



LEADERFUL ORGANIZING: A CURRICULUM GUIDE

Developing key competences
for leaderful movements

THEORY ● PRACTICAL MODULES ● SESSION PLANS

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Disclaimer

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A. Introduction to the curriculum

This curriculum has been compiled as part of a broader effort to support groups and organizations working towards social change. The content consists of teaching materials intended to scale up organizational efforts by investing in the capacities of the people involved, whether those are staff, volunteers, members or a group you wish to organize.

At the heart of this curriculum, there's the belief that people have the potential to develop the required capacities to take themselves a lead in the fight for the change they seek. The approach of leaderful organizing at the center of this curriculum has been built on insights that are documented in our research paper, while support to teach the curriculum is offered in our training handbook, "*Towards A Leaderful Pedagogy*". Additionally a competence and learning framework, which is summarized in this document, an online toolkit, available on the Commons Social Change Library and an interactive digital learning platform complete the scope of our support material.

While this curriculum has been written with educators and trainers in mind, to support them in designing new training experiences, you might find inspiration regardless of your current level of experience and the role you hold in your group(s).

Every chapter has a similar structure: it starts with a general introduction situating the topic that it seeks to address, followed by some specific modules where we address topics connected to the learning competences required to do leaderful organizing. Each chapter ends with one or more sample session plans that can be used as they are, or rather be used as a source of inspiration when you go and create your own session plans. We definitely recommend you to tailor to the needs of the group you work with. The online toolkit which has been mentioned above, contains many more exercises, which you can use when working on your own session.

Our choice of topics addressed in the chapters of this curriculum, reflects the core competencies that have been identified over the course of our project. These competencies have been named either as a result of our research or as we have been working with participants during week long training events, where we tested earlier versions of the curriculum.

When you do use this resource as a trainer, we want to invite you to see this curriculum as a raw material to be moulded by your hands into a tool for leaderful learning. There is no right order to read the chapters and when you evaluate the learning needs of the group you work with, you might see very different priorities than those addressed in the sample session plans we offer. We encourage you to assess the needs of the group you work with, using our diagnostic tool, described in section C of this curriculum guide. Based on this assessment, you can start to build your own session plans using the empty template at the end of this curriculum.

Being able to invest in a shared and effective leadership, strengthening the movements we need so badly is both an amazing challenge and a privilege. So have fun and get organized!

B. 10 Key Competences/Skills For Leaderful Organizing

1. Power

Awareness of power and privilege (Individual)

Having self-awareness of one's power and privilege, of one's response to power, ways of seeing, ego stories, traumas, triggers, patterns and ability to work with them. Being comfortable with power, ability to analyse power relations in groups, openness to share power. Adopting an intersectional approach by prioritizing the agency of the most affected by systemic injustice.

Power distribution systems (Organization)

Adopting structures and practices for power analysis and for a clear and appropriate distribution of power, roles and responsibilities. Possessing intersectional approaches to movement building.

2. Leadership

Embracing leadership (Individual)

Embracing leadership and power as personal and social transformation. Practicing self-knowledge and self-accountability. 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.

Leadership development structures (Organization)

Fostering collective leadership by creating leadership structures and practices that distribute power appropriately, enable 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

Be grounded in values (Individual)

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.

Active solidarity (Organization)

Creating structures and practices that empower and prioritise the most affected, acknowledging how different forms of systemic injustice affect different people differently. Showing 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. Organizing

Relationship building (Individual)

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.

Building power (Organization)

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

Skills and attitudes supporting collaboration within groups and organisations

(Individual)

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.

Effective organisational structures supporting transformative collaboration

(Organization)

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

Strategic mindset (Individual)

Thinking strategically and developing long-term visions and clear plans, balancing long term and short-term planning, and embracing responsive strategies to adapt to changing circumstances.

Long-term vision and plan (Organization)

Developing structures and practices to create a clear long-term vision and strategic plans. 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

Self-reflection and learning (Individual)

Practicing self-reflection and learning 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 reflection and learning (Organization)

Facilitating collective reflection and learning in organisations and movements with a "culture of debrief." 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

Comfortable with uncertainty and complexity (Individual)

Being comfortable with uncertainty and complexity, holding contradictions and competing ideas to be able to navigate in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA) world. Applying holistic thinking, assessing context, showing flexibility to adapt and courage to take risks. Holding one's center and staying grounded in moments of crisis.

Systemic approach (Organization)

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. Practicing adaptive and emergent strategies to changing contexts, and creating systems that enable emergent leadership.

9. Resilience and regeneration

Personal resilience (Individual)

Possessing personal resilience and awareness of one's emotions and those of others. Practicing fierce vulnerability, cultivating constrictive emotions and building trust. Having awareness of one's limitations and a practice of self-care and addressing the mental and emotional burden of taking responsibility, experiencing loneliness, and dealing with burnout.

Regenerative Practices (Organization)

Creating a culture of self and collective care for people in the movement with spaces for being vulnerable and sharing feelings and challenges, as well as 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

Deep listening and articulate expression (Individual)

Being able to deeply listen from the heart and withholding judgment. Communicating with authenticity, expressing boundaries and needs, using non-violent communication, and prioritizing time for one-to-one, in-person communication.

Transparent structures and practices for including all voices (Organization)

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

C. Assessing The Competences

When we do training work on leaderful organizing ourselves, we feel it's important to always start with a wide scope. It has little use to just work on one of the skills involved, without being clear of the overall picture. That's why we will always start with an introduction of what leaderfulness and leaderful organizing mean, how the approach differs from more traditional ways of looking at leadership (development) and why we believe it matters. In such introductory sessions you can opt to use our working definitions of "transformative leadership" and "leaderful organizing":

Transformative leadership involves investing in people's growth and capacities. It also means developing movement's ability to be relational, rooted in reality, collective, supportive, nurturing, intentional, adaptive and visionary, while being invested in finding common purpose and reaching shared goals.

Leaderful organizing is an intentional approach to invest in the development of transformational leaders whose role is to serve, deepen and expand social movements.

If this is what the group you work with wants to do, that's a great start. However, deciding that you want to become a leaderful organization is actually the easy part! It takes a lot of learning, unlearning and making mistakes, while you slowly grow into leaderful organizing. The ten competency areas which have been previously introduced, give us a better sense of what it takes to become more leaderful, both on an individual level as on the level of the structures, culture and practices within an organization. These competencies point to the many different skills that together enable leaderful organizing. These skills are like pieces of a puzzle: some of them you might have in place, others are harder to find.

So it is important to prioritize: in which areas of competence does a specific group of learners or does an organization want to dive deeper? Which areas feel like they are reasonably well covered already? Which are the sets of skills that could benefit a group in the next stage of its growth?

Once you have established with a group the meaning and value of leaderful organizing, it is important to take some time to identify in which competency areas participants want to dive deeper. Because, let's keep it real: even a week long training would never offer enough time to go in depth for all of the different skills that contribute to more leaderful practices.

Therefore we developed during our training work a tool to help participants assess both themselves individually and their organizations for each of the ten areas of competence. On the next few pages we share one version of this tool. The tool consists of two parts, the first being a list of questions. Note that you can add additional questions for each area of competence to help participants assess more thoroughly. Secondly, we ask participants to visualize their assessment in a "spider web" that makes it easy to see the areas that might benefit most from further exploration.

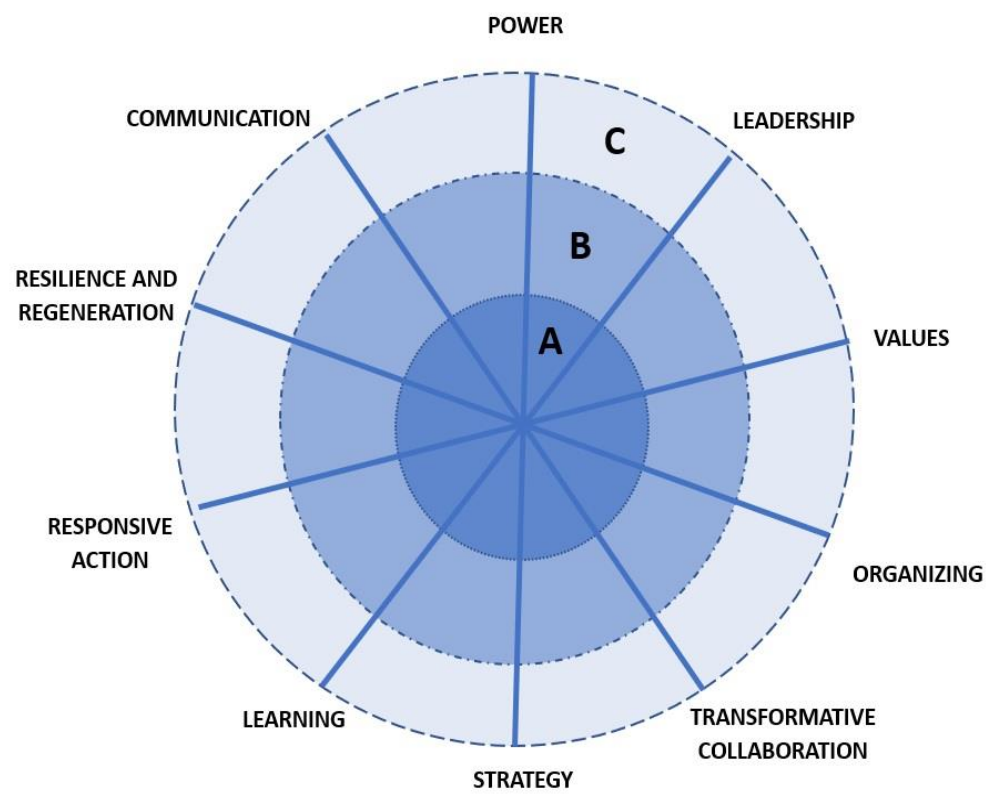
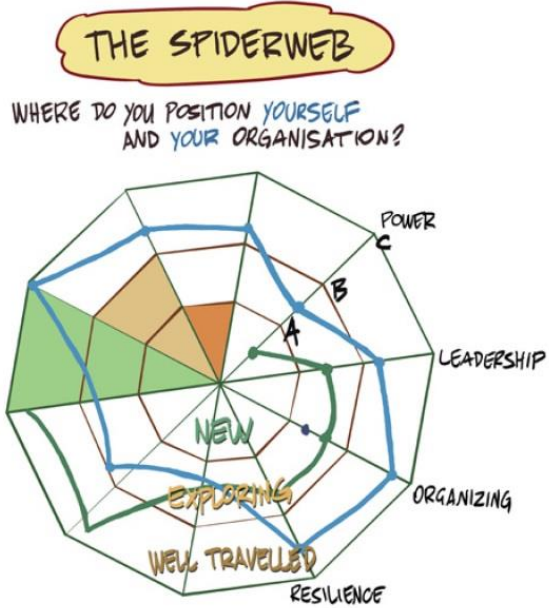
LEADERFUL ORGANIZING ASSESSMENT TOOL

Please read the following questions and rate yourself and your organization/ movement for each of the Leaderful Organizing skill areas on a scale from (a to c)

COMPETENCY AREA	Individual self-assessment	A/B/C	Organizational assessment	A/B/C
LEADERSHIP	How much do you embrace leadership?		To what extent does your organization/ movement have leadership development structures?	
VALUES	To what extent do your actions challenge systemic oppression?		To what extent does your organization/movement puts the agency of most affected from systemic injustice at the center?	
RESPONSIVE ACTION	To what extent do you feel comfortable in moments of uncertainty?		How much is your organization/movement able to respond to moments of crisis?	
RESILIENCE AND REGENERATION	How well do you take care of your levels of energy and wellbeing?		To what extent does your organization prevent and address burnout culture?	
ORGANIZING	How about are you to build relationships and trust?		Do you have structures and strategies in place to build people power?	
STRATEGY	How able are you to develop effective and impactful plans?		To what extent had your organization/movement has a long-term vision and plan developed?	
LEARNING	To what extent do you take breaks to reflect and learn on what you are doing?		To what extent does your organization facilitate collective learning?	
POWER	How self-aware are you of your own power, rank and privilege?		How well is power distributed in your organization/movement?	
TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION	To what extent is your organization/movement able to collaborate internally?		To what extent is your organization/movement able to collaborate externally?	
COMMUNICATION	Are you able to listen deeply and hold of judgement?		Does your group/organization have structures for a transparent communication flow?	

THE SKILLS - SPIDERWEB

In the circle below, please indicate with different colours your individual and organisation scores on each of the Leaderful Organizing Skill areas (centre: new to me / middle: exploring / outer: well travelled) and connect the different points to each other.



MAIN STRENGTHS

MAIN AREAS OF LEARNING

D. Deep Dive Into The Competences (Thematic Chapters)

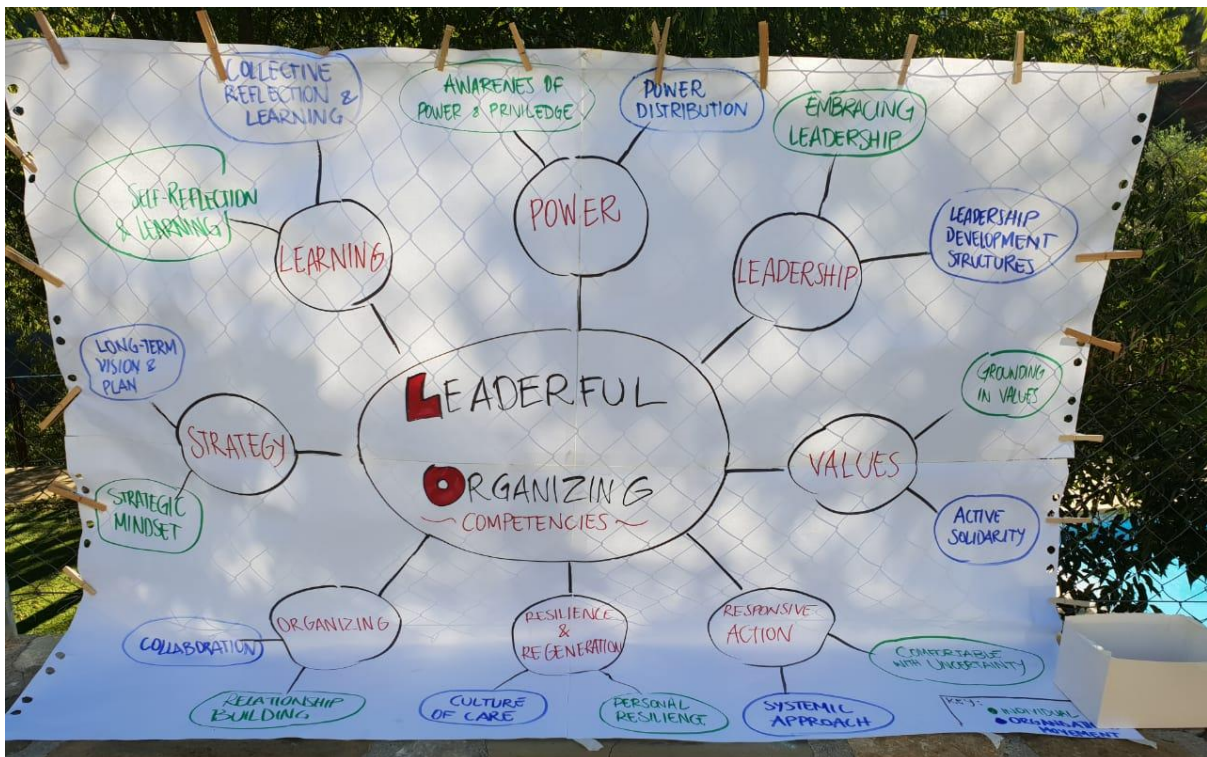


Image: an earlier version of the competency framework, used during a training. Later on we added two extra competence areas: “transformative collaboration” and “communication”.

POWER

Introduction: Building power, sharing power, addressing power: learning to navigate power with and within social movements

It is impossible to speak about social change without addressing the issue of power. Indeed, as we have state often in our trainings, the main purpose of leaderful organizing is to unlock power.

Power is everywhere: in your family, in your school, in your work place, in your city and in the supermarket. It can be found in the relationship between different social groups in a society and between nations on a world scale. Sometimes the use of power is highly visible, sometimes it is hidden. However, whenever you want to change something, you will have to confront it. Power, either in favour of or against a change of the status quo, is most visible those times people want to challenge the way things work.

Whenever we want to address any injustice, we have to face the power structures responsible for creating or maintaining these unjust situations. Having to face the unequal power relationships that benefit these structures and the status quo they represent, often leaves a deep impression on anyone participating in social movements. It is a reason for anger and indignation, which, when tapped into wisely by organizers, can potentially lead to an increased political awareness and a bolstered determination to work towards systemic change.

Unfortunately it might, and often does, lead to fear or despair as well. Empowerment or a further disempowerment are both a potential outcome of social action, depending on the outcome of the action itself and the effects it produces afterwards. For this reason, any confrontation with power can be both mobilizing or immobilizing. The ways in which we prepare people who answer our call to join movements beforehand, as well as our support in processing and ongoing learning (see chapter [ongoing learning](#) as well) after taking action, will make a difference in what is the most likely result.

As mentioned before, power is everywhere at work. Most of the time, the way it works is benefiting the institutions defending the status quo. It is therefore unthinkable to change, replace or even abolish powerful systems and structures in society without building our own power. Why then is power often so controversial within activist spaces and social movement organizations? Simply, because the unhealthy power dynamics that we seek to change in society are often as present within our groups as they are elsewhere. Whether we talk about hierarchy, bureaucracy, lack of transparency in decision making or the presence of the ism's (racism, sexism, etc.) leading to exclusion and inequality, on the micro scale of our organizations we can unfortunately find their roots as well.

Horizontal or self-declared "leaderless" groups have often chosen their structure in an explicit way to address the unequal power relations in more classical, vertical structures. However, as Jo Freeman illustrates in *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* this does not prevent power to show up even in the most informal and - in theory - horizontal groups.

Informal power dynamics in some ways might even be considered as the hardest to address, as there are no formal structures in place to keep the use (or abuse) of power accountable.

Some of these power dynamics are subtle and often they are rooted in good intentions, while they still might result in harm and have an impact on those involved. Unfortunately, at times more conscious forms of oppression and even abuse will manifest themselves in our movements as well. As Audre Lorde reminds us in *Sister Outsider*: “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within us, which knows only the oppressor’s tactics, the oppressor’s relationships.” Therefore addressing how to build resilience against oppressive power dynamics within our movements, is an essential task for all groups aspiring to be leaderful.

The many challenges related to how power shows up within our groups should however not allow us to lose perspective of the need to build the type of power that is required to change the power structures on the macro level of our society. Participants in social movements therefore need to develop a nuanced understanding of the nature of power and the different ways in which it manifests itself and can be used either for good or bad, to liberate or to oppress.

Indeed, power in itself is neither good nor bad. In “*Where do we go from here*”, Martin Luther King Jr. offers the following definition: “power properly understood is nothing but **the ability to achieve purpose**. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.” Power therefore is no end in itself, but it is a necessary means if we want to win victories for social justice.

Starhawk and other writers make a helpful distinction between different types of power:

- power over > linked to domination and control
- power with > shared power, that only exists when we collaborate
- power within > the power of an individual, based in one’s unique abilities, rooted in psychosocial resilience (see [this chapter](#)) and faith/active hope, often linked to courage and creativity

When we organize people around an issue, we always want to create opportunities for both individual and collective empowerment, thereby building both power within and power with. On a collective level we should also not shy away from building enough “power over”, so our movements are strong enough to confront and challenge the existing dominant power structures.

Training sessions with a focus on this competence area, build our skills to navigate complicated questions on power. The different modules in this curriculum offer a variety of perspectives on power, thereby helping participants to develop a layered and nuanced view of power. This view and the associated skills support both individuals and organizations to embrace the idea of building collective power, while equally investing in the appropriate organizational structures and individual skillsets to (re)distribute power and address unhealthy dynamics and power related conflicts.

When people feel supported to build power in a way that feels liberating and sustainable, we are watering the often neglected seeds of hope, deep inside of us: hope that systemic

change might be possible after all. Hope that it is possible to win, without sacrificing your integrity or the values we hold dear.

Curriculum

Module 1: Understanding power

In this module we want to explore the nature of power and how it shows up in the world. It is about understanding what power is, its potential, why we need it but also the challenges it offers to our groups. By offering definitions, creating symbolic representations and using group challenges where power shows up, we create opportunities to analyse how power operates and permeates all our interactions.

As mentioned before, power is often considered a controversial subject, especially among groups and people involved in working for social change. It is easy to understand why power is often perceived as something that gets in the way of justice. All too often 'power over' is used to dominate, oppress, abuse and to protect the status quo and maintain inequality.

Power operates on many levels. On the smallest scale, power can be individual. It is what makes someone able to achieve certain goals and ambition. At the same time a lack of power can all the same cause defeat and failure. Of course, others can either support or obstruct both individuals or groups in this process of trying to achieve one's goals, which makes power ultimately always social. Power in both its good, its bad and its ugly forms is at work in all of our groups. We can choose to address the issues arising and to amend the ways in which power gets to be used in an organization or we can design structures and practices to intentionally redistribute. However, we can only do this skilfully if we create a nuanced and shared understanding of power to start with.

Therefore it is recommended to offer participants both experiential and theoretical framework that help them to make sense of power. The "power over", "power with", "power within" model is one of these models that we use in our trainings.

Some helpful definitions and quotes on power:

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.

– Martin Luther King Jr. (Where Do We Go From Here?)

[Power is] every opportunity within a social relationship to assert one's own will, even in the face of resistance.

– Max Weber

[There is] social power, of two kinds: *earned* and *unearned*. Unearned social power is *privilege*, the power you get not from anything you've done or created, but from who you happen to be — your gender, your race, your social class, the wealth you've inherited, the opportunities handed to you. Privilege encompasses some things which should be universal human rights — access to good food, healthcare, education, a

decent place to live. But it can also include unfair advantages and license to be insensitive or oblivious.

