

COMM-
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KIRK-
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A TOOLKIT FOR MAKING
THINGS HAPPEN

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COMMONING KIRKLEES

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In 2020 we organised a research exhibition at Temporary Contemporary Gallery of Queensgate Market, Huddersfield with a selection of works from around the world. Each case study showed the power of active citizenship, local environmental actions, and socially embedded learning-teaching. But perhaps more importantly, the exhibition highlighted changes these cases made in their cities. All projects had one thing in common - practicing and shaping the Urban Commons and Commoning Practices, as the name of the exhibition goes. Our goal was to make visible some refreshing initiatives by everyday people who, despite of many challenges and struggles, have come together to work, create, or reclaim things that matter to their community - through the process of commoning.

What is the commons and commoning practices, then? Well, we will start with some examples closer to home. A group of active citizens at Todmorden have been reviving the town's local business, education, and community by the simple act of growing vegetables. At Liverpool, residents formed the Granby Residents Association to revive their neighbourhood by painting derelict properties, rewilding, gardening and setting up weekend markets in their shared spaces and streets. At Leeds to take back power from greedy landlords, activists set up cooperative housings such as Cornerstone Cooperative Housing where people share living spaces, responsibilities, and collective ownership of their housing. These are some of the many examples of collective action, mutual help and solidarity that exist all over the UK. The commons are alternative pro-social systems around shared resources created and managed by self-organised communities.

David Bollier defines commoning as the process of jointly creating and managing things that matter to us for a shared vision/ambition (2022) with minimal to no support from the market or state. It is an ever-evolving social phenomenon, innovated by the everyday life practices of people who manage them. The commons do not just exist but are made by joint participatory efforts. One commons is never the same as the other and this includes the potential commons and commoners we see in Kirklees.

Following the exhibition in 2020, introductions and conversations with local active citizens led us to explore urban commoning practices with communities in Huddersfield, UK. It was inspiring to see that there was already a large number of locally rooted experiences present and evolving across Kirklees. Some are based on making and fixing spaces such as the Huddersfield Repair café or The Making Space; some exploring visual culture at Temporary Contemporary; others are building communities at Highfields community orchard; some focus on environmentalism such as Culture Declares Emergency Kirklees and others encourage regional democracy at SameSkies Think Tank; some at Third Sector Leaders Kirklees work to support and empower growing citizen groups while others provide guidance to work with authorities via Natural Kirklees. There is plenty of impulse,

resilience, collective spirit, and shared creativity.

We have collaborated with active residents and grassroots groups to explore what commoning looks like in the context of Kirklees¹. More specifically by working as part of a citizen-led group to bring back an ex-allotment land into communal use, we experienced the complexities and challenges behind grassroots initiatives as we explored how ethos of commoning unfolds here.

As a takeaway from our previous experiences and following our ongoing research interest in commoning practices, it was important for us to form ways to support these collaborative actions which could ultimately lead to the making of potential commons. Especially in the wake of a global pandemic and the increasing climate and ecological crisis, we acknowledge working together as a community to be a vital act that we as citizens, activists and researchers can do to imagine, cooperate, and grow our skills to cope with the transformations of the future. Our responses to the climate emergency can be demonstrated and experienced through simple and effective skill sharing and positive group dynamics.

Commoning Kirklees is our attempt to respond to the need to share and support each other in rebuilding and reimagining the systems and institutions which govern our lives. It hopes to, in some way, provide a call to action for new and future local groups to work together and stand in their positions with confidence and ambition. Given the scope of the project, the booklet builds on exploration of commoning practices by the groups in Kirklees which we have further supported by also drawing from existing research which we have credited in the relevant sections. While making it we have met, discussed, and debated with some inspiring people living in the UK and working to make their communities better. They not only inspired us thoroughly but also set examples to show what a group of active citizens can do when they come together for the common ground.

Tabassum Ahmed & Ioanni Delsante, 2022

¹ Kirklees is the local government district of West Yorkshire, regulated by Kirklees Council with the status of a metropolitan borough. It includes towns Huddersfield, Batley, Birstall, Cleckheaton, Denby Dale, Dewsbury, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Kirkburton, Marsden, Meltham, Mirfield and Slaithwaite.

HI! WELCOME...

Thanks for picking up a copy of Commoning Kirklees. This booklet is a workbook and is designed to support new and current local groups in the region of Kirklees with guidance, resources, and tools. These are people such as yourselves who are interested to bring changes in their surroundings through community-led practical projects. Even if you don't live in Kirklees, chances are you will find some similarities with your local. Before we go into more details about the workbook, **here's why we made it.**

Have you noticed a rise in the number of citizen groups and community projects in the recent times? All over the UK, including Kirklees, thousands of people are gathering and getting involved in actions to shape their immediate neighbourhoods, villages, towns, or cities. These may be small projects or local creative initiatives such as running local events, taking care of a green space, short-term or gradual projects, temporary arts exhibitions or even creating skill share classes. Each experience is brave, creative, and shared. They may be small actions but are powerful ways to start bigger changes.

What remains common among all of them is a group of people coming together with a shared vision, a resource they want to produce/protect/generate/reclaim and a strategy of working together. This spirit of working together to build a community, improve people's experiences and address needs in such challenging times deserves immense respect, appreciation, and support.

As researchers working with communities, we have been fascinated with active local groups who drive changes in their environment through collaborations. At the same time, we acknowledge that it is not easy to start, walk these steps and to deliver such inspiring acts of change. While making this workbook, we have deeply engaged with number of active groups, creatives, dreamers-and-doers who are working in Kirklees. They especially include those who focus on reusing, improving, or co-managing a physical spaces in their surrounding areas for the benefit of their community.

Through several conversations with communities and local groups, we were able to identify the particular stages they go through to sustain their work and to overcome challenges. More importantly, we also noted an increasing need for clarity, practical advice, and accessible support tools among groups. This was especially true for new groups, and we will expand on this later through our main case study "Fartown Forest Garden Community. In fact, the core gaps we have addressed in this booklet are informed by the experiences and needs of this emerging group in Kirklees. As one of our collaborators say, "if you're not sure, ask. And if you want advice, ask. Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody needs advice at some point". So here we are with our two cents.

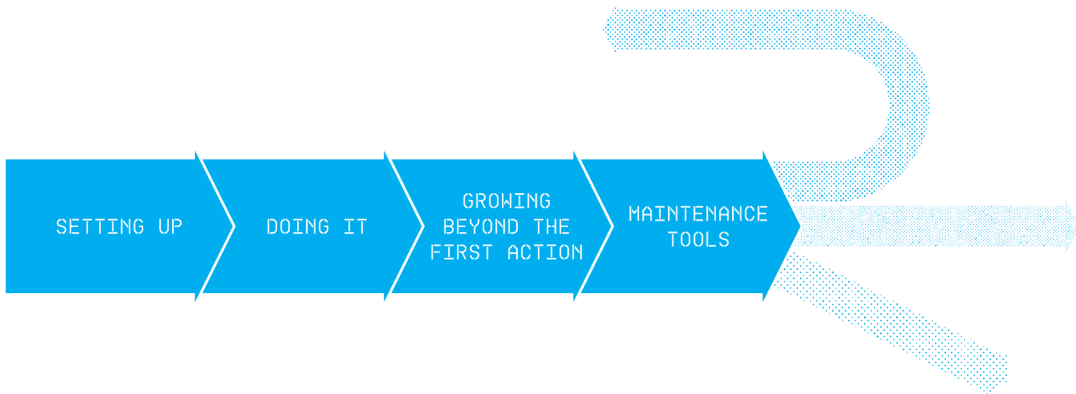
In this booklet, we have collected the behind-the-scenes picture of how these groups start and work, which tools they use and stories of incredible resilience from a community level. With this we aim to trigger conversations between yourselves as a group and offer support by taking you through some practical steps that may help you organise your group and crack on with the doing.

