

LEADERFUL ORGANISING

a competency and learning framework
A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND ORGANISERS

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A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a dense forest of bare trees. The branches are dark and intricate, creating a complex web against a pale, overcast sky. In the middle ground, a person is seen climbing a tree trunk, adding a sense of scale and activity to the scene. A solid red horizontal band is overlaid across the center of the image, containing the word "INTRODUCTION" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

This publication offers a broad outline of what we understand by leaderful organising. It explores some of the specific challenges leaderful organising aims to address and then unpacks the key competences and methods needed to achieve it. Finally, we'll explore a framework to support the development of the competences and capabilities needed to put leaderful organising into practice.


For many activists and organisers who identify with the values of social and environmental justice, the idea of "exercising power" is viewed as problematic. Our research found a connection between hesitations around the idea of power and a reluctance to embrace the concept of leadership across movements in Europe. Leaderfulness aims to respond to the movement discourses on leadership and the tendencies to reject power, hierarchies and pursue "leaderlessness", which often results in movements limiting their impact in the long term. We propose a framework to build a shared understanding of leaderfulness as a strategic approach to distribute power and leadership in movements in ways that enable effective, accountable and agile collective action for social transformation.

Our research suggests that the first use of the term 'leaderful' was by Patrisse Cullors, one of co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US. Cullors mentioned in an interview that Black Lives Matter may not have a leader, but the movement isn't leaderless. "We're a leaderful

movement," she said. Nevertheless, there does not appear to have been any substantial effort to try to theorise 'leaderfulness' or unpack the implications for its effective practice. With this publication and the accompanying curriculum and handbook, we hope to fill that gap of theory and practice.

Given the depth of the challenges facing our societies today, we believe that supporting an enriched understanding of the issues and practices associated with leaderful organising are crucially important for our social movements.





1.0 Making sense of Leaderful Organising

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MAKING SENSE OF LEADERFUL ORGANISING

Our work on *leaderful organising* has grown out of concrete challenges facing social movements, activists, and civil society organisers. It starts from the assumption that *organising* plays an important and necessary role in social change towards more just and ecologically intelligent societies. It then suggests that the most effective (and ethically coherent) way of organising is what here we are calling a *leaderful* approach. In this section we'll unpack what we mean by *organising* and explore the broad theory of change it assumes, before going on to explore the concept of *leaderfulness*.

1.1 Organising: A theory of social change

We start with the recognition that change is needed. We are living during a historic period that is characterised by a plurality of profound social and ecological problems. The neoliberal socio-economic system, that was globally dominant through the last 40 years, has hyper-charged problems that have been gradually compounded over a long historical process of extractivist economics, prioritising profits over people, and ignoring ecological limits. Alongside the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and habitat, and the impact of these on communities across the planet, we are also witnessing increases in economic inequalities, declines in public partici-

pation in civic life, a political class and system bereft of legitimacy, and opening up space for the resurgence of far right and authoritarian tendencies. We believe that to address these challenges, deep structural socio-economic change is needed. Building capacity to influence and achieve that change involves *organising*.

Purposive collective action

Social change is highly complex. It involves shifts in consciousness, material changes, new social practices and structures, as well as changes in values and culture. It isn't always driven by intentional action or human agency. Environmental factors have played an important role, as have the unintended consequences of human activity and choices. All of this should lead us to recognise that there are no simple linear causal relationships between action and social transformations. Those of us who have contributed time and energy to projects seeking to influence social change will surely recognise some of our experiences reflected in the words of William Morris, when he wrote in 1886,

"I pondered all these things, and how people fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other people have to fight for what they meant under another name."

Nevertheless, despite these caveats, the important role of large-scale collective action in social change remains clear. Social systems reproduce themselves, usually in the interests of those with power and who most benefit from the existing system. But just as social systems are reproduced and maintained by specific interests, so too, there are almost always efforts to change them by those who are disadvantaged. When people experience harm and injustice against them, they will try to do something about it, they will try to resist injustice and reduce the harm they are

subjected to. As Manuel Castells writes in his book *The Power of Identity* (2003):

“Following an old law of social evolution, resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the... existing order.”

This resistance involves groups of people coming together, recognising shared interests and grievances, and beginning to develop projects aimed at changing the social conditions that they recognise as disadvantaging them. Castells sees this process, when it happens at the scale needed for deeper structural transformation as the constitution of social movements, which he describes as:

“Purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society.” (2003)

Social movements have proven difficult to define, but a sense of shared purpose, intention and some degree of coordinated effort seem to be consistent characteristics. The social scientist Donatella Della Porta says that *“we have a social movement dynamic going on when single episodes of collective action are perceived as components of a longer-lasting action, rather than discrete events; and when those who are engaged in them feel linked by ties of solidarity and of ideal communion with protagonists of other analogous mobilizations.”* (1999). Similarly, Mario Diari, in a definition that offers a synthesis of a wide range of social scientific research, defines a social movement as, *“a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity.”* (1992)

Social movements build power to influence social change by bringing people together, shaping a sense of shared purpose, and providing op-

portunities to coordinate and combine their efforts. For us, *organising* is synonymous with the activities involved in building that sense of collective purpose and agency, as social movements. It includes the efforts and structures needed to bring individuals together into formal and informal groups, communities and organisations and the coordination and cooperation that happens between these groups.

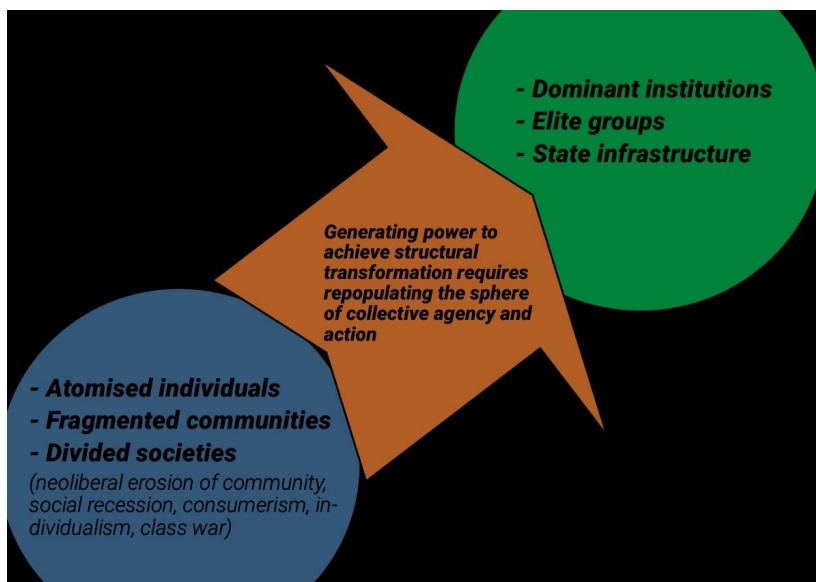
Repopulating the sphere of community and collective life

Developing the capacity for purposive collective action today is especially difficult. It has become commonplace to note that across Europe we have seen increasing social atomisation, alienation, and diminishing levels of civic participation. In large part this is the legacy of neoliberalism, which largely followed Margaret Thatcher’s view that there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. Many of the associations and institutions that supported social movements of the recent past have been disaggregated or dismantled. Individualism has come to predominate over more community-oriented values. Studies have led to the recognition of a ‘social recession’, in which fewer people engage in voluntary associations and community led activities. (Putnam, 2001) At the same time, a growing sense of disenfranchisement and disillusion with the political sphere has led to an increasing abnegation of responsibility for the collective dimensions of social life, from economic systems to community-based activities.

The way the neoliberal socio-economic system is shaped creates gradients which make it harder to find collective and community-based solutions to our problems and easier to fall towards individualistic strategies for survival and security, while relying on the efforts of elites and those holding political and economic power to assume responsibility for our historical trajectory. This has ensured a self-perpetuating tendency towards greater atomisation and disaggregation, leaving many of us separated and isolated from each other in many ways. While these patterns make us weaker and less able to wield influence, at the same time, elite groups, the wealthy and privileged, the institutions of the state, corporations and

business communities coordinate together to consolidate power quite effectively. While the relationship between these elite groups is not without tensions and internal conflict, they are often maintained well enough to protect their key interests and power.

The process of disaggregation and atomisation has contributed to a loss of the skills needed to organise collaboratively. Historically, these were often acquired through intergenerational transmission of experience and surviving oral histories, and supported continuity of movement values and tactics. But the interruption of these social processes has left a deficit in skills that sits alongside the shift in attitudes (from more communitarian to individualistic). With this in mind, it is necessary to recognise the role that education and learning play in empowering active participation in collective initiatives and building social movements. IN this sense, nurturing the attitudes, skills and knowledge required to empower purposive collective action is also an aspect of organising.



Capacity for impact

For us, organising plays a role of motivating and empowering people to take greater responsibility for their lives through recognising how power dynamics within society shape social relationships and that challenging those dynamics through *purposive collective action* is needed in order to reshape them in more just and democratic forms.

With this in mind, our conception of *purposive collective action* or *organising* is necessarily broad. Deeper social change happens through the interplay of numerous factors. Historical contingencies and the complexity of change means that none of them can be assumed, *a priori*, to be primary and any of them can be more or less relevant depending on context, which is always changing (often unpredictably). We have seen that social change can involve influence from the bottom up and the top down; it can include shifts in consciousness and changes in material conditions; it involves work to reform existing institutions and the creation of alternatives that occupy space ‘outside the system’; it can involve both confrontational rupture and collaborative reform.

Consequently, in our view, effective organising and social movement building involves a wide range of different types of contributions, organisational types, and skills and talents. We’ll unpack this range in more detail in a later section exploring categorising competences and capabilities. But to offer an initial sketch of the range of activity we consider falling within the broad ambit of organising, it can be useful to point towards a few of the key capabilities that social movements and social change organisations or groups require to achieve effective impact. Building on the work of Zeynep Tufekci, the Ulex Project operates with a social movement capacities framework that includes:

Narrative capacity: Movements need to be able to tell stories, especially stories about how we got here and where we want to be heading. This is about analysis of the conditions that give rise to the injustices and problems we want to address. It’s also about our vision, our goals, and what we can do to achieve them. Social move-

ments are built on a sense of empowering connection, so narrative capability includes telling the story of who we are and being able to articulate the sense of purpose and shared commitment that underpin collective agency.

Disruptive capacity: This is often the most visible manifestations of movement capability, and what is most easily recognisable to an onlooking public. It includes a wide range of actions that disrupt the functioning of the systems we challenge: strike action, boycotts, occupations, mass demonstrations that transgress the rules of the game, the wide-ranging tactics of nonviolent direct action, and of course riots or rebellion. They put the system under pressure, raising the cost of its everyday activities, escalating tensions, signalling power, and generating leverage for demands.

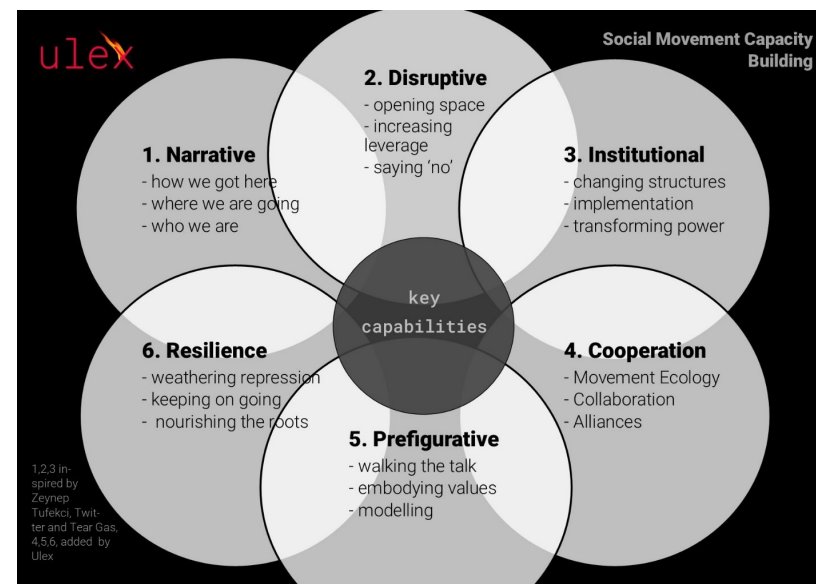
Institutional capacity: Where social movements achieve disruptive capability but lack an institutional capability, they usually fail to achieve systemic change. Whether this is in the form of a *political relay* or intention engagement with state institutions or the construction of alternative institutions on scale, this capability is needed to translate narrative and disruptive power into sustained structural transformation.

Prefigurative capacity: On the long journey of social transformation, it is important that we don't lose sight of the value and power of ensuring that the ways we organise embody, as best we can, the kind of new social relations we strive for. Prefigurative capacity is about walking the talk. More than this, prefigurative capability involves the creation of the social contexts needed for nurturing shifts in consciousness and our own growth. Prefiguration generates crucial opportunities for the experimentation and action-learning needed to guide our aspirations.

Resilience: Social movements see high levels of burnout and the consequent haemorrhaging of talent and knowledge. Building capacity for resilience strengthens the ability of activists, organisations, and movements, to endure and maintain stability under duress, build flexibility, learning and adaptation into their approach, and to build the power and collective agency to achieve structural changes in society, that derives from a diverse range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and political practices.

Capacity for cooperation and coordination: All of these capabilities imply a wide range of action and actors within our movements, a multiplicity of contributions. Cooperation helps us to ensure that they add up to more than just the sum of the parts. This is about coordinating, working with a sense of context and potential complementarity. It can involve formal and informal alliances and coalitions.

These six capabilities are social movement attributes. No single organisation needs to be able to do all of these things, but across the *ecology of social movements* the entire range is important (Ulex, 2023). In addition to these movement capacities, each organisation and group also requires a range of capabilities specific to its own function and activity. These will include capability for making decisions effectively, resourcing activities, etc. Organising includes both the activities involved in coordinating and building movement capabilities and building capacity at the local and organisational level. Again, we'll unpack all this more fully in a later section on competences and capabilities.



Traversing political strategies

Organising, just like social movement building, is not necessarily aligned to any specific political tradition. Historically and today, we can see the methods and tools of organising used by both progressive and reactionary actors, as well as those from the historical left and right. The authors of this framework are committed to the use of organising skills to build capacity for socially just and ecologically restorative transformations. Our value base is largely liberatory and socialist in orientation. This value base does have certain implications for how we see effective organising being done, especially in the ways that organising contributes towards the nurturing of people and cultures of mutual respect and empowerment. But even if we restrict our interest in promoting organising broadly towards left-liberatory practice, there is still a wide political field within which the kind of organising we champion can be applied.

Drawing on the work of Eric Olin Wright (2010), we can cluster strategies for socially just structural transformation under three headings: 1. strategies that involve reforming the existing system by working with and within current structures (e.g. social democratic initiatives and political parties), 2. strategies that seek to build alternatives outside the existing system or in the gaps and cracks that run through it (e.g. anarchist and autonomous organising initiatives), and 3. those that seek to directly confront and break the existing system so that something new can arise (revolutionary movements).

Our view is that all of these types of transformative strategies have played and continue to play an important historical role. Just how decisive any of them will be is highly contingent on circumstances and difficult to predict. As a result, we are reluctant to lean into any one of these strategic approaches as a preference. Instead, we seek to provide support to people engaged in any of them for the benefit of social and ecological justice, believing that a diverse range of approaches within social movements will help to build flexible capabilities able to be responsive under changing and unpredictable circumstances. The one thing we consider as important across all of these strategic approaches, is the importance of the capacity for collective action.

The current system supports the interests of elite groups and dominant institutions, whose interests are tied to the damaging structural irrationalities and dysfunctional tendencies of the system. We can assume that these groups will resist

and delay any processes of structural transformation that challenge their interests. But we don't have that much time. The climate and environmental crisis we face has non-negotiable limits, while inequality and injustice stifle and damage lives daily. So, we urgently need to build the power to challenge the intransigence of those in power and to really contest our future in the interests of the whole ecological web of life. To do this we need to increase our capacity for collective action and movement building. This is what we mean when we talk about *organising*.

1.2 Leaderfulness: Addressing core challenges facing social movements

If organising is about building capacity for purposive collective action aimed at influencing social transformation, why should it be leaderful? And what is leaderfulness anyway?

Leaderfulness is an antidote. It offers a solution to two related problems:

Leadership: of the kind that often leads to entrenched power interests, poor accountability, disempowerment, and traditional hierarchical structures.

Leaderlessness: where social movements and organisations, rejecting traditional forms of leadership adopt 'horizontal' structures in ways that can lack direction, continuity, and coherence.

Leaderfulness critiques and corrects many of the traditional failings of hierarchical and leadership directed organisations, groups, and movements, while avoiding the problems that simply replacing leadership with leaderless (and often structureless) horizontality can lead to.

Hierarchy or horizontality

The Rabble and Mutual Aid

Our relationship to authority and our assumptions about how groups and communities need to be structured are largely conditioned by our early socialisation. Our families, schools, workplaces, and forms of government tend to predispose us to certain types of social organisation. IN many dominant cultures today, leadership by the few is encouraged, while most abnegate their potential social responsibility, as initiative is carefully circumscribed. These ways of organising society are not ideologically neutral, despite their attempts to present themselves as simply the way things are. They are underpinned by longstanding assumptions about reality, perpetuate psychological dependency, and affect the way we see the world.

In social theory the tendencies towards top-down control (both at a societal and small group level) has deep roots. The transcendentalist traditions of Platonism and the dualism of the theistic religions all lent themselves to hierarchical models of social control. These strictly dualistic visions of the world flowed into the framework of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm which underpinned scientific thought through the recent centuries, including the political sciences. This dualistic understanding presented nature as brutal and stingy, involving a constant struggle for the survival of the fittest in a hostile and savage world. This view of nature in turn informed the crude 'rabble hypothesis' of society which was developed during the 18th and 19th centuries. This hypothesis sees society as an unstructured aggregate of individual social atoms, pursuing their own ego-centric interests held together only by authority and coercion. The development of liberal-democratic institutions was largely influenced by this thinking rooted in the belief in the need for government to control the people.

Many of our social fears and anxieties are conditioned by this tradition of thought. We can worry that if no one takes control we will find ourselves thrown into the chaotic free for all that we suppose nature to be. We can often unconsciously carry this way of thinking over into our assumptions about the groups we are part of and the organisations we build. The logical and psychosocial implications that are often derived can condition us to shape social groups around clear hierarchies, rules, and controls, to help keep us all in line.

However, we are fortunate to have perspectives which suggest that this is neither the real condition of nature, nor of human social interaction. We are now able, thanks to ecology and other scientific studies of the natural world, to see that mutual aid, collaboration and the complex interactions of symbiosis are more common than competitive struggle for survival in the natural world. We know that human nature is conditioned, and that

the social structures we are surrounded by play a large part in that conditioning. So, we know that humans can engage in conflict and selfish struggle, but in the right context are more likely to co-operate and work together for mutual benefit. We also now have recourse to historical and anthropological studies which reassure us that communities and groups have successfully developed and lived in non-hierarchical social systems.

We can find paradigms in nature and society which offer alternative and ultimately more satisfying ways of understanding social organisation. We can escape our conditioned failure of confidence in the 'rabble' who will simply make a mess if left to their own devices, or worse tear everything apart in their brute selfishness. There is evidence that will help us have faith in the capacity of our ordinary people to organise themselves through mutual support and assistance. It is this view of the potential in human nature that has inspired many utopian, leftist, and anarcho-communist visions for alternative societies.

Sensing this potential, many social movements push against hierarchical forms of social organisation based on control and coercion, aiming to create social relations based on mutual solidarity and empowerment. Given the historical record of social forms of oppression and exploitation, many activists and organisers who identify with the values of social and environmental justice, the idea of "exercising power" is viewed as problematic. They seek to dismantle hierarchical social forms and replace them with approaches that aim to share power more equitably.

These practices and critiques are often rightly wary of hierarchy and the forms of leadership associated with them, moving away from hierarchical forms in their ways of organising towards flat or horizontal forms that share power. This has often resulted in an outright rejection of leadership in favour of 'leaderless' movements. And while this is an un-

derstandable reaction, it has often given rise to new challenges and problems for organisations, groups and movements.

One way to form a picture of the challenges involved is to think about the way that power can be distributed within different groups - and the organisational shapes they suggest.

Pyramids: On the one hand there are more traditional hierarchical organisational structures, where leadership occupies a position at the 'head' of the organisation, from which it directs the activity of everyone below. This is the classic pyramidal shape of command and control, where power is understood to run vertically from top to bottom.

Circles: On the other hand, we find groups and organisations that are grounded on values of equality and empowerment of all, which aim to share power evenly throughout the group, often requiring everyone's agreement to make important decisions. This can be depicted as a circle, like a group of people holding hands, all included equally, and all on the same level. Often this kind of organisation is referred to as horizontal or flat, in contrast to hierarchical or vertically structured.

Both of these organisational patterns can be problematic. The hierarchical form, with traditional forms of leadership, is often associated with abuses of power, forms of exploitation, and the extraction of labour and creativity for the advantage of those higher up in the structure. Within the field of social justice and activism, which focuses efforts on dismantling systems of abusive and oppressive power, this kind of organisation is generally considered to reproduce the very social relationships activists are struggling to replace. As a result, anything that resembles 'leadership' or hierarchy is often viewed with a high degree of suspicion. As a result, many social justice and activist groups adopt the more horizontal or flat structural approach, which is felt to be more closely aligned with values of inclusion and empowerment. But this adopting a contrasting approach is not without its own problems.

Polarity mapping hierarchy and horizontalism

To explore some of these challenges, we'll use a method called polarity mapping. This method can be used to explore a range of binary characteristics and identify the pros and cons of contrasting factors. In this map, for the sake of drawing out the problems as clearly as possible, we'll take the two characteristics of the ways of organising mentioned above in relationship to their decision making and implementation processes, namely: a) horizontal, shared and consensus-based approaches, and b) hierarchical, command and control approaches, and we'll use the polarity mapping grid to list pros and cons.

The following polarity map is populated with the suggestions that we have harvested through working with activists and organisers over many years and represents the way these characteristics are seen within those groups.

Here's an example of a brainstorm using polarity mapping grid:

	Horizontal / consensus-based approaches	Hierarchical top down approaches
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflect ethical values and principles of equality and inclusion - Whole is more than the sum of the parts - emergent collective wisdom, draws on rich diversity of experience - Empowerment: participants grow in skill, understanding and confidence through active participation and deliberative process - Builds and promotes a culture of mutual respect - Nurtures capacity for dialogue and collaboration - Creates alignment of energy - Buy-in leads to good implementation - Power-with and non-coercive - New solutions emerge from synergy - Builds shared understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast - Decisive - Provides clear sense of purpose and strong vision or inspiration - Offers continuity of vision over time - Most responsible or best informed make the call - Draws on expertise and experience - Offers clarity of role and responsibility - Clear decision making responsibility can mean clear accountability - Supports initiative taking and entrepreneurial spirit - Determines the right level of inclusion depending on decision to be made - Offers a sense of security and reassurance
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excessively focused on process at expense of task - Process can be very slow and confusing - Indecisive and fails to arrive at agreement or clear outcomes - Decisions resulting from compromise are mediocre and half-hearted - Poor follow up or commitment to implementation, when no one really feels ownership of decision - Easily gets stuck in conflict - Hidden power structures and hierarchies persist - No-one feels free to take initiative and creativity drains away - People use their 'power' to block and inhibit each other, which leads to frustration and a feeling of disenfranchisement - Too many voices lead to lack of clear direction - Poor sense of continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coercive and uses power-over - Dominating and disempowering - Maintain a system of advantage and disadvantage - There is low sense of ownership of direction and poor buy-in or commitment - Out of touch solutions (choked information flow) - Rigidity and lack of responsiveness - time lag awareness - Demands self-sacrifice - Conflict and resentment - Energy expended in 'resistance' - People are fearful of expressing themselves and feedback breaks down, trust is eroded - Little sense of unity, competitive mindset infects all levels

What do we discover from this kind of polarity mapping exercise? When we ask activists and people involved in social justice organising what they value about horizontal, shared and consensus-based approaches or what it looks like when it goes well, they tell us:

Horizontal: The pros

Flat organisational structures are intended to dismantle power imbalances and reject the use of power to dominate others. More positively, this is often understood to be a way to champion and express the values of equity and inclusion and to help to build cultures of mutual respect. Through the inclusion of everyone in important decision making, power is shared and the process can include and benefit from the rich and diverse experience of the entire group or community. This inclusion enables people to feel valued and they can grow in confidence, as they also acquire skills in dialogue and deliberative discussions around issues. Dialogue and sharing of diverse views and experiences strengthens relationships, deepens mutual understanding, and builds trust. By including everyone in the decision making, the process helps people to find deeper alignment with each other and to really get fully behind decisions that they themselves have been involved in building. As a consequence, the investment people feel leads to committed implementation of plans and activities.

