



# **PATHWAYS TO THE 'NEW MUNICIPALISM':** **From 'devolution' to 'decentring'**

By Frances Northrop & Nick Mahony / 2022

MUNICIPAL ENQUIRY



Photo: Thom Holmes - Unsplash

## CONTENTS

1. Summary	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
2. Introduction	<a href="#"><u>6-8</u></a>
3. The Context	<a href="#"><u>10-16</u></a>
4. The Enquiry	<a href="#"><u>18-27</u></a>
5. Enquiry Findings	<a href="#"><u>28-34</u></a>
6. Conclusion	<a href="#"><u>39</u></a>
7. Recommendations	<a href="#"><u>42</u></a>

## SUMMARY

As we release this report, the world is in the grip of a perfect storm of unprecedented and interlinked crises of economic, racial, class-based, gender and disability injustice; the culture wars and the rise of the far right; increasingly authoritarian law-making and democratic deficits; climate change; and the ongoing pandemic. It is our contention that these crises can only be solved by centering the people doing practical work at the grassroots who are creating relationships and approaches which can support us to work more collectively, build our resilience and shape policy and public spending decisions in more democratic and just directions.

Our research starts to demonstrate how a range of projects already exist that are addressing these crises, which are operating at the municipal level but largely beyond the control of local authorities. This report finds that these projects prioritise self determination and autonomy so represent a challenge to current governance orthodoxies; and that institutions either do not want to support these approaches and agendas, or simply do not know how to engage with the more directly democratic processes that these kinds of projects prioritise.

This only adds to the current sense of crisis.

Alternative approaches, some of which are highlighted in this report, are often radical, especially when they seek to collectively address needs and inequalities head-on in contextually responsive and solidaristic ways. They can also be radical as they are not predicated on devolution, but are instead looking for a more 'decentred' approach to local governance. These are marginalised but potentially powerful projects, being led by a distributed plurality of grassroots groups, rather than a single local authority or central government.

This report concludes that local space is best suited to a decentred, self-determined, vibrant culture that supports people to do politics together, through the kinds of directly democratic initiatives that are currently being cultivated in a range of places across the country. It is these kinds of municipal initiatives that need greater investment, as they show that multiple approaches already exist to addressing the structural inequalities of power and interconnected crises of our times.





## INTRODUCTION

**In November 2019 we kick-started Municipal Enquiry with the purpose of bringing together grassroots groups, campaigners, state actors and academics to consider how more equitable relationships of power and more democratic and participatory forms of local control can address structural inequalities.**

This first stage of the enquiry took the form of an open and collaborative piece of research which investigated the roles of grassroots groups and dominant institutions and how they can either support or obstruct collective forms of local action.

Photo: David Mitchell - Unsplash

The conversations Municipal Enquiry convened centred on three issues that urgently needed further consideration as part of the process of developing a 'new municipalism' in the UK.

- 1.** How do we ensure conversations and development work linked to 'new municipalism' have the broadest range of voices, aren't dominated by those with the greatest power and that divisions of labour don't reproduce existing power relationships?
- 2.** What role should those currently recognised as the professionals, experts and politicians take in this democratisation process and what can they do to help create the space and resources required to support local people, campaigners, grassroots groups and workers (including public sector employees) to take more of a lead in these developments?
- 3.** How can we most practically and collectively build alternative forms of local power, including new and more plural forms of common ownership, in order to resist current orthodoxies, address contemporary inequalities and expand the diversity of grassroots groups who participate in decision-making?

Over the last year we interviewed eleven people, using questions designed to draw out the insights and experiences of people already doing this work. Alongside these interviews, this process benefited from the contributions of the speakers invited to the 'State of Us' online [conference](#) which we organised in collaboration with Plymouth-based organisation Real Ideas, on the theme of new municipalism, economic democracy and community power in April-May 2021. In May 2021 we also co-organised a session entitled '[Building Local Solidarity and Horizontal Power](#)' as part of the Cities of Change conference with Steve Rushton and Fanny Malinen from Research for Action. Desk research was also undertaken to investigate broader contemporary developments connected to 'new municipalism'.