You may ask is this really for me? We say why not.

No matter at what stage you may be in – your group is always growing and changing. We are convinced you will gain some ideas to follow to support you aim. New starters will find encouragement, but also a step closer to see what others are doing. For those who are already in similar experiences, this booklet may provide some space to rethink and reflect to make your practice even stronger. If you are an active citizens, curious individuals, activists, local community groups, grassroots organisation, third sector facilitators, researchers, educators, learners, or formal authorities – this booklet is for you.

So, what's really in the booklet? – you may ask.

After several workshops, interviews, and fieldwork, it is safe to say voices and feedback from variety of local groups has heavily informed the content of this toolkit (You can find more photos and details about how we approached to this project on page 63). Our participants - who we will refer to us our collaborators from this point - led us to zoom into four particular stages that a local group go through. They are - **1. Setting up, 2. Doing it, 3. Growing beyond the first action and 4. Putting in place maintenance tools.** These phases to us show interconnected foundation blocks of community driven collaborative practices. We have designed this booklet highlighting the experiences of each phase.



Here's how you can use this booklet

In pages to follow, we will try to familiarise our readers with these four stages. Under each stage we have provided some exercises which are primarily based on existing methods to ensure participation, teamwork, local collaborations and group management. We have also flagged relevant resources, highlighted inspiring local stories, and left space for your own notes. Below is a summary of what you will find under each section.

EXERCISE : At each stage we will take you through a series of reflective exercises which we have designed with close consultation with our collaborators and friends working in multiple communities, informal groups, and grassroots movements. These simple exercises are designed to help you think with focus, align your thoughts, and provide encouragement to act.

RESOURCE : In case you want to explore more, we have highlighted some resources that will take you beyond this booklet and which we hope will help you strengthen your understanding, objectives and figure out the next steps.

STORY : Following resources we have also narrated some stories of the collaborative cosmos of these visionaries. These are people who have come together as strangers but are working as a team to create, produce and reimagine our society in creative and alternative ways. These will showcase internal processes, struggles faced, coping tools and mechanisms and also aha! moments at various stages of forming a group.

YOUR NOTES : We have left some space for you in case you want to write your own thoughts, gather ideas or even to draw doodles after you have read each stage.

Sounds like a lot of work? Don't worry we got you.

You are not required to read everything in one go. In fact, we recommend that you don't. Come back to each stage when you find it is relevant to your group's practice. As the booklet is informed by experiences of a specific region in the UK, it may be possible that certain exercises are not even relevant to your group's current position or location. Please feel free to jump across stages and cherry-pick those that you find will be useful for you. The process of forming a group and maintaining it is never linear. We are great supporter of keeping things slow and simple. You are on a journey that is very much your own and things take time.

As for us, the idea is to test this booklet across Kirklees and beyond. We invite you to experiment with it on the ground and contribute your lived experiences, local knowledge, share successes and failures with us. Following Margaret Mead let us, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."



Mapping workshop at Fartown Forest Garden (Source-Authors)



Great things happen when people join forces. Kudos to you for being the ones to gather and to start this move towards change. Now this “change” may be small or big, in your surroundings or your shared lives or for improving life in your community – no matter what it is, together you can do it!

We understand even if it looks simple, it is not an easy process **to be a group**. Some of you may not even know each other, coming together for very different reasons or even because someone invited you to this gathering of strangers. Finding an identity, a shared reason and a vision is vital to co-create this sharing platform on which your group will stand. Many of our collaborators have expressed how important it is to recognise the individual aspirations and align them with the group's motto or finding some shared vision within the diversity each group member brings to the table.

This stage brings you closer to the start building the blocks of who you are as a GROUP. It is also often expected from groups when they approach any organisation, funding body or even the authority a clear statement summarising their identity, intentions and aims in the form of a mission statement or manifesto. Taking cue from practical guidance on having collective dialogue to clearly discuss what the project may look like in *A Community as a Garden toolkit (2020)* we have designed four reflective exercises. As you discuss and answer them as a group, the exercise will present you with some clarity about your WHY, WHO, HOW and WHAT.

EXERCISE 1: WHY IS THE GROUP BEING FORMED?

#PEOPLE

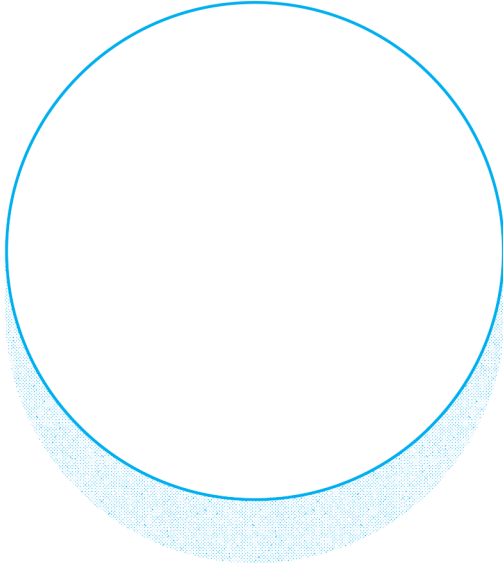
Through this exercise you will try to discover and bring together the common **reasons** for the group to come together. It is possible that you may already have an understanding of the purpose of your group. We hope this reflective exercise will help to bring together individual stories, hopes and dreams towards realizing an inclusive mission of the group.

- **TIME ESTIMATED** : 40 minutes on a weekend or after work hours.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : A black pen and some colour markers/pen.
- **DESCRIPTION** : This is a group exercise in which the members of the group can come together in a circle or sit together with tea and share with each other why you are here.

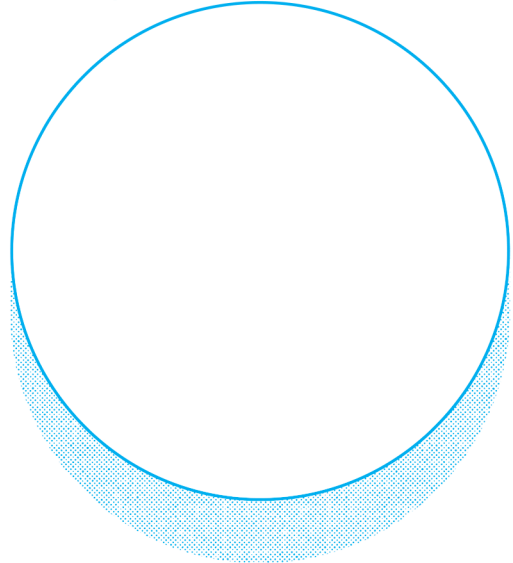
Invite each member to take a minute or two to think about why you are here. Next take turns to use the circles below to express your reasons. Your reasons may be connected to your needs or to a dream you have or because you want to do something for your community or any other reason you may have. Let's bring it all on the table. After each member has filled at least one circle take a coloured pen to highlight the common reasons. Use these to discuss and narrow down your shared aim as a group.

