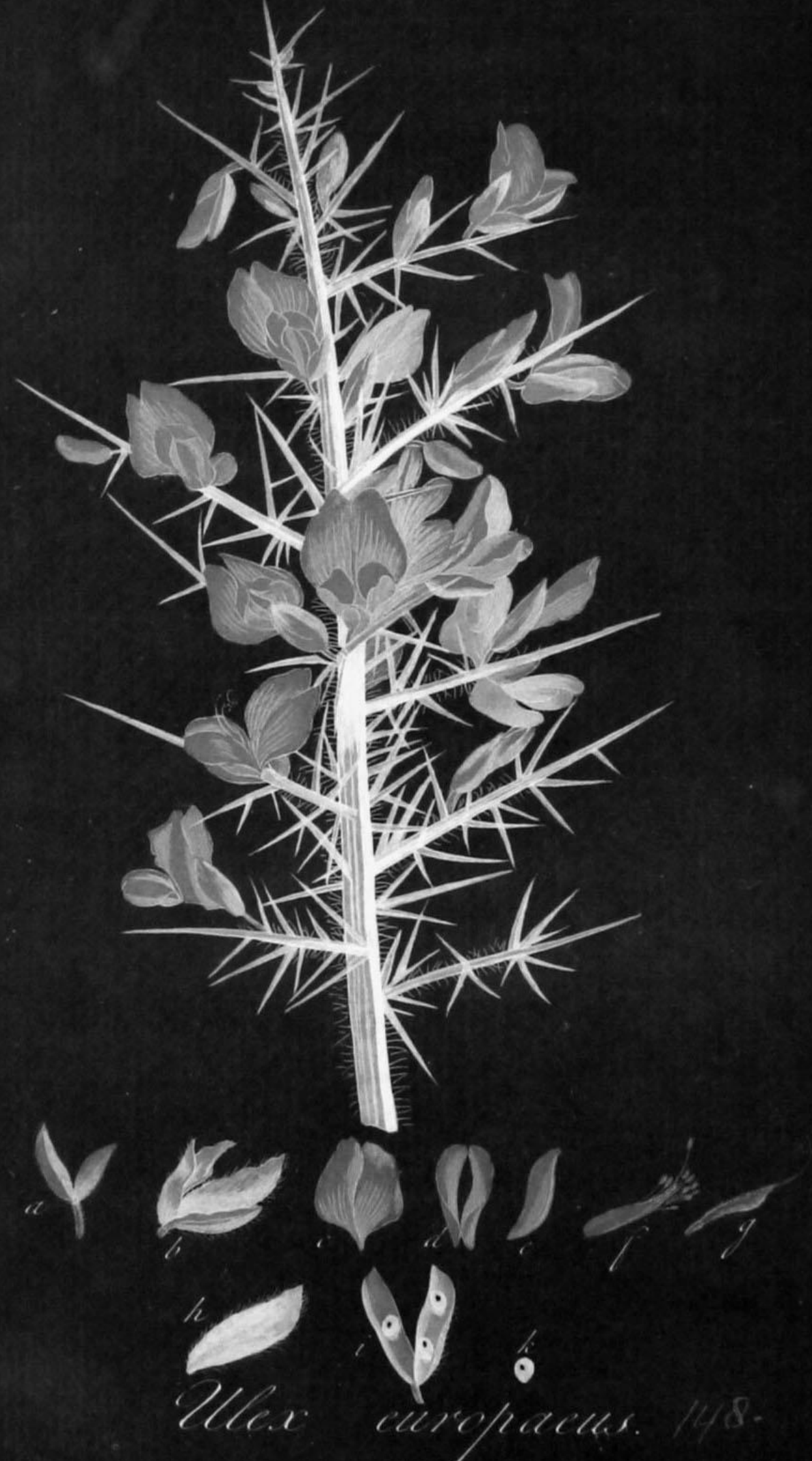


u1ex IMPACT REPORT 2017-20

ulexproject.org





INTRO: A FEW WORDS ABOUT ULEX

The Ulex Project runs an activist training programme building connections and capacity across European social movements

WHY US? WHY NOW?

The Ulex Project came to life with our first programme of residential training in the autumn of 2017. We sensed that the next few years would involve an important struggle to find effective responses to the challenges and opportunities opening up amidst the global crisis of neoliberalism and the increasing urgency of the climate crisis. It was clear that renewed power needed to be built within our movements to win the contest for our future arising out of those interrelated crises. Ulex is positioned within this historic struggle for social justice and ecological integrity.

From our activist training work during the preceding years, we knew the enormous potential within progressive movements, but also that we and our movements had much to learn. Despite the urgency of the moment, we saw that building progressive movements capable of nurturing the radical transformations this historical moment calls for would need sustained and long-term capacity building. So, we set out to develop an organisation that could serve that need. And through the help and creativity of many people we've been able to take significant steps on that journey.

A CONTAINER FOR ONGOING MOVEMENT LEARNING

Our aim has been to support European social movements to increase their impact and resilience. We want to create a space for movement learning, where skills, critical and strategic thinking, and relationships of solidarity and collaboration can grow.

Supporting the emergence of a social movement wave, capable of generating a majority movement capable of driving radical transformation, involves working with diverse movements. While important change is achieved by single issue movements, we also think our times call for a transversal approach that not only strengthens distinct and focused movements, but that also contributes to building relationships across them. To combat the interlocking systems of oppression we face, we need interlocking movements of resistance synergising diverse demands that can contribute to deep structural transformation.

Ulex is not a place to come for the answers. More importantly for learning to work amidst the complexity of social change, it is a place to learn how to ask the right questions! Of course, our trainings are full of ideas to deepen social movement learning, providing practical tools alongside theoretical frameworks. But primarily, they are about strengthening our critical and creative capacity. They are about building the relationships and practices that can help us to keep learning as we act. In essence Ulex is a growing community of action-learning practice – designed to help our movements to be responsive and adaptable, and inform our struggles for radical transformation. As Antonio Machado put it, *'we make the path by walking'*.

OUR PROGRAMME

We've spent four years designing and delivering a rich programme of activist training, with a strong emphasis on depth of reflection and the importance of learning from each other's struggles.