Horizontal: The cons

With experience of these ways of organising, we also find it easy to recognise that when it doesn't go well there are many ways in which it can fall short. When it doesn't go so well, we can feel that we become bogged down in long drawn out processes, where the deliberative process displaces the actual tasks and purpose we are trying to fulfil. The diversity of voices and ways of thinking can create confusion. Through our attempts to integrate so many diverse positions and preferences we find that we are unable to come to any agreement at all. And when we do they are so

full of compromise that no-one is really happy with the outcome. This means that no-one really feels behind the decisions and are unwilling to invest time and energy in carrying them out. By opening up the discussion and giving everyone a say, we can get stuck in conflicts. It is common for people to feel blocked by other people's objections and the loss of autonomy can be frustrating and stifle creativity. As different people pass through groups that (in efforts to embody inclusivity) are relatively open to participation, we can experience a lack of continuity of vision or follow through on decisions. And, while we claim to be horizontal, all too often hidden cliques still call the shots from the shadows and hierarchical power dynamics remain, only less visibly than before.

Hierarchy: The cons

When asked about hierarchical organisational approaches, it is common for activists to take a polarised view. In terms of the polarity map, they'll look diagonally from a position of valuing all the positives of horizontal organising towards the negative aspects of hierarchical organising. As a result, they'll tend to emphasise:

Often those with power use it in ways that are felt as dominating and coercive. Differences of power are used to maintain (and often entrench) systems of advantage and disadvantage. People lower down the pyramid find their influence diminished and potency undermined. As a consequence, apart from the factors that oblige them to contribute, they can feel very little voluntary alignment or personal identification with the purpose or activities organisation. The need to channel information from a broad organisational body to the 'head', creates time lags in processing information, as well as a limit on the amount of information that can be processed, leading to a lack of responsiveness and poorly informed decision making. Throughout the organisation, everyone is expected to sacrifice preferences and wishes to the directive of the hierarchy, which impacts well-being and motivation. When power is used over others, resentments

can build and power struggles arise. Increasing amounts of energy are expended in resisting domination, often expressing itself as latent or explicit conflict, which cannot be adequately resolved within the terms of the existing structure. Intransigence and lack of power to hold the leadership accountable erode trust, make people fearful, and undermine the necessary conditions for healthy feedback within the social system. The social body lacks unity and often competitiveness for benefits and climbing the ladder come to predominate.

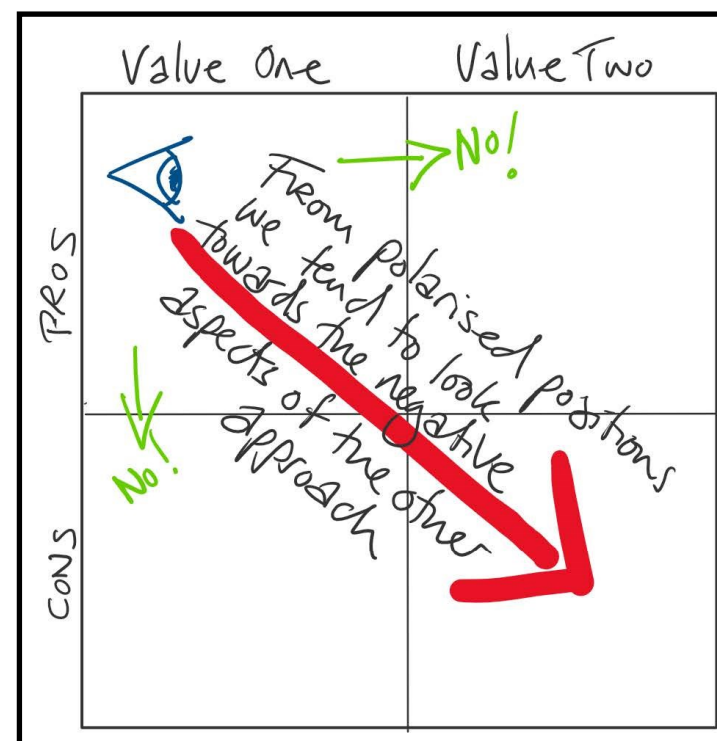
Hierarchy: The pros

However, when pushed a little, they can also be encouraged to name some of the positive attributes of a hierarchical structure, identifying certain valuable attributes when things go well:

In contrast to the sometimes slow and deliberative quality of large group consensus decision making, where power to decide is invested in a small leadership group or individual, decision making can be fast and decisive. Leaders can hold and transmit vision and support the continuity and inspiration of clear purpose and sense of direction. Instead of weighing every opinion equally, the views of those with proven experience and authority grounded in expertise are given structural priority. The hierarchical structure offers clearly defined areas and limits of responsibility, which can help people to know what they are responsible for and where accountability lies. At the top and within clearly bounded fields of authority, the pyramidal system can encourage and allow initiative taking and entrepreneurialism. Leadership doesn't preclude the involvement of others in decision making and higher and lower levels of inclusion can be chosen as appropriate to the decisions being made. Some people feel reassured to be part of a clear structure, where authority is held by a few trusted people.

Beyond a polarised view

The purpose of polarity mapping is to help us to avoid viewing the 'opposites' only in terms of their shadows, or only looking diagonally downwards across the polarity. This isn't to say that the negative attributes are only a product of binary and polarised thinking.



Obviously, abusive and exploitative hierarchies are real. Nevertheless, if we remain stuck in polarized ways if seeing things we often see a specific area of practice deteriorating into its own shadow. Where hierarchical approaches only view the negative aspects of more inclusive and horizon-

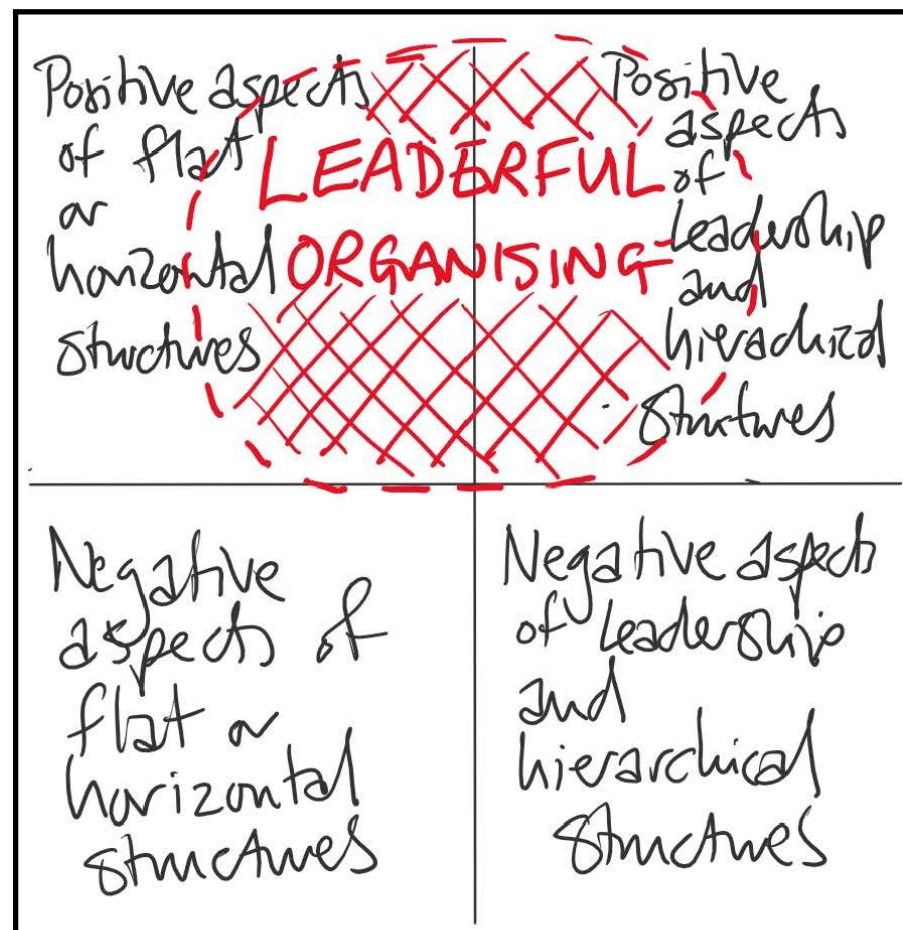
al methods, leadership becomes more distant and insulated from the rest of the organisation. Distrust increases and more and more coercive power or extraneous incentives are needed to keep people in line. Most effective newer management systems in industry and the corporate sector have recognised this and already integrate many practices more closely aligned with horizontal and inclusive practices (albeit almost always still under the overarching directive of serving a leadership and, most importantly, the generation of profit for owners and shareholders who will ultimately call the shots). On the other side, activists closely aligned with horizontal practices and values will often dismiss the benefits of some aspects of hierarchical organising, fixating on the negative impacts of its abusive and exploitative forms. And, while this isn't the only factor leading to the ways that horizontal approaches can fail, the inability to incorporate some of the values and practices developed within hierarchical groups and institutions contributes to the deterioration from a vision of empowered participation to cynical and disillusioned rejection of those ideals.

Polarity mapping encourages us to build bridges in understanding between diverse approaches using both-and-neither thinking. Applying polarity mapping to horizontal and hierarchical organisational approaches can support us to avoid fetishizing either consensus decision making or concentrated authority and support us to use methods appropriate to context and purpose.

Leaderfulness is an attempt to break out from polarised ways of thinking about horizontal and hierarchical ways of organising. It aims to promote the positive qualities of both horizontal and hierarchical approaches, while antidoting the negative attributes. One way of depicting the sphere of leaderful organising on the polarity map as an overlapping sphere that traverses both of the top quadrants like an overlapping in a ven diagram.

However, this doesn't mean that leaderfulness is a simple matter of combining horizontal and hierarchical approaches. Instead, as we begin to

integrate some of these approaches and attitudes we see both approaches being transformed into something new. Before we can begin to develop this new conception of leaderfulness, first we need to take some time to explore the central theme of *power*.



Understanding power

Understanding the idea of leaderfulness is closely related to the ways we understand power. As we've noted, the kinds of people we hope the practice of leaderfulness can support are involved in struggles to challenge unjust and dominating forms of power. This has often led to the rejection of all forms of hierarchy in favour of horizontal forms of organising that are highly suspicious of power as such. But leaderfulness needs to operate with a nuanced understanding of power, which we will discuss in this section.

What is power?

Power is a word pregnant with connotations. For many of us, as a result of the ways power is used oppressively, it carries many negative associations. And yet, if we want to participate in shaping our future, we need to be able to analyse our relationship to power, understand the ways it shapes our lives, and learn how to build the power needed to foster the kind of social relations we aspire to.

Too often we remain vague about how power functions in society and ambivalent about how we might use it. But if we want to champion solidarity over exploitation, or justice over injustice, we need to understand how power is used to dominate and control in the interests of the few, and how we can learn to use power in the service of other positive values.

It can be useful to offer a basic and relatively neutral definition. One suggestion is:

Power: *The ability or capacity to influence people or things.*

This suggests that, starting with this relatively neutral use of the term, we can then begin to ask how can power be used to heal as well as to harm.

"What is needed is a realisation that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

Martin Luther King Jr. 1967. "Where Do We Go From Here?"

How do we respond to power?

Our relationship to power is likely to be conditioned by our personal history. Given the prevalence of dominating forms of power in our lives, within families, educational institutions, and numerous forms of social control or oppression, many people are cautious or fearful when encountering dynamics of power. Some of us carry trauma from experiences of discrimination and prejudice, making us wary of people holding power, while others find stepping into positions of power more comfortable. Still others will either consciously or unconsciously push back and confront power or authority when they see it, sometimes regardless of how it is being used.

To be able to deepen our understanding of power and our relationship to it, it can be important to reflect on our own habitual responses and the variety of strategies we and others adopt in relationship to it. Some of the common patterns we have identified include:

- Complying: Doing what we think those in power want us to do.
- Colluding or allying: Working with those holding power to further their aims (and sometimes our own).
- Manipulate: Avoiding confrontation, but trying to find less visible ways to not align or counter power.
- Resist or confront: Entering conflict with the holders of power and trying to remove or reduce their influence.
- Coopting or taking power: Finding ways to take the power to ourselves.

Noticing how we respond to power held by others can also shed light on the ways we might hold power or relate to being in positions of influence ourselves. Our response will often depend on how we see power being used, whether it appears legitimate or not. All of which are important areas for inquiry as we seek to develop leaderful qualities individually and collectively.

How do we or others use power?

The legitimacy that influence and power have will often relate to how it is perceived as being used. One of the simplest distinctions can be summed up in the distinction between power-over and power-with.

Power-over is where influence is used to dominate, subjugate or ensure compliance, whether this is done explicitly or in subtle and less visible ways.

Power-with is where power is used in the service of shared aims and in solidarity with others.

Another way of describing these differences is to think in terms of power used in a controlling or collaborative way. This distinction need not assume that power is shared equally in a collaborative context, but that its distribution is consented to and being used in the interest of agreed shared purpose. Although power-with is often conflated with sharing power, this might be less relevant in a leaderful context than the ways it is distributed. From a *leaderful* perspective, as we'll see, power-with or collaborative use of power shouldn't necessarily be equated with a horizontal approach that eschews all forms of hierarchy.

What do we do with power?

In many group situations we can see situations where someone uses their influence for the benefit of the group as a whole. But we will also see situations where it is used out of self-interest in ways that are damaging to the

group or undermining a group's ability to achieve a shared purpose. In relation to the purpose of the group, we could think of this as the constructive or destructive use of power. Within groups it can often be difficult to distinguish between these. There might be different priorities or vision of what is beneficial, and only making visible the play of influence, bringing transparency to intentions, and opening up dialogue while always being alert to the risks of controlling or manipulative uses of power can help us to build a shared understanding. Sometimes, what appears to one of us as destructive is being done from a motivation to make a constructive and positive contribution. It becomes vital to develop the self-awareness and group capacity to differentiate whether power is being used in service of the whole (the group or others as well as oneself) or for only self-serving purpose.

The tensions that can arise between individual needs and group needs is one of the gnarliest issue in the life of groups and has a strong bearing on how we see power being used. Often individuals will find themselves asserting their interests against the group or the group suppressing individual needs in favour of the 'common good'. One of the most useful ways we have found to move beyond this binary pattern is to adopt the views and values contained in the advice of systems thinker Donella Meadows, to 'go for the good of the whole'. In Meadow's approach, the good of the whole depends on the wellbeing of the parts, each part can be understood as a whole in itself, and each whole is usually a part of a larger whole. While a shift in the way we see things does not eradicate material limits or the incompatibility of some needs, it can help to guide our use of power individually and collectively with greater insight and care. For this reason, we often consider that the highest guiding value for the use of power in a leaderful approach is using power 'for the good of the whole.'

Types of power

Power not only carries many connotations, it also takes many forms. It can be helpful to differentiate between these different types of power. Power can be seen as deriving from personal qualities, it can stem from position or roles, and it also relates importantly to social structures and historical relationships. Often these types of power interact and enhance each other, functioning in complex constellations rooted in social and personal histories. But it can be useful to name a few of them in order to improve our ability to analyse and understand how power is experienced and functions.

Personal power

Often, we'll encounter people who seem to carry influence as result of a range of what are experienced as personal qualities. This is not to say that the possession of these qualities can be separated out from the social contexts or opportunities that have shaped them. Nevertheless, we will often see those conditions coalescing in character and qualities of individuals. Some of the more common types of personal power we might encounter are:

- **Psychological qualities:** A certain weight of character, confidence, or consistency can give rise to influence. Often these qualities arise as a result of psychological processes of integration or a personal history in which someone has been affirmed and supported to be in a positive psychological relationship to themselves. Sometimes these qualities are hard won through struggle and difficulties.
- **Mental and emotional qualities:** Clarity and the ability to analyse and articulate ideas lends weight to peoples contributions. Similarly, a degree of emotional intelligence and capacity to empathise and support others elicits respect and trust.
- **Ethical integrity:** When people are witnessed acting with ethical integrity, they often gain the trust of others and their influence can increase in some situations.
- **Expertise and experience:** Specific knowledge and experience will

often grant influence, sometimes appropriately, sometimes not.

- **Motivational qualities:** The ability to inspire and share vision is often seen as a typical leadership quality. It often relates to someone's own sense of purpose along with the ability so share that in ways that elicit affective responses in others.
- **Physical strength and aggressivity:** Simple physical power and the willingness to use force are obviously one way that influence can be wielded.
- **Charisma:** Although often considered to be the attribute of individuals, studies of charismatic leadership point towards the way the impression of someone is actually socially generated through the stories told about them and the construction of their persona by a group. In some ways, many of the above qualities interact with such processes, and influence derives from a mix of personal qualities and the ways these are experienced and represented within a specific social context.

Positional power

Often power and influence don't derive from personal qualities but as a result of holding certain roles or being in specific kinds of social relationships. We might also think of this as a kind of contextual power. Some examples might include:

- **Holding certain roles or bureaucratic power:** By holding a certain position in an organisation someone is granted a specific range of authority. As a facilitator one holds a certain power by virtue of the role. A police officer doesn't hold personal power (although they can wield their positional power for personal reasons), their power derives from the social and institutional position.
- **Being in a position to reward and coerce:** Being in a position to reward or coerce is a type of power. Having access to the resources to punish certain action or to offer benefits to those who conform or

align. This can be circumstantial or as a result of certain structural injustices.

- **Association:** One's relationship to others is a type of power. This could take the form of nepotism or it could be the way a group of close associates ally in group situations to reinforce each other's position.
- **Mainstreams and margins:** In most social groups, of whatever scale, certain values and way of doing things or communicating can constitute a mainstream of more accepted or valued behaviour. This often bestows a certain power to those who conform to or are part of the mainstream. It also necessitates the creation of margins, whose power is often suppressed or manifests as a very different sort of power.

The way that power is granted to roles and positions within organisations is one of the things that is likely to distinguish leaderful organisations from those that operate in the mode of power-over. Distribution of power requires investing people and roles with an appropriate degree of authority. Clarity about how authority is granted, whether it is earned, collectively granted, acknowledged or not are crucial distinctions.

Social and structural power

All of these forms of power (personal and positional) sit within the broader context of social and structural forms of power that have been built, sustained and challenged throughout human history. Today, our work together sits within a global and historical system of interlocking power relations and forms of oppression. These shape the material, relational, and psychological conditions that influence every one of us, our lives, and our organisations.

Oppression and active solidarity

Within progressive movements for social justice, a lot of light has been shone on the way these dynamics play out in our groups. Tackling them is

often described as *anti-oppression work* or, more positively, the practices of *active solidarity, equity and empowerment*. Active solidarity can refer to *all the work that has to do with naming, identifying, deconstructing and transforming existing power dynamics related to the systems of oppression we live within* - capitalism, white supremacy, ageism, ableism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and others.

In this context, 'oppression' refers to the *systems of structural power that have been established historically and give certain constituted groups of people influence and dominance over and at the expense of others*. These systems of power are *structural* in the sense that they are built into and perpetuated through *specific institutions and reinforcing cultural norms*.

These institutions can include forms of government, education systems, economic structures, religions, and laws. And within our groups, they show up in the ways decisions are made, how power is distributed, our economic relationships, and the ways certain voices are valued over others.

Institutional structures tend to embody particular beliefs about the world and humanity, which often coalesce as ideologies. Whereas ideologies are generally conscious, social systems are also underpinned by less conscious preferences and assumptions which manifest through cultural norms (for example through the performance of gender roles or individualistic competitiveness). Through the process of socialisation we unconsciously internalise these norms in ways that both shape who we are and that further reproduce them throughout society.

Institutions and cultural norms tend to reinforce what is widely *accepted and valued within a society*. Obvious examples include the way that traditional capitalist societies promoted the social norm of heterosexual marriage both as a cultural bias and by inscribing its value in preferential le-

gal and economic structures, or the way that the preferencing of able-bodiedness can be seen both in the stigma associated with non-normative bodies and in the development of architecture that has often failed to meet diverse mobility needs. (This is not to ignore incredible gains won by activists in these areas, in recent years).

The interplay between institutions and cultural norms can serve to reproduce oppressive structures all the way from explicit material conditions (like economic inequality) right down to our innermost thoughts and feelings (like self-worth and confidence). Those who do not conform to these norms, experience oppression in the sense that *they are not afforded the levels of influence, opportunity, investment and attention (privileges)* often given to those who do conform to them. Along with this they may be stigmatised, subjected to subtle or explicit forms of exclusion, scapegoating and hatred or regarded as legitimate victims of violence or discrimination.

Active solidarity involves proactive engagement in deconstructing and transforming oppression and privilege at multiple levels - personal, interpersonal, socio-cultural and institutional. It involves becoming aware of how intersecting power dynamics play out in our groups and the development of skills to transform them in ways that can enhance empowerment and fuller participation for us all. It aims at building a culture of care and spaces for transformation and growth, rather than taking a self-righteous approach to 'cancelling' or undermining others in ways that fragment and reproduce mistrust. The practice of active solidarity aims to empower each other more, not less!

Within all of our groups (in one way or another) forms of oppression connected with the wider systems of oppression will show up unavoidably. Due to their pervasive and historic nature, they will often bring significant pain with them. They will produce visible or invisible dynamics connected with social privilege, influence, power and entitlement. But in addition to

these, every group will include other specific experiences, norms, values and the dynamics related to subcultures, organisational types, and individual psychology. Systemic oppression is not the only factor influencing the relationality and culture of a group, and there are many ways that systemic oppression intersects with accrued influence, rank, and other kinds of power dynamics that can make matters complex to navigate! All of this points to the need to develop nuanced skills for working creatively with these issues.

Active solidarity is a transformative practice requiring both energy and patience. We need to be able to recognise that oppression is doing real and immediate harm, that must be addressed through acknowledgement and accountability, *and* that deep transformation of these tendencies is a long-term process that also involves mistakes, forgiveness, developing emotional literacy and a gradual deepening of mutual understanding.

Structural power, social reproduction, and hegemony

At the societal level, the way power functions is complex. Under some circumstances *power-over* or forms of domination are easily identified. We see blatant use of coercion and force by the police or judicial system, incarcerating, excluding, repressing. Under *despotic* regimes it is obvious how violence or the threat of violence inspires fear and conformity. Concentrated authoritarian power demands obedience and subjugation. But across Europe and in many other countries today we see a far more intricate interplay of power and influence. Rather than *despotic* regimes we see what we can call *hegemonic* systems, which, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, can be described as involving *consent armored by coercion*. Power, in a *hegemonic* system, involves far more complex mechanisms and dynamics than simple power-over forms of domination.

So, how does it work? A good starting point is to identify some of the key mechanisms that enable hegemonic social systems to reproduce them-

selves. The central ones are *material interests, ideology and culture, institutional rules, and coercion*.

When it is working well, the current capitalist system ties the *material interests* of most people to successful ongoing capitalist economic activity. This almost universal dependence of our material interests on the pursuit of profits by capitalist enterprises is possibly the most important mechanism the capitalist system has for ensuring its continuity. As long as capitalism effectively ties the material interests of the majority of the population to the interests of capital, other forms of social power have far less work to do to keep us in line – and alternative approaches face an uphill struggle to gain legitimacy and popular support.

Attempts to understand the historical processes of social change have often swung between theories that prioritise material conditions and those that emphasise shifts in consciousness or mindsets. In reality, what we see is an interplay between the two. *Ideology and culture* are powerful shapers of society. Narratives and stories enable us to make sense of the world and influence how we act within it. But control of material resources often determine who gets to shape the narratives and tell the stories (think about who owns the media or channels of communication today).

Dominant ideologies include the conscious aspects of our subjectivity, the beliefs, ideas, values, doctrines, and theories that provide legitimacy and a sense of the normality to the existing system. While *ideology* is conscious, *culture* includes the unconscious aspects of that subjectivity, such as dispositions, habits, tastes, and skills that shape people's participation and the structures of the system. Ideology contributes to social reproduction when beliefs that contribute to social stability are affirmed in the daily practices (culture) of society and individuals. Ideology and culture combine to provide legitimacy to the way other types of power are distributed, reinforce a sense that the way things are is somehow natural or the way things should be, and constitute a kind of 'common sense'.