THROUGH THIS PROJECT I WANT TO FULFILL :

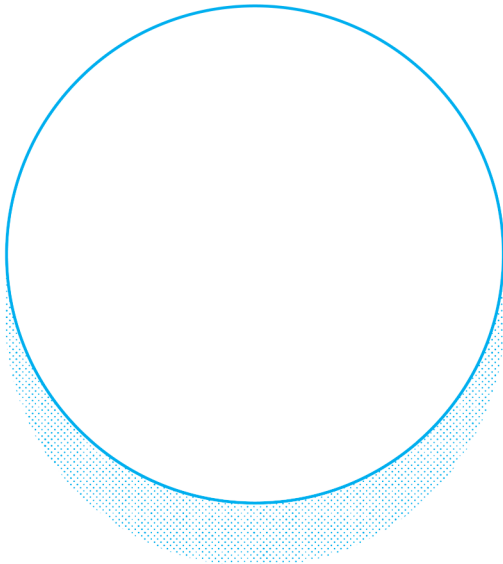
MY DREAM :



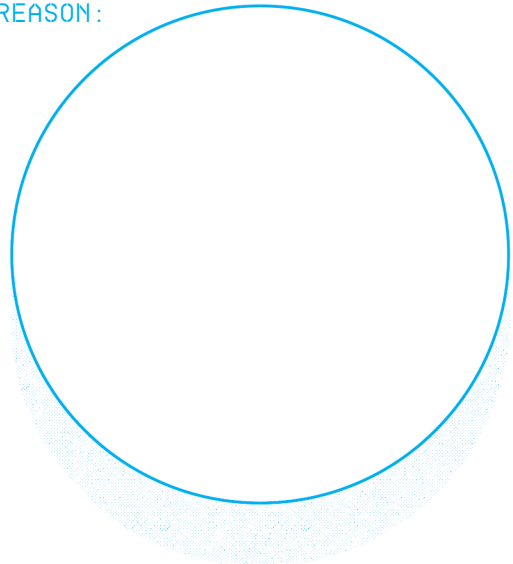
MY WANTS :



MY NEED :



ANY OTHER
REASON :



→ FURTHER ACTION

Things will keep changing as more people join your group. Decide among yourselves when is a good time to do a refresher of this exercise in the future. You can say,
We will come back to this again in the next _____weeks/months

EXERCISE 2:
WHO IS INVOLVED?

#PEOPLE

We expect this exercise to help you understand who the group is made of currently and find others **who** may want to get involved to support the group's mission. Who is part of the group now? Who do you want to involve in the future? Who are your friends? The exercise builds on the idea of stakeholder mapping which is a diagram that draws connection between the project and the people who may be interested, have knowledge to share and also be impacted by it.

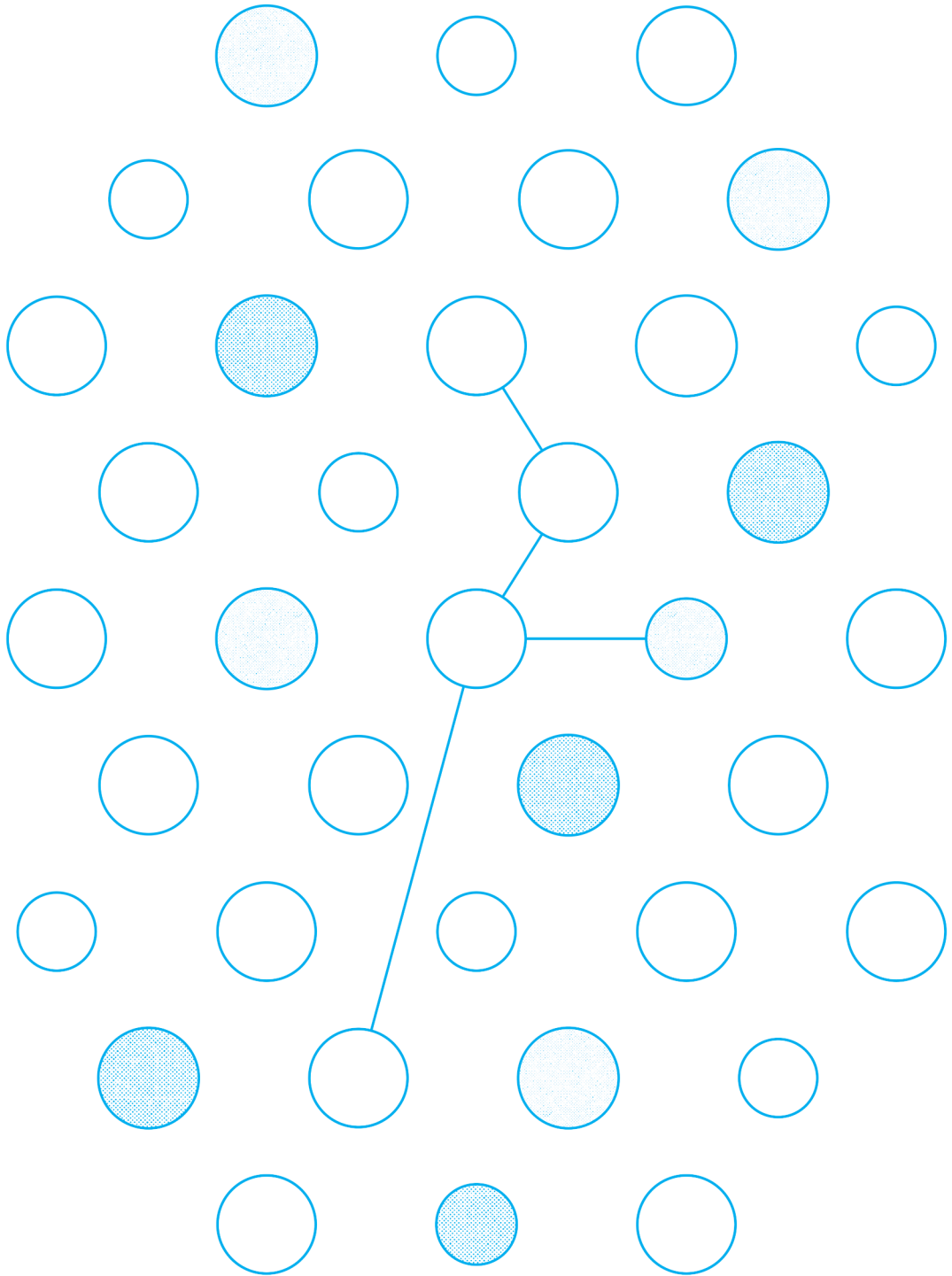
- **TIME ESTIMATED** : 45 minutes.
- **WHAT WILL YOU NEED** : A pen and some brain fuel to remember names. If you prefer, you can do the exercise on a larger piece of paper as well.
- **DESCRIPTION** : Gather in a circle as a group in a comfortable environment and place the booklet on a table where everyone can see it. The circles on the map below represent each member present in the current group. Now take turns to add yourself on the map and then add your branches of people you know who can join, help, or support you.

Here are some ideas. Use the branches to draw connections to include at least one person:

- Who may benefit from the activities of your group
- Who may have relevant resources or skills to contribute the group
- Who may have been in a similar experience before
- Who may be able to help the group for a short period of time or for a specific purpose
- Who live around the location if you have a space
- Who may have been previous users of the space you occupy

→ **FURTHER ACTION**

Decide who is going to approach or call who from the network you have drawn. Discuss whether to call or meet in person to invite them to connect to your group.



EXERCISE 3:
WHAT DO YOU WANT
TO ACHIEVE?