Our programme has been designed out of in-depth needs assessments with numerous partners and advisors, around a framework for understanding social movement capabilities. To understand what makes movements more or less effective, we've found it useful to work with a framework that emphasises five key capabilities:

KEY SOCIAL MOVEMENT CAPABILITIES

NARRATIVE CAPACITY – how we tell the story of how we got here and where we want to go

DISRUPTIVE CAPACITY – how we disrupt and resist the damage being done under the guise of business as usual

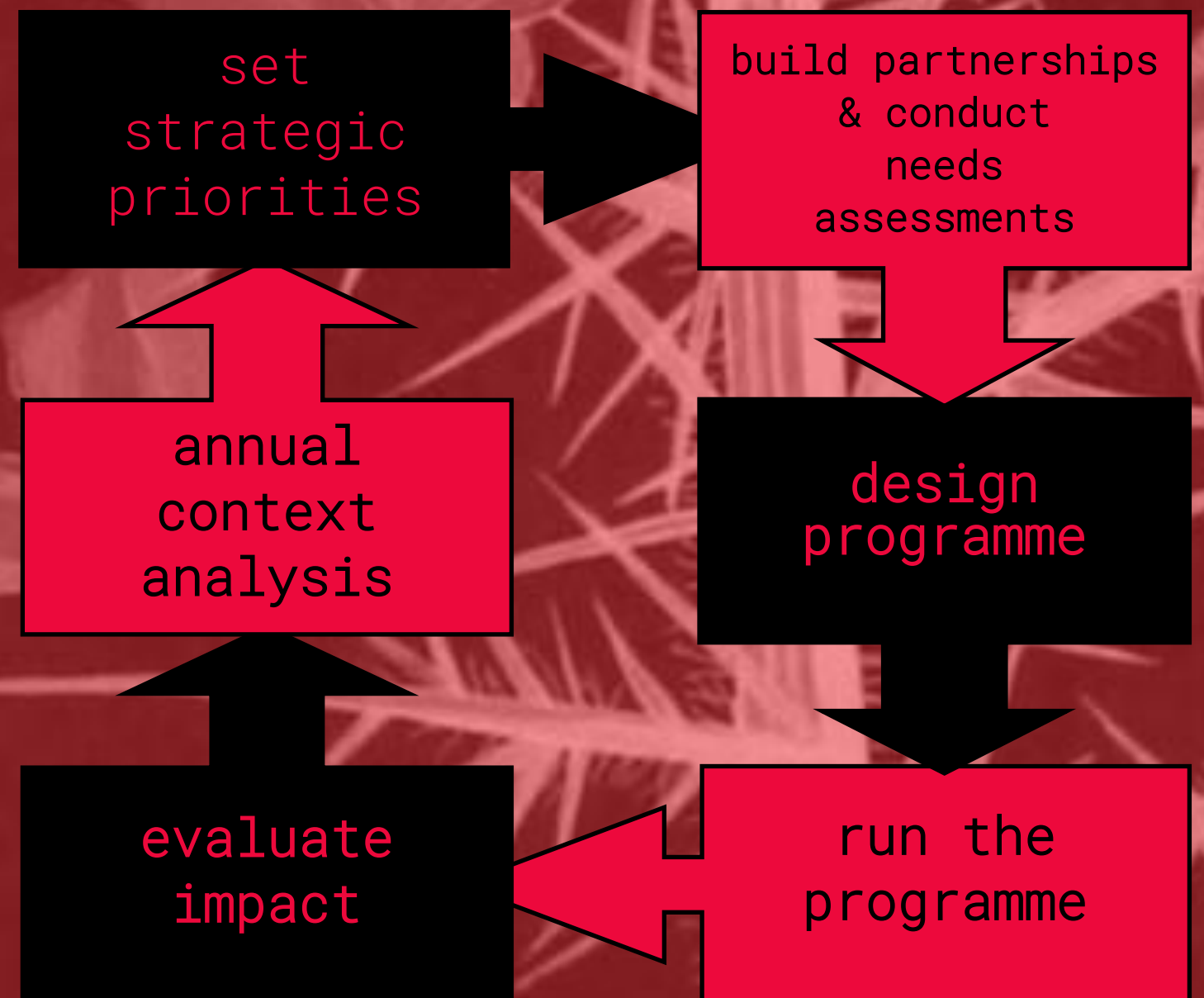
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY – the channels and relays needed to transform narrative and disruption into institutional transformation

RESILIENCE – the ability to weather the difficulties, to keep going, and to stay creative

PREFIGURATIVE CAPACITY – how we embody our values and vision in the ways we organise and build alternatives.

We use this framework to design a programme, build collaborations, and draw on skills and experience across our network to support capacity building across these dimensions of movement practice.

we put a strong emphasis on the need for deep reflection and learning from each other's struggles



THE NETWORK

Underpinning all of our capacity building work lies the crucial task of building and strengthening relationships – within groups, between organisations, and across movements.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND THE ECOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Many of us ask, ‘How can we meet the enormous challenges our societies are facing?’ There is one foundational answer: ‘Together’.

The Italian sociologist Mario Diani, offers a synthesis of various definitions of what a social movement is, suggesting that a social movement is “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity.” While this captures most of the features of this complex social phenomenon, the idea of a ‘shared collective identity’ runs the risk of obscuring the diversity and difference that exists within our movements – and certainly in any formation that might be called a ‘movement of movements’.

Rather than thinking in terms of a ‘collective identity’, we work with the idea of an **ecology of social movements**. As any of us involved in movement work know, they contain multitudes. Within their field coexist a plurality of approaches, analysis, and strategy. We often find seemingly contradictory demands, competing political cultures, and diverse roles. But rather than aiming to reduce these to a collective identity, we think it is more useful to think about the quality of the relationships between these different actors and struggles. How can we find synergising power between them? How can we ensure that creative tensions replace entrenched conflict? How can we build movements that can exist with the contradictions and antagonisms that are inherent in the necessarily partial and provisional nature of the positions we inevitably take up?

With this in mind, we’ve intentionally worked with diverse groups, often bringing together movement actors and organisations who don’t often have opportunities to connect deeply: grassroots organisers with paid NGO staff, people building alternatives outside the system with others seeking to create alternatives within and through existing institutions, thinkers and doers, lovers and warriors. In this way we aim to intentionally enrich our shared understanding and to challenge the often-settled positions we can take as activists.



As in any ecosystem, diversity is a key to resilience, adaptability, and creativity – essential qualities for responding to the complex and ever-changing conditions we struggle within. Creating spaces where diverse movement actors can meet face-to-face and reflect deeply together, can help us all to recognise the partial and provisional nature of our positions, to learn to embrace the complexity of social change practice, and to develop skills that are crucial to the ambition of building diverse majority movements for deep transformation!

