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organizers, developers and movement builders who  
together want to get better at organizing to win.

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## ESSAYS & CASE STUDIES

- 2 **Let's Organize!** Because Our Future Begins Now
- 4 **From the Knights of Labor to Body Mapping** The History and Diversity of Organizing
- 16 **"Great Organizers Ooze Love"** 11 Organizers on Key Traits
- 28 **How Free Pizza and Wood Are Helping Austrian KPÖ to Grow**
- 34 **Relational Organizing with Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez**
- 38 **ACORN** The Community Union Developing Leaders
- 42 **Stop Counting Members Start Building Power**
- 46 **How Scaling Boosted Zohran Mamdani's Campaign**
- 52 **Organizing the Unorganizable**
- 60 **How Data is Collected and Analysed Matters**
- 62 **Printing local newspapers to break social media bubbles**
- 66 **Numbers don't lie** How Phone Calls and Local Papers Boosted the Swedish Left
- 71 **The Keys to Successful Phonebanking for Building Stronger Movements**
- 76 **Door-Knocking Shaping Citizens as Well as Volunteers**
- 82 **Why Canvassing Works** Lessons from Berlin
- 86 **Changing People's Hearts and Minds by Door-Knocking**
- 90 **Data-Driven Organizing Support, Not Solution**
- 94 **Bottling magic** And why the heck we have never been taught how

## PROGRAMME

### MALMÖ GUIDE

A Beginner's Guide to Malmö 100

### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

"To Be Thousands of Shoulders"  
Interview with Daniel Sestrajcic 104

A Manifestation of Radical  
Culture and Solidarity:  
Cultural Programme 106

Full Programme Schedule 110

Map of Venue 124

## PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Short interviews with speakers and session leaders at Organize! Movement Meetup 2026.

Valery Alzaga 15

Adriel Achaval  
& Paula Suárez 25

Francisco Contreras 39

Jeremy Corbyn 41

Samah Ellous 45

Aron Etzler 51

Gustavo Gordillo 53

Max Haiven 57

Knut Hühne 65

Raquel Jesse 69

Susanne Lang 70

Richard Olsson 75

James Schneider 79

Alicia Smedberg 81

Jonathan Smucker 85

Lutz Wallhorn 93

Sophia Zaia 99

# LET'S ORGANIZE! BECAUSE OUR FUTURE BEGINS NOW

**Daniel Sestrajcic**  
**Ada Regelmann**  
**Susanne Lang**

The world is on fire. The decline of the United States as an imperial superpower and the resulting scramble by new and old powers to secure dominance are accompanied by a growing number of wars – conflicts that could even draw us toward a third world war. Meanwhile, our planet's natural resources and capacity for renewal are being depleted, threatening the very foundations of our existence.

Yet instead of turning toward what is most deeply human – cooperation and solidarity, reason and collective creativity – we see rearguard actions and desperate, destructive last stands wherever we look. Progressive ideas seem increasingly utopian. Fascist movements and narratives are gaining ground. The public sphere is dissolving into an endless loop of social media and advertisements. A glance at the news can leave us feeling utterly hopeless.

And yet. Human experience also teaches us that even in the most terrible circumstances, there is always hope for a better future – and there are always people who refuse to give up on it. People who find each other. People who, in finding each other, find renewed strength.

The desire for a good life for everyone is as old as humanity itself. It is the lifeblood of left-wing parties, progressive labour unions, and social movements. It is the driving force behind all organizing – behind every effort to name injustice, to find one another, and to fight together for something better. What makes this force special is that it grows stronger the more it is shared. Not as an idea passed between strangers, but as something felt between people who have looked each other in the eye.

That is what this reader is about.

And that is what Organize! Movement Meetup is about.

The idea of bringing organizers together in this way has lived in our minds for years – in different forms, in different organizations, across different countries. At the Zetkin Foundation, the question of how left movements could share organizing knowledge and learn from one another had been a recurring one for a long time. At Die Linke, the desire to create a European space – not for politicians or theorists, but for organizers – had been growing for just as long. What was missing was not the idea. What was missing was the moment when these threads could finally come together – and the people who would pull them together.

For years, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation had been building the bridges between movements that made such a collaboration conceivable – and when the moment finally came, their support made it real.

That moment came in the summer of 2024. The conditions could hardly have been more unfavourable. Die Linke was at an all-time low. Its conservative wing had split from the party after a long and gruelling public rupture. Poll numbers were in the basement. Members were leaving. And doubt was gnawing at those who remained: is this the end, or a new beginning?

In the midst of that crisis, efforts to organize a fresh start were in full swing at all levels of the party. Part of this involved a return to nearly forgotten traditions: organizing through personal outreach – knocking on voters' doors, reaching out to members by phone. Die Linke had been developing its door-to-door canvassing practice in recent

This reader was produced in close collaboration with Daniel Sestrajcic (Zetkin Foundation, Sweden), Ada Regelmann (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Brussels), and Susanne Lang (Die Linke, Germany), with the indispensable support of many contributors.

years, and now sought to learn from the Zetkin Foundation how to activate and mobilise its membership through telephone campaigns. Even though our joint work took place under immense pressure and with minimal room for experimentation, each of our meetings was marked by mutual inspiration. Something happened in those rooms that no email or report could have created. We always parted with the desire to learn more from one another, and the feeling that we had a lot to offer each other.

That feeling stayed with us. And it grew into something larger: the conviction that what we needed was not just bilateral exchange, but a wider community of organizers who could find and strengthen one another – who could, simply, meet.

Since then, a lot has happened – and not only the difficult things. Die Linke entered the federal election and not only survived but grew, bringing with it an influx of new members and a reinvention of the party. The New York mayoral race showed what serious leftist organizing can achieve. Living Rent won nationwide rent controls in Scotland and Acorn saw the Renters' Rights Act become law in Britain – victories built over years of sustained organizing. Enhedslisten has deepened its roots in Copenhagen. And KPÖ's remarkable breakthrough in Salzburg showed what is possible when left-wing politics stay close to people's everyday lives.

Pockets of possibility are opening up, even as the global situation remains precarious. The window is real. And to make the most of it, we need each other.

This is the deeper purpose of Organize! Movement Meetup. It is the

first European organizing conference of its kind – a space to present, make accessible, and critically examine various organizing practices and approaches. But it is also, and perhaps more importantly, a space for something less tangible: the recognition that comes from meeting someone who is fighting the same fights from a different place. Not networking in the thin, transactional sense of the word, but something more durable. Community. The kind that is built when people who share a commitment actually see each other – when they sit in the same room, share a meal, argue about strategy, and feel, concretely, how many of us there are.

We have learned, again and again, that this cannot be replicated digitally. Emotions are not a soft addition to political organizing – they are its foundation. Solidarity is not just a concept; it is a feeling, and it can only be created between people who have truly seen each other. The connections forged when organizers from different movements and different countries genuinely meet are among the most sustaining things our movements can build.

It is in the nature of organizing that it is constantly evolving and being adapted, which makes it difficult to capture or generalise. Organizing knowledge often lives in the personal experiences of long-time organizers and must be reinvented time and again. And yet, we have learned that aspects of this knowledge can be compiled and made accessible – through platforms like Zetkin, through structured reflection, and through spaces like this one.

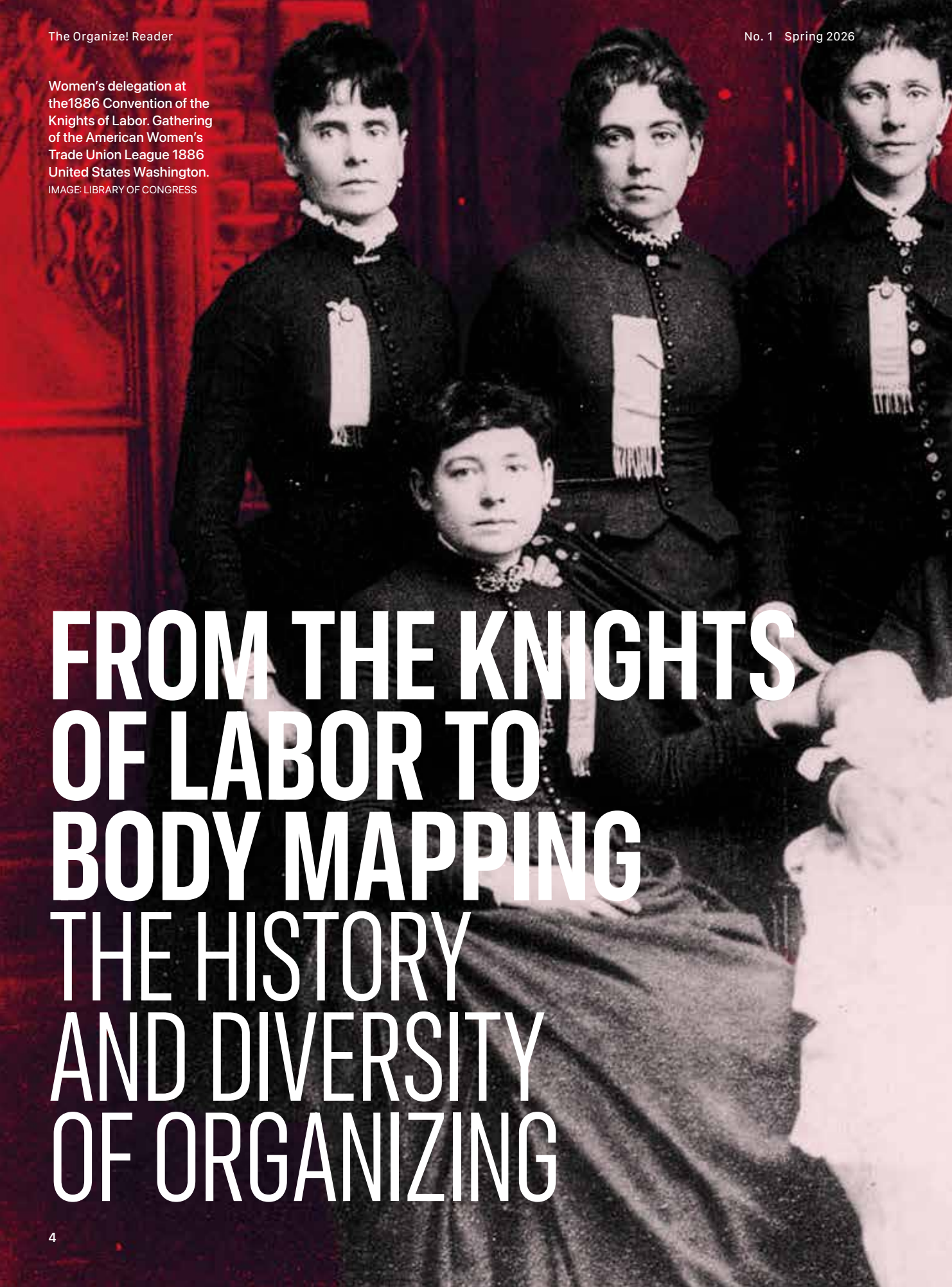
This reader is one such attempt. It aims to document some of the dis-

cussions on organizing that matter most to us right now, so that they can be remembered, shared, and built upon. It brings together essays and reflections on what organizing means – what makes a good organizer or leader, how we build sustainable organizations, how technology and data can serve the human work of building power. It gathers portraits of specific organizing methods, told through conversations with organizers who use them from the inside: door-knocking, deep canvassing, leadership development, and more. It introduces the programme of Organize! Movement Meetup – a closer look at the sessions and the people leading them, a practical welcome to Malmö, and yes, the party. And it provides space for the organizations participating in the conference to introduce themselves through the lens of organizing.

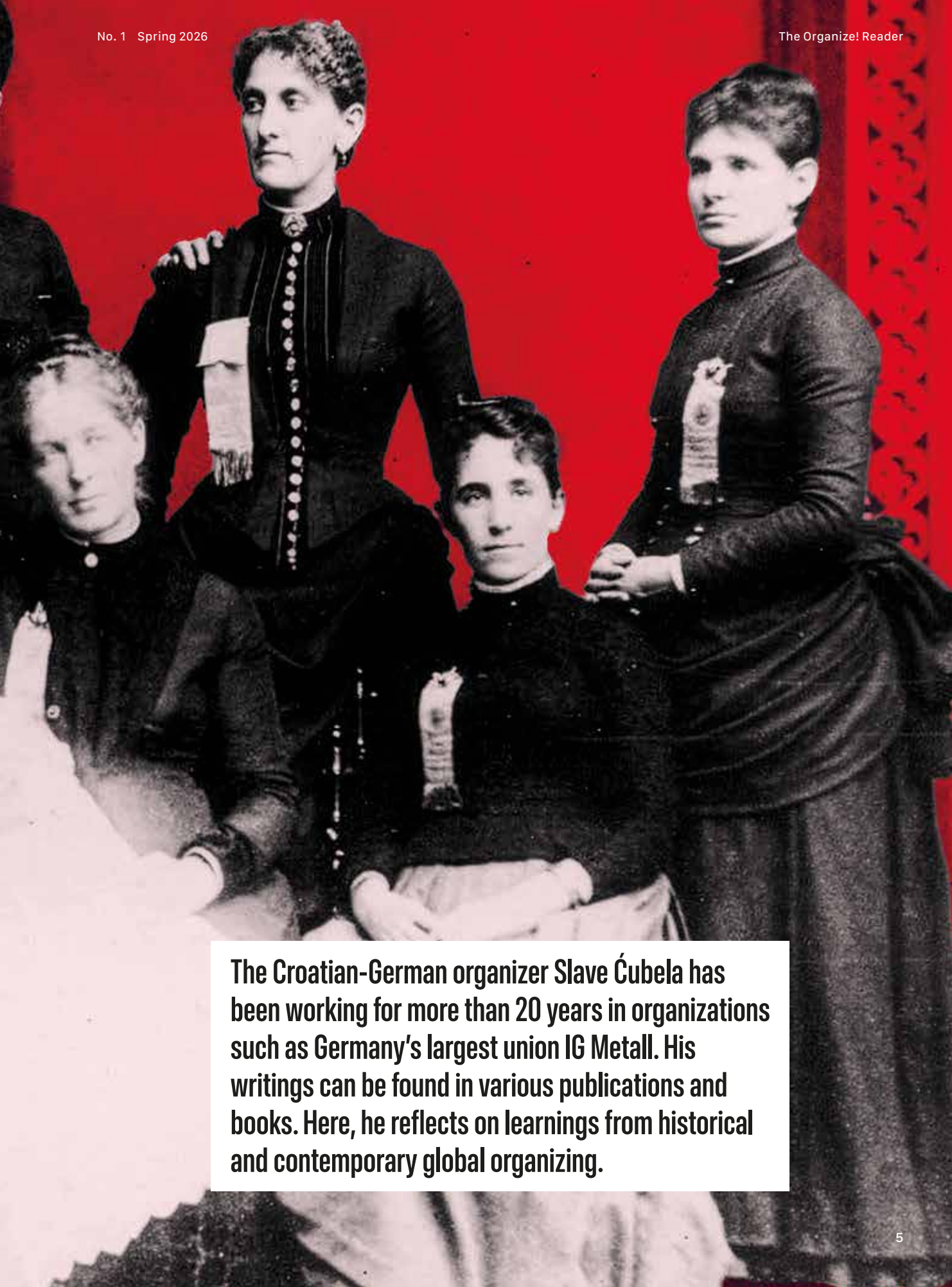
In addition to the concrete experience of coming together in Malmö, this reader aims to serve as both preparation for the Organize! Movement Meetup and a lasting reference point – something to return to, to argue with, to carry forward.

We warmly invite you to be part of this collaboration. We hope that this first Organize! Movement Meetup is exactly that: a first. A growing, ongoing community of organizers who know each other, support each other, and grow stronger together. This is something we are creating together, here and now – not just as a conference or a reader, but as a relationship between people who believe the same things are possible. And what we build here, we carry forward into every struggle each of us is part of. Not just for this moment. For what comes after. !

Women's delegation at the 1886 Convention of the Knights of Labor. Gathering of the American Women's Trade Union League 1886 United States Washington.  
IMAGE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



# FROM THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR TO BODY MAPPING THE HISTORY AND DIVERSITY OF ORGANIZING



**The Croatian-German organizer Slave Ćubela has been working for more than 20 years in organizations such as Germany's largest union IG Metall. His writings can be found in various publications and books. Here, he reflects on learnings from historical and contemporary global organizing.**

**Slave Cubela**  
 Activist and author  
 of *Anger – Hope –  
 Action? Organizing  
 und soziale Kämpfe  
 im Zeitalter des Zorns*

Those who do not learn from their own history are doomed to repeat the same mistakes. What is an old truism quickly takes on new relevance when you look at organizing. Although it has a proud history spanning more than a century, there is still no definitive work on the history of organizing. And although virtually every strategy has been tried over the long history of organizing practice, many organizers tend to simply absorb organizing methods and uncritically hype them up as supposedly new strategies.

The extent of this lack of historical awareness in organizing, and its irreversible consequences, was recently highlighted by the editors of the American organizing website *The Forge* in the following words: 'Much of organizing's past is lost to historical memory. We don't have answers to some very basic questions about the who, what, where, and how of organizing.' While this article can hardly fill this gap, its aim is to use some historical glimpses to spark organizers' interest in studying the origins and diversity of their own practice.

### **Beginnings in the Progressive Era**

On this point, at least, there is agreement: organizing is a product of the *Progressive Era*, the period in US history that began in the last two decades of the 19th century and lasted until the end of World War I. This period was a time of social resistance against the preceding developments of the *Gilded Age*, during which dynamic economic growth had primarily led to the rise of the so-called robber barons. These US capitalists – one need only think of names such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Morgan – not only managed to amass immense wealth through monopolies, but also, much like today's tech giants, used their wealth to influence politics.

To counter this, trade unions such as the *Knights of Labor*, as well as the reformist *social settlement* movement, began experimenting with forms of political neighbourhood activism in the 1880s, which very quickly took on a systematic character. The *Socialist Party of America*, founded in 1901, consequently published one of the first organizing manuals we know of, titled *How to Organize a Socialist Local or Branch*. However, this active engagement with the working and lower classes was not merely a reaction to obscene wealth and abject poverty. In a country like the USA, where elections were held constantly because not only politicians but also judges, sheriffs, school inspectors and so forth were elected to their posts, the coordinated mobilisation of voters was a natural next step for the Left.

The finesse with which organizing battles were already being waged at that time is illustrated by one of the few campaigns from that era for which we still have sources today: the United Mine Workers (UMW) campaign in the Colorado coalfields. The UMW trained twenty-one pairs of organizers at their office in Denver, each pair consisting of an active and a passive organizer. The active organizer approached the workers and tried to win them over to the UMW. The passive organizer, in turn, started working in the mine and tried to ingratiate himself with his superiors. The way it worked was as follows: if a worker resisted joining the UMW, this was communicated to the passive organizer, who then used his connections at the top to ensure that the hesitant worker was dismissed. In this way, the organizing process gradually weeded out fence-sitters and union opponents. The campaign was extremely successful but culminated in a great tragedy. In 1914, the UMW strike was ended by the brutal Ludlow Massacre, in which an anti-strike militia also shot ten of the strikers' children.

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 or car factories,  
 in many cases the  
 workers organized  
 themselves entirely  
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Workers of The United Mine Workers of America taking part in a strike in 1946.  
IMAGE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

## The paradigmatic 1930s

The next formative period for the development of organizing in the USA was the 1930s. This is well known to many organizers today because the long-time US organizer and journalist Jane McAlevey placed precisely this period at the centre of the organizing debate with her 2016 book *No Shortcuts*. At the heart of this rare attempt to learn from organizing history, based on McAlevey's doctoral thesis, was an examination of Saul Alinsky, the legendary organizer who, after a career as an archaeologist, sociologist, criminologist and trade unionist, laid the foundation for modern community organizing in the late 1930s with his *Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council* project in Chicago.

McAlevey's central argument was as follows: while the organizing strategy of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), with its particular focus on so-called key individuals, had achieved many major victories in the late 1930s, particularly in the US automotive industry, this successful concept had been undermined by Saul Alinsky. According to McAlevey, while the CIO was still concerned with anchoring its campaigns deeply within society by carefully identifying key figures or lead-

ers in the working class and building the campaigns around them, Alinsky transformed organizing into a liberal form of mobilisation, in which professional organizers aimed for quick negotiation successes for the organizations in question through often superficial forms of engagement.

## A problematic view

Precisely because McAlevey can already be regarded as a classic figure in organizing today, it makes sense to notice this point here. Her view of the 1930s is problematic in at least two respects. Firstly, the 1930s in the USA were a period of extraordinary worker militancy, which, while not rendering the strategies of the CIO obsolete, did significantly relativise their importance. Whether in the coalfields, steel mills, or car factories, in many cases the workers organized themselves entirely without the involvement of union organizers. Kim Moody, in particular, a former organizer and one of the finest left-wing experts on the history of the US working class, highlighted this in his still well worth reading critique of McAlevey, thereby grounding her concept of *deep organizing*.

Victoria Gray of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party on the floor of the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

IMAGE: RECOLLECT



Secondly, McAlevey's harsh criticism of Alinsky obscures his significant contribution to the further development of organizing. This becomes readily apparent when one considers the extent to which McAlevey, too, follows Alinsky's approach, even setting aside the concept of *key figures*. For instance, Alinsky relied exclusively on well-trained and professional organizers in his work, and McAlevey did not contradict him on this point. It was Alinsky who understood himself and his practice as non-ideological, and McAlevey, fittingly, avoided making any explicit political affiliations despite her numerous publications. It was also Alinsky who focused the organizing campaigns unilaterally on victories and gains in power, and McAlevey remained true to him by giving her book the subheading *Organizing for Power*.

In short: in Alinsky's case in particular, the old saying holds true that one must first earn the right to be criticised. Alinsky did this primarily by creating, as both a practitioner and author, an organizing paradigm that remains central to this day. But one thing should not be forgotten: while many on the Left in the 1930s were also Stalinists, Alinsky, with his

militant liberalism, helped to preserve organizing from becoming a tool of totalitarianism.

### The fruitful struggle with Alinsky after World War II

However, while strategic debates are undoubtedly important in organizing, it would be wrong to over-emphasise them – a little flexibility is certainly called for. For if it is difficult to draw a clear line between oneself and such a dominant figure, that is precisely where an important driving force lies. Grappling with Alinsky's perspectives and convictions creates an important dynamic in organizing. Or to put it another way: before engaging in conceptual battles and modifying Alinsky's legacy, it is essential to internalise a certain mindset as an organizer. This was particularly aptly summed up in *Labor Notes* in the second edition of the *Troublemaker's Handbook*: 'Organizing is an attitude. It's the attitude that you and your co-workers together can do something to make things better. It's the attitude that action is better than complaining. It's the attitude that all problems are just situations waiting for a solution. It's the refusal to be discour-

**'Organizing is an attitude. It's the attitude that you and your co-workers together can do something to make things better. It's the attitude that action is better than complaining. It's the attitude that all problems are just situations waiting for a solution'**

aged – at least not for long. It's the willingness to listen to others with respect, so that the plan you come up with reflects the ideas of many people.'

If we take this point to the period after World War II, two examples here highlight just how fruitful the struggle with 'Godfather' Alinsky is for organizing. The first example leads us to Ella Baker, one of the great activists of the US Civil Rights Movement. During her eventful life, she realised that effective organizing, unlike Alinsky's approach, had to focus not only on external victories and successes, but at least as much on internal ones. What was the point of persuading African Americans to register to vote, even in the racist South, if their harsh living conditions were accompanied by profound ignorance and overwhelming fear?

For organizing to be effective here, these people not only had to go out and vote, but they also had to be strengthened as a group. That is why Baker understood organizing as *spade work* – that is, intensive and often thorough groundwork within

the relevant community – which the US civil rights activist Charles Sherrod put into concrete terms as follows: 'Organizers had to be morale boosters, teachers, welfare agents, transportation coordinators, canvassers, public speakers, negotiators, lawyers, all while communicating with people ranging from illiterate sharecroppers to well-off professionals and while enduring harassment from the agents of the law and listening with one ear for the threats of violence.'

At the same time, Baker placed great emphasis on the fact that this growing grassroots movement should play a significant role in relevant organizations, such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Finally, she also believed it was important for the organizers themselves to change during this process. In this respect, there is a direct link between her and what is now known as transformative organizing, which Eric Mann summarises as follows: 'Transformative organizing aims to bring about a change in the system, a change in the consciousness of those being



Ella Baker, activist of the US Civil Rights Movement.

IMAGE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## ABF Malmö sydväst

### Empowerment, education, social justice, inclusion, anti-racism

ABF (Sweden) is the place where diversity and opportunities meet, where we delve into learning, culture and democracy together. We create meeting places in both physical and digital spaces. With a strong local presence, ABF is often the driving force in local associations and collaborates with both existing and new movements. We want to make public education accessible to everyone.

### Biggest win?

Making folk education accessible for workers around the country empowers people to organize for change. We are part of a long Swedish history of transition: from lack of voting and educational rights, poverty and dangerous working conditions to workers getting access to books, premises and democratic methods of organizing, exchanging experiences and mobilising for change. With our roots in the labour movement's values of equality and solidarity, we need, now more than ever, to defend a

democratic society where every individual can grow and contribute. We continue to support an inclusive community, making culture accessible to more people.



### What could others learn from you?

How to empower people through folk education and create democratic ways of learning: something very special happens when people meet!

organized, and a change in the consciousness of the organizers themselves.'

### Success depends on organizational culture

The second development in post-war organizing worth discussing here is the organizing of 400,000 farm workers in the US by the United Farm Workers (UFW) in the late 1960s and 1970s. This demonstrates that successful organizing is also a matter of organizational culture. While Alinsky and many of his successors were often still rather uncritical institutionalists, the case of the US farm workers demonstrates that it is not enough for organizations to believe they can succeed in organizing simply by following established models. While the AFL-CIO, a US trade union federation with considerable organizing experience, had been trying in vain for years, it was only with the UFW – founded in 1966 and led by Cesar Chavez – that the

mass organization of farm workers was finally achieved.

To explain this, Marshall Ganz, who himself was an organizer with the UFM in his younger years, established the concept of *strategic capacity* in a brilliant essay in 2000. In doing so, he demonstrated that it was UFM's outstanding leadership and organizational culture that underpinned its success. Or, in his own words: 'Strategic capacity is greater if a leadership team includes insiders and outsiders, strong and weak network ties, and access to diverse, yet salient, repertoires of collective action and also if an organization conducts regular, open, authoritative deliberation, draws resources from multiple constituencies, and roots accountability in those constituencies.'

Yet in doing so, Ganz did not merely illustrate why organizing quickly reaches its limits, particularly within bureaucratic organizations. Largely unnoticed, he posed an intriguing follow-up question: if effective leadership should be as diverse

## ACORN

### Community union, direct action

ACORN (UK) is a community union in England and Wales that brings people together to build power, fight for and win the changes our people and our communities need and deserve. We know that the economic and political setup in our country isn't working for us, so we formed ACORN in Bristol in 2014 to organize for what we are entitled to.

#### Biggest win?

Since ACORN's inception in 2014, we have been resisting 'no fault' evictions on a local level not just

to protect our communities from housing insecurity but to simultaneously highlight the UK's decades long rental crisis. From 1 May, England will now see the biggest change to renters rights in generations in the 'Renters Right Act'!

To achieve this, ACORN has stopped countless evictions via direct action and also worked as part of the Renters Reform Coalition. Both tactics have influenced major policy decisions including the end of no fault evictions, banning of rental bidding wars, criminalisation of rent-up-front and discrimination of child-having tenants and so much more.

#### What could others learn from you?

ACORN isn't working to win demands: we're working to build power. An organizer should always be more concerned with the process of power building than with the process of specific results. Those who think only about issues and demands can be frustrated by the amount of time and effort in organizational maintenance, but these are the criticisms of someone who hasn't yet learned the value of building power. To win, protect our wins and win bigger, we must build power.



as possible and operate as equals within their teams, why did this not also apply to successful grassroots groups? Were key figures as important as has always been argued in the field of organizing? Or could organizing also be understood as the art of revitalising organizations through diverse and egalitarian grassroots structures?

## Constants in organizing

This brings us to the threshold of the 21st century, and if I have, I hope, succeeded in briefly outlining the incredible diversity of organizing in its first hundred years, then a short pause might be appropriate. Given all these changes, it is only natural to briefly consider whether, aside from the immense significance of Saul Alinsky, there are any other constants in organizing?

Well, first of all, there is one cornerstone of organizing, which Sam Luebke and Jennifer Luff pointed to with an interesting thought experiment in their essay on the hidden history of organizing, back in 2003: 'A union organizer from the 1930s dropped into the center of an organizing campaign today would feel familiar with more than just the day-old coffee and the pervading stench of cigarettes. The basic building block of organizing is the one-on-one encounter between an organizer and a worker. This intimate engagement, in which an organizer helps a worker analyse her work life and then encourages and motivates her to take specific steps to unite with fellow co-workers, has not changed. These encounters, stacked up one after the other, constitute the skeleton of an organizing drive. Our hypothetical time-traveling organizer would find that the essential equation of an organizing campaign [(worker anger + worker hope and vision) – fear of the boss + victory or defeat] remains the same.'

While this reference to the enduring importance of one-to-one con-

versations in organizing may come as little surprise, the next point might be different. For this, too, is a constant: as in almost no other political field, women have always played a pivotal role in organizing. This is evident not only from Ella Baker and Jane McAlevey, or from the fact that the organization of the successful Mamdani election campaign in New York was led by Tascha van Auken. Precisely because their legacy has become so blurred over time, it is important at this point to recall the courageous struggles of the IWW at the beginning of the 20th century.

For within this anarcho-syndicalist trade union, which was crushed by brutal repression after World War I, there were a number of legendary female organizers. These include, among others: Marry Harris 'Mother' Jones, Elizabeth Gurly Finn, Jane Street, Lucy Parsons, Mathilda Robbins, Jenny Velsek, Helen Keller, Violet Wilkins. Lucy Parsons, in particular, demonstrates just how important these women were to the IWW's aggressive organizing strategy, in which forms of direct action such as sabotage played a significant role in empowering the movement. Not only was Parsons already regarded by her contemporaries as 'more dangerous than a thousand rioters'. When she died in 1942, allegedly at the age of ninety, the Chicago police seized her library and all her writings, which were then presumably destroyed by the FBI.

## Organizing in the 21st century

And so, we come to the end of this journey through time. And from one perspective, it is certainly a welcome ending, for it is clear that organizing in the 21st century has reached new heights in many respects. For example, Barack Obama became the first former community organizer to be elected US president in 2008. Considering the deep-seated racism in the US, the immense achievement of



Jane McAlevey.

**'The basic building block of organizing is the one-on-one encounter between an organizer and a worker. This intimate engagement, in which an organizer helps a worker analyse her work life and then encourages and motivates her to take specific steps to unite with fellow co-workers, has not changed.'**



Tascha Van Auken.  
IMAGE: ED REED/MAYORAL  
PHOTOGRAPHY OFFICE

**If, following Obama's election victory, one might have thought that organizing had also ensured that racism in the US had become significantly less prevalent, then the Trump presidency shows today how much of a mistaken assumption that was.**

the election campaign orchestrated by Marshall Ganz – which brought an African American to the highest office in the US government – becomes abundantly clear. Organizing also managed to become part of popular culture: Ken Loach's film *Bread and Roses* brought the SEIU's legendary Justice for Janitors campaign of the 1990s to the attention of a wide audience, including in Europe. Moreover, real-world organizing also reached Europe, with the result that from the 2000s onwards, small, and large projects sprang up in more European countries. And after Jane McAlevey caused a sensation with her book *No Shortcuts*, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation launched the Organizing for Power (O4P) programme in 2019, which conveyed McAlevey's ideas on deep organizing. The numbers speak for themselves: over 40,000 people from more than 1,800 trade unions, organizations, and movements across 115 countries participated in the various formats.

However, as wonderful as all these and many other organizing successes are – one need only think of the courageous struggle of the citizens of Minneapolis against Trump's fascism, which is also a product of effective community organizing – it would be self-deception to ignore the terrible developments of our present time, which Naomi Klein aptly termed *disaster capitalism*. Organizing aims to shake up and shift power structures, and precisely for this reason, it cannot ignore the question of whether and how its own development is linked to the looming social collapse of the world.

### **Shifts in power remain limited**

On this point, two concluding thoughts. Firstly, it is impossible to ignore the sustainability problem inherent in organizing. However varied the approaches may be, however much passion, strategy and courage have gone into every organizing cam-

paign, however impressive the successes in the examples presented here may appear, in the end, lasting and radical shifts in power through organizing have remained limited. If, following Obama's election victory, one might have thought that organizing had also ensured that racism in the US had become significantly less prevalent, then the Trump presidency shows today how much of a mistaken assumption that was. Moreover, while left-wing newspapers and magazines have been full of reports on union organizing successes in different workplaces for years, this has not been able to reverse the decline in union membership rates, neither in the US nor anywhere in Europe.

One can only speculate as to why this is the case. The theory goes like this: while organizing demonstrates how any left-wing movement can act successfully and proactively, everyday life is perhaps an even greater adversary than the world's rulers. Social struggles, too, are presumably only won and lost in times of peace, a point that has only been seriously addressed in organizing in Ella Baker's *spade work* approach and the transformative organizing that emerged from it, meaning there is an urgent need for the Left to build upon this foundation.

The second consideration, to better understand the disconnect between organizing and global development, makes a look at the Global South worthwhile, because here it becomes clear just how much the world's catastrophic development has long been reflected in two opposing forms of organizing. On the one hand, what Mike Davis called the *planet of slums* reveals particularly clearly that the history of organizing unfortunately also includes politically right-wing organizing. The rise of evangelicalism and Islamism, for example, is not simply the triumph of two religious movements. Given their immense growth figures, one can undoubtedly describe them as

the most dynamic social movements in the world today, movements that are also growing thanks to their community work. By reaching out to the marginalised sections of society that the respective state and other political movements abandoned long ago, they are also amassing ever-greater and ever-more-terrifying power. Bolsonaro's presidency, brutal terrorist and militia groups such as Boko Haram or IS, the increasing global pressure on women's rights – all of this, amongst other things, is the result of right-wing religious organizing.

### Learning from body mapping

However, the example of the Global South alone is not enough to illustrate the immense impact of right-wing organizing. There is also a progressive organizing movement there that receives far too little attention in the Global North. Perhaps the most striking example is the strategy of body mapping, which, depending on the source, originates from South Africa or Brazil, and which has long

deserved to be more than just an insider's tip in organizing. The procedure is simple, yet extremely effective. Whether in workplaces, communities, or other contexts, one first presents a group with the silhouette of a body. The participants are then asked to mark the areas where they experience chronic pain. Based on these markings, the group almost always realises, to their surprise, that individual ailments are not individual at all, and that the group's collective pain is also related to their social environment. The result is a sense of solidarity, emotional engagement, and an accessible, embodied way of fighting for a different, better world.

What is more, what might seem odd at first glance – given that organizing in the industrialised, developed world tends to be very head- and strategy-oriented – is by no means the case. Given that even social epidemiologists emphasise that the human body is a true reflection of the conditions surrounding it, working with body images is scientifically grounded. If, building on this, people make their natural state an indicator of a healthy and just world, further

## Allt åt alla Malmö

### Local collective power, tenant organizing, collective demands, right to the city

Allt åt alla Malmö (Sweden) builds local collective power by organizing around housing, living conditions and the right to the city. By linking neighbours, creating common spaces and coordinating collective action, they turn everyday problems into shared demands and build the capacity needed to act collectively in local conflicts over time. Much of the current work focuses on tenant organizing.

#### Biggest win?

The most recent win came in March 2026, when a full year of local tenant organizing culminated in a collective win affecting the common areas of several apartment blocks. Built through yard meetings, door-knocking, collective complaints and coordinated pressure, it showed that organized tenants can force movement from a private landlord. What matters more than the concessions themselves is what was built along the way: stronger links between tenants, a sharper sense of collective power, and the emergence of a core group

of tenants with the potential to win again and again.

#### What could others learn from you?

Repeated contact is key to identifying shared issues and building the trust needed to organize around them. By taking the initiative, linking people around common problems, and keeping the first collective steps accessible, everyday problems can be turned into local collective power.



Allt åt alla

Ver.di Handel  
Bayern protesting  
during Covid in  
Munich. IMAGE: VER.DI

research shows that they are well advised to do so, because human consciousness is often more fickle and more prone to distortion than physical and psychological symptoms. If people learn to listen to their bodies again through body mapping, that is also a form of ecological awareness. And for those with serious doubts, perhaps a high-tech example: at the major fashion chain H&M, the Ver.di trade union and the TIE network successfully used body mapping to secure a technology collective agreement in which the bodies of female shop assistants play a decisive role in determining the use of new technology!

Organizing could therefore succeed if it began to put into perspective those Western traditions from which it has emerged. Rationalism, institutionalism, power orientation,



keyperson, and obedience logics – all of these are important, but also politically problematic. In body mapping, however, the Global South extends a hand to us so that we may learn from its understanding of the world. It is time to take this hand, thereby paving the way for a sensory,

growth-critical, and sustainable form of organizing. The Native American community organizer Nick Estes aptly highlighted the value of the experiences of Indigenous and colonially exploited people when he laconically observed: our history is the future! †

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## Valery Alzaga

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you are currently working on!**

Until recently, I served as Deputy Director for Global Labor Justice – an international labour rights organization fighting to unionise workers in difficult sectors, advocate for just migration, and hold corporations accountable across their value chains.

My primary focus was the seafood sector, organizing migrant fishers in the Taiwan Distant Water Fleet and building a global support network from fishing vessels to consumer markets in the US, Japan, and the EU.

I'm currently organizing a gathering of union leaders, housing rights organizers, and social movement heads to prepare for the coming crisis – drawing on lessons from COVID and how the right used that moment to advance their agenda.

### **The strategy – or method – Bargaining for the Common Good is very important in your work. What does it mean and can you give some examples?**

Bargaining for the Common Good is both an organizing philosophy and a campaigning method. The core idea is that groups that were previously fighting separately become deeply aligned, developing joint capacity, shared skills, and a common political education – a critical analysis of racial capitalism that makes visible the gender, racial, and migration divisions of labour, and who controls the economy today.

The result is bigger fighting blocks. A striking example: teachers in Minnesota developed bargaining demands together with parents – the result wasn't just a better union contract, but demands for housing funding, school meals, and staffing,

turning a labour negotiation into a community-wide campaign.