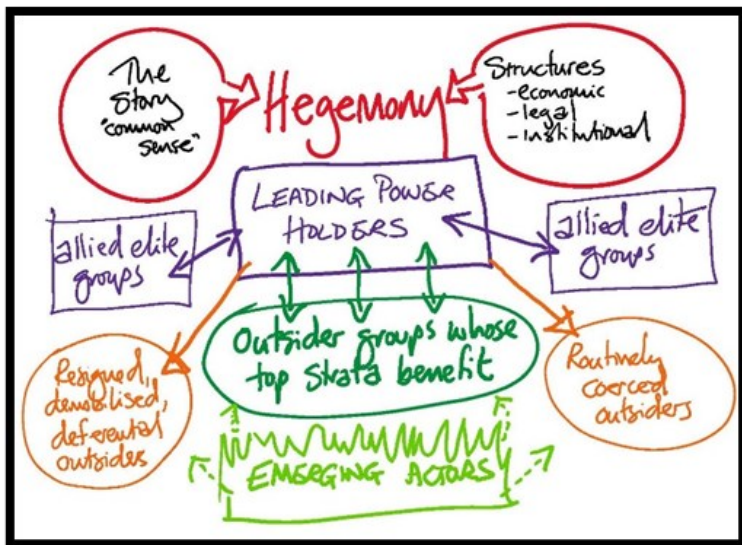
Historically, dominant ideologies have included capitalist stories of progress and individualism, white supremacy and colonialism, patriarchy and anthropocentrism. They almost always serve the interests of some groups over others. They all seek to provide legitimacy for different forms of domination. Today they intersect in different ways to reinforce the system of interlocking oppression at the heart of our socio-ecological crises.

Some of these ideologies are rooted deep in our history. And although they have adapted over time, under pressure or facing resistance, for many people they aren't recognized as historically conditioned ways of seeing the world, but as descriptions of how the world really is. But other stories are possible. By analysing how power works, whose interests it works in, and how it might be different, we aim to replace 'common sense' with 'good sense', to champion different stories of who we are and who we can be. These new stories and ways of being are articulated through emerging critical narratives and practices such as *anti-racism, feminism* or the *commoning* movement.

Alongside *material interests, and ideology and culture*, another key mechanism that shapes hegemonic social order is the design of *institutional rules*. This includes the procedural 'rules of the game' which make some courses of action difficult to pursue and others much easier. The system is structured to ensure that higher risk and cost is involved in courses of action that threaten the system and less risk or cost involved in those that don't threaten the stability of the system or that can be more easily accommodated. For example, the way that capitalist democracy channels social conflicts into electoral contests that tend to reproduce capitalist social relations. Interestingly, in the hegemonic structure, the institutional rules also act to curb excesses of power by elites that could unsettle the careful balance of relations that sustain the balance of powers amongst them.

When they combine effectively, these three mechanisms (material, ideo-

logical, and institutional) strengthen the ability of the system to maintain itself, even in the face of challenges from those who are negatively impacted by its injustices and inequality. These mechanisms elicit sufficient consent from a sufficient number of people, to give the impression that it really does function in our best interests. But sometimes 'good sense' breaks through or the harm being done is so impactful that resistance is the only option left. So, the hegemonic system still retains, as a final resort, the mechanism of *coercion*, to ensure the rules are followed, that people don't go too far in enacting different stories, and that conflicting interests are ultimately resolved in ways that don't jeopardise elite interests too much.



Hegemony can be understood as the combination of these mechanisms, along with a set of alliances in society that make power seem strong. Hegemonic power isn't simply the power of one group over the rest. Hegemonic power rests in complex and often uneasy alliances between differ-

ent groups and interests. Within the hegemonic system there are antagonisms and compromises - between those with power and those excluded from it, but also between those with power themselves. Different elite groups form alliances of convenience, but these are not without tension (think of the dynamics between business and politicians for example). The leadership of some subjugated groups also find ways of accommodating the system, helping to keep their constituencies in line (trade unions are a good example, as are certain leaders of minority groups holding political office). Certain social groups are simply repressed or demotivated (precarious poor, migrants, disaffected youth).

While these arrangements often ensure a degree of stability and impression of power, the hegemonic system is actually relatively fragile. Being a constant balancing of interests adapting to changing circumstances, fracture lines arise, and periods of hegemonic crisis are not uncommon.

Many analyses consider that today we are living through such a crisis. From the late 1970's until the mid-2000's the hegemonic system was shaped around neoliberal ideology and the global liberalisation of finance and production. Today that system is in deep crisis, resulting from a combination of the significant economic downturn as of 2008, growing inequality, the push back against the impact of globalisation from diverse groups including the post-industrial working class and right-wing nationalists, shifting balances of geopolitical power, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the growing sense that the current political elites have no answers for the climate crisis. Out of this hegemonic crisis we are seeing the emergence of new forces and new narratives that are further delegitimising the existing order. These forces are both reactionary and progressive, liberal and authoritarian, inspiring and deeply worrying. All seek to contest what the new order (if there is one) one might be.

Such a crisis presents an opportunity. As the old story no longer convinces we enter a battle of narratives. As needs are no longer met, we see a

push back against a betrayal of the social contract. To build the power to contest our future within this space we need to find ways to mobilise and organise previously subjugated groups, channel the energy spilling out from the disintegrating elite alliances, and support previously compliant outsider groups to find new voice, articulate demands and build organisational coherence.

As well as understanding the way power operate within society, which is crucial for leaderful organisations seeking to achieve structural social transformations, understanding the dynamics of social reproduction and hegemony can also shed light on the way power functions within organisations and groups, which also require to reproduce themselves through the complex interplay of narratives, institutional forms, and the maintenance of the material conditions for their continuance.

Rank: an integrative framework

The different types of power discussed above all interact. Within our organisations, as power is held and distributed, it is valuable to be able to build shared understanding of these dynamics. One model that we have found useful is the idea of rank described by Arnold Mindell, in his book *Sitting in the Fire*. (Mindell 1995)

Mindell describes rank as "a conscious or unconscious, social, or personal ability or power [and privileges] arising from culture, community support, personal psychology and/or spiritual power. Whether you earned or inherited your rank, it organizes much of your communication behaviour..." He asserts that we all have multiple ranks, some with more privileges than others, but at any one time a combination of some or all of a variety of types of rank combine to bestow certain privilege, advantage on some more than others. Mindell names four types of rank, which overlap with some of our categories above. The following list of Mindell's types of rank are reproduced by Training for Change in their handout on rank:

Social Rank: is the power you have (or lack) because of your race, gender, age, economic standing, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, education, health, or language. Social rank may be global or may depend on context.

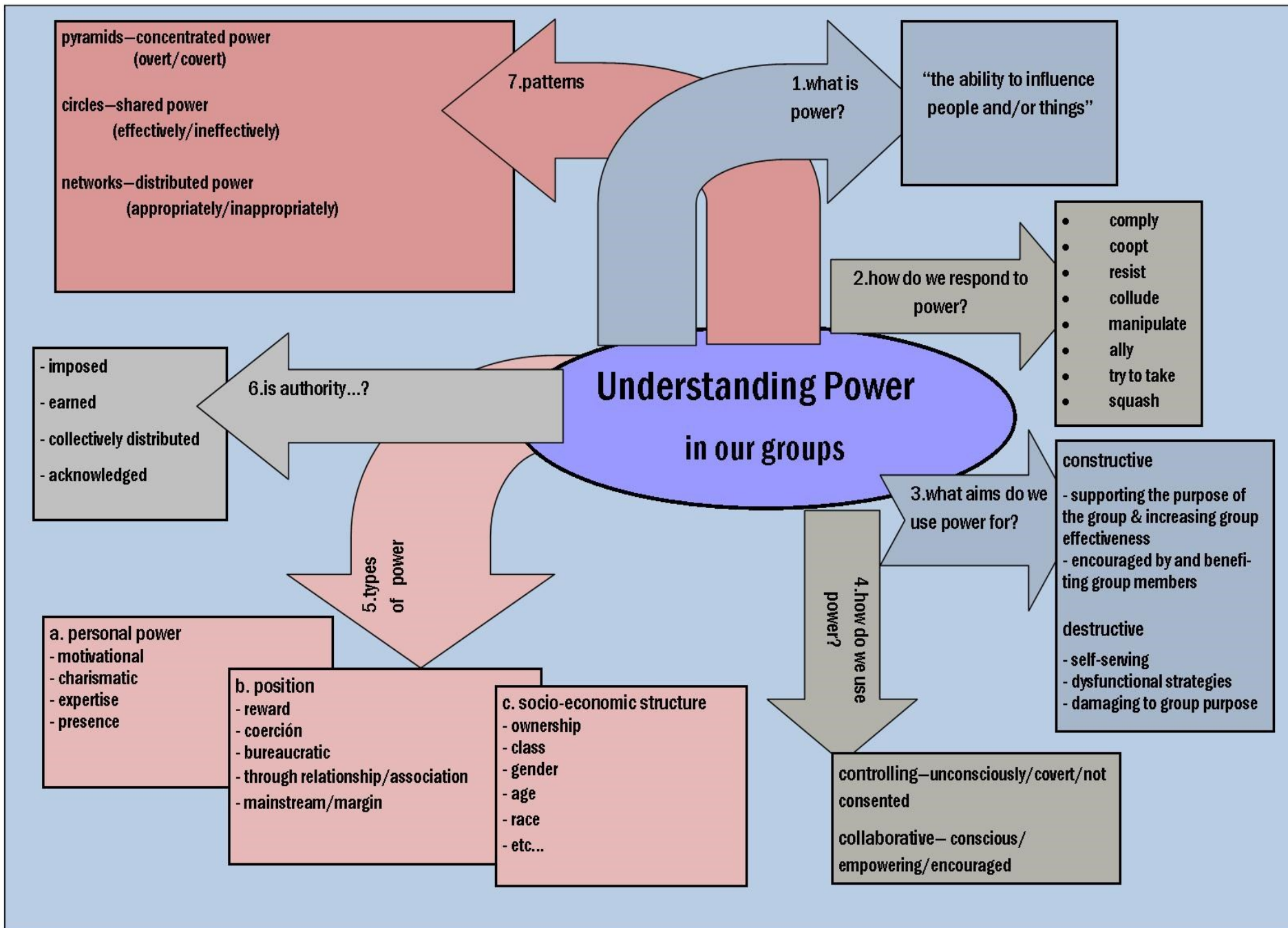
Structural Rank: is the power that belongs to your position in an established hierarchy.

The corporation president outranks her secretary, who outranks the cleaning staff.

Psychological Rank: is personal power you acquire through your life experience. It includes how we weather our childhood traumas and families. A person who feels okay about herself has higher psychological rank than someone who feels depressed, lonely, or suffers a lot.

Spiritual Rank: is a sense of power that comes from feeling connected to something divine or transcendent. Many community leaders support their authority through spiritual and psychological rank despite low social or economic rank.

In leaderful organisations, developing an understanding of the way rank and power functions and how we can act with awareness of it, so as to use it constructively rather than oppressively is likely to be essential. It can be a difficult theme to discuss and acknowledge, but developing the trust, frameworks, courage and willingness to look at and explore power and its dynamics in our groups is a crucial foundation for healthy collaborative work. Creating spaces in which we can openly talk about these issues, where people have the courage and trust to open up related issues, and the willingness to address related problems that can arise is important work for the development of leaderful cultures and groups.



Leadership and leaderfulness

One of the ways that some activists, organisers, and educators have sought to avoid the pitfalls of leaderlessness and harness some of the beneficial characteristics associated with well-functioning hierarchical structures and leadership, is to develop more nuanced and social justice inspired approaches to leadership.

As we noted in our initial research paper, “an increasing amount of literature on leadership practices within social movements has been published over the past years. Much of the literature is dominated by North American authors, many of whom focus on individual notions of leadership and on the qualities of individual leaders as the main actors in organisations and movements.”

In many ways this literature and the ‘leadership development’ practices it generates is problematic in the ways it can reproduce individualistic notions of leadership and overly associate leadership with a set of personal qualities. While personal qualities cannot be dismissed, our approach to leaderfulness critiques this over-emphasis and seeks to correct it by identifying leaderfulness as a collective attribute, which is far more than simply having a lot of leaders! We’ll discuss this more fully later on.

Another difficulty we’ve encountered in this approach is its cultural specificity. While the ideas of community leadership and leadership development seem to hold value in the North American context, we’ve encountered higher levels of scepticism in many European networks. How this relates to cultural history is too broad a subject to unpack here, but it remains important to acknowledge the difficulty in cultural transplantation and the additional levels of critique leadership is subject to in different settings.

Despite these reservations, leaderfulness does build on some of the alternative approaches to leadership. Instead of rejecting them in favour of a ‘leaderless’ approach. It doesn’t embrace them entirely on their own terms however, but takes them and roots them structurally within collective practice, as we will see.

The kinds of alternative leadership practice that we build on includes *revolutionary leadership* (Freire, 1970), group-centered leadership (Payne,

1995; Ransby, 2015; Parker, 2020), anti-authoritarian leadership (Walia, 2013), grassroots leadership (Ransby; 2015), or transformative leadership (Gass, 2014), Feminist leadership (Coalition of Feminists for Social Change, 2021), shared leadership (Lahey et al., 2016), distributed leadership (Han, 2014), cooperative leadership (Spade, 2020). All of these approaches reject the idea of a leader as someone who uses power to dominate others or maintain a system of advantage and disadvantage. Rather, these can all be understood as variations on what we could call transformative leadership.

The work of a transformative leader can appear contradictory, as they must work in the space of authority while also working to dismantle typical oppressive tendencies through change and transformation. It is a “form of leadership grounded in an activist agenda, one that combines a rights-based theory that every individual is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard with a social justice theory of ethics that takes these rights to a societal level” (Shields 2010 and Nava, 2018).

As well as being grounded in a specific ethical framework of solidarity, they also tend to dismantle some of the patriarchal tendencies often associated with leadership, adding emphasis to qualities such as empathy, compassion, emotional literacy and care as crucial leadership qualities, in a critique that has sometimes been referred to as feminist leadership.

Ella Baker’s “group-centred leadership” is another example which emphasises the importance of empowering people to take charge of their own struggles for freedom and the dangers of centralising power, decision making and responsibility for meaningful action in a single leader. Baker claimed that ‘strong people don’t need strong leaders’.

What we seem to find in many of these approaches to transformative leadership is a redefinition of the idea that shifts it a long way from the associations of abuse, domination or disempowerment often associated with more traditional forms of leadership. In these cases, there is a general awareness of the importance of grounding the legitimacy of leadership in ethical integrity and values, that the power it carries should always be renewable or removable, and shared and distributed. It is also more connected with the ability to positively inspire people to ‘follow’ by encouraging the creation, communication and directing of vision, rather than using ‘power-over’ others.

Many of these ideas fed into the first use of the term 'leaderful' by Patrisse Cullors, one of co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US. Cullors mentioned in an interview that Black Lives Matter may not have a leader, but the movement isn't leaderless. "We're a leaderful movement," she said.

The BLM movement was founded by three black women with an approach to leadership challenging the consolidation of power behind one charismatic leader, and rather focusing on collaboration, building members' power and leadership, and allowing people's identities to inform how the movement organizes. This allowed leadership to emerge from intersecting identities and to produce 'high-impact, low ego leaders' who focus more on the sustainability and outcomes of the movement rather than personal visibility (Purvi Shah quoted in Tonita, 2015).

It seems reasonable to assume that the prevalence of leadership theory and practice as an integral part of North American social movement development created the narrative framework for the idea to be coined. It is difficult to envisage the term taking hold so easily within the European setting, where distrust of leadership and the sidelining or outright rejection of the idea in many parts of social movements is more common. But the conditioning of this understanding of leadership (within the relatively individualistic cultural context of the US) as grounded in personal qualities, might also account for the leaderfulness of the movement being questioned by grassroots chapters (King, 2020). As the BLM movement grew in prominence and developed various forms of institutional expression, the structure changed with its co-founders gaining more power, resources and visibility. Which can help us to see that developing a movement's leaderfulness requires more than personal vision and qualities, but also systems and structures that are effective in helping to distribute power ongoingly.

Despite the difficulties arising from the individualising connotations of leadership, to us it does seem to us that a reclaiming and renewing the ideas of leadership could be more fruitful than simply rejecting it. Individuals do take initiative, offer unique contributions, inspire, motivate and guide. The central questions for leaderfulness are how and in what context they do so.

One source of inspiration are the Zapatistas, who developed a set of prin-

ciples and practices that fundamentally transform the ideas and practices of leadership within a highly developed anti-authoritarian approach, in which one 'leads by obeying'.

A set of seven principles offer a flavour of their reframing (themixedspace 2023):

1. Obedecer y No Mandar (To Obey, Not Command): This emphasises the need for leaders to obey the collective desires of the community rather than command them from a position of power.

2. Proponer y No Imponer (To Propose, Not Impose): As in many articulations of transformative leadership, humility is central and aligns with practices of deliberation and reflection.

3. Representar y No Suplantar (To Represent, Not Supplant): Emphasises the principle of self-governance and practices of delegation and representatives being grounded in the collective trust of the community.

4. Convencer y No Vencer (To Convince, Not Conquer): Highlights the value of dialogue, discussion and assembly.

5. Construir y No Destruir (To Construct, Not Destroy): Points towards working to create the institutions and the world that we want to see.

6. Servir y No Servirse (To Serve Others, Not Serve Oneself): Connected to the Zapatista slogan, 'Para todos todo, para nosotros nada' (Everything for Everyone, Nothing for Ourselves), this principle underscores the core value of caring for the whole.

7. Bajar y No Subir (To Work From Below, Not Seek To Rise): Strengthens the value of grassroots engagement and dangers of systems which encourage a hierarchical view of success and importance.

Combined with systems of recallable delegation, rotation of leadership positions, and structures that enable a combination of assembly-based, local bodies, and representative councils, these principles ensure that leadership and collective self-governance interplay across the collective life of the community. Our understanding of leaderfulness is not so different to this.

A third shape: networks

If leaderful organising seeks to go beyond the constraints and limitations of concentrated-hierarchical power and shared-horizontal power – depicted as pyramids and circles, it is valuable to consider what other shapes can we use to represent the kind of distributed power that leaderfulness suggests? Stepping beyond the binary of hierarchical pyramids and flat circles of sharing, we can see a third shape, namely, the network.

The network isn't a simple shape. It can take many forms and is possibly better called a pattern than a shape. It's versatility is part of its relevance here. The network is highly suggestive of many of the structural considerations that apply to leaderful organising, especially the qualities of decentralisation and distributed power, which can take a wide range of forms according to specific context. The network can incorporate flat elements in some areas and hierarchical elements in others, it able to blend a range of approaches and methods, and link them together in a multiplicity of ways.

Fortunately, in recent years a lot of work has been done to study and theorise networked systems in relationship to organising, in the fields of systems science, cybernetics, ecology and the study of living systems, as well as cutting edge organisational theory. How can these areas help to inform our development of an understanding of leaderfulness?

Decentralisation and structure: learning from living systems

Many of us are habituated to modes of organisation that conform to a hierarchical pyramidal model. We can easily recognise some of the attributes identified in the sociological study of such organisations, such as: It has lines of 'communication and command' running from the top to the bottom of the pyramid; there is a fixed delineation of responsibility – each element has a specified role; the procedures to be followed at any level are determined within fairly narrow limits, and can be changed only by decisions of people higher in the hierarchy; the role of the top group of the hierarchy is sometimes called the 'brain' or 'head' of the system.

Nevertheless, we are increasingly seeing the predominance of the pyramidal form of organisation being replaced by more complex and less strict-

ly hierarchical forms. These changes are often referred to as forms of 'agile' organising, popularised by Frederic Laloux in his book *Reinventing Organisations*. New organisational models such as Sociocracy, Holacracy, or what Laloux calls Teal Organisations, have been rapidly adopted across the business world to develop streamlined entities that are able to be highly responsive, lean, and innovative (often in the pursuit of greater profitability). Similar shifts can be seen across government and state provided services. Even within strictly hierarchical institutions, such as the military, growing understanding of non-linearity and complexity have led to the adoption of more decentralised and distributed forms of decision making.

In the 1980's military strategists coined the acronym VUCA, in an attempt to describe the characteristics of the world they found themselves operating within and to help to improve their ability to respond to those conditions strategically. Despite these origins, the concepts can help to shed light on the challenges many organisations and social movements face. VUCA stands for:

Volatility: things change, often constantly and sometimes very quickly.

Uncertainty: it is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately predict what will happen next.

Complexity: as they say in the world of ecology, 'it's not just that ecosystems are more complex than you think they are, it is that they are more complex than you can think'.

Ambiguity: even though we might have large amounts of information and data about things, what it actually means or implies can often be less than clear!

VUCA Skillsets

We can think in terms of developing VUCA skillsets, which are certainly an important area of competence for leaderful organising. We can also apply the understanding that comes from acknowledging complexity to organisational structures and practices. In the military context the biggest shifts this way of exploring things led to were increased investment in communications and information flows, and a greater degree of decentralisation of decision making towards those on the ground operating in

smaller units. As we will see this has implications for our understanding of leaderful organising.

It is important to not get too carried away by assuming that these developments are radically liberatory in nature. Often behind these innovations in organisational management, the fundamental power structures remain relatively intact, with degrees of influence being carefully distributed without risking undermining final power dynamics inscribed in ownership or state monopoly in violence or legislative control. Nevertheless, in developing our understanding of leaderfulness, there remains a lot to be learnt from these tendencies and the understanding that has informed them.

Just how suggestive of leaderfulness some of these approaches to 'self-management' can be seen in this list of principles shared by one of its proponents, Gary Hamel, quoted by Laloux (2014):

- No one can kill a good idea
- Everyone can pitch
- Anyone can lead
- No one can dictate
- You get to choose your cause
- You can easily build on top of what others have done
- You don't have to put up with bullies and tyrants
- Agitators don't get marginalised
- Excellence usually wins (and mediocrity doesn't)
- Passion-killing policies get reversed
- Great contributions get recognised and celebrated.

One of the central metaphors that Laloux and others draw on is: *organisations as living systems*. The study of living systems, cybernetics, and the implications of new holistic sciences has been widely used to explore and strategise in relationship to complexity and to design new organisational forms better suited to the VUCA world we inhabit (Margulis, 1995. Wheatley 2006). Studies of evolving self-organising systems (biological, social, and neural) have helped to explain some of the limitations of pyramidal systems and why they often break down.

There appear to be two basic criteria for the stability of an evolving self-organising system: 1) the Principle of Requisite Variety, which states that if stability is to be attained, the variety of the controlling system must be at least as great as the variety of the system it controls, and 2) the existence of adequate information channel capacity. A pyramidal structure with lines of communication running from top to bottom lacks adequate channel capacity. As lines of communication approach the top of the pyramid the channels become choked, and the 'brain' of the system cannot assimilate the erratic flow of information. With decision making located in a small and relatively isolated part of the system, the implicit lack of requisite variety and insufficient channel capacity make hierarchical systems of control inadequate to cope with unexpected disturbances and changes in the environment. Pyramidal systems are just too unresponsive to survive amidst an ever-changing environment. (McEwan, 2005)

However, successfully evolving self-organising systems exhibit very different characteristics. Here we see systems of large variety, sufficient to cope with a complex, unpredictable environment. It is characterised by a changing structure that modifies itself under continual feedback from the environment, exhibits redundancy of potential command, and invokes complex interlocking control structures. Learning and decision making - the 'brain' - are distributed throughout the system, denser in some parts than others. Rather than a hierarchical pyramidal structure, here we are looking at a complex network. (McEwan, 2005)

Sociologically, the break with the hierarchal pyramidal structure can be described in terms of a shift from centralisation to decentralisation. Critique of centralisation has always been a core theme across anarchist and liberatory socio-political discourse. In social theory these tensions have a long history. As Paul Goodman points out,

"there have always been two strands to decentralist thinking. Some authors, e.g. Lao-tzu or Tolstoy, make a conservative peasant critique of centralised court and town as inorganic, verbal and ritualistic. But other authors, e.g. Proudhon or Kropotkin, make a democratic urban critique of centralised bureaucracy and power, including feudal industrial power, as exploiting, inefficient, and discouraging initiative." (Benello, 2005)

While the pyramidal model shows characteristics that are implicated in its

own disintegration, decentralisation brings serious problems of its own. As Stafford Beer, the British researcher and theorist of management cybernetics, puts it:

Centralize: insufficient channel capacity, etc., - cannot work efficiently.

Decentralize: completely autonomous units - no cohesion, probably ceases to be a system at all.

While decentralisation is an important element in a social network which seeks to resemble the characteristics of an evolving self-organising system, or, as in the case of leaderful organising, to distribute responsibility and influence, it cannot in itself support the renewal of a sustainable system. Decision making does need to spread throughout the network. But it needs to be complemented by linkages which support co-ordination, collaboration and shared frameworks of understanding. Evolving self-organising systems are not loose networks of casual encounters between atomised elements. They are systems and they do require structure. They involve clear, strong, multiple connections and channels of communication and interaction.