– Starhawk

Addressing power is like untangling a complicated web, which is exactly the aim of this module: to allow participants to get a more nuanced and layered understanding about both the risks and the potential that power holds for social movements invested in leaderful organizing.

Learning goals:

- Participants have a multi-layered understanding of power, looking beyond a binary “good” vs “bad”
- Participants are able to distinguish between different types and different uses of power
- Participants see how power shows up within their own organizations and increase their capacity to first name and then address organizational issues related to power
- Participants identify and are able to question their own orientation to power, overcoming stereotypes and embrace power as an ability to achieve common purpose

Check the [sample session plan](#) for a three hour exploration on “understanding power”

Teaching activities:

- Space Walk
- Great Game of Power
- Colombian Hypnosis
- Image Theatre
- Theory: “power over” vs “power with” vs “power within”

Hand-out’s:

- Different models illustrating power, such as:
 - Three Faces of Power
 - Power Over / Power With / Power Within

Module 2: Navigating power dynamics within our groups

Social movements tend to spend most of their time preoccupied with tackling enormous challenges in society. An unequal distribution of power within society is one of the forces amplifying these challenges and many forms of injustice, while complicating any struggle to address those. Indeed, it takes a strong show of power to change the power relations that create these injustices in the first place.

While working ‘out there’ it’s easy to forget to pay attention to the way these dynamics also are at play at a micro level, within our own relationships, and not in the least within and between our organizations, as we figure out how to work together.

Almost anyone involved in social movement organizations will at some time be confronted with challenges related to unequal power relationships within these organizations. These

challenges can have severe consequences, both on an individual as on an organizational level. They can undermine trust, as well as the capacity to perform. Power dynamics are often initiating new conflicts or deepening existing conflicts. The conflicts can paralyze a group or make people leave the group (or even movement) disillusioned. When left unaddressed, the problem will spread and take deeper roots, making it harder to resolve conflicts and restore relationships.

Power dynamics and conflicts are part of the lived reality all groups have to deal with. The only difference is in the level of skill and the quality of practices used to address them. Handling conflict well can restore many severed relationships as even increase the trust in the group as a place where people can belong and unite to build power around a collective vision.

Some examples of power dynamics that are common inside of organizations:

- [mainstream-margin dynamics](#), where a certain group dominates the agenda and in practice
- discrimination based on the ism's
- tension between paid (staff) and unpaid work (volunteers, membership base,...)
- lack of transparency or accountability

This is by no means a complete list. Learning to address these power dynamics enables groups both to be more effective in their work in society, but also to better embody the values they stand for. By prioritizing this internal work it is possible to create brave spaces that allow us to build increasingly inclusive groups where more people find a place of belonging.

Organisers or trainers who want to build the capacity to do this work inside of groups, have to invest in developing a skill set that allows them to “sit in the fire”, as working through conflicts obviously is accompanied by a lot of tension.

Learning goals:

- participants are able to reflect on their own power, rank and privilege
- participants gain confidence in showing vulnerability, as well as showing up during conflict
- participants are able to support groups in building a healthy organizational culture
- participants are able to create or adapt structures in order to support such culture

Session plan 1 - a two day session on power within groups

Teaching activities:

- Mainstream and Margins
- Caucus processes
- Image Theatre
- Forum Theatre
- Oppression Triangle
- Power Flower

Module 3: Building power (for related content see chapters [“strategy”](#) and [“organizing”](#))

Whereas module 2 looks strongly inwards, this module will bridge the inner and outer world of an organization, where the inner world offers the resources and levers we hold to start to build power, which ultimately serves to address the outer world: the place where we want to challenge existing power and align around demands for change.

Sometimes groups get demoralized by the gap between “what they have” (people, resources, knowledge,... > ultimately a certain amount of power) and “what they need” (different power resources of more of the ones they have today) to get “what they want” (campaign goals, demands to be achieved,...)

A power building approach supports groups to recognize and assess the amount of power they already hold today. How is it more or less than the power we had last year or five years ago? What are the strengths and the weaknesses related to our power resources?

Skills related to the assessment of one own’s power, as well of the power relationships on an issue (through power mapping) are an important first condition to be able to build power strategically.

Session plan 1 - How-to build power from the grassroots (one day introduction session)
Session plan 2 - Hegemony and counter-hegemony (two day workshop)

Teaching activities:

- Theory and case studies: Three Faces of Power
- Theory: Hegemony

Module 4: Empowerment as a tool to build “power with” and “power within”

As we have established earlier on in this chapter, while power in society at times is used to dominate or oppress, groups also need it to achieve their goals. Other modules already touch upon the challenge of redistributing power more effectively. The second module addressed power dynamics “within groups”, enabling participants to address those and facilitate the redistribution of power at that level. The module on building power takes a more strategic approach to build power in a way that allows you to challenge the status-quo. This module offers an additional perspective to “building power”, with a focus on organizing groups or communities that are oppressed, discriminated against or are made vulnerable by systemic injustice.

Paulo Freire’s, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is often seen as the seminal work in studies on empowerment. At the core of his thinking, is a clear conviction that the oppressed themselves should take the lead in their liberation from oppression. He states that

In this module we touch upon two ways to do this

- building “power with”, which grows as we bring more people together and align them around shared interests, a common vision and a collective goal. Other chapters and modules (with focus on ‘strategy’, ‘organising’,...) will expand further on how organizers and activist educators can support groups to build more “power with”.
- building “power within”, which grows as we (1) create communities of care, where people find solidarity and can grow their own resilient roots, while simultaneously (2) developing people’s critical consciousness, which exists in both “a language of critique” and a “language of possibility”, as a condition to sharpen the motivation and agency individuals bring to movements.

We further explore the first type, which could be described as a process of “empowerment”. In the module, we explore the work of Paulo Freire, whose Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and the connected traditions of ‘popular education’ and ‘critical pedagogy’ have been crucial in developing both a language and a methodology to invest in the empowerment of communities.

Session plan 1 - Exploring tools for empowerment, an introduction to popular education

Teaching activities:

- Image of Oppression (image theatre)
- Forum Theatre
- Action Gallery

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Module 1 - Understanding power

Session plan 1 - a three hour exploration

- Introduction and welcome (5 minutes)
- Energiser: Colombian Hypnosis (15 minutes)
 - debrief (10 minutes)
- Great Game of Power (60 minutes)
- Debrief connecting to a model (30 minutes)
 - option 1: power over / power with / power within
 - option 2: three faces of power
 - option 3: Ulex power model
- Small group exercise
- Debrief in group and check-out

Session plan 2 - an in-depth

Hand-out's

Flip Chart Unlocking Power

Recommended reading:

Starhawk, The Empowerment Manual. A Guide for Collaborative Groups. Chapter 4 - The Axis of Action - Power and Responsibility (pp. 43 - 76)

Training For Change. Upside-Down Triangle: Understanding the Consent Theory of Power. (Online Resource)

Power - Sample Session Plans

UNDERSTANDING POWER - A THREE HOUR EXPLORATION

- Introduction and welcome (5 minutes)
- Energiser: Colombian Hypnosis (15 minutes)
 - debrief (10 minutes)
- Great Game of Power (60 minutes)
- Debrief connecting to a model (30 minutes)
 - option 1: power over / power with / power within
 - option 2: three faces of power
 - option 3: Ulex power model
- Small group exercise
- Debrief in group and check-out

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome + 1 word association with power (go-round)	15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ... 	n/a
Energiser: Colombian Hypnosis + debrief with a focus on how power manifested itself during the exercise	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One participants leads (with their hand), another follows > then switch roles ● variation 1: leading and following simultaneously ● variation 2: one leader two followers ● variation 3:... ● debrief: how did it feel to lead? 	n/a

The Great Game of Power	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> let participants take a seat, all facing the same direction, so you have a "scene". The scene contains one table, six chairs and a bottle instruction: "make one chair the most powerful object" diffe <p>Full description and tips: see toolkit</p>	6 chairs, a table and an empty bottle
Presenting the model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> power over power with power within 	15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe the different types of power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> power over > linked to domination and control power with > shared power, that only exists when we collaborate power within > the power of an individual, based in one's unique abilities, rooted in psychosocial resilience and faith/active hope. Ask participants where they have seen representations of these types of power during the exercise. 	n/a
BREAK	10'		
Three Faces of Power	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> see toolkit for full description 	Flip charts illustrating the three faces of power
Journaling on power	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participants journal on what they've learned today about power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has your understanding of power shifted today? How can you contribute to building power for social change? 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can you contribute to a more healthy relationship to power in the groups you are involved 	
Closure & check out	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● share one key insight you've learned about power during this session 	n/a

NAVIGATING POWER DYNAMICS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION - A ONE DAY EXPLORATION

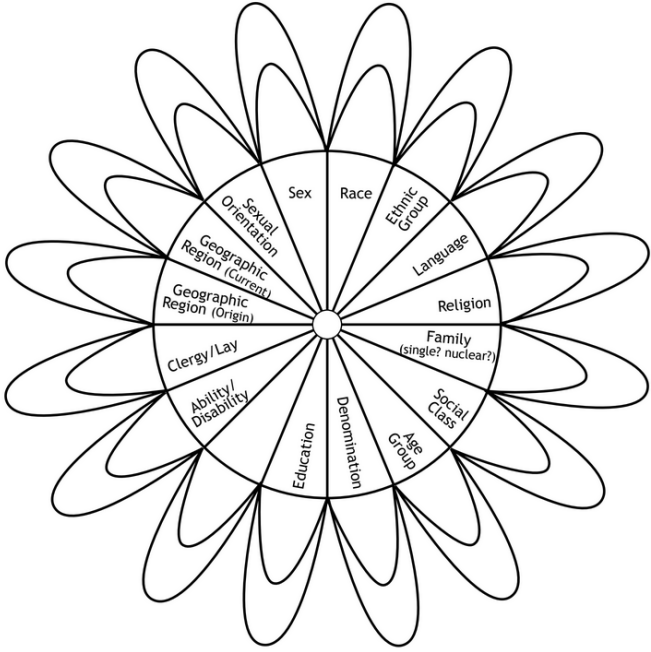
Learning goals addressed in this session:

- Participants analyse power relations in their organisations
- Participants identify mainstream and margins in their organisations
- Participants are able to challenge unequal power relations

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome	10'		n/a
Setting intention: brave space	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● invite participants to embrace the principles of a brave or courageous space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ no attack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> cause no intentional harm ○ solidarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> be supportive ○ embrace complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> beyond binaries, understand more deeply ○ listen to understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> presence with people ○ controversy with respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> varying opinions are accepted ○ owning intention & impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> acknowledge & share ○ challenge by choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> option to step in and step out <p>Check for clarifying questions on the principles, then if anything needs to be added to make it an authentic</p>	

		<p>brave/courageous space for this group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can read this text out or print it and put it on the wall as a reminder and for inspiration: invitation to a brave space (by Micky ScottBey Jones inspired by a poem by Beth Strano) <p><i>Together we will create brave space Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” We exist in the real world We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds. In this space We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world, We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere, We call each other to more truth and love We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow. We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know, We will not be perfect. This space will not be perfect. It will not always be what we wish it to be But It will be our brave space together, and We will work in it side by side....</i></p>	
Energiser: Big Wind Blows	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants sit on chairs in a circle. There is one chair too few. The facilitator (without a chair) stands in the middle of the circle and starts by explaining the rules of the game: 	n/a

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ when you're without a chair you go to the middle and you make a statement starting with "the big wind blows for..." ○ You finish that statement by saying something which is true for yourself. ○ Everyone else for whom this is true needs to get up and find a new chair, but you are not allowed to occupy the seat next to you. ○ Whoever ends up without a chair, goes to the middle and shares the next statement 	
Power Flower	30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● handing out the empty template + explain See toolkit for full description ● individually filling in your power flower ● paired sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How was it to do this exercise? Was it easy? Was it challenging? ■ Are you surprised by what you see? ○ "only share what you feel comfortable disclosing > details of your own identity are not required for the exchange" ● collective sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what did you learn about yourself and about this group? ○ How is this relevant for how we work? 	empty templates with the power flower on

			
<p>Closed Eye Process</p>		<p>Introduce the concept of a closed eye process: “I will guide you through a reflective process. If you feel comfortable to do so, I invite you to close your eyes, which will help you to go on the journey. If not, gently fix your gaze downwards, so you can still focus on yourself.”</p> <p>Process: “I want you to take a few deep breaths. As you breath in, you feel you are present. As you breath out, you relax.”</p> <p>“Feel your chair. It support you. And your chair is supported in turn by the earth. It is okay. You can give</p>	

		<p>some of the weight you carry to the chair, to the earth. It can help you carry it. You can let go now and relax.”</p> <p>“As you take a few more deep breaths, we go back in time. We zoom out from the present and move through our memories. Memories of being involved in groups. It could be any group: a work situation, at school, an activist project - anything which involves you taking part in a group with others.”</p> <p>“Try to find a memory about a time you didn’t feel particularly well in a group. Maybe different memories come to mind, then go and pick one. Don’t pick one where you really felt unsafe, but just one where you didn’t quite get a sense of belonging. Where you felt somewhat out of place.</p>	
Theory of mainstream & margins	10’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain every group has mainstreams and margins. Define both concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ mainstream > qualities, behaviour and values supported and valued highly by a group. This is the dominant culture. Mainstream behaviour is the norm, literally considered “normal”. ○ margin > other qualities, behaviour and values that are pushed into the periphery, away from the mainstream. ● “Often the mainstream will set the tone and the margins will either be further alienated or they might challenge the mainstream, often leading to frustrations with those belonging to the mainstream.” 	n/a
BREAK			

<p>Group Challenge: crossing the river (stepping stones)</p>	<p>40'</p>	<p>Set-up room/space: Teams that have about 10 members need a river that's about 10 m wide. <i>However, note that the wider the river, the more chances of error with the team needing to return to start over, so the entire challenge can take substantially longer. If you have limited time, you can shorten the width of the river to make it easier.</i></p> <p>Divide the total group into four teams (<u>eg with letters of roman alphabet</u>) , two on each bank of the river with plenty of room between them. The naval patrol boats (<u>props!</u>) come every 15 minutes.</p> <p>Present scenario: Two people's movements in some European country are growing rapidly in adjoining regions separated by a shallow river. The movements need to learn from each other how to deal <u>with rising intimidation of right wing groups/ rising intimidation by the government to try to limit freedom of speech.</u> They agree to exchange teams of experienced people for some weeks so this mutual education can take place. Actually making the exchange, however, is highly dangerous because it means crossing the narrow river which has turned poisonous from polluting factories upstream. And the crossing must be made in the minutes between navy patrols which go down the river regularly. Can your entire team cross the river safely before the patrol comes?</p> <p><u>present Rules</u> The goal is to get your entire team across the river safely and together. The only resource you can use is the limited number of "stepping stones" which will float away if nobody is</p>	
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		<p>touching them. [That means no external props can be used.] The stepping stones/pieces of <u>paper</u> must AT ALL TIMES be in the physical touch of a team member. In other words, you can't toss the stone into the river and then step on it; you must place your foot while still holding it lest it be swept away. [Facilitator will grab it and put it away.] As many team members can be on a stone at one time as you choose. If anyone falls into the river, your team goes back to the shore you came from and then the team tries again.</p> <p>If the naval patrol boat comes within sight, the team must hasten back to the shore and try again after it's passed. [Facilitator: you may declare that it's gotten too dark to try again and that the game is over. Failing to meet this challenge can be a big learning opportunity.]</p> <p><u>Debrief:</u> First step is reflecting in pairs to maximize participation and venting feelings and first thoughts. Ask: "How was that for you?" "Were there differences in how you reacted in the beginning and the middle and toward the end?" (If the group is open to sharing feelings: "What were some of the feelings you experienced during that challenge?")</p> <p>In the whole group: (One facilitator is writing on newsprint any reflections that in some way or other answers the question "What worked? What are some of the things that led to success?")</p> <p><u>Where did the leadership come from? Did you experiment before you started? Did you change your</u></p>	
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		<p><u>strategy? Why/why not?</u></p> <p><u>How did the initiative to change strategy emerge? How did you decide on a new strategy? Did you change the order in the line-up? Why/why not?" "As you were crossing the river, what worked to keep you on track? How did you communicate? Who had to pay attention to what? What was most stressful? What happened when you made a mistake? How did the group react? What did you do with your feelings? What was the role of support? Did the pattern of communication change? Where did your stamina come from? What was it like to have to touch each other so closely? How did you handle it to maintain appropriate personal boundaries?</u></p> <p>(If there were two teams crossing the river): "Who thought of cooperating with the other team? How was the decision made to do so/not to do so? How did the cooperation work out?</p>	
Power Chapati's	30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● step 1: individual <p>Participants now are invited to look back at the previous exercise and symbolically represent how much power every person in their group had by cutting out a circle from paper and writing in the name of every person in the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● step 2: in small groups <p>"Go back to the people you did previous</p>	A4 paper sheets, scissors

		<p>exercise with and compare how you assessed each other's power.”</p> <p>Instructions on flip chart paper >> do any patterns emerge >> how does it feel to be seen with this amount of power, whether it is a lot, medium or none</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● step 3: collective debrief 	
Journaling + sharing intentions	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participants are invited to journal about the day ● closing round of intentions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ one thing I take away from today is... ○ one thing I want to change/do more/do less/do different when being in groups is... 	A4, something to write
Closure & check out			n/a

EMPOWERMENT: FROM OPPRESSION TO LIBERATION (ca. 2 hour introduction session)

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- participants can recognize and critique tendencies leading to victimization of oppressed communities
- participants can translate abstract discussions on “empowerment” into concrete challenges
- participants are invested in exploring more meaningful ways of participation and identifying obstacles that prevent this participation from taking place

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome + 1 word association with empowerment (go-round)	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participants sit in a circle • introduce the topic of the day and invite participants to take part in whatever way feels supportive to their learning and taking into account their needs – they are free to step aside during exercises (especially relevant for the “sculptures of oppression” 	A flip chart paper to write down the words
warm-up: Image of the Word	15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participants stand in two lines, facing each other. Introduce the exercise: “Our bodies are made from intelligent clay. We can use them to express ourselves and to speak our truths. Our bodies know an intuitive language that is older than words. Today we are very much used to a culture dominated by words, so we will now give yourself a chance to warm-up our bodies and to get that rusty language back to live again! I will give each line in turn a word and the invitation is to make an individual image of that word. Don’t overthink it! I will count to three and then you let your body do the work!” • Give each line a few words, than switch. The line observing is invited to tell what they see in 	n/a

		<p>the images. First on a physical level: observations on posture, openness/closeness and then on the level of meaning/interpretation. It is important to first encourage holding of when they want to immediately go to the level of interpretation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some words you can use: “fear”, “hunger”, “power”, “support”, “isolation”, “liberation” > the first ones are easier, the latter if you want to increase the challenge 	
Sculptures of Oppression	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are going into pairs. Each participant will once take the role of sculptor and once be the sculpture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “This time we are going to use each others bodies to sculpture. You can ask for consent for touch, but otherwise don’t talk during the exercise” • Demonstrate how you can sculpt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physically sculpt by putting the body of your partner into a position ○ Mirror to show what you would like to see • Be sure to give exactly word by word this instruction: “now make an image of the word oppression, using only the body of your partner. You can choose where in this space to position your sculpture.” • Image gallery: open the museum and first we see the first set of images, than the second <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Have a good look at the images. What do you see on the physical level? What might it mean? What could be the story? What are similarities or 	n/a

		differences between images?"	
Group discussion & theory	15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief in groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How many of the images were representing the oppressed? How many oppressors? ○ How many of the images of oppressed were showing "victims" with hardly any remaining agency? How many oppressed, showing a consciousness about their oppression and/or readiness to fight back and resist? ○ On average 90% show images of oppressed and again 90% of these are actually victims without any agency ○ "Now what does it mean if this is the dominant image when thinking about oppression? How does it affect us?" 	Flip chart with information and optional quotes by Freire/Boal
Spectrum Lines	20'	An opportunity for the group to further reflect and discuss the topic.	
Quotes on solidarity	20	<p>Share the quotes around. Ask for participants to sit by one of them and to discuss the quote. Write down some main insights and then move to another quote after 10 minutes. Read what the previous group wrote and then add more thoughts.</p> <p>Some quotes to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (bell hooks) • (Eduardo Galeano) • (Lilla Watson) 	Quotes on solidarity printed
Small group brainstorm	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does "empowerment" actually mean in our daily practice? How can we show up in 	

		solidarity? Make a plan of action with two lists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Quick wins○ Ambitious goals to have on the horizon	
Wrap-up & closure	5'		

LEADERSHIP AND LEADERFULNESS

Introduction

Leadership is essential for movements. In fact, it is already present in all expressions of movement work (including those that purport to be “leaderless”). The need is to actively name, understand, and systematize movement leadership practice with the goal of achieving greater leaderfulness over time. Leaderfulness implies both *more leaders* as well as *a more fully articulated practice of collective leadership*.

None of this exists in a vacuum – leaderfulness is directional. We don’t just “develop leaders” because it is a nice thing to do! Rather, leaderfulness is an organizational orientation aimed at unlocking more power than we have right now so that our movements can be in position to win more than we are currently winning. To paraphrase Paulo Freire, developing a leaderfulness orientation is something that our movements can work on now so that we are able to do tomorrow what we are not able to do today.

Contradiction: leadership vs. leaderfulness

Is leadership an individual quality exercised in a collective context, or a collective enterprise? Recently the idea of “leaderfulness” has been lifted up as an alternative to hierarchical notions of “leadership,” as well as a counterpoint to the idea of “leaderlessness.”

The social movement origin of the term “leaderfulness” is generally traced to the emergence of the Movement for Black Lives. So it is noteworthy that questions of power and influence have [become difficult flash points](#) as that movement has grown in prominence and developed various forms of institutional expression.