What starts as siloed fights becomes coordinated strategic campaigning: synchronised contract dates, Strike Weeks joined by renters' unions and climate strikers – creating a crisis for employers and politicians who can no longer hold out against a coordinated movement. And crucially, a joint political front pushing for the regulation no single organization could win alone.



### **What are some of the tools used in Bargaining for the Common Good organizing?**

The principles are really strategic commitments that reshape organizing from the ground up: expand bargaining beyond wages; go on the offensive against the really bad actors; engage community allies as genuine partners; centre racial justice in your demands; strengthen internal organizing; leverage capital. And perhaps most importantly – the campaign doesn't end once the contract is signed. Winning at the bargaining table is one moment in a longer struggle, not the finish line.

### **Can you share something that gives you hope or has inspired your work?**

What gives me the most hope is what I've seen from union movements in Minnesota and South Korea – unions that have stepped far beyond traditional labour issues to actively defend democracy itself. When unions are strong, rooted in their communities, and clear about who the real opposition is, they become a force that can't be ignored. That's exactly the kind of unionism Bargaining for the Common Good is trying to build: unions that fight not just for their members, but for the common good of everyone.

# "GREAT ORGANIZERS DOZE LOVE"

## 11 ORGANIZERS ON KEY TRAITS

**From pushing forward to knowing one's limits, from baby steps to the big picture, every organizer is different. Here, eleven of them share their thoughts on what makes a good one.**

Organizing is a deeply humane experience. It works with emotions, it creates connection, it strives at building community. Working towards a goal, every organizer inevitably brings their very specific set of character traits to an organizing project and makes them work in the organizing setting. While some organizers believe in strictly adhering to a pre-defined and somewhat standardised plan, others may contend that good organizing only happens if one's personality and feelings become a major part of it (next to all the plans to win, structure tests, and pre-defined goals, of course). So, trying to find the one and only formula for becoming a successful organizer may be a tough nut to crack.

However, exploring what a good organizer can be made of seems worthwhile. To do so, we went right to the source: we asked eleven organizers what they think characterises the work and personalities of good organizers', and we got eleven very different answers. It was even possible to narrow it down to some pairs of contradicting elements or character traits that, if synthesised, point toward what kind of organizer will make a truly great one ('cause throwing in some dialectics never hurt anyone, right?). But see for yourself – here's what they said.

## Structure vs. Feelings

When asked what makes a good organizer, Stine Solvoll Navarsete, organizing adviser with Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV) in Norway, thinks of a person that is, quite simply, well organized. “A good organizer is, first of all, a person who uses lists and post-its. How can you really organize anything without a to-do list or a time schedule?”, she says, and characterises an organizer as “someone who cares about details, who manages to think ahead, and who uses lists.”

Nils-Erik Flatø, canvassing captain for SV, agrees, and adds discipline and the necessity to “know one’s shit” to the list. All this structure and work “behind the scenes”, he says, is definitely “not glamorous. And let’s be honest, boring. Very boring at times. But crucial”. Crucial, because all the structure and preparedness shows people who show up to meetings or events that their time is being valued and that the set goal may actually be achievable – which ultimately is the catalyst to get more people organized, both Stine and Nils-Erik agree.

Ola Brunnström, who is a train driver, unionist and organizer with the union SEKO in Sweden, approaches the question from a different angle and points out the relevance of emotions. “I think an organizer works with feelings”, he says. “You work with the relationships you have with the people you are organizing. It is crucial to have a deep relationship with as many people as possible in your organization. You know it’s a good organization when it has a lot of organizers that are able to create these connections.” He’s convinced that these

emotional bonds and relationships are not a goal in themselves. Because ultimately, it comes down to “the ask”. “This could be anything from participating in a strike or to be prepared for an election; anything out of the ordinary, really”, he elaborates – and “the better the relationship you have with a person, the more difficult the questions you can ask”, he concludes.

While these approaches may appear quite different at first glance, they in fact imply one another: structure without real connection risks becoming cold and instrumental, while even the strongest emotional bonds cannot endure without structure, reliability, and accountability. Their tension points toward a form of organizing that is relationally grounded and institutionally sustained.

## Listening vs. Storytelling

If we’re talking about organizing people, it isn’t too far-fetched to assume that an organizer needs to be good with people. Lewis Jordan, who is an organizer with the UK’s Green party and a board member at the community union Acorn, says that “first and foremost, you’ve got to be a people person” to be a good organizer. “It helps to have some interest in people



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ORGANIZATION.”

**OLA BRUNNSTRÖM**

and individual persons, where they are, where they're going, what their motivation is, what their capacity is", he says, because ultimately, this helps determine where individuals can fit "into the bigger picture".

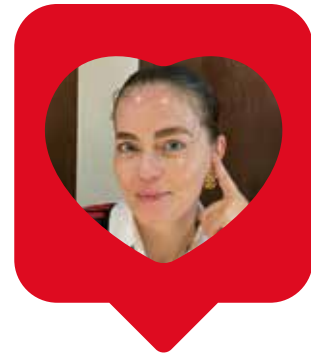
Martine Heijthuyzen, organizer with the union FNV in the Netherlands, is equally convinced that a good organizer is someone who "is empathetic, who is not afraid to reach out, who is proactive in social contact". This enables the organizer to build relationships – at first between fellow organizers, and subsequently among the people that are supposed to be organized. This should ultimately allow the organizer to become obsolete, because people will have established relationships among themselves that will help them to gain strength and power for their respective struggles. So, Martine is convinced that building relationships through one-on-one conversations is a key to success.

All this means one thing first and foremost, according to Paul Czermak, a lead organizer with KPÖ in Austria: listening. "I strongly believe that a good organizer listens instead of just talking. They understand the real problems of the people affected – whether at work, in their neighbourhood, or wherever they're active. A good organizer builds trust, identifies key people, and connects them. A good organizer can lead conversations and mobilise others." The ability to listen closely and attentively is, of course, deeply connected to general communication skills. However, a good organizer doesn't necessarily "have to be a great public speaker", says Nils-Erik Flatø – but they need to be able to listen closely and attentively enough to be able to "create a goal that a lot of people can get behind".

The crucial aspect of identifying this common goal leads us to the other side of the coin. All the time spent listening and all the stories heard need to lead somewhere: to the set goal, of course. Kim van Eekelen,

election manager at BIJ1 in the Netherlands, is convinced that "storytelling is also incredibly important": you need to have a narrative, a story, something that you can fall back on in conversations and something that becomes the ultimate motivation to legitimise and further build toward your goal, to make it known and something that seems worth fighting for. Because an organizer "thinks strategically, not just – but sometimes also – spontaneously", as Paul puts it, this means two things. Being able to "energise" and "hold pep talks" if necessary, says Olivia Koefoed Olesen, vice chair of the Red-Green Youth in Denmark, but also to "create a hype around the project and give others the same compass that you have. I believe in hype culture", they conclude.

Now, how do both listening and storytelling become a fit? In good organizing, they are, in fact, complementary. Because "a truly great organizer is someone who can push conflicts forward without unnecessary division", as Paul puts it, organizing needs to do both. Only listening without steering a conversation in a particular direction would result in loose ends and thus, no progress toward a goal; while doing most of the talking – or storytelling – can easily make others feel overruled, talked down and patronised. So, good organizing needs to be grounded in active listening that – at the right time – falls back on a carefully developed narrative. This storytelling or narrative can only be heard and gain legitimacy if the stories of others are listened to. We couldn't phrase it better than Kim van Eekelen: "Building relationship goes via being a good listener, but also being able to be a great storyteller as well – narrative is incredibly important. How do you motivate people? It's usually with words. That's how you bring your mission to them, how you narrate it. So it's really about creating relationships through that listening, but also storytelling skills."



"A GOOD LEADER IS NOT NECESSARILY EASY TO WORK WITH AS AN ORGANIZER. OFTEN LEADERS ARE SOME OF THE MOST CRITICAL PEOPLE."

**MARTINE HEIJTHUYZEN**



"A GOOD LEADER TAKES RESPONSIBILITY AND SHARES THE PRAISE – AND IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, IT'S THEIR FAULT."

**NILS-ERIK FLATØ**

## Baby steps vs. Big picture

Now, we have heard many people talk about narratives, stories, and different ways to achieve goals. What, however, defines a good goal? First of all, every good project needs a plan – ideally one that is as detailed as it is thorough, one “that involves a lot of concrete tasks and that needs the involvement of a lot of people”, Nils-Erik Flatø says. So, it is really about thinking in baby steps rather than making one big leap. To be as accessible and inclusive as possible, the planned actions and steps need to be understandable and traceable. This

way, your goal also becomes something that feels achievable.

On the other hand, all your activities should point towards a bigger picture or goal. This should inform all your conversations and actions, and serve as your point of reference throughout all your work. Stine Solvoll Navarsete puts it like this: “We often organize volunteers, and you don’t have anything except motivation to keep people doing what they should be doing. Always being able to communicate that common goal is extremely important”. This bigger picture doesn’t always need to be the revolution, mind. It can be anything from winning an election to changing a local policy, as Nils-Erik says: “It can be big, it can be small, but it has to be concrete.”

Only taking small steps may feel tangible and feasible, but this leaves the utopian surplus out of the mis-

sion – small goals alone do not necessarily point toward a genuine desire to change things. A big goal without clearly laid-out steps to achieve it, however, may feel like a nice dream but not like something remotely achievable. So, what is needed then – and Nils-Erik phrases it perfectly – is “a clear goal. It has to be ambitious enough and grand enough to be motivating and inspiring, but it has to be concrete enough that people understand what they’re getting behind.” In Regina Brückner’s words – she is an organizer with Die Linke Berlin, “it’s about seeing both the small details and the bigger picture, and being able to connect and translate between them.” Personality-wise, this translates into two key features of a good organizer, according to Paul Czermak: “a good organizer is stubborn, but patient”.

## Barcelona en Comú

### Housing, social rights, ecology, feminism, municipalism

Barcelona en Comú is a municipalist political party rooted in social movements, made up of residents, activists, and workers who entered institutions to defend everyday life. They organize around housing, public services, labour rights, feminist and climate justice: organizing from the neighbourhood level to confront inequality and speculation in the city. They are community-organized, building democratic power with a vocation to become a broad social majority: a city run by its neighbours, not by those who profit from it.

#### Biggest win?

One of our biggest organizing wins in Barcelona en Comú was not only building an electoral campaign, but

building a real political community capable of growing collectively, generating new leaderships, and sustaining long-term organizing across the entire city of Barcelona. But the most important achievement was not logistical — it was emotional and collective. A real sense of belonging was created. People dedicated enormous amounts of their free time to the campaign not only because they wanted political change, but because they had found a community, a place to return to every day, and a collective project they felt part of.

#### What could others learn from you?

Successful political organizing is not only about elections, communication, or institutions — it is about building community, trust, and collective ownership over time.



One of the key lessons is that people become more committed when they are treated as protagonists instead of simple volunteers. In our experience, organizing works best when people are given real responsibility, political information, autonomy, and space to grow. That generated confidence, creativity, and long-term engagement. Another important lesson is that leadership should not be understood as something individual or charismatic, but as something collective and distributed. That is probably one of the most important things we learned: durable political organization is built when people feel that the project also belongs to them.

**Individuality vs. Collective**

Now, we have established that, as an organizer, you're a people person in one way or another. This means that you're usually dealing with a lot of very different individuals and, accordingly, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, peculiarities, and needs.

So, it should go without saying that one shouldn't presuppose that a large number of individuals automatically constitutes a collective. People are different – and so is what they can potentially bring to a project. This is why Stine Solvoll Navarsete highlights that “when organizing an event or a project, it's extremely important to see the individual strength of each member of the working group, and how you as an organizer can build on those

strengths. Because every little task has its own value in a big project”. It is, thus, crucial to acknowledge a person's individuality. Taking the time to get to know one another is essential – as is avoiding a false sense of egalitarianism that may obscure all the valuable things a person has to offer.

However, it is just as true that it wouldn't be a good organizing project if you didn't try to form a collective. This is why every organizer should aim at combining all those strengths and individuals so that ultimately, they can form a diverse and plural group, as Stine says: “A good organizer is a person who can create a sense of team spirit in the group, and who makes everyone aware of the common goal that we're working for.”

Understood dialectically, it becomes evident that just highlighting individuality is a path to nowhere and would add to further atomisation of the left and of society. On the other hand, however, it seems that if a collective is just assumed without putting in the work to shape it, you



**“A GOOD ORGANIZER IS, FIRST OF ALL, A PERSON WHO USES LISTS AND POST-ITS. HOW CAN YOU REALLY ORGANIZE ANYTHING WITHOUT A TO-DO LIST OR A TIME SCHEDULE?”**

**STINE SOLVOLL NAVARSETE**

**BIJ1**

**Political party; decolonial socialist organizing**

BIJ1 (Netherland) is a radical left, intersectional party in the Netherlands. We fight racism, capitalism, and colonialism, centring marginalised communities. We work toward a society based on equality, solidarity, and care, through redistribution, climate justice, and systemic change, in close connection with grassroots and global liberation movements.

**Biggest win?**

One of BIJ1's biggest organizing wins is pushing the Dutch state

toward an official institutional apology for its colonial slavery history, opening the path to concrete reparative measures. Equally significant is the cultural shift we helped drive: the normalisation of anti-racism in public debate, especially confronting anti-Black racism, and bringing intersectionality from activist spaces into mainstream political discourse.

**What could others learn from you?**

Our key lesson is about strategy and messaging. Centring identity alone didn't build the base we needed and sometimes fuelled internal conflict instead

of fostering unity. Through extensive message testing, we shifted to a Race-Class narrative that connects all forms of oppression to

material issues like housing, work, and healthcare. This keeps intersectionality in our analysis while making our politics concrete and material, rooted in lived experience, and easier to organize around.



risk becoming a rather hollow organization under the false presumption of egalitarianism. Synthesised, this points towards an organizing model that strives for a strong, plural, and heterogenous collective that is rooted in different personalities and the possibility to showcase individuality and a wide array of skills.

**Validation vs. Challenge**

What should have become clear by now is that liking people seems to be an important prerequisite for relational organizing. “You have to like people, basically, and be able to motivate and see everyone’s contribution to the project, both during and after the process. And basically, to let people know that they’re doing a great job”, says Stine Solvoll Navarsete, and she couldn’t be more right about the fact that validation is an important part of organizing. People should feel seen, and contributing to a project always deserves recognition. Organizers shouldn’t see “people as obstacles or only as problems”, as Regina Brückner puts it; and it is especially true in organizing that even the smallest contributions may be the ones that make the whole organization work – “that’s not a banality at all”, she says.

At the same time, it is also true that people come in with different levels of skills and expertise, which means that – in terms of growth and sustainability – they should constantly be challenged to develop and grow. According to Regina, the main goal should be to “see and promote the potential” in them – without sounding “optimisation-oriented”, she says. Lewis Jordan agrees. While he highlights the need to “reduce any bar-



“IT HELPS TO HAVE SOME INTEREST IN PEOPLE AND INDIVIDUAL PERSONS, WHERE THEY ARE, WHERE THEY’RE GOING, WHAT THEIR MOTIVATION IS, WHAT THEIR CAPACITY IS.”

LEWIS JORDAN



“IT’S ABOUT SEEING BOTH THE SMALL DETAILS AND THE BIGGER PICTURE, AND BEING ABLE TO CONNECT AND TRANSLATE BETWEEN THEM.”

REGINA BRÜCKNER

**Pushing vs. Knowing one’s limits**

riers to people getting involved”, he thinks that “occasionally, you need to stoke it up a little bit” and “encourage others to develop and build their skills, and become organizers or leaders themselves”. The goal should always be for others to “compete for your place and replace you eventually. You won’t be around forever. The strength of your organization has to go beyond just you and your abilities, personally. It’s about being sustainable in the long run.”

To summarise, it seems that while validation without challenge may be wholesome and a good way to create a strong sense of community, it risks missing important possibilities and opportunities for development and growth. Only challenging others without validation, on the other hand, easily leads to losing people due to an atmosphere of coldness and optimisation. Accordingly, this points toward organizing (and an organizational model) that uses validation as a way to challenge others to develop and grow, which ultimately leads to a general upscaling of skills and organizational growth.

Leftist organizing faces many challenges – one of the biggest ones probably being that the adversary usually has more money, power and resources at hand. So, going above and beyond may be the only logical path towards success.

Pushing through and forward is one thing. “Most of all, it’s about putting in the work, right? Jane McAlevy was 100 percent right. There are no shortcuts. You’ve just got to do the stuff. And there’s lots of stuff to do. But you’ve got to be committed. You’ve



"I THINK A GOOD ORGANIZER IS ONE WHO IS GOOD AT TEACHING OTHERS TO BE GOOD ORGANIZERS."

**OLIVIA KOEFOED OLESEN**

just got to do it. And yeah, there's no getting around that", says Lewis Jordan. According to him, this entails a lot – building up a network, maybe reading some theory, getting to know people outside your political bubble.

But, on the other hand, a good organizer needs to understand "what their capacity is, what their limit is", he claims. This highlights an important issue: burying oneself in work and not taking a breathing space or engaging in some leisure activity aside from organizing is anything but sustainable – for the organizer's, but also the organization's, health.

Organizing without pushing limits wouldn't achieve much. It needs to be systematic, it needs to be thorough – it requires effort and time and countless extra miles gone. On the other hand, if it is done without really knowing one's limits or acknowledging that one's capacities are, in fact, not unlimited, it remains a flash in the pan. So, the synthesis would be an organizing model that includes setting boundaries but is grounded in self-awareness and attentiveness, and should ultimately lead to educating more and more people so that delegation becomes an option: "I think a good organizer is one who is good at teaching others to be good organizers", says Olivia Koefoed Olesen, and Nils-Erik Flatø adds: "Organize yourself forever. You need to empower people around you so that once you're no longer the leader, there are lots of people who can become leaders after you."

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By now, we have heard a lot about what organizing is about. But is it the same as leadership? Are organizing and leading two different things, do they overlap or are they the same? If our organizers were mostly unanimous in their answers on different topics, this may have been the most controversial question.

According to Lewis Jordan, an organizer focuses on groundwork, helping to "get the mass of members and supporters and so on who are in behind the leader to be as effective as they can be in advancing the party in different other ways on a small scale". Kim van Eekelen adds that a "a good organizer is also someone that is very good at seeing leadership in others, spotting talents in others, making sure that through these conversations, through these relationships that you build, you get to know someone and you get to see that 'this person would be amazing to contribute to our shared purpose in this way, because they're really good at it'. So this talent spotting is also very important for organizers". Olivia Koefoed Olesen emphasises orientation, arguing that "a good organizer is good at giving others the same compass that they have" so that the organizing mindset can be replicated.

A good leader, on the other hand, "has to be someone who can inspire people, who is reliable, who takes responsibility, who can stand for something with a face and a name", according to Regina Brückner. Lewis Jordan describes a leader as someone who is "at the front, who's bringing people along with them," while Nils-Erik Flatø frames leadership as being a "visionary, a storyteller".

Leaders align people with differing views around a common goal “that is so worthwhile that people are willing to set aside their differences in order to help achieve it.” They maintain oversight without micromanaging, delegate tasks, and focus on the big picture rather than being caught up “in the details”. Rather than seeking the spotlight, they create “space for the brilliance of others. So they set the stage, but then they let their staff, the organizers, and the volunteers shine. So a good leader takes responsibility and shares the praise – and if something goes wrong, it’s their fault”, even if that means that leadership is not always the “most rewarding position”. Lastly, leaders are “interchangeable”, whereas organizers usually are not.

In workplaces or communities, leaders often hold a certain “standing” within their peer group, as Paul Czermak notes, and, as Martine Heijthuyzen adds, this “following” does not automatically mean being the “loudest person in the room”. She also points out that “a good leader is

not necessarily easy to work with as an organizer. Often leaders are some of the most critical people.” This means that existing leaders may not automatically become leaders within a specific organizing effort. There are also mid-level leadership roles, a model used within DSA. According to Arielle Swernoff, organizer at DSA New York, those who step up from organizing are characterised by being assertive, kind, and reliable: “They’re interested in why things are happening. They’re resourceful, good at solving problems on their own. If something comes up, they can figure out how to do it. They don’t have to run every kind of small question up the flagpole. They like to figure it out. They’re welcoming toward others. Engaging, resourceful, welcoming, reliable, calm, respectful, and tactful. Something that’s really critical is actually reliability and the willingness to grind, right?”

So, this leads us to the ultimate question: are they the same? While most of our organizers would disagree, Kim van Eekelen follows Mar-



“SOMETHING THAT’S REALLY CRITICAL IS ACTUALLY RELIABILITY AND THE WILLINGNESS TO GRIND, RIGHT?”

**ARIELLE SWERNOFF**

## Clara Foundation

### Trainings & capacity building for movement-builders and organizers

Clara Foundation is a Swedish non-profit supporting organizers, activists, and movement builders through training, courses, and networking. They build capacity for political and civic engagement by sharing proven methods and tools, making knowledge accessible to a broader public and creating spaces for people across movements to learn from each other.

#### Biggest win?

Our biggest win is the creation of Organize! Movement Meetup, a

gathering place for the left that we have built together. Building on the community formed through Coders & Organizers, we are now bringing 300 organizers, developers, and campaigners together in Malmö for three days of workshops, keynotes, and shared experience. This is a space where movements meet, where we exchange methods, sharpen our campaigns, and deepen our practice of organizing. A space where knowledge travels across borders and where those of us who are fighting for a stronger left can learn from each other and grow together. And we are just getting started.



#### What could others learn from you?

We know how to create spaces where people actually connect. Through participatory methods and careful facilitation, we bring together organizers, developers, and campaigners in ways that generate real exchange, not just networking. We believe that investing in the space itself, in how people meet and learn from each other, is one of the most powerful things a movement can do.

shall Gantz's definition and argues that "by definition, a good organizer is also a leader". When thinking of leadership as "accepting responsibility for enabling others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty". She adds: "That doesn't mean that the organizer is the leader in every project that they participate in – but a good organizer definitely has good leadership skills and is also good at spotting good leaders around them so that they can make sure that the movement or the shared purpose that they're creating is not fully dependent on them, but is actually shared and grows and can become bigger and is always bigger than themselves. So leadership is not a position of power. It's more of a practice."

Ultimately, the distinction between organizing and leading points beyond itself. While organizers and leaders may take on different roles – one rooted more in relationships and groundwork, the other in vision and direction – both seem limited when understood in isolation. A good organizer is good to have, a good leader equally so, "but if they work together, they're great," as Nils-Erik Flatø phrases it.

What unites both roles is the ultimate goal of their own reproduction. As Arielle Swernoff argues, "a good leader and a good organizer don't just do things themselves. They're constantly thinking about how they can transfer their skills to other people, how they can replicate themselves in the movement, how they can train others." Accordingly, both roles transcend their primary function: they are not defined by what they achieve individually, but by how they enable others to act. This also reveals a shared contradiction. Excellence concentrated in one person becomes a weakness rather than a strength. As Arielle notes, "even if you're really great, if you're the only person who can do something, you're not being a good organizer and you're creating a critical vulner-



"BUILDING RELATIONSHIP GOES VIA BEING A GOOD LISTENER, BUT ALSO BEING ABLE TO BE A GREAT STORYTELLER AS WELL – NARRATIVE IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT."

**KIM VAN EEKELLEN**



"AN ORGANIZER DEFINITELY NEEDS TO BE – AMONG OTHER THINGS, OF COURSE – COURAGEOUS."

**PAUL CZERMAK**

ability in the movement." Leadership and organizing should therefore aim to distribute capacity, to multiply agency, and to make both roles less indispensable. What emerges is a dialectic of leadership and organizing in which both dissolve into the bigger picture: building collective power by making oneself replaceable.

**Relationship-  
building  
vs.  
Calculation**

By now, we have assembled various skills, traits, and – above all – tensions an organizer operates within. Another, potentially sensitive one, lies between relationship-building and calculation.

We have heard a lot about building relationships, appreciating people as they are, and making organizing about the connections you build with them.

At the same time, leftist organizing usually aims to challenge those in power – which means that, to have any chance of success, a good organizer needs to be "someone who understands power, power structures, which buttons to push to achieve their goals, and who is able to turn that power analysis into a sound strategy," according to Kim van Eekelen. This also means looking at relationships and context in a strategic – perhaps even instrumental – way, and being able "to truly analyse the resources and connections you have, and how you might activate your networks, community, and the people around you in order to achieve your goals."

In this sense, relationship-building and strategy or calculation are not opposites but intertwined: trust enables power, and power analysis gives direction to relationships. As

Kim puts it, an organizer doesn't "just build a community for its own sake; they build a community to build power in order to achieve something: to bring about change." So while relationships should always be an end in themselves, in organizing they may also, depending on the situation, become a means toward ends that can only be achieved collectively.

## Confidence vs. Self-criticism

Advocating for utopian goals can be many things: it can be empowering, it can be frightening, it can cause a real whirlwind of emotions. But if it requires one thing, it is confidence. "An organizer definitely needs to be – among other things, of course – courageous", says Paul Czermak. You need to be confident when communicating your goals and talking to people, whether that means making phone calls or knocking on doors.

At the same time, you need to be relentless at wanting to get better. Self-criticism and scrutiny are what make a truly good organizer. Says Stine Solvoll Navarsete: "At the end of a project, a good organizer will immediately start to evaluate how it went, looking at what could be done better and what went well. You also need to evaluate yourself and see how you can become a better organizer – because the truth is that no organizer is perfect."

What emerges from this is, yet again, a kind of dialectic: the courage to act paired with the humility to question the actions taken. Good organizing depends on both: the willingness to step forward with clarity and conviction, and the discipline to step back, re-evaluate, learn and change.



## Adriel Achaval & Paula Suárez

### Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!

We co-lead the Mobilisation Strategy of Barcelona en Comú, working at the intersection between institutions and community organization. Paula is a family and community doctor, deeply involved in community action and activism for public healthcare. Adriel comes from political science and urban policy, with experience in housing and local government. What we share is the commitment to build collective power: helping more people organize, step up, and lead change from their communities.

### Who is this session for?

This session is for anyone who wants to organize – whether you're just getting started or already involved and wanting to go further. Especially for those who don't yet see themselves as leaders or don't feel part of traditional political spaces. We focus on practice, not just theory. We'll work with real tools: how to build trust, make teams grow, and develop shared leadership. The goal is clear: to move from participation to taking responsibility.

### What leadership skill is often overlooked?

The ability to grow leadership in others. Too often, we understand leadership as stepping forward. In community organizing, it's more about looking around you: creating space, building trust, and sharing responsibility so others can lead. That shift changes everything. It turns groups into communities and participation into power.

### Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight or gives you hope?

Seeing people who never saw themselves as leaders become leaders – the process itself is moving. When the right conditions are created – trust, purpose, and real responsibility – people step up. Not just a few, but many. That's where real change begins: not in big moments, but in everyday organizing, in relationships, and in the moment people realise they have the power to act – and to think – collectively.

So... what is a  
good organizer  
really made of?

Trying to find out what a good organizer is made of is an interesting question – and if all these accounts of experienced organizers have shown one thing, it is that organizing can be so many different things: there most certainly isn't just one way to organize well. So instead of reading all these experiences as the way to go, it may be better to take them as inspiration and as an incentive to reflect on your own organizing. After all, it doesn't take that much to start.

To conclude this article, it may be best to end it with two quotes that might just sum up its essence. The first one is from Steve McFarland, who is a former organizer for Make the Road in New York City and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, and who highlights humanity as the quintessential part of organizing: "I think that a great organizer sees

the people, loves the people, ceaselessly creates opportunities for them to take on leadership. They see the people because we can't win anything without an understanding of where we're at in the landscape and who we've got with us and what they bring to the struggle. Loves the people because that's ultimately why we're in the struggle, not because we hate the systems we're trapped in, but because we love the people and want freedom for them. And I think all great organizers I know ooze that love of the people and energy out of their pores, even though there are all kinds of different personality types that are great at it." We couldn't have phrased it better, and we'll let Nils-Erik Flatø have the final word: "Get serious. And have pride in organizing. Because even if it's not going to make you famous or rich, you are a crucial part of changing the world."!



"I THINK THAT A  
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SEES THE PEOPLE,  
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CEASELESSLY  
CREATES  
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FOR THEM TO TAKE  
ON LEADERSHIP."

**STEVE MCFARLAND**

## Interviewees

**OLA BRUNNSTRÖM** is a unionist and organizer at The Swedish Union for Service and Communications Employees (SEKO).

**REGINA BRÜCKNER** is an organizer with Die Linke in Berlin focusing on canvassing.

**PAUL CZERMAK** is an organizer with the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ).

**NILS-ERIK FLATØ** is a canvassing captain for The Socialist Left Party of Norway (SV).

**MARTINE HEIJTHUYZEN** is a union organizer at the Dutch Trade Union Federation FNV and the lead organizer during BIJ1's parliamentary campaigns.

**LEWIS JORDAN** is an organizer with the UK's Green party and a board member at the community union Acorn.

**OLIVIA KOEFOED OLESEN** is the current vice chair and chairperson-elect of the Red-Green Youth in Denmark.

**STEVE MCFARLAND** is an organizer from the US living in Denmark. He is a former organizer for Make the Road in New York City and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark.

**STINE SOLVOLL NAVARSETTE** works with education and organization building in The Socialist Left Party of Norway (SV).

**ARIELLE SWERNOFF** is an organizer and campaign coordinator with the Democratic Socialists of America in New York and played an active role in Zohran Mamdani's Mayoral Campaign.

**KIM VAN EEKELEN** was the election manager at the intersectional left-wing political party BIJ1 in the Netherlands.

## Common Knowledge

### Digital infrastructure for social movements

We are a not-for-profit worker cooperative of technologists, designers, researchers and facilitators. We work in collaboration with organizers, using our digital skills to help build their capacity, ambition and power. Our work is organized around three interdependent workstreams: creating and maintaining digital infrastructure; training people in digital organizing, security, design methodologies and cooperative governance; and convening.

#### Biggest win?

One of the projects we're most proud of is our Join Flow plugin, which enables people to join an organization and commit to regular membership fees, then signposts

them towards their local group and the next organizing meeting. We designed and built the form in 2021 for the Green Party of England and Wales, which has surged from 68,000 to 200,000 members in the last six months. Over the last few years, we have generalised and implemented the tool for groups like Progressive International, London Renters Union and the Greater Manchester Tenants Union, assisting them to grow their membership and become more financially sustainable. It may not be the most glamorous example, but it demonstrates our methodology. We do the slow and patient work of building digital infrastructure that the movement owns and controls itself, supporting it to build its power and extend it when the moment arises.

### COMMON KNOWLEDGE

#### What could others learn from you?

We structure all of our work around cycles of varying lengths: monthly cycles of work, six monthly rotations of member responsibilities, and year-long strategic focuses. We begin each of these cycles with planning and end them with a retrospective. These retrospectives are one of our most powerful practices, enabling us to celebrate the work we've done, discuss problems that have emerged through the process and identify what to do differently next time. Scheduling regular moments of reflection and feedback ensures that we are continually iterating on our methodologies and improving how we work together.

## Deep Canvassing

### Canvassing, migration, race-class narrative

As the extreme right kept gaining ground in Europe and the Netherlands, Bruno and friends decided to quit their jobs to start Deep Canvassing The Netherlands. In the past 2.5 years, they've trained 800 people in door-to-door conversations on migration. By having long, personal conversations about heated topics, prejudice can soften and new analyses can be made together. Deep Canvassing has around 20 groups that go door-to-door in neighbourhoods where anti-migration sentiment is high. A deep canvassing conversation can change hearts and minds, but new narratives that include class and race need to be echoed through our neighbourhoods in every possible way.

#### Biggest win?

Deep Canvassing The Netherlands is proud to become an actual movement in the Netherlands with local chapters and working groups. These all contribute to improving the conversations and building a strategy that supports progressives' winning and race-class coalitions.

Deep Canvassing The Netherlands logs its conversations, allowing us to track the influence of the discussions framework. And we have been seeing a similar impact in the Netherlands as studies in the USA have shown in the past. The local chapters will continue with the topic of migration and pilot new conversations, such as degrowth or war and peace.

We're particularly happy to contribute to much-needed race-class solidarity in the Netherlands. The extreme right is a huge threat,

but the current Dutch progressives (often perceived as 'elite' and 'high-over-politics') are often unable to reach the working class in all of its diversity.



#### What could others learn from you?

Our know-how on deep canvassing conversations and setting up campaigns around these conversations. We also have experience with the Race-Class Communication Framework, specifically in the Dutch context. Our practice supports movement building with methods such as step-by-step (slow but steady), politicising social work and reclaiming neighbourhood spaces for progressive narratives on solidarity.

# HOW FREE PIZZA AND WOOD ARE HELPING AUSTRIAN KPÖ TO GROW





PHOTO: MARINA ANDREU Y CASADESUS.



**Free pizza, flea markets where you don't need to pay and communal rubbish collection – a range of solidarity projects have helped Austrian KPÖ to grow and build closer ties to its local community.**

The Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) has worked extensively since 2021 to organize all sorts of solidarity projects across Austria. Pia Tomedi is chair of KPÖ in Tyrol, where they started KPÖ's most popular solidarity project – Pizza Comunista, where people can come and eat free pizza once a month.

#### **Why did you start the Pizza Comunista?**

It started as a way to meet voters ahead of the elections and open up the party to the city's residents. We didn't want it to feel like a soup kitchen for poor people. We wanted to make it more fancy, more inclusive and cooler. So we invented the Pizza Comunista because most people eat pizza in restaurants, but don't cook it at home themselves. And because in Tyrol, we have a border to Italy so a lot of people eat pizza. There's a connection between Tyrol and Italy.

#### **But in general, what is your work with solidarity projects about?**

Well, we wanted to start initiatives where people could get some help from the party and also open up spaces for people who are interested in KPÖ and want to be part of it. For example, we have a social wood pro-

ject, where we collect wood for heating and give it to people in need. Because the price of wood is very high. So we collect wood from all kinds of people, and factories even, and give it to people who don't have money for heating.

Capitalism is definitely not working for people, basic survival isn't guaranteed, so we try to create projects to help people. And we do it with solidarity as our basis. We collect something, rather than buy it, and we give it to people in need and they, in turn, can also be part of the collecting. For example, the people who have received wood in the last four years have also become part of the project and are working with us now.

This project is called Wood Action because it's something active, not passive. The goal is that everyone who receives something from us immediately starts to contribute. We start this circle of solidarity, where more and more people are coming in. And think about it: it's easier to show solidarity than to compete.

That's the main goal behind all these solidarity projects. We want to show working class people that solidarity is always an easier path than competition.

#### **That's very cool. Could you tell me about some of your other solidarity projects?**

Yes, in Vienna and here in Innsbruck, there is a rubbish collection action, where people from the KPÖ and people who are interested in the work and locals meet up to clean. The waste management in the bigger cities across Austria has deteriorated significantly because there's not enough money. Especially in the neighbourhoods where poor people or working people live there's a lot of rubbish on the streets, in the gardens, at the playgrounds, and so on. We meet up with local residents and others who are interested and clean these parts of the city.

Another solidarity project is a kind of flea market for clothes, but where everything is free. It is mainly clothes for women and children, because everywhere in Austria the biggest





PHOTO: MARINA ANDREU Y CASADESUS.

group that comes to us for help is single mothers.

But we want to do it with dignity so we build a kind of fancy pop-up shop where there is a changing room and you can get a fashion consultation, things like that. We're starting this in Innsbruck in May. We already do it in Vienna, Salzburg and in Carinthia.

### **When did you start working with solidarity projects?**

I think the starting point was the party meetup in 2021, when a new leadership group was elected and Günther Hopfgartner was elected as chair. He has always been saying that we need to start solidarity projects. We have to show people that capitalism is not good for them, but solidarity is.

Well, there was a group of people who thought that we have to open up



## **Common Knowledge**

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

Common Knowledge is a not-for-profit worker cooperative of technologists, designers, researchers and facilitators. Working in direct collaboration with grassroots organizers and communities around the world, Common Knowledge uses their digital expertise to multiply their impact and capacity. Their session at O!MM, *Seeing the field: Mapping for strategic organizing* will be held by Alex Andrews, Everin Scott, Gemma Copeland and Jan Baykara. We asked Gemma some questions to learn more.

### **Your session *Seeing the field: Mapping for strategic organizing* teaches mapping as a technique for organizers to cut through complexity and analyse their work field. Can you give us a concrete example of how an organization has used mapping successfully in their work?**

Hope Not Hate have been using Mapped in the local elections to counter the threat of the far-right. They have a large network of supporters and custom datasets from detailed MRP polling that segments the Reform coalition: from the committed racists who are unmovable to those who are much more persuadable through deep canvassing. They use this to direct canvassing and leafleting efforts, working at a hyper-local level. We are at the point now where their use of the tool is far beyond anything we taught them to do. It is incredible to see them just run with it, using it in ways we didn't imagine when we first began working together.

### **Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight?**

We have a poster on the wall of our office with a quote from David Graeber: "the ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it's something that we make and could just as easily make differently". This idea is foundational to our cooperative. Despair is a luxury in times like these – we refuse to give into it. We are committed to the idea that the future is not set in stone, that the way we live together is not fixed. We have agency. We can turn up every day, support each other, imagine the futures we want and work together to get there.

the party to local residents and not stay in our offices working on deep theory and texts. That we have to get out and talk to people and meet them and give them opportunities to get to know the party and our values.

The first project at least in Innsbruck was Wood Action, four years ago.

**Did you have any inspiration from another country?**

Well, the inspiration for the Pizza Comunista is all the social centres in Italy, where they do regular pizza meetups in their squads. So that's a common thing in Italy.

**Out of all the solidarity projects that you organize, is any of them especially popular?**

Yes, I would say the pizza. A lot of local branches of the party have copied it and started it in their hometowns. It's a really easy way to connect to new people. In Innsbruck every month we welcome between 80 and 100 people so it's really good advertising for us. And that has been a huge development for our party.

**And is it just pizza? Or do you also have some kind of lecture or anything like that?**

It's just pizza and a lot of political discussions. There's a melting pot of all different generations and cultures. The atmosphere is very welcoming – you can sit anywhere, you can talk to



Pia Tomedi, chair of KPÖ in Tyrol.  
PHOTO: MARINA ANDREU Y CASADESUS.

**“Capitalism is definitely not working for people, basic survival isn't guaranteed, so we try to create projects to help people. And we do it with solidarity as our basis.”**

everyone and have a totally different conversation than your normal conversations with your friends.

**What would you say that the solidarity projects have meant for you as a party?**

Well, they have helped us grow and we have renewed the party. The KPÖ in Austria has grown a lot in recent years and it's partly thanks to the solidarity projects.

