

Ansuz Update . . .

October 2020



Well Autumn is most definitely upon us; the days are getting shorter and there is a definite chill in the air. How are you all getting on? Wherever you are in the country and whatever restrictions you might be facing due to the pandemic, we hope that you are safe and keeping well.

One thing we have been reflecting on and discussing is the challenge we face in continuing to engage, organise and build power when there are so many limits on our ability to meet in person. How can we get in touch with those we have not yet met, make connections and hear their stories. Our curiosity around this has led us to include this in our first panel discussion for the [Organising For Power Circle](#) where we will explore the current 'State of Community Organising'. If you are an experienced community organiser, community leader or movement building, then do check out and join our professional network membership. Panel discussions are just one of the benefits to joining so do check it out through the link above.

If you don't feel you can wait for the Panel or you are not eligible for the Organising for Power Circle, then please feel free to get in touch and [start a conversation](#) about the challenges you face in engaging local people and we will tell you how we can help.



Ansuz Announcement . . .

We are planning our first taster session to kick off our Open Action Learning Sets. The session will give an overview of what to expect, the key benefits to your professional and personal development and whether this style of learning is for you.

You can sign up for the taster and find out about our Action Learning Autumn offers [here](#)



Things to read and watch and think about...

Here are Ruth's recommendations for October along with some current job vacancies that may interest you or those you know.

A really nice report from the Carnegie Trust on embedding kindness as an organisational value in North Ayrshire council. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/north-ayrshire-a-case-study-on-kindness/> who are also making some positive moves too by doing the Wellbeing Economic Alliance: <https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/Council-becomes-first-Scottish-Local-Authority-to-join-Wellbeing-Economic-Alliance.aspx>.

Some thought-provoking writing from Ellie Mae O'Hagan on her new website: <https://www.elliemaeohagan.com/blog/why-progressive-politicians-should-never-talk-about-security>

If you are interested in alternative economic models then you'll be pleased to hear that the Doughnut Economics lab has just gone live! <https://doughnuteconomics.org/news/11>. The new Community Platform is designed to turn the Doughnut from radical idea into transformative action.

The membership of Unions has shot up recently. Read all about the role and future of unions in a new book from Annie Quick (@anniequick) and Alice Martin (@AlicePMartin) - Unions:Renewed. Preorder here <https://politybooks.com/author-books/?authid=Annie%20Quick>. Also catch them on nef's Weekly Economics Podcast <https://neweconomics.org/2020/09/weekly-economics-podcast-union-renewal>

Another decent output from the Carnegie Trust, this report looking into the role of community hubs during the Covid emergency. The study draws on case studies in North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Lancaster and Scarborough <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/pooling-together-how-community-hubs-have-responded-to-the-covid-19-emergency/>

The Young Foundation is sharing a first snapshot of insights from its Covid-19 and Community Life Study <https://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/covid-19-community-life-divided-we-stand/>

Parks have played a really important role in keeping us all sane during lockdown. See this newspaper article: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2020/sep/29/joggers-and-drinkers-what-a-day-in-the-life-of-a-leeds-park-tells-us-about-modern-britain>

I spied this super-interesting piece in the Observer this morning: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/oct/04/blue-sky-thinking-is-it-time-to-stop-work-taking-over-our-lives>

September is my favourite month and I adore Autumn and Winter, but I know for some people the dark half of the year doesn't light their fire. Find out all about a positive winter mindset here: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/sep/26/dreading-a-dark-winter-lockdown-think-like-a-norwegian>.

Some time ago I read a really good book called How to Be a Stoic: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Living. <https://www.waterstones.com/book/how-to-be-a-stoic/massimo-pigliucci/9781846045073>. Stoicism has proved a pragmatic and compassionate way of living for me. I can also recommend signing up for The Daily Stoic email <https://dailystoic.com/email/> for inbox inspiration. Also check out the Daily Stoic podcast.



Jobs:

High Trees Community Development Trust is looking for a Partnerships and Development Manager <https://www.high-trees.org/news/partnerships-and-development-manager/> Closing date 21st October at 11pm.

Hastings Borough Council is looking for Heritage Development Officer (Trinity Triangle HAZ) https://ats-hastings.jgp.co.uk/vacancies/view/134977?ga_client_id=8404334e-93d7-453f-d848-9bce403e60d9 Closing date 17/11/2020 at 12:00 PM

Shared Assets are looking for a Projects Officer <https://sharedassets.org.uk/job/projects-officer-2020/> Closing date: 22 October 2020

Citizens UK are recruiting a Creative Content Officer https://www.citizensuk.org/jobs_opportunities Application deadline is Wednesday, 21 October 2020 at 10am

Shelter are looking for a Community Organiser in Aberdeen
Go to [Shelter Scotland > Jobs](#), then click 'Current vacancies' and search by Job Title for 'Community Organiser – Aberdeen'.
Closing date: 26th October 2020 at 11:30pm



And our survey said...