At the same time, some of the most cogent thinking about these challenges in building leaderful organizations and movements has also come from leaders that emerged from the movement to value Black life. Notably, in the piece by Maurice Mitchell called [Building Resilient Organizations](#), he invites organizers and activists to examine current tendencies in our organizations such as “neoliberal identity” and “maximalism,” as well as anti-leadership and anti-institutional tendencies, and he offers thinking on how to create movements infused with joy.

So, movement fractures over the question of leadership do not argue for a return to “leaderlessness.” Rather, it is exactly why clearer teachings and shared understandings of the idea of leaderfulness are important for movements that seek to exercise power.

Leadership in the European movement tradition

Much of the modern literature on the concept of leadership emanates from North American movement traditions, where an individual-focussed discourse on leaders and leadership tend to be the coin of the realm.

However, a closer-to-home counterpoint to an overly-individualized vision of leadership may be found in the thinking of the early 20th century Italian political theorist and organizer, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci referred to the role of the “organic intellectual.” These are people who act as interpreters of the multitude of tendencies and manifestations that exist within movements and act as binding agents between the working class and the “revolutionary party” (which in Gramscian terms is the movement vehicle by which the working class advances their interests). For our purposes, we might compare organic intellectuals to descriptions of “leaders” in more contemporary writing on the practice of organizing.

However, Gramsci’s thinking on leadership takes on a more organizational dimension. In his theory on “historic bloc,” Gramsci articulated the need to build a cross-class alliance able to challenge the multi-faceted power of the ruling class. In this bloc, he stressed the need of the working class to *collectively* lead the bloc. Gramsci does not negate the role of individuals – quite the opposite – but he describes a form of collective leadership that we might compare to the idea of leaderfulness today.

Leaderfulness = unlocking power

Leaderfulness allows movements to unlock power. For anyone who has experienced a “movement moment” in which large masses of people were taking to the street seemingly spontaneously, it is the very fact that thousands of people are suddenly taking leadership that gives these times their dynamism. No one asked that person to make the sign to bring to the march – they just did it. No one told them to bring three of their friends, they were simply motivated on their own to organize members of their community. This level of empowered initiative-taking is leadership from below, in abundance.

One way to look at the challenge facing activists and organizers today is to look for ways to *extend the time horizon of the leaderful moment* into movement phases that more specifically aim at building on-going power and organization. It means creating cultures of organizing and activism that can “absorb” some of the energy emanating from the streets into longer-term projects. It means building movement organizations that are not just defined by long meetings, but by creating space where people develop a sense of collective political identity and a feeling of themselves as protagonists in history – that they are able to “change the world.”¹ It means lifting up the value of “being organizational” as opposed to individualistic or anti-institutional tendencies which are so deeply encoded in the neoliberalized world around us.

In short, people should experience a leaderful organization as a space where they are coming together in deep connection with others to exercise collective will, but also that they grow in their personal sense that they are capable of changing the world we have today to the world we know we need for tomorrow.

¹ A focus on helping people view themselves as “protagonists in history” should necessarily prompt reflection on the barriers that some people face relative to others in seeing themselves as capable of changing the world. A middle class, university educated activist starts with more opportunity and affirmation that this is a role they can and should play than, for example, a migrant living in social housing. The challenge facing those who seek to build leaderful movements is to understand the different inputs that are required to get people of different social backgrounds to equally view themselves as empowered and ready to assume movement leadership.

Curriculum

Module 1: Personal conceptions of leadership and leaderfulness

This module is built around personal and collective reflection on the concept “leaders” and “leadership.” As two terms which evoke a host of emotions and call up many personal experiences, it is critical that time is devoted to allowing people to unpack the various meanings they assign to those terms. This module also provides an opportunity to discuss if and how we should apply the practice of “developing leaders” in movement organizations.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to articulate their personal feelings about the terms “leader” and “leadership,” and have the ability to express those feelings in discussion with others.

Teaching activities

- Journaling
- Group discussion

Module 2: Interactive presentation and discussion: who is a leader?

This module goes deeper into people’s ideas on leadership and challenges participants to examine their preconceived notions of who is the ideal leader to step into the role of activist organizer. It surfaces concepts of intersectionality and poses the challenge to participants about how to build a movement and adopt practices that allow for diverse people to step into leadership roles.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to apply a critical lens to who typically is allowed to play leadership roles within movement organizations.
- Participants will be able to articulate how this might inform/change their current activism/organizing.

Teaching activities

- Interactive presentation: The Ideal Activist/Organizer
- Discussion

Module 3: Presentation: three constructive critiques of movement leadership – past and present

In this module we engage with constructive critiques on the topic of leadership from various directions, and we will explore the idea of leaderfulness as a practice of an abundant and collective approach to structuring movement organizations to gain power. This module is largely presentation based, along with points for small group discussion. Participants are introduced to the thinking of three movement makers and given an overview of some of their thinking on leadership and leaderfulness. Small group questions are designed to encourage participants to reflect on their own practice and identify the points of resonance and dissonance between their work and the concepts presented.

Learning goals

- Participants will be introduced to constructive critiques of leadership and movement practice from three thinkers/practitioners

Teaching activities

- Presentation: Three Constructive Critiques of Movement Leadership
- Discussion

Module 4: Interactive Exercise: Leaderfulness – leading as individuals, leading collectively

Leaderfulness = unlocking power. But how does power work, and how does a collective sense of leadership do the unlocking? Whether we are talking about individual leadership, or a movement that is leaderful, this module introduced the idea that these practices are “directional.” In other words, we are not developing leaders and creating leaderful organizations because it sounds like a nice thing to do, but rather because it is a necessary task to realize structural changes to an oppressive system. This module is a theater exercise designed to represent how power is organized in society and the Gramscian concept of “hegemony,” as well as the idea of building a “historic bloc” that can challenge both the power structures of the ruling class, as well as the way in which they shape the common sense of what is possible in society. The module also introduces the Gramscian idea of an “organic intellectual” and poses that idea next to the current idea of a “leader” in a movement context.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to define the concepts hegemony, historic bloc and organic intellectual, in a way that is meaningful to their work.
- Participants will embody an understanding of leaderfulness as something that is composed of many leaders, collective, and moving in the direction of building movement power.

Teaching activities

- Interactive theater exercise

Recommended reading

Articles:

[The Tyranny of Structurelessness](#), by Jo Freeman

[Building Resilient Organizations: Towards Joy and Durable Power in a Time of Crisis](#) by Maurice Mitchell

[Pedagogy of the Occupied](#), by Rodrigo Nunes

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages

Leadership and Leaderfulness - sample session plan

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	n/a
Energiser: Journaling and pair share	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants are asked to journal on the prompts, <i>“What comes to mind when you hear the terms, “leader,” “leadership,” and “developing leaders?”</i> • Participants are then paired with someone else to discuss what they wrote. • Facilitator debriefs with goal of making some key points, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is important to start with our own conceptions of these terms and to think about what they bring up for us – good or bad. • Participants are asked at the end of the session to write one “piece of baggage” that they are carrying into this discussion about leadership and put it on the wall with a post-it note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart and markers • Post-it notes
Interactive presentation: The Ideal Activist / Organizer	45'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction (humorous): When we all look and act the same • Flip charting exercise with participants answering the prompt, <i>“what/how do you need to be / do / know / have / like to be a celebrated, central person in your political context?”</i> • Story sharing: facilitator shares story from about a time when <i>“you felt like you were either</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipcharts & markers • Post-it notes (blue, green, yellow – or at least three different colors)

		<p><i>on the margins or in the mainstream of a group.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small group storytelling with same prompt. ● Full-group post-it exercise: have participants collectively populate a flip chart page with post-it notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blue: what did or could you do to make it easier for you to be a celebrated central part of your group? ○ Green: what in the group culture did or could make it easier for you to be a celebrated central part of your group? ○ Yellow: what in the group structure did or could make it easier for you to be a celebrated central part of your group? ● Discussion 	
Debrief	5'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank participants for their participation ● Share handout with participants ● Take a break! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout: Three Constructive Critiques of Movement Leadership
BREAK	10'		
Interactive Exercise: Leaderfulness – leading as individuals, leading collectively	80'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants build a physical “image of power in society” that represents key actors (i.e. economic actors, government actors, civil society actors, individuals) ● Using image theater, individuals in the exercise are asked to form a picture of “leaderfulness that allows you to unlock the power you need to change this image.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pieces of paper with the names of various actors to represent in the image of power in society (i.e. “banks and corporate finance,” “government agency,” “union,” “NGO” etc.)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and debrief – be sure to name concepts that were we were trying to represent (i.e. hegemony and historic bloc) 	
Closure & check out	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final go around and check-in on the pieces of “baggage” people named at the beginning. How are people feeling about the things they named after the session? 	n/a
Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material

VALUES

Introduction: healthy roots for leaderful organizing

Being grounded in values

Our leaderful organizing and unlocking power lies in our values. When we speak about social justice, social transformation and leaderful organizing let's think of the values that lie underneath. Values guide us in our work, our principles, our commitments to each other, our living communities and towards the society as a whole.

Power of values is also power of mind and heart and it does not come from physical or economical superiority. Values are based in ethics, which is the deepest foundation of our society that has allowed us to survive and live together in dignity, peace and solidarity. Being grounded in core values of social justice and ecological integrity means an ability to use a moral and political compass to make decisions and take actions that embody values. It also means never losing sight of 'the good of the whole' as a guiding principle.

If we are committed to building a just and equitable society, we need to keep our values thriving. Values imply both commitment and actions to that commitment, as they are not externally imposed, but coming from the place within us - our consciousness.

Whether we speak about leaderful organizing values or power, we speak about transformational potential we all carry in us, we speak about the rehumanization of the people and the world we live in. We speak about our consciousness and the process of regaining awareness of our values, our power and our privileges.

Values in building active solidarity and transformative leadership

Active solidarity creates structures and practices that empower and prioritise the most affected, acknowledging how different forms of systemic injustice affect different people differently. Solidarity and transformative leadership work in the context of social justice and change is important because they define our personal commitment and recognition - *solidarity* - as well as our rights and duties - *justice*. Values that shape transformative leadership are one of the ways of bringing that change.

Active solidarity as a value is about acknowledging how different forms of systemic injustice affect different people differently while creating spaces empowering and prioritizing the ones that are affected the most. In the words of bell hooks, an activist, public intellectual, teacher and feminist writer: "Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment."

When we speak about values of leaderful organizing, we also speak about intersectionality, a phrase coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, that has become an integral part for our understanding of power dynamics, identities and values we all bring in and how they overlap. In her own words, intersectionality is a lens through which we can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTIQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things. (<https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>)

Our long term personal commitment is to seek values that bring us closer together in the acts of active solidarity and humanization that will bring the system change. To recognize, name and work to dismantle “power over”.

As social justice teacher Beth Berilla emphasizes: “before we can change the system we must simultaneously work to unlearn oppression that is internalized, we need to learn how to recognize it, accept it and befriend it, reflect upon it and analyze it before we can transform it.” We also need to become aware of privileges that give us power in the society, and use that awareness to nourish values of compassion and empathy, in order to promote actions for societal change. This can be done through integrating the value of leaderfulness and mindfulness by engaging our mind, body and heart into our anti-oppression work in order to develop the collective political identity in building just society.

Curriculum

Module 1: Leaderful values for social change

In this module we want to explore some practices we use that can be used to become aware of our own values and the values others carry with them. Often we are not fully aware of the extent of our internal power and privilege that have shaped our lives. Leaderfulness seeks and nurtures different qualities such as a sense of responsibility and accountability, as well as taking initiative while honoring values of solidarity, mutual empowerment and equity. Also shifting power in leaderful movement towards the embodying values such as equality, diversity, openness and dialogue show the deeply collaborative and leaderful context we can have with one another and the world. This is where we also recognize the importance of mindfulness for grounding ourselves in values we want to achieve and share. Some of these methods can help the group to unravel and to understand some of the values we carry within us, to talk about it, and to create space for internal and external long term change in how we think and behave when we do active solidarity work in our communities. Leaderful practice values tend to remain consistent and stable over time because they motivate people to stay and work together against the uncertainties, different hierarchies and reward systems that other types of leadership offer.

Learning goals

- Participants identify and are able to question their own values

- Participants learn about each other different contexts, leaderful values and causes they work for
- Participants are able to set up the leaderful practice of brave inclusive spaces within their own working context
- Participants are able to discern the relationship between individual and collective level

Session plan 1: Container building

(diversity welcome, self made shared agreements, practices for effective collaboration, collective / collaborative leadership /sharing the values of leadership)

Session plan 2: Courageous spaces (meeting difficulties / different expectations)

Session plan 3: Moodboards- plakati svog pokreta (galerija)- dijeljenje svoji vrijednosti/grupe s drugima

Module 2: Values of intersectionality

Intersectionality is used as a framework to describe how power structures emerge and interact. According to Davis, intersectionality is defined as ‘the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power’. (*Davis, K., 2008. Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory useful, p.68*). In the context of leaderful organizing, it helps us to become aware of the need to re-examine the system our values are based on and enriches the understanding of how norms are constructed and power relations interact. In order to face and challenge oppressive mechanisms in society we need to learn how to recognize oppressive mechanisms in ourselves and unlearn internalized oppression that has made us believe that we are less good or even better than others. The values of intersectionality cannot just exist, they need to be practiced and they must be present in every pore of our work for systemic change. From the work within the movement, where we are aware of the unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and where we acknowledge that everyone has their own, we have to consider everything and anything that could further marginalize people based on their gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, age etc. Discrimination and oppression in this context could be both systemic and internal as it is sustained by the “myths” we are served and believe in, such as the myth of meritocracy or even the myth that there is a free choice or existence of a free society (*P.Freire*). These false beliefs can lead to fragmentation in groups which prevents already marginalized groups and communities from connecting with one another by attacking the sense of community, and we need the community to resist these harmful messages. So when it comes to work in between different social movements, where every movement is trying to make an impact regarding the causes under its scope of influence, intersectionality can help us to see how many different struggles for justice are interconnected and make us aware of the need for solidarity and the leaderful approach in movement building.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to articulate the concept of intersectionality and understand diversity dynamics in groups and identify mainstreams and margins of groups
- Participants will learn how to apply critical lenses to examine the(ir) system of values by using tools of popular education
- Participants will be able to challenge and re-evaluate oppressive mechanisms and reflect upon using their privilege for driving societal change they want to achieve
- Participants will be motivated to empower margins in their groups

Session plan 1 - Power and privilege - power flower

Session plan 2 - Mainstream and margins

Session plan 3 - Problem tree (values mapping)

Session plan 4 - World cafe, where do our struggles overlap (shared values, spaces for collaboration)

Session plan 5 - Activist notebook

Session plan 6 - Power and rank (Nontokozo's session) - to consider

Module 3: Leaderful value based framing

What is framing? It is the method of communication - making choices about how we present information - what we say and how we say it, what we emphasize, how we explain it and what we leave unsaid. Why does framing matter? It is important because it can change how people think, feel and act. Framing our narratives is how we help ourselves, our allies and the general public to “paint a clear picture” in their minds of what we want to communicate and advocate for. Thus, framing is a process where we explain a concept or idea in such a way that we only see what is essential for us. When we frame our narrative in the leaderful values that we stand for and present our ideas in the way that we influence other people's decisions, then we are doing leaderful value based framing.

With the framing we can choose if our narrative is positive or negative and we can influence others opinions in the way that they see things the way we present them. This is why it is important to use leaderful value based framing in campaigns while advocating for social, environmental, economic and gender justice causes.

Instead of using our campaigns to try to convince the public to believe something new, the goal is to frame our cause and narrative in a way that it aligns and connects to what people already believe, and just need help in framing their “picture”. In the context of leadership, value based framing is a communication strategy of powerful messages that have the high potential for persuasion and mobilization of many people for embodying ideas of leaderfulness, leaderful organizing and taking action.

Learning goals

- Participants will understand the role of leaderful values based framing in their advocacy work
- Participants will learn how to communicate their values
- Participants will learn how to frame their narratives in leaderful values stories. Participants will be able to articulate their identity (who they are) and their purpose (why they do what they do) in relation to values of their work

- Participants will learn how to create appealing leaderful value based narratives by using words, stories or pictures to inspire action

Module 4: Embodying solidarity and mindfulness

Mindful embodiment holds the value of learning how to become allies and build supporting networks that let go of the old and create new and positive storylines in our active solidarity work.

As we start to recognize the role that internalized oppression plays in our lives and how it affects us, our relationships with one another, and how it shapes our leading styles, we also learn how to navigate how different positions shape our discussions in diverse group dynamics.

Knowledge about the concept alone is never enough to unlearn oppression and this is where the value of mindfulness and contemplative practices comes in. By grounding ourselves, we are becoming observers who do not take it personally, rather just listen without judgment and reflect in compassion and empathy. This approach might provide us with more choice about how to respond. Intellectual knowledge of the problem is most often not enough to make us act in an anti-oppressive way. We need to mindfully sit with our emotions and see what is causing them.

As Pema Chödrön notes: “When things are shaky and nothing is working, we might realize that we are on the verge of something. We might realize that this is a very vulnerable and tender place, and that tenderness can go either way. We can shut down and feel resentful or we can touch in on that throbbing quality.” But to the degree that we can, meeting our discomfort with curiosity and a sense of inquiry offers an empowering alternative to the tendency to get lost in it. (Berilla)

Learning goals

- Participants will understand how to become allies and build supporting networks
- Participants will learn how to let go of the old and create new and positive storylines in active solidarity work
- Participants will listen without judgment and reflect in compassion and empathy
- Participants will learn how to embody active solidarity skills

Session 1: Self-awareness - power and privilege (privilege walk)

Session 2: Deep listening (fish bowl)

Session 3: Decolonize your mind (make a list of blabla...)

Values - Sample Session Plans

Module 1 How to start any training on Leaderful values for social change

Session plan 1: Container building/reflection

(diversity welcome, self made shared agreements, practices for effective collaboration, collective / collaborative leadership /sharing the values of leadership)

Session plan 2: Courageous spaces (meeting difficulties / different expectations)

Session plan 3: Moodboards of our movements/organisations

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Session plan 1	90	Container or group building and reflection for setting up the collective and collaborative leadership and sharing the values of leadership	
	5	Diversity welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitator starts with a warm welcome to all different people and things in space, from different identities, nationalities, languages, sex, work occupations and personal preferences. - We want to address as many things as possible as well as not let anyone feel left out. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the end we invite participants to fill in what has not been said - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nA1tEyeUiA7SX1zI9DF_NZv9DIW6Lqay/edit 	
	5	Opening circle and overview of the content, learning aims and structure of the course/training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitator can use in advanced prepared program structure and present learning aims to participants 	
	10	Practicalities include Q&A about space, time and how we claim that space and facilitator guides participants through some ground rules in order to respect some boundaries.	
	10	Group building activities you can choose from and many more:	
	25	" <i>These hands have</i> " exercise - everyone stands in a circle and one by one we tell others what our hands "these hands" have been doing today, yesterday or this week.	
	25	Presenting in pairs 25'- everyone finds a pair (we can use another exercise for that) and each person is given 2 minutes to present themselves to their pair. After 2 minutes they switch. Following the 2nd switch, each person presents their pair to the whole group in less than 1 minute. With this exercise we also learn how to actively listen to each other.	
	25	Speed dating - facilitator gives instructions on how the exercise goes and keeps time. This exercise gives participants an opportunity to give a bit more informal info about themselves following the instructions and questions from the facilitator.	printed clocks, pens, bell
	10	How do people learn? Facilitator explains how we all learn in different ways. This can be explain through learning/comfort zone, or through Action Learning circle.Understanding this makes	Speaker and music for buddy pairing Flipchart min max learning Horizon drawing

		<p>participants take responsibility for their own learning and that we do not learn in the same way.</p> <p>SET LEARNING GOALS</p> <p>Look back at the agenda (content). Maybe you came here with certain expectations, maybe not, or hearing what the agenda, this sparked some ideas or expectations. Write on some post-its</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One personal learning goal (behavior) - One or two content learning goals <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NjBQzvj4xLvw05hdWwuF9QEosxtWhIzX-hhPRYBfFmE/edit?pli=1#heading=h.gmpu7h96rbm</p>	Post-its and thicker markers
Session plan 2	45	Courageous spaces (practices for effective collaboration and self made shared agreements)	
	15 30	<p>Facilitator presents the courageous spaces concept as an idea and explains principles it is based on: no attacks, solidarity, embracing complexity, listening to understand, controversy with respect, own intentions and impacts, challenge by choice</p> <p>Have in mind that the least is not exhaustive and there might be more that comes to mind.</p>	

		<p>After that the group is split into small groups (base groups or action learning circle groups) where we discuss what we need to co-create courageous spaces that will support us to learn and what we ask from both facilitators and participants.</p> <p>Facilitator will explain that we are not making agreements but we are hearing each other needs</p> <p>Facilitator will guide its group through a gallery of emotions and needs arising, and through clarifications, questions and recommendations.</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/13zopiebTs0CygxZBKASeLG2LT6WJjsZKzue1dnLguL0/edit</p>	
Session plan 3	90	Moodboards of our movements/organisations	Flipchart papers, glue, scissors, markers and materials such as flyers, leaflets, photos that can be asked in advance for participants to bring in for their moodboards
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators invite participants to create a collage of their organisations or collectives and to show values, successes and challenges around leadership in their organisation/collective and include names of people in the organisation These moodboards are presented in a form of a gallery where we can go on and explore before representative share the story of the moodboard to everyone else 	Flipchart papers, glue, scissors, markers and materials such as flyers, leaflets, photos that can be asked in advance for participants to bring in for their moodboards

Closure & check out	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final go-round on one thing participants are taking from this session 	