People heard about our Wood Action, or about our Pizza Comunista,

and they came and started to work with us. It has meant a huge opportunity to meet new people who are interested in communist politics and have communist values and want to be part of this project. But we don't require people to join the party to be part of the solidarity projects.

Most of them sympathise with us and that's okay. Our goal is to grow, but also to gain wider acceptance among the general public.

**Do you have plans for more solidarity projects in the future?**

Yes! Our next step is to widen our offering and that everywhere there's a KPÖ local branch, there should be a solidarity project. We have written down how to do a Pizza Comunista, how to do a flea market, how to do a rubbish collection action.

**Can a tourist, visiting Innsbruck, come to your Pizza Comunista?**

Sure. We welcome everyone.!

**Die Linke**

**Socialist member party, tenant organizing, affordability, workers' rights, peace & anti-militarism**

As a socialist party, Die Linke (Germany) stands for alternatives and a better future. As democratic socialists, its members hold fast to humanity's dream that a better world is possible.

Die Linke pursues a concrete goal: it fights for a society in which no child has to grow up in poverty, in which all people can live self-determined lives in peace, dignity, and social security, and can shape social conditions democratically. To

achieve this, a different economic and social system is needed: democratic socialism.

**Biggest win?**

Our results in the 2025 snap federal election exceeded all our expectations. We began the campaign as a fight for survival. But we would ultimately secure 8.8 percent of the second vote, win 6 direct seats, and become the leading force among young voters – no one would have thought this possible.

**What could others learn from you?**

Prior to the election campaign, hundreds of party activists were

trained in a pre-election campaign focusing on a different model of party politics and the practice of canvassing and listening. Through our massive door-to-door campaign – with more than 600,000 doors knocked – which mobilised many people nationwide far beyond our membership base, we were able to build trust. In addition, around 60,000 new people have joined our party.



# RELATIONAL ORGANIZING WITH SANDERS AND OCASIO-CORTEZ

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders are US progressives, running successful campaigns while refusing corporate money and relying on relational organizing. Here, Jeremy Parkin – a key figure in their campaigns – shares some core strategies for building grassroots movements.

When Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (known as AOC) won the Democratic primary election to Congress in her district in 2018, it sent shock waves through the establishment. She defeated a candidate who had served ten terms as a U.S. Representative and who had a 22-to-1 fundraising lead over her.

Bernie Sanders, rejecting contributions from major corporations for his presidential campaigns, surprised many in a similar way by winning numerous states in the Democratic presidential primaries during his candidacies in 2016 and 2020. One of his biggest victories in 2020 was the state of Nevada where he won with about 47 percent of the vote. Jeremy Parkin was Sanders' deputy field director there and recalls their campaign in the state began early on. "We had thousands of people knocking on doors and talking to people and doing canvassing with the strip workers, taxi drivers, everyone around the casinos. No one else was operating at that level."

We meet Jeremy Parkin to talk about *relational organizing* and *one-on-ones*. He emphasises that neither of these are new practices – they come out of traditional union and labour organizing but were forgotten for a long period of time, as political campaigns started relying more on technology for reaching out. "It became easy to send a text message to a million people telling them to go vote. Or you can do a digital ad or send an email to your giant list of volunteers and say, 'hey, come out to the canvas'. And it was working for a while. You could send out an email to 10,000 people and 20 of them would actually show", says Parkin.

## Relational organizing's importance for progressive movements

However, today, he claims, this is no longer effective as people are constantly inundated with emails and digital messages. "And so you have

to go back to the basics – you have to actually talk to people."

While establishment candidates, such as Joe Biden or Hillary Clinton, have enough money to launch expensive advertising campaigns, more progressive candidates often lack those funds and are therefore more reliant on volunteers. Parkin also adds that relational organizing is particularly important for progressive campaigns, as they often try to reach people who have not been involved in politics earlier. "Getting someone from never being involved in politics to volunteering regularly takes a lot of work. So it is important to have structures in place to build people into our movements and then continue having structures there for people to grow."

The idea behind relational organizing, Parkin explains, is that people are better able to convince people they know, and get them to vote, than strangers. "In a way, it's the oldest kind of organizing that exists. It's like you tell your dad that you think





Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at a rally in Council Bluffs, Iowa, 2019. PHOTO: MATT A.J.

he should vote for Bernie instead of Trump. That could be qualified as relational organizing.”

Today this simple method has received a boost, since it has become easier to use on a large scale through new technology. During AOC’s first campaign in 2018, activists developed REACH, an organizing app that lets staff and volunteers match the contacts on their phones with voter files to see who amongst their contacts is registered to vote, how they are registered to vote and when they voted. REACH also allows activists to log conversations and report them to the campaign and to send texts, emails or call follow-ups, and hence turn their personal network into tracked canvassing activity.

If you are reading this and you are European you might be thinking that this sounds potentially illegal. It is, in Europe, because of data protection regulation. But Parkin thinks there is a lot about the strategy that can still be useful in a European context. “The theories can be used without the tool.

The tool is just a tool. You can do relational organizing without it.”

### Community connectors at the centre

With or without technology, a key in relational organizing is to find the right people to be *community connectors* or *community validators*. “It’s not like door-to-door where anyone, in theory, could go door-to-door and talk to people. Relational organizing cannot be done by everybody because I might not have a lot of people in my contacts that are voters. I also might not be the right person to deliver the message of voting to my contacts.”

Parkin gives an example from a campaign he recently worked on where they convinced imams of mosques to speak to their congregations about voting and why they themselves were supporting a certain candidate. Parkin claims an imam is a fantastic communicator,

because they are in a position of respect and authority. “So that will go a lot better than if I just had some random 18-year-old that went to the mosque be the one telling everyone to vote.” Community connectors need to be trained, Parkin says, on similar things as a canvasser who goes door-knocking: campaign messaging, how to answer tough questions and common objections that you hear from people.

One point that Parkin repeatedly emphasises is the importance of following up. Following up whether the community connectors have spoken to their contacts, as well as for the connectors to follow up with their network. “Ideally you want regular follow-up: giving them updates from the campaign as big things happen, and then obviously turning them out to vote is the biggest one. But turning them out to vote is going to be less effective if you haven’t done the work in advance of making sure that they’re on your side and that they’re connected and in touch with the campaign.” Follow-ups throughout the campaign are key to keeping people engaged, Parkin says, “because it takes multiple conversations to get someone from not voting to voting. It’s very difficult.”

### One-on-ones to identify activists’ potential

How, then, do you identify who could be a good community connector? One way, Parkin argues, could be through one-on-ones. This is a tactic he uses to elevate volunteer leaders in general and to build a structure of volunteers. A one-on-one is simply a conversation in private with someone who is, or has shown an interest in becoming, active in a campaign. You sit down with the person to get to know them, learn why they want

to be involved in the campaign and what motivates them so that you can later offer them a way to get involved that suits them. To do this, you simply take them out for coffee. “It’s an off-site type event, so it’s not going to be at an office or at their house or at a place of work. It’s somewhere else”. Parkin speaks of the difference between mobilising and organizing, where mobilising is “getting people to do stuff”, while organizing is “finding shared values and shared opinions to get people involved in something beyond just a campaign”.

When he worked on Bernie Sanders’ campaign in 2020, or AOC’s congressional campaigns in 2020 and 2022, the goal was to create a long-term movement and for the people involved to become leaders themselves. “Bernie’s whole thing was ‘Not me. Us.’ That was his campaign slogan. It was about building real movement infrastructure through the process of doing a campaign. So spending more time on your volunteer development, having a volunteer development programme, fed into that idea.”

Today many of the activists that Jeremy Parkin once recruited through one-on-ones are leaders themselves. “Some of my Bernie volunteers in 2016 are now elected officials. Some of them are leaders within the California Democratic Party. Others have formed organizations or have become campaign staff. Not everybody does, but a lot of the people that we trained and developed have continued on with this work.”

What, then, is needed to build a successful movement through one-on-ones? “Time”, says Parkin. “So you need to have launched your campaign well enough in advance to do it.” On the other hand you also need to have people who are interested in the campaign to begin with. “Your campaign has to be attractive to people to get them in the door before you can even do the development work of building them into something.”!

Jeremy Parkin at a rally held in New York in June 2025.  
PHOTO: JULES GARBER.



## JEREMY PARKIN'S GUIDE TO ONE-ON-ONES

**1** First you identify someone that you think can be a volunteer leader. Maybe you want to start by seeing who shows up to the most canvasses, who displays good leadership ability in the field or who is good at training other people.

**2** Then you call them and tell them: “I’ve noticed you’re doing great work. I would love to meet with you and talk some more about how we can build you into this campaign and this movement. Could you meet me for coffee for an hour on Thursday?” Then set it up.

**3** You sit down with them and start by asking: “What got you involved? What are you excited about in this campaign? What are you finding really enjoyable about the work you’ve done so far? Where do you want to see this campaign go?” You don’t want to be the one talking. The goal is to understand what motivates this person to be involved.

**4** After that you want to tell them: “Thank you for sitting down with me. We’re looking for volunteer leaders, I think you’re someone that could fit that. Would that be something that you’re interested in?” If they say yes, I say: “Great! I’m going to follow up with more information on that and I’m so glad to be working alongside you.”

## Enhedslisten (The Red-Green Alliance)

### Political party, socialist organizing, tenant power, anti-racism

The Red-Green Alliance (Denmark) is a democratic socialist party with the aim of combining politics for social change with politics for solving the great environmental problems both on a national and an international level. Believing in building socialism from below, the Red-Green Alliance prioritises social movements outside parliament, not least the trade unions, climate and student movements. But the Red-Green Alliance also stands in national and local parliamentary elections, as

well as elections for the European Parliament.

#### Biggest win?

During the municipal elections in 2025, we succeeded in knocking on several thousand doors all over Denmark, especially in Copenhagen. The campaign managed to mobilise a lot of recruited members and new volunteers. This engagement translated into a high increase of voter participation in focus areas.

#### What could others learn from you?

To actively involve the local boards, leaders and members in shaping the political decisions of our

parliamentary group. Whenever we have a political reform concerning a specific line of work – teachers, police, nurses, construction workers etc, we reach out to members who have listed that position in our member system, and make sure to involve them in decision making through Zoom meetings etc. It seems rather obvious and simple, but it makes a huge impact on the policy we are making and member participation in the party.



## The European Left Alliance for the People and the Planet (ELA)

### Social justice, climate justice, feminism, anti-racism, international law

The European Left Alliance for the People and the Planet (ELA) is a European party that unites green left and feminist parties across Europe. ELA members are: Bloco de Esquerda (Portugal), Enhedslisten (Denmark), La France Insoumise (France), Podemos (Spain), Razem (Poland), Sinistra Italiana (Italy), Socialistische Partij (Netherlands), Vänsterpartiet (Sweden), Vasemmistoliitto (Finland), EH Bildu (Basque Country) and Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Norway).

#### Biggest win?

In January 2026, the European Left Alliance (ELA) launched the "Justice for Palestine" European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), calling on the European Union to fully suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement due to Israel's genocide against the Palestinian population, and its ongoing violations of international law and human rights. Once an ECI reaches one million signatures, the European Commission has to officially respond to the initiative. The campaign, which is still ongoing, has already reached 700,000 signatures across the EU in only three months. To achieve this, ELA brought together political parties, collectives, civil society organizations,

Palestinian-led movements, citizens, and more.

#### What could others learn from you?

ELA's Justice for Palestine campaign is a good example of political parties organizing with movements, trade unions, and wider civil society. A solid blend of online and offline practices is what made this collaboration possible: producing social media content together, organizing events and field actions, sharing media kits and other activities.



# ACORN

## THE COMMUNITY UNION DEVELOPING LEADERS

**The English/Welsh community union Acorn organizes working-class people fighting for better housing conditions and living standards. A key in their work is their leadership development. "I've seen members whose door we knocked on be empowered to lead the organization", says field director Kat Wright.**

Acorn was first born in the US in the 1970's and has local branches all over the world, from Kenya to India, and England, where it was first established in Bristol in 2013 and has had several major victories. Acorn branches can differ but one thing they have in common is that they are member-led organizations that work with direct action. "We believe in the people with the problem directly confronting those in power and thus taking on their own power and taking away the power of the people who are screwing them over", says Kat Wright, field director of English/Welsh Acorn.

She joined Acorn herself eight years ago, after experiencing a lot of problems with housing, which at the time was the issue Acorn in England was focused on. "I had been illegally evicted before, and I had spent a lot of time having friend, after family member, after friend, sleeping on my sofa because they had been evicted or they were in between tenancies. And it has such a big impact on peo-

ple's lives – a house isn't just a house, it's a home."

Nowadays Acorn has broadened to also organize around debt and the use of bailiffs, or debt collectors, as well as public transport and services. They are a union organized by neighbourhoods instead of workplaces and the issues they work on are not set in stone. "We are multi-issue, we fight whatever affects our members' lives", says Wright.

### Ladder of escalating asks

The key principles from the 70's US organization remain, however. One of those is the importance placed on leadership development. "We strongly believe in cultivating every member's leadership potential and ownership of the organization."

A basis in their leadership development is what they call a "ladder of escalating asks". Acorn teaches employees as well as members how to identify potential new leaders and

how to help them develop up the "ladder". That means, starting by giving people small tasks and slowly asking for bigger and more difficult things.

"We use something called an onion which is a way of visualising leadership development, where we're thinking about how to get someone from not knowing what Acorn is to knowing it and supporting it and then driving them forward through the onion to becoming a member, an active member, and then a leader", explains Wright.

The tasks given are always adapted to the person. "If I meet someone who is really shy and has never done something before, maybe the first thing is to post something on their window, after they join. We always say that the organizing conversation when someone joins isn't over until after they do something. And then we give them slightly bigger things."

### Learning from each other

A crucial element is the relationship between the organizer and the member. "A good organizer is a social arsonist. They're setting people on fire. So I always want to be setting people on fire, but I also want to be giving people real ownership of the union," says Wright. For her it's also important to understand that as an experienced organizer you can still learn from new people. "If you can build those good relationships where you're very much learning and teaching at the same time, that's what takes real leadership development up to the next level."

Furthermore, she explains that a key axiom within Acorn is that the members are made of clay, not glass. "I think it's common to have a new organizer come in and say: 'My new member is a migrant, single mother. She's got a lot going on, so I don't want to make an ask of her.' And it's like... ok, but she has joined. Don't patronise her. We have got to

give members the tools to fight their own battles.”

Kath Wright thinks it’s important to understand just how meaningful organizing can be for many people. “I have members that said to me recently that when someone knocked on their door, they were in the depths of despair and Acorn was like a lighthouse in the midst of that despair.”

Many members of Acorn are either unemployed or working in hospitality or industry and within Acorn they get the chance to do things they would never have done otherwise, such as appearing in videos, talking to the press or creating things. “And I think Acorn gives you that real boost to your identity.”

### Look for qualities – develop skills

Within Acorn they also deliberately do not just choose the “loudest voice in the room”. “If we build an organization full of the people who would naturally volunteer we would probably end up with quite a lot of white men”, says Wright.

Also, they don’t look at what people are already good at. “For example, for a communications officer, I’m not necessarily looking for someone who works in social media, and has done loads of press releases. I look for qualities and I develop skills. So I’m looking for someone who really cares about the union, who wants to put some time into it, who’s willing to learn, and who has been fairly reliable. And then I’ll put time into developing the skills in them to do the role in the best way that works for them.”

To reach new members Acorn’s primary method is to knock on doors. Every week their 30 employed organizers go door-knocking. “Which is also an interesting way of finding out what people think in different parts of the country”, Wright adds. However, they also reach new people through organizing commu-



## Francisco Contreras

### Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!

I serve as chair of Solidaritetshuset in Stockholm, a collaborative hub for global justice organizations working for solidarity, human rights, and transformative social change. I’m also the international editor of Parabol magazine. I’m deeply rooted in the global solidarity movement and part of the collective MediaCon that creates multimedia productions that amplify the voices, struggles, and organizing power of grassroots and struggle-based movements. I’m a sociologist by profession, specialising in international higher education.

### Your session *Workshop: Building political strategy* is focused on participants getting a very concrete strategy output, based on the work of Marta Hanecker.

### Can you tell us a bit more about Hanecker’s work and your relationship to her work – or to her as a person?

Marta Hanecker was a Chilean Marxist intellectual and political strategist whose work focused on translating political analysis into effective collective action. She developed practical frameworks for understanding power relations, defining strategic objectives, and building viable paths for social and political change, making her work widely used by movements and organizations across Latin America.

Like many others in Chile and across Latin America, I grew up reading and discussing Marta Hanecker’s work. Her writing shaped how I learned to think about political strategy – not as abstract theory, but as something rooted in real struggles, collective practice, and everyday organizing.

### Who would you recommend this workshop to (organizer/leader, activist, other) and would you say the workshop is specifically suited for long-term or short-term goals – or both?

This workshop is recommended for organizers, leaders, and activists seeking practical tools to develop clear political strategies grounded in real conditions and collective practice.

nity events, reaching out on social media and running stalls, that is – putting a table out in the street and talking to people.

### Taking a step back as an organizer

The outreach work is, however, not always done by the organizers. Wright emphasises the importance of also taking a step back and letting members do that type of work. She gives the example of a campaign in Leeds, where she is the organizer, where members have been knocking on doors and by doing that managed to organize a campaign for cancelling rent rises and parking charges.

“They did that by knocking on those doors, recruiting their own members and then running a negotiation. And I see myself in that as: giving people advice, but also stepping back to leave them the space to fly. One of the delicate balances of being

**“I have members that said to me recently that when someone knocked on their door, they were in the depths of despair and Acorn was like a lighthouse in the midst of that despair.”**

an organizer is knowing when to step in to support someone because they really need it and when you need to give them the space to just fall if necessary, but they’ll learn from it.”

An example that Kat Wright gives of members taking the lead is that of a woman in Manchester whose door Acorn knocked on when she

was going through a difficult time. “The bailiffs had gone into her house while she had her small children there, and they had been very scary, and it was over a really small amount of council debt. We took on a local campaign with the Manchester branch around debt and bailiff use, and we won that.”

After that the woman was elected to be on the board of the Manchester branch and initiated a national campaign which has led to important wins in several cities. “We have won campaigns around how councils use bailiffs and what their council debt policies are in Brighton, Bristol, and Manchester. We have basically stopped bailiffs from hitting most houses in Bristol completely.”

The member is now on Acorn’s board of directors and is “one of our four most powerful members in the country, running what the organization does. And she had never been involved in anything like this before, but I think that’s the story of quite a lot of our members,” Wright says. !

## Greater Manchester Tenants Union

### Anti-racist tenant organizing

GMTU is a collective action organization building tenant power and solidarity in communities. Tenants brainstorm solutions to the housing crisis, challenge power-holders and put pressure on decision-makers to win affordable housing for renters. From eviction resistances and negotiations with power-holders, to protest and direct action, GMTU fights for dignity and housing justice in Manchester.

#### Biggest win?

Two tenants in council housing had their homes collapse into each other. The council was prepared to

offer them pennies for the loss of all of their possessions. This insult was responded to collectively by our Harpurhey Branch, with scheduled demonstrations outside the town hall, a takeover of a local councillor’s surgery, and significant media pressure highlighting how MCC was treating tenants who’ve lost everything in the blink of an eye. After several months of collective action, Harpurhey tenants won tens of thousands of pounds in compensation, replacement housing and regular meetings with their councillor to preempt unsafe conditions well before they reach catastrophe.

#### What could others learn from you?

Our member-led approach entails that we do not coopt existing work or step into communities with our own agenda. We ensure tenants have the tools to name how their experiences are products of landlord power and the strategies to build out their fight. Members are at the heart of every campaign and are the leaders driving our organizational strategy, meaning we set the stage for their stepping up to roles and responsibilities where there are gaps.



## Jeremy Corbyn

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

I'm Jeremy Corbyn, and I'm the MP for Islington North in north London. I am very proud to have represented my constituency in Parliament for the past 43 years. I'm also the founder of the Peace and Justice Project and the parliamentary leader of Your Party. I like to read a wide variety of books, preferably from all around the world, and I am a keen allotmenter.

### **You're giving a keynote called "Whose World?" in which you will talk about what we are up against. Can you give us a glimpse of the world as you understand it right now?**

The world is governed by an unjust, global economic system that concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a small elite. Meanwhile, millions go without food or a decent home. This is the same economic system that rewards and fuels endless wars around the world, which have resulted in the most appalling and needless loss of life, as well as the destruction of our natural environment. It doesn't have to be like this. The world is full of beauty and nature, and people with the most incredible ideas and creativity. Our job is to build a world where everyone can fulfill their creative potential – and where we can all enjoy the wonderful opportunities that our world offers. We are all human beings on

one planet, and that should be enough to motivate us to build a world of equality, care and peace.

### **The world feels increasingly chaotic — what gives you genuine hope right now, when you look at the movements and people actually building something different?**

Just look at the global movement for Palestine. In the face of utter inhumanity, people from all over the world have spoken up for the people of Gaza and for a more peaceful world. Demonstrations, the Global Flotilla, student encampments, trade union mobilisation: it's ordinary people of all backgrounds and faiths who are coming together to say: no, this is not the world we want to live in. Where there is an injustice, there is always a mass movement fighting back. I get hope from speaking to people – young and old – in my own constituency who want to stand up for each other. That's what gives me hope that, no matter what happens, there will always be people who are prepared to take a stand for a brighter future for humanity.

### **What do you do when you need to recharge to be able to continue the good fight?**

Lots of things. Spending time with my sons, planting courgettes at the community allotment, or just chatting to people I meet on the street. Often the best way to recharge to continue the good fight is to be active in the good fight! There is nothing more energising than a demonstration or a picket line.

# STOP COUNTING MEMBERS – START BUILDING POWER

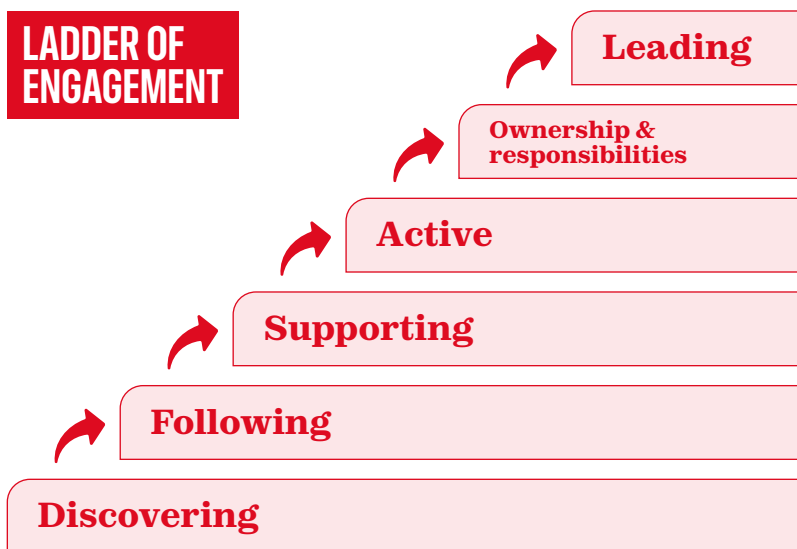
**Bente Hinrichs is a member of the Danish Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) and part of the leadership of the Red-Green Youth. Here, he writes about how to activate, develop, and organize your base.**

Most organizations know how to count members. Far fewer know how to turn them into power. You can recruit hundreds – thousands, even – and still find yourself asking the same frustrating question: why aren't more people actually doing anything? The problem isn't just growth. It's what happens after growth. When we fixate on bringing people in, we often neglect the harder, more decisive task: creating the conditions that help them step forward, take responsibility, and act.

There are, in essence, three ways to build a stronger organization. You can bring in new people. You can activate those who are already there but not yet engaged. Or you can deepen the commitment of those who are already active – helping them lead, organize, and multiply your collective capacity.

Serious organizing means being intentional about all three. And to do that, we need ways of understanding where people are, and what it takes to move them forward.

This is where member journey models come in. In this text, we look at three widely used approaches: the *ladder of engagement*, used by organizations such as Democratic Socialists of America (DSA); the *onion model*, used by ACORN; and the *five membership groups*, developed by the Zetkin Foundation.



The ladder of engagement illustrates what someone's journey from discovering the organization to leading it typically looks like. First the organization is discovered – maybe through a friend or social media. Then the person follows what is going on in the organization and eventually starts supporting the organization by speaking positively about it to friends or becoming a member. The next step is becoming active, then feeling ownership and taking on responsibilities. The last step is leading the organization.

Each offers a different lens on the same core challenge: how to transform passive supporters into active participants – and active participants into organizers who build power with others.

## The ladder of engagement

The ladder of engagement offers a way to understand how members develop within an organization. The

**Bente Hinrichs**  
Organizer at Zetkin Foundation and member of Danish Enhedslisten

journey from first contact to leadership is rarely immediate; it unfolds through a series of incremental steps. As organizers, our task is to identify where people are on that path and support their movement forward.

Each step reflects a deeper level of commitment. This progression not only strengthens individual engagement, but also builds a more sustainable organization – one powered by a broad base of active members rather than a small, overburdened core.

Different stages require different methods. Raising awareness may rely on social media or outreach in public spaces. Building commitment often involves recruitment conversations and collective activities. Moving people into responsibility typically requires one-on-one conversations, along with structured trainings and support.

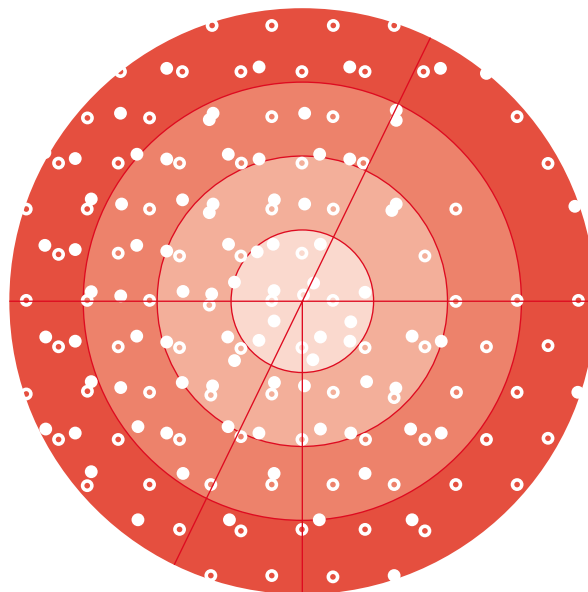
### An 'engagement elevator'

The Democratic Socialists of America provides a clear example of how this model can be embedded in practice. Its field work is built around members steadily moving up the ladder over time – for example, from canvasser to field lead to field coordinator.

Progression, however, does not happen automatically – and should not always be forced. Instead, DSA relies on a decentralized approach where members at each level help bring others up from below. In this way, development becomes collective: members actively pull one another forward, enabling both depth and scale.

Because of this, the ladder is not just a conceptual tool, but a structural principle built into campaign design. At times, it functions almost like an 'engagement elevator', where members move quickly or skip steps. This can accelerate leadership development, but also carries risks – without sufficient support, people

## THE ONION MODEL



can be pushed into roles they are not yet ready to sustain.

Ultimately, the ladder of engagement helps make member development visible and intentional. It pushes organizers to meet people where they are – and to apply the right methods to help them take the next step.

### The onion model

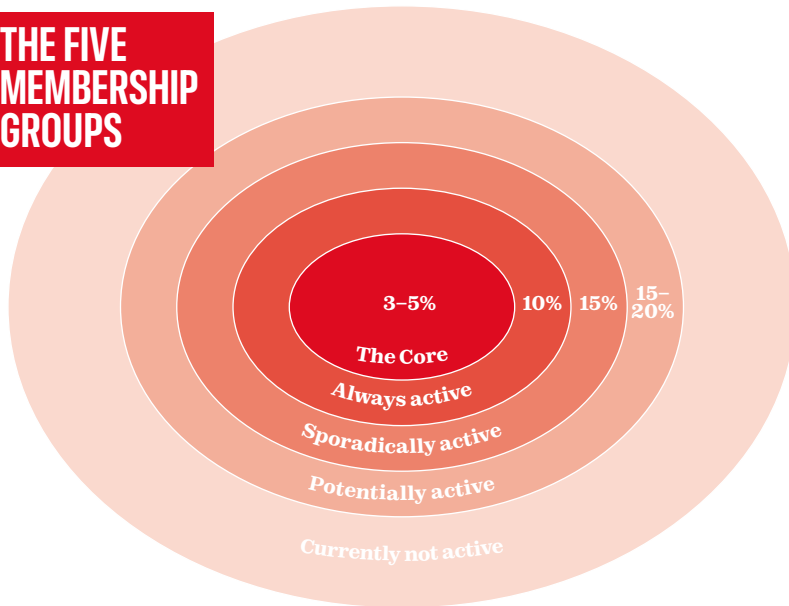
The onion model serves a similar purpose, but offers a different way of visualising engagement. At its centre are the most active members, while each outer layer represents progressively lower levels of involvement.

ACORN is one organization that uses this model, particularly in the context of list work. Organizers, membership officers, or committee members map out their organization by placing individuals within the onion structure – often quite literally drawing it on paper – and then discussing how each person might be further engaged, for example through one-on-one conversations.

A key strength of the onion model is its flexibility. Unlike the linear structure of the ladder, it allows organizers to group members across layers. Members from a specific geo-

**The journey from first contact to leadership is rarely immediate; it unfolds through a series of incremental steps. As organizers, our task is to identify where people are on that path and support their movement forward.**

**THE FIVE MEMBERSHIP GROUPS**



- sporadically active members who engage from time to time;
- potentially active members who could be mobilised;
- currently inactive members who are not interested in participating.

Many organizations – especially political parties – find that a large portion of their membership is inactive. In practice, it is not uncommon for roughly half of all members to fall into the first four categories, while the remaining half are not interested in participating. This suggests that there is often significant untapped potential: up to 50 percent of members may be possible to mobilise under the right conditions.

The key challenge is enabling movement between these groups. This requires understanding each member’s motivations, capacities, and barriers to participation. Interests, available time, social context, and preferred forms of action all matter. As a result, organizing must be grounded in relationship-building and in the systematic collection of knowledge about members.

This knowledge can be developed through tools such as membership surveys, phone banking, and one-on-one conversations. At Zetkin Foundation, these methods are used in combination to both mobilise members and build a deeper understanding of the base.

graphic area, demographic group, or gender can be understood as a “slice” that cuts through different levels of engagement, making it easier to see patterns that would otherwise remain hidden.

While the onion model and the ladder of engagement aim to address the same core challenge, they are typically used in different ways. In Democratic Socialists of America, the ladder helps structure campaign work and progression over time. In ACORN, the onion model is more often used as a diagnostic tool to create an overview of the membership base – making it easier to identify gaps, address imbalances, and strengthen representation across the organization.

**The five membership groups**

A third approach to member activation is the framework of the five membership groups. It categorises members based on their level of activity:

- core active members who take responsibility and lead;
- always active members who consistently participate;

**There is often significant untapped potential: up to 50 percent of members may be possible to mobilise under the right conditions.**

**Focusing on the right groups**

When mobilising, it is rarely effective to focus on those who are already highly active. Core and always active members typically require little prompting and are better reached through direct, targeted communication. Instead, phone banking efforts tend to be most effective when focused on sporadically active and potentially active members.

Distinguishing between potentially active and inactive members, however, often requires prior data. For this reason, Zetkin commonly builds call lists that include members from these middle and lower engagement groups. This makes it possible both to activate those who are receptive and to identify those who are not – reducing wasted effort over time.

Importantly, these categories are not fixed. Members move. Someone who is not interested in being active today might change their mind tomorrow if their circumstances change. Organizing, therefore, also means knowing when to step back – and when to try again.

### From passive support to active participation

Ultimately, these models serve a common purpose: to make engagement visible, structured, and actionable. By helping organizers understand where members are and what they need in order to move forward, they provide a practical foundation for turning passive support into active participation. In doing so, they shift organizing from reactive outreach to intentional development. They make us realise that organizations do not become stronger simply by growing in size, but by deepening the engagement of the people within them. Every member represents a potential source of energy, initiative, and leadership. The task of organizing is therefore not only to recruit, but to recognise and cultivate this potential in a deliberate and sustained way.

When we succeed in doing so, participation becomes more than an individual choice – it becomes a collective force. Members begin to move, develop, and take responsibility not in isolation, but together. In this way, systematic engagement is not merely an internal organizational concern; it is the foundation upon which lasting social and political change can be built. !



## Samah Ellous

### Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!

I am an organizer and trainer based in Sweden, who believes in people's power to create positive change in our communities. I've had the opportunity to teach and train organizers as part of the Ahel online course, supporting leaders across the MENA region, and as part of the teaching team for the Harvard Kennedy School online course on Community Organizing and Public Narrative. My work focuses on enabling leaders to achieve their shared purpose under uncertainty across diverse causes; from climate justice to women's empowerment and children's rights... etc.

### Your session *Public Narrative* offers participants a guide to crafting a strong story of self... Can you share an example?

Organizing is rooted in relationships and in the understanding that we exist in connection with others. Our ability to achieve change is deeply tied to the ability of others to act with us. Public Narrative is a leadership practice that helps us articulate who we are, what we care about, and why it matters now. It invites others to connect their values to action.

A powerful way to think about it comes from Rabbi Hillel's three questions:

*If I am not for myself, who am I?*

*If I am only for myself, what am I?*

*If not now, when?*

These questions capture the essence of Public Narrative linking values to collective purpose and urgent action.

### What keeps bringing you back to the good fight?

What keeps me going is the belief that change starts with people, that when individuals find their voice and connect with others, they can create real impact. Being part of that process, and witnessing people step into their leadership, is incredibly energising.

# HOW SCALING BOOSTED ZOHRAN MAMDANI'S CAMPAIGN

The election of Zohran Mamdani as mayor of New York sent shock waves across the world. The young, radical politician has been described as charismatic and social media savvy, but his victory should also be attributed to the campaign's 100,000 volunteers and DSA's work with scaling.

A group of volunteers in the neighbourhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, shortly before the general election in November 2025. PHOTO: ARIELLE SWERNOFF.





Zohran Mamdani at a nurse strike in New York City, January 2026.



**People found a candidate that inspired them, which is related to the volunteer turnout operation, but also to the fact that people like socialist politics and are inspired by the idea that we could have better things: a rent freeze, universal child care, public transit that works and is affordable.**

When Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City in November, a key part was played by Democratic Socialists of America's (DSA's) army of volunteers, which by the end of the mayoral campaign had grown to 100,000. Arielle Swernoff, campaign coordinator for New York City's DSA and part of the organization's steering committee, says the number of volunteers scaled immensely over the course of the year.

Recruiting a large number of volunteers was a stated aim of the organization, as the American electoral system makes it hard for candidates that don't receive support from large industries, such as real estate or fossil fuels. "Our power has to come from somewhere else – it has to come from people", Swernoff says.

The volunteers with Mamdani's campaign were mostly out knocking on doors, since DSA has come to the conclusion that in-person conversations are more effective than phone

calls, plus going door-to-door makes people connect to other volunteers, and the campaign.

### **Building a movement**

However, the goal of recruiting a large number of volunteers is not only about winning seats at the election, Swernoff explains. It's about building a movement. "And having a mass volunteer organization helps develop skills and leadership among everyday New Yorkers that are needed for the long haul."

She further explains that now that the election has been won, there is a huge amount of work to be done. "Now we're running a massive campaign to deliver on the promises of Zohran: universal child care, fast and free buses, freezing the rent. And the leadership that we built, and the skills and people's affinity towards one another and towards

our organization, are all necessary to win these really difficult fights so that our socialist mayor can deliver.”

The mayoral election not only stood out because it resulted in the election of a socialist mayor in New York, but also because it had the highest voter turnout since the mayoral race in 1969. A victory in itself, that Arielle Swernoff thinks their grassroots organizing contributed to, in two different ways: “People found a candidate that inspired them, which is related to the volunteer turnout operation, but also to the fact that people like socialist politics and are inspired by the idea that we could have better things: a rent freeze, universal child care, public transit that works and is affordable. But I also think the volunteer operation helped people understand when and where they could vote. People don’t always remember that it’s an election because the timing of our primary election has changed a lot in recent years. I personally have had

dozens of conversations where I’ll talk to someone during early voting or on election day, and they’ve said: ‘Oh, that’s today?’”

**The key: field leads**

What, then, was the key to quickly scaling the number of volunteers? Swernoff is convinced a crucial component was establishing an intermediary leadership level. “We have this tiered volunteer system that allows us to scale.”

While many political campaigns rely heavily on their staff to run events such as door knocking; launching the canvass, giving training, handing out and collecting materials, DSA’s campaigns let volunteer leaders do that instead. “We will never have a campaign where we have enough staff to do that everywhere we want to knock doors. So it requires this intermediary level of leadership, which we call a field lead.”

**“Instead of our leadership telling members: ‘This is what we’re going to do’, members are part of building the strategy.”**

**Greens Organise**

**Eco-socialist organizing**

Greens Organise (UK) was founded as an eco-socialist vehicle to take the Green Party of England and Wales to the next level. It aims to build the left within the party (and the party within the left); provide political education; model bolder communication; support candidate recruitment; broaden the party’s political strategy and increase democratic participation and organization among the membership.

**Biggest win?**

Greens Organise members helped elect Zack Polanski as leader of the Green Party with 85 percent of the

vote in September 2025, on a platform of eco-populism.

A year earlier, our launch and open letter laid the ground for a much bolder political and communications strategy, and we modelled what the Greens’ message could look like with a more antagonistic stance and explicit challenge to both the far right and political and economic elites. Members then organized behind the scenes to deliver a landslide, which has since catapulted Zack and the party to over 200,000 members.

**What could others learn from you?**

An openness to changing organizational forms and priorities. So far, Greens Organise has been able to

fulfil quite different functions. In the past, our role has been to provide political or factional pushes at national conferences, being behind the scenes to support election campaigns and help the development of a political education programme. This has left our identity unclear at times, but made it easier to adapt to the very different circumstances the party is now in.





Arielle Swernoff, campaigning.  
PHOTO: ERIC THURM.

Field leads are trained at the beginning of the campaign, and then intermittently throughout, to run the canvasses themselves. They are trained to hand out materials, be a welcoming presence, train volunteers to answer questions while they go door-knocking and to run a debrief and a social activity afterwards.

The training also includes how to identify new leaders. “Throughout most of the campaign, you couldn’t just sign up, an existing field lead would recommend you. And people are taught to look out for people who are reliable, people who step up and are helpful. If someone is a more experienced canvasser and is answering questions from someone who’s newer – that’s something to look out for.”

