



## Welcome back to the Anszuz Action Newsletter.

We've taken a break while we've been busy with project work. Our latest newsletter is a bumper issue in two parts; part one will review some of our recent work, and introduce a couple of exciting new services. Part two has a special feature from Natasha Adams, Co-Director of [Organising for Change & movement strategist](#), followed by our round up of things of interest to watch, listen to and read.



## Part One

### What we've been up to:

Since our last newsletter we have been working on various projects, here are just two of them:

Firstly we were commissioned, in collaboration with Let's CO-organise, by Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to research their approaches to community engagement and make recommendations to enable more sustainable and effective relationship building with local people in fishing communities. Using a community organising approach, we interviewed officers and staff from both organisations and other agencies as well as local people from the fishing industries in two coastal areas. The project led to some very useful insights and learning for Natural England and the MMO, and a commitment to implement some of our recommendations, work which is ongoing.

We've also been working with Part W CIC <https://www.part-w.com>, @partwcollective on I and T, a volunteer partnership of super-inspiring women who work across the built environment sector to call time on gender inequality in all its forms in our built environment. They push for intersectional thinking and take actions to support women and girls from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, across generations and with different experiences. We facilitated three high energy Zoom workshops to help the group redefine and reaffirm their mission and objectives and develop a 12 month action plan.

In both cases, we love this kind of work - if we can help you with anything similar [get in touch](#).



## Services update

### The Organising for Power Circle membership

This is our membership offer which has been running for almost a year now. It is a professional development network for community organisers, community leaders and movement builders with at least 2 years of relevant practice under their belts. It offers a low-cost high-value way to stretch, develop and improve your practice, to connect and learn with like-minded activists, to develop strategic networks and initiatives around common issues and get guidance and support from advanced practitioners. Here's what one of our current members has to say about it:

*"I really value my membership of the Organising for Power Circle. Helen and Ruth are a great source of advice and encouragement, particularly at times when it can be difficult to see the value of my organising efforts. They support but also challenge, helping me to see different perspectives and consider different approaches. Their experience and insight has been incredibly important in helping to guide the expansion of our community organising efforts, and I look forward to continuing with my membership."*

If you're interested in joining our membership, please [get in touch](#).



### **!NEW! Velocity sessions**

Are you looking for both personal and business support to help with a specific challenge ie getting to grips with a new job or remit, leading a tricky change project, or trying to get the best out of a partnership or team?

Check out our new 'Velocity' support session - a half day laser-focus on your business challenge, to help you drill down to the nitty gritty, gain perspective, sharpen your focus, ignite inspiration, boost your self-belief and mostly importantly know your next action steps.

You get our undivided attention for 3.5 hours, as we bring both our personal coaching skills and our experience of organisational change and community engagement to help you move forward with confidence. [Find out more](#)



## Part Two

### Guest feature

Drawing on reflections and questions from members of the Organising for Power Circle, we asked

Natasha Adams, Co-Director of [Organising for Change](#) & [movement strategist](#), for her thoughts on How can we replicate and sustain early lockdown organising. Here are her thoughts and reflections.



Social change makers, and many others across the UK, were hugely inspired by the spontaneous organising of local mutual aid groups as the pandemic began. 16 months on, much of that organising has fallen away, with a few groups of volunteers hanging on to support a handful of those in greatest need.

Organisers are asking what made people come together so strongly, why didn't it last, and how can we replicate that early enthusiasm? This short piece attempts to propose some answers to these questions.

### **Urgency and widespread impact**

History has shown us that when faced with a great threat, people come together. Urgent, difficult times with widespread impact across society encourage people to come together across differences and construct a larger idea of 'us' and 'we' in the face of an external threat. This happens when communities flood, in war time, and most recently in the global pandemic.

Motivated by concern for themselves and communities, inspired by the [Covid Mutual Aid](#) website and early news coverage, people came together to organise local whatsapp groups. They flyer'd their communities, connected with other groups, organised volunteer teams to get shopping and medicines to people isolating or in financial trouble, and started to fundraise for this. Many people suddenly furloughed, poured their free time into this.