Module 2: Values of intersectionality

Session plan 1 - Power and privilege - power flower

Session plan 2 - Mainstream and margins

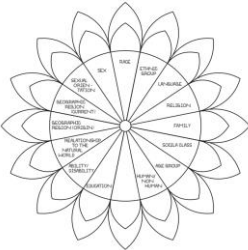
Session plan 3 - Problem tree (values mapping)

Session plan 4 - World cafe, where do our struggles overlap (shared values, spaces for collaboration)

Session plan 5 - "Activist notebook"

Session plan 6 - [Power and rank](#)

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Session plan 1	90	Power flower - Exploring power & privilege	Flipchart, markers, sketch of a flower with inside and outside petals drawn on flipchart to be visible to the participants and printed empty sketch distributed to participants

<p>What is (social) identity?</p>	<p>10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator starts the session with questions to participants: What is identity? What kind of identities do you know? What is social identity? • Facilitator is harvesting answers from the group writing them on a flipchart to be visible to the whole group • Harvesting is done after all the identities are listed: sex, race, ethnic group, language, religion, family, social class, age group, human / non-human, education, ability / disability, relationship to the natural world, geographic region (origin) geographic region (current), sexual orientation, gender 	<p>Flipchart, markers</p>
<p>Who holds the power in society?</p>	<p>10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After different identity categories are listed on the flipchart, the facilitator asks the group: out of these identities, who holds the most power in the society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart, markers
<p>Mapping their own identities</p>	<p>15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are given handouts with a scheme of a flower that is empty • They are instructed to write the identity categories they named in the previous part of the session on the petals • Participants then reflect on their own identities and they write them on the outside of the petal • Participants then see if they are part of the group who holds more or less power in society based on their identity categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power Flower scheme  <p>(source: YFoEE intersectionality toolkit)</p>
<p>Debriefing in pairs</p>	<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are then asked to find a person they feel comfortable sharing their experience with and they take time for deep reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chairs for the participants to sit

		<p>and active listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their conversation is steered with proposals of the questions: how did I feel during this exercise? What surprised me? What was my awareness of the unique experience each person is going through based on their identity categories prior to this exercise ? How is this related to the values they hold? • If they feel comfortable, they can share their result in pair • Participants are reminded of the brave spaces guidelines and asked to respect the privacy of the person they are sharing with 	together while sharing
Collective debriefing	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants come back to the plenary circle • Facilitator asks: how do you feel after this exercise? • What does this exercise can tell us about power and privilege? • Facilitator encourages participants to share and is moderating a discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
Drawing conclusions + theoretical input on intersectionality and power and privilege	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator summarizes the discussion and gives input on power and privilege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More materials can be found here
Session plan 2	90	Mainstream and margins	
Activity 1	45	Tape on the forehead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tapes in different colors, based on the number of participants are prepared • There should be at least one big group

			<p>of the same color and two to three unique ones that don't fit into the bigger group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flipchart, markers
Closed eyes grounding energizer	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● counting up to 10 in a circle as group with their eyes closed 	n/a
Tape game	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitators gently put the tape on participants' foreheads while their eyes are closed and tell them to open their eyes and "without talking in any language, form groups." ● Facilitator has the power to decide who from the group will have mainstream and who margin identity ● It is advised that mainstream of the particular group has a margin experience not to create another burden to the already marginalized part of the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tapes in different colors
Standing debrief	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short debrief while still standing – asking questions: What happened? How did you come together? What did it feel like? How do you feel now? ● Facilitator ignores as much as possible the unique ones early in the debrief to establish the mainstream experience and feeling ● Then turn to the unique ones: "What about you? What was it like for you?" ● As they talk, the facilitator feels free to prompt with questions about particular things they observed that they did or didn't experience. ● Questions like: "Have you experienced or witnessed these dynamics in other settings? What was it like?" 	

<p>Input: presenting the mainstream and margin scheme</p>	<p>20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitator explains: The mainstream sets the culture, the understood rules about how things are done in the group, whether that mainstream is a small subgroup or a majority within the group. ● The margin are those who have to adapt to what the mainstream sets up. ● Person can be mainstream one way and margin another at the very same time, depending on what characteristics you are looking at. And if you are mainstream in this group, there are other groups in which you are the margin. ● We all have experiences in being in the mainstream and in being in the margin. No matter how homogeneous a group or organisation, a close observation will show that some characteristics or qualities in the group are marginalised ● Eg. in a group that has a reputation for having vibrant social events and throwing great parties, there may be a margin which loves quietness. As a group evolves over time, different qualities will shift between the mainstream and the margins, so the dynamic is always changing. ● The benefit of learning about this dynamic is to bring awareness, understanding and offer capacity to make choices about how we participate in the group. ● It allows us to better tolerate and even welcome some of the tensions that these dynamics produce. Without the mainstream a group wouldn't exist, however without the margins a group wouldn't grow. In the short term, a group can grow by increasing the size of its mainstream, but for long-term sustainability, a group will grow by supporting its margins to participate on their own terms. ● The mainstream does essential work in holding the group together ● Sometimes people in the mainstream can feel guilty for having this power. 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's normal that the mainstream is often 'clueless' to the existence of the margins. If the dynamic starts to shift, and the margins come into their power, the mainstream can feel confused, and feel like new opinions or behaviours have come out of nowhere. ● The mainstream often tries hard to stay comfortable, and might reject challenges from the margins, feeling attacked and alienated. This doesn't mean they have suddenly become marginalised! ● They need to practice being with the discomfort of what is being pointed out, and listening. If a group's mainstream refuses to positively engage the margins, ultimately the group will fail to thrive, so the mainstream has a big opportunity (and responsibility) if it can develop it's awareness of this dynamic ● The margins are the qualities, behaviors, and values that are pushed to the periphery of the group. When the mainstream of a group is unaware, and until the margins of the group find their power, the characteristics of the margins can look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving a part of their identity 'at the door' in order to fit into the group • Feeling like they aren't included in decision-making (because they probably aren't!) • Doing work that is undervalued, not noticed by others, or not taking on jobs at all • Losing confidence in the group • Feeling isolated and not listened to • Expressing views that might seem 'irrelevant' or 'outrageous' to the mainstream. ● Being on the margins of the group can feel alienating. However, as the margins get more empowered and demand to be more seen and heard, it is also a powerful place to be. The margins have a freedom that the mainstream doesn't have. As the current existence of the group doesn't depend on the margins, they have a freedom to participate or leave as 	
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		they choose. It is very common that the people on the margins have a much clearer understanding of the dynamic than the people in the mainstream do.	
Activity 2	70	Closed eyes exercise	
Grounding + visualizing	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have participants get good and relaxed by collective grounding and deep breathing in and out • Once everybody is quiet and grounded, participants are invited to close their eyes • Facilitator starts with a story telling it slowly and giving enough time for thoughts to occur: <i>Remember a time when you felt you were in the margin, where you knew you were on the edges of the group, that you didn't really belong. Think of a specific experience where you keenly felt your marginness. Be mindful of your personal boundaries and don't go to the most painful experiences, but something you can handle at the moment that is useful for your learning.</i> 	
Questions for the participants	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator carefully asks questions, giving enough time after each question: • What was said? • What was done? • What did you do? • How did you feel? • What was it like for you to be in the margin? • What was the mainstream like? • How would you describe that mainstream person or group? • What was their attitude? 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did they act? • How did they come across to you? • What do you wish you could say to the mainstream person or group so that you would have been better. • If you could safely say what you wanted to say, what would it be? • Important note: this exercise might be overwhelming for some of the participants so make sure there is another facilitator inside and outside of the session to help and support the ones that might show emotions • At the beginning of the session it is important to give a warning to participants that this might be emotional exercise and especially pay attention to the margins of the group - this exercise is aimed at mainstream to become aware of their attitude, not the margins to feel traumatized 	
Small group debrief	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants go into groups of minimum 3 and maximum 4 people • They don't have to tell what happened, just what it was like to be in the margin, what the mainstream seemed like to them as margins, and what they as margins would say to the mainstream 	
Harvesting response on three flipcharts for the 3 groups of questions	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator prepares flipchart with different groups of questions • Participants stay in group and are sharing their responses • Facilitator writes on flipchart whatever they hear in different colors so it is more visible for the rest of the group 	3 flipcharts with groups of questions
Mapping mainstream and margin characteristics of their own groups	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going back to their groups and mapping them mainstream and margin characteristic within their own group • Discussing: "What are some of the tools/approaches we could use to address some of these polarities? What practices or tools could we use to help us notice, and better include, those on the margins of the group?" 	Papers and flipcharts
Sharing	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator invites participants to the plenary circle 	

conclusions in plenary		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group shortly present their own conclusions 	
<p>**Note to facilitators: the session is made out of 2 activities and the advice is to do both, one after another**</p>			
Session plan 3	70	Problem tree (values mapping)	Flipchart, markers, colorful stickers
Introduction and presenting an example of the problem tree	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator begins explaining the exercise: Problem Tree is a tool for in-depth analysis of the causes, consequences and solutions of a particular problem and in the context of values it can help us to see what kind of value stand behind a certain solution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The trunk is a problem The roots represent everything that nourishes the trunk (institutions, policies, ideologies, values, individuals, customs, culture, media...) branches are symptoms of the problem leaves are solutions (fallen leaves - failed solutions) the fruits are our values (which are reflected in the solutions) <p>Then everyone looks at other people's work and puts a mark where they recognize a common problem or solution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One pre-prepared problem tree that is used to explain the method to the participants
Working in groups	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group works on the problem of its cause (e.g. sexism, capitalism, homelessness, pollution etc.) and draws their own tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flipchart paper and markers

Presentation of the problem trees in plenary	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the number of the groups / topics, short presentations are done in plenary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Mapping values	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants are invited to take a closer look at other groups' work and put a mark where they recognize a common problem, solution or values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Debrief in plenary	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator invites for a collective debrief of the exercise asking questions: How did you like the exercise? What were the common values that you noticed? Are they important in your work and how? How is this useful in building alliances? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Session plan 4		World cafe - where do our struggles overlap (shared values, spaces for collaboration)	
Introduction exercise: chair game	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The chairs are distributed around the room and everyone is sitting on them, one is left empty One person's goal is to try to sit on the empty chair They walk at a steady, slower pace and make some noise while doing so People sitting must "defend" an empty chair by sitting on it and making sure they take turns and build strategy It is repeated a few times and the person whose goal is to sit changes through the rounds It is repeated until the groups starts to cooperate and becomes more successful in stopping a person to sit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as many participants as many chairs around the room

Short debrief + input	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator asks a question: how did you feel during this exercise? • What did you notice? • What does the dynamic reminds you in the context of movements and collaboration? 	n/a
World cafe	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are divided into groups according to their movements or similarities of the groups • One person sits at one table and welcomes others, one person moves to other tables, both take notes • They have 15 minutes at each table - facilitator rings a bell when it is time to move • Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Where do our values/issues overlap? 2) Was there a collaboration based on common values before? 3) Why yes and why not? 4) Is there currently a place for collaboration? (what activities could we plan together?) 5) Where can we support each other? What do we want to do together in the future? • The last round of people is when the people from the same movement at the beginning come to their own table • Then they share what they wrote down in other groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tables for as many groups as people come from • same amount of flipcharts and markers • watch
Session plan 5		“Activist notebook”	
Participants a filling in the notebooks	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone gets pre-made notebooks • They decorate the front page as they wish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre made notebooks for each of the

and decorating the front page with the things that inspires		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They answered the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What did I learn that changed my perspective? 2) What surprised me the most about my experience? 3) What interesting/new did I hear from others? 4) What do I want to remember the most? 5) Values in my work are important because... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participants • colorful pens, markers, glitters and stickers
Writing messages to each other	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterwards, everyone writes something they will remember about this person on the blank page of the notebook • For the sake of privacy in the first part, participants can staple the pages they have filled in with messages 	

Module 4: Embodying solidarity and mindfulness

Session 1: Walk of privilege

Session 2: Deep listening (fish bowl)

Session 3: Decolonize your mind

Objectives:

Self-awareness:

Session plan 1		Decolonize your mind	
Introduction	5	Facilitator starts explaining the exercise:	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culture and arts play an important part in the way we perceive and understand the world around us. They are known to be “soft power”. It is no coincidence that the cultural output of a superpower like the USA are are distributed and watched across the world, at the expense of regional productions – particularly white culture such as Hollywood and white TV shows. It is the same for books, songs, etc. In Europe, mainstream and “normalised” culture implements and enhances a capitalist, patriarchal, white supremacist way of understanding the world, also known as the <i>white-male</i> gaze. ● But culture and arts are also a powerful tool to understand, empathise with and discover the Other. We can discover and understand other identities, cultures, countries, if we read and see productions created by these very identities. For example, if you are curious about the condition of women in India, instead of going for a book written by a white European man look for a book written by an Indian Woman ● Even though it sounds simple it is harder to put into practice as schools and society at large do not teach people with privileged backgrounds to reach out to mediums that do not represent them ● During this session we will explore our relation to the (mainstream) culture produced by white-cis western men 	
Reflection	30	<p>The first step to decolonise your mind is to reflect. Look at your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bookshelf (or the reading list from the last couple of years) ● your artists in your music library ● the films and tv shows that you’ve watched in the last couple of years ● magazines and articles you read on the Internet ● influencers you’re following on social media 	A4 papers, pens and markers

		And then count, how many were produced by white western men?	
Short debrief	10	Facilitator invites participants to share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel after this exercise? • What was your result? • What surprised you and why? 	
Curiosity & research + planning and taking it back to your community		Facilitator continues with instructions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be curious – ask yourself what else is there that I don't know of and why? 2) Reach out for recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For this internet search engine can even become an ally, try and type e.g. "women director thriller", or Lollywood, Bollywood, or "LGBTQI+ writer + name of your country ", indigenous influencers, etc. • Explore your local community context and talk to your friends – are there any cultural / activist events organized by non-white, non-male organizers? 3) Challenge yourself: make a pledge that the next book you read, the next film or tv show, movie critique on the internet or the influencer you follow won't be made by a cis-man, or by a white person, or someone from the West <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list with books you would want to read • Go step further and think of a way of spreading the culture in your local context (movie night with your colleagues or concert with your friends) 	
Short debrief		Facilitator asks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How you feel now? 2) Does anybody want to share their plans? Summarize the thoughts and conclusions of the participants.	

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

ORGANIZING

Introduction: developing leaders as a way of building power

The term “community organizing” is a concept that is often confused with other complementary and valuable forms of community intervention such as community development, advocacy, movement-building, and activism.

Organizers tend to be very clear that the goal of community organizing is to “build power” and that one of the key metrics by which this is measured is the number and quality of leaders that are developed through the organizing process. At times, this clarity can put organizing in a healthy tension with other approaches that have a less clearly defined discourse and practice related to these two concepts.

When it comes to building “leaderful movements,” there are valuable perspectives to learn from creating training and learning spaces that develop more familiarity with, and sophistication in, the practice of community organizing in Europe.

Building power

Whereas the idea of “power” can feel uncomfortable in many movement cultures – to the point that people do not wish to even use the word – people who engage in the practice of community organizing tend to speak much more freely about it.

Organizers are often taught early on that “power is something you can count.” It is the number of people you can get to a public meeting or action. It is the number of votes you can secure for your issue on the city council. It is the amount of resources you can raise to support this work.

However, European community organizers have also identified blind spots in their practice and in this definition of power. Recently, organizers working in Central and Eastern Europe conducted a multi-year participatory action research project to reflect on lessons learned from ten organizing campaigns in five different countries. The resulting report, [The Power of Organizing](#), spoke about an overly circumscribed idea of power-building among organizers:

“We are not uncritical of our practice. We believe European organizing needs to shift away from being applied as a “neutral methodology” towards a practice rooted in the values of social justice, equity, and environmental resilience. Organizing needs to be grounded in local communities and center the “have-nots” in our work. At the same time, organizers need to elevate the scale of our ambition beyond the neighborhood or even the national context. In the face of escalating and interconnected crises, we must aim for a strategy capable of influencing the political agenda and public discourse at the European level.”

- *The Power of Organizing, 2021*

The study goes on to challenge organizers to take a more expansive definition of power, and it introduces an idea, adapted from the work of British political and social scientist Steven Lukes, that there are “three faces of power” which an organizer must think about. Some of the ways that power manifests are more visible than others, but they all affect an organizer’s ability to put together winning campaigns and to “influence the political agenda.”

Developing leaders

Like with the term “power,” organizers do not tend to trip over the words “leader” or “leadership.” A fundamental goal of a local community organizing campaign is to develop leadership of people in the affected community. But this is not necessarily leadership in the top-down, patriarchal sense of the word which many associate with it.

More often than not, community organizing rewards leadership styles that emphasize listening to others, as well as appreciating and encouraging the contributions of the many, not the few. Leadership in a community organizing context often comes from unexpected places and the role of an organizer is to cultivate leadership in people who themselves feel they have no agency and who society does not immediately see as leaders.

How is organizing done in Europe?

Organizing – wherever it is used – is an ever-evolving craft. As a result, there are variations in community organizing practice. However, people who define their work as “community organizers” typically employ a number of similar tools. For example, community organizing consistently prioritizes one-on-one, face-to-face outreach with local residents. This often takes the form of going door to door in a particular area or housing settlement, or in places where people are known to gather, for example reaching out to unemployed people outside of job centers, or people of faith in their houses of worship. This can be difficult and time-intensive work, but community organizers would agree that there is no shortcut around this essential piece of the organizing process.

What does an organizer need to be able to do?

Through the research conducted to produce the study, [The Power of Organizing](#), the organizers involved identified a list of things that well-trained organizers need to be able to do:

- Give people things to do and develop leaders
- Provide structure for leaders and members
- Hold groups together even in tough times
- Build the base to act when the time is right
- “Nationalize” a local issue
- Act as the “conductor of the activist orchestra”
- Cultivate broader networks
- Make space for reflection to transform and grow

Community organizers play an important role in all the steps of the organizing process, and good organizers share leadership and demonstrate an awareness of the privilege they carry based on their institutional position and their ability to shape the strategic direction of a campaign. A balanced approach to teaching the skills of organizing, along with strategic sense and personal self-awareness, are all components of an effective approach to teaching the practice of community organizing.

Curriculum

Module 1: Introduction to organizing

This sample session is made up of training modules that introduce the approach and skills of community organizing to participants, as well as allowing them to more deeply explore the personal awareness and strategic sense that an advanced organizer must possess. In doing so, participants will explore a set of skills and understandings that can be put into concrete practice to develop more leaderful movements, campaigns, and organizations.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to more clearly locate their current community-based work on a spectrum from actions that empower communities to those that advocate for communities.

Teaching activities

- Spectrum exercise

Module 2: Organizing 1:1's as a practice to build relationships and identify "organic leaders"

This module is an introduction to the most basic skill of organizing, the one-on-one organizing conversation. It focuses particularly on the idea of using these conversations to identify "organic leaders." Success with identifying leaders who have a following within their communities or workplaces is a threshold skill in the quest to increase the number of leaders in movement as well as their diversity in terms of background and identity. The module starts with an understanding of what organizing one-on-one's are and why they are so important to the organizing process behind a leaderful movement.

Learning goals

- Participants will have increased comfort with the application of 1:1 communication as the fundamental building block of organizing practice.

- Participants will gain practice in active listening and the “emotion-hope-action” cycle, and they will learn to identify common problems and themes that can be developed into issues for organizing campaigns.
- Participants will gain skills in the practice of identifying “organic leaders.”

Teaching activities

- Presentation on 1:1’s, identifying organic leaders
- Interactive 1:1 practice exercises
- “Finding the secret” simulation of 1:1 conversations

Module 3: Leadership development

Once an organizer has done the work to identify organic leaders, ongoing work to develop the leadership skills of those people is necessary in any organizing process. Again, one-on-one conversations are an essential skill, though the focus shifts to a process of accompaniment, mentoring and feedback. This module introduces participants to useful tools to apply to this process including the roles and responsibilities of leaders, as well as levels of engagements and common leadership self critique and learning tools. The module also introduces the idea of “being organizational,” an idea that cuts against traditional, patriarchal notions of the leader as a single actor, and rather roots leadership in the context of building organizations designed to build collective agency and power.

Learning goals

- Participants will deepen their proficiency with 1:1 organizing skills, and learn to apply the practice to the work of developing leaders.
- Participants will be able to articulate the idea of leadership and leadership development inside the concept of building organizations and “being organizational.”
- Participants will be introduced to tools to support leadership development work, including “roles and responsibilities of leaders” and leadership self-critique tools.

Teaching activities

- Interactive “rewriting the script” exercise about on common leadership development conversations
- Presentation and discussion of the concept of building organizations and “being organizational”
- Sharing of tools for self-critique and roles and responsibilities of leaders

Module 4: Leadership structures

The expression goes: “organizers organize organizations.” This module explores the kinds of organizational structures that exist to facilitate effective and disciplined organizing

campaigns, leadership development, and power sharing. We will look at the “snowflake model” as one common organizational structure that seeks to balance a hierarchy of experience and commitment located at the center of an organization, while at the same time enabling horizontal and potentially exponential growth as the organization expands outward. We will compare this to other models, and facilitate a critical discussion about balancing verticalism and horizontalism.