AN EXPANDING CIRCLE OF CONNECTIONS

The way we value diversity within our movements can be seen in the kinds of partnerships we’ve built over the last few years. We’ve built collaborative relationships with movement actors working across a range of key issues, including climate change, anti-racism, gender rights, migration, feminism, housing and land, and anti-capitalism. This has involved grassroots groups and networks, international NGOs, and community organisations, for whom we’ve developed programmes of training and strategic development.

These kinds of partnerships have also informed the expansion of our trainers’ network. We aim to foster increased provision of high-quality activist education across Europe. Which certainly doesn’t mean taking it on to do this by ourselves! Rather it is about building collaborative relationships with other trainers and collectives where we can all learn from each other and enhance each other’s work. To realise this we’ve invited trainers to work with us within training teams.





OUR PARTNERS

Relationships sit at the heart of our work and we take a broad and strategic view for social change, aiming to extend the impact of our work with people working at all levels: from bigger NGOs and trade unions, to smaller organisations and grassroots collectives. We seek out new partnerships and are passionate about the work we do in supporting a broad network of organisations and groups to build capacity and connections, reflect about their strategic needs for development, and design and deliver tailored training to meet those needs. Our network includes committed individuals pushing for change, as well as civil society organisations and social movements actively imagining and demanding progressive alternatives. These are some of the people we've been working with:

Arbied Millieu
 Trans Balkan and Solidarno
 Reset.Vlaanderen (A&M)
 European Youth For Action
 Gluaiseacht (Slí Eile)
 Genova Che Osa
 Climate Justice Programme
 Rinascimento Green
 RADIX Consortium
 Stroomversnellers
 Aseed
 Activist Training Centre
 ZAD
 Reset Cz
 ParamitaLab
 Nordic Climate Justice Programme
 MOOS
 GEN Estonia
 Wandelwerk
 the living commons
 FOE Malta
 Fundacja Herstory
 AgroPermaLab
 ATTAC
 Kontrapunkt
 LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans & Turkey (ERA)
 GLOBAL 2000
 Klima Kollektiv
 Milleudefensie
 Narativ
 Climaximo

Act 4 Change
 Legebitra
 Ideen3
 Accept
 Civil Collegium Foundation
 KolektIRV (TMB)
 LDI Italy
 Steps
 Reboot the Roots
 PIRC
 Tripod
 Transformative Education
 Streetgäris Sweden
 NOAH
 Anti-discrimination Education Society (TEA)
 Siddetsizlikmerkezi
 Transgender Equality Network Ireland
 Zelena Akcija Croatia
 Védegylet
 Centre for Ecological Learning Luxembourg
 Trans*Parent
 Transition Germany
 Global Village Greece
 Comlach
 SPINA
 Campaign Against Homophobia
 FOE Scotland UK
 Commonweal UK
 Moving Sounds
 International Tibet Network
 Gracia Feminist Group
 Architects Workers Coop
 Solidarity Uganda
 Climate Action Buddies
 Circle of Life
 Liverpool Community Renewables
 Co-Resist
 Landworkers Alliance
 LABO VWZ
 European Community Organising Network
 Young Friends of the Earth Europe
 Guerrilla Foundation
 Transgender Europe (TGEU)
 Rosa Luxembourg Foundation
 Community Action Training (CAT)
 Sapling, o.z.
 Centrum Klinika
 Women's Fund Georgia
 Seeds for Change
 Transition Bristol

Transition Brixton
 Co-Exist CIC
 Cooperativa Integral
 NEON
 La Bolina
 Tactical Tech
 The Eroles Project
 Conscious Collaboration
 Kommunikations Kollektiv
 European Alternatives
 University of Ireland, Maynooth
 GAIA education
 Ecolise
 Global Ecovillage Network
 Institute for Global Integral Competence
 CHEDACH
 International Permaculture Educators Network
 Romania in Tranzitie
 FemFund
 Insight Ukraine
 Transvanilla
 Hatter Society
 Aleanca lgbt
 Trans Aid
 Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex rights (RFSL)
 FOE Cyprus



THE STUFF WE'VE BEEN DOING:

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

- 78** courses run
- 3816** hours of residential sessions
- 235** hours of online/offsite training
- 1931** activists trained
- 51** countries involved
- 110** partner organisations
- 43** trainers we've worked with
- 770** members in our online forum
- 51077** visits to website
- 11** core team members
- 90%+** of participants said it was 'lifechanging', 'excellent', 'very good', or something like that!

PROJECTS & ACHIEVEMENTS 2017-20

A few of the things we're proud to have done.

The Journey Begins

In the spring of 2017, over a period of 40 days, 256 supporters from across 10 countries helped launch the Ulex Centre, raising the necessary funds to renovate the new centre, and get the project off the ground. Building work took place through the summer and by the autumn, with all the basic infrastructure in place and a new onsite team, we were welcoming participants to our first courses in Regenerative Activism and Transformative Collaboration.

Throughout 2018 we ran back-to-back training, with all courses full or oversubscribed. Working in partnership with activist educators and social movement organisers across Europe we designed several completely new trainings, including the Ecology of Social Movements. This strand of work brought people from different social movements together to deep-dive into the dynamics of social movements, exploring theories of change, ideas and strategies which animate activists to respond and succeed. We also launched Thinking Diversity Radically, which examined the subtleties and challenges of anti-oppression work, and Organisations Revisioned, which drew on systems thinking and notions of agile organising to maximise impact across social change organisations. Within six months we were involved in active strategic partnerships with dozens of social movement organisations across 18 countries, and by the end of the first year had supported learning and sharing with over 300 activists across Europe.



Capacity Building for Trans* Activists

Partnerships are core to the Ulex Project's programme and from the onset we have sought to work with a wide range of pan-European civil society organisations across a variety of movement themes, contexts and struggles. We place great emphasis on designing courses which equip people with the tools necessary to engage and make impact, to sustain themselves for the long haul, and to build networks for greater resilience. In 2017 we worked with Transgender Europe (TGEU) to design and deliver a Sustainable Activism programme for trans* activists across Europe, sharing tools and practices to create supportive organisational cultures and avoid burn-out. Growing out of this work we have continued to develop partnerships with trans* advocacy organisations in Ireland, the Czech Republic and Sweden, and broaden our trainer pool of trans* facilitators, includ-



ing trainers from the Building Allies network, to run tailored courses which add strength and capacity to trans* organisations and allies.