For this report we have analysed the results of our interviews, insights from the conference, discussions that took place at the event organised with Research for Action as well as the outcomes of our desk research to generate a set of research findings, conclusions and recommendations we hope will be valuable in supporting further collective action and public debate related to municipalism in the UK.

”

*Some of the strongest forms of solidarity are forged in situations of crisis [...] My hope in this new context is that people realise, collectively, that there is not a lack of resources, but that the problem at the moment is with how societal resources are*

*unequally allocated and used. Disconnected communities, a lack of cohesion and growing injustice in our society are all way more costly than any lack of government control over local people [...] Where there is no connection, no public accountability, no justice and no real forms of participatory democracy it is damaging and costly and there will be more health issues because isolation kills. We can't return to the status quo.*

Moussa Amine Sylla - Community Organiser



## THE CONTEXT

Over the last decade there has been a resurgence of global interest in the political and transformative potential of local, place-based and collectively driven forms of political action and more directly democratic and publicly accountable forms of governance. Often referred to as the 'new municipalism', this rise of experimentation has taken a range of forms in different contexts.



”

*I think it's important to note that when the co-op movement was in its growing years, from the late 18th and most of the 19th centuries, many local consumer co-op societies had an emancipatory and revolutionary agenda – they were helping start up other co-ops, they had reading rooms, all kinds of social and cultural groups, they were building their own supply chains, running farms. Alongside the unions they were challenging the capitalist class. It's so important to analyse why this changed and be clear about the forces that co-opted all that energy.*

Cath Muller - Radical Routes

The most radical 'new municipal' activities are driven by a combination of contextually specific need and the allied desire for a concerted response to capitalist extractivism, corporate centralisation and financialisation, environmental degradation and persistent social, economic and racialised inequalities.

Many of the groups leading the burgeoning 'new municipalist' movement around the world are explicitly anti-fascist, movement based and committed to 'feminising' local politics. They thereby level a challenge to prevailing technocratic, institutionally-led and patriarchal governance orthodoxies.

While a radical history of municipalism exists in the UK, initiatives here have not been at the vanguard of this most recent contemporary global wave of 'new municipalist' activity. Nevertheless, the approach most closely associated with the 'new municipalism' in the UK has been Community Wealth Building (CWB) - with work undertaken on 'the Preston model' being the most feted example.

Photo: sanecollectiveglasgow.org.uk



Less well profiled approaches to CWB have also been led by Labour Councillors working in the socialist tradition in other parts of the country, including in Islington. CWB is now undoubtedly a growing trend here, playing an increasingly important role in the development of UK-based alternatives to the corporatisation and hollowing out of public authorities.

The 'Flat Pack Democracy' approach, developed by a group of independent Parish Councillors in Frome, has been another notable UK-based development. This is characterised by a deliberate drive for more open forms of decision-making and by the marshalling of resources to benefit the specific needs of local areas. In the lead up to the May 2021 local elections there was a concerted campaign to encourage independent parish and town level councillor candidates to align with this approach rather than with established political parties; and this movement continues to grow.

This desire to shake up electoral democracy and to focus campaigning on alliance building, participation and realising shared agendas has also emerged in several urban areas. This is represented by the growing group of municipalist initiatives associating themselves with the wider global

municipalist surge, including the SANE (Solidarity Against Neoliberal Extremism) collective in Glasgow, Beacon in Liverpool and CAST (Citizens Assembly in South Tyneside) in Newcastle.

It is also important here not to forget the practical, embedded local work of development trusts which also set out to create community wealth through the use of a range of land holding vehicles. Organisations such as B-Inspired in Leicester, The Wharton Trust in Hartlepool or Nudge Community Builders in Plymouth are all examples of democratically and collectively organised projects that are developing land and buildings to help meet local needs.