Throughout the campaign the staff were in regular contact with field leads, updating them on campaign strategy, having check-in calls, and making sure that they were organizing events.

## A democratic foundation for creating engagement

Although we are talking about quickly scaling a volunteer operation, the organizing model of DSA’s New York City chapter was not born recently. It has been developed over the past eight years, after a new movement was sparked by Bernie Sander’s presidential campaign and the shock of Donald Trump’s first electoral victory. “I think that really inspired people to say: ‘My politics are not reflected in what I’m seeing from either party. It’s time to get organized’”, says Swernoff, who dates this movement’s first electoral campaigns to 2017.

It’s also a movement that has a strong democratic foundation. When it came to the mayoral election, for example, the organization went through several rounds of deliberation and voting to decide whether or not to run the campaign. “So instead of our leadership telling members: ‘This is what we’re going to do’,

## IWGB trade union

### Workplace organizing

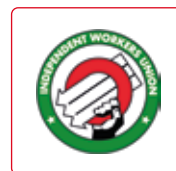
IWGB trade union primarily organizes precarious and migrant workers, such as outsourced cleaners, caterers and security guards, ride hail drivers, and food delivery couriers. We also organize workers in emerging sectors, like video game workers and workers in outsourced public sector services. By building organization among the hundreds of thousands of workers in these sectors and confronting exploitative bosses, we hope to overcome precarious work and also revitalise the broader workers movement and build a more combative trade unionism capable of transforming society.

### Biggest win?

Doubling the size of our union. The IWGB is a new union, we’ve been around since 2012. In the past four years we’ve built the union from around 5,000 to nearly 10,000 members. This has involved around 100 organizing drives and strikes in different workplaces over that time. It has also involved building up hundreds of activists and representatives. There are hundreds of thousands of workers in the sectors we intend to organize, so we still have a long way to go. But this process over the last few years has been very significant in experimenting and learning how to scale our organization further.

### What could others learn from you?

We have experience organizing precarious and migrant workers in “difficult to organize” sectors, and winning difficult workplace disputes with limited resources. In recent years, we have learned to scale up a small to medium sized union, how to build, train and manage a team of staff organizers and how to build an activist development and training machine in a union.



members are part of building the strategy. That deliberation includes presentations on voting history in a particular district, key political players in that area, all sorts of data and information that allows people to make smart decisions.”

This also contributes to ensuring that everyone in the organization feels a strong sense of commitment and collective responsibility. “You understand the political reasons for running a race. You’ve been convinced of it.”

### Tax the rich campaign

As Swernoff has pointed out – the volunteer organization is not just built for one election but for the long term. Today, many of the volunteers from Zohran Mamdani’s campaign are working with other campaigns, such as for DSA candidates for the state assembly, state senate and US Congress, but also a “tax the rich” campaign. In order to deliver on the promises from Mamdani’s campaign, Swernoff says, New York needs money. “And we can get it by taxing the extremely wealthy individuals and extremely wealthy corporations that are concentrated here.” It’s not up to New York alone to do that though – the state and the governor would need to approve the initiative. “So we’re running a really big campaign for that as well. And many of the volunteers, door knockers, and field leads, have continued to stay engaged in these projects.”

Arielle Swernoff also explains that they have built a network for offering their volunteers a community, beyond campaigning. “As an example, we have a soccer league that people can join, a choir, a running club, a cycling club, other places where people can socialise and be together with people who share their beliefs and values in a relaxed and social way. So that’s another sort of element of our work in terms of keeping people engaged in our movement.”!



## Aron Etzler

### Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!

I am a passionate and intellectual guy, who is interested in all things human.

**Your session, *What can I do to bottle magic, and why the heck have I never heard of it before?* – Organizational culture, care, and sustainability in a modern left is about harnessing and recreating that powerful energy that collective work can give you, if I understand it correctly.**

**Can we avoid the draining parts as well? Should we...?**

No, no: there will be enough draining parts too for those who love them! But the goal should be to cut out the draining that has no meaningful purpose.

**Do you have any “quick fix” type of advice for an organizer on how to energise a draining or difficult meeting?**

I am no fan of quick fixes. No one ever built a life out of quick fixes. It takes purpose, kindness and courage to create something good for yourself and other people. And even if that is easy to say, it is not a quick thing to practice.

# ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZABLE

The British union United Voices of the World organizes workers that other unions have long neglected or failed to reach: low-paid migrant and precarious workers, including cleaners and couriers but also cultural workers. And through direct actions they have gained important victories.

A union organizing workers who other unions do not reach – that was the idea that led to the creation of United Voices of the World (UVW) in 2013. Here, we speak to one of its founders Petros Elia.



### Can you tell us why you started this union?

It's worth saying that the backdrop to UVW, and other similar unions being founded later, is four decades of union decline. This is obviously not a phenomenon restricted to the UK, but globally.

In the UK context, we have seen trade union membership and density in freefall since the 1980s. This has led to, last year, the lowest numbers of trade union members on record. At the same time, the type of workers who are represented by trade unions has become narrower. In the UK trade unions have become organizations primarily for public sector workers and more professional workers. This excludes the millions of precarious workers that exist in the UK.

It's in that context that UVW was born. We were created to represent and organize low paid precarious migrant workers. That was our founding mission statement and that remains our mission today.

Beyond simply wanting to ensure union support and representation for workers who had been continuously excluded from those things over the past several decades we were also aware that certain types of workers needed to employ specific tactics in order to win. They needed to develop new strategies – there were no effective strategies at the time and they needed to be developed fresh.

### Were you yourself a precarious worker at the time?

My personal entry into UVW was that I had several friends of the family who were working in cleaning at the



## Gustavo Gordillo

### Can you tell us who you are and what you do?

I'm a co-chair of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America. Since 2017 I've primarily organized around the energy system, tax campaigns, and electoral and labor work in New York. For my day job I've been a union electrician for the past several years.

### Winning an election is just the beginning – so what do you think is the hardest part of keeping movement power alive once you're inside City Hall?

In NYC-DSA we have a history of relying on an inside/outside strategy where elected officials rely on the base to develop an agitational movement which gives our elected officials more space to maneuver internally within the government. The biggest challenge now has been developing the right balance between inside and outside in City Hall. We made campaign promises that this would be a government that fought to put power in the hands of the people and we are committed to that, but we face many opponents.

### Can you share with us something that keeps you coming back to the good fight?

I think we have a political and economic system that systematically conceals that having power over the world is an option available to ordinary people. Power is not something anyone is taught to want in the US. One of my moments of political awakening came from an early campaign victory where I came to see that ordinary people can build collective power to shape the world for the benefit of the many. Seeing others have that political awakening and helping to make it happen is what motivates me.

time. They were mainly Colombian people and I was spending a lot of time with them.

And they were asking about problems they had at work and I didn't have the answers at the time – I didn't know anything so I looked to signpost them to unions or organizations but it became quite clear that there simply weren't organizations or unions out there at the time that I could confidently say: "You should go here because they're going to give you the advice or support you need." That was my personal entry into this world.

That's not to say I didn't have lots of precarious jobs. In fact, in the years before that, I was working in lots of different jobs from hospitality to teaching English and some construction work. But it wasn't those jobs that led me into the union movement.

### **What were your personal experiences of union organizing before?**

None. I didn't have any. UVW wasn't founded from another union so we had to learn and develop all the skills, knowledge and experience that we have built up over the years. We had to learn all that from scratch. For the first several years, we had no money at all, no staff members, no office.

We have had to build our relationships and our strategies and test new tactics. For us being a grassroots union is really about learning and developing and executing everything through trial and error and through solidarity, commitment and determination. These are the things that you really need to prioritise in the absence of established formal structures, networks and resources.

### **You have been successful at organizing workers that many other unions and parties struggle to reach. Why do you think that is?**

There are different reasons for that. The first is we try to do it. As I alluded to at the beginning, established un-



Petros Elia at a rally.  
PHOTO: ERALDO STRUMIELLO/UVW.

**Service sector workers and the workers that we have successfully organized haven't been given the time of day, they've been considered to be unorganizable. They've been considered to be "bad investments", from a business point of view, which many unions have the logic of.**

ions have not prioritised organizing low paid precarious and migrant workers.

Service sector workers and the workers that we have successfully organized haven't been given the time of day, they've been considered to be unorganizable. They've been considered to be "bad investments", from a business point of view, which many unions have the logic of.

Secondly, we have always organized within a highly confrontational framework. And that continues to define our organizing to date.

The conditions that our members face are the result of employers basically being free to do whatever they want with impunity for several decades now. To change those structures and improve the terms and conditions of these workers you come up against some of the most belligerent and arrogant employers.

The only way that they can be dealt with is through highly confrontational strategies and that's what we have developed and deployed very successfully over the years. And that's something that more established unions are not often willing to do.

They seek partnership, collaboration – a partnership model of unionism, a business model of unionism. And they're not willing to organize workers in a confrontational way, which is an absolute requisite of success in these sectors.

### **When you speak of confrontational tactics, and high visibility tactics – what can they involve?**

We won't spend months or years, as many unions do, working with employers or at least appearing to be working with employers to achieve what is often described as common goals, common aims.

There really aren't common goals or common aims between unions and employers in most cases so we won't agree to endless conversations and joint projects with employers. We don't accept the parameters that

employers lay down to assess the viability of our demands.

What this means is, instead of wasting time in endless and meaningless conversations or talks with employers, we move to action – strike action. Where we believe that talks will not reap the results that we want, we will move to strike action almost immediately.

And we have developed many different strike strategies, but coupled with strike action we often support our members in other kinds of leverage actions as well, that’s protest action. We may look for opportunities to engage in occupation – occupying workplaces or offices of directors or trustees of different organizations or charities. We might even occupy institutions like hospitals, which we did in the course of one of our disputes, which was the first dispute to end outsourcing within the National Health Service.

It was St. Mary’s Hospital [in London]. That was the first time workers had occupied a hospital in the UK in the context of a trade dispute.

We have also engaged in road blockades in the areas surrounding the sites where our members are on strike. We have engaged in what we call “marches on the bosses”, where our members will go and physically

demand answers or demand concessions from bosses in the course of a dispute.

Really, we will always be looking for leverage opportunities. So we will be looking for when meetings or important events that the company has organized will be taking place and we will always be supporting and encouraging our members to take direct action to make sure they are seen and heard. Because it’s only through this kind of direct action, this confrontational, highly visible, often carnivalesque kind of direct action that employers ever pay any attention, that they ever listen, and that they ever concede. Despite what employers always like to say, which is that dialogue and negotiation is the best path to resolution, we know for a fact that without the credible threat of direct action, or in most cases, the actual direct action itself, there’s no way that concessions will be granted.

**How easy is it to get your members to participate in these direct actions? Do you find that it’s hard to convince them to be this confrontational?**

It’s important to state that these actions are organized because our members have decided to participate in them and lead them. So we

will never lead an action that our members are not at the forefront of.

There is a high level of fear. Not everyone is always willing to engage in the type of action that is required in order to win. And that’s evident in the fact that we still have really bad terms and conditions and workers are still really badly treated and that is always because they haven’t taken the action that they need to.

The fear of reprisals, dismissals, and punishments is incredibly high, so there is a process with members to help them understand that: first, it is okay to be afraid. They can still act in spite of the fear. The goal is not to get rid of the fear. It’s a legitimate and understandable fear, but they need to take action in spite of that fear.

And that’s really important for workers to understand. If they think that whilst they’re afraid they’re not ready to take action, that’s a mistaken belief because everybody is afraid and that’s okay. But they also need to believe that the action will be successful.

If workers don’t believe the action will be successful they’re not going to take action. A big part of the process is helping them understand that the action can be successful and will be so if certain conditions are met.

**Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (KPÖ, the Austrian Communist Party)**

**Communist organizing, housing rights, tenant power, peace movement**

The KPÖ is a “connecting party” that mobilises a wide variety of structures, organizations, and groups in its environment. In this way, it aims to unite different social groups in a solidarity-based struggle to assert common

interests and to achieve a just and classless society.

**What could others learn from you?**

We have an income cap of €2,500 for all our officeholders – regardless of whether they are a municipal councillor or a mayor. This is intended to ensure that our representatives do not lose touch with reality. Any income exceeding this

limit is used for social purposes and redistributed in an un-bureaucratic way. In this way, we can, among other things, directly help people in difficult situations – for example, with tenancy law issues.



No one can say with certainty what the outcome of any action will be and actions might have to take place frequently or over a much longer period of time than originally envisaged or hoped for. You need to be prepared to do that.

As long as you're committed and willing to do what it takes for as long as it takes, as we always say, then you have every chance of winning, even though victory is never guaranteed. A quote we always use when we're speaking with workers at the beginning of a campaign is a quote from the former General Secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union in the UK, Bob Crow.

He passed away over a decade ago now, very sadly. But he used to say, "If you fight, you won't always win. But if you don't fight, you will always lose".

And as simple as that phrase is, it's very profound. That the choice workers have: to do nothing and lose or do something and maybe win.

### **You said yourself that the fear workers have is legitimate, but would you say that it's also exaggerated sometimes?**

It's an interesting question now, because sometimes employers, when they are confronted by their employees in an organized way, will be less likely to look to punish them or to sack them or to inflict reprisals on them. But they often do.

Employers often behave like cowboys and they will punish, sack, victimise, blacklist and discipline our members or workers in general. A major phenomenon in the UK is blacklisting. Many employers, particularly in these sectors, have no regard for the law or for the well-being of workers and they will act as if they are untouchable. Because that's what they have been accustomed to doing for the last 40 years, because trade unions have been completely absent. So on occasion, perhaps the fear is exaggerated but where we have a system where losing your job equates to losing your home,

that's the reality that workers are facing today.

Ultimately the fear is not being able to pay for food or pay for rent – the two most fundamental things that no one should have to worry about. But of course, in our society, if you're sacked one day and your salary is stopped the next day, which employers do all the time, the welfare system will not give you money to pay for your rent and it will not give you money to buy food. And what little money it does give you, it certainly doesn't give it to you immediately. So the fear in relation to the level of financial precarity people live in is very legitimate.

### **That's why actions need to be collective, right? Do you have an idea of what proportion of the workforce needs to participate in an action for it to be successful?**

We always push for supermajorities wherever we can and often achieve them. We have run strikes with 90

## **Living rent**

### **Organizing tenants and communities to get what we deserve**

Living Rent (Scotland) is a mass-membership union that organizes collectively to put power back into the hands of ordinary people to secure material improvements to the working class's daily lives. Living Rent fights for protections against rent increases and evictions, lack of public services, high energy bills, pollution and poor-quality housing. Our political system is failing us and we refuse to wait for others to change things for the better.

### **Biggest win?**

In the last fifteen years, rents have increased 104 percent in some areas of Scotland, which has pushed people out of communities. On top of that, landlords have been able to evict tenants to increase rents. But last October, after ten years of actions, door-knocking, work on press and social media, gathering contacts, and talking to politicians, we won a rent control bill passed through parliament. This bill will see rents capped, in-between tenancy rent increases stopped, a clampdown on mould and damp, and allow tenants to decorate and keep pets. But the bill does not go far enough. The rent controls proposed are the bare minimum, and we are now fighting

to bring rents down!

### **What could others learn from you?**

As a tenants and community union, we organize and campaign on a range of issues that matter to our members. As a result, we have a staff team and teams of members who doorknock every day to recruit and grow our union. We then work with members to campaign on issues that come up at the doors. Our strategy chart maps our primary targets, secondary targets and what will move them. We can then plan strategic communications based on our tactics and demands.



to 100 percent of workers participating.

But that doesn't fix the fundamental problem, which is that even with a supermajority, most workers today have very little workplace power. By that I mean that they're easily replaceable.

Different countries have different laws around using agency workers or other workers to break strikes. But in the UK context, there are no laws prohibiting employers from hiring agency workers to replace workers on strike. There's one law, but it only prohibits agencies themselves from knowingly providing workers to break strikes.

And in fact, even where there's clear evidence that agencies have been doing that, there's never been any effective enforcement of that law. So workers will sometimes have to fight for huge amounts of time and go to huge amounts of effort through disruptive direct actions. And this is connected to why new strategies and tactics are needed because where you don't have workplace power, you need to compensate for it through confrontation and disruption.

If you're organizing with train drivers or teachers or doctors, so-called professional workers – these are groups that are harder to replace during a strike because of the particular skill sets and qualifications required for the job. But in the service sector, where low-paid precarious migrant workers predominate, workers are easier to replace.

In fact, one of the major reasons why more established unions have not succeeded in organizing successfully with these workers, even where they've made efforts to, is because their approach is grounded in a mistaken analysis of workplace power. Traditional union organizing will dictate that you achieve a supermajority and you go on strike, and that's enough to force the employer's hand and like I've been saying – that's not enough.



## Max Haiven

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

My name is Max, an organizer, educator, writer and game-maker. I work as the Canada Research Chair in the Radical Imagination and an associate professor in Canada. I'm a specialist in the politics of the imagination and the practices that awaken it.

### **What is the importance of play and games in radical organizing?**

It's not simply that games are great ways to bring people together and to educate about key topics. It's not even just that games are the most popular entertainment media ever and we're losing them to the far right. It's also because thinking about games makes us better organizers: we have to think about what can make participating in movements engaging, rewarding, fulfilling and, yes, fun.

### **What would you say to someone who claims they are 'not into games'?**

Everyone's into games. Beyond video and board games, humans play all the time: with words, with animals, with ideas, in the bedroom, in art... You don't need to be a huge games fan (I'm not!) to learn something important and useful about how humans interact through play and games. And even if you're not into games, 2 billion people each day play one (more than watch a film or read a book), so as organizers we can't ignore them.

The main requirement, and this is what most unions are not willing to do, is to engage in highly confrontational actions.

**You also organize English classes for your members. Why?**

In our union, about 40 percent of our entire membership speaks Spanish or Portuguese as a mother tongue and many of them don't speak any English or have a very basic level of English. So we offer English classes so that they're able to defend themselves, to stand up for themselves, and to support each other more, and to help them navigate their workplace and the systems. But we also offer other classes and workshops as well, in lots of different areas. Digital skills – use of the internet or use of smartphones. Employment law workshops so that they're aware of what their rights are.

And we've offered lots of other kinds of workshops that aren't so educationally based, but are culturally and community based. Dance workshops and exercise sessions and things like that for members to be together, learn together and have fun together.

**Although your focus is on precarious workers in low-paid jobs you also organize cultural workers. How has it worked for you to combine such different groups of workers?**

Yeah, our membership predominates amongst facilities workers, so cleaners, security guards, caterers, hospitality workers and retail workers but yes, we also represent what we call design and cultural workers. That is graphic designers, artists of different sorts, creative workers from the creative industries.

Of course, they face very different issues. Primarily, many of them are self-employed, so that's a whole other paradigm through which they have to organize. We help them by creating networks, by sharing knowledge and information and quite often they have to fight to be paid

**We've organized in several sectors that have not had much of a union presence, if any union presence before. We have kind of pioneered the organizing work with facilities workers and then done the same in other sectors as well.**

for the work they do so we support them with that.

But the collective element of the organizing is more based around creating a network of workers rather than workers taking collective action together against an employer. These workers build the networks and communities they need to support each other. It's a far more kind of autonomous way of organizing.

Beyond the creative industries, we've also organized within the legal sector, including workers like paralegals and solicitors, even barristers – despite them being self-employed. We've also organized with architectural workers, sex workers, and lots of different categories of charity workers as well.

So we've organized in several sectors that have not had much of a union presence, if any union presence before. We have kind of pioneered the organizing work with facilities workers and then done the same in other sectors as well.

**In the years since you founded the union, what would you say have been your biggest challenges?**

Many. I would say that the main challenge in the early years was learning what was really required to win. And that's actually an ongoing question.

As the economic, legal and political climate changes, tactics and strategies also need to change. We

have recently had a host of new laws in this country cracking down on protest activity and providing police with powers to suppress protests or strike action based on the level of noise there is, for example.

It's absurd. And these kinds of highly draconian new policing measures will continually influence and inform the tactics and strategies we need to deploy. So a major challenge has always been developing and re-developing effective strategies and tactics based on the prevailing political, economic climate of the time.

Also, building up a sufficient network of people. Creating and maintaining a community is incredibly hard work and of course, community is one of the cornerstones of UVW.

Another challenge we face is that the industries that we organize in have incredibly high levels of turnover. That makes it very hard to sustain a workplace presence and workplace power.

One of the major challenges is it's very hard legally to hold employers to account. There's no enforcement body for employment law in the UK and that makes it very easy for employers to break the law and to break the human rights of our members. That requires huge amounts of investment, time, energy, commitment, and whatever little resources we have in every fight that we have. !

## New York City Democratic Socialists of America

### Socialist organizing and party building

The New York City Democratic Socialists of America is the largest chapter of the largest socialist organization in the U.S. We believe a better world is possible and we're building it right here in New York City.

New York is one of the most unequal cities in the country, but it doesn't have to remain that way. Democratic socialists are building working class power to challenge the dominance of the wealthy and the powerful in the five boroughs. Together, NYC-DSA aims to

transform New York into a place where working people have the power in our democracy to ensure that everyone can live a dignified life.

### Biggest win?

Our biggest organizing win was electing Zohran Mamdani mayor in 2025. We expanded the electorate and organized young people and immigrant communities to elect a mayor that can create a city we can all afford. Before that we have passed major climate legislation, strengthened tenant laws, and passed taxes on the rich in New York state. We have elected

14 democratic socialists at the municipal, state, and federal levels.



### What could others learn from you?

Electoral field work is our hallmark, and we have strong communications and fundraising operations. Increasingly important for us is building community among our members. Tying it all together is a history of fighting for a working class agenda with our elected officials, coordinating between movements and the halls of government.

## People Before Profit

### Community organizing, socialist political education, people power movements

People Before Profit is a broad ecosocialist party operating across Ireland, North and South. We organize around housing, cost of living, workers' rights, and ecosocialism. We build collective power for working people, in the Dáil, Stormont, and on the streets to take on corporate interests and fight for a society where human need comes before profit.

### Biggest win?

People Before Profit (PBP) helped lead the mass movement against water charges (2014–2016), one of Ireland's most significant grassroots revolts against austerity.

Communities across the country blocked meter installations and a majority boycotted the charges. A by-election victory for Paul Murphy (now a People Before Profit TD) put water charges at the centre of national politics and used electoral campaigning to fuel street power. The movement forced the incoming government to abolish the charges and abandon austerity rhetoric, demonstrating what organized working-class resistance can achieve. While it fell short of removing Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael from power, it proved that mass non-compliance, community organizing, and electoral politics combined can win.



### What could others learn from you?

People Before Profit has developed a practice of combining electoral campaigns with mass movements: using elections to amplify community organizing, and community organizing to give elections real stakes. Candidates don't just seek votes; they build movements. Alongside this, PBP maintains a broad, democratic party culture where debate and difference are welcomed, while unity holds in the big battles. The lesson: you don't have to choose between the ballot box and the picket line, and internal democracy makes you stronger, not weaker.



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# HOW DATA IS COLLECTED AND ANALYSED MATTERS

Data is not a substitute for organizing – but can strengthen it. Here, William Skoglund, from Zetkin Foundations' research team, expands on how and when progressive organizations can use data.

**William Skoglund**  
Zetkin foundation

We now live in a world increasingly governed by data. With modern computing power and the rise of AI and machine learning, information has never been more abundant – or more intensely analysed. Data can guide us on where to campaign, which messages to emphasise, and which methods are most effective. But it can also be misleading when interpreted poorly. If we want to build a world where the left is winning, leveraging data is essential – but it must be done critically, strategically, and with a clear understanding of its limits.

Data can be misleading when stripped of context. For example, a campaign might find that certain areas respond strongly to a particular method, but fail to distinguish whether this reflects genuine persuasion or simply higher baseline turnout among supporters. Using data critically therefore means asking what the data actually captures – and what it leaves out. Not all patterns reflect causal relationships, and without grounding in local knowledge and experience, data risks leading us to optimise for the wrong outcomes.

## How to leverage data

Data, in many countries, is available to those who know where to look and how to collect it. In countries such as Germany and Sweden, local characteristics are publicly available through government agencies. This makes it possible to analyse characteristics such as age, gender, income, and educational level across voting districts.

In Germany, Die Linke has created illustrative maps using this type of information, tracking the demographic and economic composition of local areas. These maps allow activists and organizers to quickly

G	H	I	J	K	L	M
	<p>assess what an area looks like and what they might expect when organizing there. Organizers often hold tacit knowledge about areas, but by leveraging data we can systematise our knowledge and confirm, or nuance, what we know. Data, therefore, should be seen as a complement to our pre-existing knowledge – not a replacement.</p> <p>As organizers, we should be emboldened by data in our work, and data should help us make decisions about which campaign methods to employ. Volunteers at Zetkin Foundation work on analysing the effectiveness of different campaign methods, learning which, and where, different methods work best. This can directly inform organizers on what campaign methods to use and how to prioritise between different methods. As an example, following the EU election in 2024, analyses of phone canvassing showed that calls to areas with a high share of low-education voters proved</p>		<p>most fruitful in increasing turnout and engagement. When planning similar campaigns, these areas can then be targeted first.</p> <p><b>Guide but not determine our actions</b></p> <p>While data can guide us, organizers still have to make crucial decisions based on their judgment. Data can tell us which method has the highest marginal effect but this does not mean that all activists should engage in that particular method. As organizers, our role must be to first and foremost activate as many people as we can. If an activist is hesitant to engage in direct-contact campaigning, start them off with handing out newspapers (another proven campaign method), or helping prepare sandwiches and coffee. Organizers should not be trapped in a tyranny of marginal effects but should be</p>		<p>guided by data to make informed decisions.</p> <p>To be useful, the conditions under which data is collected and analysed matter. Today, for-profit consultancies provide one avenue for the left to leverage data. Another is to collect, analyse, and disseminate data through our own institutions – powered by our collective efforts. The strength of the left is the broad base of activists and organizers who, on a daily basis, engage in activities to impact change. For the most part, this consists of individuals doing basic activism, but it can, and should, also involve people using their skills in statistical analysis or programming to help the left leverage data. In this way, the movement does not have to rely on external parties with their own incentives and priorities. Data, in this sense, is not a substitute for organizing – but a tool that, when used collectively and critically, can strengthen it. !</p>	

## Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Brussels Office (RLS Brussels)

### Political education, support for movements and parties on the left, left-wing strategy, internationalism

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is a political education organization operating in Germany and internationally. RLS is closely affiliated with the German democratic socialist party Die Linke. Through political education, research and spaces for mutual learning, it contributes to building transnational organizing ecosystems and shared strategies, and supports those

working for social, economic and climate justice.

#### Biggest win?

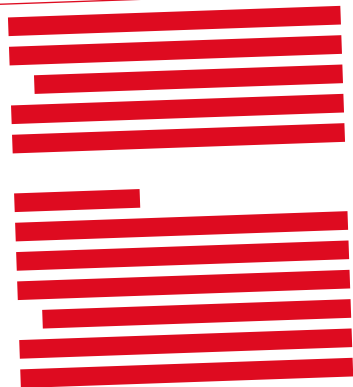
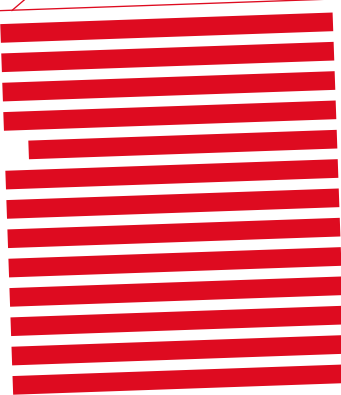
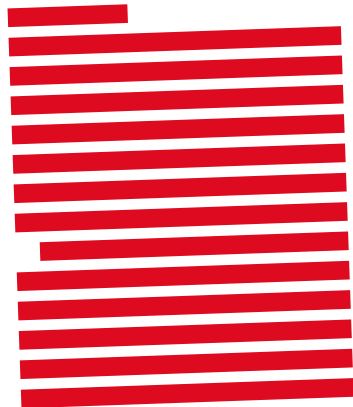
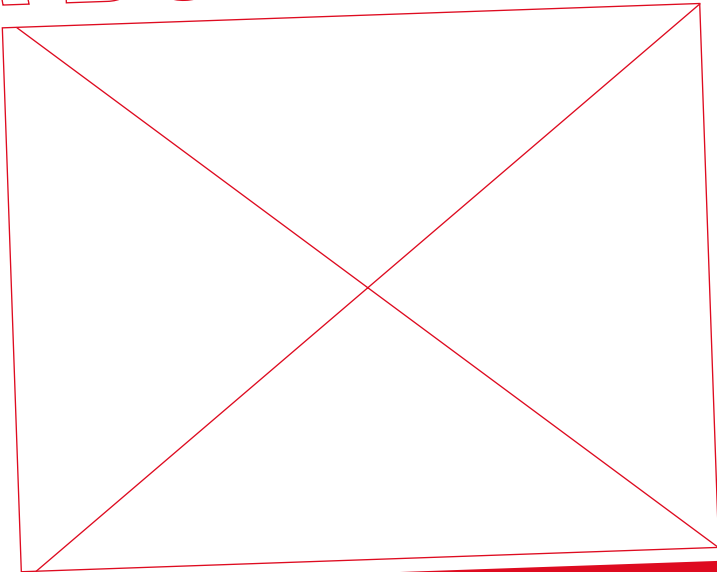
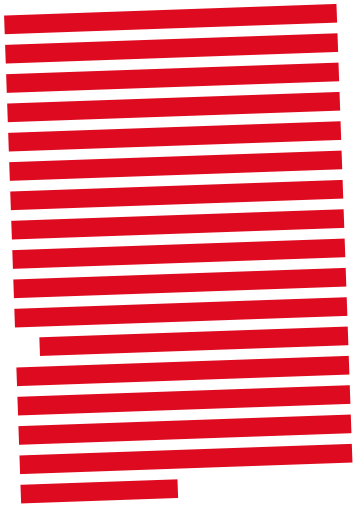
Recently, RLS Brussels opened up a strategic discussion on organizing and technology through a Europe-wide study and interviews with organizers, thereby bringing questions of power, infrastructure, ownership and collective practice to the fore. As this work is taken up, more conscious and collectively driven approaches to the use of technology in organizational work are beginning to emerge.



#### What could others learn from you?

We've built expertise in building durable links between movements and parties across borders, investing in political education and shared strategy (not just campaigns), creating spaces where organizers can reflect and learn collectively, and working towards long-term transformative goals rather than short-term wins.

# PRINTING LOCAL NEWSPAPERS TO BREAK SOCIAL MEDIA BUBBLES



## In a digital age, Zetkin Foundation bets on distributing printed newspapers. With "Vänstern i..." ("The left in...") Zetkin has long offered to produce local issues of a newspaper for local branches of the Swedish Left Party – a strategy designed both to increase voter support in the area and boost engagement among activists.

Since 2015, the Swedish Zetkin Foundation has been helping progressive organizations through the Zetkin platform, an online tool designed to make organizing easier. But since 2018 they also produce local newspaper editions for the Swedish Left Party. And at the beginning of this year, they did the same for the German party Die Linke ahead of the mayoral election in Strausberg.

Adam Määttä, an organizer at Zetkin Foundation, speaks here about the benefits of investing in local newspapers for progressive parties.

### **At Zetkin you have chosen to invest in printed newspapers in this digital age. Why is that?**

There are several reasons, but the main one is that it provides direct contact with important voters in the very areas where we want to get our political messages across to them.

We also believe that a long-term presence in these areas is important, and that it helps us break out of social media bubbles, where only a few people are exposed to the left's message. Instead, with printed newspapers we can reach out widely to entire residential areas.

### **In how many Swedish cities have you published Vänstern i...?**

I think for the last Swedish election we published around 170 editions. But there are many editions in Stockholm, for example. Still – we were in the majority of Sweden's municipalities. There were a few exceptions: sometimes we publish newspapers at a more regional level,



Adam Määttä, organizer at Zetkin Foundation. PHOTO: JOHN SKARIN.

with the district sending them to all the municipalities within its district. Sometimes at the municipal level, and sometimes it's even at the neighbourhood level.

### **At Zetkin, you seem to think there is a risk in relying on digital advertising campaigns. Why is that?**

Well, the risk of advertising is that you don't reach the people you want to reach. But then, we also see the newspaper project as something that goes beyond simply spreading information. We're trying to build a long-term local presence in the areas where we distribute the newspaper. We envisage that, on the one hand, we establish direct contact by being able to send a newspaper to everyone within a postcode area. But we also want to complement this with other forms of presence in the area. This can range from door-to-door canvassing to putting up posters or standing outside the local grocery

shop and talking to people there. In this way, we can make targeted visits to the areas we consider important.

And I think the newspaper serves a much stronger purpose than simply coming across a post on social media. In that sense, we believe there are advantages to producing a printed publication, a printed newspaper.

### **Another point you raise is that it's a way of engaging members, is that right?**

For the left, if we are to win, we need more people to get involved in various ways. By producing the newspaper we build relationships with those involved. We need people to write for the newspaper – to develop and argue for our policies. We have also managed to engage people who, for example, have not been active in the Left Party but are talented photographers. That person can get involved and feel that they are contributing by taking photos for the newspaper. We

can attract graphic designers to create things for the newspaper.

But then, I would say the thing that has had the biggest impact is actually distributing the newspaper ourselves. A great number of members go out and distribute the newspaper in their own neighbourhoods.

For us, it has worked well as a low-threshold activity. Many people find it an easy way to get started. In this way, it's often the case in many local organizations that 10–20 people, perhaps even hundreds, are involved in some way in either producing the newspaper or distributing it to letterboxes.

### Why are low-threshold activities important?

For the left, it's crucial that many of us get involved and that many of us spread the left's message. We cannot rely on buying large advertising spaces or advertising in bus shelters

and major newspapers, etcetera. We need other tools for reaching out, and that means having the numbers on our side. So it's important that a lot of people are committed.

It's not enough just to have a newspaper, but it can be a way to get involved and then take on a bigger role in that kind of work, feeling that you can contribute what you're good at. If you're a writer, you can contribute by doing that; if you're a photographer, you can contribute by taking photos, and so on. I think that's usually key for getting people to be involved in and work for civic organizations in the long term.

### Your strategy is to distribute the newspaper primarily in areas where it is believed to have the greatest political impact. How do you decide which areas these are?

For one thing you can look at previous election results to see where

**It's not enough just to have a newspaper, but it can be a way to get involved and then take on a bigger role in that kind of work, feeling that you can contribute what you're good at.**

## Rød-Grøn Ungdom (Red-Green Youth)

### Socialism, feminism, anti-racism, climate activism

The Red-Green Youth (Denmark) is a 6-year-old organization for young socialists, feminists, anti-racists, and climate activists organizing to move the goalposts in Danish politics. They fight for a fair future for all by organizing young progressives, meeting them where they are: at schools, in workplaces, and on doorsteps. They collaborate with Enhedslisten (The Red-Green Alliance).

### Biggest win?

During the autumn of 2023, Rød-Grøn Ungdom campaigned for free public transport. They visited schools across the country, engaging students by having

them write letters to the Minister of Transport. They collected over 2,000 handwritten letters during the campaign, putting good, green, free trains and buses on the agenda. Since their campaign launch, public transport has proven to be a winning case in Denmark. More and more parties, unions, and interest organizations have taken on this policy, and multiple municipalities across the country have made local buses free of charge for all passengers. The campaign has proven how we can create a socially just green transition built on people's power.

**What could others learn from you?** Rød-Grøn Ungdom's key to creating change is to build confidence amongst activists, so that

thousands of young people have the courage to talk to strangers about their struggles and wishes in everyday life. They focus on organizing their peers through 1:1 encounters, building people power one conversation at a time. By meeting young people where they are through school visits and door-to-door canvassing, they communicate encouragement and hope for a better future. Other organizations could learn that a caring approach builds confidence, creating a strong foundation for organizing skills.



there is strong support for the left, and not just for your own party. I think you could look at where the red-green parties are stronger in general.

Then, I think it's reasonable that these are areas where, for example, many people live in rented accommodation and where people do not have the highest incomes and therefore also benefit most from left-wing policies: lowering the cost of living, raising wages and things like that. So I would say it's both about the demographics and the type of area, and the election results. These are areas where left-wing parties have greater potential to grow than, for example, an area where most people vote for the right.

**You prefer to publish newspapers not only in connection with or ahead of elections, but also between elections. What is the idea behind that?**

It's about building long-term trust. I think it means a great deal to be a voice that is always present and consistently championing its causes. To show that it's not about temporary election promises or a way to maximise votes. Rather, we want to be there in the long term, listening to what residents in certain areas want and think, whilst also communicating the political proposals we put forward.

I think the key to building trust is always being there, rather than just popping up like a jack-in-the-box every four years. Take Eskilstuna, for example, where we distributed the newspaper eight times a year for four or five years. When we are in the area, lots of people tell us they usually get the newspaper and have seen and read about this or that. It becomes a point of reference that you're present, and I think people appreciate that.!



## **Knut Hühne**

**Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

I am Knut, a member of Die Linke in Berlin, Germany. I am a software developer by day and have been organizing the Zetkin-Hackdays in Berlin for the past year. I love building systems and tools to empower my comrades to fight the good fight.

**Your session *Digital security for organizers* introduces the fundamentals of web security.**

**Can you tell us more about who this workshop is mainly aimed at, and what are the general public most unaware of in terms of web security?**

Organizers are often faced with handling very personal data. I think that it can be helpful for them to understand a bit more about the background of digital security. With my talk I would like to help organizers build a more foundational understanding about different types of encryption and security considerations in general. Equipped with that theoretical background, it should be easier for organizers to make decisions about new tools and technologies themselves.

**Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight?**

When I canvas or talk to people on the streets, I regularly meet very disillusioned people who have given up all hope in politics. Through talking to them they sometimes realise that it is up to them to effect change. Seeing how this empowers people is really motivating to me.

# NUMBERS

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# HOW PHONE CALLS AND LOCAL PAPERS BOOSTED THE SWEDISH LEFT

Phone canvassing and locally produced newspapers both increased the Swedish Left Party's vote share in recent elections. William Skoglund, from Zetkin Foundations' research team, gives an evidence-based picture of what these tools can achieve.

In the recent electoral cycles, the Swedish Left Party has invested in two key campaign methods: locally produced newspapers and phone canvassing. Ahead of the 2022 general election, local party chapters produced editions of the newspaper “Vänstern i...” (“The left in...”) – for example “The left in Uppsala” – a project coordinated by the Zetkin Foundation. The papers covered the party’s positions on both local and national issues. Two editions were distributed: the first roughly a month before the election, and the second less than a week before election day.