Learning goals

- Participants will further explore the role of building organizations in the organizing process, and have discussions about the different kinds of organizations that we can build

Teaching activities

- Spectrum exercise to explore the concepts of verticalism and horizontalism
- Examining a case study of the “snowflake model”

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Organizing - Sample Session Plan

Session: Organizing 1:1's

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome	10'		n/a
Spectrum exercise	25'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator runs a series of spectrum discussions on topics related to understanding the nature of their current activist/organizing work • The spectrum session ends with the provocation, "People don't get involved with our movements because..." • Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tape for marking out spectrum exercise on the floor • Flipchart & markers
Presentation on organizing 1:1's	25'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation begins by defining the concept of an "organic leader" and explains the role that organizing 1:1's play in identifying them • It then provides an introduction to core concepts of the organizing 1:1, including the 70/30 rule, the "cone of curiosity" and other elements of active listening, as well as the "emotion-hope-action" cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation
1:1 practice sessions	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, participants will be given the task of applying the cone of curiosity to the practice of listening to the story of another. 	n/a
Debrief	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion focussed on drawing out how participants applied lessons from the presentation to their practice 1:1's 	n/a
BREAK	10'		

Interactive Exercise: "Finding the secret" exercise	60'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants will divide into two groups, with one group being assigned to play the role of organizer, the other group assigned specific roles to play that represent tenants of the same building. ● Each "tenant" in the building has a different story, and each of them is guarding a "secret" that is a key to who they are, as well as to the potential leadership role they could play in the organizing campaign. ● The organizers are assigned one tenant and instructed to do a 1:1. During the 1:1, the organizer's goal is to get them to agree to come to a community meeting AND to discover the secret that the tenant is hiding. ● The organizer and tenant then reverse roles, and they switch partners to ensure that no organizer is doing a 1:1 with a person whose secret they already know. ● Debrief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pieces of paper with the names of various actors to represent in the image of power in society (i.e. "banks and corporate finance," "government agency," "union," "NGO" etc.)
Presentation on developing leaders and building organizations	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants hear an introductory presentation on the ideas of building organizations, the role that leaders and leadership play in that process, and the idea of "being organizational" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation
Closure & checkout	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final go-round on one thing participants are taking from this session 	n/a

TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION

Introduction: skills for working together collectively

When we ask, ‘how can we find solutions to the enormous socio-ecological challenges that are facing us today?’, perhaps the most important answer is: Together! The deep transformations that are required can only be achieved by people working together, collaborating, and generating collective vision and agency. Working together in groups and organisations create the foundation for effective action, bringing together talent, ideas, energy, and multiplying our capacity to achieve what we want to in the world. These relationships enable us to embody our values and offer spaces where synergy and creativity can arise. But working together isn’t easy. In this module we explore skills and knowledge that can help us to work well together – and we’ll find out about the insights and inspiration that we can derive from the more-than-human world. Many of the other modules feed in or develop particular skills and add nuance to these themes and will be referenced as we go.

The importance of our group and organisational cultures can hardly be overstated when thinking about building transformative capacity. Our groups and organisations are:

- **The basis of effective action:** They bring together talent, ideas and energy and multiply our capacity to get things done;
- **A ground from which true synergy and creativity can emerge:** Through collaboration the possibility for something bigger and more beautiful than the sum of the parts can arise. And, let’s face it, we need a bit of that magic;
- **An expression of alignment with the realities of Interconnectedness:** Commitment to collaboration is a way of refusing to conform to the atomised individualism propagated by neoliberal capitalism and to live our lives in a way that honours the complex mutuality of life;
- **A vital context for transformation and learning:** The complex and challenging nature of social action requires ongoing learning and adaptation, both individual and organisational. Contexts of collaboration can provide the feedback and support needed to grow and keep learning as we go;
- **An opportunity to embody our values:** They can provide spaces in which to make real the kind of affirming and caring social relations we strive to create in the world, challenging systems of oppression and dominant socio-political narratives by creating alternative forms of social relations in the ways we struggle together.

Nevertheless, working with other people is challenging. It can be frustrating, exhausting, and demoralising. To work with others effectively requires the development of a wide range of skills, important shifts in our attitude and understanding, and the adoption of supportive practices.

In addition to developing the range of skills explored within the 'intrapersonal skills' section of this curriculum (such as emotional literacy, somatic awareness, receptive capacity etc) and attending to some of the principles explored in other modules (such as communication, socio-cultural literacy, skills for prefigurative organising or embodying solidarity in our groups), along with the development of a more ecological, systemic, interconnected sensibility that will inform our relationships and work, there are some further and crucial areas and practices we need to attend to if we want our groups to be effective, resilient, and transformative of ourselves and society

BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EFFECTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE COLLABORATION

By attending to some key aspects and structures of group life we can set up systems that are more likely to contribute to trust building, effective sharing of work, and the sense of synergy and cooperation that we find in the most effective groups. Some of these key building blocks include:

Establishing Vision and Purpose: Underpinning everything is our collective sense of purpose and clarity about what we are coming together for. Our purpose acts as our invitation to those joining us - we come together with a sense of shared motivation and intention. We need to clarify (and re-clarify) our vision and purpose as fully and explicitly as we can, so that people can be clear what they're committing to when they join a group or continue to work together. This helps gather and align energies with a sense of coherence.

Attending to Group Formation and Culture: Paying attention to the process of the formation of a group is crucial. The foundations and ground of a group - its soil - contains the nutrients and the seeds that will determine what grows and manifests. Unlike with physical soil, we cannot leave its contents and makeup to chance. We need to think consciously about the kind of group culture, values, needs, boundaries, membership etc, that will be part of getting people on the same page, managing or mitigating assumptions and expectations right from the start, and creating the conditions required for healthier and more resilient flourishing.

Integrating an Action-Learning Approach: We need strong vision and purpose to hold and return to, but we also need responsiveness, adaptability, the ability to learn from experience and mistakes - the kind of capacities that natural systems are so effective at embodying. Everything is always changing - we need to embrace that, and, wherever possible, use it to our advantage!

Understanding Participatory Process: Our ability to be aware of the dynamics of participation and the shapes and patterns of the processes involved, is essential if we want to establish ways of working that replace control with collaboration. Nature, broadly speaking, is always functional but that doesn't mean it is necessarily always harmonious - tensions occur, but they occur within bigger systems and trajectories of balance and time. Knowing that periods of divergence and conflict are to be

expected and developing the skills to integrate them is part of a creative process of building agreement and deeper coherence. Finding the right balance between inclusion and the setting of boundaries around decision making, or learning how to ensure our differences enrich our collaboration rather than leave us entrenched in disputes, are all part of this area. It includes the skills to ensure that the whole remains greater than the sum of the parts.

Balancing Task, Process and Relationship: Learning to balance task, process and relationship is essential for effective collaboration and nurturing group resilience. We come together as a group with a **task** to do, something we want to achieve, and that can often take most of our energy. Equally important is *how* we go about achieving our aims and the **process** involved - structures for making decisions, communication, delegation, accountability, and so on. And, in addition to task and process, we also need to attend to the quality of the **relationships** within the group, which underlie and determine the functionality of the tasks and processes. Applying a Task-Process-Relationship lens can help us to consciously cultivate a healthy collaborative culture which adequately cares for and gives attention to all three necessary dimensions - another way of thinking about balancing the 'system'.

Working with Power and Embodying Solidarity: One of the biggest challenges in group work is working with the dynamics of power, which are always present and can be highly destructive if not engaged with transparently and with care. It is essential that we develop the ability and courage within our groups to face these issues skilfully, identify what's happening, become able to listen to one another, and find collective strategies and solutions.

Making Decisions Well: One of the key ways that power and its distribution manifests in groups and organisations is in the way decisions are made. Effective and appropriate decision-making lies at the heart of all good group process. There are all sorts of decision making processes and structures we might employ - more hierarchical ones or more horizontal ones, some decisions may be best made by 'authority', some will need more involvement, some will need complete consensus. The key is that they are transparent, clear and consciously chosen - that way we can see what is happening and make adaptations when things aren't working. People feeling excluded from the decision making processes that affect them or their work is one of the key ways that power dynamics can undermine us. Most importantly, we do not need to commit to one fixed way of doing this - returning to our adaptive systems for inspiration we can see that being overly fixed or rigid is not nature's way! Just because consensus is ideal for one decision, doesn't mean it should be blanket applied to everything!

Working with Conflict: Even under the best conditions, conflict will sometimes happen, and that's okay! We just need to know what to do when it does. We need to acquire skills and understanding to work well with conflict, face up to our differences, and find creative ways to have difficult conversations.

Working with Teams and ‘Types’: We are all different. And this can bring diversity of skill, personality, and experience to our groups. Using and applying group/personality analysis tools (of which there are many - see for example [Belbin](#)) for looking at teams, types and diversity can help us to develop a more nuanced and inclusive way of understanding what is happening in a group, helping us to celebrate and harness the ranges of strength and talent, and helping everyone to bring their best.

Bringing Somatic and Trauma Informed Awareness: Many of us carry historical and socially conditioned tensions, wounds, stresses and traumas in the body, and these can become more strongly activated in complex social systems, like a group - especially when deep values around transformation or environmental protection are in the mix. When one or more in a group are reactive or disconnected in a meeting or at an event etc, having one or more who are ‘at home in the body’, present, connected and regulated, can be very powerful. Creating cultures and spaces of care where we go slow enough to stay connected to sensation, listen to one another properly and respond to the things that are arising in the group field, as well as having some practices at our disposal for helping with regulation - such as a breathing exercise, or a ‘sit spot’ - are pretty important if we want to care for the effectiveness of our groups. Apart from anything, the ecological destruction we are engaging with can be highly distressing for people. How are we taking care of this, collectively?

Ideally we would at all times ‘move at the pace of trust’ so that all nervous systems could be fully present and well. That’s not always possible - sometimes other things are too urgent, sometimes overwhelm or distress are unavoidable. That is part of life. But what are we doing to create stability in the system and re-regulate after disturbances occur? How are we developing our psychosomatic awareness, sensitivity, receptivity and literacy around trauma, in ourselves and others, taking these skills seriously and not leaving them to those who have been socialised to traditional ‘caring’ roles? Nb. Creating time for collective grieving / processing difficult emotion, particularly because of the kinds of work we are engaging with, is part of creating these stability and regulation.

Strategic Thinking and Planning: Strategic thinking is essential for moving from vision to effective action. It is key to enabling us to feel resourced and inspired by our collective effort, rather than diminished and burdened. After all, we have come together to achieve a purpose, and if we consistently fall short of achieving that, it is difficult for the group to thrive, at any level. Establishing good group practices for strategic planning and streamlined and adaptive implementation of our plans and actions will do so much to resource us, supporting us to avoid the pitfalls of confusion, unclarity, lack of ‘progress’ and wasted energy - and the inevitable frustration that produces.

Skilful Communication: Group culture is significantly shaped by communication practices. There is enormous value in creating a communication culture where we aim to speak in ways that strengthen kindness, that are helpful and considered rather than reactive, and that increase harmony while also being truthful and courageous. With this, we need the knack of good listening - receptivity, respect, the capacity to see or feel beyond our own needs, preferences, and views.

A last word

Our ability to work well together involves an important shift from approaches of control and command towards truly collaborative ways of working and being. The core skills for effective and transformative collaboration need to be grounded in the values ecological learning promotes. Working well together doesn't merely depend on a set of well developed skills or methods, but also on a well developed set of attitudes and ways of being and relating that centre solidarity, care and reciprocity. Collaboration is a fundamental expression of the ecological world view - as well as being a prerequisite for building collective power.

Curriculum

Module 1: Task-Process-Relationships

Learning to balance the elements of task, process and relationship is essential for effective collaboration and nurturing group resilience. We come together as a group with a **task** to do, and that can often take the majority of our energy. That makes sense - we have come together to do something, and we need a clear sense of our task and shared commitment to it, for the group to thrive. But overemphasis on task neglects other important factors which, over time, will unbalance the whole.

To achieve this balance we need good **process**, the establishing and holding of structures and systems for making decisions, communication, delegation, accountability etc. This helps us ensure that the frameworks, agreements, and protocols are in place to enable us to pursue and fulfil our tasks efficiently and in a way that empowers people and manifests our values.

Often, we encounter groups where the task and the process are well attended to but things are still not working out. That may be because our processes and structures are only as good as the people inhabiting them. The quality of the **relationships** within the group is often what we find neglected here. Failing to attend to the relational dynamics between us can have a significantly detrimental effect on the health of the group and its culture, no matter how well designed the processes, or how committed to achieving the task people are. The quality of relationship underpins all of our collective efforts, and we need to put time and energy into strengthening and caring for our relationships, fostering trust, and paying attention to the quality of our communication and sense of connection. These things are crucial if we want our groups to be resilient and to thrive.

Learning aims

- Understanding group dynamics
- Framing/theorising group praxis
- Unpacking and exploring personal and group tendencies/habits
- Supporting improved health, wellbeing and functionality in our groups

Module 2: Exploring group dynamics

Group dynamics are complex and multifaceted. It is important for groups to be able to develop skill and practice in diagnosing what is going on and finding vocabulary and capacity to discuss these dynamics. This module offer activities that can support this learning process. When wanting to explore and understand aspects of group dynamics such as mainstreams and margins, working with power, privilege, rank, levels of participation and so on, it can be necessary to 'generate' some group dynamics to reflect upon. This might be the case if it is early on in a training/group's life and they don't have much 'real life' material to work from yet. Or sometimes it is more helpful to have a concise, bounded and specific example of dynamics to be working with, than to ask a group to draw on their whole history of working together which may be long and complex.

Other possible sessions you might use for this purpose would be the Raft Game activity (this is much snappier and can be used in the 'getting to know each other' stage of the training. The Warehouse is more in depth and requires there to have been some group/trust building first).

The activity is generally not framed. The facilitator will usually simply follow the instructions for part 'a.', so that the participants are dropped into the activity with very little warning - they should not know what is coming in advance.

The intention of this is to create a challenge that the group needs to spontaneously find creative and collaborative solutions to. This will add some pressure to the activity, with the intention of heightening the dynamics. The point is not that they are able to do it well (necessarily), but that content/experience is generated which we can use to analyse and explore themes on group dynamics, participation and personal tendencies.

Learning aims

- Creating an experiential context to support in-depth reflection on group dynamics
- Generating experiential content to support in-depth reflection on our own tendencies in groups
- Can provide space for practising/testing skills related to group process, such as decision making, facilitation of discussion, consensus process etc

Module 3: Giving and receiving feedback

No matter how much self-reflection and analysis we do, it is often very difficult for us to be aware of our blind spots, unhelpful behaviours and obstructive habits. Feedback from others can often be the most potent way for us to learn about and transform our behaviour. We need our colleagues and friends to help reflect these things back to us. For the role of "giving and receiving feedback" in ongoing learning practices, see the [similar module](#) in the chapter on learning. Here we'll look at feedback from the perspective of "trust and relationship building" and putting structures and mechanisms in place that allow for healthy feedback loops to be sustained in your group.

Creating a group culture in which people are comfortable and adept at offering and receiving feedback is vital. If we can create cultures of care, that means people feel safe enough and are invited/encouraged to offer feedback, if we can make these practices the norm in our groups - supported by self awareness and emotional literacy practices - we do a lot to mitigate the inevitable tensions and conflicts that will present themselves over time.

However, it requires skill and understanding to do well. Here are a set of these simple guidelines that can help us to ensure that feedback is given and received more helpfully.

Learning aims

- Developing self awareness/knowledge
- Strengthening personal/emotional robustness
- Group trust and relationship building
- Supporting feedback loops/structures/mechanisms
- Developing listening skills
- Developing communication skills

Learning activity

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xxmliGc3w4pGJI9hCjdQum8qEWrw7KFC/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Transformative Collaboration - Sample Session Plans

Task - Process - Relationships session (1 - 1,5 hour exploration)

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- Understanding group dynamics
- Framing/theorising group praxis
- Unpacking and exploring personal and group tendencies/habits
- Supporting improved health, wellbeing and functionality in our groups

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Framing the session	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the importance of the elements “task”, “process” and “relationships” for transformative collaboration. Say a few words about each of them and common pitfalls. You can give an example from your own experience with working in groups <div data-bbox="714 928 1279 1329" data-label="Diagram"> <p>The diagram consists of three overlapping circles on a grey background. The top circle is light blue and labeled 'task'. It contains a list: 'mission', 'aims', 'strategic objectives', 'projects', and 'specific work tasks'. Below this list is the text 'each layer nests within the higher level'. The bottom-left circle is light green and labeled 'process'. It contains a list: 'decision-making', 'meeting protocols', 'delegation', 'accountability', and 'communications & information sharing'. The bottom-right circle is light red and labeled 'relationships'. It contains a list: 'trust', 'quality of communication', 'mutual respect and care', 'honesty and truthfulness', and 'non-neurotic investment'. The circles overlap in the center, and the text 'each layer nests within the higher level' is positioned between the task circle and the process/relationships circles.</p> </div>	

<p>Setting up the activity + unpack the model</p>	<p>20'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a group conversation on the topic of task-process-relationships. Make sure all participants have a clear understanding of each element. Invite the group to give some examples of their own to support them fully grasping the elements and how they relate • Set-up groups of 3-4 participants • Give clear instructions on which experience in groups they will analyze, using the model. This could either be an experience in the present group (e.g. during a previous exercise) or an experience “back at home”. <div data-bbox="824 512 1518 1054" data-label="Diagram"> <p>The diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of task, process, and relationships. At the top is a blue box labeled 'task'. At the bottom left is a green box labeled 'process'. At the bottom right is a pink box labeled 'relationships'. Red arrows connect these boxes in a triangular pattern with bidirectional arrows between each pair. Text boxes explain each relationship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task to Process: "task influences process to ensure it is appropriate to serving the purpose (not ideology)" Process to Task: "attending to process ensures means are congruent with ends" Task to Relationships: "coming together on basis of shared vision and intention. Purpose that is greater than the group creates the necessary tension for transformative action and motivates effective relationship" Relationships to Task: "building relationships and supporting the flourishing of individuals can be embraced as part of the task of the group" Process to Relationships: "good process takes account of emotional layer, the needs of individuals, supports connection and development of relationships" Relationships to Process: "attending to the health of relationships will support fluid process, time spent on this can save time later" </div>	
<p>Group Work</p>	<p>20'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move between the groups in the space and re-clarify or support them where necessary • Give them a five minute warning before the end of the activity 	
<p>Debrief</p>	<p>15'</p>		

More detailed activity plan for this session:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_HzhLx16vV4Csq8CfAqKEwITNNmOyZtZ/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true

Exploring Group Dynamics: The Warehouse (2 hour session)

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- Creating an experiential context to support in-depth reflection on group dynamics
- Generating experiential content to support in-depth reflection on our own tendencies in groups
- Can provide space for practising/testing skills related to group process, such as decision making, facilitation of discussion, consensus process etc

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Setting up the activity + individual writing	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without offering any framing, simply begin the activity by giving everyone a copy of the handout which should have the scenario description and instructions written at the start, as well as a simple plan of the building and two boxes. Tell them that this is going to be an individual activity that should be done in silence. • Silent writing (individually 	
Transition	/	After 5 minutes you interrupt the silent work that individuals are doing. One theatrical way to do this is to set a phone alarm with a ringtone for 5 minutes in and then act as though you are actually receiving a phone call. You can then speak into the phone in hearing distance from the group saying something like:	

		<p><i>“Hi Miren, how are you... oh, really! Ah, that was my mistake, ok I will tell them now. 30 minutes? That’s lucky..”</i></p> <p>- Then tell the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Miren just rang to explain that actually the activity needs to be done as a collaboration. ➢ Really sorry for the mistake! It is exactly the same task, but it needs to be done as a whole group. ➢ Luckily, the plan has been delayed so you now have 30 minutes to complete the task: coming up with an idea for the use of the space and three reasons it is a good one. <p>- Step back and just let them get on with it! Usually this generates some excitement and movement as people gear up to the challenge they have just been presented with.</p>	
Group Work	30'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As the 30 minute point approaches you can decide whether to give them an extension or not. If it feels like an additional 5 minutes would be useful you can simulate another phone call to explain that the flight has been further delayed. This can also serve to help bring the activity towards a close. ● When the time is finally up you can also simulate a call and say to the group, “Hey, It’s Miren. Who’s going to explain the plan and the 3 reasons?” ...and hand the phone to someone. Usually someone will volunteer to read out the plan and bring the process to an end. ● 	

<p>Creating a timeline of the process</p>	<p>30'</p>	<p>Lay out your pre-prepared long roll of paper. Draw along the centre of the paper an arrow and invite participants to gather around it. Then give the instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will now make a timeline of the 30 minute period of the collaborative process ➤ We'll include all the key events we have witnessed. ➤ These should be observable events with as little interpretation or subjective judgement as possible (ie. things like 'Ben left the room' or 'Asad reminded us that we had 10 minutes left' which we can all observe and agree on; and not things like 'Alex was bored' which is speculation or someone's opinion) ➤ The names of people should be included. ➤ Write these on post-it notes and then arrange on the timeline in the appropriate order. <p>It might be useful to divide the group into subgroups, suggesting that each subgroup work on a 10 minute section. (If, during the collaborative process, the larger group decided to split into smaller working groups, there might need to be several parallel timelines for those periods).</p> <p>- Once the group has completed the timeline as well as they can (and you may need to get involved to help them get it done in the time you have), ask the facilitator who was taking notes of the events to suggest any obvious additions or amendments that will help to clarify the timeline. At this stage the timeline will look something like this:</p>	
<p>Debrief</p>	<p>30'</p>	<p>Debrief offers an opportunity to analyse the graph</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite small groups of three to look at the timeline and explain to each other what was going on for them at each stage. Why did their line rise and fall? What 	

		<p>were the factors involved? What would have supported greater engagement?</p> <p>2. Bring the groups together to discuss what they have observed and learnt:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What have they learnt about themselves? b. What would they do differently next time? c. What other patterns have they noticed? 	
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More detailed activity plan for this session:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zLUG1n42oJDm83UDJFVZy1Wed7QbNyt5/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true

Giving and receiving feedback

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- Developing self awareness/knowledge
- Strengthening personal/emotional robustness
- Group trust and relationship building
- Supporting feedback loops/structures/mechanisms
- Developing listening skills
- Developing communication skills

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Setting up the activity	20'	<p>Introduce the theme and concepts (see link below for more detailed description):</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xxmliGc3w4pGJl9hCjdQum8qEWrw7KFC/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true</p>	

Facilitating the activity	50'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep an eye on the groups, offer assistance if required, and bring them back together at the allotted time. 	
Debrief	15'	<p>The primary function of the debrief will be to ensure that everyone is 'ok' and bring the group together. Balance an attitude/modelling of care, with a straightforward sense that 'assumes' the best. (Any hurt feelings or conversations that need to happen might come up in the debrief but will likely be more helpful post-activity).</p> <p>Other than simply hearing from people to get a read on how they are, you may want to draw out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did people feel was most important for them, both in terms of offering and receiving feedback? What would they do differently if they tried the activity again? Was there anything that stood out for people or surprised them that they'd like to share? 	