Photo: Save Latin Village Facebook



**Since the 2019 UK general election a plethora of ideas and proposals have also emerged from a complicated tapestry of dominant state institutions, local government networks, funders, think tanks and others pushing for more localised forms of governance. However, there is still little evidence in the UK that dominant institutions are engaging with grassroots groups or social movements as part of this process of reform.**

This illustrates how dominant institutional approaches to local governance remain largely wedded to a number of highly problematic and contested assumptions about communities and non-experts. Communities are still generally assumed to be dependent for their viability on institutional leadership and professional expertise and taken to be static, ideal-type groups that

exist within geographically bounded areas. Communities are also typically assumed to have a set of shared interests that are not significantly different from those of dominant institutions and powerful groups.

Orthodox models, prescriptions, policy proposals and designs for municipal change are shot through with these kinds of assumptions. So when it comes to developing policy and involving local people in governance, the highly unequal relationships of power that currently exist between people and institutions still tend to remain largely unquestioned.

This is illustrated by the recent work on 'Community Power' recently undertaken by an alliance of Conservative MP's, convened by the 'New Social Covenant' Group in collaboration with the think-tank New Local and other organisations

such as Locality and Local Trust, who are there to represent their members and beneficiaries. This work sets out to influence and shape central government's emerging approach to devolution by proposing a set of new policy levers and strategies for the allocation of (ever decreasing) pots of public money for the benefit of local areas and people.

”

***I am a supporter of a strong state, but I do understand it's limitations and lack of responsiveness to community needs and civic participation - this lack of participative democracy needs to be addressed. But the civic participation of new municipalism needs to also address representative democracy - how are communities of race, class and gender represented in civic participation. As a Labour councillor, with a democratic mandate, these are the questions I always ask.***

Cllr Asima Shaikh - Labour Councillor

Overall then, what we see happening at the moment in this contemporary UK landscape of municipal reform is the emergence of a diverse and competing set of municipal reform approaches and agendas. This situation gives rise to a range of important questions concerning what the aims of such reform should be and about who should lead these processes of change and how.

How we respond to these questions will shape the contemporary UK field of local power and political governance for years to come.

”

*We knew the project shouldn't just be dominated by the specialists and that if it was going to work it was vitally important to get input from right across the local community [...]*

*It was about finding ways of bringing together a loose coalition of radical campaigners, established political organisations and civil society groups to then help involve other community members who weren't already engaged [...]*

*What we have been doing is a kind of community organising I suppose, since it was about engaging and involving anyone in the community who has a view - it was about amplifying their voice in ways that make it impossible for the developers and the council not to take notice.*

Will McMahon - Holloway Community Plan





## THE ENQUIRY

**For the purposes of this enquiry we wanted to assess the impact that dominant institutions and influential organisations are having and to help shift attention to how grassroots groups are responding to the current situation.**

To do this we started by identifying a set of groups that were meeting urgent collective needs and taking more democratic and participatory approaches to address inequalities of power at a local level.

We also wanted to understand some of the ways grassroots projects are innovating in terms of local governance and collective action and why they aren't generally being recognised in the mainstream.

Photo: Phil Kiel - Unsplash

It felt important to engage across a range of domains that, as yet, have not been investigated adequately in relation to 'new municipalism' in the UK, including community organising, the 'voluntary' sector, the cultural sector, the worker co-op sector, the new unions and work activism, local regeneration and housing campaigns.

The interviews served several roles:

- They allowed us to make contact, develop relationships and forge connections between people working with shared intentions
- They enabled the enquiry to generate material for analysis; and with the consent and active cooperation of the interviewees, we edited some of the interview transcripts into pieces that were published on the Municipal Enquiry website
- They helped us to publicise this project and encourage others to engage with this emerging process

”

*Whether it is cleaners, drivers, couriers or security guards - despite coming from different backgrounds - we have been able to come together in a community sense which is so important to us. [...]*

*Through the years I have learnt that if we organise and if we decide to work as a community and in solidarity we can achieve great things.*