Leaderful organising will inevitably challenge centralising tendencies. It will often look more like a network than a pyramid (hierarchy) or a circle (horizontal). But creating networks involves more sincere involvement, more energetic participation, and a stronger sense of committed responsibility, than building pyramids ever required.

Decentralised networks involve sufficient self-organising structure to avoid systemic [dissipation](#). And they are inherently complex. Meaning that networks are always more complex than the imposed, reassuring, and fictional simplifications of the pyramidal/centralised model. Donald Schon in his 1970 Reith Lectures pointed out that “the centre-periphery model has been the dominant model in our society for growth and diffusion of organisations defined at high levels of specificity. For such a system, the uniform, simple message is essential. The system’s ability to handle complex situations depends upon a simple message and upon growth through uniform replication.” He sees as an alternative, networks “of elements connecting through one another rather than to each other through a centre,” characterised “by their scope, complexity, stability, ho-

mogeneity and flexibility” in which “nuclei of leadership emerge and shift” with “the infrastructure powerful enough for the system to hold itself together... without any central facilitator or supporter.” (Schon, 1970)

One of the fascinating implications of integrating cybernetic and network theory into our conceptualisation of leaderfulness is the emphasis on structure together with the capabilities that such networks have to adapt and evolve. Whilst great attention needs to be given to structure, it is nevertheless not fixed, in fact it is inherently adaptable. As George Benello points out in his book on grassroots democracy,

“Perhaps the most difficult conception here is that of a structure which can evolve through self-organising and participation, capable of responding continuously to the needs of its members. What is required here is more structure rather than less; humanist organisation is more complex, with more horizontal linkages, more decision-making loci, more overlapping sub-structures, and more provision for modification than hierarchical organization.” (Benello, 1999)

The emphasis on ‘more structure rather than less’ is important. One of the common causes of groups failing to effectively embody anti-authoritarian values, along with rejection of all aspects of leadership, has been an often accompanying rejection of formal structure. While this seems to be less and less the case, it was sufficiently problematic in the 1970’s for Jo Freeman to write the article *The Tyranny of Structurlessness* (1973), where she describes how failure to explicitly acknowledging the existence of power structures within groups risks creating spaces where power is still being wielded and operates informally, preventing effective accountability and increasing the risks of power abuse and the lack of representation.

While leaderlessness may work in small groups, in order to scale up and increase impact, movements need structures that enable them to distribute power (instead of sharing it) clearly and appropriately, which does not mean evenly or equally.

Freeman does not propose one type of structure that would fit all movements. Rather she suggests that each movement should develop their own structure and experiment with different kinds of structures. She pro-

poses a set of principles of democratic structuring to ensure that movement are controlled by and accountable to groups rather than individuals.

These principles include:

1. Delegation of specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures.
2. Requiring all those to whom authority has been delegated to be responsible to those who selected them.
3. Distribution of authority among as many people as is reasonably possible.
4. Rotation of tasks among individuals.
5. Allocation of tasks along rational criteria (e.g., Ability, interest, and responsibility).
6. Diffusion of information to everyone as frequently as possible.
7. Equal access to resources needed by the group.

The importance of paying attention to structure and formal systems is further reinforced in research into organisational decentralisation and methods for distributing power within groups.

Dangers of bureaucratisation

Freeman's recommendations have been found to help groups aiming to embody values that reject forms of power-over to do so more effectively. But structures and systems do give rise to certain difficulties themselves. Max Weber famously explored the deadening effect of bureaucratisation on the modern human spirit. In his study of the historical trajectory of Buddhism, Weber developed his idea of routinisation. He explored how the initial charismatic influence of the founder of the tradition, the Buddha, was gradually replaced with rules and regulations. According to Weber, the movement he called "routinization" – the stage that comes after a movement's creative beginnings and, as a kind of reaction against the disorderly freedom of individual creativity, represents the quite different values of order and regularity.

While the structuring of groups can provide clarity, transparency, and more effective cooperation, the risk of overly rigid structures can also

have a deadening effect and itself contribute to unhelpful power dynamics. Bureaucratisation involves the replacement of personal relationships and the direct face-to-face interactions rich with sharing of needs and evolving understanding with institutionalised forms in which direct interactions become more and more indirect and mediated by rules and protocols. Institutionalised authority can gradually foster patterns of dominance and subjugation, dependence and counter dependence, and inevitably becomes subject to the intrusion of forms of power-over.

When direct and unmediated personal relations within a community get lost the classical attributes of bureaucracy begin to develop as necessary substitutes. Martin Oppenheimer points out:

"As any revolution, movement, or group develops a structure to carry out its goals, its original élan tends to deteriorate, and the routines set up by the structures tend to take over. The rank and file thereupon tends to lose interest, and the organisation becomes a clique."

Bureaucracy is characterised by the every-day routine control of actions, and rests on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules. It is characterised by the mediation of authority where power is given to roles not to individuals. Individuals do not take responsibility; they are 'just doing their job'. With this routinisation we can often see a middle tier of management using the systems and protocols to accrue power, which all too often gets used in stifling ways. It involves a mechanical type of relationship which does not respect or allow the development of the wholeness of relationships necessary for the free association of individuals which ideally constitutes solidarity-based relationships and power-with.

Late in his life, with reference to the increasing dominance of the modern world by bureaucratic forms of social control, Weber asked, "what can we oppose to this (bureaucratic) machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parceling-out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life?" To remain true to the highest ideals of solidarity-based relationships we must answer his question. Leaderful organisations must envision and create structures which can generate coherence and continuity while resisting bureaucratisation at every level.

This will involve a great leap of imagination and effort of creative participation on the part of everyone involved.

This suggests that leaderful organising requires structures that are able to evolve responsively and sustain high levels of direct personal interactions and dialogue, while also maintaining sufficient structure to guide interactions and effectively delegate activity and authority appropriately. Working with the tensions between structure and freedom are a crucial challenge for leaderful organising. Learning to centre guiding principles, vision and values, over rules based relationships seems to be crucial.

A fugitive equilibrium

*“Imagine a community of people which “seeks the fullest development of free association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all conceivable purposes: an ever-changing association bearing in itself the elements of its own duration, and taking on the forms which at any moment best correspond to the manifold endeavours of all... a society to which pre-established forms crystallized by law, are repugnant, **which looks for harmony in an ever changing and fugitive equilibrium** between a multitude of varied forces and influences of every kind, following their own course.” - Peter Kropotkin (1896)*

Leaderful organisations need to be able to evolve responsively, to resist the deadening influence of bureaucratisation. Rather than suggesting a fixed set of practices and pre-set structure that will ensure leaderfulness, it seems more important to understand some of the inevitable tensions that arise between different needs and values, and to cultivate the capacity to adapt and adjust practices and structures over time.

To support an understanding of some of the key challenges leaderful organisations experience, we have identified four key (hopefully creative) tensions that often arise within group processes that need to be kept in mind.

These are:

Autonomy - cooperation
Innovation - conservation
Diversity - commonality
Inclusivity - exclusion

Optimising not maximizing: Working with these balances we need to shift from thinking in terms of maximising to thinking in terms of optimising. Maximising is when we think that if something is good and useful, that more of it will always be good too! When a value is beneficial we might try to maximise that value or thing. But this is not how healthy systems seem to work. If we consider plant nutrition, we see that although nitrogen is beneficial to plant growth we might mistakenly think that more of it will always be a good thing. But often in too high doses something that is a nutrient or a medicine becomes toxic or a poison. To work well with these tensions, instead of seeking to maximise any of them, we need to think in terms of optimising - getting the dose right - in the right balance. It is important to bear in mind that the amount of something in the system may need to continually change. Kropotkin uses the phrase a “fugitive equilibrium” when talking about social systems. The fugitive equilibrium suggests that the perfect balance will always elude us. We need to be continuously adjusting and adapting. One moment too much of this. The next too much of that. Using this idea of a fugitive equilibrium can help us to recognise that the balance between these factors is never settled, always evolving, and requires continuous responsiveness and adjustment.

Autonomy - cooperation

As we’ve discussed, one of the key issues in leaderful groups will be how we attend to the distribution of power. It is important to know when we need to include all of us in decision making and when we can distribute and delegate this throughout the group. A sense of involvement is important, but so is creating and allowing space for individual initiative. Often more horizontal forms of organising will preference consensus decision making. More hierarchical structures will tend to concentrate power. But we need to become versatile in using a range of decision-making methods.

Innovation - conservation

We live in a society that maximises innovation. Although the capacity to change and adapt is important, so is preservation of learning and wisdom. It is important to establish clear and well understood processes for decision making and structures for sharing information or delegating responsibility. Clear structures are crucial. But so is the ability to adapt and change our structures in response to changing circumstances and new opportunities. It is important to maintain continuity while avoiding excessive rigidity. We need to take care that we don't throw everything up in the air continuously! The health of a group or organisation requires both conservative and innovative dimensions and these will often be in tension. Innovators and conservatives are often at odds with each other. But both play an important role in the ecology of the organisation. Whether we are predisposed towards conservation or innovation it is important that we are able to be grateful for the contributions of those who do what we are not so inclined.

Diversity - commonality

Healthy and resilient systems - ecological or social - require diversity. But diversity needs to be supported by a sense of commonality - especially in terms of purpose and shared needs. It is crucial to value diversity AND to consistently look for our commonality. Taking time to develop a shared sense of purpose and core values can help. This can create a container of commonality that can help us to hold the diversity.

Inclusivity - exclusion

A good way to think about this balance is to think in terms of a membrane. A group requires a boundary. Otherwise, it is not a group, just a random amalgamation. Think about the structure of a living cell. The membrane of a cell marks the boundary of the biological system. But the membrane needs to be permeable. If it is too closed it will not receive nutrients. If it is too open it will be flooded by toxins. We need to be alive to the level of permeability in our group boundaries. Often this is a source of big problems for political groups - especially grassroots movements. Inclusivity has become a very important value in progressive social movements. Our society is beset by forms of exclusion and many important social battles have been fought in the name of greater inclusivity. Sadly, however, it is very common for progressive social movements and groups

to become deeply dysfunctional when they simply maximise this value. They can easily lose continuity or become overstretched in accommodating needs they are not resourced to meet. Addressing this tension often requires difficult and brutally honest appraisal about capacity and prioritisation and longer-term strategic aims.

The capacity to work with the ever-changing balance of needs is a crucial characteristic of a networked organisation seeking to bring to life the principles of leaderfulness. While structures are crucial, there is no prescriptive set of methods or protocols that should be preserved at all costs. The ability to continually reflect on dynamics and changing needs and adapt accordingly over time appears to be a necessary condition for the ongoing health of leaderful groups that will require responsive rather than overly rigid structures.

Participatory processes and growing into leaderfulness

While leaderful organisations don't need to involve everyone in every decision, there will tend to be a higher degree of active participation in decision making, which is distributed across the organisation. And, when big decisions that affect principles or have a high impact on everyone, it is likely that everyone will be involved to some degree. Participatory decision making involves two complementary notions. First, that people are capable of understanding their problems and engaging in creative exploration of these problems and their solutions. Second, that the most lasting and relevant solutions to problems that affect the whole require the fullest possible participation of the community affected.

These notions only become true and relevant in a social context in which freedom of expression is possible, and where the problems of dependency and counter dependency in relation to the authority of others is addressed. When participation is supported, both individuals and their community are more able to realise, through their social interaction, their full social potential. Participatory decision making is demanding and requires a range of important skills, such as communication, building of understanding through discussion and inquiry, and empathetic listening. The development of self-awareness and a range of interpersonal skills are needed.

Through participation these skills can be developed. As can many of the personal qualities associated with the expanded conception of leadership. In a leaderful organisation leadership can arise naturally out of interaction and communication, with vertical dimension of any relationship sometimes being stronger and sometimes weaker. Meaningful leaderful leadership is expressive of a living relationship, and its legitimacy will often require no institutional safeguards. To the extent that leadership qualities are not tangibly experienced and yet the role is institutionally asserted, the relationship between leaders and the community in an institutionalised hierarchy is merely bureaucratic and ultimately based on power-over. Institutionalisation of leadership is a form of mediated relationship which replaces direct human encounters. In order for the leadership to be meaningfully legitimised it needs to be based on actual and direct mutual responsiveness. It need not be, indeed should not be, institutionalised or mediated.

Where face-to-face witnessing of leadership becomes overly mediated by institutions and bureaucratisation it is more apt to encourage unhelpful leader/follower dependencies and counter dependencies than a supportive leaderful culture. In the face-to-face assemblies and small group meetings of a participatory system mediation is reduced, and both our developed personal qualities and limitations are revealed and tested in direct interaction. The process is an opportunity to continually test the value of anyone taking a leadership role at any time. In this face-to-face experience the mutual responsiveness of direct communication plays a crucial part in ensuring that leadership is consistently offered in the spirit of the Zapatista principle of 'leading by following' and that it ongoingly elicits consent.

As previously mentioned, one of the characteristics of a successfully evolving self-organising system is redundancy of potential command. It is not that there is neither leadership nor command, just that leadership and the locus of command are flexible and not fixed. In the self-organising system leadership is interchangeable and will usually come forward as appropriate to specific contexts, sometimes only temporarily and sometimes for a longer duration. In a report on the Pioneer Health Centre, a fascinating experiment carried out by a group of biologists and physicians in the 1940's, John Comerford comments:

"Accustomed as is this age to artificial leadership... it is difficult for it to realise the truth that leaders require no training or appointing, but emerge spontaneously when conditions require them. Studying the members in the free-for-all of the Peckham Centre, the observing scientists saw over and over again how one member instinctively became, and was instinctively but not officially recognised as, leader to meet the needs of one particular moment. Such leaders appeared and disappeared as the flux of the centre required. Because they were not consciously appointed, neither (when they had fulfilled their purpose) were they consciously overthrown."

It is interesting to note that the participatory self-organising system here antidotes both dependency upon leaders and counter dependency. It is commonplace in organisational sociology to remark on conflict between leaders and rank and file. The larger the organisation the greater the built in conflict. It is a common human weakness that we want leaders not only to provide us with leadership, but also to blame when things go wrong. This is a weakness that a participatory and leaderful system will help us overcome.

Within pyramidal structures certain personality types tend to come to the fore and certain individuals are regularly called upon to do the thinking for the rest. While the qualities and abilities these individuals offer are certainly important and helpful, within the participatory system a wider range of individuals and qualities are called for, to provide for a vital moment, the crucial contribution. Each and every member of a leaderful organisation is recognised as bringing qualities which will be, indeed which are, required for the growth of the community. Each of us at any time might offer the inspiring example, the insight, the specific quality or experience that can unlock the door to a greater collective realisation, to a deeper mutual understanding. In a leaderful system each of us is supported and called upon to offer our creative energy, in its many diverse forms, to our community.

A few key learnings from 'agile' and decentralised organisational theory

Given that many of us like things simple, the structures and principles of decentralised and more participatory systems will be experienced as demanding, both conceptually and in terms of what is required by way of participatory effort and skill. While the specific forms will grow from the ground up in response to specific local conditions, it is useful to look at some of the elements and principles that are likely to be relevant to evolving a more fully participatory and leaderful system.

We can derive a range of principles from the literature on self-organising systems, that appear to be congruent with Freeman's recommendations.

These include:

Spaces for dialogue and deliberative practices: Firstly, it is important to realise that space at various levels for discussions and consensus building that we see in participatory system is not a form of power brokering. It is not merely a tool for sharing power, but a method of encouraging harmonious engagement in organisational vitality where power is eschewed in favour of respect and mutual concern.

Grounding participation in ethical values and non-coercion: As the participatory system seeks to support the free association of individuals, it refuses a place to any form of coercion, but requires individuals to go beyond narrow personal perspectives, to develop empathy and understanding. It equates to a liberating function for the individual who becomes able to go beyond ego-defined goals and elicits a creative embodiment of a truly participatory and empowering social vision.

The value of going for the good of the whole: When the interaction within a community is experienced as empowering, when we recognise that we can influence our community as well as be influenced, then we can really move towards a transcendence of self and other, experience ourselves in our truly social dimension, and learn to cherish and trust our own creativity in harmony with others.

Participation as a developmental opportunity: Just as traditionally hierarchical social systems condition individuals to become dependent on leadership and to either conform and defer responsibility or enter into struggles against power holders, self-organising social systems socialise people in the skills and values needed for active participation in solidarity with others.

Inclusion and empowerment: Valuing diversity of contributions and recognition of the importance of a wide variety of different contributions is needs to be cultivated and practiced in effective participatory systems. Redundancy and interchangeability of leadership: No one person holds leadership responsibilities exclusively. All members of the community are encouraged to make diverse contributions, including stepping up into leadership roles at different times.

Recognition of diverse leadership qualities: the conception of what is understood to constitutes leadership is broadened out from the rather narrow set of qualities associated with traditional hierarchical leadership. This includes emotional labour, care, and creativity.

Appreciation of - but not dependence on - leadership: The broader definition of leadership encourages appreciation of the contributions of those taking on leadership roles, rather than resentment or resistance to it.

Teams and defined domains: Groups and organisations are not undifferentiated wholes, but rather made up of the interactions of smaller units with defined roles and domains of authority.

High degree of linkage: The differentiation of roles and smaller units (teams and groups) requires rigorous systems of linkage to ensure coherence and effective cooperation.

Transparent and easy flow of information: Information is widely shared across the organisation. What is going on and understood is generally made available to everyone.

Distributed decision making: Clear articulation of domains of authority are used to empower different actors and groups to make decisions relevant to their domain and areas of responsibility.

Honour dissent and differences of opinion: Although cooperation is highly valued, conformity is not. Diverse voices are supported to be heard and contribute to enriching a shared understanding of complex situations.

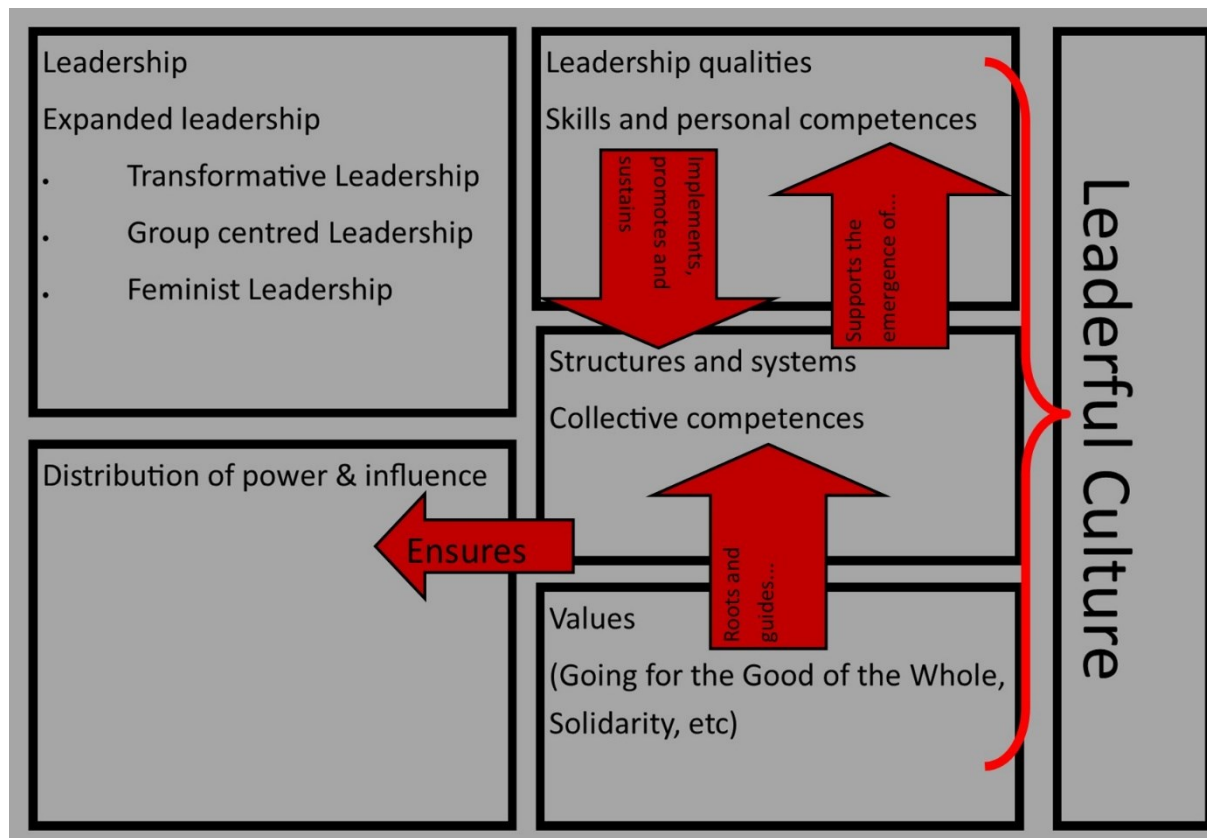
Drawing on some of these insights, we can say that leaderfulness is likely to require a combination of leadership qualities (as identified and practiced in some of the alternative and expanded leadership models we've mentioned above) and effective structures for distributing power, supporting participation, and nurturing skills and competences to practice leadership. This is what we'll turn to now.

1.3 A model of leaderful organising

Based on the previous discussion, we've come to recognise that leaderfulness in our organisations arises through the interplay of a number of important factors.

- It embraces the leadership qualities and practices described in the alternative and expanded models of leadership, such as transformative leadership, feminist leadership, and group centred leadership.
- The organisational context needs to support all participants to be able to develop their personal capacity to embody and practice these expanded leadership approaches.
- It requires structures, systems, and practices that effectively distribute and decentralise power, while encouraging participation.
- It needs to enable people to develop the skills and understanding to develop, maintain and practice these structures, systems and practices.
- It needs to be grounded in values, such as solidarity, equity, and the guiding principles of going for the good of the whole.
- It needs to serve a vision of transformative engagement aimed at building collective power to effect social change towards increased social justice and ecological integrity.
- All of this can be integrated within what could be called a leaderful culture, which integrates practice, knowledge, values and mindsets.

We can depict the model like this:



Leaderful organising is a way of building collective power aimed at systemic social change that embodies the values of power-with and eschews power-over by creating organisations that effectively distribute power amongst its members through systems and practices, while nurturing the potential of all members to grow into the embodiment of alternative forms of leadership and mutual empowerment.

A low-angle photograph of a tree with a person climbing, overlaid with a red banner containing white text. The tree's branches are silhouetted against a light sky, and a person is visible climbing a branch on the right side. The red banner is positioned at the bottom of the image, and the text is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

2.0 A competency and capabilities framework for Leaderful Organising

20

A COMPETENCY AND CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERFUL ORGANISING

Implications for a competency framework

A few words about competency frameworks

Competencies, as a framework of thought, originated in the 1970's as a way to move beyond narrower concepts of skills and knowledge. Hence, competency thinking emerged from the recognition that every job requires a specific set of competencies to do it well - predominantly situating competences in the realm of waged labour and productivity.

The approach focuses on what a person can learn, rather than what they can do - so has become useful and popular in the training sector. Specific behavioural indicators as well as self-knowledge, motivation, and desire and willingness to demonstrate effective performance in a role can all be understood as types of competencies. Competency-based learning focuses on outcomes as well as the learners' real-world performance, whether that is within a work context for a specific job, or in a role as a trainer or catalyst of community-based activity or learning. As a result, competence frameworks can be extremely helpful for developing a deeper understanding of both learning needs and appropriate ways in

which this can be delivered. In particular, competence frameworks add to the traditional dimensions of knowledge and skills, by integrating the equally essential dimensions of *attitudes, motivations and inclinations* that have such a fundamental impact on both the experience and outcomes of learning, and on the application and ripple effects that arise from that learning.

Given that the approach has been largely applied within the highly productivist and often instrumentalist context of capitalist organisational frameworks and the neoliberal influenced academic sphere, we should quite rightly have some reservations about its applicability to social movement development. But, despite its origins, we believe that a framework can be used to increase understanding of the capabilities activists, organisers and their organisations can usefully develop in order to become more impactful. We see it less as a method of assessing others, but more as a way of understanding our own and collective needs, so as to help us to develop our capability to achieve the impacts we aim to have through our organising work. Such an analysis can make explicit the underlying conditions that can support successful organising and the learning or training required to put those conditions in place.

This approach can have significant value for considering what people need to learn to enhance their capacity to activate and accelerate social movement impact, whether they are active as individuals, as part of a team in a formal organisation, or operating within informal grassroots networks or communities. As such, it should be useful for trainers designing learning opportunities and for organisations and groups wanting to think strategically about capacity building.