#RESOURCE #PRACTICES



A big part of establishing your group is to decide what is it exactly that the group will do. This exercise aims to clarify what is the project the group wants to do together to turn its mission into reality. The best scenario is if you have an end goal in mind and take small steps towards it in phases. The Grassroot Collective emphasise on setting small, specific, and realistic goals that are achievable to allow you to be more efficient and do more with less. Remember to keep it *KISS* – KEEP IT SIMPLE and STUPID.

- **TIME ESTIMATED** : 60 minutes.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : Pen or pencil. Tea and biscuits are always good to share.
- **DESCRIPTION** : Use the space below marked “you are here” to write the current stage you think your group is in. Fill in what is your ultimate goal in the circle marked “end goal”.

If you want, you can also think about the near future and not too far ahead. Where do you see yourselves in 3 months, 6 months or 1 year? We have added some circles to help you think about the next few months.

Don't worry, you can use your own timeline or just state the end goal if you have not thought so far into the future.

→ **FURTHER ACTION**

Come back to this diagram in a few months and see if you are heading in the direction you intended to do.

END GOAL:

IN 6 MONTHS, YOU WANT TO:

YOU ARE HERE:

IN 9 MONTHS, YOU WANT TO:

IN 3 MONTHS, YOU WANT TO:

EXERCISE 4:
HOW DO YOU WANT
TO DO IT?

#PRACTICE



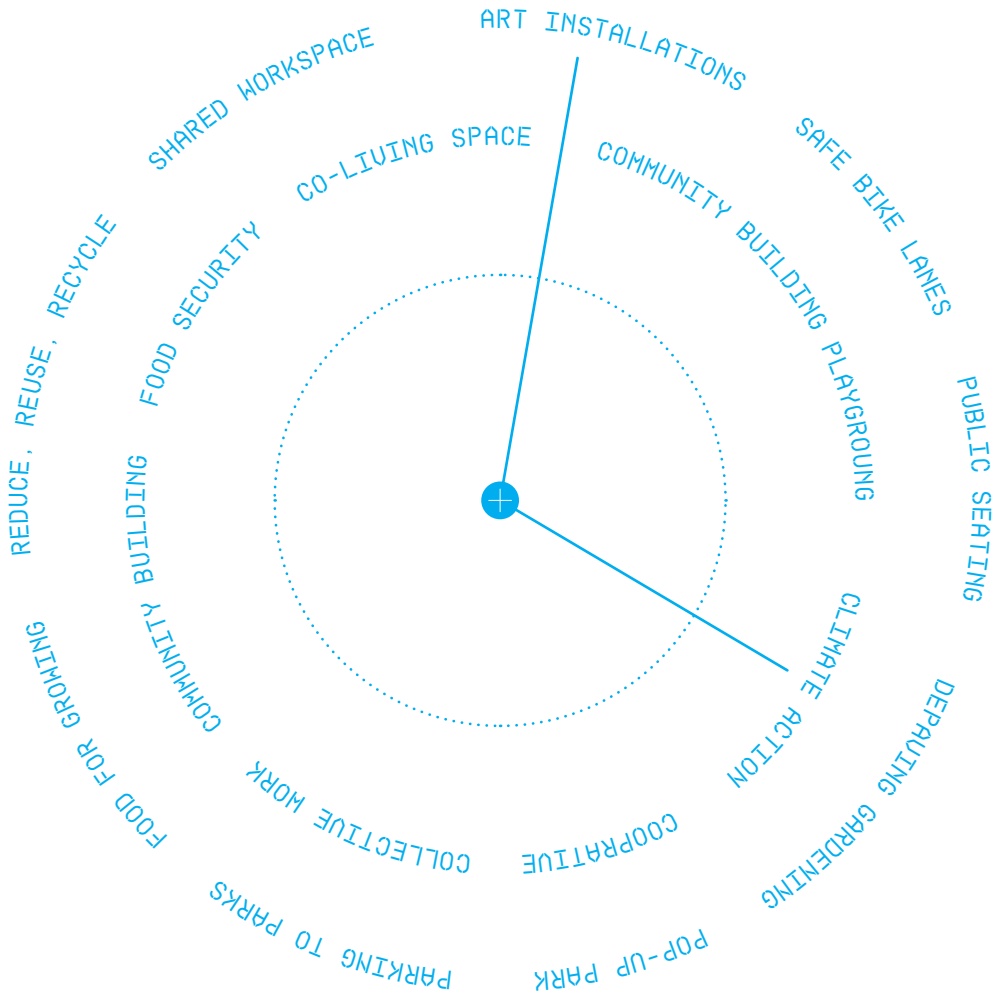
This exercise builds on the end goal or vision you produced in Exercise 3 and expands to the details of how you want to achieve this goal. As active citizens, your efforts to improve your town or city may include testing out small-scale improvements which are financially viable, scalable and low risk. We have designed this exercise by referring to small tactics outlined by Tactical Urbanism by Street Plans Collaborative. At the end of this exercise, you should have ideas about the small strategies you can use for your group's mission. Remember you can choose as many as you want.

- **TIME ESTIMATED** : The task may from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the level of detail you want to achieve.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : Pen or pencil, some tea or coffee, biscuits.
- **DESCRIPTION** : The black circle in the middle represents your group. Draw lines to connect to the tactics you may want to use to realise your mission. What are the areas you want to focus on? You can add as many lines as possible you want.

Remember nothing is set in stone at this point. The exercise is explorative and wants you to reflect on your capacities and vision towards future rather than having definitive answers. We have left some space empty for you to add your own tactic or strategy. We have connected two links as an example.

→ FURTHER ACTION

It is important to note that you are focusing on early stages of forming your group. So don't worry if you do not have all the answers yet. You can always come back to the exercise later.



YOU HAVE REACHED
THE END OF STAGE 1

As a collective group you have discussed who you are and what you want to do, with reflections on your purpose and how you want to progress.

Please use the lines below to summarise your group's **mission statement**.

WHO ARE YOU?
YOU ARE:

.....
.....

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
YOU WANT TO:

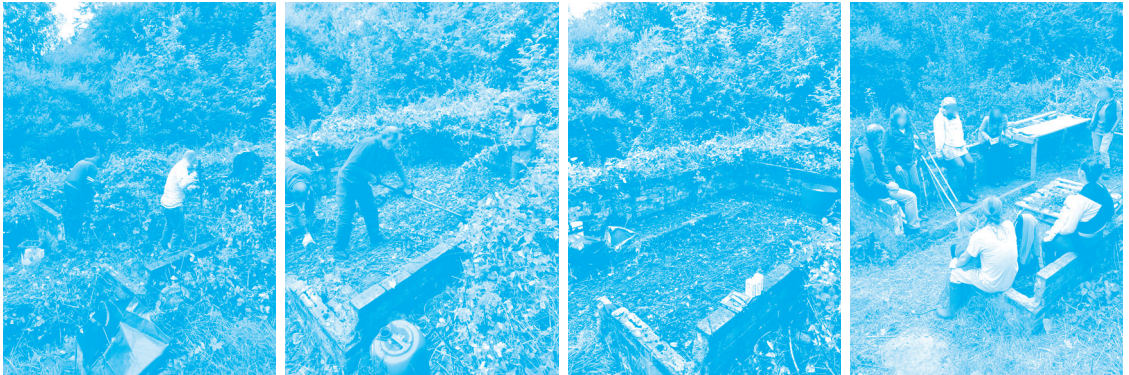
.....
.....

HOW DO YOU WANT TO DO IT?
BY:

.....
.....

WHY ARE YOU DOING IT?
BECAUSE:

.....
.....