Henry Lopez - IWGB

## The eleven people we have interviewed as part of Municipal Enquiry process were:

**1. Moussa Amine-Sylla** Community Organiser, Trainer and CO Trustee based at Selby Centre, Tottenham, London; edited version of [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website June 18 2020

*“Disconnected communities, a lack of cohesion and growing injustice in our society are all way more costly than any lack of government control over local people.”*

This interview focused on how local mutual aid groups, unions and others connected through community organising work to collectively organise and run a ‘food hub’ based at the Selby Centre in Tottenham, North London. There is interest in developing this initiative into a food co-op, to help further strengthen the forms of solidarity, local autonomy and community participation that have already emerged.

**2. Elizabeth Costello** Founder, Leigh Film Society; version of [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website August 14 2020

*“At this point in history it feels like a huge missed opportunity not to have community arts organisations as part of a national conversation about the future of arts and culture in the UK.”*

This interview discussed Leigh Film Society, which is run by volunteers as an independent and locally based organisation that shows films from across the world and engages local people in deciding what counts as culture for them. The Society runs a cinema programme, organises mutual aid groups and works with the local university to put on a celebrated annual film festival. Its ethos is geared to combating social isolation, providing opportunities for young people and strengthening community cohesion.

**3. Will McMahon** Chair, Holloway Community Plan; [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website August 19 2020

*“When communities are faced with ‘regeneration’ or ‘redevelopment’ plans in their area they’re usually on the back-foot from the start.”*

This interview focused on an ongoing community battle to secure significant concessions from developers in London. Since 2016, the Community Plan for Holloway project has involved a wide range of community groups and a large number of local people in a campaign and collective planning process geared towards achieving a greater community role in the redevelopment of the site of the former women’s prison in Holloway, North London.

**4. Barbara Lisicki** Disability Rights Activist; edited version of [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website September 23 2020

*“I am disabled by inaccessible environments and discriminatory practices”*

This interview discussed why self-determination for disabled people needs to be the baseline and why local authorities and charities are still getting it wrong by reproducing exclusionary and paternalistic approaches. The call is made for better support for disabled people and the vital ongoing role of organising, campaigning and direct action is also stressed with the aim of centring the collective voice of disabled people.



Photo: selbytrust.co.uk

”

*Disabled people are one of the key groups of people that have been shielding, so a big impact on disabled people is just being stuck indoors [...] Public provision has to be shaped by what disabled people want and need [...]*

*I think in an ideal world councils should have structures that involve and include disabled people.*

Barbara Lisicki - Disability Rights Activist

”

*Study circles, consciousness raising, popular education - all these activities are absolutely inherent to the coop movement [...] The study circle is the bit that builds relationships and trust, which you need a lot of when you're all struggling together.*

Cath Muller - Radical Routes



Photo: iwgb.org.uk

**5. Stephen Smith** Community Organiser with Nottinghamshire County Council; edited version of [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website 26 November 2020

*“This issue of financial sustainability and resourcing is the elephant in the room when we’re talking about Community Organising at the moment.”*

This interview reflected on what it was like being employed by Nottinghamshire County Council to work as a Community Organiser and on why it is only after working in the most marginalised neighbourhoods to help people meet their immediate needs that it then also becomes possible to collectively address bigger issues through networking at scale.

**6. Sasha Josette** Former staff member of the Labour Party’s Community Organising Unit

*“The Community Organising Unit team became the most diverse team in the whole Labour Party, in terms of gender and race. The diversity of our team matters because it meant that we collaborated with communities on campaigns in ways that really connected to the communities we were working with. This meant Labour campaigns started to be created not just by members of staff in the Party but by people in communities too.”*

This interview reflects on how radically different and directly democratic the Labour Party’s Community Organising Unit was compared to the mainstream of the Labour Party, during the period of 2017-9.