International Gathering of Activist Educators

In 2019 the Ulex Project held our first International Gathering of Activist Educators, welcoming 20 activist educators from around the world to meet and learn together. The gathering was initiated in partnership with activist educators Holly Hammond (Plan to Win, Australia) and Andrea Parra (Training for Change, Columbia). Centred around building connections and sharing best practice, the week-long gathering created a community of inquiry to reflect and learn how activist education can best respond to social movement needs. Participants contributed to designing and delivering the sessions, modelling different ways to hold space, and demonstrated new curriculum and practices applied across different cultures and movement contexts.

Creative Tools from the Classroom to the Frontlines

Another strand of Ulex Project's training programme has been the ongoing development of the Creative Tools for Social Change work. Over the last three

years a series of week-long courses have brought together activist educators, artists and practitioners to share and explore how the creative arts, including Theatre of the Oppressed, can be applied to building community empowerment, campaign development, and direct action. Participants from this training have



gone on to use the tools in various settings, including local communities, arts festivals and activist training camps. Growing out of the first Theatre of the Oppressed training in 2015, a gathering of course participants took the tools onto the streets of Paris at the COP 21. Since then, the course has continued to act as a hub for ongoing creative collaboration. More recently a series of transformative theatre workshops were held at Ulex South site La Bolina, a pioneering project responding to intersecting global challenges at a local level, bringing migrants and local people together to repopulate and regenerate rural areas in the South of Spain.

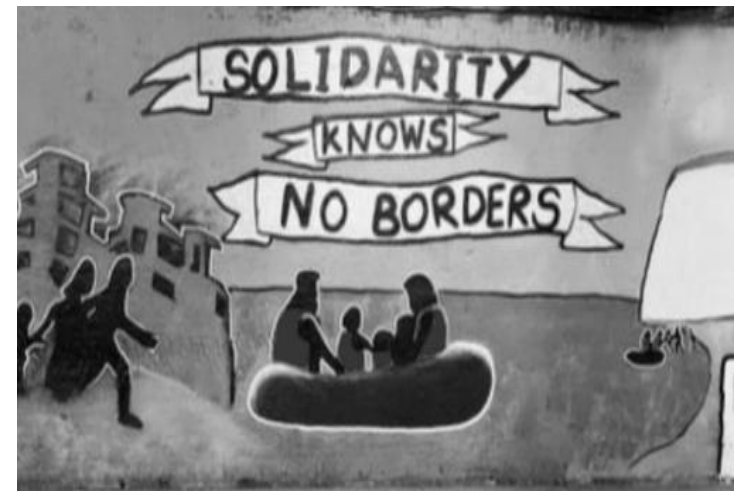
Ulex South - New Site, New Chapter

With the increasing need to find responses to the crises we face and rising numbers of people wanting to participate in our trainings, we've found ways to expand capacity. In 2019 Ulex South was born in collaboration with La Bolina in Andalucia. The co-founders of La Bolina, Maria Llanos and Ruth Cross, are key members of the Ulex training team and Ulex South trainings are informed by La Bolina's ethos, and vision, integrating a systems view of life, economic localisation, and migrant solidarity—and embedded in their locally based regeneration project.



Building Migrant Solidarity Resilience across Europe

Commencing in 2020 the Ulex Project began a two year partnership project with three organisations working on migrant solidarity - Comhlamh in Ireland, Action Aid Hellas in Greece and CESIE from Italy. The two year project aims to better equip organisations and volunteer networks working with refugee, asylum-seeking, migrant and undocumented communities across Europe to be able to develop a resilient approach to that work. The core of the project will be the writing of an extensively researched training manual based on Ulex's ground breaking resilience training over the last 10 years. The project will provide accessible psycho-social educational tools, training and processes, along with a more nuanced understanding of the impact of trauma.



Online Trainings and Webinars - Launching our Blended Learning Programme

Despite the challenges of not being able to run in-person training due to Covid 19, the Ulex team found ourselves increasingly responding to requests for online training in 2020. We offered a series of webinar and interactive workshops in partnership with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (Fellowship Programme and the Salon Bildung Series), the Community Action Training conference and Trans Mreža Balkans. We helped host the first Online Youth Gathering for Climate and Social Justice with Young Friends of the Earth Europe, Gastivists and European Youth For Action. Following on from these experiences, with input from the People's Hub, Training for Change, and the Blended Learning for Social Ecological Transformation Project, we've begun to develop our digital learning capacity with the aim of launching a platform of online and blended learning later in 2021.



PROJECTS & ACHIEVEMENTS...CONTINUED

Annual Regenerative Activism Conference

In 2017 we began a series of annual conferences in collaboration with the Advaya Initiative and Gita Parihar exploring the practice of regenerative activism. Originally platformed in face-to-face settings in London, the conferences scaled up into the online space in 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions, opening up participation to a global community of hundreds of people. The most recent 2021 conference, Building and Sustaining Our Movements, brought together thought leaders and activists over a series of 4 weeks to explore themes such as facing repression, the relationship between narrative and power, and approaches to psycho-social practice across social movements. Contributing speakers ranged from activist leaders situated within the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, indigenous women's movements in Brazil, those working with Black Lives Matter in the UK, and youth climate organisers spearheading change across Europe.

Supporting LGBTQI+ activists in Central & Eastern Europe

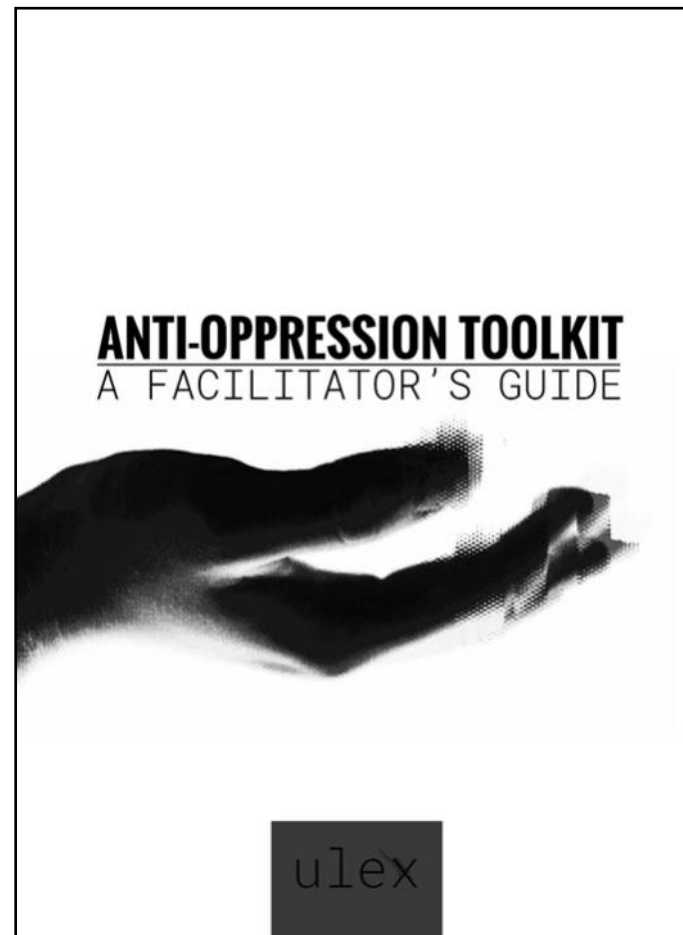
In 2018, building on a decades work of designing and delivering psycho-social resilience training for activists, we turned our attention towards developing a curriculum aimed specifically at the LGBTQI+ community and movement in Eastern & Central Europe.



