way to see who can hold which part of the training session and if you need to change plans or drop some responsibilities.

When I meet with trainers I haven't yet worked with, I find it important to get to know each other and our training styles. In our first online preparation meeting we just talk about our journey of becoming trainers, what training means for us, our past experiences as trainers, our weaknesses, strengths, and where we may need the support of other team members etc. At each meeting, we take time to talk and reflect on a specific question related to trainings. We make sure we arrive one day early to connect, get to know each other better, do some informal chatting and catch up on our well-being and needs so we can hold each other during the training.

Container building starts with the facilitation team and it is an important phase of a leaderful training team. Here is a summary of my suggestions of how to build an effective leaderful trainer team:

→ Take enough time to get to know each other before starting to plan and run the training.
→ Talk about your training styles and the strengths and weaknesses of your facilitation skills.

→ Name what situations you may need the support of others, what situations challenge you as a trainer and how you would like to receive support from others.
→ Talk about what is ok and not ok to do when you lead a session, for example, do you mind interruptions from other team members while you're leading or not?
→ Meet regularly during the training, maybe in the evenings when sessions are finished, to check how each member of the team is doing, and what they need for the next day. If you are a big team of facilitators this is quite important.
→ Check during the day how your co-facilitators are doing, if they need any support on any tasks or emotional support. Basically, be in touch with each other throughout the training.
→ Are there any issues or uncomfortable emotions within the team? Open up the conversation and trust each other at this stage. Any issue or emotion that is not dealt with within the trainer team will likely appear in front of the group. Groups sense these situations, and this is the stage where you will start losing the trust of the group. While talking or bringing up difficult emotions or feedback, clearly name how you would like to be treated and use it as an opportunity to build stronger relationships within the training team.

Roles in training teams

Training is often a team sport. Many trainers prefer this approach, and it is an important way one can attend to questions of diversity and representation in movement spaces. If you have to create a group of trainers from scratch there are certain roles that are helpful to have on your team – especially in larger training formats. And there are steps a training team can take before and during trainings to build a solid group, whether you are all new to working with each other, or you have trained together for years.

The support needed for a group to learn relates to different roles that you can have in place as a training team. The first one that you might think of is a trainer or facilitator. But there are other roles that are equally important to create a safer environment where people feel they can take risks and as such, learn. The roles and examples mentioned below largely come from (larger) residential trainings run by Ulex.

1 / FACILITATORS
Supporting people's learning takes shape in the constellation of the training team. Ideally, the trainers in our team not only **represent different identities, but also mirror the differences in learning styles of your participants**. Facilitators or trainers tend to have their own preferred or socialised presentation or facilitation style.

Leading a training on my own might give me the sense that I have more freedom and can be more time efficient, but I often realised that this also meant that there were certain dynamics I could not attend to due to my more limited capacity. It also gives fewer possibilities for reflection and questions like: 'is this what is happening in this group?' that are better answered in a pair.

2 / COURSE ORGANISER(S)

It's helpful to have one or more people taking responsibility for the practical and logistical matters of running a training. The course organiser(s) can take care of participant and facilitators' needs in terms of layout of the space, materials that are needed, liaison with the venue, preparing snacks and drinks for the breaks, etc.

One course organiser is often enough if they are solely intended to do this role. However, this role can sometimes be merged with the role of participant, in which case it's good to have more than one course organiser for courses of over 20 – 25 people. It is important that the course organiser is clear that their first responsibility is to provide practical and logistical support, and that their participation will depend on what else is needed to be taken care of.

A suggested structure is that at the beginning of every day there's a space for 'practicalities' (for example during the morning session), when the course organiser(s) can let the group know any relevant information. This is also the time when the group collectively has a space to ask/check-in on practical issues arising for them ('there's not enough coffee!', 'that door is broken and makes a lot of noise during the night' etc.).

We often try to turn practicalities into a bit of a celebration. Generally, practicalities are something that people tend to dread, and it can be helpful to turn it into something light-hearted, as long as it doesn't feel forced – so bear in mind where the group is at. If the group is going through conflict or challenging topics, it could come across as you trying to suppress difficulty by pretending everything is cheerful.

3 / SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT ROLE

The goal of this role is to support people when experiencing discrimination, microaggressions and difficult behaviours linked to their identity and social positionality. People in this role offer a listening ear, a chat and can help you figure out what you want to happen when a situation or conflict arises.

This role is especially important when working in large groups. As trust-building is more difficult, more structure is needed to spot if potential harmful interactions are happening. In a smaller team it is equally important that a trainer takes on this role. This can inform you if programme adaptations are needed.

Voicing this role to the group also brings awareness that this is an important element in sharing a space. Some more things to take into consideration are:

→ Having two or more people that represent different identities. Having shared lived experiences based on these identities, lowers the threshold to approaching them for support.

→ Ensuring time for talking things through with people taking on this role. What are the mutual expectations? Do we have support for ourselves in place?
→ Often repeating the existence of this role to participants. You can name it before or after sessions or put up a poster with a phone number for example. Even if participants don't make use of the Solidarity and Support Role, it brings their attention to these aspects.

→ Have you reflected on your training style before? Have you identifyied your strengths and weaknesses as a trainer?

→ Do you feel like you know your team members well enough as trainers to work on the training together? If not, where can you create space to build better relationships and connections before the training starts?

→ Did you reflect on your current emotional needs as a trainer before the training starts?

→ Did you include time for trainer team check-ins in your training programme?

→ How would any of the other roles complement your trainings?