**7. Cath Muller** Radical Routes housing cooperative and workers coop / board member of Coops UK; edited version of [interview published](#) on Municipal Enquiry website Jan 12 2021

*“I see co-ops as being a tool – a means to the end of realising a world based on cooperation and mutual aid, where people’s creativity and the environment are valued and not exploited.”*

This interview focused on the history and politics of the co-op movement in Britain and the current lack of support, from the more commercially minded co-op mainstream and for more radical forms of cooperative organisation, such as workers’ co-ops.

**8. Henry Lopez** General Secretary, Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB)

*“Participation means members participating in democratic decision making, working to lead our union and organising in their workplaces”*

This interview discussed how, through organising, struggling and participating collectively, as part of a democratically run union, it is possible to build solidarity, community and alternative forms of power.

**9. Cllr Asima Shaikh** Labour Councillor, London Borough of Islington

*“Local government needs to re-discover and strengthen its community development and engagement functions so that local community participation infrastructures are supported.”*

This interview reflected on how local authorities can use their powers to champion and support their most marginalised constituents by acting as stewards of a place and using land and buildings to provide opportunities for self determination and autonomy, and to help meet local need for homes, workspace and affordable goods and services.

**10. Dorothy Francis** Co-Director of Co-operative and Social Enterprise Development Agency (CASE)

*“Personally I engage in co-operatives because it’s about ownership and control. Those two words are essential to me. They are very important because as a woman of colour I do not tend to have ownership and control in this white, male world that I live in.”*

This interview focused on the role that autonomy and self determination play, especially when it comes to negotiating how you use your labour power. The interview also reflected on why trust is an essential ingredient to the process of cooperating with others and building a democratic economy and society.

**11. Mona Bani** Managing Director, Revoke

*“We’ve always felt that there’s a strong connection between frontline work and more strategic kinds of policy development and this work is also aided by us having a media channels - we want to speak about the things that we’re witnessing.”*

This interview addressed how gaps in state provision can brutalise people, including those employed within the system. It reflected on how Revoke was established with the aim of addressing the gap in practical empathic support for unaccompanied minors who arrive in the UK with no-one to champion or guide them as they negotiate the immigration system.



Photo: John Cameron - Unsplash



Photo: Leigh Film Society

## Pathway One

**Our research highlights that a range of alternatives already exist for radical forms of municipal change, with this report shining a light on just some of the wealth and diversity of these marginalised projects, which typically exist beyond the bounds of the dominant institutions.**

These alternatives typically share a commitment to meeting contextually specific needs and using as directly democratic and collaborative approaches as possible to address structural inequalities in relations of power.

The forms of community represented by these alternatives are diverse and emerge from dynamics of collective action at the grassroots. Since they are responding to many different needs and working in disparate contexts these municipal projects can be viewed as part of a radical movement for change, despite initially appearing to be disconnected.

## ENQUIRY FINDINGS

### Headline Finding

The 'new municipalism' is at a vitally important crossroads in the UK. This crossroads is characterised by the simultaneous existence of two very different pathways: a decentred pathway which involves following a plurality of radical municipal alternatives, some of which are represented in this report; and a devolved pathway - represented by the emerging 'community power' agenda - which looks to co-opt grassroots language and energy to largely perpetuate existing inequalities.



Photo: Chris Dack - Unsplash

The majority of these groups do not have a seat at the table of dominant institutions, partly because they often prioritise self determination and autonomy and therefore represent a challenge the status quo; and partly because the institutions apparently either don't want to support more radical agendas, or don't know how to engage with more directly democratic processes.

These alternative approaches are characterised as being radical here because they are working in collective, contextually responsive and solidaristic ways to address local needs and structural inequalities. Rather than being predicated on devolution, being dependent on a single local authority or singular model of change, they instead work on the basis of a 'decentred' approach to local governance, whereby projects are organised, designed and led by a plurality of distributed grassroots collectives.