### **Lack of a relational organising approach**

Organising is by definition relational - moving at the speed of trust built on foundations of solid interpersonal relationships. The model of 'share a shout out for help' then 'dispatch a volunteer to run the errand' did sometimes build relationships within volunteer teams, but didn't help build relationships with and across communities.

There were few attempts to build leadership in a coordinated way. Instead the people with most agency in the current system tended to step in and take control, causing problems of a lack of diversity or understanding of communities needs, and drawing 'white saviour' type criticism.

I would argue most of what happened under the banner of 'mutual aid' wasn't really organising - instead it was charitably oriented volunteering that didn't have relationships, trust, or power building at its heart. Of course I don't have an objective birds eye view of everything that has happened, and if in some places genuine organising has flourished, wonderful! But I think this isn't the case on the whole.

### **How much is actually replicable?**

If that early energy and enthusiasm could be channelled into genuinely relational organising, what a

powerful movement we could build! Is that possible?

The time people suddenly gained through furlough and lockdown probably can't be replicated. Obviously we also wouldn't want to replicate the onset of a global pandemic, or any other big disaster. But we could be ready to respond to fresh challenges as opportunities to organise. And we could explore ways to grow a bigger sense of a collective 'we' in more of day to day challenges, emphasising their widespread impact.

To do this, we need to train organisers, grow knowledge of organising practice, process and structure, and get funders behind this.



We would like to thank Natasha for this thought-provoking piece and would invite you to get in touch to share your own thoughts on this. These are the kinds of juicy questions that come up in our conversations in the Organising for Power Circle monthly meet ups, so do [get in touch](#) if you need a space to share more in depth and strategic organising issues.



## Looking for some inspiration and learning?

### Listen

**Brené Brown** interviews **Sonya Renee Taylor** on Unlocking Us on "**The Body is Not an Apology**", an inspiring podcast where Sonya explains her concept of Radical Self Love and how this is crucial in the fight against social injustice.

<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-with-sonya-renee-taylor-on-the-body-is-not-an-apology/>

**George the Poet's** podcast, '**Have you heard George's** podcast', from the beginning. George's skillful spoken word podcast sheds light on his upbringing and his community's experience of growing up on an estate in North London. It spells out the challenges of overcoming social injustice and celebrates the history and contribution of black people in society, particularly in music.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/p07915kd>

**Project Love** podcast **Episode 137 "What it means to be Human with Dr Soph"**: **Dr Sophie Mort** explains how her own experience of mental health led her to becoming a Clinical Psychologist. She talks about her book which she describes as the guide she wished she had had when she was navigating her path through life.

<https://loveprojectlove.com/new-blog-1/what-it-means-to-be-human-with-dr-soph>

**CLES's** community wealth building model continues to get adopted by councils in England and Wales and there's a new **CEO Sarah Longlands** at the helm, as **Neil McInroy** leaves for pastures new. There's an

interesting 'fireside chat' between outgoing and incoming CEOs here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSaYBtSij1M>.

## Read

### **“How To Be An Adult— Kegan’s Theory of Adult Development” by Natali Morad**

An excellent 3-part series of articles on Adult Developmental Psychology that enables us to consider other factors to consider when working alongside and communicating with adults.

<https://medium.com/@NataliMorad/how-to-be-an-adult-kegans-theory-of-adult-development-d63f4311b553>

### **Dean Spade (2020), “Mutual Aid – Building Solidarity During this Crisis (and the Next)” Verso Books.**

“This book is about mutual aid: why it is so important, what it looks like, and how to do it. It provides a grassroots theory of mutual aid, describes how mutual aid is a crucial part of powerful movements for social justice, and offers concrete tools for organizing, such as how to work in groups, how to foster a collective decision-making process, how to prevent and address conflict, and how to deal with burnout.”

**“Paint Your Town Red: how Preston took back control and your town can too” by Matthew Brown and Rhian E Jones** (2021, Repeater Books), re: Community Wealth Building, gives an account of how it has worked in Preston and shows how you can also transform local economies from the ground up.

## Courses

<http://www.theinstituteofnarrativetherapy.com/> for anyone interested in the role of narrative therapy and systems thinking in their work with individuals, groups and communities.

<https://www.the-sse.org/our-courses/> the School for Social Entrepreneurs offer a range of training opportunities for people who tackle social and environmental issues.



# See you next month!