This was in response to anti-LGBTQI+ narratives being used across the region by nationalist populist movements, leading to an increase in hate crimes, repressive laws, and intolerance. We have been able to draw on experience from with our team and network to design tools and practices for working with repression, dealing with stress and burn-out, assessing risks and creating resilient organisational cultures. Following on from extensive needs assessments, a series of training the trainer events and two key international activist gatherings and skillshares were planned for 2020 and 2021, bringing together LGBTQI+ organisations from Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. Due to Covid 19 restrictions these gatherings were moved online.

New Resources for Resilience

A decade since launching Sustaining Resistance, our first sustainable activism programme, we were able to find the time and resources to write up our learning to develop training manuals and online materials. These sustainable activism resources are being developed both as a set of generic resources, but also in forms that are tailored to specific contexts. These include a project to develop support material and practice for people working on migrant solidarity,



tailoring the material for activists involved in climate justice work, and applying it to the experience of LGBTQI+ activists in Central and Eastern Europe. The first versions will be available in early summer 2021.

Sharing Tools for Anti-Oppression Work Across Our Trainers Network

The Ulex Project thrives on connectivity and aims to be a reference for value based collaboration across diverse networks. We draw on the experience of an extensive network of experienced trainers across Europe to design and deliver our training programmes and are hugely grateful to the talented and committed people who contribute to our educational work. To support connectivity and skills-sharing across our network we hosted a Trainers Network Series in 2020, inviting educators across our various courses to gather and explore themes such as embodiment and

facilitation, anti-oppression in design and delivery, and managing conflict and holding discomfort. This built on the release of our Anti-Oppression Toolkit for trainers and facilitators, which aims to better support conversations across social justice cultures and enable educators, community leaders, activists, and organisers to understand the complex and intersectional nature of systemic oppression. We'll continue to support the trainer network space as an ongoing community of practice, aiming to strengthen our own pool of trainers, but also to contribute to building capacity for activist education across the continent.

A new chapter in Strengthening European Social Movement Ecology

Building on the success of our Ecology of Social Movements training which has run since 2017, we are now expanding this work with the launch of a new activist learning initiative - the Strengthening European Social Movement Ecology (SESME) project, led by Gee and Carol Marin from the core Ulex team along with key collaborators Laurence Cox, Natasha Adams, and Maria Llanos del Coral. This initiative aims to create an innovative space to support long term action-learning practice across diverse struggles and movements. Informed by an extensive Europe-wide survey and a year long community of inquiry with movement leaders and community organisers, SESME will deepen our understanding of the kind of training movements most need to bring about wider change. In 2020 we launched a continent-wide survey and in June 2021 we presented a paper on these findings at the Alternative Futures & Popular Protest conference. We will be building further on this work throughout 2021 and 2022.

Community Practice Groups to Support Ongoing Learning

With growing numbers of strategic partnerships across Europe, and to support our network of trainers to share resources and learnings, a key aim was always to create spaces beyond the face-to-face gatherings for people to continue to learn and connect. In 2018 we launched the first iteration of an online community hub, before moving to the Mobilise platform in 2019. The intention of this network is to enable the possibility of extending the learning arc of participants whilst offering a space to share best practice and build networks of support and solidarity. Members can take part in online discussions, download and upload resources, get invites to network events and take part in online events, webinars and trainings. We have exciting plans in place to develop the potential of the online platform as a support mechanism for a raft of online courses being developed in 2021. Currently we have around 800 members in our Mobilise network, sharing best practice across 12 Community of Praxis groups.



CASE STUDIES #1

ZELENA AKCIJA, CROATIA: Leaderful Organising for Leaderful Movements

ZELENA AKCIJA recognise the necessary relationship that exists between environmental degradation and the larger capitalist systems and economic structures that drive it. To address these systemic ills, their work, which originated out of grassroots environmental campaigning and non-violent direct action, combines an emphasis on social justice and environmental analysis to shape their organising strategies. Established in 1990, Zelena Akcija, also known as Friends of the Earth Croatia, push for environmental protection locally, nationally and globally, guided by the principles of social justice and systemic change.

Needs

Ulex have been in a strategic partnership with Zelena Akcija for several years, arising due to a recommendation from another Friends of the Earth partner. Over a 3 year period, Ulex and Zelena Akcija have developed a number of projects to address different needs:

2018: With the debt crisis of 2015, record rates of unemployment, increased numbers of refugees arriving in Croatia, and the escalating climate crisis, Zelena Akcija recognised a need to create a dedicated network of activist educators who could create inclusive learning environments and build stronger movements of solidarity across different social change contexts and audiences.

2019: Building on the success of the 2018 project Zelena Akcija now wanted to develop the skills of their dedicated training team further, and in particular to increase their understanding of how different social movement strategies interact and intersect so as to work more strategically together. They also identified a need to increase the skills of trainers already working in different movement contexts within their network so as they would feel more confident in training others, and thus ripple out the learning, impact and outreach.

2020: Ulex have recently begun working with Zelena Akcija on a longer term aim of developing resources and training material which support 'Leaderful Organising for Leaderful Movements'. This has come out of a need, identified by Zelena Akcija, that amidst the challenges of the climate crisis, increasing inequality, and the rise of the far right across Europe, there is a need for fresh approaches to leadership, to sustain and consolidate their capacity to build power and strength across different social movement networks.

Action Taken

2018: During an initial 14 month period, 14 staff members from Zelena Akcija participated in a training programme centred around increasing their skills and understanding to support the needs of culturally diverse learners impacted by migration, unemployment, social exclusion, climate instability. So as to maximise outreach many of the participants selected for this project were already active volunteers in human right organisations, and organisations working with migrants and refugees across Croatia. Using an Action-Learning cycle methodology, course participants formulated three goals at the onset, which were then reviewed and evaluated throughout.