STORY HIGHLIGHT :
FARTOWN FOREST
GARDEN COMMUNITY



Fartown Forest Garden Community (FFG) is a growing group of active individuals living in Huddersfield, UK. Since mid-2021 they have started to gather as a group to take care of an ex-allotment on a council owned land. While their interests are diverse, what binds them together is their wish to co-create a community space with where they can grow, learn, and share while being closer to the nature. With the ethos of open-to-all, sharing and collaboration, it has been maintaining accessible pathways, clearing regularly fly tipped rubbish and looking after forest's fruit trees and shrubs. When asked about their experience as a group, while most found the experimental and learning by doing strategy to be empowering, it was also evident that they do not find it easy to work together because of variety of opinions, agendas, and visions as a newly emerging group.

"Our community garden group is like an open access umbrella which is bringing various interests and groups in one space."

— M, member of Fartown Forest garden community, Huddersfield

"The group was changing all the time... not everyone was attending all meetings and it would be perfect if we had more consistency"

— L, member of Fartown Forest garden community, Huddersfield



Some advice from FFG community for new groups :

1. Start small with a simple idea.
2. Build on the skills and knowledge the group has.
3. Remember to regularly recall the values you have set.
4. Don't forget to have fun.

THE POWER OF
THE COMMONS

Historically, the word “commons” remind us of the shared natural resources such as pasturelands and forests to which local groups or communities had shared rights to access and use to make a living through pasturing and collect food, fuel, etc. (Marx 1973; Neeson 1993; Thompson 1963). It also connects us to parts of history in which many peasants were deprived from these common lands by “enclosure” – fencing of the commonly-held land. In an extensive Land Magazine article, Simon Fairlie (2009) shows us how the enclosures took place progressively in England, dispossessing many communities over time. But perhaps more interesting he also shows how they were met with various forms of citizen protest to protect their livelihoods and rights to the commons.

The commons remained forgotten for a while until a scholar named Garrett Hardin wrote ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (1968) in which he said use of natural resources held in common will inevitably lead to an ecological disaster because humans are selfish. He was proven wrong by another scholar named Elinor Ostrom and her extensive studies showed on how communities manage and share natural resources sustainably (1990). She not only showed that the free-rider problem does not exist in commons because commoners communicate and set rules. Through self-organised collaboration these communities protect and share their natural resources long term. Since then, the commons went on to be studied and practiced in various fields including its role in paving alternative ways to the challenges in our cities.

It is important to note that the commons are not just objects or resources. Each commons survives because of the way it is shaped and cared for by its people and their social, cultural, historical, and geographical background. Through communication, negotiations and agreements between each other, commoners form an internal culture, self-govern and manage their shared resources. This shared act to collectively care for, manage and co-create the commons by a group of people indicates that the commons stand on the tradition of sharing and horizontal participation. They do not just exist; they are made by the people through the social practice of *commoning*. They are dynamic social networks and alternative political positions created, defended, and reproduced by commoners through social practices (Pusey & Chatterton, 2016).

David Bollier, a scholar and an activist, wrote about the commons as *“a self-organized social system by which communities manage resources with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State for the long-term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity”*. (2011).

If you want to explore more, here are some free to access resources.

1. Elinor Ostrom’s 8 design principles of the commons
2. Urban commons cookbook by Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, Nils-Eyk Zimmermann and Nicole de Vries



YOUR NOTES



Making of a community meeting place (Source Authors)

With some foundation of the group's identity and clarity of this mission in place, we now want to start the doing. Our collaborators working in various community-led projects strongly believe in the power of doing things. There is something about just doing things together that has a way to show the next steps naturally.

So here you go! This stage all about making things happen - action, event, activity, or a mini project - that the group will do together. We understand it can feel overwhelming to organise so many things all at the same time. Our job is to make it easier by organising the basics. In this section through some to-do lists, check-in sessions and mapping activities of resources we will put your plan into action – quickly. Let's get going!

EXERCISE 5: PUTTING THE PLAN IN ACTION

#PRACTICE

This exercise has been designed with questions that will assist you to quickly imagine first action that you are aiming for and set a plan in place. We will do this by ticking off the essential things you need to do in terms of people, resource, and activity. The exercises below gave have not been invented but curated by consulting with collaborators who have undergone the process to organise multiple events of different scale and purpose. At the same time, following the map of *Community Organising Framework* by Community Organisers helped us to understand that the process starts by listening to ourselves; may have repeating steps but building power through action is vital.



- **TIME ESTIMATED** : 2 sessions of 50 minutes each with good amount of break to rest your mind.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : A pencil, some tea or coffee, some brainpower snacks (peanuts are great!).
- **DESCRIPTION** : We have come up with two checklists. Checklist A is there to cover things you need to decide - the core schedule and format of the event. Checklist B is to be followed to gather your resources and people. Follow the checklists to ask yourselves the questions and write down the answers in the space provided. These answers you write are details, decisions, and tasks of your upcoming "doing", "acting" or "making" event. We have also added some clues in brackets to help. Remember the idea is to be honest with yourself and be a team when you answer the questions. This will allow you to arrive at practical decisions.

TICK: CHECKLIST A: TO THINK & DECIDE CHECKLIST



WHAT IS THE EVENT ABOUT? WHAT ARE YOU CALLING IT?
(Think about: What are you doing on the day & a name for the event?)

.....

.....

.....



WHERE WILL IT TAKE PLACE?
(Think about: Do you have a place in mind? When is it available on the day? Do you need to pay for it? Is it easy to get to? Do you need a shelter from rain or sun?)

.....

.....

.....



WHO IS IT FOR?
(Think about: Is it open for all? Who are the target audience? Are they free on the day?)

.....

.....

.....



WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF IT?
(Think about: How will this small event/project/activity can help you long-term?)

.....

.....

.....

TICK: CHECKLIST B: TO FIND & DO CHECKLIST #RESOURCE



DO YOU NEED TO INFORM ANYONE? FOR EXAMPLE, KIRKLEES COUNCIL SAYS IT IS A REQUIREMENT FOR CITIZEN GROUPS TO SEEK THEIR PERMISSION IF YOU WANT TO IMPROVE LOCAL GREENSPACE OWNED BY THE COUNCIL.
(Think about: Do you need to take any permissions for the activity you are running?)

.....

.....



WHICH MEMBERS OF THE GROUP ARE SUPPORTING IT ON THE DAY? ASK EACH OTHER AND MAKE A LIST WITH CONFIRMED ATTENDEES WHO WILL BE PRESENT.
(Ask who is making it happen- core members, new members, volunteers, who wants to do what?)

.....

.....



WHAT ITEMS DO YOU NEED TO DO THIS? ASK YOURSELVES IF YOU NEED TO BUY THINGS OR WILL YOU BRING THEM AND SHARE?
(Think about: What are the material needed – drawing supplies, measuring tapes, gardening tools, fixing tools, cooking utensils, etc? Do you need snacks and water? Who can bring what if you don't have funds? How will you source them? Who will bring them to the location?)

.....

.....



DO YOU NEED FUNDS FOR THIS? CALCULATE THE MONEY YOU HAVE ACCESS TO AND WHERE IT NEEDS TO BE SPENT.
(Think about: Do you have any financial support? Is the core group doing a collection for this? Can you collaborate with anyone?)

.....

.....



HOW WILL YOU LET EVERYONE KNOW ABOUT THIS EVENT?
(Make a Facebook event and share in the local Facebook/online groups; use your friends and family networks. If someone in your group has access to a printer, some flyers through doors are a good start. More on making flyers or posters can be found on RESOURCE 3: Free digital tools of Stage 44)

.....