An analysis shows that the first edition – the one distributed well in advance – had a clear positive effect on the Left Party’s vote share. When we look at the cities where the Left Party is typically strong: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Borås, Norrköping, Örebro, Umeå, Linköping and Uppsala, the effect is nearly 0.82 percentage points. For the country as a whole, including areas where the party’s potential is smaller, the average effect is about 0.33 percentage points, corresponding to around a five percent increase in a typical district. That is still a meaningful effect for a single campaign intervention.

The second edition, distributed just before election day, showed no clear effect. While we will re-evaluate the impact of newspapers in the

**William Skoglund**  
Zetkin foundation

2026 election, this pattern suggests that building trust and communicating with voters early in an election cycle, perhaps for several years, is a key strategy for the left.

Ahead of the 2024 EU election, we analysed the effect of phone calls to voters. Here too the results are clear and positive. Phone canvassing also had a positive effect on turnout – people who were called were more likely to show up and vote. This is an important result, particularly in an election like the EU election where turnout is generally low and many voters are uncertain.

**Focusing on low-education and low-turnout areas**

To get a sense of the scale of these effects, consider Malmö, where the phone canvassing operation was particularly extensive. Out of the 25,049 votes cast for the Left Party in Malmö, the analysis suggests that roughly 6,058 were generated by the phone canvassing campaign. If we remove those votes, the Left Party’s share in Malmö could have dropped from close to 20 percent to closer to 15 percent. That is a dramatic difference from a single campaign tool. At the district level the effects can be even more striking – in Hägersten 37 Årstadal in Stockholm, the 292 calls placed to voters in the district

are estimated to have generated 113 out of the district's total 229 votes for the Left Party.

A particularly important finding is that the effect of phone canvassing was strongest in areas with a large share of low-educated voters. In these areas, the calls got more people to turn out as well as to vote for the Left Party. This suggests that personal contact through phone calls can be especially powerful among voters who otherwise risk being left outside the political conversation – and that the Left Party's message is particularly resonant with these groups.

This finding has strategic implications. If the left wants to maximize the impact of its campaign resources, a substantial share of its efforts should be directed toward low-education and low-turnout areas. These are areas where the information environment is thinner, and where a single phone call or newspaper can make the difference between someone staying at home and someone casting a vote. In high-turnout, high-information areas, most voters have already made up their minds – the mar-

ginal return on campaign effort is smaller. By contrast, in areas where many people feel disconnected from politics, the left has the greatest potential to grow as well as the greatest opportunity to bring people into democratic participation. Targeting these areas is not just electorally smart – it also means campaigning in areas where the politics of the left are most needed.

However, one must take care not to just show up every fourth year. Building trust and relationships is done over time, not overnight. Furthermore, campaigning is still meaningful in an average electoral district, and party organizations might still benefit from campaigning where they are strong and where there is trust and a history of voting for the left.

Analysing combined and sustained efforts

### Analysing combined and sustained efforts

One should of course be cautious about the precise size of the estimated effects – they could be both larger and smaller than what is measured here. But the direction

## The Socialist Left Party (SV)

### Political party

The Socialist Left Party (Norway) fights to implement a fairer tax system that doesn't privilege the richest but instead becomes a toll for redistribution. We believe this must also apply to how we tackle climate change, Norway must take responsibility for its oil production and the impact it has on the most vulnerable countries. SV pledges to fight climate change and work towards a more inclusive society.

### Biggest win?

Preventing deep sea mining. The Norwegian government was about to permit deep sea mining but SV was able to force them to reverse this decision through negotiations. A broad coalition of environmental organizations, in Norway and internationally, contributed to shifting the public discourse alongside the political process.

### What could others learn from you?

We have recent experience with implementing Zetkin across all organizational levels in a large organization. SV also increased doorknocking in the 2025 election, and we continue our work to knock on more doors before the 2027 election.



**A particularly important finding is that the effect of phone canvassing was strongest in areas with a large share of low-educated voters. In these areas, the calls got more people to turn out as well as to vote for the Left Party.**

is clear across both campaign tools and across different analytical approaches. Locally produced newspapers strengthen the left, especially when distributed early and in strategically important areas. Phone canvassing has a clear effect on vote share as well as turnout among all voters, but especially among low-educated voters. These are campaign tools that deliver measurable results.

An important question that remains is what happens when these efforts are combined systematically and sustained over an entire electoral cycle, rather than concentrated around individual elections. The 2026 election offers an opportunity to find out.

What we already know, however, is that deliberate and sustained campaign work strengthens the left – and that the greatest gains are to be found among those who need the left the most. In 2026 the left will, for the first time, begin using large scale door-to-door canvassing. By tracing both phone and door-to-door canvassing as well as the deliveries of newspapers we will be able to track how these campaign methods interact and complement each other, providing new insights into the efficacy of our campaign strategies.!

## Raquel Jesse

**Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

Raquel Jesse is an organizer working with race and class narratives in political communication. Her work focuses on how narratives around race and class can be used to build broader support, and how these approaches can be adapted to different political contexts, including Europe.



**Raquel, your session *Race-Class Narrative – a proven strategy to combat racism* offers a messaging framework designed to counter racism. Can you give us an example of where the Race-Class Narrative as a messaging framework is best used successfully and by who? (Is it designed for large-scale campaigns or can it be used in one-to-one conversations with voters – or something else?)**

The Race-Class Narrative has been widely used and tested in the US. We adapted and tested it for the UK context and proved it works. It is currently used by organizations including NEON and the UK Tax Justice Network. While large-scale campaigns make it easiest to test empirically, RCN is a strategic framework, not just a messaging toolkit, that can be adapted to any context, from national campaigns to one-to-one doorstep conversations. At its core it's about understanding how right-wing actors divide and distract communities, and how to respond effectively.

**Can you give us an example that has been or is inspiring to you in how RCN has been successfully used? By yourself or someone else – a personal or organizational win.**

This question always makes me pause, because RCN is ultimately nothing new. People have always found ways to come together across their differences. The examples that motivate me most: Fred Hampton's Rainbow Coalition in the US, which brought the Black Panthers, the Young Lords and the Young Patriots together to fight police brutality. The Grunwick dispute in the UK, where thousands of workers, Black and white, men and women, united to defend the rights of migrant women workers who had initially been ignored by the union movement. And more recently, Kenmure Street in Glasgow, where neighbours blocked an immigration van and refused to move until two migrant men were released, chanting "let our neighbours go." In most parts of the world, across history and right now, ordinary people have come together across differences, for strangers, to fight for justice. That's not the exception. That's how we've always won.



## Susanne Lang

### Who are you and what do you do?

I am head of Digitalization and Organization, at Die Linke. I work somewhere between digital strategy, organizational fine-tuning, and an inbox that never quite reaches zero.

I split my time between Berlin and Strausberg in Brandenburg – where I recently led the campaign for Die Linke's mayoral candidate.

### You are hosting the panel **What does a left party of the future look like? Why do you think it is important to talk about parties today?**

Capital is constantly reorganizing itself in its endless pursuit of concentrating resources in the hands of a few while exploiting the many. The only way to stop this once and for all, and to create something new, is to organize those affected. Parties are the one form of organization capable of doing so. As organizations of the many, the parties we know today emerged alongside industrialisation and the early formation of democratic states. But now, as democratic states are increasingly challenged from the right and from capital across much of the Western world, we need to renew mass organizations in order to stabilise our fundamental social foundation: democracy itself. Only if people come together again will they be able to counter attacks from both capital and the right.

At the same time, the era of classical industrial modernity is long behind us. Even Fordism has

passed, and few people are willing to organize themselves within traditional party structures defined solely by hierarchy and obedience. People seek meaningful participation and want to have a real say. They demand flexibility, as their lives are often difficult to control – especially when it comes to working hours and predictable free time. Individuals want to maintain their uniqueness while still acting collectively. They may long for structure, yet resist rigid hierarchies.

As we all know: there is no going back to the past. We must reinvent parties so they can offer exactly this: strong collective power combined with vibrant internal democracy and effective leadership; individual empowerment alongside strong communities; a diversity of issues and perspectives, paired with clear political focus and most importantly: meaningful relationships and joy in party life. So the question we need to ask today is: how do we reinvent our organizations?

### Can you share something that keeps you coming back to the fight?

When I look at the world today, I often feel a deep sense of anxiety. The only way I know to move beyond that feeling of helplessness and to find the courage and hope to attempt the impossible again is through a good, inspiring conversation with friends.

There are few things more fulfilling than walking away from such a conversation with a clearer sense of the world, having learned something new, and feeling ready to take the next step together.



# THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PHONEBANKING FOR BUILDING STRONGER MOVEMENTS

By turning phonebanking into events where activists hang out, have fun and eat pizza, Zetkin has found a way to efficiently activate their members and to turn phone calls into votes. We take a look at the factors needed to make phone canvassing successful.

Phonebanking is a central part of Zetkin Foundation's approach, both for getting volunteers to become more engaged and participate in activities, and for reaching voters ahead of elections. Zetkin Foundation has used this method, for different purposes, in Sweden, Germany, Norway, Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands – working with parties as well as other types of left-wing organizations.

Nathalie Söderberg is an organizer at Zetkin who has worked with phonebanking.

### **For what purposes do you organize phonebanking?**

We use it for three purposes. First, it's very effective when you phone your own members to mobilise around activities. When you phone someone to ask if they would like to participate in a protest or a meeting, there's a much greater chance that they will show up than if you send them an email. So it works really well to get members involved and to build a relationship and get to know them.

The second reason is because it's also effective to phone potential voters ahead of elections. We've done a study [described in the article by William Skoglund in this reader] where we saw that if we reached 10 percent of voters in an election district by phone we increased the number of votes there by 1.5 percent.

The third reason is that it's a good way to activate members. A member can go from not having participated for a while to being a part of phoning and at the same time meeting comrades. We try to make it a fun activity with good food and a good atmosphere. You usually eat pizza together, and most people think it's a lot of fun.

As the person in charge, it's important to create a good atmosphere; from being able to sit comfortably, to having headphones and computers to borrow if you don't have them yourself. And to lower the threshold to be able to phone. You should offer

help to create an account on Zetkin, log in and other practical things. But you also need to make sure that there's coffee, sweets, snacks, so you get a reward for participating.

Another aspect that is important is for people to feel like they are making progress, and for that it's important to set a goal you can reach. You make a calculation of how many people you want to phone, how many you want to reach, and how many hours it will take. A goal becomes a push for people. It's very important that they get to feel: "yes, we made it".

### **Do you always have big groups sitting together making phone calls?**

That varies. When I was responsible for a call centre in Malmö, ahead of the church election in 2021 I think, we also had a digital call session, so that people who didn't live in Malmö could call from home. So if you have people who want to participate who aren't in the same place – that's a good way to do it. But the best and most fun way is to gather and phone together from the same place.

### **What else should you bear in mind to make phonebanking successful?**

Well, to recruit callers several weeks in advance. For that you can use these three steps for mobilisation that we work with, and teach, at Zetkin Foundation: As the first step you do a broad sweep, send an email or a lot of text messages, or post on social media.

The second step is to make direct contact with low-hanging fruit. So if you take the Swedish Left Party as an example, I am referring to those who are on the board or who have political assignments – those core activists, who are always there. I text them or phone them, or write a message.

The third step is to call members, to get callers to the phonebanking session. Usually, while we're phoning members or voters about something specific, one caller is phoning just to recruit more people. Then you always ask people who have partic-



Nathalie Söderberg.

ipated at a phonebanking event, if they can participate again.

It's also good to make the goal you have set, and how the phonebanking is going, visible. You write the numbers on a whiteboard, or on the window, or show an image on the computer. That way everyone can feel that they are making progress, and that we are actually achieving something. Because it's almost always 30–35 percent who answer, no matter when we phone and who we phone. The response frequency is always somewhere around there.

It's good to make sure people don't get frustrated that no one is answering, and for that you should show everyone that reaching four out of ten people is really good. And it's effective to show how many conversations we have actually had. It's also good to prepare as much as possible before a session.

### How do you prepare people who will be participating in phonebanking?

We organize courses ahead of phonebanking events. They can be digital. We usually run one a day or a week in advance. But it depends on what kind of phone campaign it is. If it's like 20 people participating, and they all live in the same city, then you can have a training session in person.

It's also good to send out an email to everyone who signs up for the next call session where you describe how they can prepare in advance. That is to say: create an account on Zetkin and read through any relevant material, such as a script for the conversation, or political information. Then there will always be those who don't do it, so you give a brief summary on the spot.

### You use scripts for the calls?

It's always good to have some guidance for a conversation. However, you shouldn't sound like a robot. You shouldn't follow the script word-for-word. But it can be good to have some points written down, like: this is a question I want to ask during the conversation.

The Left Party usually produces a conversation script, which covers what we say based on what the person tells us: if they have already voted for us, or if they are unsure of what they should vote for, or if they are not on our side.

### What do participants log on the Zetkin platform?

Who we have tried to talk to. Who answered when we called. Who did we have a conversation with, so that it's not just someone who says, "Hello. No, I can't talk right now."

Sometimes we might have a survey to fill in. It can be a survey directed at members: What do you like to do? What are you interested in? Would you like to come to this event? And then you can also register people for events on Zetkin. If someone wants to be a part of distributing newspapers, or be a part of door canvassing, and so on.

When we phone voters, no information like that is saved but there can be a survey where callers answer: Do you think the person will vote for us? But the survey is not linked to any specific voter. It becomes an anonymised survey.

### Because of data protection laws?

Yes, exactly. You can't register people's political opinions.

### Not even which questions were the most frequent?

We probably haven't done that. I think that's the kind of thing that can come up during check-in rounds with the participants of a phonebanking session: What is something that came up often during your calls?

But the focus is on making a lot of calls quickly when it comes to potential voters. And then not many people can answer every question about a party's policies by themselves but the website and documents are available to help you to provide answers.

### These check-ins – when are they done?

It's good to have a short introduction or first check-in before you start and to remind everyone why we are doing this, what goals we have and so on.

Then it depends on whether you are phoning for three hours or for a whole day. But it's good to have a check-in in the middle of the day or in the middle of calling. At that point it's more about how you feel, how the conversations are going, and if there

## Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet (the Swedish Dockworkers Union)

### Workplace organizing, rank and file union, trade union

The Swedish Dockworkers' Union is an independent trade union. The organization is based on the members' right to decide on negotiations, agreements and industrial actions. They keep the rank and file tradition alive to build power. The Dockworkers' Union has been in the spotlight in the past year because of the unlawful dismissal of vice chairman Erik Helgeson.

### Biggest win?

In 2019, the Dockworkers' Union won a protracted battle to sign a nationwide collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the employers' organization Ports of Sweden. The issue of a CBA had been on the agenda since the union was formed in 1972. APM Terminals in Gothenburg launched an aggressive union-busting campaign with massive lockouts as early as 2016, and in 2018, the Dockworkers' Union's elected representatives were

banned from all union activities and health and safety work throughout the country. The members stood up, and just hours before a total strike of indefinite duration was to break out, the employers chose to sign a CBA.



# NATHALIE'S STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL CALL TO A POTENTIAL VOTER

**1** I would say that it is important to introduce yourself in a pleasant way first. "Hi, my name is Nathalie and I am active in the Left Party."

**2** Then you tell them why you are calling. "We are calling because election day is coming up soon." Then you ask questions, like: "What do you think are important political issues? What do you think could be better where you live or in Sweden in general?" And based on what the person says, you can talk about those topics and inform them where your party stands on that issue.

**3** You have to find out where the person is at and how they feel about the elections. Is this someone who mostly agrees with us? Or is it someone who is quite sceptical? The conversations can vary based on that.

**4** In general: You should always be nice. You should ask them questions. You should listen to what they think is important. And then connect their most important questions to your party's policies. Also – offer help to find information that they are wondering about.

is anyone who needs input or help with anything.

And then it's good to have a check-out as well. Not too long, but you need to talk and have a summary of how it went. "This went really well! Great job. See you next time."

## When you phone voters – which voters do you prioritise?

There are two different groups you should phone. The first is voters in areas where you have a lot of support. So you look at the election results from the last election and phone people there because we want to keep the support we already have and gain some more.

These are normally areas with high voter turnout and people are mostly middle class and have slightly higher education than in other areas.

The second group is areas where voter turnout is quite low but people still like the left and also have a strong material interest in our politics. So areas with a high concentration of rentals, where you don't have high income earners and where you have lower education in general. People who need a more equal economy.

Those two types of areas I would say are important to pinpoint. And then you can see what resources you have and what you have time for.

## I know that some other organizations have come to the conclusion that door-knocking is more effective than phonebanking. What do you think?

Door-knocking is the most effective and we do that a lot as well. But the thing is that door knocking is what requires the most resources. Phoning is a good complement to that. The best is to do both. And to also have a lot of posters and flyers in the city and to also be in election booths and on the square.

There is a study that shows that you need to reach a voter about 16 times for that person to start thinking about voting for a party. So you need to reach voters in several different ways and work in parallel at different levels. !



## Richard Olsson

### **Tell us very briefly who you are and what you do!**

I'm Richard, one of the founders of Zetkin Foundation and coordinator of the software team. I started coding in my teens, and much later came into organizing in the local Malmö chapter of the Swedish left party Vänsterpartiet, where I'm currently active.

### **Your session What is Zetkin anyway? will introduce and demo the software Zetkin and what it can do for organizers. Tell us one thing about Zetkin you wish more organizers knew (or understood)?**

Zetkin is a suite of tools built with the intention of optimising certain parts of the work that organizers do, but not everything. We believe in relational organizing, so we intentionally do not try to optimise away the labour of building relationships.

### **Can you share a recent win or development with Zetkin that you're happy about?**

We developed canvassing features in Zetkin, together with (among others) Norwegian SV and Swedish Vänsterpartiet. This software has been developed in partnership, and aided culture shifts in both organizations, towards door knocking. This is integral to what Zetkin Foundation tries to do – build useful software and inspire a culture of organizing in progressive organizations.

### **Can you share something with us something that keeps you coming back to the good fight? Something that gives you hope, inspiration etc?**

When practical solidarity is manifested in people standing up for each other, that always brings a tear to my eye and power to my heart. Whether it happens in one of the fights I'm personally involved with, within other organizations or even in movies or art, it brings me the inspiration to keep going.

# DOOR-KNOCKING SHAPING CITIZENS

For German Die Linke door-knocking isn't just about persuading people through conversations, it's about listening to people's grievances and allowing that to shape the party. And it's done through a well thought through process from start to finish.

## AS WELL AS VOLUNTEERS

In last year's German federal election the Die Linke party invested heavily in a door-knocking campaign. Lukas Lademann from the party development department and responsible for canvassing trainings at the federal level dives into the details of their campaign.

### **Why did you decide to invest in door-knocking ahead of the federal election?**

As early as the late 2010s, people were experimenting with door-knocking and in 2021 we were scaling it up quite significantly thanks to the Aktivisti app, which made it possible. It's a map-based app and website that our digital department created and that can be used for door-knocking, spreading flyers, putting up posters, and for advertising events on a geographic basis.

What really tied it together in the last federal election was that there was an overarching plan for how to use this tool and we invested heavily in making sure that local party structures joined this plan.

### **Did you knock on doors all over the country?**

We had a focus on areas where we had the biggest potential. Places where we did well in the past and where door-knocking would have the effect of boosting turnout. Then, we were also trying to win voters over in left-leaning progressive areas that may have voted green in the past. And then finally, a more long-term strategy was we tried to go into areas where people generally don't vote at all. The idea is that they are areas where our policies have a lot to offer and it's just a matter of engaging people and bringing them back into the electoral process, and maybe even organizing them.

Rural party branches have a harder time door-knocking because every door is far apart from the next so it doesn't make sense logistically. But still we tried to guide people to other forms of conversations – the point was that even if you have a little stand in the local square you still want to have engaging conversations that are based around listen-

ing. Even if you interact with voters in a more classical way, we still don't want to hand them a pamphlet and say: "This is what the party does." We want volunteers to listen, first of all.

### **So one of your main strategies in this last federal election was active listening. Why?**

The campaign was structured so that we would listen to people. The plan was to hear their concerns about their daily lives: what are the biggest issues that they're facing and that they wish politicians would do something about? After that, we would enter into a process of drafting our electoral platform. Take the priorities that people tell us about and make these our priorities. That's kind of the narrative that we built. It's something that a lot of politicians don't do anymore.

### **Was it only a narrative, as you say, or did you also actually go through with this?**

Given that the elections came about six months earlier than planned because the government coalition

Lukas Lademann  
at Die Linke's  
Auftrittkongress zur  
Mietenkampagne 2025.  
PHOTO: MARTIN HEINLEIN.



broke up, we had to move faster. We ended up gathering the main priorities that people told us about in our policy platform. Which were essentially: high rents and high cost of living. Then we were unfortunately robbed of the time to prove in practice that we weren't only listening but also acting on this by engaging in local organizing efforts. But this is something that we're doing now.

However, beyond creating the narrative of being the party that listens to people, there are many other reasons why canvassing is an important tool. These conversations move people in a way that other forms of communication don't, even though they're resource intensive, which brings me to the second point – the fact that they are resource intensive is a good thing. We are a socialist party, so we want to do mass politics. We want to involve a lot of people. Resource intensive techniques are generally a good thing for us because they allow us to activate a lot of people. It's better than working with social media communication

## I think canvassing really does something to people. It doesn't only affect the people you talk to; it also does something to the people knocking on the door.

where essentially only a handful of people can play a role. And since we saw a massive influx of members in late 2024 and early 2025, canvassing played out very well for us – we were able to offer something that a lot of people found very rewarding and then also scale it up quickly.

The last point is that this technique allows you to get into contact with people you would otherwise not reach. We are a party that is still

dominated by more academically trained people. We want to be a party of the working class at large, but that will not happen on its own. You need to go out and talk to people and invite them to join. And we need to do this with the people we have at the moment, which is the more academically trained ones. So door-knocking is an important tool to create that bridge and reach people beyond your usual circles.

Then also – I think canvassing really does something to people. It doesn't only affect the people you talk to; it also does something to the people knocking on the door. They may realise that: "These talking points that I usually use only work within my friend group and not at people's doors. I need to talk very differently at people's doors to be heard or understood."

### What training did you offer the volunteers knocking on doors?

We have many layers of training. We found that it was very important to build up local core groups that were trained at what we called weekend

seminars. These were seminars run by staff from the federal level for the local core of volunteers who would run canvassing operations at the local level.

Volunteers would come to the seminar and receive their first training in how to do a one-on-one at a door, how to train someone else to do it, how to map out the areas to visit, how to plan on when to go, who to invite, how to mobilise people for canvassing.

Then we had online trainings from the federal level. Those would have up to 150 participants every week, continuously streaming in.

This would be conversation training – how do you speak to someone at their door? This was about making sure that people understood that the conversations were to be about listening and only at the most important moments speaking a bit yourself.

The online trainings were also important for handling some of the fears people have about knocking on strangers' doors, and just telling them: "You don't have to know

## SP (Socialistische Partij)

### Socialist activism, anti-war, anti-capitalism, political party

Since their founding in 1972, the Socialistische Partij (Netherlands) has built a long and proud history of activism centred around their core values of human dignity, equality and solidarity. With nearly 30,000 members, they are a significant political force in the Netherlands. They are currently represented in both chambers of the Dutch parliament, in all provincial parliaments and in almost one hundred municipal councils.

### Biggest win?

Recently, it has been the (re)building of our political youth organization, which in the last five years has grown from nothing up to 1,000 members at the time of writing. In 2021, we also forced the interior minister to freeze all rents during the pandemic, but our biggest recent win was in 2017 when we collected over 300,000 signatures and mobilised over 10,000 people to march for the re-nationalisation of our healthcare system.

### What could others learn from you?

Our organizing model, 'The snail shell', which we use for organizing people and building connections within communities. Our remittance policy, which prevents monetary incentives from playing a role in our elected representatives' motivation, guarantees our party's independence from corporate funding, promotes equality between those elected and other party members and keeps them grounded in 'everyday life'.


 The logo for the Socialistische Partij (SP) consists of the letters 'SP' in a bold, red, sans-serif font. To the right of the 'P' is a small red circle containing a white five-pointed star.

every intricate detail of our policy platform. You're there to listen. And if someone says something that you don't know anything about, that's totally fine. You can just say: 'give me your contact details, I'll find out and get back to you.'

We had a lot of written material as well. And we had further, deeper trainings that were about what to do if you encounter right wing talking points at a door. Stuff like that.

**Is there anything else that is important to say about how the conversation should proceed?**

We train them in a specific model for conversations. Back then we used the model of emotion, hope, action, which comes from union organizing. You try to listen to find the issue that people care about. Then you also want to understand what emotion is attached to that issue. I'm not just saying "I can barely afford my rent." This also triggers an emotion for most people like: "I'm scared because I don't know how long I can keep this going" or "I'm angry that I have to pay this much". So we want to understand the emotion.

And then we want to convert that emotion into hope. Which is the point where we start talking a bit more and we offer a plan: "We will take what you tell us and make this our priority but for this to happen we have to do something together and we need more people to join because otherwise they will never listen to us."

The plan is also to invite the person in. And that brings you to the last part: action – for that part we essentially ask people: "Are you in?" This could take different forms depending on how the conversation went and what the context is. It could be: "Will you vote for Die Linke?" That's a very basic one. "Will you give us your contact details so we can stay in touch? Will you come to this event that we have next Sunday? Do you want to join us for the next door-knocking event and talk to your neighbours?" Depending on



## James Schneider

**Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

I'm a political organizer for freedom and dignity in Britain and around the world. That means I write, speak, and organize for socialism and against imperialism however I can.

**What's organizing from below and why does it matter?**

Organizing "from above" mobilises mass support through leadership, elections, and political direction. Organizing "from below" builds durable power in workplaces, communities, and movements. Progressive victories require both: mobilisation without organization fades, while organization without mobilisation stalls. The task is to combine them – linking electoral politics with social power to win and sustain change.

**Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight?**

Human dignity is universal in principle, but denied in practice. People carry an instinct that life should be fuller, freer, more secure than it is. That quiet knowledge – shared across all peoples – is what makes the struggle both necessary and, ultimately, possible.

what the local party structure has going on, the ask might be different.

### **When you say “back then” – does that mean you have changed strategy since last year’s election?**

At the moment, we’re experimenting with what is essentially the same model but we call it head, heart and hands. It’s this idea that we want to win the heart by understanding the emotionality of an issue. We want to win the head by coming up with a credible plan for things to change and then we want to win the hands by inviting someone into action.

### **The federal election was a big success for Die Linke but if I understand the research from Red Data correctly, it shows that the door-knocking campaign had an effect, but not huge. How did you interpret that?**

I think there are still different interpretations of the quantitative effect of canvassing in this election. Usually people don’t analyse it entirely objectively, because the whole door-knocking technique is also part of a cultural shift. Because it’s a newer technique – seen as North American, to be precise – I think people have reservations about it. Does it fit culturally within the German context? Do people want to be talked to at their doors? But even if you cannot measure a large effect, and I think that debate is not over yet, you can see that it has a huge effect internally on the party itself.

And it enables you to say that you’re a party that does politics differently than other parties, which I think is important. That cannot be easily measured at the local electoral district level.

And a really interesting twist is I think it also changes who you attract to the party. Initially when we tried to get local and state party structures to join this federal plan we were met with a lot of resistance and one of the complaints was that “our people won’t do it”. But as soon as we started we saw a lot of new people coming in

who said: “This is exactly what I want to do.”

Maybe it’s not the right technique for some of the people who were in the party at that point but some other people joined because it was the right technique for them. A lot of people don’t want to sit in endless meetings and discuss theory, they would rather go out and talk to people. And by adopting door-knocking as a key technique I think we attracted new people and mobilised inactive members.

### **So you think that you also gained members by using this technique.**

I think so. We were also at a very specific historical moment when the coalition broke and the CDU was kind of turning towards the right and opening its arms to the AfD at parliamentary level. That was a huge wake-up call for a lot of the progressive parts of society that they need to act, and I think that helped us immensely.

I think it was a lucky coincidence that we had set up this machinery for bringing in new people and having something very concrete for them to do. So it’s hard to say whether the technique itself would have attracted people, but it was very helpful in welcoming tens of thousands of new members and quickly getting them into action.

### **Could you tell me about a particularly interesting personal experience you have had canvassing?**

There are so many. I liked this one moment when I was in Göttingen, in Lower Saxony, and I had a conversation with a woman who had migrated from Turkey to Germany and when I asked her: “What is the one thing that you would like to see change in your neighbourhood?” She immediately said: “There are too many foreigners here. I don’t feel safe anymore.” That’s a tough one coming from a Turkish woman. And so I keep asking, to understand where this is coming from. And very quickly it be-

comes clear that she’s a nurse and she feels very little control over her working life and therefore also very little control over her life in general. She does not earn enough money, there’s inflation and all of this contributes to the sense of insecurity and instability.

I ended up getting her contact details and it was a really good conversation. That was really one that stuck with me because it went so quickly from some racist narrative that she essentially reproduced and then seeing how it actually slotted into an overall feeling of insecurity that we could talk about productively.

### **How long are the conversations usually?**

That’s very context dependent. When we guide volunteers we always say that if you’re in the peak phase of an election you want to keep your conversations short – five minutes if you can – because we’re in electoral strongholds and you just want to get them to vote.

But usually if someone opens their door and talks to you, it’s not going to be just five minutes. Especially when we were serious about listening to people. That could mean a conversation goes on for 20 to 40 minutes.

These are very emotional conversations and it would feel awkward to look at your watch and say: “I have got to go and talk to the next person”, while they’re pouring their heart out, you know? So they can take a long time, but that’s also why they’re so transformative in a true sense, because a lot happens from beginning to end. Not every conversation will be like that, but you can have two or three of these during one door-knocking session.

That’s why after every session we recommend getting back together and debriefing on how it was and how we feel, because it can be tough. And it’s also a moment of learning: “How could I have handled this conversation? I didn’t know what to say.” It’s important to come back together afterwards. !



## Alicia Smedberg

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

I hold a PhD in participatory design and work at the intersection of research, teaching, and activism. My work explores collaborative methods, public participation, and how research practices can contribute to social and political change. Alongside my academic work, I have been active in grassroots organizing for over 20 years.

### **Your session *From reflection to action* – *Workshops as generative method* emphasises the importance of collaboration and collective knowledge-sharing to make workshops successful. What in your opinion is a common mistake facilitators make that results in less collaborative workshops?**

Workshops are not about arriving at a predetermined outcome, but about creating space to think together, especially when facing big questions and uncertain futures.

One common mistake is treating a workshop as something the facilitator delivers to participants, rather than something that is shaped with them. When facilitators become too focused on control,

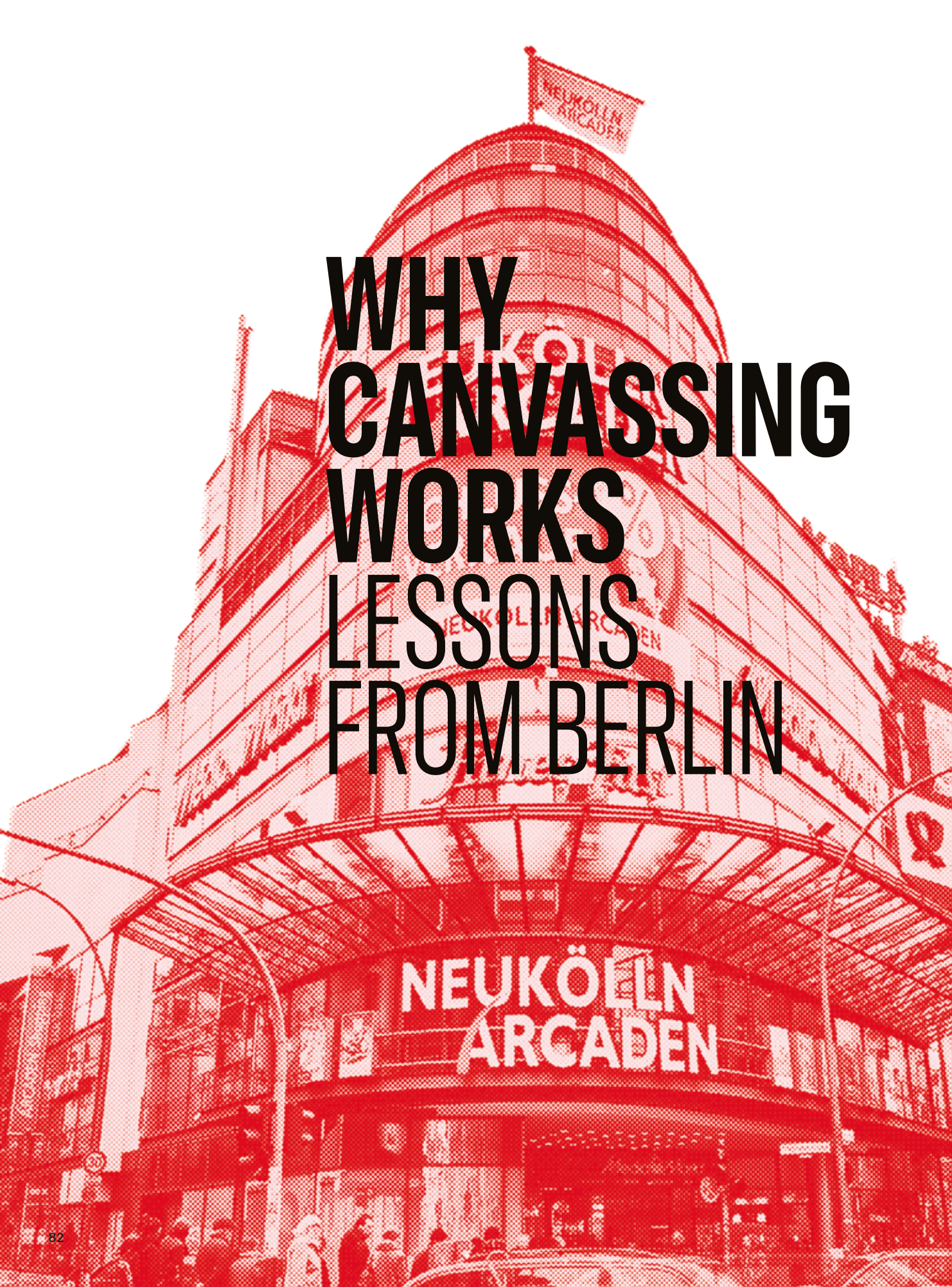
efficiency, or getting to a predetermined outcome, participation easily becomes superficial. People may be present and active, but not genuinely able to influence the process. For me, collaborative workshops require facilitation that creates structure without closing things down too early, and that makes room for different kinds of knowledge, experience, and disagreement.

### **Is your session for more experienced facilitators or beginners as well?**

Both! Collaborative future-making is something you can learn the basics of in half an hour, and then spend your entire life improving. The session is designed to be accessible to beginners, while still offering depth for more experienced facilitators.

### **Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight? Something that gives you hope, inspiration etc?**

For me, hope is rooted in the kinship, purpose, and sense of home I have always found on the left. Parties and organizations may change, sometimes painfully, but they are not the whole story. The broader struggle remains, and there is still a left fighting for socialism in our lifetime. That is something I still want to be part of.



**WHY  
CANVASSING  
WORKS  
LESSONS  
FROM BERLIN**

## In the wake of Die Linke's unexpectedly strong result in Germany's 2025 federal election, one campaign tactic has drawn particular attention: a large-scale, data-driven canvassing effort. Here, Theo Glauch from the radical research team Red Data offers a causal analysis of canvassing's electoral effect in Berlin.

In the 2025 federal election, Die Linke conducted a large, strategically coordinated canvassing campaign for the first time. Volunteers knocked on several hundred thousand doors, and the party publicly framed this as part of a more hands-on, community-focused approach rooted in the everyday concerns of the working class. All activities were recorded in the party's *Aktivisti* app, creating a detailed database of visited addresses, opened doors, and conversations.

The election was a major success: Die Linke won 8.8 percent of the vote – nearly doubling its 2021 result. A debate quickly emerged about how much canvassing contributed to this outcome. Many arguments rely on anecdotes – for example, pointing to precincts where canvassing took place and where the party performed strongly. But these correlations are not causal evidence. Precincts with more canvassing might

**Theo Glauch**  
Executive board  
member of Die Linke  
and co-founder of  
Red data

simply have characteristics – such as a younger population or a higher proportion of migrants – that both attract canvassing and produce strong results. In that case, the correlation only tells us that we canvassed where we already have a solid voter base.

To provide a stronger empirical foundation, we carried out a causal analysis of canvassing in Berlin – the state with the largest number of canvassed doors and the most detailed precinct-level data. Mapping the campaign shows that activity was concentrated in Neukölln and Lichtenberg, where the party targeted the direct mandates. In both districts, the strategy succeeded: Ines Schwerdtner and Ferat Koçak entered the Bundestag as directly elected representatives.

### The independent impact of canvassing

Estimating the effect of canvassing is difficult because it requires answering a counterfactual question: what would the election results have been without canvassing? While we cannot rerun the election, we can approximate this by comparing precincts with different levels of canvassing that are otherwise demographically and politically similar – for example, precincts with comparable past election results, age structures, or income levels. We therefore focus on the *party vote*, since candidate votes are heavily shaped by tactical considerations that differ sharply across districts.

Using data from more than 2,000 precincts, we compare highly canvassed precincts with statistically similar precincts that saw little or no canvassing. This allows us to estimate the *average treatment effect* – the independent impact of canvassing. Methodologically, we rely on causal inference techniques, specifically a causal random forest, which combines machine-learning tools with statistical methods designed to distinguish cause from correlation.

Our analysis finds that canvassing increases the vote share by around 5 percentage points when all doors in a precinct are visited. There are indications that the effect varies across the city. Precincts with a strong Green Party vote in 2021 show some-

what higher gains – consistent with the known voter overlap between the Greens and Die Linke and the ideological openness of these voters to left-wing arguments.

### A conversion rate of 5–10 percent

Using the *Aktivisti* data, we can also estimate the absolute impact. Die Linke won 386,066 votes in Berlin in 2025. The campaign recorded about 92,000 conversations; assuming roughly 64,000 were with eligible voters, the model suggests that 3,000 to 6,000 votes were gained directly through canvassing. This corresponds to a conversion rate of 5–10 percent. If one expects canvassing to single-handedly win elections, this may sound small. But for realistic political persuasion – a short, honest conversation at someone’s door – this is a good result.