What about you? Think about it!
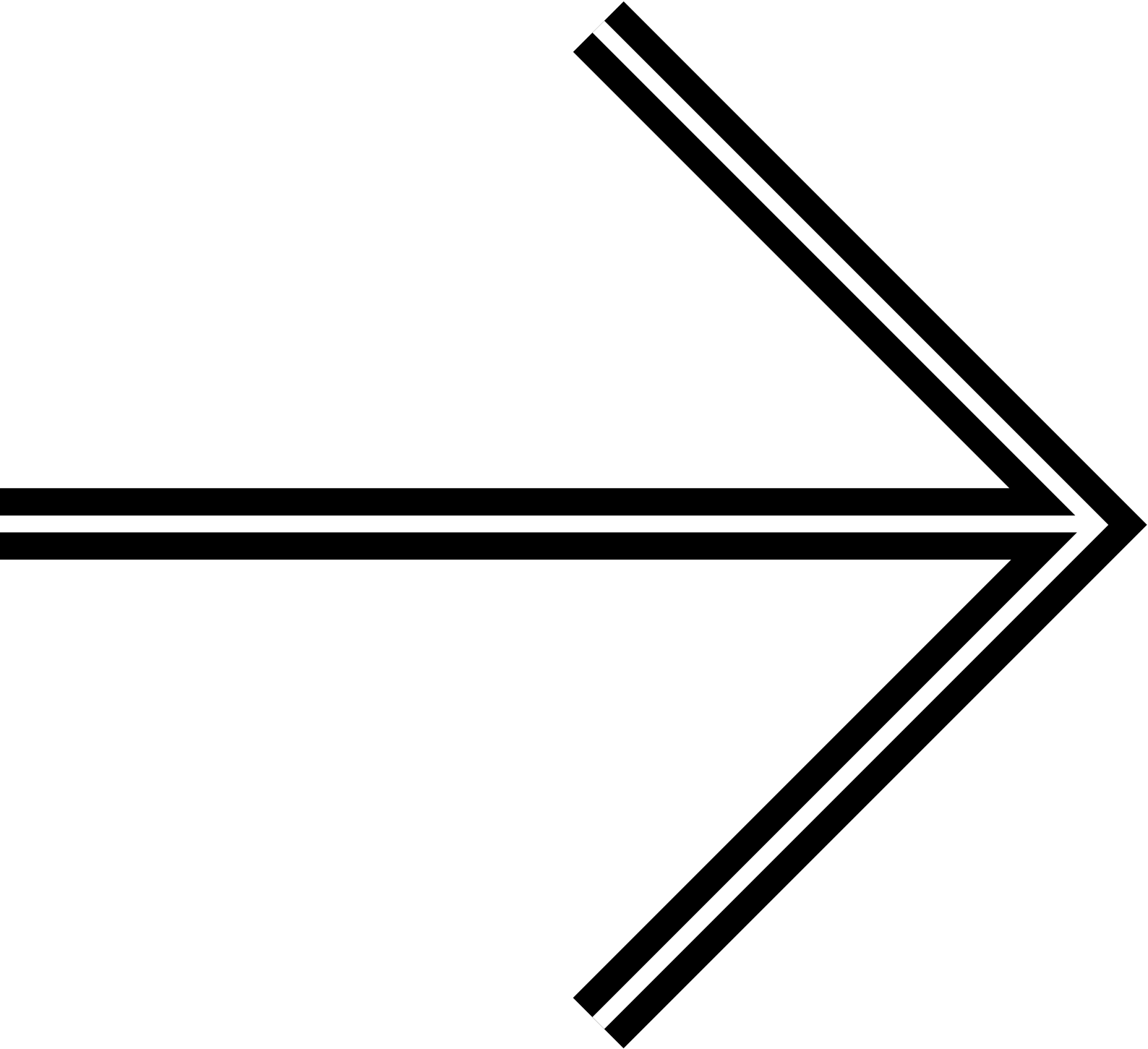
Values in practice

How do we run trainings in ways that put our values into practice? This section dives into the idea of 'brave spaces' as a key approach to creating a training space that encourages learning, while also holding the emotions and experiences we each bring into the space. Laying out the idea of three zones – the comfort zone, learning zone, and panic zone – this section talks about the considerations one must have to ensure that the learning space we create is anti-oppressive and inclusive while rooted in a practice of active solidarity. It also touches on mindfulness practice and skills for facilitating group decision-making processes.

For me, transformative, leaderful trainings are the ones that put our solutions for social issues into practice. They give us ideas on how we can tackle these social issues but also empower us and give us hope that change is possible and here.

The training is not just about the content of sessions but about building a temporary community where our values are put into practice.

Forming a leaderful space is the core of a transformative experience. I used to use group agreements to create this space, but after seeing how many times these agreements can fail to achieve their purpose, I now use the concept of a brave, or courageous space in my trainings.[4]

Brave space is a concept that has been created in response to the concept of 'safe space.' We are diverse and have different needs, so it is almost impossible to create a space where everybody can feel safe. A brave space can be built when everybody is aware of different needs and holds them with care. Another aspect of such a space can be found when we are open to challenging experiences. I use the 'learning zone' concept to explain this.

We all have three zones: the comfort zone, learning zone and panic zone. In our comfort zones, we care for ourselves, we rest, we self-reflect, and we look after our bodies and minds. We are passive in that zone. Through our self-reflection, of course, we continue to learn but it is not the same quality as when we are in the learning zone. The learning zone is where we actively interact with others, listen, analyse, theorise and so on. In this zone we feel challenged, and this evokes deeper learning. However, if we go too far, we might enter into our panic zone, where we close ourselves off. Our nervous system shuts down because we cannot handle the challenge anymore. In these times, we need to return to our comfort zone for self-care. In group settings this means that we will step into the learning zone with care and challenge. We are responsible for holding each other there. It is everybody's responsibility to look after themselves, which also means looking after the group itself.

HOW TO CREATE A BRAVE SPACE?
One way of creating a brave space is to use enough time for people to express their needs. This can help them be in the training space, in the learning zone and take note of critical needs.

Some helpful frameworks to highlight in setting up a brave space are:

→ Controversy with respect: *Varying opinions are accepted.*
→ No attacks: *We will not intentionally cause harm to each other.*
→ Embrace complexity: *Things are not either or, and we all come from different places.*
→ Solidarity: *we recognise each other's humanity and act in solidarity with each other.*

4 Some prefer the term 'courageous spaces' because courage is the quality of the heart. You take courage and you don't have to BE either brave or not brave, as it is with bravery. Bravery could thus be associated with patriarchy and saviourism. The specific model I use for Courageous Spaces comes from Crossroads anti-racist training.

→ Listen to understand: *Listen from the heart to truly understand.*
→ Owning intentions and impacts: *acknowledging and discussing instances where dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person.*
→ Challenge by choice: *we have the option to step in and out of challenging conversations.*

Anti-oppressive training spaces

When we talk about anti-oppression, I find it important to apply an intersectional lens. We need to have some level of understanding of how gender, race, class, sexuality, neurodiversity, body and mind abilities influence power dynamics. We need to work consciously and skilfully with these issues, potentially reducing problems and harms that often arise due to lack of awareness. It is important to address these considerations if we want to make change happen.

I often work with diverse participants coming from different parts of the world. One thing I always remind myself is that I should not act on assumptions about the context of others. I try to actively listen and leave my judgments aside. I have lived in Europe long enough to know certain values and mindsets even though I am not a European. In mixed groups of people coming from different cultural backgrounds I feel the importance of building the group container even more to create a transformative, leaderful learning environment. In this way, our judgments, mistakes and conflicts can be handled in a constructive way – we can learn from them and grow as a person rather than letting these differences harm each other.