.....



DO YOU WANT TO CONTACT THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER OR RADIO OR TV TO CELEBRATE AND SPREAD THE NEWS?
(Think: Who can you access easily? Does anyone know anyone working for the local news?). More relevant information can be found on resource page of Stage 3.)

.....

.....

You are ready to get going! Be brave and just start. We all have started somewhere. Remember things will never be perfect. What is important that you test things out to learn and progress to the next step. The list above does not include all that you may need to do when you are starting your work. But we hope it allows you to review the basics and start quick without spending too much thinking and planning.

You can use the template on the next page to summarise your plans for the upcoming event...



EXERCISE 6:
HOW TO DO THINGS
TOGETHER

#PEOPLE



It is no surprise when people from variety of background come together, there is friction and disagreement. We all are unique and can have different views on the same topic. (More exercise on conflict management can be found on Exercise 10). Moreover, in the era of hybrid (online and in-person) work culture and distanced communication, checking in and managing team dynamics is more important than ever before. Building on [Tedx Speaker Chris Lovett's](#) article, we have designed the 60-min check-in session below which we hope helps to bring everyone together and on the same page. You can do this exercise as a recap or catch-up with your group before your action or as a exercise to assess your group's work after the event from Exercise 5.

- **TIME ESTIMATE** : 60 minutes for a group of 6, depends on how big your group is.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : A black pen or pencil, a moderator
- **DESCRIPTION** : Gather the group in a circle. Sitting down is great but remaining standing is also an option. Nominate one member who will act as the referee. The referee will follow the cue given below, moderate time and write summary of the answers given. Now let's work on the following together.

ASK ALL PRESENT TO
PLEASE RE-INTRODUCE
THEMSELVES.

.....
.....

TAKE SOME EXTRA TIME TO
WELCOME THE NEWCOMERS,
IF ANY, AND MAKE THEM
FEEL INCLUDED IN THE
CONVERSATION.

.....
.....
.....

USE THE MISSION STATE-
MENT FROM STAGE 1 TO
DO A RECAP OF YOUR GOAL
AND STRATEGY.

.....
.....

ASK IF EVERYONE IS ON
THE SAME PAGE. IF NO,
ASK WHAT THEY THINK
IS MISSING OR NEEDS
TO BE ADDRESSED.

.....
.....
.....

ASK IF THERE ARE ANY
GAPS OR INFORMATION
THAT NEEDS TO BE SHARED
TO GET EVERYONE ON
SAME PAGE.

.....
.....
.....

ASK HOW CAN YOU WORK
BETTER TOGETHER? IS
THERE ANY LACK OF COMMU-
NICATION, COOPERATION,
OR COORDINATION?

.....
.....
.....

1.LET'S DO A FEELINGS CHECK:

- RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU ARE HAVING FUN WORKING AS A GROUP .
- RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU FEEL PROUD OF WHAT YOU ARE DOING .
- RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU ARE UNHAPPY WITH THE GROUP .
- RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE MORE IDEAS TO SHARE .
- RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS .

→ FURTHER ACTION

Decide as a team how you will address the fact that someone is unhappy with or has concerns about the group's work. Exercise 10 gives a great method to talk about uncomfortable things.

EXERCISE 7:
EXPLORING THE
RESOURCES YOU HAVE

#RESOURCE

Now that we had a check-in with the people, let's talk about the resources you have where you are located or gather as a group. Your group's mission may be organised around or in a fixed space or area where you meet and work together regularly. It is possible that your group works online or that it moves around from place to place where you are needed. You may even be a nationwide network joining forces towards a common cause with occasional regional or local temporary hubs. Whatever the situation may be, it is a good idea to take a moment to know, recognise and assess the strengths and comforts of the space you occupy. This practice comes recommended by our collaborators at S2R who work with many communities across Kirklees by organising outdoor wellbeing sessions.

- **TIME ESTIMATED** : 40 minutes. 20 min for walking + 20 minutes for discussing what you saw.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : Three colour pens or markers, a pen or pencil, your phone if you want to take photos of what you see.
- **DESCRIPTION** : Follow the steps below.

STEP 1 : Meet at the place where you come together as a group. A garden? Streets of your neighbourhood? An unused shop? Your local community centre? A pop-up shop in the market? An abandoned house? An unused council land?

STEP 2 : Time to go on a group walk and see your space! Without planning the routes and directions go on a slow walk together. You may want to divide in smaller groups of 3 or 4.

STEP 3 : Make a note of interesting things you notice on your walk. You can write a list, use arrows or lines, and take photos to record what you find out on your walk. We have left some space below to draw or write what you observe as you walk (or as you think about).

STEP 4 : To help you further, we are including some reminders that may help you see and assess your surroundings with fresh eyes.

- Note which paths you take on your walk. How does one enter this space? Draw the common paths to enter and exit.
- Is it easy to get to for the people who you are serving or want to engage with? Mark the facilities nearby – the houses, shops, car park, grocery store, etc.

- What is special about it? Are there things that you need to take care of, fix or edit? Draw what you find unique about it (trees, a wall, doors, graffiti, people, sounds...anything that catches your attention).
- Where does your project sit in this area? Draw below where you are located. Does it cover the whole area? Or does it live in a small section?

YOUR NOTES

A large grid of blue dots for taking notes, covering the majority of the page below the 'YOUR NOTES' header.



Highfields Community orchard Source: Author

STORY HIGHLIGHT :
FRIENDS OF HIGHFIELDS
COMMUNITY ORCHARD



When a group of neighbours read on the newspaper that Kirklees Council is encouraging more community orchards in their neighbourhoods, an idea was born to have one such orchard in an unused playground of a local school. This is the story of Highfields community orchard and the local group that manages it Friends of Highfields Community Orchard.

The project started in 2008 with a desire to have a space for the neighborhood to gather and mingle, especially for young families and children. With interest and support from several people living on the same street, the group reached out to the Kirklees Council with the proposal – “we want to turn this disused ex-playground into a community orchard”. A respective department rejected the project as the land was part of development land. Frustrated and disappointed, the active group launched a petition, and 100 signatures were collected by knocking on doors and speaking to people. Eventually they presented the petition to the council, only to be declined for the same reason - development land.

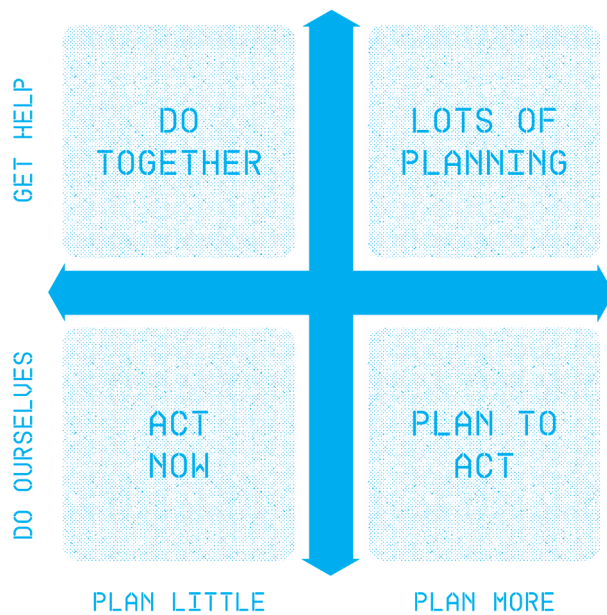
“Should we just go ahead, plant trees and see what happens?” - the group decided.