More detailed activity plan for this session:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xxmliGc3w4pGJI9hCjdQum8qEWrw7KFC/edit?usp=drive link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xxmliGc3w4pGJI9hCjdQum8qEWrw7KFC/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=102040225756045930761&rtpof=true&sd=true)

STRATEGY

Introduction: strategy as a flexible roadmap from where you are to where you need to get

Imagine a justice related issue suddenly comes to the surface of society and as an organization working to address the issue you are confronted with many new faces who all want to express their anger, their pain or their desire for change. It could be any issue that draws attention and public outrage: flooding related to climate change, a case of police violence, a sudden rise in evictions from home due to hyperinflation... What would you do?

Hopefully your organization would at least have enough capacity and visibility to be able to organise an action to channel the anger/frustration/grief or to bring people together to offer some relief or to practice solidarity. If all you can do, however, is organize a one off event, there's a good chance your organization will keep on reacting to what others do and expressing how you feel about it, rather than you are building something yourself: a base of power, a clear path forward, moving towards something worth fighting for. As the writer Alvin Toffler said: "If you don't have a strategy, you're part of someone else's strategy."

One of the first references to the importance of strategy I've learned about during a training many years ago comes from an ancient Chinese war manual, written by Sun Tzu, "The Art of War":

Strategy without tactics is the slowest road to success
Tactics without strategy is the sound before defeat

Since I've come to realise how the confusion between strategy and tactics and often a focus on tactics rather than strategy, holds social movements back when trying to create change.

The trouble is, when I look back on the one-off protests I've joined over the years, I don't remember a single one that changed the policy we were protesting.

Campaigns are very different from protests because they are built for sustainability and escalation.

Marshall Ganz shares a similar reflection: "Any single tactic thus has limited influence. So, in discussing effective strategy, I refer not to a single tactic, but to a whole series of tactics through which strategists may turn short-term opportunity into long-term gain."

Ganz offers us a definition of strategy as well. It's one of my favorite definitions as it clearly names the challenge any organization working towards systemic change has to face. He defines strategy as "turning what we have into what we need to get what we want".

What we "have" is a whole range of resources such as money, skills, knowledge, accommodation and of course... people! People in our support base, volunteers, activists,

staff members. All of those together are our “input” or “starting position”. It defines what we can or cannot do today.

What we “want” is ideally based on a shared vision and specific goals we set ourselves. It is the change we seek through all of our collective work.

What we “need” is a realistic assessment of the resources we will need to shift the power balance in our favor, to make sure we can get or successfully demand the things we need.

Ganz implies that we can only start where we are but also that success will depend on our ability to use the potential of what we have, taking into account the limitations that come with it, and take the right steps to build resources over time until we have the power to win - which would be unable today and without a good strategy.

In Pedagogy of Hope, Paulo Freire asks us a similar strategic question: “what can we do today in order to be able to do tomorrow what we can’t yet do today?” Strategy in that sense is always about working today with one eye on where we are and with another on the future which we have in mind.

Social movement strategy is however more complicated than “mere planning”. George Lakey uses this metaphor: if you want to go on a trip, you can make a plan. But if you know others are likely to try to put obstacles on your road to avoid you reach your destination, than you need to strategize.

This is true for social movements: as they work towards social change, they are confronted with other powerful players, who have interests which rely on the status quo and the continuation of the current business as usual. The rich cannot keep getting richer, if we eradicate poverty by giving everyone a fair share. As we develop strategies to build power and to demand change, our opponents mobilize their own resources and develop strategies to prevent us from succeeding.

In the end, strategy is all about knowing why you do what you are doing, about being intentional when you do things and knowing why you do them at that specific time. Any tactic (a specific course of action you take, such as organising a march, having a fundraiser, etc.) that was exactly what a group needed yesterday might be a terrible choice today. A good strategy unfolds a smart sequence of tactics, building on previous achievements, always with the goal at the end in mind. That means both that it is a carefully designed plan, but also that it is a plan flexible enough to be adjusted as conditions, both internal or external, change and demand us to rethink. It is a plan, one could see it as a ladder - where the tactics are the rungs - that often will need an element of what sometimes is being called “strategic escalation”. As you build power and support, as attention for your demand or the problem you address increases, the situation might get stuck at the level of decision making or in terms of implementing the change you want. By choosing tactics that escalate the conflict, you raise the stakes. It will build pressure on your target, but this pressure can also be redirected at you (for instance in the form of repression or harsh public criticism,...)

Again the issue is to develop the necessary skills to assess when to talk and when to fight (to reference a great book by Rebecca Subar on the strategic choice between dialogue and

resistance), when to choose to connect and when to engage in conflict and when and how to escalate the conflict to increase/maximize momentum, while minimizing/limiting any unhealthy pressure on your own group.

Strategic skills are crucial for leaderful organisers because without them we fail to progress on the issues we care about and we might even be unaware of that failure or the nature of that failure. A strategy allows us to create a staircase with logical steps from “here” (the current situations with a defined problem we want to address) to “there” (the future situation, where change has happened in line with our goal/vision). Moreover, with a strategy we can monitor progress, adjust our plans when the situation change and evaluate where things go wrong.

Many organisations and movements today lack credible and ambitious strategies which can really bring us closer to the world we seek. There’s many reasons for this. Part of the effort in training our “strategic muscle” is increasing our ability to address the challenges behind

One of them is the preoccupation with the “delusion of the day”. We often lose longer term perspective. Part of that has also to do with an overall focus on the short term in society today. Election cycles, economical conjuncture,... The way policies are designed with an exclusive focus on short term gains or popularity often restrict our thinking to a small time frame. The same is true in many funding structures asking us to make a budget for a plan that needs to prove impact by an end date at best a few years from now.

Depoliticisation is another reason why our movements seem to lack strategic insights. In the last decades a lot of issues have been reduced to “technical problems”, to be addressed by technocrats or scientists, erasing questions of power and ultimately justice. A so-called “post-political space” has emerged where issues are withdrawn from the public/democratic debate, as they should be addressed by “experts”. It feeds into false narratives of objectivity and neutrality, masking the ideology that underpins that status quo. For that reason alone, political education, which has always been a crucial corner stone in the development of strong and ambitious social movements, will need to get center stage in our educational work once again, if we want to sharpen the “strategic eye” of participants in our struggles. The strategic eye is capable of seeing beyond the limitations of short term thinking, depoliticized narratives and other limitations, to see the bigger picture: the roots of the problem, an ambitious vision and a road to take, with important station to stop by in between.

Increasing the capacity of our movements to build successful strategies means increasing our chances to win.

Opponents, defending the status quo, need to worry less about “internal democracy” and a “broad participation”, as long as they can keep enough of political legitimacy to keep their pillars of support in place. As power at the top is more concentrated, it is far easier for them to develop a long term grand strategy, than for the opposition, our organisations, which are often fighting the system in very dispersed order.

Winning meaningful victories might then also depend on our ability to transcend limitations of particular, rigid organizational strategies and to develop the necessary skills and attitude required to build a grand strategy, tying together the ends of the many different ways in which we engage in the work.

Curriculum

Module 1: enabling your team to develop a strategic mindset

As groups we are often not used to thinking in a strategic way. We grow up in a society which is often dominated by short term solutions, That's why it's important to invest some time looking beyond the next step or reacting to what is happening. Being strategic is to start with the end in mind and to build a credible pathway from "here" to "there".

Learning goals:

- (1) understanding the difference between strategy and tactics
- (2) increase ability to lead groups through strategic processes
- (3) ability to retroplan
- (4) ability to select tactics on a basis of their contribution to a chosen strategy

Teaching activities:

- Hot Seat
- Stepping Stones exercise
- Different energiser games used as a way to reflect on strategy. (e.g. giants, pixies, wizards)
- Three mystery tasks
- Critical Path
- Tactic Star
- Forum Theatre

Module 2: creating a strong common vision and theory of change

A good strategy requires a clear vision on what it is one seeks to accomplish (which might be translated into a campaign goal), as well as a clear assessment on how to get there.

Learning goals:

- (1) Expressing insights in different assumptions of how change happen, being able to express why you choose for one over another
- (2) ability to combine a language of critique with a language of hope/possibility when exploring social issues
- (3) develop your own toolkit to guide visioning processes

Teaching activities:

- Newspaper Headlines
- Discussing A Theory of Change
- Movement Action Plan (4 roles of social change)

Module 3: designing a leaderful campaign rooted in people power

In this module we explore how to use a set of strategic tools to plan a strong campaign, rooted in people power. As our movements want to build power to achieve systemic change, they need to increase their ability to plan strategically which steps to take from the exploration of a problem or injustice till the implementation of change.

People powered campaigns are rooted in a broad level of participation in different stages of a campaign, as well as in the empowerment of its participants. All too often organizations today only mobilize their constituents and don't build their capacity, thereby also negatively affecting the impact the campaign has. In a leaderful campaign mobilizing is complemented to an extensive degree by an organizing effort and attention to capacity building and leadership development.

This means that in this module traditional strategic planning tools such as "power mapping" and "tactic star" will be complemented with increasing participants' skills in involving an increasing number of people in the planning process. These topics will be addressed by exploring "social change roles", structures that allow for "blended decision making", ways to create a "ladder of participation" and navigating increased engagement through circles of engagement.

What distinguishes a leaderful campaign from other more traditional campaigning ultimately is the way it stresses meaningful participation and thus makes the campaign planning in itself an exercise in collaboration and democracy.

Learning goals:

- (1) develop your own toolkit with strategic planning tools that support groups to devise a collective campaign strategy
- (2) insight in how to engage the public in a campaign strategically, in ways that build power and increase level of participation.
- (3) ability to create a flexible campaign strategy

Teaching activities:

- Problem Tree
- Power Mapping
- Spectrum Of Allies
- Story Based Strategy
- Critical Path Analysis
- Tactic Star
- Movement Action Plan: 8 phases and four roles
- Participation Ladder
- Circles of Engagement
- Blended Decision Making

Recommended Reading

Books:

Boyd, A. (2012). *Beautiful Trouble. A Toolbox for Revolution*. New York/London: OR Books.
What is there not to love about this toolbox packed with strategic insights and creative ideas to boost your next action or campaign?! As it consists of very short chapters introducing ideas in the most concise way, you can use it as a menu card, quickly scanning the items in the table of content and stopping at whatever grabs your attention.

Coover, V et al. (1977). *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Engler, P & Engler. *This Is An Uprising*.

Ganz, M. (2009). *Why David Sometimes Wins. Leadership, Organization and Strategy in the California Farmer Worker Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press.

In the introductory chapter one (pages 3-22), Ganz uses the case study of the farm worker movement, led by Cesar Chavez, which he further analyzes in depth throughout the book, to introduce the concept of strategy and to offer insight in the essential building blocks of strategic capacity.

Lakey, G. (2018). *How We Win*. Brooklyn/London: Melville House Publishing.

If your group is invested in campaigning, you want to strengthen your strategic capacity and you have only time to read one book: this might be the one. Lakey

MacLeod, J. & Whelan, J. (2015). *The People Power Manual: Campaign Strategy*.

Subar, R. *When To Talk and When To Fight*.

Online articles and resources

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2019/04/otpor-campaign-manual-strategy-everyone-ivan-marovic/>

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/07/19th-amendment-womens-suffrage-movement-alice-paul-escalation/>

<https://commonslibrary.org/campaign-strategy-start-here/>

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Strategy - Sample Session Plan

THREE HOUR STRATEGY INTRODUCTION SESSION PLAN

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- participants are able to define strategy and explain the difference between strategy and tactics
- participants are able to assess the value of a tactic as part of any given strategy
- participants feel more comfortable to talk about strategy in relation to the work they do

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... 	n/a
Energiser: Hot seat + debrief with link to strategy	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants are seated. Chairs are spread around equally in the space. A facilitator explains that they/she/he (or a colleague) is going to try to sit on the one vacant chair. Goal of all participants is to prevent this by moving around and trying to occupy any seat the facilitator tries to sit on. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ rules of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ participants can run, the facilitator can only walk. ■ once a participants gets up, they need to move to another chair and they can't sit back down on the one they were just sitting. • After the first two rounds, take a break. Ask participants how it went and what was the strategy they used. Let a few participants speak up, then give them some time to discuss 	Chairs for participants

		<p>a strategy. Then have a few more runs of the game.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End with a short debrief: how did it work? What did you learn? 	
<p>Defining Strategy (+ Strategy vs Tactics)</p>	<p>30'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ask participants for their first associations with the word "strategy". Collect those on a sheet of paper ● ask some participants to describe the difference between strategy and tactics in their own words ● draw an image of a ladder or a staircase as a metaphor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the ladder/staircase is your strategy, a pathway towards your (campaign) goal ○ the steps/rungs are the tactics > the specific actions you take ● You can additionally share the quote from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" ● One helpful definition for strategy you can offer, is this one from Marshall Ganz: "strategy is about turning what you have into what you need to get what you want." 	<p>Flipcharts & markers</p>

		<p>“STRATEGY WITHOUT TACTICS IS THE SLOWEST ROAD TO SUCCESS</p> <p>TACTICS WITHOUT STRATEGY IS THE SOUND BEFORE DEFEAT”</p> <p>SUN TZU</p>	
Spectrum Line	25'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read out some scenario's • participants will take a position on the axis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ strategic/not strategic • Let participants suggest: 	n/a
BREAK	10'		
Action Gallery	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • step 1: invite participants to have a look at the pictures. • step 2: Introduce a scenario. Which of the previously chosen actions/tactics might be helpful at some point in the campaign? All chosen pictures should be put in a logical order by participants. If you would build a campaign: what would make sense to be done first? What 	Pictures of different actions, put up to the walls surrounding the workshop space or in a wide circle on the floor

		<p>in a next phase, etc? See if a consensus can be found in the group. Ask one participant to narrate the strategy of the campaign based on the sequence of action pictures.</p>	
Tactic Star exercise	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share the model and illustrate by filling in the tactic star for an action of your choice • invite participants to choose a picture from the previous exercise (action gallery) and to make a tactic star based on one of these exercises 	Flipcharts & markers
Closure & check out	10'		n/a

INTRODUCTION TO CREATING YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN STRATEGY SESSION PLAN

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- participants are able to define campaign demands based on a problem analysis

- participants are able to make a structural power analysis, mapping the strength of forces of support and resistance related to their demand
- participants

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction & Welcome	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share a few words of welcome ● Go-round where participants share their names and are invited to mention one particular campaign they've come across (or were involved in) that inspired them 	n/a
Big Wind Blows	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants sit on chairs in a circle. There is one chair too few. The facilitator (without a chair) stands in the middle of the circle and starts by explaining the rules of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ when you're without a chair you go to the middle and you make a statement starting with "the big wind blows for..." ○ You finish that statement by saying something which is true for yourself. ○ Everyone else for whom this is true needs to get up and find a new chair, but you are not allowed to occupy the seat next to you. ○ Whoever ends up without a chair, goes to the middle and shares the next statement ● "Now please use the statements to say something related to an experience you have had with campaigning yourself." 	

<p>Why have a campaign strategy?</p>	<p>15'</p>		
<p>Vision exercise: newspaper headline</p>	<p>20'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any good campaign needs an ambitious (though somewhat realistic) goal: a change you can only expect to see if you do the right things to build power for change. 	
<p>Power Mapping</p>	<p>45'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain how every good campaign strategy process starts with a power mapping. Draw the map as you explain: “There are two axes. The horizontal one describes the level of sympathy or support you can expect to get for your demand, from active opposition that might derail your campaign or even push for opposite goals on the one hand to very active support that will help you to implement the demand on the other hand. The second axis indicated the amount of power someone has. From very little actual power to very high levels of power. 	

BREAK			
Tactic Brainstorm	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look again at the way you want to move important actors on the power map. What course of action could you take to push for such a move? Have a brainstorm of different forms of tactics. You can either “freely” brainstorm or offer some inspiration, such as Gene Sharps list. 	
Tactic Star	30'	see above for description	
Closure & check out	10'	<p>The next time I'm running a campaign...</p> <p>... One thing I will do different</p> <p>One thing I want to leave behind</p> <p>One thing I want to try out</p>	n/a

ONGOING LEARNING

Introduction

David Kolb, an almost essential reference when discussing experiential education philosophy, said that “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”.

Understanding when and how learning happens is crucial for leaderful organizing practices because it enables and secures the long-term development and growth of individuals, groups as well as entire movements. In Kolb’s “experiential learning cycle”, a tool which is widely used, he argues that there are four essential stages of learning.

1. Concrete Experience, in which we experience something as a result of an action.
2. Reflective Observation of the New Experience, in which we create a meaningful gap and take time for curiosity and receptivity, we deepen our awareness of what had happened in the previous phase and reflect on the new experience.
3. Abstract Conceptualization, in which we analyse, question and conceptualise the reflection and apply our new understanding into new or modified ideas. Here is where the planning for a new action happens.
- Lastly, 4. Stage four is Active Experimentation, in which we apply our new idea(s) and concepts to the world around us to experiment and see what happens. The circle then continues and repeats.

Often, individuals, groups and movements can get stuck in the Action → Experience loop, where they do an action and then immediately plan and do another. This way they miss the other stages of the cycle, which are all crucial for effective action and avoiding burnout. There could also be a tendency to jump too far into analysis after the experience and miss learning that would arise if we allowed ourselves to spend more time in expansive reflection and eliciting questions: what actually happened? how do we feel about what happened? how are we now? etc. Lastly, if we get stuck in analysing the situation and reflecting and focus solely on those two phases, we might miss an opportunity of getting into action again. All these stages of learning can be facilitated by several tools that can help individuals and groups benefit from their experiences, thought processes and the opinions and comments of others.

In order to truly learn from experience we must make space for meaningful reflection and take our time to process, reflect and draw conclusions to implement them for the future. The learning in leaderful groups and movements can happen in many ways, by

- a) **enabling space for individual self-assessment and self-reflection,**
- b) **learning the art of giving and receiving feedback,**
- c) **nurturing a culture of collective debriefing that feeds into effective strategic planning processes and,**
- d) **connect to the wider movement and nurture mechanisms that ensure we are learning key lessons**

By structurally implementing these aspects into our individual and collective work we nurture a mindset oriented to learning and growth and build a culture of “mutual learning”.

Curriculum

Module 1: Self-assessment and self-reflection

This module focuses on the individual level. By taking the time to actively learn from experiences, that either just happened or happened in the past, we become more skilled in accentuating characteristics that benefit our contributions to the group / movement as well as our general well-being. We also identify our “dead angles” and behaviour patterns better. The various tools for self-reflection can either be just for the person assessing themselves, or it can be a group process, where we would communicate our findings to our peers and colleagues. By opening up to others about our processes and pathways we can increase the competencies that are crucial for leaderful spaces; empathy, communication, adaptability, accountability, emotional intelligence, and compassion. By being open to evaluating our own strengths and opportunities for growth regularly, we can establish a path of positive self-evaluation. Taking time to self-assess we take ownership over our work for growth.

Learning goals:

- Participants reflect on the key moments that led them to be a part of the group / movement
- Participants open up their self-assessment process to others in order to learn from each other through inquiry, asking questions and offering reflections
- Participants identify strengths or growing edges in their character, skill set and knowledge
- Participants are able to evaluate their behaviour or tendencies in specific situations
- Participants generate new ways to look at a challenge or question and develop new approaches for responding to the challenge or question

Session plan 1 - A two hour exploration exercise “Rivers”

Session plan 2 – A two hour peer-to-peer learning exercise “Action learning groups”

Session plan 3 - A three hour exploration of “Tendencies in groups: Teams and roles”

Session plan 4 – A half day experiential game “The “Workshop”

List of other recommended activities:

TA 1 – Evaluation forms for participants (fingers / pies)

TA 2 – Mind maps (Ulex)

TA 3 – Body exercises?)

Recommended reading

Module 2: Giving and receiving feedback

Some, or even most, people might be uncomfortable giving or receiving feedback, be it constructive or appreciative. So, groups often need to find ways of introducing structured feedback into their practices to make people more comfortable with it and to benefit from this vital learning process. By practising our openness to give and receive feedback we strengthen several skills that are crucial for forming stronger bonds with ourselves, our colleagues and the mission and vision of our group. When receiving feedback we practice self-critique, as well as self-appreciation, a sense of value in what we've accomplished, as well as humility. When giving it, we contribute to focusing the energy of our colleagues, helping them reach clarity and alignment. This aspect of leadership is especially true if the *culture of feedback* is engrained within the group, with practices put in place that enable people to get over the initial sensitivity towards giving or receiving feedback and embrace and own it in the long run, initiate it and ask for it themselves. The benefits of a feedback culture are multiple. We can continuously value contributions and recognise and celebrate our successes, big or small. We can prevent behaviours and processes that go off-track with the mission and vision of our group while reinforcing habits that have proven to be positive for it. We can learn to continuously be mindful of the actions we take as individuals and colleagues, strengthening the relationships in the group. We can address the issues we have on behaviours, content, ways of working and processes before they escalate. When we are used to regularly share feedback, we become more comfortable with having certain difficult conversations on topics important for our practices, which will prevent further conflict in the long run.