Once I was in a small training with two Black people from countries in Africa as well as two white people from European countries. One of the Black participants worked in the government and was a cis man. He had certain power over others and took up a lot of space. But we were also doing the training in a European city, given by two trainers living in Europe. The origin of the tools that we were using came from Europe or North America, and the trainers had something they thought of as activist experience,

while the Black participants did not. This picture was already charged with many different layers of power dynamics.

During the training I personally struggled to manage the participant who was taking up a lot of space as a cis man. There was clearly a gender issue in the room. He wasn't aware of how much space he was taking from others, his way of sitting and speaking was quite dominant and he was using a language like lecturing others. In small group work this became even more problematic. My co-trainer was a trans, non-binary person and was also affected by his style.

Conscious of my rank, I tried to connect with the participant, acknowledging that I am hearing and respecting his thoughts but also trying to give the message that I am also responsible for others and the space. I also observed others, how they were feeling about his style. As we established some personal connection and trust, in some sessions when he was taking over the space again from others, I stopped him kindly and gave the word to others. He got to share his opinion later.

One participant was clearly uncomfortable with his style, so I kept observing her. At some point I wasn't sure if I was managing the entire thing well. I

decided to talk with that participant in private to check how it was going for her in terms of gender dynamics. I think this was the critical moment to bring in leaderfulness. Rather than assuming or ignoring the situation, I shared my experience and checked if the participant was happy with how I was dealing with this situation. She said that I was doing well and that if I hadn't intervened, she would have personally tried to deal with it. Seeing how I was managing it, she was able to be just a participant, which was a relief. She also proposed that I explain to him why I was stopping him sometimes. I took her proposal and in one session I explained it to him. He understood and later collaborated and changed some of his style.

In this example the complexity of the power dynamics wasn't so easy to deal with. Risk of colonial approaches, gender dynamics, cultural differences were all in one place. It could have really gone badly wrong. We managed to work with it well enough to continue the training and bring everybody's experiences to a certain level, but this experience also taught me that as a trainer, power dynamics shouldn't be easily diminished into a single dimension. For me cultural sensitivity doesn't mean that I should be aware of all the other cultures, but rather that I need to be aware where my certain privileges come from and where I hold more power over others. I need to be aware of where my training content comes from, and I need to make space for diverse experiences, giving enough time for people to process and adapt the content to their context.

To me, anti-oppression training design starts with self-reflection as a trainer about my privileges, my training style, and my rank. Exploring my privileges and how I position myself in different groups is a good starting point. I try to be transparent and honest about my social class and my identities when starting to work with others.

I think challenging oppression needs some courage and it brings some discomfort. Learning to sit with discomfort is quite critical in being able to address and change oppressive behaviours. There might be times during a training when we'll need to address or call someone out on their oppressive behaviour. I learnt by failing that running away from doing this harms the group dynamic more deeply, so I propose doing it in a timely way, but taking care to do it skilfully. Take into account the safety of the group as a whole and of each participant - from both marginalised and dominant groups. In most cases, people act in oppressive ways out of ignorance or lack of knowledge and not out of ill will. It is important to acknowledge that. But it is essential not to ignore oppressive behaviours. I decide if it's more appropriate and safer to address the issue with the whole group or if it is something I need to talk about with someone individually. Here the most important thing is to see and acknowledge the damage done by oppressive behaviours, it is the first and most important step for rebuilding the safety in the group.

I find some aspects of oppression can be addressed with these anti-oppression practices below as they help us create inclusive and active solidarity practices in training spaces:

Don't assume people's gender and sexual orientation by their physical appearance. When giving examples do not just use typical gendered examples. On the first day I explain what pronouns are and why it is important to use them and ask participants to carry them, together with their name on a name tag.

Don't let one kind of experience dominate the room. Dominating the conversation is an unconscious behaviour often resulting from socialisation. I am sure we all find ourselves thinking 'shall I stop this participant now?', as our trainer instinct is taking over. What you are feeling is often what others are also noticing. So, I try not to let this happen many times and I politely let that participant know they are taking up a lot of space.

Language we use is also very important in this context. Inclusive words are not enough, we also need to be aware of how clearly and fast we talk. Personally, I suffer from my low-level voice and I am constantly observing and checking with participants how they are being affected by it.

Give credit to those who created it, especially if it was not created in the global north by white folks. Whenever you are proposing an activity, a tool or a method, check if you know where it comes from. Often marginalised communities create resources and tools that are being widely used among privileged groups and an automatic assumption is made that they were created by those groups as well. It's important to make the marginalised groups' labour visible by acknowledging it.

Being open to feedback and questions by having a jar/box/container, where participants can leave written notes to the facilitators is an accessible way for people to communicate with the trainers. Some folks might prefer this as a way of flagging something, asking a specific question about the content or method used, asking for support or for a need to be met. I place this box in a visible place, where everyone can access it. I explain its purpose at the beginning of the training and check it regularly. For accountability I openly say how and when I will come back to it again.

Using caucus spaces is a way to deal with power dynamics around different identities rather than pretending that the differences don't exist. It's much more useful to acknowledge the existence of differences and imbalances of power to be able to work with them. Caucus spaces offer people an opportunity to speak with others

of similar experiences. The caucus might come together around a theme: gender, race, ability, class or shared experiences of oppression. For example, there may be a caucus for people of colour, women and trans caucus, LGBTQ+ caucus, sex workers caucus, etc. Some might argue this divides the group, but in my experience, it bonds it. Often, people have more ease in dealing with challenges and discomfort when in a group of people who share similar experiences of oppression. It might be just for checking-in, sharing or also for working on tools, methods and behaviour proposals for the whole group around fighting imbalances.

Mindfulness practices

I find mindfulness practices quite effective when they are offered during residential trainings. Creating leaderful training spaces is also about allowing ourselves to digest and be in contact with our emotions. This allows us to deeply understand and integrate the insights into our personal lives, as well as to become aware of uncomfortable emotions and thoughts so that we can explore where they come from. This kind of personal deep check-in allows us to act in a transformative way when conflict arises.

One of these mindful practices is morning meditation. It can be done as an in-person or audio-guided meditation so people who do not have experience can also take part. There are also reflective sessions. When we are working on topics that need personal awareness and transformation, this process can be quite demanding. You can either give some 'free' time to do that or offer 'self-journalling' or 'stream of consciousness writing'. There are also 'silent walks' – especially if the training facility is in nature. Our natural surrounding can bring clarity to our thoughts and help understand our emotions – not to mention refresh our energy!