Individual competencies and collective capabilities

One of the limitations of the standard approach to competence frameworks in relation to capacity building for leaderful organising is the em-

phasis on individual skills, knowledge, and attitudes. As we've seen above, *leaderfulness* is not just the accumulative result of an aggregation of individual competences. It also depends on shared practices, structures and even the nurturing of a leaderful culture.

This requires that the competency framework goes beyond typical approaches and finds a way to describe learning and the acquisition of competencies at a collective level. This requires us to innovate an approach to competencies that include the idea of capabilities that can be held collectively. To help articulate this we have found it useful to distinguish between *competencies* and collective *capabilities*.

We consider competencies to refer to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals have and develop. Collective capabilities are the structures, practices, and shared understanding that groups and organisations use or develop. The combination of competencies and capabilities give rise to an organisational culture, which we understand as referring to the way that mindsets and values as cultivated, expressed, and sustained through collective practices.

Consequently, we have structured the competency and learning framework to include all three dimensions of individual competencies, organisational structures and practices, and culture. In addition we have found it necessary to find ways to articulate learning not just as a process for individuals, but also as a collective attribute, which we'll unpack more fully in the section on the learning framework below.

Dimensions of competency and capabilities

Leaderful competencies

As we developed our understanding of competences we recognised that leaderfulness involved the development of a wide range of abilities and understanding. Drawing on previous work we had done in relation to

competences for blended learning for socio-ecological transformation, we began to explore the competences we had found necessary for collaborative projects aimed at social change. Our earlier model had identified the importance of four competence domains:

- **Intrapersonal Competencies:** Personal qualities, understanding, attitudes and skills required to bring our best to the cultivation of a leaderful culture
- **Interpersonal Competencies:** Those needed to support effective collaboration and interaction between those we organise with, covering the range of task, process and relationship.
- **Cognitive Competencies:** Those related to knowing things, analysis, and making sense of our experience.
- **Action Competencies:** Practical skills required to design, plan, and carry out the tasks involved in building the power to achieve social transformation.

The final framework spreads these across key areas needed for effective leaderful organising.

Collective capabilities - structures and practices

The structures and practices relevant to leaderful organising include a range of key competences needed for effective organising and fulfilling the tasks related to ensuring organisations and movements achieve their goals. Some of the key functions these structures and practices need to support include:

- Effective distribution of power and ability to work well with dynamics of privilege, inclusion, and clear differentiation of roles and domains of authority
- Methods that encourage participation and mutual empowerment
- Forms of decision making that align with the effective fulfilment of

tasks in alignment with objectives and core values

- The nurturing of the potential of group members, including capacity to offer diverse leadership contributions
- Supports to effective communication, including dialogue and empathetic listening
- Strategic development, including visioning and planning
- Ongoing learning and reflection, providing response and adaptive capabilities
- Methods that ensure resilience and the sustainability of individuals and organisations
- Systems to support effective coordination and collaboration

Collective capabilities - culture

In addition to competences, structures, and practices effective leaderful organising needs to be supported by a culture grounded in values and mindsets that guide choices and actions. These include ethical principles and values, such as mutual solidarity, non-harm, truthfulness, equity, and care. Along with these are the shared commitments to collaboration as a practice that embodies these principles, as well as a vision of social and ecological justice that inspires the groups transformative strategies and efforts. An important foundational principle relates to a shared mission to build collective power, which provides a sense of purpose that is greater than the group itself and seeking to benefit the whole - both social and ecological.

2.2 The competency and capabilities framework

Drawing on the above reflections and considerations we have structured the framework around 10 key areas, each of which is divided into two levels: individual and collective.

The 10 competency areas are:

1. Power
2. Leadership
3. Values
4. Organising
5. Transformative Collaboration
6. Strategy
7. Ongoing Learning
8. Responsive Action
9. Resilience & Regeneration
10. Communication

The framework examines each of these areas and articulates both the personal competencies and the collective capabilities required to support the area to flourish in a leaderful organising context.

The chart running across the following pages breaks it down.

1. Power	
Individual	<p><i>Awareness, understanding and skills to work with power and privilege</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a nuanced understanding of power as it operates in society and groups • Having self-awareness of one's won power and privilege, of one's response to power, ways of seeing, ego stories, traumas, triggers, patterns and ability to work with them. • Being able to distinguish between power-over and power-with • Being comfortable with power, ability to analyse power relations in groups, openness to share power, and willingness to aim to transform them helpfully • Adopting an intersectional approach by supporting the agency of the most affected by systemic injustice.
Collective	<p><i>Power distribution systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting structures and practices for power analysis and for a clear and appropriate distribution of power, roles and responsibilities. • Using effective decision making processes and structures that are transparent, promote accountability and balance autonomy and cooperation. • Possessing intersectional approaches to movement building.
2. Leadership	
Individual	<p><i>Embracing alternative and expanded forms of leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing alternative forms of leadership and power as integral to personal and social transformation. • Understanding different leadership types, and the interplay between individual and collective leadership. • Contributing to collective leadership by practicing "stepping up and stepping back", empowering others, delegating, letting go of control and allowing others to take the lead. • Demonstrating fluency with examples of collective leadership in movements and organisation.
Collective	<p><i>Leadership development structures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering collective leadership by creating leadership structures and practices that distribute power appropriately. • Enable and facilitate participatory and effective decision making. • Develop individual and collective transformative leadership (e.g. onboarding trainings, leadership trainings, mentorship). • Empowering movement members and enabling movements to scale up.

3. Values	
Individual	<p>Be grounded in values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being grounded in core values of social justice and ecological integrity. • Never losing sight of 'the good of the whole' as a guiding principle. • Ability to use a moral and political compass to make decisions and take actions that embody values. •
Collective	<p>Active solidarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting a culture that helps to reproduce core values of social justice and ecological integrity. • Creating structures and practices that empower and support the most affected, acknowledging how different forms of systemic injustice affect different people differently. • Using analysis and processes grounded in awareness of group dynamics (mainstreams and margins), creating safe spaces to value a diversity of identities, experiences and voices to participate and be heard.
4. Organising	
Individual	<p>Relationship building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to build relationships of trust in movements through empathetic listening, one-to-one conversations, engaging in dialogue, and effective and non-violent communication that move people into action. • Ability to facilitate group processes, dialogues, participatory and effective meetings, decision-making process, creating shared visions, and managing conflict. Ability to align with others and work in coalitions.
Collective	<p>Building power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating structures that enable scaling up our work by bringing in more new people, • Overcoming separation by building communities. • Translating complex "big" problems into concrete issues, and issues into demands. • Challenging dominant narratives and building a public narrative that unites people around a common purpose. • Mobilizing communities and/or an organised base into action to increase pressure on your targets.

5. Transformative Collaboration	
Individual	<p>Skills and attitudes supporting collaboration within groups and organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a collaborative mindset. • Practicing accountability as an attitude. • Demonstrating emotional literacy. • Giving/receiving feedback. • Recognising the (multiple) value of collaboration, and developing skills for working together effectively.
Collective	<p>Effective organisational structures supporting transformative collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a structure that serves the goal of the organization, and clarity on the division of “roles, tasks and responsibilities.” • Using clear decision-making structures, holding participatory and effective meetings. • Balancing task - process - relationships. • Allowing for the growth of a culture of care, as well as systems of accountability and for conflict resolution. • Enabling spaces for collective analysis and creating shared visions. • Building networks and coalition among movements and organisations through shared infrastructure, spaces and processes. •
6. Strategy	
Individual	<p>Strategic mindset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking strategically and developing long-term visions and clear plans. • Balancing long term and short-term planning. • Skills to use a range of tools for developing and implementing strategies. • Using method for responsive strategizing that can adapt to changing circumstances and take complexity into account.
Collective	<p>Long-term vision and plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing structures and practices to create a clear long-term vision and strategic plans. • Have practices for reviewing, monitoring and adapting strategic pathways. • Staying focused despite distractions. • Creating a clear organisational structure with systems of accountability and follow up on tasks. • Creating and influencing narratives based on shared values.

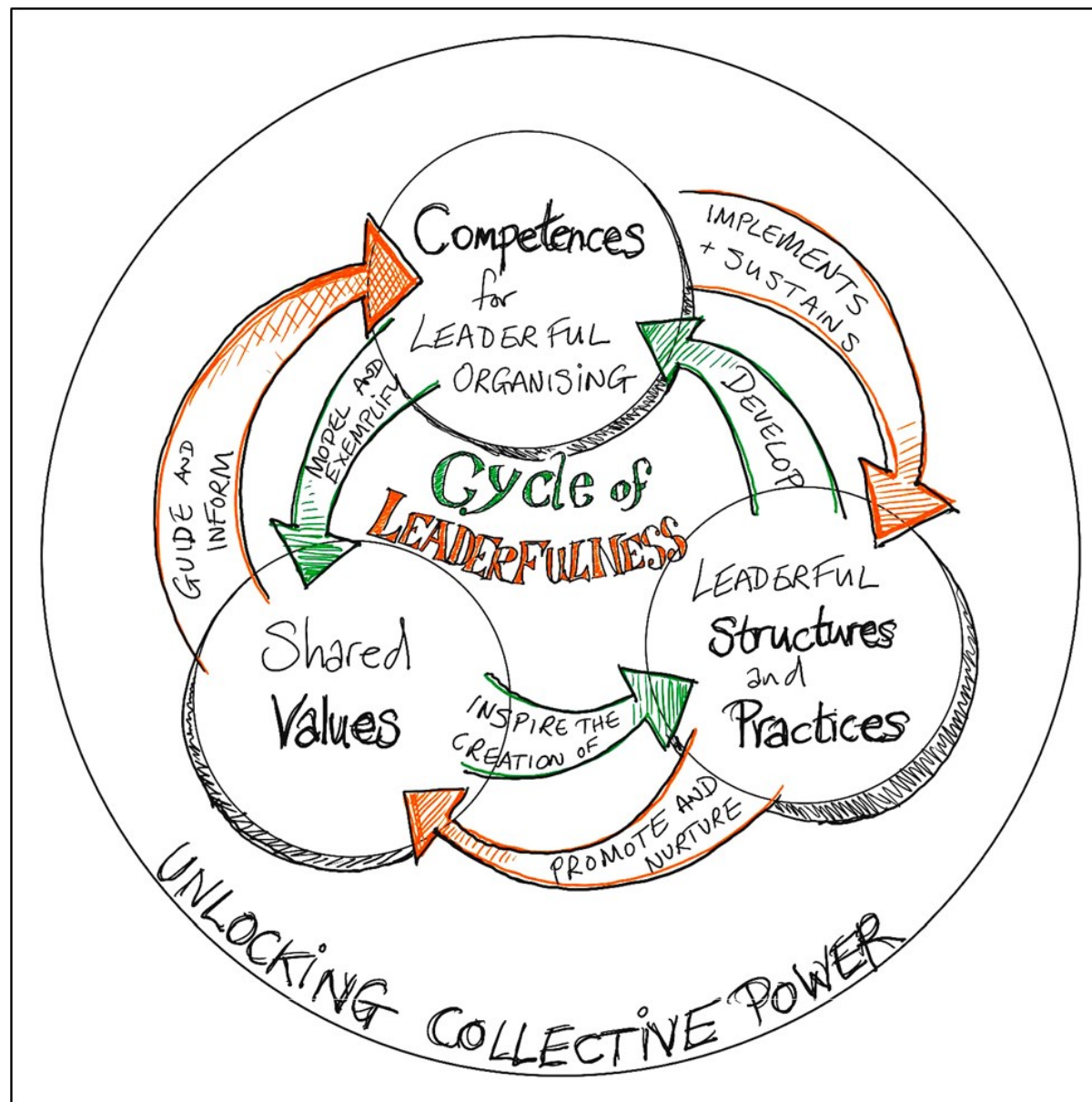
7. Ongoing learning	
Individual	<p><i>Self-reflection and learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicing self-reflection and reflexivity. • Ability to learn from experience to inform future action. • Practicing openness to feedback, self-critique, humility. • Having a mindset oriented to learning and growth and an ability to give and receive feedback.
Collective	<p><i>Collective reflection and learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating collective reflection and learning in organisations and movements with a “culture of debrief” and action-learning. • Making the time and space to reflect on actions and draw lessons learned. • Addressing difficult conversations. • Documenting movement experiences and knowledge and building cultures of “mutual learning”.
8. Responsive action	
Individual	<p><i>Comfortable with uncertainty and complexity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being comfortable with uncertainty and complexity. • Holding contradictions and competing ideas. • Able to navigate in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA) world. • Applying holistic and systems thinking • Assessing and understanding things in context. • Showing flexibility to adapt and the courage to take risks. • Holding one’s centre and staying grounded in moments of crisis.
Collective	<p><i>Systemic approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to think systemically about problems and solutions, and responding to the context in which those problems exist. • Working through the fog of ambiguity and contradictions to develop organizational plans, test assumptions and create enabling conditions. • Practicing adaptive and emergent strategies to changing contexts, and creating systems that enable emergent leadership.

9. Resilience & Regeneration	
Individual	<p>Personal resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possessing personal resilience and awareness of one's emotions and those of others. • Practicing fierce vulnerability, cultivating constructive emotions and building trust. • Having awareness of one's limitations and a practice of self-care. • Addressing the mental and emotional burden of taking and holding responsibility. • Addressing burnout through using burnout preventions practices and plans.
Collective	<p>Regenerative Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a culture of self and collective care for people in the movement with spaces for being vulnerable and sharing feelings and challenges. • Mechanisms to prevent and address burnout. • Practicing team building, check-ins, appreciation, embodied activities, and creating mutual support systems and ability to 'go for the good of the whole'.
10. Communication	
Individual	<p>Deep listening and articulate expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to deeply listen from the heart and withholding judgment. • Communicating with authenticity. • Expressing boundaries and needs. • Using non-violent styles of communication. • Prioritizing time for one-to-one, in-person communication.
Collective	<p>Transparent structures and practices for including all voices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a supportive communication infrastructure. • Installing clear and transparent feedback loops that allow for a good flow of communication. • Developing practices that enable the inclusion of all voices with a focus on lifting up those voices at the margin of a group.

Many of the details and specific models that can populate these the competence fields and examples of practices are developed within the curriculum and trainer handbook informed by this framework.

The leaderful organising cycle

In addition to the specific competence and capability fields, an overall requirement that blends competencies and capabilities is the *leaderful organising cycle*, in which the various elements of the framework are understood to be complementary and reinforcing of each other. The establishment of this cycle and its elements, as an integrated set of conditions, is also to be understood as a *meta-capability* upon which leaderful organising rests:





3.0 A learning framework for Leaderful Organising

3

A LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERFUL ORGANISING

3.1 Introduction

We hope that this competency framework can be used to help individuals and organisations analyse and evaluate strategic development and capacity building needs related to fostering effective and impactful leaderful organisations. Using this framework can help people to think strategically about the strengths and weaknesses of their organisations and to develop pathways of learning and development. It will be of value to organisers themselves and for trainers and educators who seek to support individual and organisational capacity for leaderfulness.

Specifically, it can be used to help individuals, teams and organisations to:

1. Assess Competencies:

- i. Self-assess their own levels and qualities of existing competencies
- ii. Assess the levels and qualities of existing competencies amongst learners, activists, groups or communities they are part of or working with
- iii. Assess progression and achievement of goals in the deepening or addition of competencies on a learning pathway

2. Develop & Enhance Competencies:

- i. **Learning pathways:** to raise and refine their competencies over time, individually and collectively by identifying any key gaps and priorities where i) their individual or team competencies or ii) the competencies of their target audiences, can be put in place developed, enriched or added to in order to catalyse, expand or deepen socio-ecological transition activity.
- ii. **Programme development:** designing, implementing and refining and resourcing:
 - a. training programmes for Leaderful Organising
 - b. transformative action-learning programmes for individuals, groups, communities and movements involved in advancing socio-ecological transition activities, which would be embedded within organisational practice.

The nature of many of the competences and capabilities means that they are likely to be developed gradually, iteratively and over longer periods of time. Training will certainly play a part, but full their development and consolidation over time requires an inherently transformative process that integrates individual learning and organisational change. Understanding that has been acquired needs to be brought to realisation, meaning become embodied in the behaviours and attitudes of individuals and in organisational structures and practices.

Information and knowledge need to be put into practice, trialled, tested, and reviewed, as skills are gradually acquired through experience and application. Structures and practices need to be designed and implemented on a *'good enough for now, safe enough to try'* basis, (Rau, and Koch-Gonzalez, 2018) and gradually shaped to meet the needs of specific groups and organisational contexts. In many ways, there is no end point in this kind of learning. New challenges will continue to arise and creative responses and deeper learning will likely be a lifelong requirement. So, creating the conditions that enable this ongoing refinement and deepening of understanding and practice will be integral to the kind of learning pathways that leaderfulness requires.

In this section we explore some of the pedagogical considerations, the enabling conditions for ongoing learning, and other factors relevant to designing learning pathways for leaderful organising.

3.2 Prefigurative education and leaderful pedagogy

Leaderfulness is not something that can be taught. It needs to be learnt. Although there is specific content that can be shared and specific practices that can be explained, at the heart of leaderfulness lie attitudes and ways of being together that can only be developed through witnessing them being modelled, trying things out for ourselves, and gradually acquiring the ability to embody them in our own practice.

With this in mind, it is vitally important that any training that seeks to support the acquisition of leaderful competences and capabilities is prefigurative, meaning that it is itself and embodiment of the core principles and practices of leaderfulness. Leaderful pedagogy needs to be alive to the dynamics of power inherent in educational settings and able to embody power-with approaches to learning. It also needs to recognise the long-term developmental nature of competence and capability acquisition and ground itself in ongoing and iterative learning methods.

In our view, a leaderful pedagogy must be: radically transformative, holistic, participatory, and proactively inclusive.

The methodologies and practices that we consider central to such pedagogical project the project, able to bring learning methods into alignment with the core values and vision of leaderful organising include:

- transformative and holistic learning methodologies
- participatory and action learning methodologies
- addressing power and privilege (including decolonising pedagogy)
- creating organisational contexts for ongoing transformative collaboration.

Transformative and holistic learning methodologies

Leaderful learning needs to be in service of the broader intentions of leaderful organising. Addressing social, organisational and individual change implies that it needs to be both holistic and transformative.

Transformative learning

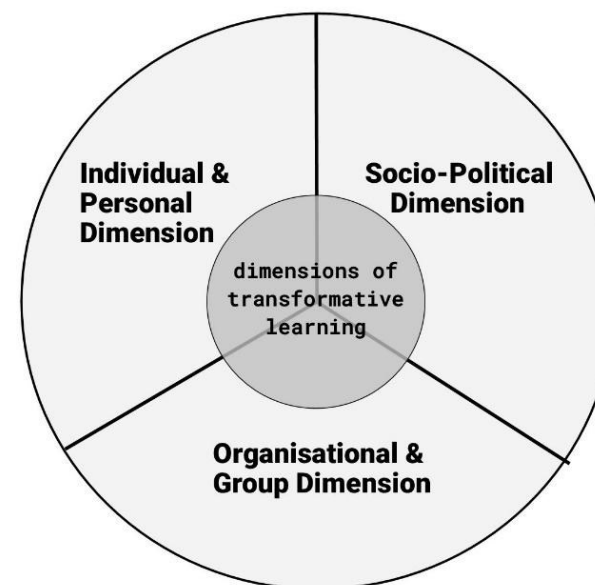
Transformative learning underlines the importance of a complementary interplay of transformation that happens at three levels: the personal, the interpersonal and the socio-political. Transformative learning implies change in ways of seeing and being, not just the acquisition of knowledge. This change happens in the individual in terms of new understanding, shifts in attitude, and the development of skills. At the interpersonal level we are thinking about groups, organisations and communities on a scale that is somewhere between the individual and the wider society. Transformative learning at this level implies changes in the ways people relate and communicate, the way they shape their interactions through shared practices and the development of culture, the ways they articulate shared understanding and vision. This in turn gives rise to shifts in wider social practice and in the context of social action, direct efforts to transfer the changes and learning towards wider socio-political transformation.

Transformative learning recognises that personal development is nested within the inter-personal dimension of groups or organisations, and that the inter-personal or group transformation is nested within the socio-political, and that the socio-political is nested within the ecological. Each of these dimensions has its own systemic structure and yet also needs to be understood as part of larger systemic wholes. Learning and effective practices for transformation need to attend to each of these layers and to the connections between them. The transformation of individuals and their social context involves a kind of reciprocity. Social contexts shape individuals and individuals shape their social contexts. Personal and collective learning are mutually reinforcing and a transformative learning approach bears this in mind when designing spaces for learning or fostering learning communities - and in the ways trainers think about the

relationship between individual learning and supporting change in groups and organisations.

Transformative learning is most effective when it is pursued in solidarity with others, when we recognise the struggles we share, and gain empowerment through our collective activities. We can discover the transformative power of working with others and recognise the mutually reinforcing relationship between building collective agency and personal empowerment - learning to keep these complementary through the balance of autonomy and cooperation. The wider purpose and ambition of social transformation, shared by the kind of groups leaderful organising is relevant to, need to remain a clear point of reference that supports them coming together, learning, and building transformative capacity.

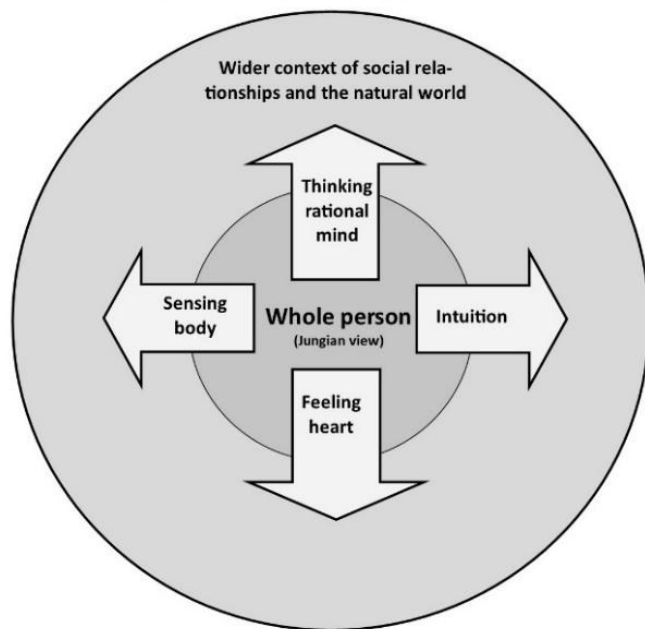
All three levels require a set of integrated and complementary transformative learning strategies.



Holistic education

The integrated and complementary transformative learning strategies, referred to above, is part of what we mean by holistic learning. It is a 'systemic' approach that acknowledges the way that different systemic levels (the psychology of the individual, their immediate social context, and wider socio-political systems) interact, and takes this into consideration. Holistic education is also holistic in the way it seeks to address the *whole person*, while also addressing the person in relationship with those around us and in relation to the wider world. At the personal and learning group level, it engages the head, the heart, the body, and even our intuition. This requires an approach to education that includes the rational, the feeling, the sensing, and the relational dimensions of who we are.

Holistic view of the person in context



A holistic approach will involve the design of pathways and activities that address all of the faculties that humans use to engage with our world. It supports the development of reflexive criticality, addressing the rational faculty. It also integrates emotional literacy and our feeling faculty. In addition, it will draw on the powerful learning that comes through the body and senses, using embodied practices and experiential learning. To support the development of leaderful competences, this kind of deeper engagement with all of these human faculties.

Holistic learning, inclusion, and diverse epistemologies

Many trainers involved in non-formal learning will appreciate the importance of applying a range of learning activities that accommodate diverse learning styles within a group. They are aware that people often have different preferred styles of learning. As David Kolb describes, 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). (Kolb, 2014)

These considerations are especially important for learning for leaderful organising. For educators it offers an important way of modelling the value of inclusion and supporting inclusion in practice. By attending to diverse needs and ways of learning in a group we embody valuing diverse perspectives and ways of being in the world, rather than preferencing certain learning styles and faculties over others.

Including a range of approaches to learning in our work, we not only support diverse learners, but encourages the re-evaluation of assumptions about the superiority of certain faculties which can often place the ration-

al in a hierarchical position in relation to the emotional or sensing dimensions of experience. A holistic approach aligns with both feminist critiques of the valorisation of the rational faculty and decolonial approaches that encourage the appreciation and engagement with different ways of knowing and diverse epistemologies. All of this plays a key role in the deconstruction of forms of power-over that are sometimes found embedded in mainstream pedagogies.