Flyers were distributed in the neighborhood, with a call to join and plant fruit trees. A generous donation of 6 apple trees followed. 30 enthusiastic neighbours with spades and shovels joined hands. Strangers met with gardening knowledge to share. And together they planted the first 6 apple trees of the orchard and put up a sign declaring the space as the Highfields Community Orchard.

“Just do something, not set up organisations. Once you have done something together, develop the organisation to enable you to do more or better or involve others to do this may need help or expertise”

— Tom Taylor, Highfields community orchard

Tom also showed us this helpful graph which they use to see when the group can do things on their own and when they need to get help, when an action can be taken immediately and when planning is required.

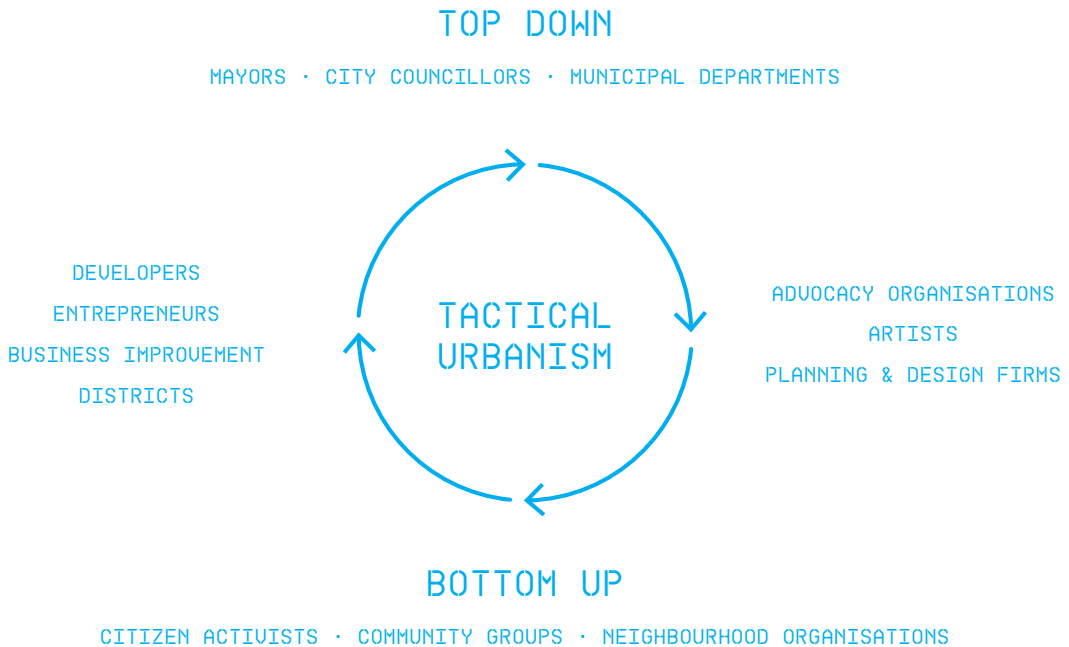


Highfields Community orchard Source: Author

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG
CHANGES - TACTICAL
URBANISM

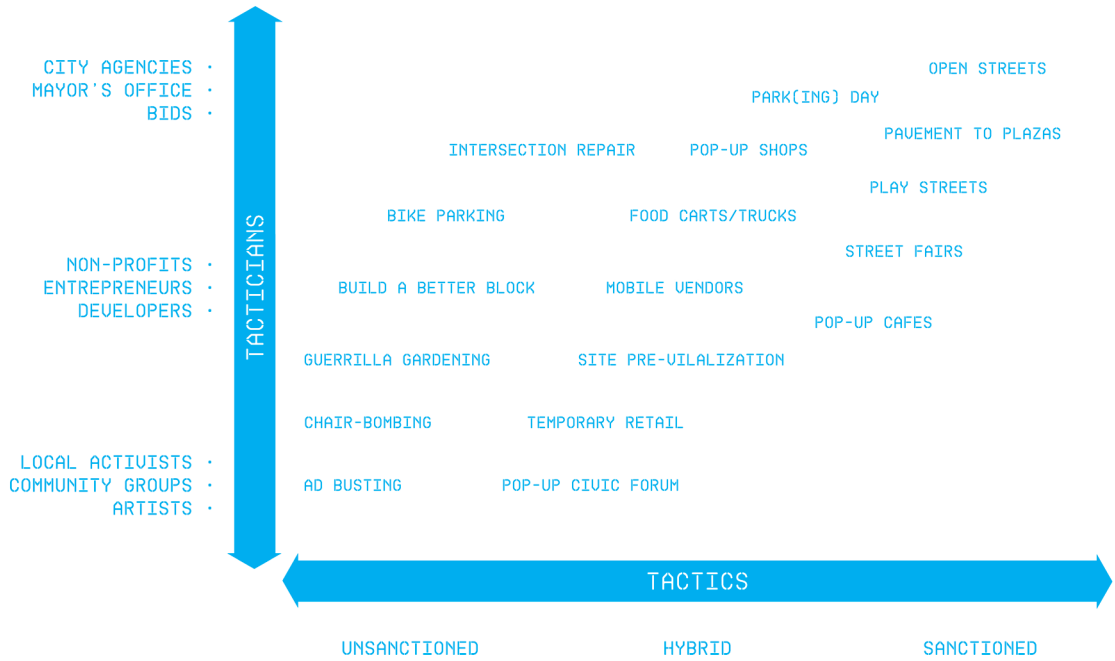
“a city and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building that uses short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies to catalyze long term change.” (Lydon, M. et al, 2014)

In the light of the economic recession, exploding urban population and reducing resources in cities, Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia founded a movement called *Tactical Urbanism* that triggers long-term changes through innovative short-term, small scale and low-cost projects. This revolution is timely for two reasons. First, with reduced resources and access to infrastructural support, big and long-term projects are becoming increasingly difficult to carry out, especially for communities and local groups. Second, there are many vacant lands, underused resources, and abandoned spaces around that can be more efficiently used. With the rapid connectivity through Internet, citizen risings and social, political, and economic challenges, more and more citizens are interested in the way cities are designed with refreshing ideas to actively improve their community.



↑ Source: from the book *Tactical Urbanism* (Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, 2015)

With a core focus of low-cost material, short-term and scalable, Tactical Urbanism is action focused. It uses mix of sanctioned and unsanctioned tactics to design local solutions.



↑ Source: Tactical Urbanism: Volume 1 (The Street Plans Collaborative, 2012)

YOUR NOTES

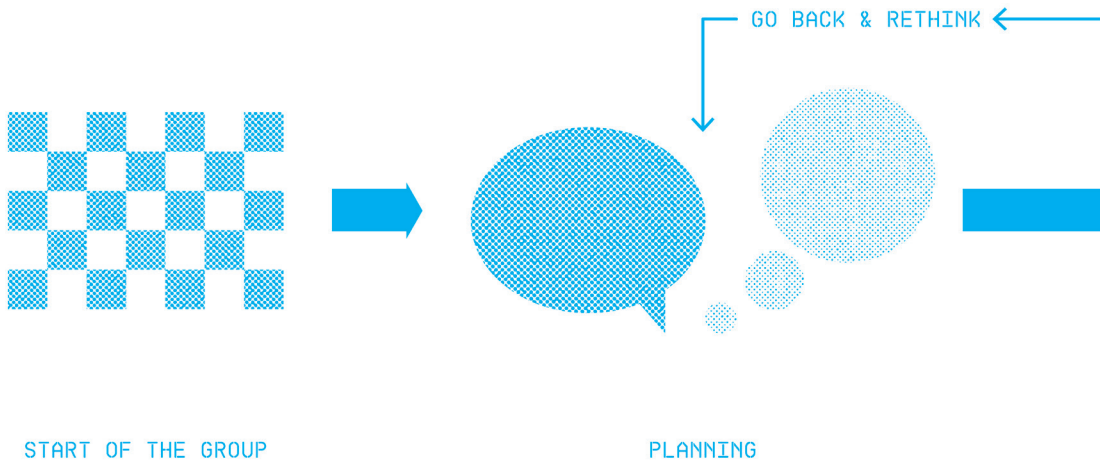


Urban Furniture Making workshop at Moruzzi Road
(Source - Moruzzi Road, beyond a road)

By now you may have made something happen as a group already. You may have organised a small event or gathering or even your first group meeting. It is now time to understand how to continue the group beyond your first activity or event and how to keep it growing. To do this we will familiarise you with practical methods of managing a small group, such as yours, and processes that may help you grow your activities long-term.