Holding spaces for dialogue

If we manage to form a strong container on the first day of the training, and use good support structures in an ongoing way, then we start building up trust. Trust is essential for participatory decision-making processes with participants. Relatedly, it is important for me to attend to the thing that some people call 'flow.' Flow is adaptive to any number of issues that may arise during the training. It is a state in which we feel aligned with what is happening around us, where things are effortless, individually, and with each other.

There are these moments when I am unsure of what to do next. I may not be able to decide which route to take or even how to do so because there may be several options that are aligned with my sense of purpose. Perhaps something significant has occurred, but I am unsure of how to foster the conditions necessary for it to be converted into learning. Because the next step is unclear, I need some key skills for holding space for dialogue.
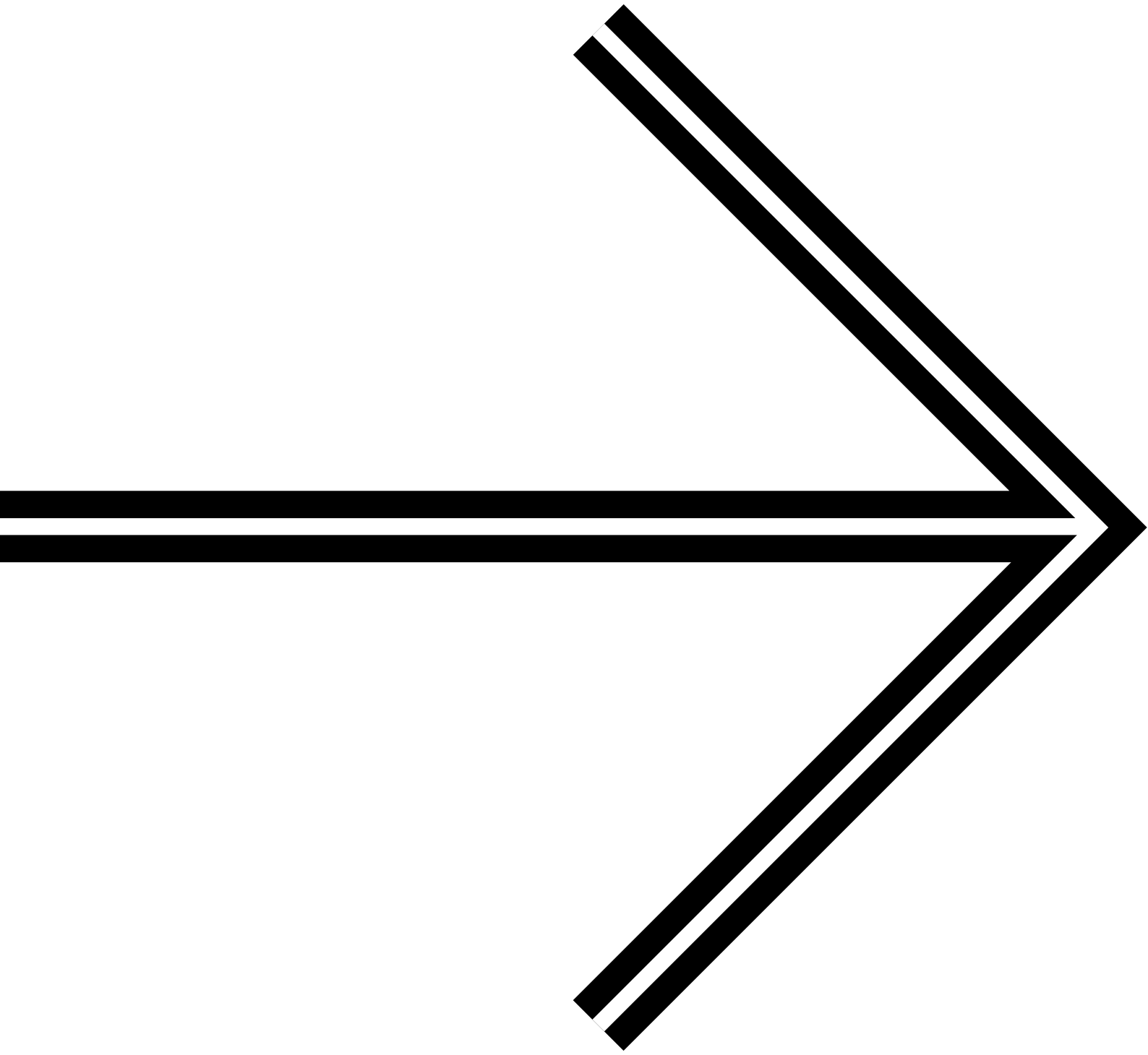
I found Sam Kaner's framework expressed in his 'Facilitator Guide to Participation' very inspiring for my own practice. He takes on some key skills for holding effective discussions and decision-making processes. It includes tips on everything from good listening practices, skills for clarifying, developing and refining ideas, tracking complicated lines of thought during a discussion and broadening it, t empathising and validating, to identifying and acknowledging the feelings within the group and listening to common ground when the group is polarised. In addition to this work there are many other authors and texts out there that inspire (e.g. A Guide for Collaborative Groups by Starhawk).

These existing theories are helpful for bringing clarity to a topic that needs to be discussed while allowing space for participants to bring emotions and thoughts in a constructive way. Resourceful facilitators know the value of encouraging participants to engage in thoughtful discussion. But the most interesting conversations can also be the hardest ones to close. Making a deliberate effort to summarise a discussion helps participants consolidate their thinking and have a sense of closure on the topic. The restatement of key themes and main points provides people with mental categories. These internal categories serve as both memory aids and devices for improving understanding.

→ What kind of container building do you usually use? Do you see yourself creating a brave space during your training?

→ Are you equipped with tools and prepared emotionally to deal with oppressive behaviours in a non-harmful way?

→ Have you created space for mindful practices in the programme and do you have skills in the training team to offer these practices? If not, what are the alternatives you could offer?

→ Do you have skills for holding effective discussions if the flow gets interrupted by a conflict or urgent need? If not, what support do you need from other team members?

What about you? Think about it!

Emergent design: on values in a complex setting

How do we adapt to different learning and teaching styles? And how do we practice flexibility in our session design? This section reminds us that trainings – like social change processes themselves – are made up of people and human relationships. We are called upon to be flexible and to also be ready to get into our learning zone when facilitating. This section reflects on the nature of 'emergent design': different kinds of diagnostic tools a facilitator can use to gauge where and how a group is moving, and how to work through the emotions that come up when we are being challenged in our role as facilitator.