Participatory Education

As we've discussed, one of the key principles of leaderful organising is to support and encourage a participatory culture within groups and organisations. Participatory education models relationships based in solidarity. To paraphrase Paol Friere, one of the most inspiring practitioners of the approach: *Education is a practice of freedom*. Ideally, it fosters a critical and creative engagement with reality, while equipping learners to participate actively in the transformation of our world. The learning it supports is designed to lead to transformative action, especially collective action. This kind of learning helps us to change our lives according to our own ideas and is essential to the process of individual and collective empowerment.

Freire pointed out that traditional education tends to reproduce unequal power relationships, rather than serving the interests of learners. Instead of transforming systems of power-over - it reproduces the dominance of these structures. It uses methods in which learners are considered empty vessels waiting to be filled with the knowledge of the teacher. To subvert the oppressive model of what Freire called "banking education," he developed participatory methods of learning that centre the needs and interests of the learners, and fosters their capacity for critical thinking and awareness. Through participatory methods we subvert more traditional assumptions about how learning happens and the implicit power relationships that didactic approaches reproduce. (Freire, 1970)

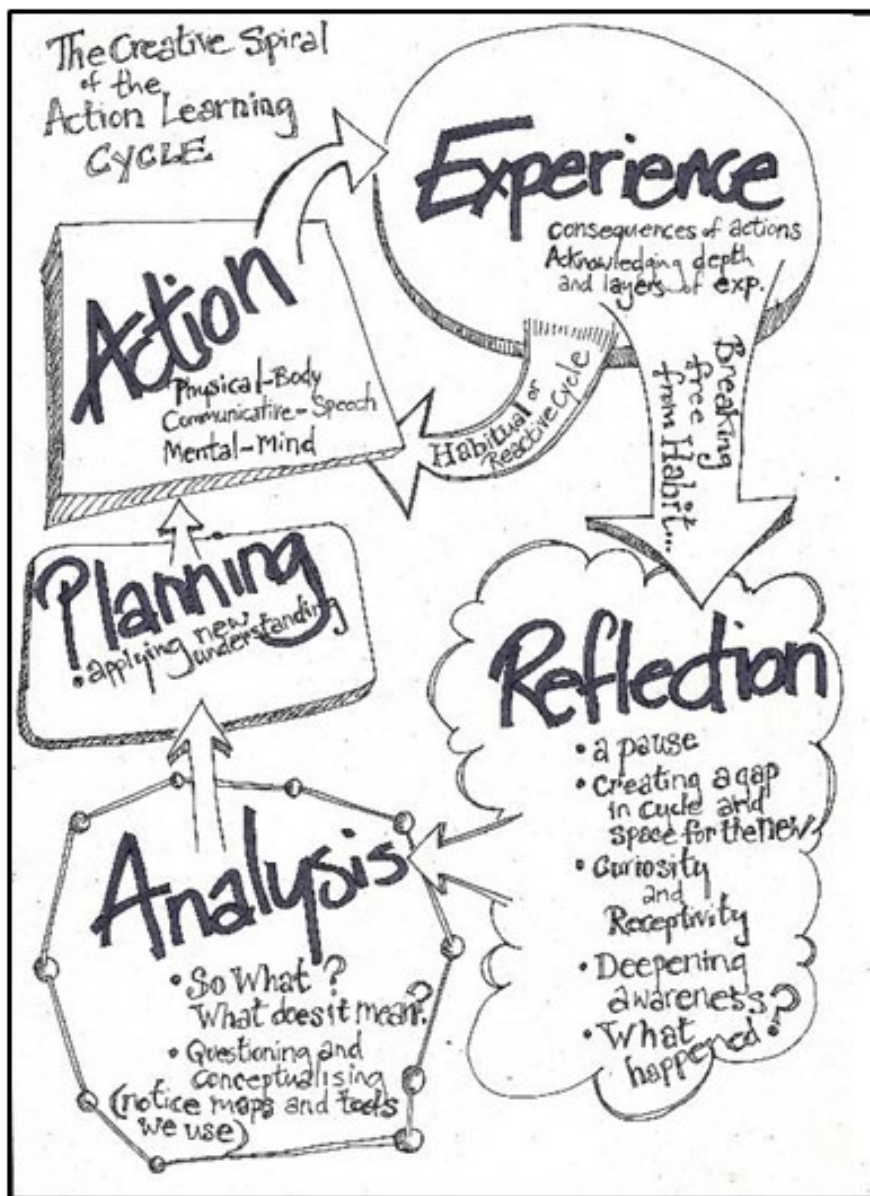
The kind of learning activities found in the leaderful organising curriculum, are designed to support this kind of participatory and critical approach. Through these methods we support people to learn from each

other's experience and build confidence in themselves and their own abilities to find solutions to their problems. This doesn't mean that we should always refrain from presenting new material, frameworks or concepts, but when we do this as trainers or facilitators, we should do it whilst encouraging a critical engagement with the ideas. In this way we also participate in the generation of learning, testing and adapting content and tools in relationship to the lived experience of the group. In alignment with leaderful ideas of incorporating both flat and non-oppressive forms of hierarchy, this does not mean that learning for leaderful organising should avoid didactic elements or the sharing of expertise and presentational content. But it should give a high priority to pedagogical forms that nurture deep shifts in attitude and mindsets, which participatory education emphasises.

Action Learning

Connected with strengthen the critical capacity of learners and the ability to sustain ongoing learning and responsive approaches, are action learning methods. Action learning emphasises the importance of reflecting on and learning from experience, testing and trying things out, and developing adaptive strategies. It assumes that many of the answers to the complex problems we face in social change work do not pre-exist and are not fixed. The answers and solutions we seek are contextual and changing. This means that building our capacity for action-learning will strengthen our capacity to strategise effectively within the complex challenges of social movement work.

An easy way to get a sense of *action-learning* is to look at the *action-learning cycle* (see *diagram*). The cycle emphasises the importance of creating space to step back in an open minded and reflective way to take stock of the impact of our action. This can offer us deeper insights and enriched information about what is going on, which we can then analyse and make sense of (taking care to not simply force our experience to conform to pre-existing frameworks!). Based on analysis we re-evaluate and, where needed, reshape our plans, which carries us into new rounds of action and learning.



In effective *action-learning*, both action and reflection are required. Overly focusing on action can leave us stuck in habitual and uninformed approaches to our work that become increasingly ineffective, however much energy we put into them. Too much reflection means that our mental models and inquiries are never exposed to the light of day or tested in the world. An effective action-learning approach aims to ensure the optimal balance between these elements, to enable effective learning and impactful action for social change.

In *action-learning* the emphasis is on learning that is closely tied to concrete action and experience. Again, this doesn't mean that there is no place for theory. Bringing awareness to the concepts and theories we are using, renewing and refining them, or rejecting them and trying a new framework, are all important parts of the analysis dimension which should encourage self-reflexivity. But, with action-learning, theory serves action, not the other way around. Action-learning also requires a strategic approach. The planning phase seeks to integrate new understanding and apply that to clear pathways of action and practice, implementing and testing what we think and feel we are learning. This involves a sophisticated approach to strategy that is responsive and developed iteratively.

As trainers we can use the stages of the action learning cycle to design learning processes, either using experience people bring to the space as the experience stage or by setting up experiential learning situations that serve as a basis for reflection and analysis, as you'll find on some of the learning activity designs accompanying the curriculum.

Addressing power and privilege with anti-oppression and active solidarity pedagogy

A leaderful approach to learning needs to model solidarity-based relationships and be proactively inclusive and able to challenge and transform oppressive dynamics within the learning community, just as much as it aims to transform them in the wider social context. This includes making it easy for a wide range of people to take part and to make their views heard.

While social movements often champion the principle of inclusivity, in practice many organisations struggle to include the voices of those most impacted by the patriarchal and colonial capitalism we live within. We can find ourselves reproducing the barriers to participation, empowerment and wellbeing that we see in the world around us.

The practices of active solidarity, equity, and empowerment are intended to help us to better embody the values we strive for. As we refine these skills we can begin to create groups and organisations which better exemplify these core values in their structures, practices, and in the ways we treat each other. Our organisations and movements can become more creative, courageous, and effective, while we come to be fuelled more by compassion and care and less by guilt, blame or reactivity.

Inclusive learning processes pay attention to diversity and do not try to homogenise different opinions and points of view or cultural differences. Building movements of solidarity requires that we learn how to operate in pluralistic cultures of mutual respect and empowerment. Through this kind of work, we can become increasingly skilled in transforming harmful tensions and conflict into enriching growth opportunities, and through better working with diversity, we can include a wider range of perspectives, experiences, and histories, for more leaderful and powerful movements.

As we discussed earlier, anti-oppression and active solidarity work includes *all the work that has to do with naming, identifying, deconstructing*

and transforming existing power dynamics related to the systems of oppression we function within - capitalism, white supremacy, ageism, ableism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and others. As facilitators, we can do a lot to transform existing power structures and challenge oppressive social relations, including the dynamics embedded in traditional educational methods. We should aim to use our facilitator's influence to bring awareness to existing power dynamics and address relevant issues where possible.

Developing these skills is a lifelong practice and there are no quick-fix solutions. But there are some useful areas to reflect on and consider when looking to establish or deepen an active solidarity practice within our educational work.

The following recommendations are derived from Ulex Project work on active solidarity training:

1. Basic education: We can ensure that everyone has at least a basic knowledge of how gender, race, class, sexuality, neurodiversity, and body and mind abilities influence power dynamics and what can be done to work consciously and skilfully with these issues. This can help to reduce problems that often arise due to lack of awareness. It is important that our groups do not rely on members of unprivileged or marginalised groups to do the emotional labour of educating others.

2. Acknowledging power and privilege: *Social privilege is an unearned advantage that a person is either born into or acquires during their lifetime*, often linked with conforming (or not) to social norms such as gender or able-bodiedness. It is crucial for us as trainers and for members of our groups we work with to understand and become aware of privilege and the dynamics associated with it, in order that we avoid its reproduction.

3. Emotional awareness, building trust and embracing discomfort: To be able to engage with this work sustainably, we need to develop awareness and emotional literacy and learn how to build and rebuild trust in our relationships and groups. This emotional intelligence helps us to

work creatively with symptoms of wounding, defensiveness (our own and that of others), and the anger and fear that often surface when we engage with these issues. It is a requirement for supporting the necessary processes of healing.

4. Addressing oppressive behaviour and dealing with conflicts: The strategies we adopt need to be based on analysing a variety of factors: the wellbeing of the person being affected; what is best for the group/community involved; factors that led to the event; and the particular situation of the person who caused harm (there is a difference between a person repeatedly causing harm and refusing to be accountable for it, and a person committing a mistake and being willing to change their behaviour). The most important thing is to see, acknowledge and name the damage caused by oppressive behaviours - and to protect people from further harm. We need to use accountability mechanisms that are rooted in core values of care and compassion, rather than reproduce a culture of shame, blame and individualisation.

5. Failing, giving and receiving feedback: As we have said, acknowledging fallibility and the high chances of “getting it wrong” at times, is really crucial to healthy engagement with this work. We need to embrace making mistakes and learn how to fail with an open heart! The first step is to understand the bigger picture and connect with the deeper motivations for doing work on active solidarity. If our motivation can come from a place of love and commitment to a better world, rather than obligation and fear of doing something wrong, we are more likely to stay inspired and resilient, even when failing at it. Key to this area is creating structures and mechanisms for sharing experience and giving feedback.

6. Moving beyond polarisation: The dominant traditions of Western thinking have been highly dualistic. Good-Bad, Right-Wrong, Us-Them, and so on, pervade our ways of seeing. These dualistic frameworks give rise to blame, shame and essentialism, which can get in the way of a deeper transformative approach to active solidarity. The wounding, trauma and anxiety present within activist groups, as a result of existing and historic oppression, can feed into these tendencies. Nevertheless, the gradual deconstruction of these polarising tendencies is important in our

work to heal oppression, trauma and the impacts of violence.

7. Deepening understanding of group dynamics: Within groups more subtle dynamics can reinforce exclusion and unhealthy power relations. Becoming familiar with some key diagnostic tools such as theories of mainstreams and margins, rank, and target/agent skill sets are extremely valuable for trainers and facilitators. Leticia Nieto’s work on skillsets for people who are members of social groups who are agents of oppression and those who are targets of oppression, can equip facilitators and participants to develop a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of oppression from a psychologically informed perspective. Using such frameworks to deepen awareness and develop our skillsets is highly recommendable for those of us looking to design learning spaces that promote solidarity and anti-oppression. (Nieto, 2010) (Lakey, 2010)

Decolonising pedagogy

"For decolonial thinking decolonization is less the end of colonialism wherever it has occurred and more the project of undoing and unlearning the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being and of creating a new sense of humanity and forms of interrelationality." Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Puerto Rican philosopher educator

Decolonization is simply the process of undoing colonizing practices. Given how significant colonialism has been and continues to be in shaping systemic oppression and injustice, it is important to integrate decolonial perspectives in leaderful pedagogies. This means confronting and transforming practices that inscribe colonial, extractive, and supremacist values within education. This will include shifting geopolitics of knowledge, to restore historical understanding of the way power and knowledge production are enmeshed. It also involves challenging hierarchical epistemological frameworks which relegate certain forms of knowing, seeing, and feeling, while championing supremacist, rationalist, and instrumentalist approaches. The holistic methods we recommend, which incorporate

embodied, emotional and post-rational learning, already support these shifts in practice. This is all part of a decolonising approach. It also means restoring notions and values of solidarity, equity, and dignity to a place within the learning process, which are also elements we have encouraged above.

Building on these, we need to find ways to reflect more deeply on the ways that deeply engrained colonising mindsets can shape our approach to learning pathway design and content development. The HEADS UP tool, developed by Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti in 2012, offers seven areas educators can reflect upon to begin to better design learning processes that are working their way out of the colonising mindsets and practices.

HEAD UP stands for:

- Hegemony
- Ethnocentrism
- Ahistoricism
- Depoliticisation
- Self-Congratulatory Attitude
- Uncomplicated Solutions
- Paternalism

Hegemony: For Oliveira, this includes the (often unconscious) assumptions of that some cultures are superior to others. Socialisation within a dominant socio-political system, can leave us holding assumptions and a specific world view as though they are simply how things are and common sense. These beliefs can 'occupy the horizon of the thinkable' and we can unconsciously assume the narratives of the dominant system are always the best way and only right way to be and act. It is important to reflect on the extent to which such beliefs are embedded in our work – and to consider in what ways our approach to learning unconsciously imposes our way of seeing things. We can begin to antidote these limitations through collaborative and participative processes with diverse learners and actors.

Ethnocentrism: Often we can find ourselves operating from a strongly Eurocentric position and projecting the historically dominant views of this specific socio-historical formation as universal. We might find that we evaluate other cultures solely through our own cultural conditioning and dominant Eurocentric viewpoints. Our training approach should include recognition of the conditioned and provisional nature of culture, which can help to soften attitudes towards different cultures and help to deconstruct assumptions of supremacy.

Ahistoricism: Having a sense of how we got here and the historical processes that have shaped our lives (both longer term and recently), is central to the process of politicisation. Nevertheless, it is common for training programmes to fail to take acknowledge and identify the historical contexts that have created the current realities for communities and people. Unless our training for leaderfulness is able to integrate exploration of the historically conditioning factors of contemporary life, it will be difficult to situate learning in an adequate understanding of how power functions today (both in society and in our groups).

Depoliticisation: If learning contexts and processes disregard the existing power inequalities and ideological assumptions (of gender, ethnicity, economic class, etc) embedded in analyses and content, the power imbalances can be left invisible or disregarded. As discussed in relation to 'active solidarity' practices, this can include the power relations and issues of authority between trainers and participants, and within participant groups themselves.

Self-congratulatory and self-serving attitude: Oliveira encourages us to reflect on our own motivation as educators (and activists). She encourages us to ask: 'What are the motivations of those running trainings? Are they aimed at building relationships in genuine solidarity? Are they going to help, fix or make a difference or are they going to learn to grow in a mutual solidarity? *Do our trainings challenge our own and participants motivations?*'

Un-complicated solutions: It can be tempting to look for simple solutions to our problems and filter out the complexity and contradictions

that seem to be inherent in the world. Oliveira asks us to question whether our 'trainings explore the root causes of social-ecological and psycho-social issues and how we are both part of the problem and part of the solution at the same time? Does it allow space for participants to sit with the discomfort of contradictions and complexities, e.g., we want to create a fairer, more equal world, but we also benefit from the structures that create poverty in other parts of society.' While we need to pay attention to inclusion and different ways of understanding, that might be less academic in approach, we should aim to do this without ignoring the complexity of epistemological and ontological issues related to the reproduction of dominant mindsets. An in-depth critical approach is required.

Paternalism: We need to root out saviour-complex type assumptions, which reproduce supremacy type thinking with our work. It is common to approach education and activism in ways that are unconsciously motivated by a desire for affirmation of our own 'goodness' and reinforce a position of superiority in relation to others. Cultivating humility and a genuine respect for the autonomy and experience of those we work with will help us to accept participants' right and capability of finding different solutions and alternative perspectives. Oliveira asks us to consider whether 'our programmes portray the people we work with as in lacking something that we as trainers need to bring them, e.g. education, resources, or help? Do we expect participants to gratefully accept our help without question?'

All of these methodological considerations imply the acquisition of a range of trainer competences and skills, some of which we discuss in the trainer handbook that accompanies this framework. In the context of the framework itself, we have given time to unpacking some of our thinking about pedagogy to support reflection on the way these approaches will bear upon the design of learning pathways and curricula. We now move on to look more deeply at the interplay between individual learning and collective learning and developmental contexts.

3.3 Reciprocity and interplay of personal development and organisational change

As we discussed earlier in the context of the competence framework, we recognise that the conditions that support leaderful organising include both competences developed by individuals and the capabilities (through structures and practices) developed collectively, as groups, organisations, and movements. This leads us to ask the question, where does learning happen?

An individualising answer to this question would suggest that learning is something people do and that it is evident in changes in the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess. Our approach doesn't contradict this, but it does compliment it with the assertion that learning is also an attribute of collectives and that this learning becomes evident in the ways they embody that learning through structures, shared practices, and culture.

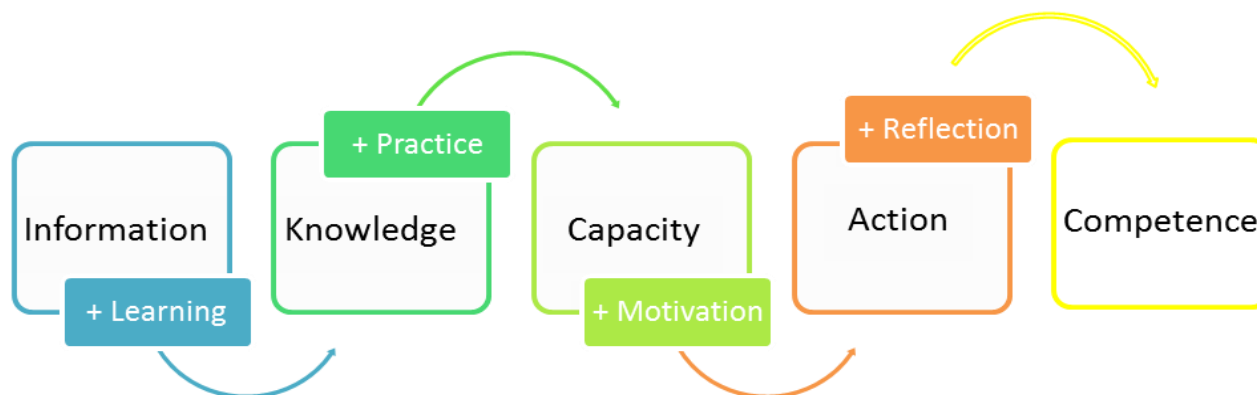
We believe that, it is not only that learning happens at both the individual and collective levels, but that the kind of learning needed to generate leaderful organising has to happen at both levels simultaneously and in a complementary way.

The kind of learning involved in developing leaderful competencies is long term. As we've said, it cannot be taught, it needs to be learned through

practice and experience. This isn't to say that there are not elements that are teachable, in the sense of ideas, recommendations, and practices that are sharable. But the initial stage of understanding these elements needs to be matured from understanding to realisation - or the ability to embody the learning in practice.

The process of realisation or 'making the learning real' and embodied includes acquiring knowledge and information, which is then tested and enriched through practice that should include action-reflection learning. In this way competences are matured. Nevertheless, we assume that the nature of leaderful competencies is that they are always partial and provisional. Any knowledge, skill or attitude that is practiced in amidst the complex interactions of interpersonal relations, will inevitably encounter fresh challenges and situations. A certain humility and attitude of ongoing learning is needed. In both the case of initial competence acquisition and maturation and their ongoing evaluation through practice, can only happen in a context where practice and collective action-learning is viable.

Just as the model of leaderful organising we shared earlier points to the interplay between competencies, structures and practices, learning pathways to support the emergence of that model must also take into account the interplay of these factors in the process of learning and the design of capacity building programmes.



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3.4 Transformative collaboration and transformative groups

To help to unpack some of the implications of our understanding of the interplay of individual and collective learning for leaderfulness, we'll share two related concepts developed by the Ulex Project that offer one way of thinking about those dynamics and reciprocities: They are the idea and practice of *transformative collaboration* and the related concept of the *transformative group*.

Transformative collaboration

There is a great deal of overlap between the concepts and practices of *transformative collaboration* and *leaderful organising*. Like *leaderful organising*, it starts from the assumption that people need to work together to build collective capacity to address issue requiring social transformation. The model adds four additional reasons to value collaboration to this, to arrive at a list of five 'reasons to value collaboration':

1. Effectiveness and Empowerment
2. Embodiment of Values
3. Honouring Interconnectedness
4. Synergy and Creativity
5. A Context for Transformation and Development

1. Effectiveness & Empowerment: Just as we described in the section on *organising* above, the transformative collaboration model points to the importance of initiatives that seek to re-populate the arena that has been vacated, in ways described Robert Putnam's identification of social recession and the disaggregating influence of neoliberalism, between the atomised individual and the state or other elite controlled groups and entities. It also emphasises the everyday value of cooperation in 'getting things done' and the strategic importance of increasing our sphere of influence and the amplification of potency that is achieved through building collective agency and the power of community.

2. Embodiment of Values: Transformative collaboration sees coordinated collective action as expressing a set of life affirming values that directly oppose the atomising and fragmenting values of individualism seen in late capitalism. It contrasts individualism with a 'politics of care', the 'radical power of kindness', the embodiment of which is seen as a direct form of resistance against the reproduction of further social disaggregation. This embodiment, in groups and networks, plays an important part in rekindling the 'radical imagination' and escaping the hegemony of late capitalism. We can often internalise the view of self that the capitalist system is based on. Through the lived embodiment of alternative social relations, we gain confidence in the possibility of alternatives. This is inspiring and empowering. It uses the guiding systems thinking principle of 'going for the good of the whole', which transcends the simple dichotomy of individual and collective (discussed further below) and underscores the idea that 'you can't embody the value of solidarity alone!'

3. Honouring Connection: The approach recognises that one of the problematic symptoms of consequences of dominant western worldviews has been an increasing sense of disconnection and alienation. It seeks to antidote this by emphasising the importance of re-connection at three levels: people to themselves (psychological); people to people (social); and people to nature (ecological). Taking an ecological and systems view of the world, it sees value in learning to act in accordance with awareness of 'interconnectedness' and sees in collaboration a basis for both deconstructing our socialised sense of separateness and re-learning to understand and experience ourselves as interconnected beings. This includes reframing agency as a shared attribute, which we participate in with humility, learning to see the world in terms of living systems, and increasing our capacity to embrace complexity. Collaboration aligns practice with the mindset that honours interconnectivity as an integral characteristic of the world.

4. Synergy & Creativity: Transformative collaboration seeks to make real the idea that ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’. It suggests that the diversity of contributions, experiences, and perspectives brought into play through collaboration can enhance certain aspects of creativity. Similarly, when we act with others something can emerge between us that goes beyond the mere aggregation of our individual contributions. Synergy brings into being qualities and potencies that only lie in the space of interaction.

5. A Context for Transformation & Development: Lastly, but especially important for our current exploration, *transformative collaboration* emphasises the importance of committed and cooperative relationship as an essential basis for personal development and self-awareness. When we create collective spaces of solidarity-based cooperation we gain both the support we need to grow and the challenges and feedback we need to learn. Obviously, the quality of these relationships is key and we’ll explore that more fully below. But when the conditions are right, collaboration constitutes an arena in which we can heal the alienation and disconnection mentioned above, offers and challenges us to grow beyond self-preoccupied mindsets, and helps us to mature our sense of interconnected self. It provides the space we need to learn and practice interpersonal skills and to transform unhelpful mindsets and attitudes as we mature into people who can genuinely collaborate with others. More of what this actually mean is unpacked through the model of the *transformative group*.