However, canvassing is more than a short-term campaign tool. It helps rebuild our presence in neighbourhoods where the party has lost ground. It lets us speak with people ignored by mainstream politics, understand their workplace

## FRACTIONS OF OPENED DOORS



Houses visited in Neukölln

and housing struggles, and connect these experiences to our political programme. It also strengthens our organizational culture: canvassing shows that Die Linke is not just a parliamentary apparatus but a movement that organizes, listens, and stands with people where they live.

The conversion rate of 5–10 percent is not fixed. It will grow if we deepen our local roots. Door-to-door conversations are most effective when embedded in long-term political organizing – tenant struggles, workplace support, and visible solidarity. In short: canvassing works best when it is part of a socialist party anchored in the daily lives of the working class.!

**The conversion rate of 5–10 percent is not fixed. It will grow if we deepen our local roots.**

### Tipping Point UK

#### Climate justice, anti-racism and Palestine solidarity

Tipping Point UK supports communities to build enough power and resilience to win climate reparations and dismantle the systemic racial, social and economic injustices that fuel the climate crisis.

#### Biggest win?

During COP26, we supported the launch and win of a grassroots campaign against new oil and gas:

Stop Cambo. This network grew to hundreds of groups and tens of thousands of people, all coordinating actions focusing against a proposed new oil and gas field in the North Sea. The field was halted for years, as key partners dropped out, and the network has remained in place to oppose further oil and gas development.

#### What could others learn from you?

We have worked on combining relational and momentum-based

organizing practice to great effect. It has allowed us to support the creation of various networks and campaigns that can share organizing practice between them, with a specific focus on maintaining movement memory.



## Jonathan Smucker

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

I am a political organizer, communicator, educator, and strategist. I've spent three decades working in progressive grassroots social movements and organizations and have trained thousands of organizers and campaigners, especially in tools and frameworks related to breaking out of "activist bubbles" and connecting with broader, especially working-class, social bases. Most of my work has been with "outside" social movements, but over the past decade, I've engaged more with insurgent political campaigns too. I'm also a sociologist, currently finishing my doctoral programme at UC Berkeley while doing a research fellowship at the Othering & Belonging Institute. I'm the author of *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals* (AK Press, 2017) and the forthcoming *The Many vs. The Few: A Practical Guide to Populism* (Rutgers University Press, 2027).

### **Your session, *The Many vs. the Few: A Practical Guide to Populism*, will deconstruct the rhetorics of authoritarians (like Trump). Why do you think these authoritarians' opponents have been so unsuccessful in understanding and combatting this rhetoric?**

Let me distinguish between the failure of establishment liberals and the failure of leftists, as they're quite different. To overgeneralise, establishment liberal parties and institutions around the globe have been effectively captured by and associated with neoliberalism. And, related, they tend to have an elitist disposition or habitus. Authoritarians like Trump attack them as condescending "cultural elites" and they often play into it (think Hillary Clinton's "basket of deplorables"). In a sense, liberals are still playing a game that is over, failing to meet the moment and articulate the kind of fights against powerful culprits that are needed to win back disaffected working-class voters. The left is, in fact, enjoying scattered successes that we can learn from and build upon; in the United States, the election of Zohran Mamdani is especially instructive right now, as well as promising candidacies like Graham Platner in Maine. But these victories are being pulled off by especially skilled and savvy candidates and campaigners, and these remain in short supply. The larger "culture of the left" in the United States, but I suspect in much of Europe as well, is suffering from a perhaps lighter version of



the class-based insularity of more established liberal political parties. Again, to overgeneralise, the skills and even the orientation to effectively connect with broad working-class social blocs is severely lacking. I'll elaborate this more in my presentation and workshop.

### **Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight or gives you hope?**

Strangely, one source of hope for me has to do with the extent of institutional failure we have been living through. The people in power are out of touch and fumbling. No one seems to know what they're doing. Unfortunately, the left is often not much of an exception, BUT we have seen over the past fifteen years episodes where we show a surprising ability to outmanoeuvre our powerful opponents. Again, Mamdani's historic victory is presently a very fresh illustration and source for hope. A hopeful read is that our limited successes over the past fifteen years are likely to be just the start. Keep in mind that in many countries (definitely in the United States) the revival of the left over the past fifteen years followed a half-century period of decline, defensiveness, and marginality. It takes time to rebuild the strategic capacity, skills, leadership, etc. necessary for sustained mass mobilisation, and I see abundant signs that this rebuilding is progressing, with thousands more organizers, campaigners, and leaders developing in this unfolding struggle. When this generation comes to power it will be battle-hardened and ready to make big things happen.

# CHANGING PEOPLE'S HEARTS AND MINDS BY DOOR-KNOCKING



Canvassers  
Cecile and  
Emma. PHOTO:  
HANNAH RUDNER



## How do you change people's minds on heated topics such as migration? In the Netherlands, three activists who wanted to combat the extreme right learned how to knock on doors to change the narrative on migration, and started a national movement.

In the summer of 2023, three friends, all activists within Dutch environmental NGOs, were frustrated by the growth of the extreme right in their country, and Europe as a whole. They felt new tools were needed to combat it and heard of *deep canvassing*, a method developed in the US.

As opposed to traditional door-knocking, deep canvassing aims to enable longer conversations, where you ask for the other person's lived experiences and use that as a starting point. It's about having a non-judgmental, open conversation where the canvassers also put forward their own experiences, in order to connect, reflect and ultimately challenge prejudice.

Bruno Lauteslager and his friends founded Deep Canvassing Nederland with a focus on going to areas where anti-migration parties are popular, and contributing another perspective. While the extreme right succeeds using the approach of divide and conquer, and attributing societal problems exclusively to migrants, Deep Canvassing Neder-

land tries to combat this by focusing on what they call a race-class narrative. "We promote coming together in a shared class struggle and conquering", says Lauteslager.

### Listening to the other's experiences and point of view

He gives the example of when he met a woman in Amsterdam who claimed immigrants took all the housing. Instead of arguing with her, he asked about her own experience of the housing crisis and she talked about things she, her husband and their children had gone through. He then told the story of a large migrant family living in Utrecht in a tiny house and asked what she thought of that. "She said it sounded really bad and that no one should experience a housing crisis like that. So we broadened the discussion and that was a big change in the conversation."

Deep Canvassing Nederland always knocks on doors in pairs, and after introducing themselves and



## DEEP CANVASSING

Deep canvassing was developed by activists in California after the 2008 election which banned same-sex marriage. The campaign canvassed 100,000 people with the aim of speaking to opponents of marriage equality.

In 2016 researchers from Stanford University and UC Berkeley studied the impact of another deep canvassing campaign in California, focused on attitudes toward transgender people, and found that the approach managed to change the positions of about 10% of voters.

Deep Canvassing Nederland's data shows a similar pattern but more conversations are still needed to assess the overall results.

Bruno Lauteslager conversing with volunteers. PHOTO: HANNAH RUDNER.

explaining that they are there to talk about the divisive migration debate, they ask the other person to take a position on two statements.

The first one is: "Everyone in the Netherlands should have access to housing, health care and an income. On a scale from one to ten, where would you place yourself?" The second statement is that all migrants in the Netherlands, regardless of where they came from, also deserve that and the canvassers ask: "Does this affect your number?" After that the canvassers themselves explain their views.

The second step is to lead the conversation toward personal experiences. "This is also a way to make

the conversation vulnerable", Lauteslager says.

Thirdly, they make their fundamental point about class and how change can be accomplished by joining forces. Lauteslager highlights historical examples such as the labour movement's struggle to shorten the working week or achieving the vote for women. "Big things can change", he says.

### Adapting to national context

Learning how to conduct deep canvassing conversations has also had an impact on Lauteslager's personal life, as he notices it has changed the



Dutch canvassers Jan and Siri talking to a resident.

PHOTO: JELT ROOS.

way he discusses issues with family and friends as well, being more open to hearing their arguments without judging.

Lauteslager learned the method through participating in an online training course by Deep Canvassing Institute in the US and, with his col-

leagues, later adapted it to a Dutch context. He says it's necessary to adapt the approach to new settings and the subject being discussed. "It took us about six months to find a really good script – to find the right values that we wanted to convey, to ask the right questions, and to be able to make a point."

Nowadays Deep Canvassing Nederland has about 20 teams throughout the country and last year they held 1,500 conversations. The teams organize trainings that are open to anyone who is interested. In 2.5 years they have already trained 900 people. "We see a lot of interest from activists who are eager for new strategies", says Lauteslager. !

## United Voices of the World (UVW)

### Workplace & community organizing, migrant, precarious and low-paid workers

United Voices of the World is a member-led, direct action, anti-racist, campaigning trade union. We exist to support and empower the most vulnerable groups of precarious, low-paid and predominantly Black, brown and migrant workers in the UK. UVW fights employers through direct action and legal challenges to secure fair conditions, including a decent wage, full sick pay, dignity and respect at work.

#### Biggest win?

In November 2025, over 500 facilities staff – cleaners, caterers, and porters – at St Helier and Epsom hospitals won a £10 million deal after years of being denied full NHS pay and benefits. The workers joined UVW and took the bold

step to strike action. The pressure forced hospital directors to grant full NHS terms, restore service rights, and end a two-tier system that disproportionately affected Black, brown, and migrant workers. This win is significant because UVW, a small, independent grassroots union without formal recognition, proved that relentless and bold organizing of low-paid, often migrant workers can achieve major results. It strengthens UVW's identity, builds trust, and shows that workers in "invisible" roles have real leverage when organized. Beyond the local impact, the victory sets a precedent for other NHS trusts and contractors, signalling that staff on inferior terms may now demand full Agenda for Change conditions. It also highlights longstanding inequalities faced by Black, brown, and migrant workers, raising pressure for fairer treatment across the NHS.



#### What could others learn from you?

UVW can show you how to build the skills, confidence, and discipline needed to support low-paid, migrant, and precarious workers facing exploitation at work. We avoid layers of bureaucracy and overly complex worker structures, which keeps us nimble, flexible, and able to meet workers where they are. We build power one conversation at a time, combining disciplined organizing with the ability to adapt strategies and tactics when needed. We practise community unionism because we recognise that the struggle for dignity and respect extends beyond the workplace into our communities.

# DATA-DRIVEN ORGANIZING SUPPORT, NOT SOLUTION

**Technology can support organizing by providing insights, but it cannot answer the most important questions, which are political, writes Laura Blum, software engineer working on digital infrastructure for political organizing.**

**Laura Blum**  
Senior software  
engineer at Zetkin  
Foundation

In many organizations, the need for better infrastructure often emerges in everyday tasks of campaign work. Someone fills out a form after an event but they never hear back. A volunteer takes on too much because nobody has a clear overview of who else is available. Notes from a productive conversation stay in one person's notebook instead of becoming shared knowledge. None of this is dramatic, it is just the everyday texture of campaign work. Over time, these small gaps accumulate, and they shape what an organization is actually able to do.

This is one reason organizing technology has become such an important topic, not because software has suddenly become the centre of movement-building, and not because

political problems can be resolved by digital tools. The key point of interest is more practical. Organizers are looking for ways to hold together growing teams, complex campaigns, and long chains of follow-up without losing sight of the human relationships that make organizing possible in the first place.

## **Benefits of new systems**

Organizing has always involved the collection and interpretation of information. For a long time, relevant knowledge existed in scattered notes, spreadsheets, contact lists, and the memories of organizers. It included practical details as well as more subjective impressions.

“Who came to a meeting?”, “Which geographical areas or parts of our base responded most actively to outreach?”, or “Where did follow-up slip?”. There is nothing radically new about this kind of insight. However, what is currently advancing, is the attempt to build systems that can preserve this knowledge more reliably, make it easier to share, and turn it into something organizations can actually work with productively over time.

Zetkin is one example of this effort. As a platform built for organizing, it tries to make campaign work more legible to the people doing it. It helps teams coordinate outreach, track participation, follow up with volunteers, and structure the countless small tasks that make collective action possible. In that sense, it belongs to a wider family of movement technologies that aim to reduce friction and replace some of the guesswork that still significantly shapes organizing in many cases.

This is part of the practical value of organizing infrastructure. A weakness in many campaigns is not indifference, but the inability to carry knowledge and relationships forward in a consistent way. People attend meetings once and then fall out of touch. Useful insights stay within one team instead of becoming part of a wider organizational memory. Volunteers are flattened into generic roles because nobody has the capacity to form a fuller picture of their skills, their personality and what they could contribute. In this context, campaigns can become chaotic not because people do not care, but rather because the supporting infrastructure is weak.

This is where data-informed organizing becomes genuinely useful. In the best sense, it is not about producing metrics just to hoard data, or mistaking measurement for strategy. It is about helping organizations notice patterns that are otherwise easy to miss under the pressure and constant move-

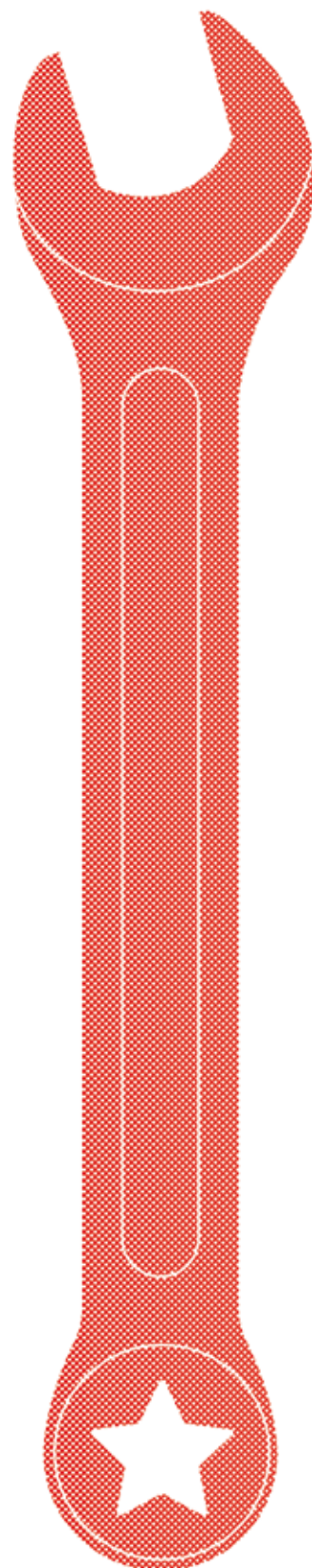
ment of campaign work. It can show whether outreach is reaching a wide audience but failing to go deeper, or whether a smaller base is beginning to develop real staying power. It can help clarify whether new people are finding paths into responsibility and leadership, or if they are simply moving from one low-commitment task to another without ever becoming more rooted in the work. This kind of infrastructure gives organizers something many campaigns lack: a more reliable data source.

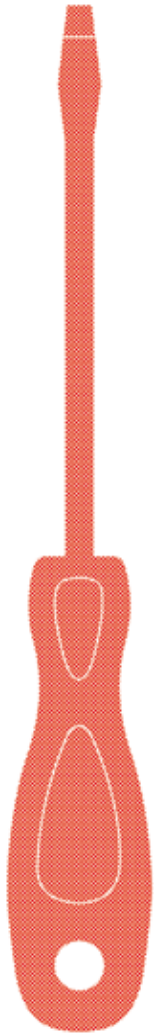
### Data isn't everything

In this context, the phrase *data-informed* is more suitable than *data-driven*. Organizing is not a delivery system, and people are not units moving through a pipeline. Numbers can clarify some things while obscuring others. A database may show who attended three events in a month, but it cannot fully capture who changed the tone of a room, who quietly held a team together, or who is one good conversation away from taking on real responsibility. Political work fundamentally depends on interpretation, on judgment and on trust.

Tools like Zetkin cannot generate commitment where none exists. They can neither resolve weak strategy, unclear demands, or poor leadership, nor can they substitute for the slow and sometimes difficult work of building relationships across differences. A movement can have excellent software and still fail because it has no base, no political direction, or no culture of responsibility. That is why the strongest case for tools like Zetkin is not to automate organizing, but rather to support it by providing insights to established structures.

There is also a more subtle risk here. As organizations become able to measure more datapoints, they may also begin to value only what is easily quantifiable. The temptation is familiar: counting calls, doors,





attendees, and conversions. Those numbers are not meaningless, but they can become misleading when they begin to stand in for political understanding. A campaign can look efficient on paper while becoming thinner in substance. It can produce activity without producing power. The reverse can also be true. Small numbers may suggest limited impact, even when something more significant is taking shape beneath the surface, such as stronger relationships, deeper commitment, new leadership, or a more durable local base. Not everything that matters in organizing can be represented by numbers and data.

The real question is therefore not whether organizing should use technology. It already does, and it always will. The more difficult question is what kind of relationship movements want to have with their tools. Good infrastructure should make follow-up easier, reduce avoidable chaos and lack of information, and preserve knowledge that would otherwise be lost. But it should also leave room for the parts of organizing that resist neat classification: intuition, conflict, loyalty, growth,

and the long process through which people become more capable of acting together.

### Beyond technology

In that sense, technology is best understood as a support, not a solution. A useful platform can help movements shift from guessing to knowing in some areas of work. It can make coordination more deliberate and accountability more real. But it cannot answer the most important questions, because at the end of the day, those are political questions. What are people fighting for and what kind of organization are they joining?

Tools matter, infrastructure matters, and data matters, but none of them have an effect in isolation. They are of consequence when they help people become more organized, more connected, and more able to act with purpose in support of the movement. That may sound like a humble claim, but also an honest one. In the end, technology should offer the movement a starting point rather than just hype. !

## Vasemmistoliitto (The Finnish Left Alliance)

### Political party, solidarity, equality, ecological & democratic socialism

The Left Alliance is a modern red-green civic movement working for a just, equal and free society. We are building an ecologically sustainable welfare state where everyone has equal opportunities to take care of themselves and their loved ones.

#### Biggest win?

Through hard work as well as smart politics, we've been able to grow our membership by over 50

percent in four years. This work has been done by both positioning ourselves as the key opponent of a historically right wing government: we fight them every step of the way while they dismantle the welfare state and enact racist policies. Attracting people to join is great, but keeping them committed is better. We've been able to make the party a more welcoming place: somewhere to learn, do things, make friends and campaign for a better world.

#### What could others learn from you?

We're been able to improve the engagement of our members, as well as people who are interested in us but not yet ready to commit to joining, via effective direct communication using email. This has been a key method to mobilise the people who are more generally oriented towards leftism, but have not (yet) connected with the on the ground work we do.





## Lutz Wallhorn

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

Lutz Wallhorn lives in Düsseldorf and works at the intersection of science, data, and politics and is a member of Die Linke. Alioun Diagne is an activist and software developer based in Munich, organizing with Die Linke to fight rising housing costs. Together with Theo Glauch, the two have co-founded Red Data Analytics, helping organizations turn data into legally compliant, responsible, and actionable insight, supporting more effective campaigns, and stronger democratic participation.

### **Your session *From data to doors: Mapping neighbourhoods, milieus, and campaign potential* gives participants insights into how we can use public data for organizing. Can you share a concrete example with us of how this has been done successfully in the past?**

One concrete example comes from our work with Die Linke in Germany. We developed a map-based campaign tool that helps local teams plan and prioritise their outreach more strategically. For example, in tenant-focused campaigns, we combined publicly available data, including German census data, to identify areas where certain housing and heating patterns were more likely. This made it

easier to target door-to-door outreach around issues that were especially relevant in specific neighbourhoods.

We are currently doing similar work with Die Linke Berlin. With state elections coming up in Berlin this year, the party is using a map app we built to support the planning of canvassing efforts throughout the campaign. The goal is always the same: to help organizers focus time and resources where they can have the greatest impact.

### **Who would you recommend this workshop to, and is there any prerequisite level of knowledge about campaigns, or can anyone join?**

This workshop is for anyone interested in how data can support organizing and campaigning in practice. It will be especially useful for organizers, campaigners, activists, and tech-curious participants who want to better understand how data can inform strategic decisions on the ground.

At the same time, we want to keep the session as accessible as possible. No prior knowledge of campaigns, mapping, or data science is required. The workshop is designed so that people can join with different levels of experience and still come away with useful ideas and examples.



**There is a science to making our movements better. Organizational psychology provides insights into culture, care, and sustainability, writes Aron Etzler, former General Secretary of the Swedish Left Party.**

**Aron Etzler**  
Former editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Flamman* and former General Secretary of the Swedish Left Party

Think back to the best meeting or action your group ever had. You know the one – ideas were flowing, people were listening to each other, and you walked out into the night feeling completely electric, like your movement could actually take on the world and win. That feeling of pure, collective power is exactly why we organize. You just want to bottle that feeling and distribute it to the whole neighbourhood!

Then you know there are also other kinds of nights. The ones where you walk out of a gruelling, three-hour

evening meeting – having just spent 45 minutes angrily debating one word in the political programme – wondering why fighting for a better world has to feel so draining.

The truth is, that bottled magic has a very short shelf life if we don't actively keep producing it. We often treat those electric nights like lucky accidents, rather than realising that there is actually a recipe for creating them. In the long, hard haul of political work, we often forget how to intentionally cultivate that magic, struggling to extend that same deep care to the organizations we build and the people standing right next to us.

This is why so many of us obsess over making our movements work better – swapping campaign stories, analysing past victories, and trying to reverse-engineer our best moments. But we don't have to rely purely on our own trial and error. There is actually a massive body of scientific research we can use as inspiration. What is the actual heartbeat of an organization that thrives year after year, decade after decade? And why do so many groups tear themselves apart trying to build one? It turns out, organizational psychology has some surprisingly practical answers. Let's cut through the aca-

demic jargon and get straight to the core. Based on decades of research, there are three foundational pillars that explain why people organize, why they stay, and how they survive the hardest difficulties.

## 1. Purpose

The main reason people get organized on the left is the cause itself – the purpose. Being in an organization with a strong purpose is a deep, powerful, and even existential thing. What decades of science show is that having a strong sense of meaning is a foundational human need and one of the strongest drivers of long-term satisfaction.

Exactly what purpose we are talking about may differ a lot: it could be advancing the interests of workers, saving humanity from climate catastrophe and fascism, furthering women's rights, stopping a war, or any combination thereof. But the purpose is really front and centre of how people on the left think and act.

It is so central that it is often hard to understand that for many people who are not politically committed, there may not be much long-term purpose. They may have a job that

does not have a purpose for them, but only serves as a way to make a living; they may not be convinced of any political direction, philosophy, religion, or idea, and may also feel a lack of purpose in life. Having no purpose in life not only sounds depressing – it is clinically proven to be depressing.

## A superpower – and a potential problem

All of this is to say one thing: what most people on the left take for granted – having a purpose – is one of its most valuable assets. If you want to know what drives people to be part of a movement, this is it. Purpose is a driver, a motivator. It is a superpower.

The tricky thing about purpose is that it can also turn into a problem of enormous dimensions. If, for instance, people are constantly fighting about what purpose an organization should have, then those fights will also be super-powered. In an organization where there is not much purpose or passion, fights are lame and low-energy. In an organization where people attach the whole meaning of their lives to the struggle, things get dramatic.

## Vänsterpartiet Malmö

### Left party in and outside the parliaments

Vänsterpartiet Malmö (Sweden) has an ambitious reform agenda for the city. They advocate for economic equality, affordable housing, free public transport, more teachers and support staff in schools, anti-racist policies, LGBTQ+ rights, a rich cultural life, green transition, and ethical procurements. They

organize activism with marches, political education in socialism, international issues, feminism, etc.

### Biggest win?

When we introduced progressive preschool fees, which meant that we lowered fees for those with low incomes and made it free for those who earned the least.

### What could others learn from you?

The combination of democratic structure and procedures with activism, which for us means being in a network with other organizations and having a radical reform agenda. We believe that being strong in both of these pillars is quite unique.



And so, we must be very conscious about how purpose works. Purpose not only exists on a collective level – it is also personal. On top of that, it may change individually, just as the world may change. What gave you chills as a 19-year-old activist may feel stale as a 27-year-old union representative. And what was once a huge driver for motivating new members of the party in 2018 may be cringeworthy by 2026. Getting people to talk about their purpose and having a collective discussion about it is central to cultivating it. Thinking about it collectively is a way for a movement to tap into this energy.

## 2. Self-determination

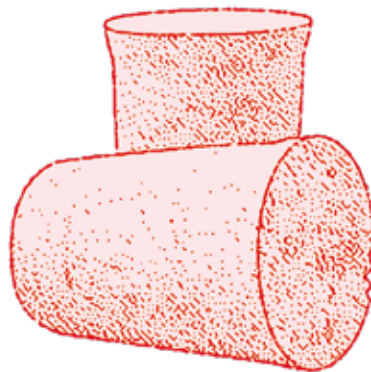
The second factor demonstrated by decades of organization science is self-determination. There is an entire framework developed by scholars and theorists called *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*. It states, simply, that genuine motivation relies on three internal human factors:

- **Autonomy:** Having the freedom to make active choices.
- **Competence:** Feeling capable and experiencing a sense of progress and mastery.
- **Relatedness:** Feeling genuine social connection, belonging, and safety with others.

Contrary to the assumptions of many right-wing theorists or the basic tenets of capitalism, genuine motivation cannot be forced by external rewards or punishments. It comes from within.

Building organizations where people do things because they want to do them, rather than out of fear of punishment or desire for reward, is – just like purpose – a superpower. And just like purpose, this is rare in working life. At your job, you usually get a job description that is not up to you, and you do it to get paid. If the

**Contrary to the assumptions of many right-wing theorists or the basic tenets of capitalism, genuine motivation cannot be forced by external rewards or punishments. It comes from within.**



pay stopped coming, you probably would not show up.

Being free to choose your own mission, knowing that you are good at it, and doing it alongside other people – it is not too hard to imagine that most people would love that!

### Challenges and conflicts

But applying this to a left-wing organization poses some challenges. Some tasks may not be of anyone's

choosing. Who is going to clean the venue after your big meeting? Who wants to badger people for receipts and get them in order for the yearly bookkeeping? And what about feeling competent – what if you don't feel competent at anything in your life? The same goes for relatedness. Some folks just have a hard time with people and would rather be at home watching TV.

Yes, all of the above are challenges. People who do not like to mix with others at all are unlikely to organize collectively, but they may well find a way to do so in their favoured setting, independently and alone. People who struggle with feeling competent will probably continue to have those feelings – regardless of whether they are actually competent – until they resolve them through other forms of personal development.

But maybe the key challenge revolves around the freedom to choose your mission. In a free association like a left-wing organization, many internal fights are not really about politics, but about personal ambition. We do not like to think about it, but especially within political parties on the left, there is fierce competition – not just over who gets to be the party leader, but over all kinds of positions.

My experience, as the person responsible for conflict resolution within a party for 13 years, is that 90 percent of internal conflicts were actually about people's positions within the organization rather than their views. At the time of whatever conflict, it absolutely did not look that way. Because left-wing organizations are all about purpose, the only way to effectively make your way in these internal competitions is by attaching yourself to a political purpose. But what was at the core? Personal issues. There's a whole range of these kinds of conflict: individuals who are always putting their own interests first, or who may not accept what the majority decides, or simply lack care and empathy for others.

The power of self-determination is such a strong driver that it may cause a person to devote their whole adult life to politics, but it can also put the whole collective project in danger. Leftist organizations should not deny this freedom of choice. Instead, they should identify which character traits are essential for good leaders and which ones are problematic. They must also consider what mechanisms can be used to get the right people into the right positions – and, when necessary, move them out.

### 3. Psychological safety

The third factor, which has gained massive attention in organizational psychology over the last few decades, is *Psychological safety*. Pioneered by researchers studying high-performing teams, it describes a climate where people feel comfortable taking risks. It is the belief that you will not be humiliated, punished, or ostracised for speaking up about your ideas, asking questions, raising concerns, or admitting mistakes.

When many people step into a political movement, they are looking for a sort of sanctuary – a place

where they do not have to compete, but can instead figure out solutions in collaboration with other people. Where this actually works – where an organization achieves true psychological safety – it becomes a superpower. Members trust each other enough to be vulnerable, they brainstorm bolder political strategies, and they form deep, unbreakable bonds that are not dependent on constant success.

This sounds essential, right? A movement built on empathy, where everyone has each other's backs and feels secure enough to grow. What a wonderful thing!

#### Calling out and weaponisation

But just like purpose and self-determination, psychological safety faces challenges when placed in the pressure cooker of political organizing.

First, because the 'purpose' of the organization feels existential, mistakes are rarely treated simply as mistakes; they may be seen as a 'deviation from the correct line' or even a 'betrayal'. If a member uses outdated terminology, asks a sensitive question, or admits a mistake, the psychologically safe response

would be to give some feedback and offer time to discuss it in private. However, in many leftist spaces, the response may be 'calling out' the person in public – a sure way to create an atmosphere of walking on eggshells.

Second, you may end up in the other ditch: the language of safety itself can be weaponised. In any dynamic political organization, people must confront new realities and challenge their own ingrained behaviours. This process is often uncomfortable. Members sometimes confuse the feeling of being politically or intellectually uncomfortable with being psychologically unsafe. The result is that necessary debates about confronting new political realities or internal accountability get shut down in the name of 'safety', arguing that we cannot discuss an issue because a specific person or faction within the movement will feel threatened.

Maintaining a safe environment for people while allowing the environment for ideas to remain challenging is tricky. Psychological safety is not there to freeze development – the political world is high-speed and high-stakes – but rather, it acts like the crash protection in a Formula 1 car.

## Zetkin Foundation

### Organizing, technology, methodology

Zetkin Foundation is a Swedish non-profit that produces organizing knowledge, methods and technology, most notably the digital Zetkin platform for organizing activism.

#### Biggest win?

Over the years, we have had the great privilege of playing a small

part in many victories won by our partner organizations around Europe, like electoral gains in Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and solidarity movements in the UK.

#### What could others learn from you?

In our role as a campaign and movement building partner to many successful organizations, we have amassed a lot of research, experience and tools that we are happy to share with others who fight for

a fairer, more sustainable and peaceful world. The Zetkin platform and its organizer tools are most central to our offering, but we will also

happily help out in designing campaigns, organizing and mobilising strategies, and facilitating cultural shifts towards organizing in the organizations we partner with.



## QUICK STARTUP GUIDE: PRACTICING CARE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

### Beyond the tool: sustaining the magic

If these are the golden keys for making leftist movements sustainable and caring, why have you never heard of them within the left?

The probable answer is that organizations on the left are extremely busy with other things. Political developments in the outside world are never-ending. Campaigns, elections, and demonstrations are happening all the time. Internal elections, welcoming new members, coordination, and studies are constant. The left is very ambitious about changing the outside world, but rarely about elevating itself. This can sometimes be heard very clearly: “The party is just a tool for the working class.” And who, really, cares for a tool?

When we are all dead and in the history books, I feel completely okay about being described as a tool. Until then, I, personally, am alive! The people around me are too, and we all deserve to be treated as such. The left is powered by people – humans full of joy, energy, sadness, anger, experience, wishes, a need for belonging, and a need for individuality.

When we actually celebrate those needs, organizing stops feeling like a sacrifice and starts feeling like a profound, shared joy. We deserve organizations that do not just demand our labour, but nourish our spirits, so we can thrive and inspire one another for decades to come. We have made the free, beautiful choice to devote a piece of our lives – sometimes a lot of our lives – to building a future actually worth living in. Our ultimate collective task is to ensure we do not just experience that electric magic by accident, but actually learn to bottle it for the long haul.

Let it rip. !

If you can relate to this, you will also understand how complicated it would be to fully implement these pillars in the messy pressure cooker of political life. There are manuals on how to practice this, but you may also start by experimenting in small ways:

### 1 CULTIVATE PURPOSE

Start a conversation in your local activist group about what individuals see as their most important purpose right now. Ask them to reflect on why this feels key, and if it has changed over time. Listen and reflect. Are these individual purposes separate things or do they overlap? Where in these intentions or goals are the possibilities to reinforce your collective purpose?

### 2 ENCOURAGE SELF-DETERMINATION

See what happens when you do not talk about actions as an obligation imposed from outside, but rather as a choice. Instead of saying: ‘We have to get this neighbourhood organized’, tell people how badly you want to get it organized, and invite them to share what they would like to happen. Ask people what kinds of skills they would like to practice and master while getting it done.

### 3 BUILD PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Spark a discussion in your board about how you want to act if you encounter a difficult conflict in your organization. How do other board members think they would react? How would they like to be treated if they were at the centre of a conflict, or if they were the ones chosen to handle it? What would be the most important tools for de-escalation, and who should you expect to step in to enforce the collective will if needed?



## Sophia Zaia

### **Tell us briefly who you are and what you do!**

Hi! I'm Sophia Zaia: I'm an associate consultant at PowerLabs, where we support organizations to build strong volunteer teams. I got my organizing start as a student in the fossil fuel divestment movement. In my first year of organizing, I helped organize a thirty-day sit-in in my school's administration building, and right before graduation I organized a hunger strike of students and professors.

Since then, I've supported campaigns from the inside and out, leveraging the youth vote in support of Kendra Brooks' and Nicolas O'Rourke's at-large city council races in Philadelphia, working as deputy field director on Jessica Cisneros' 2022 campaign for Congress, and building a team of fifty student volunteers who ran a distributed voter contact programme that made more than 6 million dials and sent more than 1 million postcards during the 2020 election cycle.

Prior to joining PowerLabs, I worked for five years with the Sunrise Movement, doing local and distributed electoral organizing.

After nearly burning out from organizing altogether, I found answers to so many of the challenges I faced when I learned the science of

motivation. It felt like a decoder key that could support me to make sense of my experiences and see a path forward to more effective organizing. Having the opportunity to support others to have similar epiphanies and see the transformation in their work is so fun and fulfilling!

When I'm not working, I'm likely two-stepping at a honky tonk in my home city of Austin, Texas, salsa dancing, or bird watching, while continuing to feel most fulfilled and connected while organizing.

### **Your session is *How you can use the secret behind motivation to build a strong campaign*. What is an organizer's greatest challenge in motivating a volunteer or activist, in your opinion?**

Shift from a command-and-control to a coaching mindset.

### **Can you share something with us that keeps you coming back to the good fight?**

Once I had experienced how it feels to build power in solidarity with others, I knew I could never turn back. I can think of no better way to spend my time than to support others to have that same experience of turning private shame into collective power.

# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MALMÖ



PHOTO: MALMÖ STAD

**Malmö is Sweden's third largest city, diverse and multicultural. It's young – 50 percent of the city population is under 35. It's dense – you can walk or bike almost anywhere. It has issues with segregation and unemployment but is full of solidarity – a stronghold for the left in Sweden.**

**IT IS A PLACE WHERE** left politics are not just practiced in parliament but lived in the streets, workplaces and neighbourhoods. Trade unions, tenants associations, climate justice movements, LGBTQ+ organizations and cultural collectives form a dense and vibrant ecosystem of organizing, and the connections between them are well established and genuine.

The Left Party is a central part of this picture. What once consisted of a few hundred members has grown into an organization of nearly 1,600 – and what was once a handful of elected representatives has become a parliamentary group of 14, rooted in and accountable to the broader movement ecosystem. The party describes Malmö as “the capital of love and the voice of the streets in parliament” – a phrase that captures something true

about the city, and about what the party is trying to be within it. With the largest and most well-organized local member organization in the country (if we do say so ourselves!).

**TODAY, THE BROADER** left and social movements are present across the whole city. But if one place captures what the left in Malmö is, it is Möllevången and the Möllevångstorget Square. Perhaps the most multicultural area in Sweden, it is full of both social disadvantage and political fighting spirit – and it is where the left gathers pretty much every weekend, in support of Palestine, protesting against market rents, enjoying arts and culture and budget-friendly food.

Every demonstration in Malmö starts or ends at the Möllevångstorget Square. The May Day marches and the demonstrations

for Palestine. Solidarity with the Kurds in Rojava and protests against cuts to healthcare. Marching against war or raising our voices on International Women's Day. The Möllevångstorget Square has seen both joy and struggle – and it has seen determination, like when over 10,000 people marched under the banner Kämpa Showan (Forza Showan), in defence of Showan, a victim of nazi violence who miraculously survived. Or when, during Eurovision, tens of thousands gathered to boycott Israel and protest the ongoing genocide.

**MALMÖ IS ALSO** where Zetkin Foundation was founded, even though we now have staff, volunteers and collaborators in many cities and countries around the world. Here are some of our best tips to get the most out of Malmö, brought to you by Zetkin comrades.



# THE MALMÖ EXPERIENCE

PHOTO: MALMÖ STAD.



If you have time, visit **RIBERSBORGS KALLBADHUS**. Sauna on the sea in a beautiful old wooden building. You sauna and swim naked (one women's section and one men's section), so no need to bring swim wear, and you can rent towels. The nearest bus stop is Ribersborg (bus 7).

PHOTO: MALMÖ STAD.



**FOLKETS PARK.** A small park with skate ramps, playgrounds, cafés, bars, and working class history all in one!

**MALMÖ KONSTHALL.** Just by Triangeln station is this beautiful art gallery that exhibits contemporary artists. Always excellent. Note that it's closed on Mondays.



**STADSBIBLIOTEKET.** Malmö City Library is a beautiful place. Half of the building is an old castle, the other half a modern "box of light". Great place to sit and work, read or just relax for a moment. It's also located in a very nice park.

**PANORA/FOLKETS BIO.** Southern Sweden's largest arthouse cinema, run as a non-profit cooperative since 1973. Three screens showing indie, documentary and international festival films you won't find at the multiplex. Located right in the heart of Möllevången – grab a coffee nearby before the show.