I asked a trainer who was going to co-facilitate last minute to be present one hour before the start of the training in order to run through the design and adapt the programme to what they had in mind. I had never worked with them before but I was convinced that they could offer an approach and perspective that I could not, and which would benefit the participants. Half an hour before the start, there was still no sign of them. They showed up at the moment the training was about to begin. My first urge was to tell them not to participate as a trainer as we hadn't had any preparation timeor time for checking in. I felt conflicted, as I also recognised the various layers of high rank I was holding in this situation. I asked my co-facilitator if it was ok for her to start leading the training (after an initial hello) with an exchange exercise in pairs; this would give us about 15 minutes to check-in with each other. She agreed and during this time I presented what I had prepared and why. I checked whether they wanted to take this on; there was no time for explanation, I had to trust the person and the process. I was nervous about it, because this meant not only stepping down but also taking a risk. And as tends to happen with risk-taking (a smile appears on my face even while writing this), I learnt something and I grew in my training practice. I learnt not only that I can let go of my preparation, but also to trust my gut feeling to trust the process. If I would have said no to the other trainer, the participants wouldn't have had another training style modelled (which is even more important in train-the-trainers) and I wouldn't have learnt from observing a new and different way of facilitating this session.

Emergent design can be scary, because you are letting go of the control of sticking to your preparation. You might also let go of your comfort zone if you are used to sticking to your plan and set timing.

Control stems from the belief that you can predict. There is an underlying assumption that what works for one, works for all. Just like engaging with society, engaging with people is complex. They can show ambiguous communication, change their opinions or behaviour, and you can't predict much of what they will do or say. In short, life and people are VUCA (Volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous).

How do I deal with this complexity in terms of designing a training programme or agenda? I bring in flexibility in my design, which in turn brings forth the following:

→ It gives space to the learning that the group needs and the pace they need it at.
→ It brings an attitude of humility that I don't know what is best
→ It tends to be more risky, more in the discomfort zone, so deeper learning can also happen for myself and I am less prone to a bore-out.

SOME GUIDELINES AND PRACTICAL TIPS:

→ **include 'diagnostic' tools in your design**. These tools will give you the information you need to keep track of people's learning. Is the learning in line with the goals? Are people at the margins as much part of the learning process? How strong is the container to allow for more risk-taking? Tools you can use vary from asking a 'simple' question like 'where are we as a group?' to a spectrum line, sociogram or go-rounds. These diagnostic tools guide your choices on changes or adaptations in content, group formations, learning style needed, capacity and learning edges.

→ In groups, **observe the patterns**; the recurring processes, not isolated events. Every moment is a teachable moment. Which ones can you identify that take the group forward? Be mindful of who benefits from these choices. I ask myself 'who's learning might benefit the most at this moment?' Mainstream and margins serve here again as a guideline.

→ **be prepared with other options**. Don't depend on just one choice of exercise or choice of topic. I often have printouts from previous trainings or sessions with me.

→ In practice, I noticed that having a linear print-out of my programme ends up turning into a mess when changing things around. I am now increasingly working with post-its on a paper or flipchart (when co-facilitating) so I can **visibly move things around during the training**.

→ I find grounding in designing frameworks. The ERGA cycle (Experience – Reflection – Generalisation – Application) helps me with last minute design. You can read more about it here.

→ learn to be comfortable with emergence and change, and start with small steps (e.g. loosen up your timing and listen to and observe the group, leave the ending of a session open to being designed during a break)
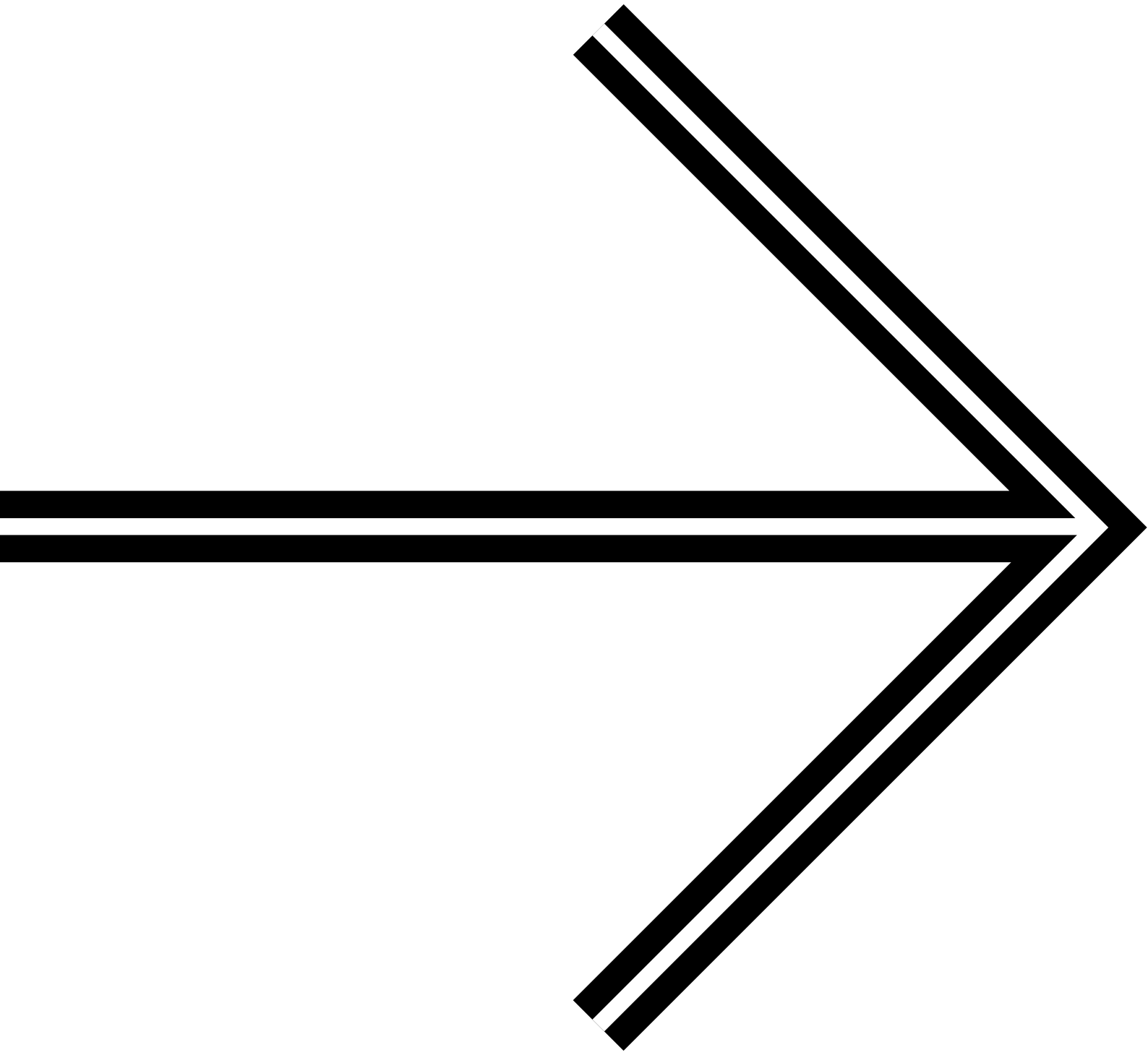
I repeat the sentence from Adrienne Maree Brown in my head: 'learn to trust the process, the people.' **Create relationships between participants and strengthen the group container** so participants support the process. I quote from her book Emergent Strategy: 'Just like in nature, change emerges out of relationships. If you build a strong group container by creating a large variety of connections between the participants by linking up people's multiple dimensions your container will strive.'