Transformative groups

The model of transformative groups can help us to reflect on how we might understand some of the dynamics involved in the interplay be-

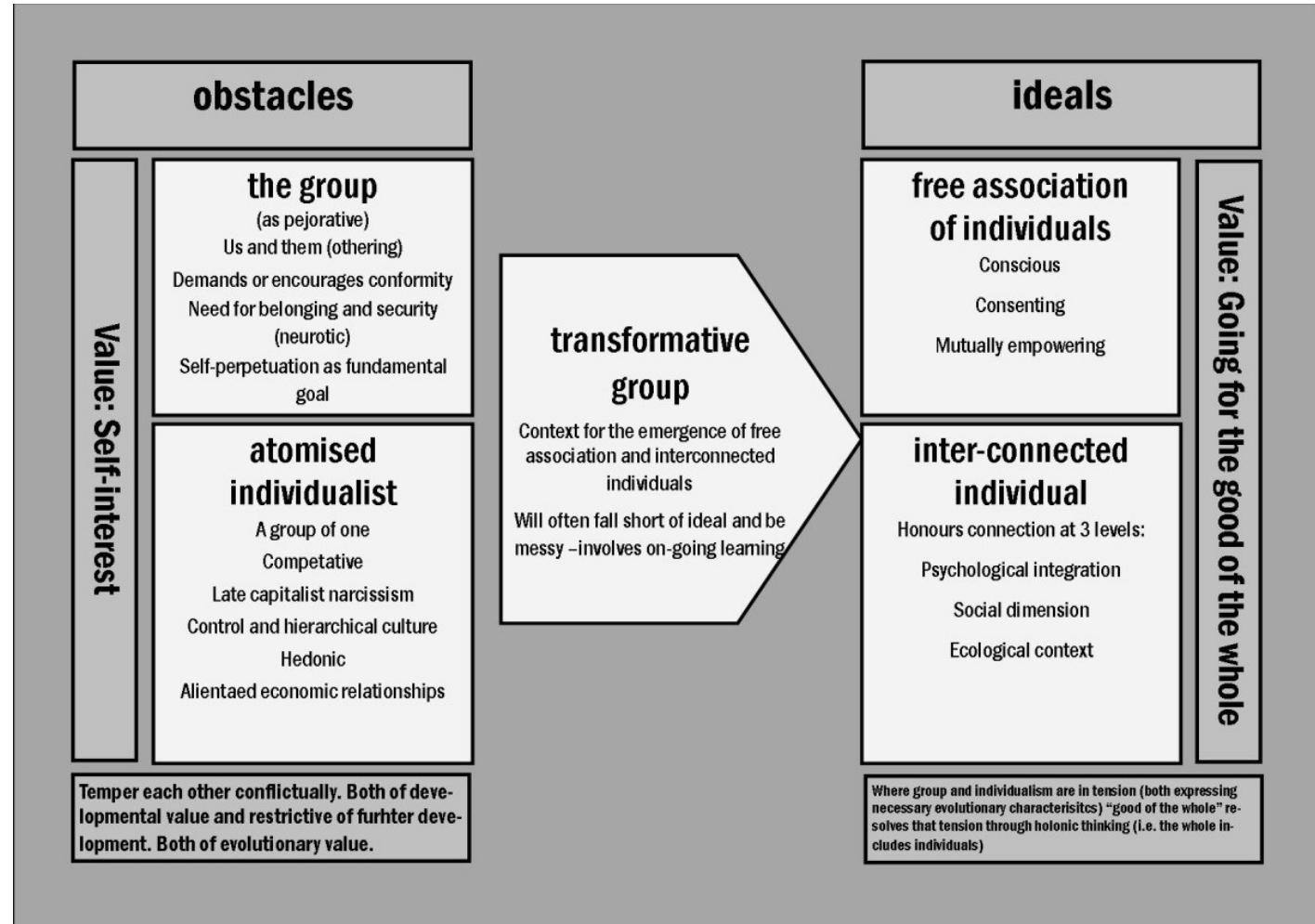
tween individual and collective learning for leaderfulness. We are not sharing it here as suggesting a prescriptive approach. The language and framing of such models will always need adaptation according to context. But we hope that this tried and tested model can support an exploration of some of the principles and practices that will help educators and trainers develop their own approach to learning pathways for leaderfulness. As mentioned in the opening disclaimer, this model does not necessarily reflect the practice of all contributors to the framework. Between us we apply a number of similar methods, of which this is just one useful example we encourage you to engage with critically.

Transformative

In the *transformative collaboration* and *transformative groups* model, the term *transformative* should be understood in light of what we have discussed above concerning *transformative learning*. Namely, it understands collaboration (on the basis of solidarity) as the basis for the transformation of both individuals, their groups, and wider society.

Collaboration in this context is both a means to an end (building effective collective power and personal development) and, when done well, an end in itself – in that when we collaborate effectively, we also seek to embody the values we are working for. But many of us aware of just how hard this is. Often we find that the groups we come together in replicate many of the failures of the society we’re seeking to change. We can experience entrenched conflicts, hidden power dynamics, competition for status and influence, a breakdown of trust, and reproduction of oppressive social relations (such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and so on).

The transformative group proposes a model that understands our groups as developmental and directional - aiming to make the context of our collaborative efforts truly expressive of our values. It offers guidance on how we can create collaborative relationships that enable us to flourish as individuals and empower our collective impact for social change. As such, the insights can be applied to the conditions needed for the acquisition of competences and capacities for leaderful organising.



A. Ideals

The model begins by proposing two ideals, not as end points we will necessarily reach, but as points of orientation or guiding compass. The ideals address two dimensions: the *collective* and the *individual*.

Ai. Collective Ideal: Free Association

At the collective level, it suggests the ideal of *free association*. This idea comes from the political tradition of Anarchism. The key ideas, closely aligned with our concept of *leaderful organising*, are that social relations should be:

- Non-coercive/consenting
- Mutually empowering
- Conscious

Anarchism is a complex and varied tradition. Popularly it has been associated with disorder. The early European anarchists of the 19th and early 20th centuries were associated with assassination and efforts to ferment rebellion and revolution. The idea of anarchism is often connected with lawlessness and social chaos. It has often found expression in strong antagonistic relationship to the power structures in society, commonly taking the form of insurrectional mobilisation. It has often deteriorated into forms of individualistic libertarianism or what Murray Bookchin called “lifestyle anarchism”.

Nevertheless, there is far more to the tradition than this. There is an important strand of anarchist thinking and practice that is highly moral. It critiques social hierarchies and the rule of law to the extent that laws and social hierarchy institutionalise oppressive and exploitative social relationships – deeply unjust distributions of wealth and power. The writer and thinker Kropotkin established the idea of anarcho-communism, which avoids the individualistic limitations of some forms of libertarian anarchism by emphasising the idea of mutual aid. At its heart is a strong moral

case for living in solidarity with others and establishing social and economic relations that are just and mutually empowering.

These ideas inspired people in early 20th Century in Catalunya to organise around anarchist syndicates, in ways that (despite eventual defeat) were to provide the social basis for the initial resistance to fascist coup in 1936. Leading up to that moment had been a long process – over decades – of education and cultural work. Setting up schools, editing publications, running youth clubs and excursionist study groups. Eventually the establishment of a very strong and well organised workers’ syndicate in the form of the CNT. The history of this social movement illustrates the organised, deeply moral, and socially committed implications of anarchists like Kropotkin.

The ideal of free association involves social relationships that are free of coercion. These relationships are mutually empowering, in that the distribution of social wealth and opportunities are achieved through dialogue and agreement – seeking to live the ideal of ‘give what you can, take what you need’. At their heart lies the idea that each of us is uniquely valuable and that social relations should enable each person to flourish according to their unique qualities and abilities. At their heart are the moral values of compassion and solidarity. The ideal is a lofty one.

One of the main criticisms of this ideal is simply that people just aren’t like that. That in fact we are fundamentally selfish, forever competing (and cooperating) with others based on self-interest. Therefore, the criticism runs, we need laws and social structures that prevent society from deteriorating into rabble driven chaos. But anarchism (and many other progressive traditions, both secular and spiritual) suggest that this need not be the case, that we can grow beyond self-centred interest, that we can grow into beings who care, who regard each other with kindness and compassion. The ideal of *free association* encourages us to aspire to

grow into the kind of people whose core values include mutually supporting each other to flourish and realise our potential – and assets that under supportive conditions this is possible.

Aii. Individual Ideal: The Mature Interconnected Individual

The ideal in terms of the individual is the mature *interconnected individual*. The interconnected individual doesn't lose a sense of their unique qualities and characteristics, but recognises that these are not merely personal qualities but qualities that arise out of psychological processes, social conditions and the great ecological web of life and evolutionary history. The interconnected individual doesn't lose their uniqueness or sense of personal agency but experiences themselves non-individualistically and with appreciation for all that their uniqueness depends upon.

The interconnected individual is connected on three levels:

1. Psychologically: They are deeply connected to themselves through self-awareness. Psychologically integrated, emotional literate, and having greater access to the depths of their mind and heart. They enjoy a healthy and affirming sense of self, which can hold both pride and humility together.

2. Socially: They are able to acknowledge and to feel grateful for all that has gone before that supports them: ancestors, carers, teachers, friends. So much of what we consider our self is the fruition of the efforts of innumerable others in the world around us and of innumerable generations of human culture and learning. The interconnected individual recognises, as John Gray puts it:

Human individuals are not natural data, such as pebbles or apples, but are artefacts of social life, cultural and historical achievements: they are, in short, exfoliations of the common life itself. (John Gray, Gray's Anatomy p325)

3. Ecologically: Spatially speaking, they recognising their dependence on the intricate web of life of the ecosystem. Temporally speaking, they knowing that their immediate and concrete experience arises out of a deep evolutionary process. They are alive to the way our moment-to-moment experience rides the crest of a wave that swells out of primordial time, from the birth of our universe 13.7 billion years ago, through the 4.5 billion years of earth's evolution

There is always a risk that such ideals can be taken to imply a normative and prescriptive view of the 'good person'. It is important to avoid this and translate the principles in ways that still allow us to value our differences. Many conditions, material, historical, even cultural can prevent the development of these qualities and they are not meant as a scale to measure ourselves or other by. Instead, they are simply intended to offer flavour of human potential for connection and wellbeing. Nevertheless, the model places a lot of weight on the values of self-awareness and reflexivity, enabling the interconnected individual to avoid being merely driven by unconscious habit. Mindful awareness of our own tendencies better equips us to make choices and to learn from our experience. This implies a certain shift in consciousness, without which the ideal of free association will always fall short. The ideal of free association only becomes possible through both a *restructuring of social relations* and a *transformation of consciousness*. That transformation of consciousness requires both individual effort and social structures that support it.

B. Obstacles

Counterposed to the ideals are two obstacles that prevent us from realising them. The two obstacles don't pretend to be a definitive list of everything that gets in our way but is intended to point towards specific tendencies at the collective and individual level that are of particular importance.

Bi. Collective obstacle: The Group

In terms of the collective dimension the major obstacle described in the model is what it calls The Group. Obviously, 'the group' is generally a neutral term that simply refers to a number of people or things that are gathered or classified together. But in this context it is used in a pejorative sense, with a negative connotation. The characteristics of the group, in this pejorative sense are: othering, demanding conformity, being founded on insecurity, and having the principal goal of self-perpetuation

1. Othering: This characteristic is best understood as the tendency to construct identity and define belonging in terms of *us and them*. We can see this tendency especially clearly in times of insecurity. An example is the increase of xenophobia and intolerance that is often leveraged by the political right in times of economic precarity and loss of social confidence or stability. It is often an expression of weak and insecure identity or a sense of there being a growing threat to perceived needs. Material insecurity combined with perceived existential threats are often leveraged through specific narratives to construct an 'other' in order to consolidate our sense of who we are by defining what we are not. Given that all identity can only ever be provisional, the underlying existential insecurity ramps up the tendency to create stereotyped and reductive conceptions of other.

As James Martin (in the introduction to *Hegemony, Radical Democracy, and the Political*) puts it,

"social groups and relations exist only by means of their symbolic differentiation from other possible relations and identities, through exclusion from or opposition to certain conditions. This antagonistic differentiation supplies a fictive coherence and objectivity to social identity through the demarcation of a threatening 'other' often regarded as irrational, hostile or beyond reasonable comprehension (selfish capitalists, envious foreigners, cold-hearted bureaucracies, and so on), thus- It promise[s] an illusion of fullness of identity once the antagonist has been overcome."

While the tendency doesn't always show up in this more extreme form, the basic pattern is fundamental to *the group as obstacle* to realising the ideals of free association and interconnected individual.

2. Demanding or encouraging conformity: Fragile identities find it difficult to bear difference or tolerate diversity. Othering within the group itself is often an integral part of the group life. Looking for scapegoats. Creating fear of exclusion. Using fear of expulsion and rejection to create pressures that encourage conformity. This happens in quite subtle ways that almost all of us are involved in from time to time, often quite unconsciously.

The framework of *mainstreams and margins* (Mindell, 1995) usefully helps us to understand this dynamic. It suggests that in all groups there are mainstreams and margins. Each group will have a set of cultural norms, ways of doing things, that are subtly reinforced through mechanisms of approval. There are often preferred and acceptable modes of communication, not to get too emotional for example. Unspoken hierarchies are strengthened and dissenting voices can be subtly portrayed as expressions of dysfunctionality or not belonging. The mainstream of each group will create margins, people who feel less at home, who feel (and are often made to feel) that they belong less than others. In the *group as obstacle*, norms and conformity to them serve to signify belonging and advantages are bestowed upon those who conform.

3. Founded on insecurity: The dynamics of othering and conformity, discussed above, feed off and perpetuate insecurity. While a sense of belonging is a healthy human need, the group perpetuates a sense of insecurity, keeping membership contingent on conformity and constructing identity through narratives of a threatening other. The contingent nature of acceptance makes it impossible to feel a deep and nourishing

sense of real belonging, often requiring people to suffer a sense of disconnection from parts of themselves that might not fit the accepted norms. Fear of rejection or marginalisation encourage people to suppress their differences and undermine autonomy and freedom of association.

4. Having the principal goal of self-perpetuation: The last, and crucial, characteristic of the group is that it tends to treat self-perpetuation as its ultimate goal. We can see this in the history of many political organisations. They start out with a strong social program, perhaps even deeply inspired by the possibility of changing society, but gradually deteriorate into organisations whose own self perpetuation becomes more important than their actual relevance. The party itself becomes more important than the impact it is having. We'll discuss the central importance of this characteristic below. Interestingly, as with the other characteristics, this can be a true of hierarchical or conservative groups and those that consider themselves horizontal or progressive.

Bii. Individual level obstacle: The Atomised Individualist

At the level of the individual, the obstacle to free association and interconnected individuality is the atomised individualist, which can exhibit some of the following characteristics: being a group of one; competitive and self-preoccupied; alienated and disconnected; attuned to or pursuing control and command social relationships; short term and hedonistic.

1. A group of one: First of all, we can say that the atomised individualist exhibits many of the tendencies of the Group at a personal level! They show a strong tendency to see self and other dichotomously, can suffer from psychological conformity or the tendency to suppress or obfuscate parts of the self, and grounding purpose on the hard to sustain illusion of individualistic existence can be haunted by existential anxiety (that plays out in a myriad of neurosis).

2. Competitive: The individualist is prone to competitiveness and comparing themselves with others. Status can really matter, humility is challenging, and adversely this can play into lack of self-acceptance. Of course, they cooperate, but generally to their own advantage. They embody and are shaped by one of the dominant views of human nature (all of nature perhaps) - one of the founding beliefs of neoliberalism and capitalism in general - the idea that we are driven fundamentally and inherently by self-interest. Neoliberalism goes so far as to model the entire global economic system around this view. Of course, organising society on this view has notably conditioned us to be more competitive and individualistic.

3. Alienated and disconnected: The atomised individualist, holding a world-view that not only believes in but also valorises the separate self, inevitably experiences isolation and disconnection. A sense of difference and superiority to 'brute nature', self-preoccupation and pacing their own experience at the centre of things, along with the impossibility of finding this essentialised self that makes sense of it all, all contribute to disconnection from self, nature, and others. The innumerable persuasions towards narcissism across today's culture, along with the alienating economic relations we are subjected to, just hypercharge this tendency. Curiously, the suffering that can arise can often predispose people to the lures of the group.

4. Hedonistic: Sometimes atomised individualism will predispose people to short-term thinking and hedonism, but as with much of what is described here, this is not inevitable and a variety of character traits are compatible - including a strong work ethic and discipline.

5. Control and command: The pursuit of self-interested individualism will obviously be prone to seek to control outcomes and often overestimate self-agency. They will often seek to assert preferences and de-

sires through social relationships of domination, pushing their own agenda, and looking for situations of control and power for themselves. At the same time, assuming that others are equally motivated by self-interested and competitiveness, they will also see the value in systems of hierarchy that keep people in check. A curious tension arises between the desire to autonomously assert and the need to sometimes seek protection.

Not about good and bad - just limiting

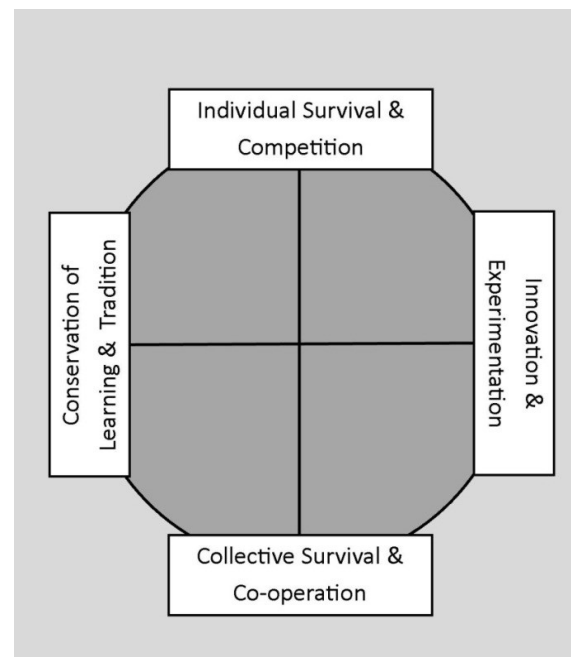
From a moralising perspective, it can be tempting to cast the attributes discussed under the headings of ideals and obstacles as good and bad. But it can be more useful to recognise them as simply different aspects of human potential that manifest under different conditions.

In his excellent book, *Prosperity Without Growth*, the economist Tim Jackson points out that both the tendency for individual survival and competition and the tendency of cooperation for collective survival have been necessary in the evolutionary history of humanity. He points out that there is something of a tension in the human heart - a tension that we also witness within most human institutions, organisations and groups - the tension between individualism and collectivism, autonomy and cooperation.

Jackson points out that:

“each society strikes the balance between altruism and selfishness (and also between novelty and tradition) in different places. And where this balance is struck depends crucially on social structure. When technologies, infrastructures, institutions and social norms reward self-enhancement and novelty, then selfish sensation-seeking behaviours prevail over more considered, altruistic ones. Where social structures favour altruism and tradition, self-transcending behaviours are rewarded and selfish behaviour may even be penalized.”

He depicts this using a diagram with two axes:



Both of these tendencies have been necessary. They are necessary in evolutionary terms - and we might also say that they are necessary in terms of psychological development. It is not that they are in themselves good or bad. It is just that perhaps today we can imagine beyond them.

The tensions along these two axes have been in tension and conflict for a long time. The group demands conformity from the individual, which, while often enhancing the individual's opportunities for survival and well-being can also stifle the individual's autonomy. Individuals can seek to escape from the group or turn the group towards their own individual interests. Or, as in the case of the transformative group, transform themselves and the group to find a resolution of this tension in a higher set of ideals.

The Transformative Group

Both the ideals and the obstacles proposed in the *transformative group* model depend on conditions. The movement from one to the other emphasise collaboration as creating the psycho-social conditions that can support the changes involved. The space in which these conditions are generated is what is referred to as the *transformative group*.

Due to the parallels between creating the conditions for a transformative group and supporting the transformative learning required for the development of competencies and capability for leaderful organising, we hope that by exploring some of the conditions for creating and sustaining a transformative group will shed light on aspects of designing learning pathways for leaderfulness. So, let's begin to explore the terrain in the transitional space between the obstacle and the ideals.

The *transformative group* is a space in which two simultaneous, inter-linked, and complementary processes of transformation are being supported to take place. What does it look like?

Its messy

The first thing to bear in mind is that the *transformative group* is not the ideal. Rather it a context that aims to support the emergence of the ideal. Because it involves people and tendencies that are strongly conditioned by the obstacles, it will inevitably and often fall short. The process of individual and social transformation will be messy. Often it will fail to live up to the ideals. Consequently, we must embrace it as a space for on-going learning and recognition that everything isn't yet transformed or worked out. These failures and limitations can lead to disillusionment, difficult conflicts and disappointments. These are all part of the learning journey. So, certain conditions are necessary to hold those challenges well enough, so that the context can be sustained, and the relationships nurtured as we work through the inevitable challenges. Systems of feedback and accountability, honesty and forgiveness, are all essential.

Going for the good of the whole

At the heart of the distinction between the obstacles and the ideals is the value base. The core value that underpins *the group* and the *atomised individualist* is self-interest. As we've noted, even where cooperation happens, it is in pursuit of self-interest. The core value that is proposed as the basis for the ideals of *free association* and the *interconnected individual* is what we refer to as 'Going for the Good of the Whole'.

The phrase "Going for the Good of the Whole" is lifted from the work of the systems scientist Donella Meadows. She was co-author of the seminal study *The Limits to Growth* (published in the early 1970's, with an update published in 2004). This was one of the first comprehensive studies that popularized awareness of the deep irrationality of a growth based economic and industrial system in a world of non-negotiable ecological limits. Towards the end of her life she was working on a primer for systems thinking. It was intended to help people to think in ways that really honoured the interconnected and relational nature of the world. One of the chapters of the book is called "Living in a World of Systems". The chapter offers a set of maxims which can guide us to cultivate an approach to life that takes the systemic nature of life seriously and engage more intelligently and effectively. It includes maxims such as: 'Expose Your Mental Models to the Light of Day'; 'Make feedback Policies for Feedback Systems'; and 'Stay Humble - Stay a Learner'. Along with these valuable bits of advice she coins the phrase 'Go for the Good of the Whole'. (Meadows, 2008)

What is so valuable about this maxim is the way in which it supports us to find a value-based framing that transcends the apparent conflicts between individual needs and collective needs. The whole, from a systems perspective, includes the parts. Using a systems framing, we learn to recognise that the integrity of the parts are integral to health of the whole system. Going for the good of the whole includes the wellbeing and flourishing of the individuals - who are part of the whole. As such neither

the individual nor the collective trumps the other, as the individual is seen to be nested within the collective and the collective an emergent system resulting from the presence and activities of the individual. To take care of the social field or the ecological web of life, is not self-sacrificial, nor is it self-interested, as the identification of the *interconnected self* recognises that the wellbeing of self and context are deeply interlinked. Striving for the flourishing of one includes the flourishing of the other. A similar sensibility can be found in the idea of living in solidarity with life, in recognition of ones embeddedness and interdependence, an realisation expressed in the words of John Seed, a rainforest activist, who shared his experience of recognising that he wasn't just a human being trying to save the forest but was 'that part of the rainforest most recently emerged into consciousness defending itself'.

This shift to a solidarity-oriented value base, appears to be an important condition for the development of a *transformative group*, likewise we should place a high degree of emphasis on the establishment of a similar shared value base as foundational for contexts to support *leaderful organising*.

A fugitive equilibrium

Another key insight is the importance of responsive structures, rather than prescriptive rules. It is certainly necessary to have agreements and protocols, but as we discussed in an earlier section, many tensions and balances will exist in a fugitive equilibrium (see Section 1.2). The skills and attitudes needed to find creative tension and continuous adaptation in relationship to the paired values of Autonomy - Cooperation, Innovation - Conservation, Diversity - Commonality, and Inclusion - exclusion, are also key.

Enabling conditions

A transformative group cannot guarantee outcomes. It can however aim to put in place a set of key conditions that can support and enable the

growth and development of the individuals involved and the collective itself. Some of the key conditions identified through this model are:

1. Purpose that is bigger than the group: Coming together with an intention to collaborate to fulfil a purpose that is for the benefit of something greater (though not at the expense of) the group itself, provides the non-self-referential motivation and intentions that guides the groups action and work together.

2. A shared and explicit commitment to transform and to honour the developmental potential of ourselves and others: Valuing and recognising our potential and the potential of others needs to underpin the willingness to grow and learn - and to support each other to do so. We need to consistently place our failings in the light of development. And help each other mature and gradually overcome our limiting conditioning.