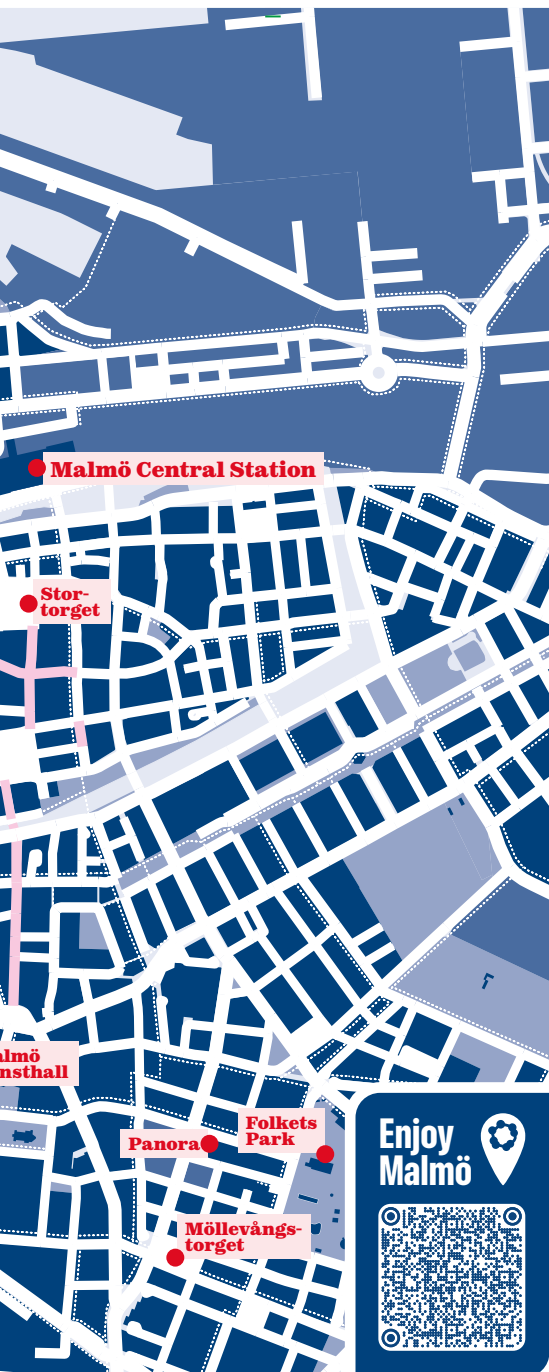
## How to get around

**BY BIKE.** Malmö is a very bike-friendly city and you can rent bikes using the app Malmö by bike.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT.** Malmö has plenty of buses and trains connecting central areas. Download the Skånetrafiken app to find info about bus fares and buy tickets (also in English). You can also pay-as-you-go by tapping your card on all city buses.

**TAXIS.** Use the taxi services Taxi Malmö (+46 40 911 911) or Taxi 97 (+46 40 97 97 97). Uber, Bolt and Fair Taxi are also in use in Malmö.

**WALKING!** Malmö is dense and pedestrian-friendly so if you are able to, walking is a comfortable option.



## How to pay

You can pay by card everywhere. Many places do not accept cash.

## Weather

Malmö is just by the sea and very flat, so windy. Even if the temperature looks nice in May, it can be a good idea to bring a light jacket to protect yourself.

# EAT AND DRINK

**LET'S START** with the most important thing: where to eat and drink if you are coming early to the Organize! Movement Meetup or staying for a couple of days – or the next time you come to visit us.

## “I want to eat very Swedish things”

**NOBES** (Kristianstadsgatan 36). Pub with home style classic Swedish food, plenty of vegan options, in a punky leftist environment. Cute dogs are always around.

**SIRI'S CAFÉ** (Södra Förstadsgatan 88). A wonderful time capsule, a bakery that has looked the same since 1983. No wifi, no music, just vibes.

When you crave cardamom buns and cinnamon buns for your Swedish fika, check out **LEVE** (Östra Rönneholmsvägen 6), **ST JAKOBS STENUGNSBAGERI** (multiple locations), or **GATEAU** (multiple locations). Leve and Gateau have vegan options.

## “I want to eat like a local”

Malmö is known for its tasty and affordable falafel. Try **MR FALAFEL** (Nobelvägen 34), **JALLA JALLA** (Bergsgatan 16), **MÖLLANS FALAFEL** (Bergsgatan 14), **BAGHDAD FALAFEL** (Annelundsgatan 59) or **BOLLEN I RULLEN** (Trelleborgsgatan 2). Let a Swede teach you how to say “Alla grönsaker, blandad sås”.

**MISS VIETNAM** (Södra Förstadsgatan 91). A Zetkin Foundation classic, very tasty Vietnamese food.

## THE MÖLLEVÅNGSTORGET SQUARE.

Plenty of places to sit outside and have a beer, and on a corner is another Zetkin Foundation classic – **KRUA THAI**.

## “Malmö – the city of food”

There is food from every corner of the world, and the city has experienced a real food boom over the

past decade. It really has something for every taste and every budget. Here's a completely incomplete list of some good places to eat.

**BAR KIOSKO AND KIOSKO IMPORT.** Fun atmosphere, small plates, good drinks.

**FREDEN.** Lively bistro blending Vietnamese, Japanese and modern European.

**HYGGE.** Neighbourhood pub with a great terrace.

**INTERNATIONELLA KORVHUSET.** Sausages from every corner of the world.

**KHAYYAM.** Persian skewers and stews: koobideh, soltani, djodjes, the works.

**KIN LONG.** Malmö's oldest Chinese restaurant, opened in 1964; everything can be made vegan. Don't miss the dragon on the ceiling.

**KONTRAST.** Bold, flavourful Indian cooking.

**MALMÖ SALUHALL.** Quality food hall: fish, pasta, burgers, pizza, meat, café.

**MANTO.** Afghan gem near Dalaplan, fully vegan.

**ÖRUM.** Malmö's best bread and pastries.

**PIZZERIA DAVIDSHALL.** Pizza, gyros, and classic Greek dishes.

**PIZZERIA REX.** An institution of the left, where many a meeting has been held.

**RAU + LU.** Asian sister restaurants next door to each other; Rau is fully vegan.

**REKAS.** Rated Malmö's best burger by Burgerdudes.

**SALTIMPORTEN.** Lunch only, but widely considered the best in Malmö.

**SAUVAGE.** Honest French bistro cooking, seasonal and flavourful.

# “TO BE THOUSANDS OF SHOULDERS”

Meet Daniel Sestrajcic, lead organizer for Organize! Movement Meetup. In this interview, he talks about the ideas behind the event and the importance of building deep relationships across the left. It's a reflection on the patience that organizing requires and the hope that comes from standing “back-to-back” with others.

## Who are you and what is your role at Organize! Movement Meetup?

Most of what I do comes down to organizing and activism, building a broader left. That's been true my whole life, whether I was active in the Left Party or doing solidarity work with Latin America, serving as an elected member of parliament or working at a petrol station.

I'm a father of two living in Malmö. I love cooking, going for walks, and going to the cinema. I work for Zetkin Foundation, which I co-founded with Richard Olsson — our tech lead — as part of Sweden's Left Party in Malmö. I coordinate a team of organizers, serve as chair of the board, and I also work for Organizing for Power as Community Coordinator.

In Organize! Movement Meetup (O!MM), my job is to hold the whole project together — putting the different pieces into place alongside all the brilliant people who contribute in so many ways. I've worked a lot on the programme and on building relationships with the many organizations that are part of this.

## What experience do you have as an organizer?

At this point I'd say I have quite a lot of experience as an organizer, from building active groups in my local area to running large-scale electoral campaigns. Through that work I've come to understand the difference between mobilising and organizing. They are two distinct things and organizing, in its own right, is the more fundamental of the two.

## What have been your greatest challenges in organizing and what have been the greatest gifts or experiences that organizing has given you?

My greatest personal challenge is the patience that long-term organizing demands: holding onto the belief that every small step is moving us toward what we're actually dreaming of — a more equal and decent society where everyone is well and everyone has the space and opportunity to be active and engaged on their own terms.

The greatest gift organizing has given me is hope — and people.



The hope and belief in ourselves and in the possibility of change. All the people I've learned from, been inspired by, been moved by. The community it creates, of being part of a family of people who want something more and better — for themselves, for each other, for the world. Organizing has brought out sides of myself I didn't know were there, and made me a better person.

## How and when was the idea of Organize! Movement Meetup first born? What was the vision?

It was actually an idea that was born many years ago, before the pandemic. Richard wanted us to organize a gathering to celebrate Zetkin Foundation's fifth anniversary, and the board ran with the idea, letting it grow from a simple vision of bringing together people working on organizing and tech. Many of us who were involved then are still active.

Over these years we have grown, gained new experiences, developed as an organization, built new relationships and connections across



Daniel Sestrajcic.

PHOTO: EMMALISA PAULY.

Europe and the world. So honestly, I'm glad it didn't happen back then. It would have been something completely different from what we're creating today: a place where organizers and developers can come together because we want to be part of this community. Because we know we have a lot to learn, but also a lot to give: when it comes to organizing and winning campaigns.

Beyond that, it's about tearing down barriers between countries, organizations, and organizers. Creating new friendships, relationships, and connections that make us stronger. A place we can return to again and again to recharge and deepen our commitment. As the Portuguese communists said during the Carnation Revolution: to be thousands of shoulders, supporting each other back-to-back.

#### **What were some of the most important steps in getting O!MM off the ground?**

One hundred percent: the people. The people we've got to know over the years and the people around Zetkin Foundation who kept

thinking, kept doing, and kept wanting to invest in gatherings, community, and networks.

There are too many to name everyone, but within Zetkin Foundation the crucial ones have been Mats, Elin, and Richard alongside myself. Outside Zetkin Foundation: Felix, Stine, and Nils-Erik: the Norwegians who always wanted to meet and exchange experiences. Stefan from Enhedslisten Copenhagen, who has been inspired by what we're building and always open to thinking together about organizing. Comrades in Die Linke: Robert, Alina, Lukas, and Jos who were open to all the ideas we had around organizing things like the Autumn and Summer Schools. And Ada at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's Brussels office, who never stopped believing in the idea, made it possible in every practical sense, and brought her own thinking into it. I could keep going. There are organizations and people at every turn who've been essential to getting O!MM off the ground.

But perhaps the single most important person is Susanne Lang

from Die Linke. With Susanne it simply never ends. The ideas keep flowing, the conversations keep going, and her deep commitment to the left – to how the left organizes, to the people within the left – is both inspiring and propulsive. Susanne has been an inspiration, rolled up her sleeves and done the work, and in more ways than I can describe been part of creating Organize! Movement Meetup, the community that's forming around it, and the reader that this text is part of.

#### **What was important in putting together the programme?**

The consultations we did with a wide range of organizations, and the decision we made early on that we wanted as much participation as possible from the attendees themselves – prioritising workshops, discussion, and smaller groups over big panels.

#### **What do you hope participants will take away from this first instalment of the Meetup?**

New bonds, friendships, and meaningful relationships. A belief in the community we're trying to build. That's what matters most to me. Along with the occasional aha-moment, a lot of knowledge, and the conviction to keep fighting and building the left in these times of fascist offensive.

#### **What is the future vision for O!MM?**

That this is just the beginning. That O!MM becomes a vital part of an ecosystem where we learn from each other, come together to be inspired, and show up for each other when it matters. That it returns every other year as a fixed point on all our calendars. A place we all know we want to be: to learn more, to be part of the debate, to share ideas, and to find each other again.

CULTURAL PROGRAMME FOR ORGANIZE! MOVEMENT MEETUP:

# A MANIFESTATION OF RADICAL CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY

The cultural programme for O!MM is more than culture, it is a catalyst for change. We will transform our space into a haven for resistance and international solidarity not only through our work, but through music and dance as well. We intertwine political voices from Santiago, Damascus, Tehran and Copenhagen in a celebration of unity in diversity.

## Friday 15 May Roots And Strength

We open the weekend together with our hosts Daniel Sestrajic and Susanne Lang. We let Mikael Wiehe set the tone with a soulful song, followed by a meeting between pianist Tanja Naranjo and percussionist Bader Debs. With piano, darbuka and loop pedals, they weave together the experiences of exile from Chile and Syria into a soundscape that is both beautiful and merciless. The evening then transitions into a mingle with curated music from DJs Hallis Placebo & Rockadelika, keeping the energy alive.

**17.30** Mingle and dinner with music  
(DJ Hallis Placebo & Rockadelika)

**19.30** Welcome speech

**19.45** Live: Mikael Wiehe

**20.00** Democracy is a verb: Building deep  
movement alignment to fight back

**20.30** Live: Tania Naranjo & Bader Debs (Orientino Duo)

**21.00** DJ: Hallis Placebo & Rockadelika

Selectors and crate diggers **Rockadelika** and **Hallis Placebo** are teaming up for the first time behind the decks. With almost 40 years of collecting records they have a broad range of music to choose from. This set will represent Malmö through global music – spanning from Arabic funk to Brazilian gospel and yacht disco with a psychedelic twist from the late 60's to records released only yesterday. Everything on vinyl.



## Rockadelika & Hallis Placebo



## Orientino Duo

**Orientino Duo** is a piano, percussion, and vocal ensemble uniting musical traditions from Latin America and the Middle East. The duo features Chilean-Swedish concert pianist and singer **Tania Naranjo** and Syrian-Swedish darbuka player and vocalist **Bader Debs**. With piano, voice, darbuka, riq, and daf, their arrangements weave Arabic rhythmic structures and maqam-inspired elements together with Latin American harmonic language.

PHOTO: MAHERBARADAI



**Mikael  
Wiehe**

**Mikael Wiehe** is a Swedish singer, multi-instrumentalist and composer. As the main songwriter and driving force of Hoola Bandoola Band he was also one of the most important people in the progg movement, a left-wing, anti-commercial musical movement from the 60's and 70's. In the '80s, when political music died, Wiehe kept up the tradition, heavily inspired by early Bob Dylan. In his later career, he showed more influence from a traditional domestic tradition, and the late '90s saw revived respect for political songs and brought a new audience.

PHOTO: ADAM HAGLUND

## Saturday 16 May From Ambient To Total Explosion

Saturday starts with global beats on vinyl from ajabu! records before we dive into Maria Naidu's interactive house dance performance *Glide*. The outdoor stage is taken over at sunset by sound artist Lucy Headburn on cinematic analogue synths. The evening culminates with a speech by Jeremy Corbyn and live music by Iranian-Swedish singer Arya Armenjad, a voice for freedom and resistance. They are followed by Malmö-based Swedish-Moroccan artist Miriam Aïda, building bridges from the stage between cultures, and a total energy discharge from Faela with its Latin American rhythms and the performance collective Mør Collective, who close the evening inside the club together with the DJ duo LIRON (Aron Mody & Lidia Ponjavic).

**12.00 DJ:** Pether Lindgren (ajabu! Records)

**13.00 Dance:** *Glide* with Maria Naidu (Interactive house dance performance)

*Glide* is a dance performance for everyone to take part in, in their own individual way.

*Glide* is about coming together. To move in the same direction for a moment, to share the same rhythm, to feel how community can arise almost by itself. A dancer leads a movement that the body recognises long before the head has time. Something simple and at the same time quite powerful.

**Maria Naidu** is a choreographer and dancer. With four decades of stage experience, she creates works

that meet the audience where they are – with commitment, warmth and humour as artistic driving forces. Naidu has performed and toured her works in fourteen countries. Community, identity and dance's ability to bring people together are recurring themes in her work.



**Maria  
Naidu**

**Pether Lindgren – Ajabu!** – is a filmmaker and cultural producer from Malmö, Sweden. In 2005, Pether founded the



**Ajabu!**

internationally acclaimed record label ajabu! and the world-touring music documentary festival Music Doc. His notable projects also include the music film *Sonica Sequence*, a collaboration with musician Lisa Nordström. His work remains dedicated to promoting musicians from the Global South and providing an alternative to mainstream commercial music.

# SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY

## Outdoor stage

17.00 DJ: Lucy Headburn

18.00 Dinner

19.30 Welcome

19.35 Live: Arya Aramnejad

19.45 Speech: Swedish Left Party

20.00 Live: Miriam Aïda & Faela

20.30 Speech: Jeremy Corbyn

20.50 Live: Faela

22.00 DJ: Badhuspojken

**Lucy Headburn** is an Iraqi DJ and curator based in Copenhagen, known for her refined selections and thoughtful approach to music. She runs the monthly Trancefarmer series on Retreat Radio in Malmö, where she highlights a diverse range of artists and sounds. In 2026, she launched her label, Liberty Cap Records, further expanding her curatorial work. For this event, she will deliver a warm, immersive set of chill-out/house.



## Arya Aramnejad

**Arya Aramnejad** is an Iranian-Swedish singer, songwriter, and music producer, whose distinct style of soulful pop combines modern compositions with classical elements from Iranian music. Highly political, his texts speak of the crimes of the Islamic Regime in Iran while simultaneously inspiring resilience, hope, and freedom for the people. Aramnejad's songs reflect on the adversity he has faced for speaking his mind in Iran and his personal experiences of living in exile.

PHOTO: UGNIS BAGDONAVICIUS

## Miriam Aïda

The Swedish-Moroccan singer and cultural profile **Miriam Aïda** has released her albums under her own name, toured in Scandinavia, Europe, Brazil and Japan, appeared regularly on TV and radio, and received several awards. From the stage she builds bridges between people that extend beyond nationality, culture, language, colour, gender and religion. Intimate, urgent, honest and always groovy!

## Badhuspojken



For over 20 years, **Badhuspojken (Anders Dahlberg)** and friends have been a part of the local scene in Malmö through their memorable and energising sets. Their sources of inspiration come from all over the world creating a blend of Northern soul and electroswing with a steady groove, and influences from electroblues, soul'n'funk and oriental tones. As avid record

collectors their sets are made up of both their own soul remixes and classic Northern soul with some fingers pointed to the lounge era of St Tropez in the sixties. Calling all the lounge-lizards!

## Faela



**Faela** is one of the greatest Latin bands in Europe. They have been performing for almost twenty years, in the whole continent – as well as in South America and Africa. Their original music is a mix of Latin Jazz and rock. The musicians give a live performance – a unique show! While sharing energetic vibes with the crowd – leaving you with an euphoria of dance and music to remember.

**Club Rosa**

22.00 DJ: LIRON

23.00 Live: Mør Collective

23.45 DJ: LIRON

**LIRON**

With many years in the musical sphere separately, **Aron Mody & Lidia Ponjavic** have a long track record of producing and playing at clubs. As of late they've created a buzz in the local scene through their memorable sets filled with energy in the underground scene of their hometown of Malmö, Sweden. Their sources of inspiration come from all over the world creating a blend of house and techno with a steady groove with influences from disco, funk and oriental tones. As dedicated record collectors, their sets are made up of both physical and digital tracks and their own productions showcasing a great blend of their sounds and taste.

**Mør Collective**

**Mør Collective** operates in the friction between electronic pop, techno, poetry and battle cries. The music is created on analogue synthesisers, drum machines, and electric guitars processed with effects, crafting a soundscape that can go from the hard and dirty to the fragile and beautiful. The texts deal with themes of oppression, apathy, power and privilege-blindness. As well as the beauty in embracing the reality of others – daring to believe, daring to dream, daring to feel the community we are undeniably part of. MØR music is created by **Mika Forsling & Anika Barkan**.

**Sunday 17 May  
Pulse And Closing  
Ceremony**

Before we part ways and close the meetup, we let the rhythm have the last word. World artist **Gustav Borehed** – one of Sweden's foremost tap dancers – steps onto the stage together with his trio. Expect a breathtaking, polyrhythmic interplay where the tap shoes become an instrument in themselves in this tribute to the African-American art form.

**11.45** Live: **Gustav Borehed Trio**

**14.30** Closing ceremony with speeches and performance by **Gustav Borehed Trio**

**Gustav  
Borehed**

# HOW TO READ THE PROGRAMME

**WELCOME TO A** weekend programme packed with workshops, panels and seminars – you choose what you want to attend. We have seven parallel venues running simultaneously, and places are limited and allotted on a first come, first served basis.

The rooms have been named after important female pioneers in socialist history from around the world. The largest room **Rosa** holds over 100 people, while most other venues hold 30–40. Most rooms are inside MEC, but **Sylvia** and **Kata** are covered outdoor venues – check the map in the reader or the maps posted on site and you will find your way.

For programmers and designers there is a dedicated hackathon space in **Clara**, where you can take part in all or parts of the weekend's hackathon and contribute to the development of Zetkin.

The first sessions of the morning run for **2 hours**, other sessions run for approximately **75 minutes**. To avoid long queues for food, the morning sessions end at slightly

different times – spreading out the lunch rush so you spend less time in the queue. **Keynotes** are short sessions of approximately 30 minutes when all of Organize! Movement Meetup comes together.

On Saturday we wrap up the programme at **17.00** and move into socialising and drinks before dinner at **18.00** – after dinner, at **19.30**, Malmö's most exciting left-wing party opens its doors to all. Expect live music, a speech by **Jeremy Corbyn**, a club night and a sausage buffet with vegetarian and meat options.

On Sunday the programme ends at **15.00**. Let the weekend continue a bit longer – for those who have time to stick around, the afternoon is yours to enjoy. Meet up at **Freden** where we have booked the restaurant for an after-conference bar, join a guided walk in the footsteps of the labour movement, take a dip at Malmö's popular open-air swimming baths – or find something of your own to do with new and old friends.



Breaks & Food



Keynote



Organizing & Tech



Registration



Building Organization



Strategy & Power



Gathering




Campaigning

## City walk: From Amalthea to Kockums shipyard – Stories about workers and activists in Malmö harbour

Pål Brunnström, Fredrik Egefur

FRIDAY, 14.00–16.00

OUTSIDE VENUE. MEETING PLACE: SPETSBUNKERN (GAMLA DOCKAN 1)

 Many different types of work have been carried out in the port of Malmö – loading and unloading of different types of goods, ferries across the strait or to more distant

destinations, shipbuilding, small industries and so on. It has also been a place where the union has been strong and where many dramatic conflicts have taken place. Although geographically close, the port has at many times been perceived as being a bit remote from the city centre, which is why rents have been cheap and various political groups have been able to find a place here. On this walk we discuss some of the stories about these activists and workers.

The guided tour will be led by historians **Pål Brunnström** from Malmö University and **Fredrik Egefur** from Labour Archives Skåne.

**PÅL BRUNNSTRÖM** is a historian at Malmö University specialising in urban history and the history of social movements. He is also a long term activist in the Malmö branch of the Swedish Left Party.

**FREDRIK EGEFUR** is a historian and archivist, director of the Labour Archives Skåne. He is also a long term activist in the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

## Registration

FRIDAY, 16.00–18.00  
BIG HALL



Pick up your name badge, welcome materials, and your copy of The Organize! Reader – our magazine on organizing, with the full programme printed inside.

## Dinner

FRIDAY, 18.00–19.15  
RESTAURANT VARV



We sit down together for a shared dinner at Restaurant Varv and its outdoor terrace. A moment to settle in, meet new people, and enjoy a meal before the opening ceremony begins.

## Opening ceremony

Daniel Sestrajcic, Susanne Lang, Tanja Naranjo, Bader Debs, Valery Alzaga, Mikael Wiehe

FRIDAY, 19.15–20.30  
KATA



After dinner, we gather to officially open Organize! Movement – the first European organizing conference. We do what movements are made of – meet, connect, and recognize each other – before the keynote “Democracy is a verb: Building deep movement alignment to fight back” sets the tone for the weekend.


We are joined by acclaimed pianist **Tanja Naranjo** and percussionist **Bader Debs**, whose music weaves together exile experiences from Chile and Syria. One of the most renowned Swedish protest singers, **Mikael Wiehe**, will also treat us to some music.

## Democracy is a verb: Building deep movement alignment to fight back

Valery Alzaga

FRIDAY, 19.30–20.15

KATA

 Democracy is not self-sustaining – it must be built, defended, and deepened through collective struggle. This keynote explores why only deep movement alignment can meet the scale of the attacks we face, and why the labour movement is central to building that broader fight. When unions organize across sectors, communities, and struggles, they can defend public services, workers, and the common good together – and help build the majority power and disruption needed to win.

**Valery Alzaga** will share lessons from Bargaining for the Common Good in Minnesota, where unions joined with migrant rights, housing justice, climate organizers, and Black Lives Matter to build real power, win major legislative victories through the “Minnesota Miracle”, and then turn that alignment into resistance against ICE attacks. She will also draw on South Korea, where the labour movement not only defended democracy, but helped tip the balance in a moment of crisis – mobilising up to 2 million workers, preparing for strike action, and showing the decisive role labour can play when democratic rights are under threat. These are not just inspiring stories – they are blueprints for building the power to defend and deepen democracy.


**VALERY ALZAGA** is a labour and migrant rights organizer with experience across sectors including property services, healthcare, renewable energy and fishing. Starting with Justice for Janitors, she has coordinated organizing across Europe with unions such as FNV, UNISON and IG Metall, built UNISON’s organizing department and migrant rights campaign in social care, strategised for Barcelona en Comú, and most recently served as Deputy Director of Global Labor Justice, leading efforts to defend Indonesian migrant fishers’ rights across Asia, Europe and the US.

## DJ, drinks, hangout and mingle

DJs Hallis Placebo  
and Rockadelika

FRIDAY, 20.30–23.00


KATA, RESTAURANT VARV

 The opening ceremony flows into the evening – music takes over, drinks are poured, and conversations spill across the room. **DJ Hallis Placebo** and **Rockadelika** join forces behind the decks, spinning global vinyl from Arabic funk to Brazilian gospel and psychedelic yacht disco. Stay as long as you like.

## Registration

SATURDAY, 08.00–09.00


BIG HALL

 Still need to register? Pick up your name badge, welcome materials, and your copy of The Organize! Reader before the day kicks off.

## Arrival, coffee & breakfast

SATURDAY, 08.15–09.00

RESTAURANT VARV


 Arrive, grab a coffee on us, and settle in. If you’re hungry, Restaurant Varv serves a simple breakfast – their bread is fantastic and everything is baked in-house.

## Whose world comes next?

Jeremy Corbyn

SATURDAY, 09.00–09.45

BIG HALL

 The world order is fracturing – and what replaces it will not be decided by accident. We are living through ecological collapse, the return of great power conflict, and the systematic stripping of public services and workers’ rights. The forces of capital are using this moment deliberately – to consolidate power, militarise economies, and push the costs onto ordinary people.

But crisis also opens possibilities. As socialists, we understand that what feels like chaos is also a contest – between those who want to lock in a brutal new order, and those of us building something different.

**Jeremy Corbyn** will speak to what this moment demands of us: honesty about the scale of the attacks we face, and clarity about the direction of travel – toward collective ownership,

## FOOD, DRINKS & PRACTICALITIES

**Restaurant Varv** is open throughout the conference – from the morning when you can buy a simple breakfast, during the day as the perfect spot for informal meetings or a moment to recharge, to the evening when you can buy cocktails, beer or the finest non-alcoholic option you can imagine. Coffee and fika (cakes, buns, etc) are served throughout the weekend and are free of charge, baked by volunteers.

**The Zetkin** hub is located in **Clara** – drop in for a demo or help with a concrete problem.

**Getting here:** Media Evolution City (MEC) is located at Stora Varvsgatan 6. Bus 5 stops right outside, and it is a short walk from Malmö Central Station. The recommended hotels **Story**, **Malmö City Park** and **Comfort** are all within walking distance of MEC.

**Taxi:** The most cost-effective taxi service with fixed prices is **Malmö Taxi** – book via their app or call **040-911 911**. Alternatively **040-97 97 97**, which also has an app. If there are several of you travelling from the same place, a taxi is usually cheaper and easier than public transport – a standard taxi (up to 4 people) costs approximately 10 euros, a large taxi (up to 8 people) approximately 20 euros.

**Info desk:** The Organize! Movement Meetup info desk is located right at the entrance and can help you with practical questions.

**Toilets** are available in the restaurant, in the large hall and out on the quayside.

**Smoking** is not permitted indoors or at the entrances – please use the designated smoking areas.

**Luggage storage:** On Sunday you can store your luggage in our supervised luggage area out on the quayside.

economic justice, and a peace built on solidarity rather than militarism. Deep canvassing, community organizing, and movement-building are how we build the majority that can actually win, and how we root socialist politics in the lived experience of working-class communities.


In a world being reshaped by force, the left must be clear-eyed about what we are up against – and confident in what we are building toward.

**JEREMY CORBYN** is a lifelong socialist who has spent over 40 years as a Member of Parliament, including as leader of the Labour Party, and a lifetime in political struggle. Now parliamentary leader of Your Party, he remains a tireless advocate for peace, anti-racism, Palestinian liberation, and international solidarity — consistently linking the global struggle for justice to the everyday fight for working people's rights.

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### Hallway hangout

**SATURDAY, 09.45–10.00**  
**BIG HALL**


 After the keynote, it's time for a short hallway hangout. Chat to someone, check the programme, and make your pick – eight sessions are waiting for you.

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### Field Lead Deep Dive: How DSA Built and Scaled Field Leads in New York

**Carmen Kunkel Quesada**

**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**VIDA**

 Field leads are the backbone of any successful canvassing operation. In this session, we dive deep into everything from recruitment and training to how you create a culture where volunteers feel a genuine sense of ownership and purpose.

A great field lead programme is about giving people a strong sense of purpose – helping every volunteer understand not just what they're doing, but why it matters. That culture is what keeps people coming back. We'll cover expectations, trust, and how structured debriefs keep the whole operation learning and improving.

This session draws directly from DSA organizers who played a leading role in Zohran Mamdani's New York campaign. Rather than a straight lecture, it combines short presentations with interactive elements and group discussions – leaving you with concrete tools to build your own field lead programme.


**CARMEN KUNKEL QUESADA** is an organizer active in grassroots electoral campaigns in the United States, with a focus on leading mass volunteer programs. She was a Deputy Field Director on Zohran Mamdani's mayoral campaign where she helped lead the one of the most effective electoral volunteer operations in U.S. history. She currently works in New York City's Office of Mass Engagement, which has a mission to bring organizing into municipal government.

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### It starts with an ask: Building volunteer leadership in your organization

**Jeremy Parkin, Cody Hoskins**

**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**VILMA**

 This session will focus on organizing techniques, including organizational structures, conversational techniques, and 1:1s, in order to arm you with the ability to identify and scale up volunteer leadership in your organization. The session is designed to be interactive and to use your real-world experiences and examples in order to leave you with meaningful tools to begin this work in your own organization.


**JEREMY PARKIN** is a campaign strategist and organizer with experience across the United States and Europe. He has worked on major campaigns including Bernie Sanders' presidential runs and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's congressional campaign, focusing on field operations, organizer training and building effective campaign structures.

**CODY HOSKINS** is a political strategist with experience in campaigns, unions and legislative work in the United States. He has worked on Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign, focusing on campaign strategy, field operations and building strong organizing structures.

### Public Narrative: Telling stories that move people to act

**Samah Elous**

**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**LUISA**

 Public Narrative is a powerful tool for any organizer to build relationships and connect with people on a deep and meaningful level. **Samah Elous**, a teaching fellow at Harvard University, leads a workshop where you will learn to craft a strong story of self that will enable you to turn your people into a strong, united constituency.


**SAMAH ELOUS** teaches Community Organizing and Public Narrative at Harvard Kennedy School Online Course to international leaders with a team of teaching fellows, lead by professor Marshall Ganz. Currently, she is working on the climate board campaign by Vision, which is one of the largest trade unions in Sweden, focusing on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at work places.

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### Innovating to win: Organizing and campaigning in challenging terrains

**Valery Alzaga, Charlie Macnamara**

**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**ROSA**

 This workshop explores three detailed case studies of successful organizing and innovative campaigning in challenging conditions.

First, it examines the principles and practice of Bargaining for the Common Good, drawing on examples from Minnesota and teachers' strikes across the US. Second, it looks at organizing with food delivery workers, and more broadly with workers in sectors that have been dramatically reshaped by capital during the neoliberal period, and how we can organize effectively today in this new terrain. Third, it turns to the campaign to organize distant-water fishers – migrant workers in one of the world's most dangerous sectors, labouring in extreme isolation across a complex global value chain.

Across these cases, the workshop will explore how organizers can innovate in both campaigning and organizing, from local struggles to transnational strategies. It will highlight some of the most innovative

multi-directional campaigning anywhere in the labour movement, and draw out practical lessons on field organizing, strategic choices, and movement alignment.

**VALERY ALZAGA** is a labour and migrant rights organizer with experience across sectors including property services, healthcare, renewable energy and fishing. Starting with Justice for Janitors, she has coordinated organizing across Europe with unions such as FNV, UNISON and IG Metall, built UNISON's organizing department and migrant rights campaign in social care, strategised for Barcelona en Comú, and most recently served as Deputy Director of Global Labor Justice, leading efforts to defend Indonesian migrant fishers' rights across Asia, Europe and the US.

**CHARLIE MACNAMARA** is head of organizing at the IWGB trade union in Britain, and has led successful organizing campaigns with outsourced cleaners and security guards, ride hail drivers, food delivery couriers, foster carers, hospitality workers, and other precarious workers.

## Billionaires & Guillotines board game session

Max Haiven

**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**SYLVIA**



**Billionaires & Guillotines** is a board game created by critical theorist and organizer **Max Haiven** and published by London's radical Pluto Press in which players take on the role of oligarchs trying to snatch the world's wealth before a revolution. Beyond just being fun, the game subtly conveys a sharp critique of capitalism. Come and play a demo and learn from the designer why we can't afford to ignore the 2 billion people who play a game every day (the far right aren't ignoring them!).

**MAX HAIVEN** is a writer, educator, organizer and game maker. He works as the Canada Research Chair in the Radical Imagination at Lakehead University and has been involved in many grassroots movements against capitalism, colonialism and boredom.

## Seeing the field: Mapping for strategic organizing

Alex Andrews, Everin Scott, Gemma Copeland, Jan Baykara  
**SATURDAY, 10.00–12.00**  
**DOLORES**



Organizers are constantly navigating complexity: shifting alliances, uneven capacity, patchy data, and fast-moving political terrain. Yet most never get the chance to step back and analyse power dynamics or potential strategic opportunities. Mapping can be a powerful tool to cut through this complexity. Maps help us externalise our thinking into something tangible that we can play with, build upon, and act from together. In this interactive session, we'll introduce a set of practical mapping techniques – from stakeholder mapping to power analysis – and then get hands-on, using them to work through a real organizing challenge together.

**ALEX ANDREWS** has been a strategic advisor for various campaigns, from national elections to grassroots anti-deportation efforts. He served as a senior software engineer at startups like Lightful, leading technical strategy. He is on the board of New Economy Organisers Network (NEON).

**EVERIN SCOTT** has facilitated political activism across organizations, leading projects like School Cuts and Organise. They've collaborated with groups like 38 Degrees and NEU and are on the steering group for StrikeMap.

**GEMMA COPELAND** is a designer and educator interested in social infrastructure, collective imagination and cooperative organizing. She is on the board of workers.coop and organizes Materials, an annual festival of visual culture and politics.

**JAN BAYKARA** is a software writer and advisor, informed by organizing with workers and activists since 2015. Before co-founding CK, he worked in tech startups and political tech projects. He is studying community learning & development at the University of the West of Scotland.

## Lunch

**SATURDAY, 12.00–13.45**  
**RESTAURANT VARV**



Lunch is served at Restaurant Varv. We've kept it long – time to eat well, rest, and spend time with people. Use it however you need: a long conversation, a quiet moment, or a walk in the neighbourhood. During lunch, **Pether** from Ajabu Records will play and **Maria Naidu** will bring an interactive dance performance that will get you moving.

## Hammers, sickles and other purpose-built tools: Building movement infrastructure

Dion le Maître, Zee Vieira, Felix Vaager, Gemma Copeland, Laura Blum

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**SYLVIA**



Movements don't just need tools, they need infrastructure. This panel explores how digital systems, shared data, and organizing practices come together to build long-term capacity beyond individual campaigns. Drawing on different experiences with communication layers and purpose-built tools, participants will discuss what it means to build movement infrastructure today: who controls it, who benefits from it, and where do its limits lie? Can technology support organizing without becoming the strategy itself?

**DION LE MAÎTRE** has been a 'general purpose IT guy' at the Socialistische Partij (SP) for a little over 6 years. He has done everything from server management via debugging ancient code to managing the development and migration of over 100 chapter websites.

**ZEE VIEIRA** is a software engineer, a lifelong advocate for open technology and a member of the Left Party in Sweden. They currently lead a project with ETC to establish small scale, solar-powered data centres on recycled hardware.

**FELIX VAAGER** works with IT for the Socialist Left Party in Norway. He has been involved in implementing Zetkin and several other systems, and is quite an experienced Microsoft administrator – not entirely by choice. For the past year and a half or so, he has been very interested in exploring

alternatives to the most widely used digital infrastructure solutions, for some reason.

**GEMMA COPELAND** is a designer, organizer, and educator. Her practice centres on building infrastructures to foster more creative and resilient movements, and exploring how arts and culture can expand our collective political imagination.


**LAURA BLUM** is a software engineer building digital infrastructure for political organizing – focused on connection, political education, and sustainable collective action, and on how technology can support rather than flatten the relationships and judgment these depend on.

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## Print is back: How to do it and why it matters

Adam Määttä

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**VIDA**

 This workshop explores the strategic value of printed newspapers in modern political campaigns and organizations. Why does print remain a powerful tool for reaching voters, shaping the political agenda, and building long-term trust in our key communities? The session offers practical guidance on how to plan, produce, and distribute your own newspaper, while also highlighting its impact on organizational visibility, voter engagement, and electoral outcomes.


**ADAM MÄÄTTÄ** is an organizer at Zetkin Foundation and the Swedish Left Party, working with onboarding and training new organizations in organizing methods and the Zetkin platform. He is also an editor of "Vänstern i..." (The Left in...), a newspaper produced by the Swedish Left Party and Zetkin Foundation.

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## From reflection to action: Workshops as Generative Method

Alicia Smedberg

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**VILMA**

 Drawing on participatory design and activist collaborations, this workshop examines how workshops can build collective understanding and shared political imagination. It critically engages with facilitation as

a practice that challenges traditional notions of expertise, instead emphasising collaborative and democratic knowledge production. Participants will get a hands on tutorial on how to set up your own workshop for democratic future making.


**ALICIA SMEDBERG** holds a PhD in participatory design and works at the intersection of research, teaching, and activism. Her work explores collaborative methods, public participation, and how research practices can contribute to social and political change. Alongside her academic work, she has been active in grassroots organizing for over 20 years with experience of working in London, Glasgow, and Malmö.

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## What can I do to bottle magic, and why the heck have I never heard of it before? Organizational culture, care, and sustainability in a modern left

Aron Etzler

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**KATA**


 Think back to the best meeting or action your group ever had. You know the one – ideas flowing, people listening, and you walked out into the night feeling electric, like your movement could take on the world and win. That feeling of collective power is why we organize. You want to bottle it and share it with everyone. But there are other nights too– the draining ones, spent arguing details, leaving you wondering why building a better world feels so exhausting. The truth is, that magic fades quickly if we don't keep producing it. These moments aren't accidents – they follow a pattern that we can learn and recreate together.

**ARON ETZLER** is a Swedish political writer and former Party Secretary of the Left Party. He has a background as an editor and author, and has written extensively on political strategy, organization and the history of the left. Today he is a board member at For The People Foundation.