→ I keep in mind that when co-facilitating (which ideally is the case) to check-in prior to the start of the training about how my fellow trainers are with a more emergent way of working. And to also **discuss what levels of risk-taking and discomfort each of us have** the capacity for at the moment in relation to the capacity that holding the group will entail (physically, mentally and emotionally), -and to regularly review this on a personal and relational level.

→ In terms of practising humility and awareness, when being challenged by a co-facilitator or a participant on my design or facilitation: I remind myself when I feel a defensive reaction popping up, to take a breath and invoke curiosity of why this is happening. Is it because I don't want to take a risk? Is it because I only want to be seen as a perfect facilitator? Is it because I don't want to be questioned? Is it because I don't want my facilitation rank and privileges to be

questioned? I remind myself to be fair; **if I ask participants to take risks, I should do the same** and model that at a moment (or moments) when the group container is strong enough.

→ How comfortable are you with emergent design?

→ How can you be more open to flexibility in your work as a trainer? Who can help you with this process?

→ Do you know any other tools that could help you?

What about you? Think about it!

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Conclusion

— *Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.*

Arundhati Roy

This handbook has been an exploration of the idea of 'leaderful pedagogy,' which is a tool to build movements that both allow more people to step into their own role as a leader, as well as a collective practice of leadership. It is meant to serve as a support for those who recognise that old patterns of leadership are just that…old. And it is a tool for those that feel, as we do, that rejecting the idea of leadership altogether will not serve to build the movement we need.

As Arundhati Roy says, a new world is on the way. However, we cannot hear those words with a false sense of optimism that the world we need will happen on its own. We must step into the challenge of building it. As trainers we must stretch our own learning zones and think about how the work we do contributes to unlocking the power our movements need. We must not shy away from our role as leaders who can influence the growth and learning of the people and organisations we work with. And we must dedicate ourselves to the practice of fostering leaderfulness in our learning spaces, and in the movement as a whole.

Thank you for reading.

Meet the authors and contributors of this handbook…

Aleksandra Schindler Ljutak (SHE/HER)
I started my journey as an educator by being a high school teacher of philosophy, ethics and human rights in 2008 in Croatia, where I was born and raised. After I joined Zelena akcija/ Friends of the Earth Croatia in 2013, I started developing and using more non-formal methodologies. At one point I became inspired by some Colombian friends during a training as part of the School of Sustainability that we were also developing. I started to thirst for a deeper understanding of Paulo Freire's philosophy and pedagogy as well as Augusto Boal's methodology of Theatre of the Oppressed. I have come to realise that without going through the process of 'conscientisation,' or becoming aware of power and oppression within and around us, there is little basis for moving forward. This became the first foundation for all the educational programmes I have developed.

The trainings I develop put emphasis on environmental, social and economic justice being grounded in power and privilege. I hope we've managed to inspire many students, youth leaders and educators, as well as formal education teachers, to embrace a new way of teaching that sees the interconnectedness of the system we live in and embraces an intersectional approach while teaching and learning.

All of this represented a big step out of my comfort zone. In a way it is still challenging, but it is also so much more inspiring to work with so many diverse people. I also take much pleasure in being a participant in different trainings and learning new things, sharing with others and just taking another role. I love reading, writing and painting or just getting grounded in my free time.

An Maeyens (SHE/HER)
Two decades ago I got involved in the alter-globalisation movement. Here I learnt (by observing and doing) to facilitate large 'action' assemblies and gained experience in large-scale consensus decision making. My first experience in a 'trainer' role was preparing people to participate in a mass-action of civil disobedience. Here again I observed and learnt from my fellow trainers.

Over the years I campaigned for the removal of nuclear weapons, for halting the introduction and expansion of GM crops and stopping the construction of detention facilities. This gave me facilitation skills and the experience to start giving trainings on movement strategy and I stepped more into an organiser role. When I followed my first training with Training for Change about a decade ago, I came into contact with frameworks on learning and anti-oppression that I had been lacking. Since then, my educational approach has been mainly shaped by their direct education that allows me to stay curious and keep on learning myself by supporting people's learning processes. My intensive training with them, as well as some training in process work, taught me to acknowledge my rank as a white cis woman with a middle-class background. I am still struggling with my internalised paternalistic and saviour-complex tendencies and lately the work of adrienne maree brown has supported me a lot in doing this work. I try to create training or learning spaces in which people's knowledge is catalysed into a direction that is more effective and inclusive. I aim to support them to re-discover a recipe for change by sparking their motivation, evaluating their capacities, and transforming this into creative strategising. I see my role here in bringing an honest, open, and critical mindset as well as knowledge on methodologies for understanding and analysing power relations in the societies, groups and teams we work in.

I often facilitate and train in my second or third language and deeply value the diversity and possibilities that multilingual spaces offer. I have facilitated and trained in different cultural settings. I love bringing music and its content into my training work as well as my creative lightness, as I want to create spaces where people feel they are allowed to be their full selves. Joy is the new serious?

Ana Mileusnić (SHE / THEY)
In my life, I have had good and bad decisions but activism, education and the combination of both, were probably one of the best ones! After my studies, I was craving for some knowledge that would have an impact on me, not just teach me how to reproduce the content the system made seem important. My intuition was telling me that there was so much more to learn and know and so much more to live, and I was definitely right!