2019: (partially put on hold due to Covid 19 restrictions) Building on the previous project, throughout 2019/20 over a 14 month period, 17 staff members from Zelena Akcija were due to participate in a training programme centred around learning tools and popular education approaches for enhancing understanding of intersectionality and anti-oppression. A number of more experienced activist-trainers were due to participate in a series of Train the Trainers courses specifically developed to support them to design their own courses and train others. In addition participants were also due to participate in 'Ecology of Social Movements' - an intensive two-week training for experienced activists and organisers involved in movement level thinking and practice from across Europe.

2020: More recently Ulex have been designing a new partnership with Zelena Akcija, LABO (Belgium), and the European Community Organisers Network, to develop learning resources for the building of 'leaderful movements'. This project will synergise practices and insights from grassroots activism and community building methodologies, and address a series of questions: How do we develop movements and organisations that are leaderful rather than leaderless? What are some fresh approaches to leadership that go beyond traditional hierarchies, and yet do not fall into fetishized horizontalism which lacks clear direction? How can leadership be shared and accountable? How might grassroots leadership be adapted to meet current social movement needs?

Outcomes

On return from the 2018 & 2019 trainings, 98% of participating staff reported an increase in their skills, confidence and competence to create inclusive learning spaces, along with a more nuanced understanding of how social movements can work together to create impactful change. Due to the focus of skilling up a dedicated training team, there was a marked increase in both the quantity and quality of Zelena Akcija's

training activities, which were made more accessible to diverse learners, as well as an increase in the number of skilled activist-trainers across their networks. This has meant that the learning can be shared far wider than before, implemented at a wide range of activist workshops, conferences and festivals with hundreds of learners across the climate and social justice sector in Croatia. This has also included the wider international Friends of the Earth network. At a senior management level, the Vice President of Zelena Akcija has participated in the Ulex training programme, which has influenced the organisation's strategic development. This has been particularly evident in the way that Zelena Akcija view their role in the wider climate movement and their ongoing commitment to bridging movements which support migrants and refugees, alongside anti-war, anti-fascist and anti-corruption campaigning, in Croatia and beyond.



"Zelena Akcija is a complex organisation with multiple projects and partnerships occurring at the same time. Working with Ulex over the years we have seen that they are very well adept at catering to complexity. They are organised, they do what they say they're going to do, and they do it in a timely manner. It's a relief to be able to put our trust in an organization in this way. Ulex bring a breadth of historical understanding to social movement organising, and a vast body of tools and resources to share. They live and breathe their values. They are deeply committed to bringing people together from across diverse movements to learn from each other. This, for us, is invaluable." - Aleksandra Schindler Ljutak, Project Coordinator, Zelena Akcija



CASE STUDIES #2

REBOOT THE ROOTS, UK: Increasing Inclusivity and Impact

REBOOT THE ROOTS (RtR) is a UK charity and solidarity organisation that promotes social inclusion and education through the arts. Founded in 2008 they use theatre, music and creative tools for social transformation to support people who are denied their rights to full, happy and active participation in society. This includes those recovering from addiction, people living with HIV/AIDS and individuals who have been in conflict with the law. Drawing on the work of Augusto Boal (the Brazilian activist and founder of Theatre of the Oppressed), Reboot the Roots facilitate workshops with the socially excluded, train trainers from grassroots organisations and NGOs in techniques of art for inclusion.

Needs

In 2018 RtR underwent an extensive needs assessment to address 3 key questions:

1. Who are the people attending our workshops, and who are being excluded?
2. Which social movement areas are a priority focus?
3. How can we scale up our outreach to strengthen solidarity across social movements and create more socially transformative narratives?

Results showed that RtR had strong connections with autonomous movements across Europe, and yet accessibility was still remaining a barrier for people experiencing houselessness, people with refugee status and sex workers. With the rise of hate crimes against LGBTQI+ and Muslim communities, alongside an estimated 14.3 million people living in poverty in the UK, the two key social movement areas that stood out as demanding attention were LGBTQI+ community rights and wellbeing; and inequality and poverty. A further need was leadership development for the trainer team so as to be able to scale up and offer more training across a range of different social movement settings.

Action Taken

Since 2016 the Ulex Project and RtR have collaborated on a series of capacity building projects. Year upon year we have conducted needs assessments and evaluations so as to keep meeting emerging needs, and to deepen learning and strengthen impact and outreach. The two most recent two project strands, launched in



2018 and 2019, included:

- A one year programme designed to strengthen LGBTQI-led education and equip trainers with the skills, syllabus and content to develop LGBTQI+ specific training in psychosocial resilience. This included professional development training for transgender trainers within RtR, and the application of Theatre of the Oppressed methodology to create safe spaces to explore intersectionality, and oppression.
- A one year programme designed to increase the quality and effectiveness of community education aimed at supporting people in poverty and experiencing social exclusion. This involved increasing understanding of anti-oppression methodology so as to ensure trainers were better equipped to meet the reality of poverty and deprivation within the communities they serve, and to dismantle barriers to learning. This project brought RtR trainers together with other educators working to address social inclusion across Europe, and to co-create shared community arts events and educational projects which empower learners directly.

Outcomes

Between 2016-2019, approximately 40 educators from Reboot the Roots have participated in capacity building projects with Ulex. Without exception all participants have reported an increase in confidence and felt that the programmes had been valuable to their professional development.

As a result of the training, and trainers developing skills to increase inclusivity and safe spaces, throughout 2018 and 2019 RtR successfully ran a series of nationwide workshops across the UK exploring Class and Inequality. These workshops attracted participants from across class divides, bringing together people experiencing houselessness and people from anarchist collectives alongside people from more traditional NGO organising backgrounds. Feedback from participants in the LGBTQI-led community trainings reported that the workshops were successful in creating safe spaces to explore queer identity and experience.

Ulex supported RtR to consolidate their team of trainers and empower new and emerging facilitators to confidently lead on educational initiatives, addressing all 3 of the needs identified at the start of the capacity building programme. In doing so, RtR have improved their own programme, created more inclusive learning environments to attract a broader participant base, and extended their reach across diverse social movement contexts.