We asked a couple of friends about life and work in lockdown last month but a hiccup with our newsletter distribution meant that not as many of you as we hoped received September's newsletter. So that you don't miss out, here's what one friend told us...

Graham Weston

Graham is the Community Action Manager at High trees Community Development Trust, in Tulse Hill, South West London. He works with groups of local people who live on the large estates immediately surrounding the development trust building. They call these organising groups and they support them to develop their community organising practise, to organise around issues that are important to them and they deliver training in community organising. As an organisation, High Trees also delivers a broad range of services from Children, Young People and Family Services to Adult Education training to Employability Support. We also work within the organisation to support beneficiaries to consider how they may be able to move beyond service provision to organisation. Pretty much all of our work is face to face.

Q: How has your working day changed since Covid 19 lockdown?

A: As Covid-19 hit and we had to go into the initial social distancing phase, all face to face delivery at High Trees stopped and we started to work from home. Our facilities staff were put on furlough. The working day changed drastically from that point on and so it was a case of trying to adapt a space at home to be able to work and try to maintain connections and relationships to keep moving things forward. We had to find ways to continue to support people whilst not being physically in the locality. This was one of the key challenges as the central tools an organiser needs to function has seen a drastic shift and a shift that is possibly going to remain for months to come.

Q: How has the work of your organisation changed since Covid 19 lockdown?

A: So instead of continuing the face to face door knocking, we shifted our emphasis to listening to the beneficiaries who have accessed services at High Trees over the previous financial year, around 800 people. We started by calling them and conducting a listening campaign to establish what issues

people are facing, what things had come up, what support people were able to access and where gaps remained. We also listen to local partners, the councillors, schools and other organisations that were responding, like community groups, to establish they were doing in response and how we might be able to work collaboratively and collectively to help support and address some of those issues. Through those conversations, we ended up identifying that there was a need for a wellbeing service which would provide a regular check in and guidance to people to help them access essential information required to overcome the challenges. What was really highlighted were issues around digital exclusion and isolation, which were around before but now took the spotlight due to Covid-19 and lockdown. We worked with a partnership of local organisations and launched a Crowdfunder which raised over £18000 to purchase and distribute digital equipment to people most in need and came up with a referral process and all of the resources required for local organisations to refer into the services. We've come up with sophisticated means of enabling people to access a myriad of support. Our learning from this is that digital exclusion is a human rights issue that impacts the most vulnerable people in society.

Q: What transformation do you want to bring about as a result of all this?

A: Through this project and through connecting with local partners, it's clear that in the past, a significant amount of energy and effort has gone into looking into Community Wi-Fi solutions but they haven't worked. It seems firstly this is because of the limitations of the technology at the time these Wi-Fi solutions were implemented and secondly, the lack of community expertise in terms of organising and rooting that project so that it's owned by local people from the start.

I believe that we have now got all of the conditions in place for Community Wi-Fi to happen. So, my vision would be to create a blueprint for Community Owned Wi-Fi. I think that one of the key arguments for enabling access to the Internet across the country for people that can't afford it is that, without it there isn't true democracy. Political discourse and information are lacking for those that do not have the privilege to access the online world and community and I don't think that is something that can be underestimated since there's a myriad of reasons why access the Internet is a fundamental essential of society today. There is evidence that shows that there has been a limit to the proliferation of broadband across the world where poor folks are still marginalised and excluded. Lockdown really put the spotlight on that isolation, that lack of access to the web. So, the transformation would be to create free-

to- access community owned wifi to overcome some of the democratic isolation as well as the social isolation that people have experienced.

Q: How are you keeping motivated and optimistic?

A: Being able to connect with people like Helen and others has helped significantly in terms of motivation and in terms of being able to take a look at what is happening outside of Tulsa Hill. I think I have been fortunate enough to have an employer who has managed to keep me employed and in work during the pandemic. Having tasks and responsibilities has given me structure, routine and purpose. I have been concerns for folks who have found themselves in the situation of having lost their jobs and not having the ability to go and seek new employment. Also knowing that there are bigger issues out there has helped to keep some of my own challenges in perspective.

Q: Tell us one thing that you've learned about yourself during lockdown

A: This is a really deep questions - I am reminded of my own resilience. Also, I think I have reminded myself or at least I have learnt in a new way that work isn't everything and that how home life and caring for those around you is so important.



And finally...

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