Learning goals:

- Participants learn and practice giving feedback to others
- Participants experience receiving feedback from peers
- Participants are able to identify the flow and structure of giving and receiving feedback
- Participants think of ways to incorporate feedback into their practices

Session plan 5 – A two hour practice of “Giving and receiving feedback”

Recommended reading

Module 3: Collective debriefing and learning

This model explores the continuous and dynamic process of learning in groups. While this type of learning can happen naturally at times, it also benefits from clear structures that enable it. Any type of action, campaign or other experiential activities will provide a lot of discussion points for the whole group. However, if the group debrief is done too late or is not facilitated

or structured properly, it may not be effective, and many opportunities for learning may be lost. The process of debriefing and strategic planning are crucial for groups and movements, because by practising it we become more in tune with our surroundings and the zeitgeist and, ultimately, we become more relevant to our communities and the ones we dedicate our work to. By taking time for processing, discussion and reviewing our experience we extract key learning points and enable our common strategy to evolve. Building a culture of “mutual learning” is a key aspect of leaderful groups.

Learning goals:

- Participants have dedicated time and space to reflect on actions and draw lessons learned
- Participants identify and address hot topics or discussion points
- Participants are able to document movement experiences and knowledge
- Participant can draw conclusions and identify preferred outcomes
- Participants set realistic short-term goals
- Participants perceive value of offering time to processing emotions, feelings, thoughts to enrich information to take a next step

Session plan 6 - A half day exploration of futures and next steps

Recommended reading:

<https://ulexproject.org/psr-training-manual-climate-justice-version/>

Module 4. - Strategic learning on the movement level

Apart from learning as a member of the group and in the group as a whole, we need to connect to the our wider movement and nurture mechanisms that ensure that they, and we as their integral parts, are learning key lessons. Political education or strategic education is a process of learning to build critical consciousness and awareness about issues and possibilities for change. Social movements are learning sites for all the people participating in them. Trainings and educational activities from the movement for the movement can share important knowledge for challenging dominant cultural codes and meaning systems, such as the history of social movements, the nature of capitalism and power, and the challenges and solutions to local or global social issues. It can enable activists to learn, rethink and gain skills in effective tactics and strategies that match their movements' current needs. They can also understand the opportunities and threats they are currently facing, so it can inform their future efforts. To be able to learn on the movement level we need to inquire deeply into how organisations and networks relate to the wider strategical aspects of their movements, and how these movements relate to wider struggles in the ever-changing cultural, socio-political and ecological context. It is not only about learning new skills and jumping from tactic to tactic, but rather, we can create systematized methods in which we step back, look at the big picture, and then turn that big picture into learnable and transmittable lessons that help others in our movement make strategic shifts in their work. This type of practices contribute to leaderfulness because it's essentially an investment in everyone obtaining some level of capacity to think and act like a “movement strategist.”

Learning goals:

- Participants will explore how different social engagement practices intersect with each other
- Participants will learn how to increase the collective impact of our work
- Participants will understand how to build campaigns, organisations and movements geared towards systemic change
- Participants will share with one another how to build alliances and transversal strategies and increase our collective impact
- Participants will explore how to create strategic approaches that are responsive, dynamic and systems intelligent

Session plan 7 - A half day “movement mapping” exercise

Recommended reading

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kNvZuAPEhiXNRIGykhPYAr9D12kpVoEO>

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Ongoing Learning - Sample Session Plans

A two hour exploration exercise “Rivers”

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- ability to reflect back on one's journey
- building community through the process of sharing your story

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Framing the session	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing an example of your story, by making a river drawing yourself	
Drawing the rivers	40'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	
Sharing the rivers	45'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•	

RESPONSIVE ACTION

(VUCA skillsets: complexity, systems, and social change)

Introduction: making our action matter in a complex world

The world is complex and ever-changing. In some ways, perhaps, with globalisation, information technologies, the increase in speed and volumes of communication through social media, it is getting more complex and volatile. The processes of social change are certainly complex and often unpredictable. Social action often leads to unintended consequences and our analysis of the causes and conditions of problems and their solutions is inevitably limited. If we want our action in the world to have impact, if we want it to contribute to significant structural transformation of society and ecological conditions, we'll need to be able to work and organise amidst change and complexity. This involves cultivating our personal capacity to face a world in constant flux and to endure the uncertainty that implies. We'll also need to develop specific skill sets and understanding to help us navigate such challenges and respond effectively, including ways to plan and act strategically in alignment with the interconnected, transient and complex nature of the world we share.

Linearity, Reductivism, and Mechanistic Mindsets

A lot of the socio-economic systems and structures we live within have been heavily shaped by the reductive and mechanistic paradigm that stood at the heart of scientific and technological development since the 'new science' of the 17th century until recent years. The mechanistic paradigm is now recognised as outdated within the scientific community, and yet its influence remains deeply inscribed in our socio-economic systems and in the mindsets of many of us. These ways of seeing the world encourage us to reduce problems to their simplest parts and to think in terms of linear, unidirectional, cause and effect. The classic image being the way a billiard ball strikes another, sending it off in a predictable direction. This approach can contribute to a belief that by reducing things to their simplest components we can develop strategies and approaches that can enable us to determine and control the outcomes of our actions. Along with these ways of thinking we find some core assumptions about the objective and universal nature of knowledge, and the prioritisation of the measurable and quantifiable ahead of qualitative and more subjective aspects of life.

This way of seeing the world has given rise to extraordinary advances in scientific understanding and technology. However, many things don't work like this. And the same mindsets have underpinned the conceits of human superiority and domination that has been at the heart of the anthropocentric, progress obsessed trajectory that leaves us colliding with non-negotiable ecological limits. Many things, especially living things, are far more complex, irreducible, and unpredictable than the mechanistic paradigm is able to explain or control.

Social change processes are far more like living organisms than the orbiting of planets. They are certainly not simple and reducible. So, if we bring expectations based on more mechanistic ways of thinking to our social change work we can become confused, disappointed, and, importantly, ineffective.

Imagine I want to kick an object through a doorway. Using a nicely spherical football on a flat and smooth floor, there's every reason to think that if, with a little care and minimal skill, I kick the ball along the floor it will roll in a fairly predictable way into the doorway. If I try the same thing with an irregular shaped stone on a floor of uneven flagstones and tufts of grass, it is going to be far more difficult to predict where the object I kick will end up, bouncing all over the place. Now let's add a little more complexity. (Animal welfare trigger warning) Imagine instead of a football or a stone, I try to kick a small dog towards the doorway. Now what happens? It runs the other way? Turns and bites me? Goes and bites someone else? Hides under a table?

This absurd scenario makes it very clear how utterly inappropriate it is to bring reductive and mechanistic ideas of cause and effect to bear on actions involving living systems, that have their own intentions and volitions. And societies and other people certainly fall into that kind of category.

Strategising and looking to influence change amidst the complexity of living systems and social transformation, using linear and reductive approaches, is sure to fail. Whether we are looking at large scale socio-political change or strategic shifts within our own organisations, expecting to be able to determine and control outcomes through simplistically conceived interventions, is sure to be frustrating. So, how can we better strategise and organise amidst complexity?



Different types of problems

It can be useful to recognise that there are different types of problems and that they require different kinds of approaches. Let's say that problems can be simple, complicated, or complex.

Simple problems (such as baking a cake) involve solutions that are relatively easy to do and can be addressed by re-creating proven conditions often by ourselves, with little risk of failure. Complicated problems (like building a rocket) are more difficult to solve. They can involve a lot of analysis, testing, and gathering expertise, often need to involve the right team with appropriate skills and expertise. These are difficult, but doable. Complex problems, however, don't have a 'right answer'. Raising a child, for example, is not something that we can know how to do in advance or simply by bringing together an expert team. However much prior knowledge and experience we bring to the situation, a great deal remains unknown and unpredictable. And the cause and effect is never linear or unidirectional, in the sense that parenting will be mutually conditioning, as the child develops, so does the parent

through the act of parenting. So, we need to take an approach that is iterative, responsive, and evolving over time.

With simple problems the solutions are known. For complicated problems the solution is knowable. But for complex problems the solutions are, in a sense, unknowable. As it has been said in the world of ecology: "It's not that ecosystems are more complex than you think they are, it is that ecosystems are more complex than you can think!"

Types of problems

Problems, Change, Learning, and Thinking

Types of Problems	SIMPLE LIKE BAKING A CAKE	COMPLICATED LIKE MAKING A ROCKET	COMPLEX LIKE RAISING A CHILD
	Easy to do. Re-creating the proven. Low Risk of Failure Can do it myself.	Difficult to do. Improving what works. Risks are many & managed The right team can do it.	Iterative, Ambiguous Risk not easily Managed The Village is needed. Relationships are key.
	KNOWN (Easy, I can do this)	KNOWABLE (Difficult but doable)	UNKNOWABLE (No "right" answer)

Adapted from Brenda Zimmerman

The recognition of the nature of complex systems suggests humility and a reevaluation of our assumptions about being able to control outcomes of complex processes. But it doesn't mean that we need to fall into complacency or negate all sense of agency. While a caregiver might not be able to determine the personality and character of a growing child, they can certainly exert an important and valuable contribution to a child's development. And in some ways, by letting go of the conceit or need to control, the outcomes are likely to be far more positive! Similarly, acknowledging the limits, nonlinear, and complexity in the relationship between our agency and social change, needn't lead to complacency or a sense of futility. In fact, by integrating such understanding our efforts can become far more effective. But to do so implies a significant shift in how we think and see the world, and the development of different skills and approaches. These are what we call VUCA Skillsets

What is VUCA?

The acronym was coined by military strategists in the 1980's 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 we face strategizing in the context of social transformation. 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

Just as these characteristics suggest specific challenges for military strategists, so too for those of us thinking about social change. Social change happens in a VUCA world and is itself highly complex and often unpredictable. So, how can we strategise? How can we evaluate the most useful pathways for action? We need to develop VUCA skills. This implies shifts in:

Knowledge - we need to explore learning from the study of complex living systems, ecology and systems thinking, to help us recognise the mindsets we carry and begin to replace them with more nuanced and useful ways of seeing.

Attitudes – facing complexity requires the emotional capacity to sit with uncertainty, greater preparedness to live with impermanence, more willingness to take and manage risks, as well as greater mental humility, and flexibility. It can involve being able to appropriately balance receptivity and patience to learn from experience with the passion and drive needed to test things out.

Skills and practices – we need to acquire new tools that can help us to think and plan strategically, develop responsive designs for action, and shift from expectations and cultures of control to collaboration. The three modules associated with this chapter each focus on these three areas.

Curriculum

Module 1: Understanding Complexity - Learning from Complex Living Systems

This module explores the paradigm shift from mechanistic to ecological and systems based ways of seeing the world – and how this has shaped our current socio-economic structures. We explore the historical background of the development of ecology and systems thinking and ask what this means for how we live and act in the world today – and the new kind of social relations it implies. We will explore the concept of ‘ecological literacy’ and the relationship between understanding and values.

Using embodied exercises and game-based activities, we will see how complexity and non-linearity are part of our everyday lives. The module touches on a wide range of relevant areas, including network theory, non-linearity, and chaos theory. It will use feedback mapping and models of natural processes (such as carbon cycles and climatic regulation) to understand the self-regulating processes of living systems. We’ll also explore some key areas such as the self-organising properties of living systems, the role of feedback and information flow, and principles of holistic understanding. All of these concepts and frameworks will be used to help us think more skilfully about social change and organisational dynamics.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to distinguish between linear/reductivist/mechanistic and non-linear/systemic/ecological ways of understanding change, causality and conditionality.
- Participants will have an increased ‘ecological literacy’.
- Participants will be introduced to key ideas of systems thinking, complexity theory and emergence.

- Participants will understand why these ideas and approaches are relevant to social movement and organisational development.

Example activity:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uFss9Qh4anYlvkCaKqjn0ozbOu5Q_bnH/edit

Module 2: Living in a World of Systems - Attitudes and Capabilities for Facing Complexity

Developing VUCA Skills involves a lot more than knowledge and tools. To become skilled at working amidst complexity and impermanence involves deep shifts in attitude and our emotional capacity. Uncertainty and change can give rise to a sense of insecurity. Complexity can feel overwhelming. We can often look for security through denial and unwillingness to face these dimensions of life. Often, we simply don't have the psycho-social resources we need to face them. But we can learn to cultivate greater emotional literacy and self-understanding that can help us to work with these experiences.

As well as exploring some of these more existential challenges, we'll also draw on the work of the late Donella Meadows, a pioneering systems thinker, to explore some of the key attitudes she recommends for living in a world of systems. Using a chapter from her *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* we'll inquire into the implications of her recommendations, captured in pithy mottos, such as: Go for the Good of the Whole; Get the Beat of the System; or Expose Your Mental Models to the Light of Day.

Learning goals

- Participants will become familiar with the challenges of shifting our own attitudes from more linear/reductivist/mechanistic ways of approaching the world and non-linear/systemic/ecological approaches.
- Participants will gain an overview of some of the key skills and attitudes needed to better navigate a VUCA reality.
- Participants will begin to explore the practical implications for applying key ideas of systems thinking, complexity theory and emergence to their work and lives.

Example activity:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OdJmCi5Hw46iMmrdsIFAUcD0WrdR258a/edit>

Module 3: Strategising Amidst Complexity - Tools and Methods for Enhancing a Strategic Approach

Traditional approaches to strategy can tend to be overly linear and based too much on cause-and-effect assumptions about how change happens. While we will usually find it

useful to start learning and mastering such approaches, it is also important to learn additional skills for strategise amidst complexity, interconnectedness, and a world in constant flux.

These include: Action-Reflection-Learning, Scenario Planning, and Systems Thinking Analysis tools. A complexity-responsive approach also requires us to think in terms of capacity building, feedback systems and creating enabling environments. Responsive strategizing includes asking the question posed by Paolo Freire: *What can we do now, so that we are able to do tomorrow what we are unable to do today?* To strategize effectively for socially transformative action, we need to develop the skills and understanding of the *strategy cycle* and combine these with the *VUCA Skillsets* derived from a deeper understanding of living systems. This module will cover each of these areas and explore how we can combine them effectively.

Learning goals

- Participants will be able to apply their learning concerning non-linear/systemic/ecological ways of understanding change, causality and conditionality to strategic analysis and planning.
- Participants will be able to use several key tools that integrate a VUCA view of social change and movements to strategic development.
- Participants will be better equipped to understand and apply the concepts of 'enabling conditions', capacity building and responsiveness to strategic planning.

Example activity: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LEQGPIYnVmaTLhpEf8S4UtfajSR4-qLw/edit>

Responsive Action - Sample Session Plans

Scenario Planning Activity (1,5 hour exploration)

Learning goals addressed in this session:

- Provides a tool for thinking about variable conditions and contexts relevant to strategic planning
- Enables us to better think strategically under changing and unpredictable circumstances
- Adds a practical method to the VUCA skillset and builds confidence that we can think and plan strategically, despite complexity and unpredictability.

Building block session	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Framing the session	10'	<p><i>"The gods laugh at the plans of humankind."</i></p> <p>Developing strategic plans can all too often feel like a waste of time, especially when circumstances are changing unpredictably. Unless we know what the future we will be carrying out our plans within, how can we ensure they are relevant?</p> <p>Strategic analysis should always start with some element of 'context analysis', but if we don't know what the context will be, what can we do? One tool that can help us to mitigate some of the risks and difficulties of developing a strategy in complex and changing circumstances is the Scenario Planning tool.</p> <p>Understood to have been developed by the Shell corporation, it was later adapted by one of the founders of permaculture, David Holmgren, in his book Future</p>	

		<p>Scenarios. The book offers an accessible and useful overview and application of the tool. But the basics are simple enough and can be outlined in just a few minutes.</p> <p>The tool uses a simple four-part grid with two axis. Each axis represents an important variable. By using the two variables on the two axis, four potential future scenarios are generated. Each scenario represents a different potential future context, to which strategic analysis and planning can be applied.</p> <p>Here's the example Holmgren used (bear in mind that when he was working on this the concept of 'peak oil' still had a lot of currency):</p>	
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Future Scenarios (David Holmgren)

	Rapid Peak Oil	Slow Peak Oil
Rapid Climate Change and Chaos	<p>LIFE BOAT SCENARIO</p> <p>Insufficient climatic stability for effective cultivation Breakdown of production and distribution Largescale disruption to food supply Small scale survivalist-type social groups</p>	<p>BROWN TECH</p> <p>Fossil fuel production maintained Strain on food production Elite groups fortify their position Increased militarisation Increasingly authoritarian and despotic social order</p>
Gradual Climate Change	<p>EARTH STEWARDSHIP</p> <p>Sufficient climatic stability for effective cultivation Relocalisation of production and economy Largescale disruption to industrial production Diverse localised social organisation</p>	<p>GREEN TECH</p> <p>Sufficient climatic stability for effective cultivation Globalised economy and production sustained for some time Time to build wider political will and implement energy transition Democratic institutions strengthened</p>

Homgren's variables are the rapidity of the onset of high impact climate change on one axis and the speed at which 'peak oil' is reached, leading to significant shortages of fossil fuel supply relative to demand.

Mapping these two variables gives him four scenarios, which he calls: 1. Green Tech; 2. Brown Tech; 3. Earth Stewardship, and 4. Lifeboat Scenario. These are each imagined and their characteristics considered. In this case, Holmgren saw permaculture as the most relevant strategic and preparatory response to the Earth

		<p>Stewardship scenario. But clearly other strategic approaches are needed in preparation for the others!</p> <p>Although Holmgren’s example is on a large global scale, we can use the same method to explore a wide range of variables and generate potential scenarios that will help us to envisage potentially relevant contexts within which we can usefully develop strategic analysis. Some examples I have seen used very usefully include:</p> <p>Example One</p> <p>Axis One: The far right win the next election – the opposition win the election.</p> <p>Axis Two: With a large majority – With a small majority.</p> <p>Example Two</p> <p>Axis One: Economic stagnation – economic decline.</p> <p>Axis Two: Austerity policies harden – Mild social distributive policies prevail.</p> <p>Example Three</p> <p>Axis One: Extreme weather impacts European population in 2024 – Minor extreme weather impact in Europe during 2024.</p> <p>Axis Two: Sabotage gains increased legitimacy in mainstream narratives – Sabotage remains marginal and seen as illegitimate.</p> <p>As you can see, we can use a wide range of variables, depending on which ones will importantly affect the contexts we want to be developing plans for.</p>	
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		<p>The key to effective scenario planning is to identify relevant variables and to take the time to really think through the implications of each scenario generated. It can be useful to apply an entire PESTLE analysis to each scenario (PESTLE = political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental)</p> <p>This is a challenging activity and demands substantial work and thought, but no-one said that being strategic in a complex world would be easy!</p> <p>Related material to support framing: https://www.futurescenarios.org/</p>	
Set-up	15'	<p>Describe the challenges of strategic thinking and planning in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world (VUCA).</p> <p>Outline the scenario planning tool with examples.</p>	
Small Group Work		<p>The activity is done in small working groups sharing interest in strategising on a common issue or topic.</p> <p>Step One: Participants identify a clear and relevant timeframe for their analysis.</p> <p>Step Two: They list a range of important variables that will impact their plans. They then choose TWO key variables. Often people want to include more variables, but the process needs to be broken down.</p> <p>Step Three: The variables are added to a flipchart sheet with the scenario planning grid drawn on it. They are encouraged to think about the relevant characteristics of each scenario (a PESTLE analysis could be usefully applied to each scenario). The characteristics are written in each box. Sometimes a name can be added to each context as a simple way of naming and discussing them.</p> <p>Step Four: They should think about the likelihood of these scenarios coming about.</p>	

		<p>More attention should be given to the most likely, but it is important not to neglect the others. Each scenario can be subjected to an analysis considering the opportunities and threats related to strategies they will develop.</p> <p>Step Five: The groups think about how these multiple context analyses could shape their plans. Are there strategic steps that can be taken that are able to prepare for each of them? Are distinct strategic plans needed for each or can an integrated approach be developed that enables preparation for the different possibilities or a degree of adaptability and responsiveness as conditions change?</p> <p>Step Six: The scenario analyses are integrated into next steps in strategic thinking and planning.</p>	
Debrief		<p>Ask each or some groups to share their work.</p> <p>Ask how they found the task? What did they notice? What were the challenges they faced? What insights arose and how will this impact their strategic planning?</p> <p>It can be useful to ask what sources of information or analysis they are using to develop these scenario analyses. Are there ways they can improve their access to relevant information and analysis?</p>	

More detailed activity plan for this session:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LEQGPIYnVmaTLhpEf8S4UtfajSR4-qLw/edit>

PSYCHOSOCIAL RESILIENCE AND REGENERATIVE ACTIVISM

Introduction: resourcing ourselves for the long haul

Anyone giving time and energy to working for socio-ecological transformation will be familiar with burnout and the need for resilience. The scale of the challenges we face, the way this work brings us up against suffering, and the seemingly incomplete nature of our victories, can all take their toll. As activists, many of us will either have our own personal experience of burnout or we'll be close to the experience of burnout in others.

In recent years the importance of developing regenerative approaches to activism, to enable us to develop effective and sustainable organisations and movements, has been increasingly recognised. The concept of *regenerative activism* is borrowed from the field of *regenerative agriculture*, which is counterposed to the damaging practices of *extractive agriculture*. Although sustainable agriculture aims to put an end to patterns of depletion and to create a stable relation between the inputs and outputs, when we consider the level of damage already done through centuries of extractive practice (deforestation, soil erosion, species extinction), it becomes clear that a sustainable approach just isn't enough. What is needed is a *regenerative* approach, that "goes beyond sustainability, to enable regeneration through processes that restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials" (Vosper, 2016).

If the social and cultural matrix is the soil our activism grows out of, today it has been severely depleted and damaged by several decades of neoliberal hegemony, underscored by the long history of oppressions including racism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Under these conditions, a merely sustainable activism isn't enough. Instead, we need to develop a *regenerative activism*, that, like its agricultural namesake, integrates practices that 'restore, renew or revitalize' our movements. This involves replacing behaviours and mindsets that reproduce extractive approaches with practices that deepen relationships in which we honour and support each other's potential and learn together how to foster cultures of care and solidarity. Regenerative activism creates the conditions that enable us to avoid burnout and to build the resilience we and our collaborators need for the long-haul processes of socially transformative work.