"Through partnering with Ulex, we have had the opportunity to expand our team, build connections, and be in many places at once. A highlight of our partnership was working with facilitators from migrant backgrounds and applying the tools and skills we had learned to co-create a local arts festival. Within two years we went from having a team of facilitators with zero experience to empowered trainers providing week long courses. Reboot the Roots has built into a movement which has rippled out on multiple levels across class and gender boundaries, providing a way to bring different people together to effect change. We hope that Ulex will continue to be a key ally in future journeys of learning and discovery" - George Wielgus, Founder, Reboot the Roots



CASE STUDIES #3

CIVIL COLLEGIUM FOUNDATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS, HUNGARY: Building Resilience For the Long Haul

CIVIL COLLEGIUM FOUNDATION (CCF) is a nationwide adult education organization which focuses on community development, community work and citizen studies in Hungary. Over the last 20 years CCF has become a leading organization working with hundreds of civil society organizations and local communities. With a focus towards community organising, CCF has developed a range of programmes to support and mobilize a wide range of citizens facing exclusion and discrimination, including Roma groups, LGBTQI+ groups, homeless people and people with disabilities, disadvantaged youth and housing tenants' groups. CCF has a residential Training Centre where between 500-700 volunteers/community activists are trained for free each year. They are also the sibling organisation to aHang (the Voice), Hungary's largest progressive campaign group.

Needs

In 2018 Ulex undertook a needs assessment and relationship building trip to Hungary. The aim was to explore the challenges facing progressive civil society groups and organisations in the context of growing re-

pression from the nationalist populism and autocratic far right Orbán/Fidesz government. Ulex met with more than 20 key civil society groups to explore how we might provide support to enhance personal, organisational and movement-wide resilience and impact. This extensive assessment led to the design of a multi-year programme of psychosocial resilience building for individuals, organisations and their wider networks. Within these networks CCF occupied an important connective position and in liaison with a group of their key organisers, we decided to develop a longer term partnership together addressing core needs:

1. Strategic organisational development to strengthen long-term capacity for organising work
2. Tools and practices for deepening resilience across their activist-trainer programme
3. Building capacity for strategic reflection on social movement ecology: sharing tools, strategies and best practice with other movements organisers working for progressive social change.

Action Taken

Initially Ulex designed and delivered two psychosocial resilience and movement building trainings to organisers from CCF and other key Hungarian organisations. This was followed up with trainings and accompaniment work on the ground in Hungary through 2019-20. Building on this work we designed a longer process focussing specifically on CCF, in order to:

1. Upskill CCF activist-trainers with new content, curricula and methods to improve the impact and reach of their community education work with marginalised communities



2. Improve staff knowledge and skills of sustainability and experiential learning for the hundreds of learners who come to the centre each year
3. Deepen strategic analysis of the impact, relevance and quality of CCF's programmes
4. Build new relationships with activist-education organisations across Europe and strengthen understanding of how different social movements work together.

Outcomes

Ulex training has provided support to a wide network of organisations in Hungary on holistic strategies for resilience and impact. The project will run through into 2022, with another 18 CCF organisers attending Ulex trainings, as well as collaborating by contributing content and training delivery on community organising skills. Throughout 2021-22 Ulex will support CCF and close allies, such as the key campaign organisation aHang, in work related to the coordination of opposition challenges to the Fidesz government in upcoming elections in 2022. We'll support them with scenario planning and Holistic Security training, both for the work leading up to the elections as well as the spaces that could open up if a change in regime is made possible.

"Ulex trainings enabled me to build closer working connections with people from other organisations - one working with migrants and refugees in Hungary, and the other with feminist organising circles working towards structural change. After the training we continued to build on these connections and developed projects together. Perhaps one of the most useful learnings was having the opportunity to explore new theories and methodologies around different European social movements and gain historical perspective. The other was Ulex's whole philosophy about creating safe and supportive spaces from which to learn how to take care of ourselves, to think more consciously about how we treat ourselves, the people we work with, and the people in our networks and organisations. This is of course an ongoing learning and refining process!" - Mónika Bálint, CCF lead organizer

CASE STUDIES #4

CENTRE FOR ECOLOGICAL LEARNING, LUXEMBOURG: Developing Skills for Organisations To Thrive

CENTRE FOR ECOLOGICAL LEARNING (CELL), is part of the international Transition network, a global movement that aims to equip communities for the challenges of climate change, fossil fuel transition, and economic impacts. Established in 2010, CELL helps bring people together to act on local issues and projects to combat climate change and alternative economic systems which limit greenhouse gas emissions. It works as a both a central operating core with projects of its own, and also by supporting a network of localised action-groups with their own independent projects. In 2014 CELL was mandated by the Ministry of the Environment to support the municipalities in the country in implementing the Climate Pact, especially in the area of citizen participation.

Needs

CELL and Ulex Project first began working together on a raft of trainings in 2015, and then in 2018 we decided to partner again on a project specifically focussed around

building organisational resilience. This arose out of a period of intense growth for CELL, following on from the Ministry of Environment mandate, where at the same time as they were stepping up to be a main bridging organisation between multiple social movements, they were also implementing a Sociocracy model to support their internal organisational processes. Coming out of an organisation-wide needs assessment, it emerged that despite CELL's progressive structure, and encouragement of autonomy and equality across their network of local groups, there were tensions around 'mission creep' with staff and volunteers feeling stretched across many projects. CELL identified a need to ensure that there were processes in place which meant that core skills and experience were not lost when a team member, for whatever reasons, left the organisation. In addition they needed tools and methods to support healthy relationships and robust collaborative working processes which could handle tension, conflict, and change.

Action Taken

Over 14 months CELL and the Ulex Project worked together to design and implement a programme of training focussed around building staff and organisational resilience. This included 20 staff members from CELL participating in a range of courses such as Organisations Revisioned, Transformative Collaboration and Regenerative Activism where they met with other community organisers from across Europe to explore strategies for building resilient networks, and gaining tools to optimise collaboration.



Outcomes

As a result of the training, over 90% of participants from CELL strongly agreed that they had improved their knowledge and practical application of tools for personal and organisational resilience, built up new contacts and expanded their networks, as well as developed competencies for working smarter and better together as groups. Participants reported an increased confidence in holding and supporting group learning spaces, and feeling better equipped to identify helpful and unhelpful behaviours in group dynamics. There was an increased understanding in how to avoid the generation of negative patterns in organisations, as well as being able to mediate conflict.

Back in Luxembourg the learnings were shared in a series of skill-shares and workshops to increase resilience across the entire network. In addition to this the tools and processes for resilience were applied within the Sociocracy model by a Coordination Circle which took on responsibility for reviewing ongoing organisational processes, and supporting the well-being and resilience practices amongst staff and volunteer teams.