## Canvassing changes you and your organization

Lukas Lademann

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**ROSA**

 Canvassing, intense 1-on-1 conversations with strangers, is a craft that almost anyone can learn. And yet, within Die Linke it has proved to be more than just another tool in the organizing toolkit, changing how we talk about values, emotions, and strategy. In this workshop we'll share how we run our canvassing trainings and what cultural shifts we observed across our party by adopting large scale canvassing.

**LUKAS LADEMANN** works as an organizer at Die Linke's federal headquarters and has designed and run the canvassing trainings there since mid-2024. He first learned how to door-knock in the Berlin tenant movement in 2018.

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## Case study: How organizing defeated the far right in Gorton & Denton

Miles Thorpe

**SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00**  
**LUISA**

 We explore the Green Party's victory over Reform UK in Gorton & Denton.

Together, we'll examine how organizing delivered a winning campaign – securing 40 percent of the vote in a seat where the Green Party was polling at just 13 percent nationally. Through this case study we explore key principles of electoral campaigning, before digging into the real-world tactics that made this victory possible and why they worked.

The participants will work to design their own campaign using organizing principles.

Ideal for anyone interested in the practical relationship between organizing and electoral politics, this is a hands-on session focused on strategy, lessons, and application.

**MILES THORPE** is a campaign manager with the Green Party in the UK, specialising in political organizing and electoral campaigns. He managed the campaign that led to Hannah Spencer's victory in the Gorton & Denton by-election, as well as Carla Denyer's successful campaign in Bristol Central.

## Workshop: Building political strategy

Francisco Contreras

SATURDAY, 13.45–15.00  
DOLORES



Drawing on the work of Marta Harnecker (Chilean-Cuban political theorist and one of Latin America's most influential Marxist thinkers), we dig into how long-term goals and short-term tactics can be grounded in a concrete analysis of reality. We explore key concepts, map power relations, and formulate strategic lines together. You leave the workshop with a first draft of your own strategy.

FRANCISCO CONTRERAS serves as chair of Solidaritetshuset in Stockholm, a collaborative hub for global justice organizations working for solidarity, human rights, and transformative social change. He is also the international editor of Parabol magazine. Contreras is deeply rooted in the global solidarity movement and part of the collective MediaCon that creates multimedia productions that amplify the voices, struggles, and organizing power of grassroots and struggle-based movements. He is a sociologist by profession, specialising in international higher education.

## Hallway hangout

SATURDAY, 15.00–15.45  
BIG HALL



Another hallway hangout – this time forty-five minutes. Grab a coffee, debrief with someone from your last session, and choose where you're heading next.

## Building mass movements (not little lefty clubhouses)

Jonathan Smucker

SATURDAY, 15.45–16.15  
LUIISA



In this session, long-time US political organizer and strategist **Jonathan Smucker** will explore how grassroots organizations, movements, and campaigns can persuade, mobilise, and organize broader social bases – and the obstacles and internal dynamics that often stand in the way of doing so effectively. Jonathan will discuss a growing pattern of class-based insularity that turns would-be mass organizations

into little self-referential activist clubhouses. Most importantly, we'll dig into the role and responsibility of movement leaders in transforming these dynamics, to organize and mobilise beyond the 'usual suspects.'

**JONATHAN MATTHEW Smucker** is a political organizer, strategist and co-founder of the Popular Comms Institute. He is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*.

## Digital security for organizers

Knut Hühne

SATURDAY, 15.45–16.15  
VIDA



How does the internet actually work – and what does that mean for security? This session introduces the fundamentals of web security, explaining how the web, communication protocols and encryption interact. It aims to provide a clearer understanding of the systems behind everyday tools, helping participants make more informed decisions in their organizing.

**KNUT HÜHNE** is a developer and activist based in Berlin and active in Die Linke. He loves building tools and sharing knowledge in order to empower others.

## Organizing to win: Lessons from tenant struggles

Aidan Cassidy, Rufus Bouverie, Joel Nordström, Alicia Smedberg, DWE

SATURDAY, 15.45–17.00  
ROSA



Tenant organizing grows out of everyday conditions, but rarely stays there. What starts with rent, upkeep, or eviction can become a broader struggle over power and collective agency. Housing issues are immediate, deeply personal, and widely shared, yet tenants often have to build power from fragmentation and insecurity. Bringing together organizers from Sweden, Scotland, and England, this conversation explores how everyday grievances are transformed into strong organization, strategic campaigns, and how tenants can win.

**AIDAN CASSIDY** is a National Organiser for ACORN the Union, based in Sheffield. With a decade of involvement he has seen ACORN grow from a handful of groups to an organization of thousands. Aidan coordinates national campaigns, develops the staff team, and organizes direct action to win concrete demands.

**RUFUS BOUVERIE** is the communications and campaigns director of Living Rent tenants union in Scotland. He has been involved with the union since 2019 and has worked on campaigns for rent controls, against short term lets, for eviction bans and bus franchising. In his spare time he likes to walk his Great Dane-mastiff and play cards.

**JOEL NORDSTRÖM** is vice-chairman of the southern Scanian regional board of the Swedish Union of Tenants. As an organizer within the tenants union of Malmö he has, during the last five years, led and supported numerous smaller and larger rent disputes.

**ALICIA SMEDBERG** is a member of the national board of the Swedish Union of Tenants (Hyresgästföreningen). She has been involved in housing organizing in Malmö, including the successful campaign against double rent increases. She is particularly interested in how activism, collective power and democratic organizing can turn everyday struggles into lasting political change.

## Community organizing and the development of new leaderships

Paula Suárez, Adriel Achaval

SATURDAY, 15.45–17.00  
DOLORES



In this workshop, we will explore community organizing as a key tool for social transformation, focusing on the creation of new grassroots leadership. We aim to reach those who are not yet mobilised, by creating spaces of trust, community, and active participation. Through collaborative methodologies and practical training, we will examine how to foster shared responsibility within local groups and strengthen the community fabric. The workshop will combine collective reflection with hands-on activities to help apply what is learned in real-world contexts.

**ADRIEL ACHAVAL:** Born in Córdoba, Argentina (1991). Graduate in Political Science and International Relations, with a master's degree in Urban Policy and Planning. He worked as Head of

Area at Som Llar, a social housing NGO, and has been spokesperson councillor for Barcelona en Comú in Gràcia, responsible for the housing portfolio. Currently part of the executive direction of Barcelona en Comú, co-leading the Mobilisation Strategy with Paula Suárez.


**PAULA SUÁREZ:** Born in Gran Canaria, Spain (1993). Specialist in Family and Community Medicine. Activist against mass tourism and for high-quality public healthcare. District councillor in Gràcia since 2023. Currently part of the executive direction of Barcelona en Comú, co-leading the Mobilisation Strategy with Adriel Achaval.

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## What is Zetkin anyway?

Richard Olsson

**SATURDAY, 15.45–17.00**  
**CLARA**

 All over this event there are mentions of “Zetkin” but what is it? What’s the story behind this Swedish piece of software that so many organizers keep mentioning? If you are new to Zetkin, this is a great place to start. Founder and software team leader **Richard Olsson** will share the backstory, demo the current state of Zetkin, and maybe even share a little bit of insight into what is coming soon.


**RICHARD OLSSON** is the software team lead at Zetkin Foundation and has been around since the first days of Zetkin back in 2013. In between coding, meetings and trips to European partner organizations, he continues to organize locally in the Malmö chapter of the Swedish Left Party, always trying to find some time to hang out on his boat.

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## Masspolitics: mobilisation from above and organizing from below

James Schneider

**SATURDAY, 15.45–17.00**  
**VILMA**

 **James Schneider** will lead a workshop on the strategic relationship between electoral politics and social power – exploring how movements can combine mass mobilisation “from above” with durable organizing “from below” to win lasting political power.


**JAMES SCHNEIDER** is a political organizer, author, and broadcaster. As Communications Director of the Progressive International, he works with movements and campaigns

worldwide. He previously served as Director of Strategic Communications for the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, co-founded Momentum, and directed Corbyn’s 2024 general election campaign. A former Africa-focused journalist, he is the author of *Our Bloc: How We Win* and a regular media commentator and television debater.

## Building resilient working class culture: self-confidence, risk and rank-and-file democracy in times of repression

Erik Helgeson

**SATURDAY, 15.45–17.00**  
**SYLVIA**

 The Swedish Dockworkers’ Union’s Erik Helgeson was sacked from his job in the port of Gothenburg in 2025, after twenty years on the docks. As the national spokesperson for the union’s legal blockade against the handling of military trade with Israel, the employers branded him a threat to “national security.”

Fifteen months on, the dockworker collective still refuses to back down. Erik reflects on collective and personal risks, organizing effective solidarity and the fight against looming hopelessness in workplaces, as the military build-up provides employers in the European labour market with new tools to suppress trade union activity.


**ERIK HELGESON** is an organizer with the Swedish Dockworkers’ Union. His work focuses on trade union organizing, workplace struggles and building collective power among workers in the transport and logistics sector.

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## Escaping Big Tech: Practical steps toward digital freedom

Felix Vaager

**SATURDAY, 16.30–17.00**  
**VIDA**


 In this short talk you can hear about things you can do to feel a bit more free and in control if you use electronic devices. Most of this does not require a lot of technical skill, but is still hard for social and emotional reasons. There will be time for questions, comments, and sharing tips and insights with the group.

**FELIX VAAGER** works with IT security and privacy at The Socialist Left Party (Socialistisk Venstreparti). He is also a part of the group that runs Zetkin in SV. He is passionate about having a less awful internet and also intrigued by the history of the Luddites. In recent years he has tried to make his digital life less dependent on large technology companies.

## Activation pipelines: A model for large scale mobilisation

Bente Hinrichs

**SATURDAY, 16.30–17.00**  
**LUISA**


 What does it take to turn interest into engagement? This session introduces activation pipelines – a structured approach to growing campaigns and making contact work scalable. Participants will learn how pipelines function in practice and how to design their own for effective follow-up and mobilisation.

**BENTE HINRICHS** is an organizer at Zetkin Foundation and Red-Green Youth (Denmark), working on scalable organizing methods and campaign development.

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## Dinner

**SATURDAY, 18.00–19.30**  
**RESTAURANT VARV**


 Dinner is served at Restaurant Varv. Eat, drink, and get ready – the evening is open. Music, dancing, good company. Anything can happen.

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## Vänsterfesten 2026: Antifascism – Free Palestine – No Pasarán

DJ: Lucy Headburn, Arya Aramnejad, Miriam Aida, Faela, DJ: Badhuspojken, MØR Collective, Jeremy Corbyn

**SATURDAY, 19.30–01.00**  
**RESTAURANT VARV, KATA, ROSA & BIG HALL**

 Vänsterfesten 2026 is open to the broader left in Malmö – a night of live music, speeches, and club. From ambient to total explosion.

The outdoor stage opens with **Arya Aramnejad** and **Miriam Aida** before **Jeremy Corbyn** delivers the political fire. Then Faela takes the outdoor stage and the night ignites – pure dance, pure explosion. **Badhuspojken** keeps the energy alive outside while the club opens late with **Lucy**

Headburn and MØR Collective closing the night.

There will be many spaces and many feelings. Want to talk? Head to the restaurant. Want to dance? The floor is yours. Want to lose yourself in live music? Stay outside. Whatever you need – it's all here.

### Arrival, coffee & breakfast

SUNDAY, 08.15–09.00  
RESTAURANT VARV & BIG HALL



Sunday morning – come as you are. Coffee is on us, and if last night took its toll, Restaurant Varv's freshly baked bread might be exactly what you need.

### Connecting the dots

Susanne Lang

SUNDAY, 09.00–09.45  
BIG HALL



We are living through a moment that demands more than good intentions and hard work in isolation. Across this weekend, organizers from tenant movements, trade unions, left parties, and grassroots campaigns have shared tools, strategies, and hard-won lessons. This keynote brings those threads together – and asks what it means that we are all here, doing this work, at this particular moment in history.

**Susanne Lang** will reflect on what connects the struggles in this room: the door-knockers and the data analysts, the union organizers and the party builders, the deep canvassers and the digital infrastructure teams. Not to flatten our differences, but to name what we share – and why we need each other's knowledge, each other's critical thinking, and each other's capacity to win.

This is not a closing. It is a starting point.

**SUSANNE LANG** is a German left-wing organizer who has worked at Die Linke's federal office since 2016, where she is responsible for digitalisation and organization.

### Hallway hangout

SUNDAY, 09.45–10.00  
BIG HALL



Keynote done. Eight sessions ahead. Take a moment, then choose your path.

### What does a left party of the future look like?

Salomé Cheysson, Jeremy Corbyn, Susanne Lang, Sarah Pansy

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00  
ROSA



This panel debate will discuss the future of left parties as mass organizations. We are exploring the role of left parties in today's world – shaped by short term campaigns and attention, focusing more on single issues than on comprehensive ideology. What role will left parties have in the near future? We want to explore what this means for the (future) party membership and how we need to change our party organizations.

**SALOMÉ CHEYSSON** is an organizer with La France Insoumise (LFI), where she has been part of the movement's core staff since its earliest days. She has played a central role in LFI's organizing infrastructure — leading the development of Action Populaire, the movement's digital platform, as well as coordinating electoral analysis and strategy.

**JEREMY CORBYN** is a lifelong socialist who has spent over 40 years as a Member of Parliament, including as leader of the Labour Party, and a lifetime in political struggle. Now parliamentary leader of Your Party, he remains a tireless advocate for peace, anti-racism, Palestinian liberation, and international solidarity — consistently linking the global struggle for justice to the everyday fight for working people's rights.

**SUSANNE LANG** is a German left-wing organizer who has worked at Die Linke's federal office since 2016, where she is responsible for digitalisation and organization.

**SARAH PANSY** is the organisational secretary of the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ). Since 2023, she represents the party in regional parliament of the Salzburg region. The focus of her political work is building strong party structures – not only for elections, but mainly to anchor the party in society.

### Social arsonists: Developing the leaders of our class

Aidan Cassidy

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00  
VILMA



Organizations live and die by the strength of their leadership. In this workshop we will discuss what a leader is, and how to practically identify and develop them in an organization, focusing on the practical techniques and intentional planning that are crucial to organizing our class.

**AIDAN CASSIDY** is a National Organizer for ACORN the Union, based in Sheffield. With a decade of involvement – first as a member, then as a staff organizer – he has seen ACORN grow from a handful of groups to an organization of thousands. Aidan coordinates national campaigns, develops the staff team, and organizes direct action to win concrete demands, from public toilets and landlord taxes to ending evictions and cheaper transport.

### Deep canvassing 101: Changing hearts and minds

Bruno Lauteslager, Vivian Konijnenberg

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00  
KATA



Forget what you know about canvassing and rethink your voter-contact strategy. This workshop takes you into the world of personal conversations on heated debates. Deep canvassing is a powerful door-to-door conversation technique that reduces prejudice. Classic voter conversations usually happen during election time with 'neutral, active and passive allies'. Deep canvassing gets you the conversation you need with the 'far opposition'. We will discuss handling frames, personal conversations, your own story and the race class narrative.

**BRUNO LAUTESLAGER** is an organizer focusing on deep canvassing and community engagement. His work centres on building meaningful conversations with voters and using relational approaches to strengthen campaigns and shift opinions.


**VIVIAN KONIJNENBERG** is an organizer in Dutch social movements — from climate activism to social justice campaigns — and since 2025 works for Deep Canvassing NL.

## The many vs. the few: A practical guide to populism

Jonathan Smucker

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00

LUISA

 In this workshop, we will explore the rhetorical structure, strategy, and conditions underlying authoritarian pseudo-populism: how authoritarians (like Trump) tap into widespread anti-elite anger, direct it towards cultural elites, deflect attention from the extraordinarily wealthy at the “tippy top” (leaving inequality and extreme consolidation of wealth off the hook), while scapegoating vulnerable groups. We will look at why liberal parties and institutions have been so useless in stemming the authoritarian tide. Most importantly, we'll examine cases of successful progressive populists (i.e., left populists), breaking down their strategies and rhetoric and examining the constraints they must overcome.

JONATHAN MATTHEW Smucker is a political organizer, strategist and co-founder of the Popular Comms Institute. He is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*.


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## Game making for radicals

Max Haiven

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00

VIDA

 You don't have to love games to discover how they can level-up grassroots organizing. Video games, board games and role-playing games are so popular because they appeal to our creativity, our sense of discovery and our feeling of agency. We can learn to integrate games and play into our movements not only to make them more fun, but also more effective and imaginative. In this workshop, we will learn key concepts and tools and put them to work making mini-games for campaigns, meetings and protests.

MAX HAIVEN is a writer, educator, organizer and game maker. He works as the Canada Research Chair in the Radical Imagination at Lakehead University and has been involved in many grassroots movements against capitalism, colonialism and boredom.


## From data to doors: Mapping neighborhoods, milieus, and campaign potential

Lutz Wallhorn

Alioun Diagne

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00

DOLORES

 A practical session on how public data can support real world organizing and campaigning. Using examples such as scraping large housing companies, clustering election results to identify local milieus, and building election models, the session explores how data can help answer a simple question: where should we focus next?

LUTZ WALLHORN lives in Düsseldorf and works at the intersection of science, data, and politics. After a PhD in neuroscience and several years of postdoctoral research, he moved into industry data science, is a member of Die Linke, and co-founded Red Data Analytics. Red Data Analytics grew out of an election mapping project in Germany ahead of the 2025 federal elections. After early success supporting Die Linke's field campaign, it was founded to organize and expand data science, geospatial analysis, and strategic research for left politics and civil society.

ALIOUN DIAGNE is an activist and software developer based in Munich, organizing with Die Linke to fight rising housing costs. He builds data tools for real-world campaigns, including maps for Die Linke's Mietenkampagne that help organizers identify and reach neighbours locally.


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## Race-Class Narrative: A proven strategy to combat racism

Raquel Jesse

SUNDAY, 10.00–12.00

SYLVIA

 The Race-Class Narrative (RCN) is an evidence-based messaging framework designed to counter strategic racism, build cross-racial solidarity, and advance progressive policies by connecting economic anxiety with racial justice. It directly addresses how opponents use dog-whistle racism to divide people, instead uniting a diverse “we” to push for shared prosperity and equity.

RAQUEL JESSE (UK) is an organizer working with race and class narratives in political communication. Her work


focuses on how narratives around race and class can be used to build broader support, and how these approaches can be adapted to different political contexts, including Europe.

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## Lunch

SUNDAY, 11.45–13.15

RESTAURANT VARV

 Lunch at Restaurant Varv. Eat well and take your time – catch up with someone, take a walk, or simply breathe. Live jazz from the **Gustav Borehed Trio**.


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## After the Win: Movement and City Hall

Gustavo Gordillo

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

ROSA

 Winning an election is just the beginning. When Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City, the real work had just begun – because winning the mayoralty gives you the right to rule, not automatically the power to.

This session explores one of the most complex questions facing any left movement that wins power: how do you coordinate between an organized grassroots base and an administration trying to govern? Drawing on the experience of NYC-DSA and the ongoing Tax the Rich campaign, we'll examine how the inside/outside strategy must evolve when you have a mayor from within your own movement – and what it means to sometimes pressure institutions and politicians nominally on your side. You'll leave with concrete lessons on what genuine co-governance can look like in practice.

GUSTAVO GORDILLO is co-chair of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America (NYC DSA). He has led major organizing efforts around public energy and was a key campaign architect behind Zohran Mamdani's mayoral campaign in New York City, focusing on building grassroots power and winning political change.

## Justice for Palestine: Mobilising millions, ending EU complicity with genocide

Tamam Abusalama

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

KATA

 The Justice for Palestine European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has reached one million signatures in only three months. The grassroots initiative, put forward by the European Left Alliance (ELA), calls for the European Union to fully suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

The session will present how the campaign is mobilising millions of Europeans, and actively engage the audience in exploring the power of mobilising actions against Israel's genocide.


**TAMAM ABUSALAMA** is a Palestinian-Belgian communications and campaigns professional, born and raised in Jabalia Refugee Camp, Gaza. A writer, public speaker and human rights advocate active in multiple anti-racist and anti-colonial movements, she is currently Communications and Campaign Strategist at the European Left Alliance, where she leads the European Citizens' Initiative to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

## Relational Organizing theory and practice

Jeremy Parkin, Cody Hoskins

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

LUISA

 Relational Organizing is a hot buzzword – but what does it really mean, and how can we scale it for electoral and organizational success? From the Zohran Mamdani and Bernie Sanders campaigns to local issue-based campaigns like tenant organizing, relational techniques can be a powerful addition to our toolboxes as organizers. This session will cover the theories and real-world applications of relational organizing in the context of US elections, and will create space for discussion among participants on how these techniques could be applied in your own contexts.

**JEREMY PARKIN** is a campaign strategist and organizer with experience across the United States and Europe. He has worked on major campaigns including Bernie Sanders' presidential

runs and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's congressional campaign, focusing on field operations, organizer training and building effective campaign structures.


**CODY HOSKINS** is a political strategist with experience in campaigns, unions and legislative work in the United States. He has worked on Bernie Sanders' 2020 presidential campaign, focusing on campaign strategy, field operations and building strong organizing structures.

## Agile organizing: Can campaigning learn anything from a successful software team?

Richard Olsson

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

DOLORES

 Zetkin is developed by hundreds of contributors, at the center of which is a small day team of 8 people. Since a few years ago, the day team manages the day-to-day in ways inspired by a project management method called FaST, that facilitates collaboration and autonomy. Could this be a prototype of how to work not just in software teams, but also campaign teams and political organizations?

**RICHARD OLSSON** is the software team lead at Zetkin Foundation and has been around since the first days of Zetkin back in 2013. In between coding, meetings and trips to European partner organizations, he continues to organize locally in the Malmö chapter of the Swedish Left Party, always trying to find some time to hang out on his boat.

## Successful organizing in a decaying world

Charlie Andrén, Jonas Ohlsson

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

SYLVIA

 Economic growth is declining. So are cheap and accessible resources. Unkept promises of utopian futures continue to give rise to far-right political forces. The left needs strategies that are aligned with the physical reality we organize for. What could these strategies look like? How can we organize successfully and unite struggles, in a world where surplus is diminishing? In this interactive workshop, we shape new stories of ourselves and our task at hand.

**CHARLIE ANDRÉN** is a long-standing fulltime activist within the climate justice movement. They are organized mainly within Reclaim the Future.


**JONAS OHLSSON** has a long history within the climate justice movement and has been a core organizer for Extinction Rebellion Sweden. He is now active in the Left Party.

## From calls to change: Building phonebanks that deliver

Nathalie Söderberg

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

VIDA

 This workshop explores phonebanking as a high-impact tool for large-scale outreach, engagement, and mobilisation, with a focus on what makes operations truly effective.

Participants will learn: How to make a phonebank function – from setup and structure to coordinating volunteers and ensuring smooth operations. 9 things all successful organizers do – practical principles that drive effective, scalable campaigns.

The workshop also covers how to recruit volunteers and scale outreach, while balancing high volume with meaningful conversations that create lasting impact.


**NATHALIE SÖDERBERG** is an organizer at Zetkin Foundation and the Left Party and has organized many successful large-scale phonebanks.

## How you can use the secret behind motivation to build a strong campaign

Sophia Zaia, Stefan Larsen

SUNDAY, 13.15–14.30

VILMA

 In this workshop we will present the secret theory behind motivating volunteers and building organizations that grow and get things done. We will look at stories from the local election in Copenhagen in 2025 and you will get started on implementing these ideas in your own organization.

**SOPHIA ZAIA** is an organizer who has worked in the Sunrise Movement and is currently teaching at Powerlabs.

STEFAN LARSEN was campaign manager for The Red-Green Alliance in Copenhagen for the local election in 2025.

## City walk: Labour movements and social movements in Malmö and Möllevången

Pål Brunnström, Fredrik Egefur

SUNDAY, 17.00–18:30

OUTSIDE VENUE. MEETING PLACE: THE STATUE "THE GLORY OF LABOUR", MÖLLEVÅNGSTORGE

Malmö is in many ways the heart and birthplace of the Swedish Labour movement, but it is also a place where many other social movements and activists have challenged injustices and lived their lives. On this walk, we get to know the cool anarchists at Svarta Katten, the success story that made the People's Park an important tool of organization as well as leisure for 150 years, the "herring Bolsheviks" protesting the lack of food during World War II and many other big and small stories from the long radical history of Malmö and Möllevången.

The guided tour will be led by historians **Pål Brunnström** from Malmö University and **Fredrik Egefur** from Labour Archives Skåne.

PÅL BRUNNSTRÖM is a historian at Malmö University specialising in urban history and the history of social movements. He is also a long term activist in the Malmö branch of the Swedish Left Party.

FREDRIK EGEFUR is a historian and archivist, director of the Labour Archives Skåne. He is also a long term activist in the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

## After-meetup-bar

SUNDAY, 17.00–21.00

OUTSIDE VENUE: RESTAURANT FREDEN

See you at Freden? Our after-bar and after-restaurant – open to everyone who wants to hang around, wind down, and say one last goodbye. Freden means "The Peace".

## Closing ceremony

SUNDAY, 14.30–15.00

BIG HALL

We close the way we opened – seeing each other, connecting, and taking a moment to recognise what we've built together this weekend.

**Then Gustav Borehed** – one of Sweden's foremost tap dancers – takes the stage with **Elias Källvik** on guitar and **Simon Petersson** on double bass. A polyrhythmic performance where the tap shoes become an instrument in their own right. A fitting end to a weekend

dedicated to culture, organizing, and politics that change the world.

## Zetkin hub

Volunteers & day team building Zetkin

CLARA

What is this Zetkin thing people keep talking about? What does it look like? What can it do? How do you use it? Well, the Zetkin hub is the space with the answers for you! Come to talk to the Zetkin tech gang to learn about the platform, get a little demo and some answers about the tech that's making organizers across the globe go wobbly at the knees with excitement.

## Hackathon!

Volunteers & day team building Zetkin

CLARA

What's better than a room full of socialist computer geeks building tools for organizing? Honestly, not much. During the weekend-long hackathon you can contribute to the Zetkin platform by solving code bugs, working on designing new parts of the interface, or collaborating on building new cool features that will make the lives of organizers everywhere smoother and easier.



Art by Revoluform Protest Service.

## BRING YOUR POSTERS. SHARE YOUR STRUGGLE.

From rent strikes to election campaigns, union drives to street protests — we want to see what you've been fighting for. On Friday, we'll build a collective exhibition of movement posters from across the world. Bring something from your city, your campaign, your organization. Together, our walls tell our story.

	What	Big Hall	Vilma	Vida	Restaurant Varv	Kata	Outside Venue	
14.00–16.00	City Walk						From Amalthea to Kockums shipyard Pál Brunnström, Fredrik Egefur	
16.00–17.30	Registration Mingle Poster Exhibition	Registration	Poster Exhibition					
17.30–18.00			Mingle & Music					
18.00–19.00					Dinner			
19.00–19.15								
19.15–20.30	Welcome Live Music Keynote				Welcome Ceremony Keynote: Valery Alzaga			
20.30–23.00	Music Mingle Drinks				Dj, Drinks, Hangout & Mingle			

	What	Big Hall	Vilma	Vida	Luisa	Dolores	Clara	Rosa	Sylvia	Varv	Kata	
	<b>08.00–08.30</b>	<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Breakfast/Coffee</b>							<b>Breakfast/Coffee</b>		
	<b>08.30–09.15</b>	<b>Arrival Registration Coffee</b>										
	<b>09.00–09.45</b>	<b>Keynote</b>	<b>Keynote:</b> Jeremy Corbyn									
<b>09.45–10.00</b> Hallway Hangout												
	<b>10.00–12.00</b>	<b>Block 1</b> 120 Min.	<b>It starts with an ask</b> Jeremy Parkin, Cody Hoskins	<b>Field Lead Deep Dive</b> Carmen Kunkel Quesada	<b>Public Narrative</b> Samah Elous	<b>Seeing the field</b> Alex Andrews, Everin Scott, Gemma Copeland, Jan Baykara	<b>Zetkin hub Hackathon!</b>	<b>Innovating to win</b> Valery Alzaga, Charlie Macnamara	<b>Billionaires &amp; guillotines</b> Max Halven			
	<b>12.00–13.45</b>	<b>Lunch</b>										
	<b>13.45–15.00</b>	<b>Block 2</b> 75 Min.	<b>From reflection to action</b> Alicia Smedberg	<b>Print is back</b> Adam Määttä	<b>How organizing defeated the far right in Gorton &amp; Denton</b> Miles Thorpe	<b>Building political strategy</b> Francisco Contreras	<b>Zetkin hub Hackathon!</b>	<b>Canvassing changes you and your organization</b> Lukas Lademann	<b>Hammers, sickles and other purpose-built tools</b> Dion le Maître, Zee Vieira, Felix Vaager, Gemma Copeland, Laura Blum	<b>Lunch</b>		
	<b>15.00–15.45</b>	<b>Break</b>										
	<b>15.45–16.15</b>	<b>Block 3</b> 30/75 Min.	<b>Masspolitics</b> James Schneider	<b>Digital security for organizers</b> Knut Huhne	<b>Building mass movements</b> Jonathan Smucker	<b>Community organizing and the development of new leaderships</b> Paula Suárez, Adriel Achaval	<b>What is Zetkin anyway?</b> Richard Olsson	<b>Organizing to win</b> Alicia Smedberg, Aidan Cassidy, Joel Nordström, Rufus Bouverle	<b>Building resilient working class culture</b> Erik Helgeson			
	<b>16.15–16.30</b>											
	<b>16.30–17.00</b>	<b>Block 4</b> 30 Min.	<b>BREAK</b>		<b>Escaping Big Tech</b> Felix Vaager	<b>Activation pipelines</b> Bente Hinrichs						
<b>17.00–18.00</b> Hallway Hangout with Music, Fun & Games												
	<b>18.00–19.30</b>	<b>Dinner</b>										
	<b>19.30–22.00</b>	<b>Big Party</b> Music, live performance	<b>Vänster-festen</b>									
	<b>22.00–01.00</b>	<b>Club Rosa</b>										
<b>Saturday</b>												
	<b>22.00–01.00</b>	<b>Club Rosa</b>										

What can I do to bottle magic, and why the heck have I never heard of it before?  
Aron Etzler

What	Big Hall	Vilma	Vida	Luisa	Dolores	Ciara	Rosa	Sylvia	Varv	Kata	Outside Venue
08.00	Arrival & Coffee Breakfast Optional	Breakfast/Coffee							Breakfast/Coffee		
08.15–09.00											
09.00–09.45	Keynote	Keynote: Susanne Lang									
09.45–10.00	Hallway hangout										
10.00–12.00	Block 5 120 min.	Social arsonists Aidan Cassidy	Game making for radicals Max Haiven	The many vs. the few Jonathan Smucker	From data to doors Lutz Wallhorn & Alioun Diagne	Zetkin hub Hackathon!	What does a left party of the future look like? Salomé Jeremy Corbyn, Susanne Lang, Sarah Pansy	Race-Class Narrative Raquel Jesse		Deep can- vassing 101 Bruno Laute- slager, Vivian Konijnen- berg	
12.00–13.15	Lunch								Lunch		
13.15–14.30	Block 6 75 Min	How you can use the secret behind motivation to build a strong campaign Sophia Zala, Stefan Larsen	From calls to change Nathalie Söderberg	Relational Organizing theory and practice Jeremy Parkin, Cody Hoskins	Agile organizing Richard Olsson	Zetkin hub Hackathon!	After the Win Gustavo Gordillo	Successful organizing in a decay- ing world Jonas Ohlsson, Charlie Andrén		Justice for Palestine Tamam Abu-salama	
14.30–15.00	Closing ceremony										
15.00–18.30	Side- meetings Walking Tour										17.00–18.30: City walk Pål Brunn- ström, Fredrik Egefur
17.00–22.00	After Conference Bar										17.00– After Conference Bar & Food at Freden

Sunday

# ROOM NAMES

Revolutionary and radical women in socialist history.

## ROSA

**Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919),  
Poland/Germany**

Marxist theorist and co-founder of the Spartacist League and the Communist Party of Germany. She championed spontaneous mass movements and was murdered by right-wing paramilitaries in Berlin during the Spartacist uprising in 1919.

## VIDA

**Vida Tomšič (1913–1998),  
Yugoslavia/Slovenia**

Slovenian lawyer, partisan fighter and Marxist feminist who developed one of the first systematic programmes for women's emancipation. She co-founded a partisan brigade and spent decades translating feminist theory into concrete policy – voting rights, maternity leave, childcare, and the legalisation of abortion.

## CLARA

**Clara Zetkin (1857–1933),  
Germany**

Socialist feminist and founder of the international socialist women's movement. She initiated International Women's Day in 1910. A close friend of Rosa Luxemburg and a tireless anti-fascist organizer until her final years.

## DOLORES

**Dolores Ibárruri (1895–1989),  
Spain**

"La Pasionaria" – the iconic voice of the Spanish Civil War and anti-fascist resistance. A Communist Party leader of extraordinary oratorical power, her rallying cry ¡No pasarán! became a global symbol of left-wing resistance.

## LUISA

**Luisa Moreno (1907–1992),  
Guatemala/USA**

Guatemalan labour organizer in the United States who unionised Latin American factory and agricultural workers. Co-founder of El Congreso, one of the first pan-Latino civil rights organizations in North America.

## VILMA

**Vilma Espín (1930–2007),  
Cuba**

Cuban revolutionary and guerrilla fighter in the Sierra Maestra. She founded the Federation of Cuban Women and spent decades advancing women's rights, healthcare, and education within the Cuban revolution.

## SYLVIA

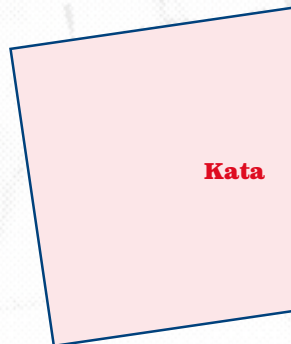
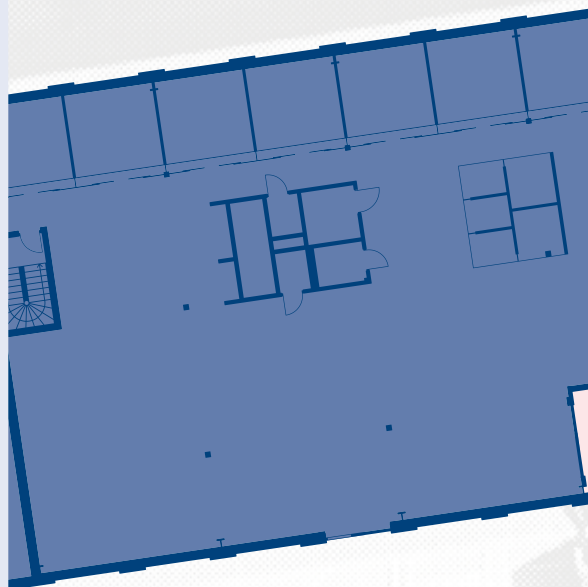
**Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960),  
United Kingdom**

Suffragette who founded the East London Federation of Suffragettes in the city's poorest neighbourhoods. She insisted that votes for women meant nothing without economic liberation, building creches, cost-price restaurants, and clinics alongside her political campaigns – uniting feminist struggle with class analysis.

## KATA

**Kata Dalström (1858–1923),  
Sweden**

Known as "Red Kata" – one of the Swedish labour movement's most beloved and feared agitators. She travelled the country speaking to mass audiences about socialism and women's rights, frequently pursued by the authorities.





**ORGANIZE!** Movement Meetup 2026

**The 1st European Conference on Organizing brings together 300+ participants from 85 organizations across 27 countries – all about organizing, all about strengthening the left, building power, and winning new struggles wherever they arise – for 3 keynotes, 35 sessions, and 1 very big party, with love and fighting spirit.**

ABF (SE)  
ACORN the Union (GB)  
Akademikerförbundet SSR (SE)  
Allt åt Alla (SE)  
Avaaz (US)  
Barcelona en Comú (ES)  
BiJ1 (NL)  
Billionaires & Guillotines (CA)  
Bloco de Esquerda (PT)  
Chalmers University of Technology (SE)  
Clara Foundation (SE)  
Common Knowledge (GB)  
Deep Canvassing Nederland (NL)  
Democratic Socialist of America NYC (US)  
Die Linke (DE)  
Dockworkers' Union of Sweden (SE)  
European Left Alliance (EU)  
Extinction Rebellion Norge (NO)  
Extinction Rebellion Sweden (SE)  
For The People Foundation (EU)  
Framtidens Vänster (SE)  
Global Labour Justice (Global)  
Greater Manchester Tenants Union (GB)  
Green Organise (GB)  
Green Party (GB)  
Hyresgästföreningen (SE)  
In To the Blue Consulting (US)  
Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (GB)  
Iratzar Fundazioa (EH)  
Jarrow Insights (GB)  
Klimatkalendern (SE)  
Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (AU)  
La France Insoumise (FR)  
Leading Change Network (US)  
Levica (SI)  
Living Rent (SCO)  
Malmö University (SE)  
Matupproret (SE)  
Mietgemeinschaft Johannstadt (DE)  
Movement Hub Germany (DE)  
Movement Research Unit (GB)  
NOAH, Friends of the Earth Denmark (DK)  
Nonviolence International (US)  
Nordic Climate Justice Coalition (Norden)  
Organizing 4 Power (Global)  
Our Time (US)  
People before Profit (IE)  
Popular Comms Institute (US)  
Power Labs (US)  
Progressive International (Global)  
PVDA-PTB (BE)  
Razem (PL)  
Reclaim the Future (SE)  
Red Data Analytics (DE)  
ReGeneration 2030 (AX)  
RiVAL: The Reimagining Value Action Lab (CA)  
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung - Bruessels office (BE)  
Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeast Europe (RS)  
Råfilm (SE)  
Rød-Grøn Ungdom (DK)  
Sinistra Italiana (IT)  
Skiftet (SE)  
Socialistische Partij (NL)  
Solidaritetshuset (SE)  
Solidarity Rising (SE)  
Solidarnost (RS)  
Sosialistisk Venstreparti (NO)  
Swedish Building Workers' Union (SE)  
Swedish Electricians' Union (SE)  
The Peace & Justice Project (GB)  
The Red-Green Alliance (DK)  
Tipping Point (GB)  
Tool.Builders (SE)  
Transport Workers' Union of Sweden (SE)  
Ung Vänster (SE)  
United Voices of the World (GB)  
Uplift UK (GB)  
Vasemmistolliitto (FI)  
ver.di (DE)  
Vänstern i Svenska Kyrkan (SE)  
Vänsterpartiet (SE)  
Your Party (GB)  
Zetkin Foundation (SE)  
Återställ Våtmarker (SE)