3. Valuing the wellbeing of individuals as integral to the wellbeing of the whole: Often we exert pressure on each other to overstretch. Burnout is the cause of enormous damage in our groups. Conflict, inability to fulfil responsibilities, too much falling back on too few, leads to loss of talent and experience. This can be antidoted through establishing a culture of care.

4. Valuing collaboration as a necessary developmental context: We need to really want the transformative opportunities that collaboration offers - appreciating both the challenge and the support of healthy collaborative relationships.

5. Clearly articulated values and ethical principles and practices: Values are the factor that most influence the shape of a system. Shared commitment to ethical principles is important, as it underpins the building of trust. These should be clearly articulated, but not prescriptive, emphasis-

ing principles and practices rather than rules. Along with these is the importance of creating a capacity to own our failings and forgive others.

6. Shared or at least mutually respected practices for self-awareness and transformation: Cultivating self-awareness is one of the most important ingredients. We need specific and effective methods, which can include practices such as mediation, therapeutic processes, and feedback systems. We need to be able to own our side of difficulties that arise and to have the self-awareness to communicate about difficulties we experience with others skilfully. Mutual respect for the practices are important because we need to have faith that each of us is growing. We will fall short. We will need to forgive each other again and again. But forgiveness also requires confidence that each of us is doing the work to overcome our limitations.

7. Tools for organisational/group awareness: In addition to self-awareness we need ways of reflecting on group dynamics. We need ways to analyse what's going on and to keep learning collectively. These practices will enable us to remain responsive to the challenges of a fugitive equilibrium of needs and to support ongoing collective learning.

8. Balancing action and reflection: To support self and group awareness, we need to take time to stop, pause, reflect and learn. Without this we will keep reproducing the old problems. Learning requires both reflection and action through which we test out our learning and learn again.

9. Practice of transformative friendship, peer support and mentorship: Peer learning is vital. So is honouring and being receptive to the experience and wisdom of others. These practices can include methods to share and support learning, such as coaching, training, and shadowing

others in their work. It is not only task-based learning, but also support with interpersonal challenges and other developmental struggles.

10. Long term association: In a world characterised by high rates of mobility and difficulties generating sustainable resources, this can be a tough one. But the deeper connection and trust required to support the life of a transformative group take time to build. Ideally, transformative groups are composed of people who can offer mutual longer-term commitments to each other, and place a high value on maintaining and building on the relationships and foundations of trust and understanding we have fostered. Often who we do something with is just as important as what we do. The quality of relationship is often a more important foundation to build on than specific skillsets. High turn-over of members will often undermine our efforts.

11. External support and perspectives: However good a group is at bringing awareness to its own dynamics and creating systems to resolve problems and conflicts, having feedback, new perspectives, and support from people outside the group is enormously valuable. This can be both formalised and informal support. It can also take the form of networking with other groups and organisations, as well as entering into wider collaborative relationships with them.

12. Being open to dissolution and renewal: While long term commitment to work through difficulties is essential, it can be counterproductive to try to preserve the group or a specific configuration at all costs. Sometimes creativity comes from division and new combinations. Things change and being open to impermanence, even of the transformative group, can help us avoid stagnating dynamics and desperate attempts to avoid the inevitable. Learning can always be carried forwards and each end approached as a new beginning.

Leaderful learning frameworks

The preceding discussion of the *transformative collaboration* and *transformative groups* model is not meant to suggest a prescriptive framework, instead the aim has been to circumambulate some of the key considerations relevant to creating spaces that can support the longer-term learning pathways we think are necessary to support the depth of transformative learning required to really consolidate, mature, and integrate the relevant individual competencies and organisational capabilities.

Learning for leaderfulness needs itself to be leaderful in spirit and practice. What this means is suggested through the methodological considerations for pedagogy and the importance of an organisational and relational structures to support the ongoing learning involved. In a sense, the model of leaderful organising outlined earlier is also a model for the learning process. As in the leaderful organising model itself, the learning process also involves a reciprocal and complementary interplay of individual competencies with structures and practices.

Evolving, sustaining, and adapting a leaderful environment is an integral part of any learning pathway for leaderfulness. The kind of space that is created, including the culture, structures, the shared values provides the container for carrying knowledge and skills learnt through training into practice. Considerations about how such a space is set up or supported to emerge through organisational change are integral to the design of leaderful learning pathways.

Clearly not everything can be done at once, so an ability to reflect on priority learning needs and organisational changes is necessary. In the next section we offer a simple method for evaluating and assessing needs for both individuals and groups, so that educators and organisers can tailor learning journeys to the specific strengths and weaknesses of the groups they work with.



4.0 Assessment tools

04

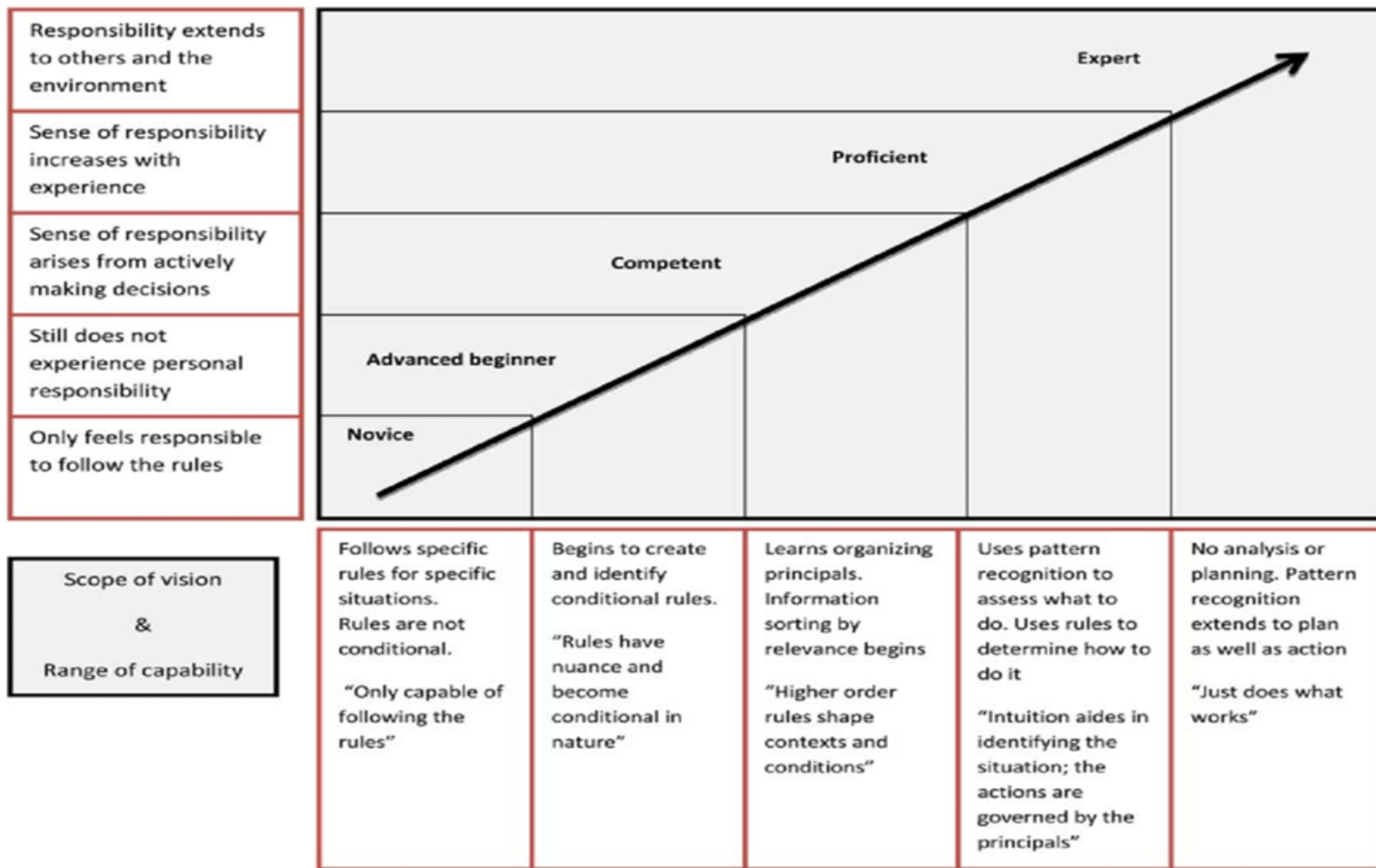
ASSESSMENT TOOLS

A developmental pathway

Learning pathways can help us to structure training and the practice needed to support the initial acquisition, development, and maturation of learning. This involves being able to identify helpful sequencing of content and areas of learning to best support that development and to be able to provide appropriate support during different stages. The qualities that support leaderful organising, being collective as well as individual, also involves pathways of organisational change and evolution.

Beginning with the competencies that individuals need to develop it becomes useful to be able to identify where they are starting from and the progress they are making through different stages. In keeping with a leaderful approach, this should always empower people to assess themselves, rather than subjecting them to some kind of external ranking. It also requires the articulation of some kind of scale. Such as scale is inevitably a crude reduction, given the nuance and complexity of the qualities involved and the depth of personal transformation involved in this kind of learning. Despite this, some kind of scale can help people to get a useful reading for themselves and associates.

The Dreyfus & Dreyfus skill acquisition model offers a useful starting point in developing such a scale. The model uses five levels from novice, through advanced beginner, competent, proficient, to expert. The diagram below gives an indication of the range and scope of vision associated with each stage.



Shifting terminology

While this can be useful, in the context of leaderful organising, the terminology can be read in a way that accentuates a traditional hierarchical. In our work we have looked to find different terms that have less of this connotation, while inevitably acknowledging that if there is such a thing as a learning pathway, some people will be further along it than others. This being true, given that development of the kinds of qualities involved in leaderfulness can be developed unevenly, it will often be the case that someone with a well developed competence related to one area might be far less developed in another. So, care must be taken not to have these tools used in ways that reinforces artificial hierarchies.

In our handbook for trainers, we have simplified the stages by turning them into self-applied statements about learners relationship to topics. In this way the stages become:

- a) **new to me**
- b) **exploring, and**
- c) **well-travelled (learning in depth).**

This might well be a useful simplified approach to use with learner groups. At the same time, taking Dreyfus & Dreyfus five stage model, we have come up with some new terms that correspond to these, that might be helpful for trainers and organisers to use to develop a more nuanced analysis of needs and competencies.

These are:

- 1. Aspiring:** The term focuses on the motivation and initial vision of leaderfulness that should already be present at this stage. The basic values and principles are in place as foundational elements that will be built upon and that will guide learning. Ideas and practices are new to people.
- 2. Initial testing:** At this stage learners are already bringing the skills and practices into their work and relationships, initially testing learning and gradually growing confidence in its relevance and value.
- 3. Ongoing development:** Learners are regularly bringing the skills and attitudes into ongoing collaborative work. Confidence in the value of leaderful competencies is growing and principles can be applied in new situations. Ongoing guidance from those with more experience is needed.
- 4. Maturing:** With principles and attitudes well integrated and having gained a significant opportunity to put skills into practice, at this stage leaderful approaches begin to feel natural and uncontrived. They offer the 'go to' solutions to problems that arise. Increasingly willing to take responsibility for the whole. At this stage enough confidence is present to be able to cultivate something of 'a beginners mind' at times.
- 5. Realising:** While failures are never avoidable, the realising stage is able to embrace the idea of 'failing fast, failing forwards', because effective systems match up with attitudes that mean feedback and ongoing learning are deeply integrated in practice. Willing to hold significant responsibility for the whole becomes a common ongoing experience. A beginners mind becomes a default attitude.

Individuals and collective assessment

Assessing personal or individual competencies is not sufficient to understand the levels of leaderfulness present in leaderful organising. This needs to be complimented with collective measures.

When we do this we have three layers to the assessment:

1. Individual competencies: as discussed above

2. Aggregation of individual competencies: Not everyone in a team needs to be equally competent in all areas. It might be sufficient for one or two people to have a mature competence in one area and others a more mature competence in others. The combined affect can provide the skills necessary for a group to continue to be effectively leaderful.

3. Organisational (group or movement) capabilities: these are different to the aggregation of individual competences and are more about the establishment of organisational structures and shared practices.

At the organisational level, an assessment scale can look like this:

-1. Non-existent: this additional level indicates that an organisation is unaware or disinterested in a specific competence area. While some members might see the need, the perspective it is not sufficiently shared to be able to say that the organisation is 'aspiring'.

1. Aspiring: the need and value of leaderful structures or practices is recognised, but these are new and require initial learning to be able to begin consider how to implement them.

2. Initial testing: Initial learning of structures and practices has happened and the first steps of putting them into practice is taking place. As challenges arise outside support and experience is often needed to embed them and troubleshoot.

3. Ongoing development: the structures and practices are being used ongoingly. As challenges arise outside support and experience is often needed to embed them and troubleshoot, but the practices are beginning to feel as though they are part of the group's life and culture.

4. Maturing: The structures and practices are fully embedded. Leaderful capabilities are clearly experienced as part of the culture. The experience within the group means that most problems and challenges can be addressed and the ability to adapt structures and practices is well established within the collective.

5. Realising: At this stage all dimensions of leaderful capabilities need to be well developed (at least to stages 3/4) and a holistic understanding of the way they complement each other is widely shared. There isn't an expectation that everything is always perfectly leaderful, but failings are easily embraced as opportunities for ongoing learning and adaptation. Although there are well established methods and structures, grounded in experience and culture, responsiveness replaces any organisational rigidity.

Mapping competencies and capabilities

We have found it useful to use a mapping tool to create a visual representation of competencies and capabilities.

The mapping web tool has 10 spokes radiating from the centre, each representing one of the competence/capability areas of the competency framework. Along the spokes individual competencies and collective capabilities can be scaled.

Mapping Individual Leaderful Competencies and Collective Capabilities

Using the descriptions of the competence areas (enriched by information from the curriculum) use the web diagram to draw a competence web. This can be done:

- Individually: for both oneself and the organisations
- Collectively: overlaying individual self assessments
- Collectively: for the organisation

Key to scale:

0 = Aspiring

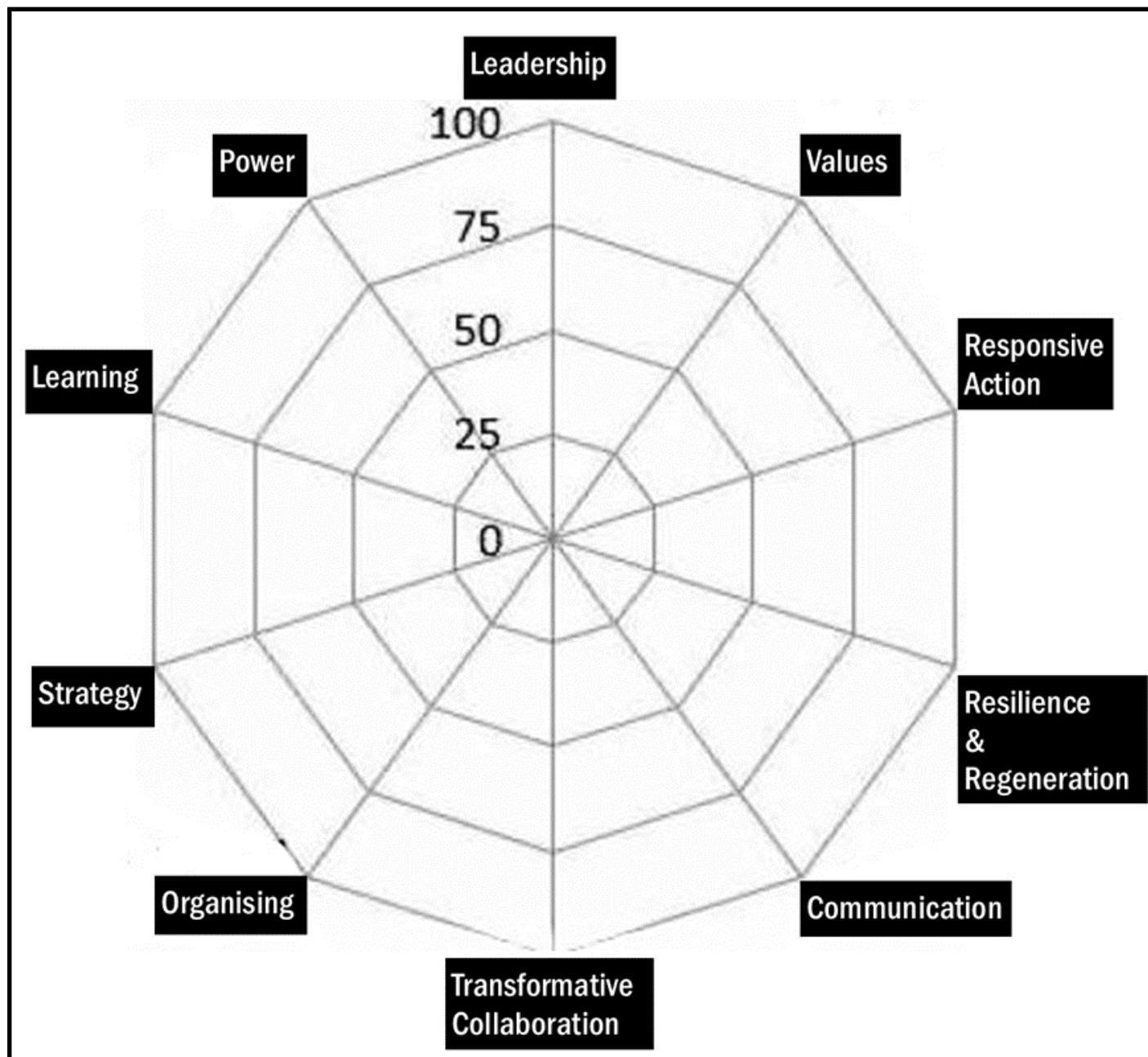
25 = Initial testing

50 = Ongoing development

75 = Maturing

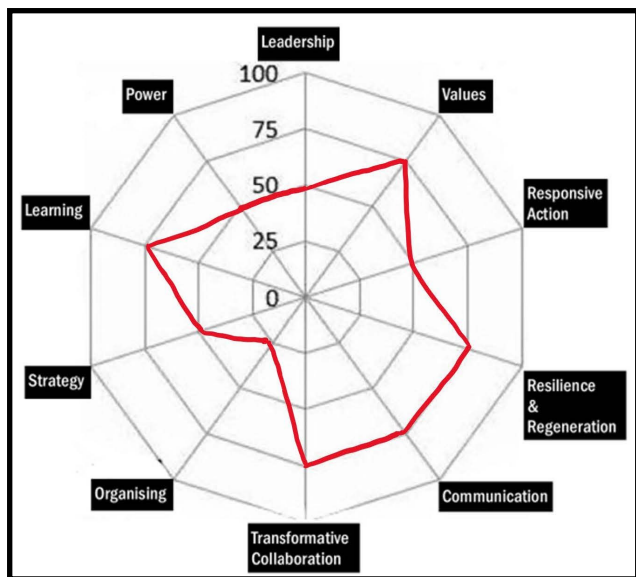
100 = Realising

For 'non-existent' at collective level, leave the spoke blank

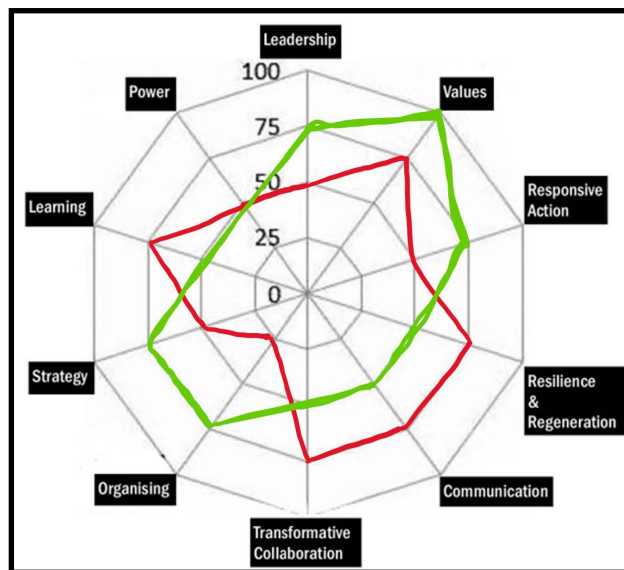


The tool can be used to map one's own assessment, oneself and assessment of the organisation, and the combined assessments of a team.

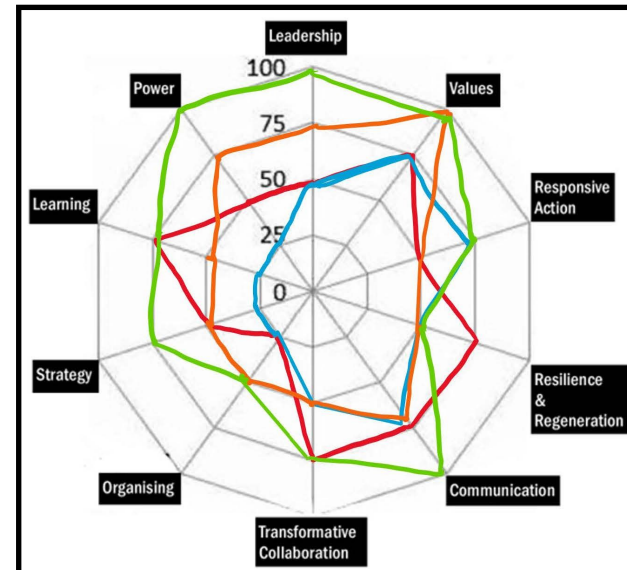
Example of an individual assessment



Example of an individual and organisational assessment



Example of multiple individual assessments overlaid



Assessment reflections

An initial introduction to some of the key themes in the curriculum are often necessary to give people a sufficient understanding of the key terms to be able to effectively assess themselves and their group. But we have found it useful to offer some prompt questions. The following tool offers some useful prompts.

	Individual competencies	0-100	Organizational capabilities (organisation can be replaced with	0-100
POWER	To what extent are the concepts of personal power, rank and privilege known to you and are able to have discussions about the power you hold?		To what extent are there: - systems for intentionally dealing with internal power dynamic? - practices for reflecting on how organisational structures, dynamics and processes are influenced by wider	
LEADERSHIP	To what extent do you: - embrace the idea of leadership? - step into leadership? - take responsibility and hold accountability?		To what extent are there: - leadership development structures in place? - practices to ensure intentionality and consent around assigning leadership roles?	
VALUES	To what extent do your actions challenge systemic oppression? How central to your life choices is the value of mutual solidarity (or 'going for the good of the whole')?		To what extent does your organisation/movement have a clear sense of purpose greater than itself? How clearly articulated and widely shared are the values of solidarity for those within and outside the organisation (this can include non-humans)?	

<p>ORGANIZING</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place your main focus on building relationships and trust with others in your work? - use relational skills to facilitate group processes? 		<p>To what extent does your organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have structures and strategies in place to build collective power? - create a shared sense of purpose among people (outside the organisation) towards a common goal? 	
<p>TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personally value collaboration? - view emotional literacy as part of your work? 		<p>To what extent does the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - design and hold clear decision making processes - have clear structures and processes that support the realisation of the purpose of the group? - have structures for effective communication flow? 	
<p>STRATEGY</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reflect on and plan your work? - think on both short term and long-term time horizons? - adapt your plans easily when circumstances change? 		<p>To what extent does the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have clear systems to develop shared strategy and long term vision? - stay focussed on a clear plan vs. move from thing to thing? - have systems in place to ensure follow-through on shared plans? - review and adapt strategy at appropriate intervals? 	

<p>ONGOING LEARNING</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take breaks to reflect and learn on what you are doing? - give and receive feedback well? 		<p>To what extent does the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitate collective learning and debrief your work? - create intentional spaces for shared reflection? 	
<p>RESPONSIVE ACTION</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel comfortable in moments of uncertainty or ambiguity? - take risks? - remain grounded in moments of crisis? 		<p>To what extent does the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop plans that embrace contradictions and complexity rather than run from them? - respond well to moments of crisis? - allow new leadership to emerge in difficult moments? 	
<p>RESILIENCE AND REGENERATION</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work from a place of vulnerability with others? - admit to yourself your own limitations? - take care of your levels of energy and wellbeing? 		<p>To what extent does the organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take steps to prevent and address burnout culture? - engage in activities to build up your team, including offering appreciation? 	
<p>COMMUNICATION</p>	<p>To what extent do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - listen deeply and withhold judgement when talking with others? - share your needs and boundaries clearly to others? 		<p>To what extent are there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structures for a transparent communication flow? - organisational practices designed to include all voices, especially those who may be at the margin of the 	

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