"The learning experience with Ulex was not always comfortable. It showed up my biases and my assumptions, the stuff I don't see, or didn't want to see. Because of this the work is transformative at both a personal level and intellectual level, and it touched me profoundly. It changed me. Ulex supports the deep transformative work that is necessary to address social change, at a personal, organisational and collective level. They create safe spaces to first ignite the spark for change. This then grows and ripples outwards across the organisation, and in the work beyond" - Luis Santiago, Council Member of CELL



PREFIGURATIVE TEAM CULTURE

Since 2017, Ulex has grown from a team of three people to a team of 12. As an organisation we practice 'prefigurative politics', meaning we aim to walk the talk, and embody the values we want to promote and struggle for. We live and work by the principles of 'transformative collaboration' and 'regenerative activism' as promoted through the trainings we run. Here's what it looks like, practically:

CULTURE OF CARE

We want to get shit done. We also want to work in relationships of mutual trust and mutual support, in a culture of nurture and care. We take into account that different people have different needs - such as childcare, healthcare and study - and have a variety of personalised flexible working arrangements, and accountability/review practices, to support that.

SOCIOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

We use Sociocracy as a governance system offering a tried-and-tested consent based decision making process, distributed authority and agile team structure.

ACTION-REFLECTION BALANCE

Balancing action with reflection has always been a strong theme in our trainings. Each year we analyse the broader political context and collaboratively choose the social movement areas we will focus our actions towards. Each year we take a substantial organisational retreat where the team steps away from the screens, and into a more reflective and contemplative space together.

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

We operate a 'solidarity economy' which rejects the capitalist paradigm of service provider and client/consumer. This means that we never charge individuals for training and are committed to economic inclusion. The economic ethos of our training provision is 'take what you need, give what you can'. We put enormous effort into leveraging funding to make this possible—as well as receiving donations from people who want to support this approach.

ulex-team

ANTI-OPPRESSION PRACTICE

We are committed to holding ongoing reflective work as a team and a wider organisation, to support each other in better understanding and dismantling systems of oppression. We have a dedicated anti-oppression working group to monitor development including visioning, researching, planning, training and creating materials on anti-oppression.

INTEGRAL ACTIVIST ETHOS

The project and the community are grounded in an 'integral activist' ethos - applied at personal, interpersonal and political levels. Everyone in the team has an active meditation practice, and we take our personal development as seriously as our social engagement - considering the transformation of self and the transformation of the world to be inseparable.

COLLECTIVISED ECONOMY

Rather than operate in terms of wages for work done, we make sure we support each other across the team to meet our needs - so that we can freely give our time to the work we do. Financial support is based on needs such as childcare, living remotely or on site, study or healthcare cost, rather than role or hours worked.

INTENTIONAL RADICAL COMMUNITY

An important part of our economic model is our collective structure. As a collective based in a post-capitalist community, we are able to maintain very low overheads (shared living costs, off-grid, no office rent). This enables us to make the most of funding, achieving a lot with minimal core costs.

GOING FOR- WARD

So, what's next for the Ulex Project?

We've done a lot of work over the first three and a half years. Earned people's trust, forged strong connections, and learnt so much. But these are only the first steps on a strategic journey to help build capacity for social movements that can win! It's a long journey on a complex and emergent path. But it is one we are committed to. These are some of the next steps we'll be taking and we hope many of you will join us in 'making the path by walking' together.

STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT ECOLOGY (SESME)

Building on the success of our Ecology of Social Movements training, we're developing a new space to support long-term action-learning across European movements, supporting transnational and transversal movement building. Informed by a survey of learning needs reaching more than 100 organisations in over 20 countries and a Community of Inquiry through 2021, expect to see this kicking off in 2022.

BIPoC ACTIVIST TRAINING CAPACITY

Aiming to resource and support affected groups to take a lead in developing their own capacity building projects (a model we've applied to supporting the development of transgender trainers), we'll be hosting a BI-PoC Activist Trainers Gathering and supporting a core team to develop this work. The aim is to both increase the diversity and strength of Ulex's training network and to resource anti-racism and the decolonisation of European social movements more widely.

DIGITAL LEARNING

While we remain convinced of the deep transformational potential of immersive residential learning, we're also increasingly aware of the value of increasing the reach and ease of access to our work. In late 2021 we'll be launching a digital learning space integrated within the existing Ulex website, where we'll build a wide range of modular curricula and courses.

LEADERFUL ORGANISING

Along with the European Community Organisers Network, LABO vwz (Belgium), and Zelena Akcija (Croatia) we're developing a curriculum, online training, and resources to equip and inspire the uptake of leaderful organising across the continent. It supports the learning needed to go beyond traditional models of hierarchical leadership, while avoiding the pitfalls of the leaderless fetishization of horizontalism!

DIVERSIFYING OUR TRAINING FORMATS

As well as continuing to build on the strengths of our week to two week long residential trainings with medium sized participant groups (12-20 people), we'll be experimenting with running some larger scale residential trainings with groups of up to 60 people coming together for a week or so. While we might sacrifice some of the intimacy, we expect to see this offset with the increase in diversity and networking it can support. We'll also be launching some year long training formats, blending in-person and digital elements.

RADICAL NATURE CONNECTION

Building on our experience of environmental and ecological education, we're developing a strand of work that explores the power of nature based learning to equip people to act in defence of the earth. Along with Wandelwerk (climate activists and environmental psychologists), and Vedegylet in Hungary, we'll develop trainings that draw on ecopsychology, nature connection work, ecoliteracy, and decolonial approaches to bring a radical and transformative approach to this field.

A MUNICIPALIST SCHOOL FOR TRANSLOCAL ACTION

In 2020 we began working with the European Municipalist Network. We're hoping that this will come to fruition in 2022 with the development of a Municipalist School sharing the skills and learning accumulated over recent years within that movement. Along with EMN we're exploring this with European Alternatives, Mouvement Utopia, Commonsopolis and The Commons Network.

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Support us at www.ulexproject.org/donate

Terra, llibertat y solidaritat

The Ulex Team

To find out more about us get in touch at
info@ulexproject.org
 Or visit our website at www.ulexproject.org
 You can subscribe to our newsletter at
www.ulexproject.org/contact-us
 Like us on Facebook @ulexproject
 Follow us on Twitter @ulexproject

WE FEEL MASSIVE APPRECIATION FOR EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED SO FAR... AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO BUILDING ON THE CONNECTIONS, SOLIDARITY, AND CARE THAT'S BUILT UP BETWEEN US, AS WE DEVELOP THE KIND OF POWERFUL TRANSVERSAL MOVEMENTS OUR TIMES NEED.