”

*...the first nine years of that was completely unincorporated, informal, a very much like a movement and a kind of grassroots entity that was developed by the people that were benefiting from it. So there wasn't this idea of creating programmes*

*and initiatives that you then retrospectively need to try and put loads of effort into doing outreach for, it was created by the people that were running it and benefiting from it.*

Mona Bani - Revoke





Photo: Brixton Blog

with less', conservative identity politics and volunteerism; albeit in the guise of a shift towards devolution, community development and local government reform.

Much of the content of the 'Trusting the People' report also contradicts what we have heard from the majority of those we interviewed as part of this enquiry. For these reasons the 'community power' agenda needs to be seen as an attempt to obscure the urgent need for more direct forms of democracy, equality and justice as it seeks to co-opt grassroots energy to divert people towards a programme of continued institutional control, austerity and self-help.

## Pathway Two

***The second pathway to the 'new municipalism' is represented by the emerging 'Community Power' agenda. This is the current devolution-oriented pathway to local governance reform promoted by an alliance of Conservative MP's and supported by a range of influential organisations.***

"Community powered Conservatism is the only credible approach which promises to improve our quality of

life, strengthen our economy and unite our nation. This is a Conservative project for the next decade and builds upon our greatest asset, the people of the United Kingdom" (Trusting the People report, page 38)

By co-opting the liberatory and solidaristic connotations summoned up by the very idea of 'community power' without addressing the structural inequalities and growing democratic deficits of our time the 'Trusting the People' report looks to reinvigorate status quo agendas and entrench existing governance orthodoxies. These agendas and orthodoxies include: 'doing more

”

***Co-operative development is about supporting people and communities to grow, develop and become sustainable. It's about mentoring, coaching, building confidence and encouraging people. That is so very important because we often work with some of the most disenfranchised people; some of the most marginalised people who've been told that they are not successful and cannot be successful and are therefore labouring under a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby they cannot succeed. And so part of what we do is build confidence and encouragement so that people can thrive and flourish.***

Dorothy Francis - CASE

## Other Key Findings

- There are a multitude of grassroots groups and projects that offer a set of radical alternatives to more mainstream and institutionally supported approaches to municipal governance reform.
- These radical municipal alternatives are more directly democratic and politically ambitious, especially when it comes to responding to context specific needs and structural problems related to inequality.
- These radical municipal alternatives are often characterised by a determination to retain a level of autonomy from dominant institutions. This allows them to prioritise a positive agenda of collective self-determination and to organise in more just, non-hierarchical and collaborative ways.
- These radical municipal alternatives are currently not receiving the investment they need to realise their potential to enact forms of local and structural change.

”

*It's the power of the big arts organisations and getting a seat at the decision making table that decides what a town wants from arts and culture. Culture activists like myself know what is wrong with the current system of control and those who like to take ownership.*

*As a grassroots organisation driven by an inclusive ethos we have the freedom to experiment with projects. This gives us freedom to challenge the norm too. As a volunteer led group we have no wage bills therefore we are not beholden to anyone. If something doesn't work we can try something else.*

Elizabeth Costello - Leigh Film Society



Photo: Save South Norwood Library



Photo: Eileen Pan - Unsplash

”

*What we'd like to see result from our work is better communities. We would like to see policies and actions that assist to build communities that care, and communities that manage themselves; that build communities that are not run on centralised principles from Westminster, by people who've never even seen them, but by those who live in them and appreciate and understand what those communities stand for.*

Dorothy Francis - CASE

”

*We were able to tell stories of communities rising up and the movement emerging - it was beautiful [...] The movement comes from communities, when community organising really grows that's how we can then get to have a sustainable and thriving movement [...] With the organising around the green industrial revolution, we looked to create links with similar climate campaigns in the global south - with activists who have been on the front line of the climate crisis for decades and who in reality disproportionately bear the burden of the climate crisis.*

Sasha Josette - Community Organiser



Photo: Municipal Enquiry



## CONCLUSION

Radical alternative forms of new municipalism can provide spaces where immediate needs can be addressed in directly democratic, collectively owned and autonomous ways that can also push back against wider structural inequalities. Current UK projects of this type are actively learning from each other as well as from allied radical 'new municipalist' alternatives around the world.