I started with *women studies*, then *peace studies* and I started to be more and more aware of the movement on the cognitive level, but I had very little experience with practice. At the same time I started to attend non-formal education trainings on different topics, like peace building, human rights and the environment. Attending these training sessions, I became fascinated with the power of group learning and how it very much depends on the facilitation team. In Croatia, where I come from, most of the facilitators I've met on my journey were performing like teachers even in non-formal settings. I never liked this too formal approach as I always saw it as something reproducing the power dynamics I'd already been so deeply critical of. And then I met Zelena akcija. I learned about Paulo Freire and the *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, I had my inner breakthrough and I really didn't have to think much - I just knew this was the place where I wanted to be. I also knew that the environmental | climate movement is where I felt the most comfortable and valued as a person. Little did I know at that time that I would become a facilitator in a small but super powerful team and continue the joint journey of mutual learning and inspiration. Apart from being an environmental activist, that was the role in which I believe I have achieved my highest potential as a human being. The dots I had in mind after so many readings were finally connected in the activist practice: horizontal organising, a humble approach of understanding and compassion in education, constantly linking environmental justice with social, economic and gender justice. What more could a person ask for?

Dora Sivka (SHE / HER)
I accidentally stumbled upon the field of environmental activism 10 years ago while studying unrelated things: comparative literature and Spanish. Be that a coincidence or destiny, I can now say that I have dedicated my life to it.

Many places and people defined my training philosophy. I got my intersectional approach from Young Friends of the Earth Europe, my creativity and spirit for experimentation and playing with the rules from Zelena akcija. My strategic thinking hat came in part from Bankwatch CEE Network, my theoretical base from Ulex. The love and support continuously come from Aleksandra and Ana, my co-facilitators. I got a lot more from all the curious and enchanted people that trained me, mentored me and nurtured me to become what I am. I learned most of the things I know as a trainer from trainings, conversations and experiences. Even though I majored in literature, I'm not really a bookworm and I don't tend to dive deep into theoretical educational concepts. I plan to work on that, but I also accept the fact that it might not entirely be my style. During trainings, among other things, I love spaces dedicated to the emotional, the irrational, the sensual and the abstract. I like poetry nights and slams, ad hoc theatre performances, movie nights and discussions, morning 'misticas' and appreciate exercises that make me or others weep. Things that complement the rational and the practical. Essential things, often overlooked. Having said that, while preparing or doing a training I actually feel most comfortable with clear structure and prefer bullet points, short sentences and to the point writing. So, in the spirit of that, key aspects of my training style are:

MY FAVOURITE THING: collective brainstorming of sessions & slightly tweaking existing experiential games to adapt to the group (once you get to know them)
MY FEAR: thinking I'm not good enough to train other people
Absolutely terrified of: deciding whether to cut off a participant in the midst of a very long emotional speech
CAN DO BUT PREFER NOT TO: Totally improvise on the spot
Greatest inspiration: Latin American activists and activist spaces
MOST COMFORTABLE THEMES: group dynamics and group processes, effective | creative activist practices, non-violent direct action skills, artivism, strategy and collaboration, climate justice
ECSTASY REACHED WHEN: I see people in group work actively discussing while smiling
And lastly,
BEST WAY TO SPEND SUMMER: joining a mass civil disobedience action!

Gee

I've been involved in social movement organising and education since the late 1980's and a core member of the Ulex Project collective since we started. I focus on programme development, training design and delivery, as well as strategic movement capacity building. I've lived for 22 years in an intentional community in a remote part of the Catalan mountains, where our lives and economy are highly collectivised.

I grew up on a new town council housing estate, where we watched the neoliberal demagogues wage their class war, eroding the local community spirit and labour movements my family life had been rooted within. I was indoctrinated into revolutionary Marxism at the age of 14, which gave me tools to make sense of what we were seeing. I was helped to shed that dogma through punk and squatting in London in the early 80's. Then my activism carried me into numerous projects throughout the late 80s and 90's, working on anti-racist initiatives, campaigning against the arms trade, anarcho-ecology, the non-parliamentary activities of the green party (local and national), and the rich and creative networks of the alter-globalisation movement of movements.

Alongside that I studied and trained in Buddhist practices, especially interested in intensive meditation and the ethical challenges of building spiritual community. For many years I was involved in developing projects that brought inner and outer work together (like when our Buddhist 7-aside team beat Class War in the final of Hackney Anarchist Week football tournament).

At the turn of the century I left London and founded the intentional community where I live. Alongside running activist training programmes, I've spent my time facilitating organisational change and strategy processes, and developing a holistic and regenerative approach to activist psychosocial resilience. Facilitating large scale network and movement strategy inspired development of the Ecology of Social Movements approach, which underpins my current work.

Hilal Demir (SHE/HER)

I am a trainer with 24 years of experience. I have worked in Turkey (the place of my birth) and Europe (where I live now). I decided to become a trainer after experiencing my first training in Germany. To me it was a life-changing experience because for the first time in my life I experienced that we can form a space where our ideals can be put into practice in a short time. At those times, there was no training practices in Turkey. My small anti-war group and I were the first ones to use these practices. I had my 2-year training for trainers experience from two German trainers who were in Turkey to support my group.

Five friends from this anti-war group formed the first trainer collective in Turkey and started to introduce nonviolent training concepts to political organisations and activists. At those times we were particularly working with nonviolent concepts. Participatory experiential learning tools meant nonviolence for us. Each training we delivered was a teaching experience because we didn't have any previous examples. After becoming part of War Resisters' International, I started to travel and learn from other contexts, other training styles and had the opportunity to work with very diverse groups and contexts.

My own training style is based on David Kolb's experiential learning style, the hand-heart-mind cycle. I still use this approach quite often though now after

gaining a lot of experiences and privilege to work with many other trainers now I am more adaptive and use other approaches as well such as the Freirean approach. I see trainings as opportunities to put our values into practice so for me the process becomes as equally as important as content. A participant once called me a process-focused trainer, and I think that's true. I have trained in many topics; transformative group processes, nonviolent communication, nonviolent action, conflict transformation, consensus decision making, gender, privilege and strategising on all levels (organisation, action, campaign, movement). In recent years I became more engaged with movement level strategy trainings.

My political problem with 'power-over' also shapes my training style. It is important for me to put myself at an equal level with participants, even though I have power as a trainer, but the group also has power over me. So it is a process of learning and living, and it happens in all directions, not only from trainer to participant.

Jeroen Robbe (HE/HIM)
I have been involved in grassroots social movements for two decades now, starting back when I was fifteen. During this time, I have been active in several groups and even more campaigns. Throughout the years the fights for 'climate justice' and 'migrant justice' have been consistently on top of the list of struggles I want to dedicate myself to. Finding myself within such struggles in a position of privilege, I spend a lot of time reflecting on what solidarity really looks like. It's a work in progress, but part of my answer has been choosing a commitment to fight for deep systemic change, rather than settling for limited reforms that leave the most affected behind.