BURNOUT

Burnout damages people. It can have a significant, long-term impact on individual health and wellbeing. It also damages our collective efforts, reducing the capacity and strength of our organisations and groups. The associated cynicism and internal conflicts drain energy from our groups. The strains can lead to a loss of responsiveness and creativity. People drop out, groups collapse, and movements lose momentum and haemorrhage talent. Inter-generational wisdom is lost. These impacts cause personal and collective disempowerment. Clearly then, whilst deeply personal, burnout is not only a personal matter. Burnout is also a political issue.

Burnout presents activists and people working for socio-ecological transformation with significant ethical, strategic, and political challenges. These challenges lie at the heart of our work to build the personal and collective capacity to change the world for the better. Dealing with the causes and conditions that lead to burnout is not an add-on to our activist work. It's integral to it. It sits right at the heart of our ability to develop effective organisations, resource transformative work, and build collective power.

Healing and preventing burnout leads us to develop regenerative and resilience practices that are themselves a refusal of the extractivist, exploitative, profit driven system we work to transform. They contribute to a greater sense of coherence and authenticity within our activism, enabling us to more fully embody our values, restoring a sense of joy and meaning to our actions, and establishing new cultures of care and integrity. The activities associated with this module help us to understand the causes and conditions that lead to burnout and the changes in practice we can make to build resilience and regeneration into our work and lives.

ACTIVIST RESILIENCE

Resilience is a core social movement capability^[1]. Social change is complex and usually requires long periods of education, organising, and the building of community. Developing collective power to achieve deep transformation is often an intergenerational project, involving the gradual accumulation of knowledge, skills, and resources. This requires individuals, organisations, and movements that last. Given all of the obstacles and the challenges we face, resilience is an indispensable quality.

Learning from the natural world and mature ecosystems, we find that, at its most basic, resilience is the capacity of a system to bounce back from shock or to recover after difficulties or damage. It is a quality that encompasses robustness without rigidity, and in some cases the ability to adapt and learn. We can understand resilience as the capacity to absorb the stresses and pressures of a situation, enabling people (and ecosystems) to endure and survive under duress.

Activist resilience goes beyond this to strengthen our capacity to build and sustain *transformative power*. In this sense, it does include our ability to weather the stresses involved in our activism, but we do so in ways that strengthen our collective efforts towards social transformation and the creation of worlds in which we can thrive, rather than merely endure. Not only does resilience enable us to keep going, it also helps us build our capacity to influence change.

In their *Resilience Handbook: A Guide to Integrated Resilience Programming*, Action Aid presents a resilience framework incorporating the principle of transforming unequal power structures that keep people vulnerable to shocks and stresses. They name three capacities integral to their conception of resilience:

- **Absorptive capacity:** the ability to prevent, prepare for, or mitigate the effects of negative events, through coping mechanisms that focus on essential structures and functions

- **Adaptive capacity:** the ability to engage in longer term change - rather than simply responding to the immediate threats, this is the capacity to find longer term flexible responses
- **Transformative capacity:** the ability to push for institutional reforms, cultural changes and behavioural shifts, questioning values and assumptions.

Although the framework has been developed in a different field, it can be usefully integrated into a framework for activist resilience to emphasise the interplay of skills and conditions that can enable us to:

1. Endure and maintain stability under duress;
2. Build flexibility, learning and adaptation into our approaches; and
3. Build the power and collective agency to achieve structural changes in society.

Activist resilience depends on a complex of conditions that are both intrapersonal and interpersonal. The intra-personal includes the dimensions of our inner life, our psychology, our emotional experience, and so on. The inter-personal includes the wide range of relationships from friendships and family, through our colleagues and the cultures we work in, to the wider socio-economic factors that bear upon us. We don't think of resilience as a personal quality so much as something that arises in the interplay between people and their relationships, the inner and outer, or the individual and the collective. This is what we aim to point to with the term 'psychosocial resilience'.

We need to take a holistic and multidimensional approach to build resilience, because the health and vitality of individual activists, our groups and organisations, and our movements or networks are deeply interdependent and connected - just as in the ways that the health of individual organisms and species depend on their interaction in the shaping of a mature woodland. Individuals are affected by group culture and group culture shapes individuals, likewise in the reciprocal relationship between groups and movements or networks. Effective strategies for activist psychosocial resilience need to acknowledge the inseparability of inner and outer transformation. They need to attend to the quality of relationship and connection between and within these fields: the connections of people to themselves, of people to people in our groups and organisations, and the connections across our networks within the *ecology of social movements*.

Resilience emerges as a quality at the intersection of a range of the practices explored across this curriculum, including the intrapersonal skills of emotional literacy and self-awareness, the cultures of collaboration and care we create, and how our ways of seeing shape our action and relationships. It is this holistic understanding of activist resilience that underpins the structure of this module, incorporating learning activities that weave together intra- and inter- personal elements.

Curriculum

Module 1: Regenerative Activism

Regenerative activism is a dynamic and evolving cluster of practices and emergent culture. Just as healthy ecosystems aren't static (they grow, adapt, and respond), regenerative activism similarly implies developing the capacity of our movements to renew, evolve, adapt and keep learning. This involves transforming the dominant modern extractive systems that have been underpinned by a reductionist and mechanistic paradigm that breaks the world up into separate parts - dividing human from nature, labour from its fruits, head from heart, mind from matter, and people from each other. Regenerative activism, in contrast, is informed by the insights of interconnection, interplay, and mutual dependence. It incorporates an ecological way of seeing in which we recognise everything as woven into networks of reciprocity, each thing as embedded in context, and which understands phenomena in terms of relationships. This interconnected worldview is inherent to regenerative activism as an expression of our solidarity with life.

Learning goals: (3 to 5)

- Understanding a regenerative approach
- Understanding how we might reproduce extractive approaches
- Developing a systems based understanding

Session plans: see session plans and chapters here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/13lp8-P5AsuvYMxOfkCoaB30pMlby5xGj/view?usp=share_link

1. Burnout

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Burnout presents activists and people working for socio-ecological transformation with significant ethical, strategic, and political challenges. These challenges lie at the heart of our work to build the personal and collective capacity to change the world for the better. Dealing with the causes and conditions that lead to burnout is not an add-on to our activist work. It's integral to it. It sits right at the heart of our ability to develop effective organisations, resource transformative work, and build collective power.

Learning goals: (3 to 5)

- Understanding burnout
- Analysing the causes and conditions that contribute to burnout
- Identifying changes and building sustainability

Module 2: Psychosocial Resilience - A holistic approach

Activist resilience emphasise the interplay of skills and conditions that can enable us to: endure and maintain stability under duress; build flexibility, learning and adaptation into our approaches; and build the power and collective agency to achieve structural changes in society. We don't think of resilience as a personal quality so much as something that arises in the interplay between people and their relationships, the inner and outer, or the individual and the collective. This is what we aim to point to with the term 'psychosocial resilience'.

To develop activist resilience, we need to take a holistic and multidimensional approach, because the health and vitality of individual activists, our groups and organisations, and our movements or networks are deeply interdependent and connected. Individuals are affected by group culture and group culture shapes individuals, likewise in the reciprocal relationship between groups and movements or networks. Effective strategies for activist psychosocial resilience need to acknowledge the inseparability of inner and outer transformation. They need to attend to the quality of relationship and connection between and within these fields: the connections of people to themselves, of people to people in our groups and organisations, and the connections across our networks within the *ecology of social movements*.

Learning goals: (3 to 5)

- The three dimensions of resilience
- Taking a psychosocial approach
- Applying a holistic analysis and strategies

[\[1\]](#) We refer to 5 core capabilities effective social movements need: Narrative, disruptive, institutional, resilience, and prefigurative. see Ecology of Social Movements module for more.

Psychosocial Resilience and Regenerative Activism - Sample Session Plan

SESSION NAME: EXPLORING BURN-OUT

Learning Goals:

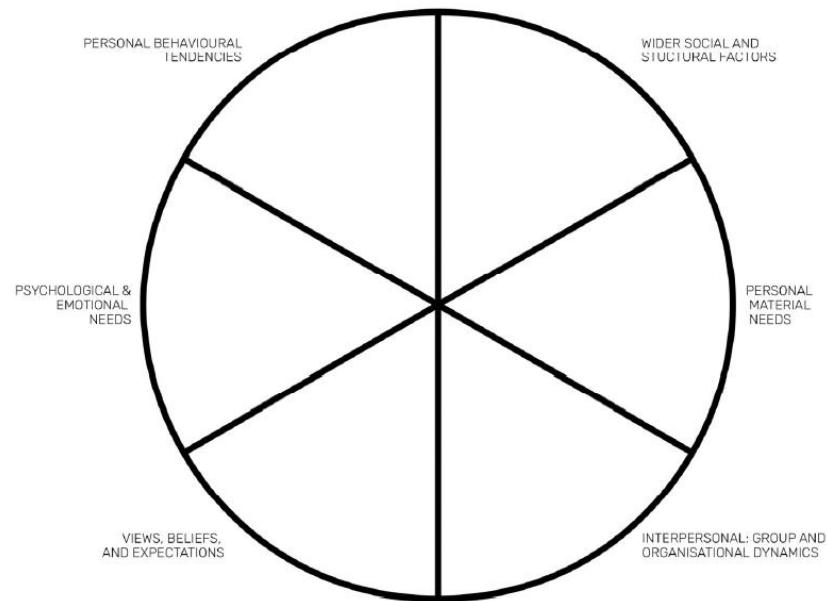
- Deepening understanding of burnout, and its causes and conditions
- Building confidence and self belief around capacities to work with burnout
- Moving us towards informed intervention and strategy
- Group building, deepening understanding, connection and solidarity

See pages 120-123 of [this manual](#) for a more expansive description.

Building block session Name of the activity	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Setting up the activity	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start off by ensuring there is a shared understanding of the term 'burnout' to enable them to do the activity (as above). Then give them the instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We will be trying to understand and identify what causes and conditions can contribute to burnout, with a more general/collective focus ○ There are a wide range of factors which can produce susceptibility to burnout. It is rarely simply a matter of uni-linear cause and effect. More often than not a number of different kinds of conditions act in combination to give rise to burnout. ○ The shift from causal to conditional thinking 	

is important, as we begin to recognise the range of both personal and environmental conditions.

- We will use the format of the burnout wheel to help us explore some of these conditions, something like this:



Instruct participants:

“You will fill in the wheel and its segments with examples of things under each heading that might contribute to burnout, for example: in the segment ‘Personal Behaviours’ you might write “not enough sleep”, or in ‘Personal Material Needs’ you might write “housing insecurity”, or in ‘Social and Environmental Factors’ you might write “rising power of the far right”, and so on.”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get into groups of 4-6, copy the wheel onto one flipchart page per group. Then brainstorm, discuss and write down examples of these contributing factors, for every segment. You'll have X time. • Answer any clarifying questions, give them their timings, and then send them off.. 	
Group Work	40'	Keep an eye on the groups, move between them, see if they need any help. Give them a "half way" and a "five minutes left".	
Debrief in full group	15'	<p>Give some time for people to move around and look at the other groups' work.</p> <p>-Then bring everyone together and have some time for reflections, experiences and, especially: how are people now? what are they left with? how are they feeling?</p> <p>Give this time and hold it with care - it is not good for people to feel 'dropped' at the end of an activity like this.</p>	

For additional session plans and chapters, see here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/13lp8-P5AsuvYmXOfkCoaB30pMlby5xGj/view?usp=share_link

COMMUNICATION

Introduction: the craft of real connection

“Communication is at the heart of any organization,” as Starhawk points out. As soon as you want to do something with anyone besides yourself, you have to communicate in one way or another. Whether it is to share a plan of action, to ask for feedback, to request or offer help or even to set boundaries: as soon as you are joined by one more person, you are required to communicate. And when small groups are confronted with ‘small’ (but the scale does not necessarily make it less painful) communication challenges, much larger organizations or movements have to face even much more complicated communication challenges.

However, although at times you might feel tempted to just do it by yourself then, lone wolves seldom get far. As Abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba reminds us: “everything worthwhile is done with other people”, which means we don’t have the luxury not to invest in our capacity to communicate ever more skillfully.

Communication is by no means a skill that is unique to human beings. Wherever you look in nature, you will find communication to be omnipresent. Take birds for example, they have an elaborate communication system to show their intent, share information or warn other members of their species. Birds have both songs and calls, which serve distinct functions. When a birds sing, they call out to other birds, with an interest in reproduction. Their calls on the other hand, which are less complex and shorter, are used to make contact for other purposes, such as when there is danger or to support collective navigation when in flight. It is crucial for birds to have a shared code in order to be able to communicate. It is no less crucial for us as human beings to think about the code in which we want to communicate. It doesn’t matter how far technology has involved, a good medium or communication channel will only help us to a certain degree.

The absence of clear and open communication is at the basis of so many misunderstandings and conflicts that plague our organizations. Communication issues can either be a consequence of the lack of supportive structures and practices on an organization level, it can be the consequence of an internal culture characterized by distrust and competition or it can have to do with a lack of the individual qualities that make good communicators (such as the ability to be fully present, to be vulnerable, etc.). If all of the above are applicable, you’re especially in trouble. Being intentional about the culture your create and the structures you put in place, is a good start to get things back on track. In a supportive environments, people will grow faster and further.

Curriculum

Module 1: practicing deep listening

So much of the communication we have on a daily basis remains at best at the surface. We are afraid to both show ourselves or see the others for who we really are, we lack the time to go into that space or we just never were encouraged to learn how to do so. Leaderful organizing requires honesty and vulnerability to do both, showing up fully ourselves and really hearing the other.

Deep listening takes practice and... Time! In a rushed conversation most participants won't feel heard. On an organizational level, making sure agenda's are not overloaded, will create space for real conversations. Deep listening is also a skill that increases your ability to receive feedback (see our chapters on [transformative collaboration](#) and [ongoing learning](#) for more). For people in (in)formal leadership positions in organizations, it's all the more important to embrace deep listening as a practice. With great power comes great responsibilities. Especially in more hierarchical structures it takes courage to have honest conversations with your leaders. Acknowledging this by being fully present, showing vulnerability yourself and listen from the heart won't only lower the threshold for open communication, it will also increase your effectiveness as a leader.

There are many sets of practices and frameworks that pave the way to deep listening. Here are a few favorites:

- mindfulness: mindfulness supports us to be fully present. We pay attention to whatever is happening within us and around us. It is in itself a way of deep listening, which uses more than just the ears
- Non-Violent Communication (Rosenberg)
- Exercises and frameworks from The Work That Reconnects (Joanna Macy)
- Transformative Justice based approaches (see writers and practitioners such as adrienne maree brown, Mia Mingus, Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)

In training sessions some of the ways we can include formats that support deep listening:

- check-in formats that are spacious enough in time
- paired exercises
- action learning groups with a clear format, where a case giver is encouraged to share and other

- exercises on asking elicitive questions (such as “how did you feel when...” or “what exactly happened?”, questions that encourage to do what George Lakey calls “peeling the onion layer by layer” and which are drawing out deeper insights rather than steering the conversation or resorting to advice. Using those questions, you actually do more than just deep listening, as you truly support your conversation partner to dive deeper and to further explore a story or experience.
- ...

Module 2: structures & tools for inclusive and transparent communication

Deep listening is first and foremost a personal practice that individuals can adopt with purpose and through practice. On the organizational level there are many ways to intentionally improve lines of communication. It is important to note that we here focus on “internal communication”, meaning all communication that takes place within an organization, be it between staff members; between board members; between a staff member and a board members; between volunteers and paid staff; between members of two different working groups; during formal or informal meetings, etc. That being said, some of the tools and many practices that help us to communicate better at the level of an organization can also be beneficial between organizations, for instance when doing coalition work.

A good starting place is often making an assessment of the current state of communication within your organization, with attention to the strengths and weaknesses. How is communication flowing as it is? Who is communicating? And to whom? What is the purpose of communication? What are the used channels of communication and what is the frequency? Which feedback loops are involved? You can compile both factual information (how does it work?), as well as appreciation (how does it feel?) as communication is being assessed.

Please note:

- Communication is more than just a monologue or “sending information”. Informing someone is the very lowest rung on the ladder of communication and if you want to be inclusive, you can’t afford to stay on that rung. Communication is at least a two ways thing and often it is multi directional.
- Paulo Freire wrote that a real dialogue can’t take place if there is not some kind of balance of power between two parties in a conversation. Whenever that happens a dialogue is more likely a monologue. Do you agree? And if so, how does this affect communication within and outside of your organization?
- You cannot not communicate. When you aren’t communication, that is equally telling something. (Just as you cannot not decide, not taking a decision is taking the decision not to do something.) E.g.: if some communication on why a decision has been made is not

shared, whether intentionally or unintentionally this will send a message to those who inquire. Of course, it might not be the right thing to do to share everything with everyone, but clarity on what you will or won't share and why can also be communicated.

Practices like regular check-in's help building a context where people can share more openly. Doing container building exercises or setting up brave/courageous space framework are others ways to open a space for deeper sharing. Investing in an awareness of mainstream and margins in your group, as well as being able to hold conversations about those without judgment is really important as well. All these practices mostly enable a supportive culture for more inclusive communication.

However, another level needs attention as well: a structure that is clear, transparent and intentional about communication in your organization. The DARCI model (see our toolkit) is a useful tool, both in terms of clarifying roles & responsibilities, decision making and accountability but also to be transparent who to communicate with and what the purpose of this communication should be. DARCI stands for "Decision Maker", "Accountable", "Responsible", "Consulted and "Informed".

Return to the [table of contents](#) to explore more topics related to leaderful organizing competency areas or check sample session plans for this chapter on the next few pages.

Communication - Sample Session Plan

SESSION NAME: FACILITATION TOOLS FOR MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

Learning Goals:

(Struggling to decide on the right learning goals for your session? Find inspiration in our trainer’s manual on pages 30-33)

(1) participants are able to notice when communication is not flowing

(2) participants take home a range of tools to encourage and equalize participation

Building block session Name of the activity	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material
Introduction to the topic	5'		
Space Walk + Mingle	25'	<p>(1) Space Walk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● invite participants to walk in the space. Challenge them to be aware of their surroundings. Give further instructions: “Try to tune in with the pace of the group. Can you find the right pace for you as a group? Can you move at equal speed without anyone taking a clear lead?” ● “Do you think you’ve got this as a group? Now we’ll increase the challenge. Try to stop together as a group with as little time between the first and the last person stopping. Then try 	

		<p>to feel when is the right time to start walking again, again trying to figure this out by tuning into the group, without actually talking.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Now we’ll add one last challenge. Try to jump and land at the exact same time as a group!” <p>(2) Mingle (tip: use music during this exercise and indicate that people should stop and meet someone as the music stops and start walking again when the music gets going again.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participants walk in the space, then stop and meet a first person. Instruct participants: “now talk with each other about the following question: <i>what is the biggest frustration you have with communication in your current group?</i> You will have five minutes, so try to be conscious about time and switch after a few minutes.” ● Question for mingle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you need to feel like your voice counts? ○ What is your natural reaction if you feel there is no space for you to be heard? 	
Conversation on your feet	25'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask a participant to share about communication in the group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ phase 1: needs ○ phase 2: appreciation ○ phase 3: challenges/issues ● For each phase participants are invited to make statements reflecting what is true for them. They walk away from the pack and then make the statement. Everyone who feels drawn to what has just been shared, joins the person 	

		<p>who spoke by standing behind them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you feel something else you will position yourself in a different spot in the room. Participants can only speak when the facilitator comes and stands next to them. 	
Maximize/Minimize	20'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “reflecting back on the past exercise, what insights arise on what is helpful or hurtful when trying to create an inclusive communication culture?” We are trying to map both obstacles (minimize) and best practices (maximize) 	Flip chart paper with two columns (maximize and minimize)
BREAK			
Exploring Tools (I) - inviting more group participation (taking into account different styles learning/participating/...)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present a number of tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ journaling ○ paired sharing ○ 1 - 2 - 4 - 8 ○ Dot Voting ○ Using hand signals ● Resources for additional tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://seedsforchange.org.uk/tools 	
Exploring Tools (II) - equalizing participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consciousness is a often a condition for change, so monitoring and sharing who speaks how much (based on gender) can be a good first step <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ app: https://www.lookwhostalking.se/ ○ or you can do it the “old school way” by tracking with drawing lines yourself (then you count number of interventions rather than duration) ● match sticks: each gets a limited amount, you 	

		need to return one each time you speak	
Next steps & Closure	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify two quick wins that are relatively easy changes to implement and one long term goal related to improving communication to make it more inclusive • share of one of three intentions with the group and share how you leave this space 	

BUILD YOUR OWN SESSION (BLANK TEMPLATES)

SESSION NAME:

Learning Goals:

(Struggling to decide on the right learning goals for your session? Find inspiration in our trainer's manual on pages 30-33)

(1)

(2)

(3)

Building block session Name of the activity	Timing	Description + facilitation suggestions	Material

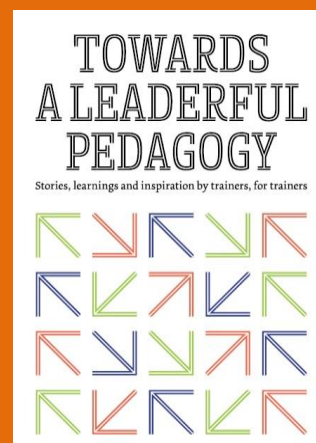
Link to online template that you can copy and adjust to your own needs: [Leaderful Organizing - Template for creating your own training session](#)

Want to dive deeper? Also explore our other resources on leaderful organizing!



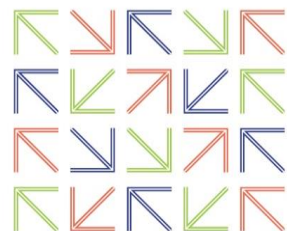
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