This enquiry concludes that it is the plurality of radical grassroots groups, rather than the narrow blueprint preferred by existing power holders, that have the greatest potential, *precisely because these projects are already delivering on the aims of democratic engagement, collective participation and addressing inequalities.*

This is why Municipal Enquiry's headline finding is that we are currently at a vitally important crossroads: either more resources and organisations continue to be drawn into the 'community power' route (and radical alternative pathways continue to be marginalised) or greater support is generated for more democratic, pluralised, radical, decentred and equitable pathways to the new municipalism.



Photo: plan4holloway.org

”

*We believe that creating a democratic organisation is very important, we are not just here to fight for better conditions but to create leadership. So engaging members with their own struggles is important and this means providing our members with*

*the space and creating educational spaces where they can improve their skills and knowledge. It is important to make them feel part of this community by working in solidarity with each other to achieve the success that we are aiming for.*

Henry Lopez - IWGB

”

*In a world where so many people feel disenfranchised from politics, one of the most radical things you can do is just talk to someone and meet people where they are at. This is something different from top-down political education, top-down*

*movement building or what a lot of campaigning and training often entails. This is because it's about actually building things together, including campaigns and everything else that people in communities need, but it's about doing this together - that felt really powerful. [...] We focused on deindustrialised towns, coastal towns and ex-mining areas including lots of areas in what people are now calling the 'red wall', which are areas Labour now needs to win back. We also organised events in places like Motherwell and Glasgow in Scotland, as well as places in South Wales. [...] To get to the stage where we could have these kinds of conversations in community settings, local organisers did hundreds of one-to-ones with a wide range of local people, from union organisers and community activists, to business people and people in the local colleges. It was by sounding people out in this way and getting them involved in the process that we got people into the room.*

Sasha Josette - Community Organiser



Photo: case.coop

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** People and organisations working in the UK to realise the 'new municipalism' must reject the 'community power' agenda as it represents an insidious form of co-option that diverts attention and resources away from addressing the urgent crises of the present in more collective, radical and ambitious ways.
- 2.** All those currently working in the UK to realise the potential of more collective, radical and ambitious forms of 'new municipalism' need to forge stronger alliances in order to network activities more effectively; expand the reach of this work across a greater number of UK contexts; and publicly amplify their arguments for more democratic, pluralised, radical, decentred and equitable forms of practice.
- 3.** Funders and institutions urgently need to resource the plurality of UK-based, grassroots-led, justice-oriented and decentred approaches to realising the 'new municipalism'. Urgent investment is needed to help publicise and learn from existing radical approaches, as well as for further research, broadening collective discussions and to support more practice-based work.

”

*I've always felt very strongly that I need to bridge that massive gap between frontline data collection and access to the issues; and the public and policy spaces where these things get discussed.*

Mona Bani - Revoke



**Municipal Enquiry exists to undertake collaborative work that will contribute to a clearer and more widely shared understanding of what it will take to defend, support and develop more public spaces and processes for collective discussion, municipal level democratic decision making and public action for the common good.**

**Frances Northrop** is a local economic development specialist who is currently an Associate Fellow with the New Economics Foundation, part of the Save Latin Village campaign as well as a Director of Atmos Totnes. Frances has a long track-record of working on initiatives and campaigns across the UK and is a specialist on how change is created through different means – culture, policy, practice and campaigning - and experienced in all four areas.

**Nick Mahony** is a freelance social researcher specialising in participatory democracy and participatory research. Nick has worked as a teacher, researcher and project coordinator on a range of projects including with The Open University, the Centenary Commission on Adult Education, Lawrence & Wishart, Selby Centre, Arts Council Wales, UCL Institute of Education and Birkbeck. Nick is also the Development Coordinator of the Raymond Williams Foundation and co-organiser of the Movement for Cultural Democracy. For further information and access to full interviews, please visit our website

[www.municipal-enquiry.org](http://www.municipal-enquiry.org)