A key transformative moment for me was reading Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire's revolutionary pedagogy gave me a language to support the creation of emancipatory learning environments, rooted in a desire for collective liberation. Soon after my journey into the world of Freirean popular education started, I quickly fell in love with its cousin, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Few tools offer a similar powerful opportunity to both explore oppression and discover strategies for change.

Inspired by the possibilities of these methodologies, I started an organization with a friend, back in 2013: LABO vzw. We're based in Belgium, where we are a catalyst for critical citizenship. Our leaderful crew supports grassroots groups with training, while also running some of our own campaigns. Since we got started I've been exploring Direct Education, Deep Democracy and The Work That Reconnects to add new resources to my trainer's toolbox.

Always committed to seeing our movements grow, I've been increasingly interested in 'organising traditions' in the last few years. At the same time I made a choice to focus moron questions on strategy (how do we win?), while making an effort to move beyond the activist bubble without losing sight on my deeply rooted values. Building on current best practices and historical lessons, I nowadays combine training work with supporting groups in developing stronger campaign strategies as a consultant. As a trainer, I love to combine embodied work with heavy chunks of theory, while I tend to laugh with my own jokes first. And oh yes, be warned: don't be surprised if I end a session with a group song as a closure. If we don't sing, we're probably not yet ready for a revolution!

Marina Tota (SHE/HER)

I am an educator, organizer, campaigner, and researcher with a background in psychology and education and 10 years' international experience in facilitating learning and change processes with civil society groups, organisations and movements in Europe, Africa, Asia and Central America.

Originally from Italy, I have studied different universities in Italy, UK, US, Spain and Denmark and researched the intersection between education and democracy and the crucial role education plays in forming democratic citizens.

My pedagogical philosophy is influenced by Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy and popular education, John Dewey of democratic and progressive education, Grundtvig's Danish Folk High Schools among others. I believe that education is inherently political and in contexts of social injustice, education needs to side with the 'oppressed' in order to transform society.

For five years, I have coordinated trainings, MEL and Research of ActionAid's Global Platforms, a network of activist training centres around the world. I worked in Ghana, where I developed the capacity of activists to lead campaigns for social and environmental justice, and facilitated the creation of national and international activist networks such as Activista Ghana and the African Creative Action Network. Living and working in different countries and with diverse people, I realised how relations are socially constructed and how my identity of white cis woman with a middle-class background affected my levels of power and privilege depending on contexts and the people around. As a trainer, I strive to be aware of how I hold my power and privilege in learning and movement spaces and actively challenge systems of oppression.

Currently, I serve as Executive Director of the European Community Organizing Network (ECON), where I lead strategic organisational development for and strengthen the organizing capacity, solidarity and sustainability of the organizing movement in Europe.

Steve Hughes (HE/HIM)

I am an organiser and trainer with two and half decades of experience. I have worked in the United States (the place of my birth) and Europe (the place where my wife and children are from) and bring a decidedly transnational viewpoint to my work. I often find myself working at the intersection of education and movement power-building in both the US and Europe.

One of the most formative experiences on the path of my own political development was the work I did, along with many others, in organising to shut down the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999. At that time, I was fully immersed in the horizontalist movement culture of the era, but I was also drawn to working in the labour movement. I worked as a union organiser for seven years. This work sparked in me a deep understanding of the value that movement leadership can and should play. As an organiser, I was always on the lookout for workers who exercised leadership qualities in their workplaces and communities. In this organising context, the folks who usually stepped into this role were not the people who carried my identities (i.e. a white, heterosexual, cis

man). More often than not, the people who played decisive leadership roles in union organising campaigns were folks whose view was shaped from their places at the margins – women, people of colour, and people with different sexual and gender identities.

From my days as a student organiser, I was already heavily influenced by the pedagogical approach of Paulo Freire. My own learning style is best defined by his idea of praxis. I don't have advanced university degrees, but rather I have been working in the field for many years and I have been engaged in my own cycle of reflection and action that informs my work and the things that I bring to the table as a trainer. I believe that the role that we have as trainers is to create containers that allow people to draw their own conclusions and to 'write themselves into the story.' With that in mind, I have a penchant for storytelling (learned from both my family background as well as my training as an organiser). I also love to bring jokes and laughter into the training environment. I am most comfortable using a blend of theoretical content, stories, and simulated exercises that pose real-to-life organising challenges which allow training participants to develop their own capacity to think and act strategically in their work. I am least comfortable in any training environment defined by rigidity, memorisation, or a lack of curiosity and genuine emotion.

And the organisations behind them….

Econ
ECON is a network of progressive movements, organisations, and groups engaged in community organising in Europe towards social and environmental justice. ECON enables them to build people power, organising capacity, strengthen international solidarity, and support the sustainability of the community organising sector.

LABO vzw
LABO is a Belgian-based NGO with a focus on critical citizenship. The organisation offers trainings rooted in a range of emancipatory traditions such as Freirean popular education, Theatre of the Oppressed, The Work that Reconnects and others. One of the main aims of LABO is to support grassroots groups and social movements in their work, by offering tailor-made trainings. LABO also runs its own campaigns, selecting issues with a potential to build bridges and strengthen often overlooked communities or struggles.

Ulex
Ulex Project is an international training organisation based in Catalunya, Spain. We live at a time where social and ecological challenges require a shift from atomised individualism to networks of solidarity. It implies a new collectivity which still honours individuality. It requires cooperation balanced with autonomy. Ulex thrives on connectivity and seeks to be a reference for value-based collaboration. Ulex works with numerous individuals and organisations to design and deliver our training programme. We establish partnerships with organisations across Europe and internationally. We bring diverse groups and individuals together in

learning communities. We support organisations, groups, and individuals to foster collaborations, build networks, share experience, and deepen movement resilience through meaningful connection.

Zelena Akcija

Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan and voluntary association of citizens for environmental protection. We were founded in 1990 and are based in Zagreb. The aim of our work is to protect the environment and nature, and to encourage the development towards a low-carbon society while being guided by the principles of social justice and systemic change. We achieve our goals through nonviolent direct action, campaigning, and education, and we work jointly between our professional and volunteer teams. Since 2015 we have been offering trainings for activists and other civil society organisations on various themes, under the umbrella of the 'School of Sustainability'. By using a holistic approach, we seek answers to systemic challenges and place emphasis on reflection and strengthening the ties for personal and collective empowerment. We believe that educators and facilitators, who are also activists, play a crucial role in social movements, as they increase the ability for meaningful social action.

Towards a leaderful pedagogy: Stories, learnings and inspiration by trainers, for trainers

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