We will start by taking a moment to reflect and evaluate where you stand as a group after your first activity or event. Once you are aware of your group's position, we will then walk you through a few exercises that will help to clarify how to make decisions together, expand and plan long-term visions.

It is important to note that sometimes a group only survives its first action. It is perfectly fine for a group to come together organically for one purpose, test one idea and dissolve after it is complete. Not all groups go beyond its first event and, if that's you, know that you have not failed, and your group's purpose was probably till that event.



3. ANY CORE CHANGES HERE?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

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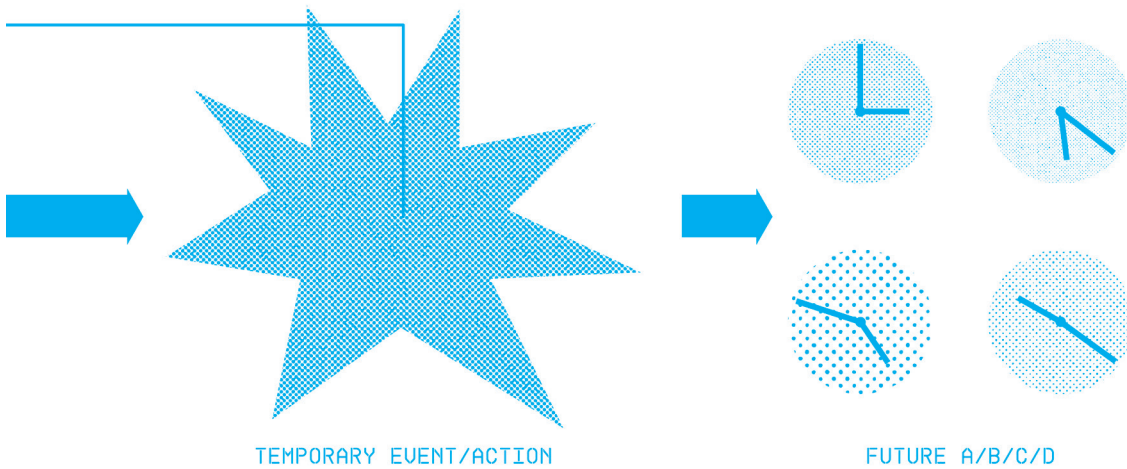
.....

EXERCISE 8:
ASSESSING YOURSELF

#PRACTICE

Chances are in your first group actions or activity, there are a few things you can improve on, or you may have found new ideas, directions, or networks that you want to explore. As indicated earlier, you are not expected to achieve perfection at any stage of your work – in fact, we don't believe it exists. Shifting the focus towards learning by doing is a great way to build consistency. Therefore, it is useful to take a moment and learn from the action you have taken before progressing to the next step. This exercise uses the method of reflective journaling to hear your own thoughts, jot down ideas and use them to assess the mood and position of your group post-action.

- TIME ESTIMATED : 30 minutes.
- WHAT YOU WILL NEED : A pencil.
- DESCRIPTION : Use the diagram below to write down your thoughts around the event. We have included some questions that may help you to think clearly about how was the event – What went well? What went wrong? What would you change? What did you learn? Are there changes you want to make in your group's way of working?



1. WHAT WENT WELL?

.....

.....

.....

4. WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED?

.....

.....

.....

EXERCISE 9:
MAKING DECISIONS
TOGETHER

#PRACTICE #PEOPLE



Taking decisions together is one of the toughest experiences that local groups face, especially when they are informal or loosely bound. When making any decision, our brains automatically make choices and form opinions based on our individual reasons, emotions or even prejudices. We need to have reason, think clearly, realise priorities and responsibilities, and make informed choices – all that is not easy. In a group setting with large number of people we can easily make poor choices when we give in to avoid disagreements, ignore ethics to avoid pressure and not voice our concerns worries as a minority.

This exercise shares very useful resources that have been made by researchers and hopes to give you some food-for-thought. The first section introduces you to the types of decision-making methods as beautifully summarised by researchers at *Sociocracy for All*. Second, we will learn about hand signals used by *Occupy Together* taking votes in group decision making process.

1. Let's get to know the types of decision-making methods you can use:

Sociocracy for All is a nonprofit organisation that collaborates with organisations and communities all over the world to help them make informed decisions with a sense of ownership, empowerment, trust, and transparency. They tell us that none of the methods suggested below are perfect as each have their own pros and cons. Knowing your options and being aware of the patterns and processes may help you choose or design the way you want to make decisions in your group. Let's have a look at this together.

- **TASK FOR YOU:** Good news! You can choose the concept that you think will work for you or want to test. And if it doesn't work you can always come back to this chart and choose another.











The Occupy Movement was an international movement started by a call from Adbusters who are an anti-consumerism magazine and global collective. The Occupy movement spread like wildfire across cities in the world and was a call by active citizens like you who came together from all types of background to bring real change from the bottom-up. They raised voice against the social and economic inequality and corruption systems that allowed the rich to get richer and hold power while the poor get poorer.

Occupy had its own hand signals which comes from a long tradition of other collective movements. They used them in consensus decision-making meetings instead to voice or sound. When a large group of people are involved, conversations can get chaotic and lose track. The silent signals keep the chaos away, brings order and allows the quietest voices to be heard.

	AUTOCRACY	DEMOCRACY	NO GOVERNANCE SYSTEM	WHOLE-GROUP CONSENSUS	SOCIOCRACY
HOW DO WE DECIDE?	<p>BY AUTHORITY</p> <p>Whoever is in power makes decisions; also has power to override the decisions of other on lower levels</p>	<p>BY VOTING & AUTHORITY</p> <p>(The most common form is simple majority vote where one needs >50% of the votes to win)</p>	<p>UNCLEAR</p> <p>Groups default to whatever is the norm in their culture; choice of method is often emotionally charged</p>	<p>BY CONSENSUS</p> <p>(A decision is made when everyone agrees)</p>	<p>BY CONSENT & AUTHORITY</p> <p>Consent: A decision is made when there is no objection. People with mandate can make certain decisions.</p>
WHO DECIDES?	<p>TOP-DOWN</p> <p>Whoever is higher in the chain decides. Includes overriding of decisions lower in the chain</p>	<p>VOTING MEMBERS</p> <p>Members of decisions-making body representative who gets authority; those elected have defined authority</p>	<p>UNCLEAR</p> <p>Often, some people emerge whose voice will have more influence than others there is no way to change</p>	<p>MEMBERS</p> <p>All members decide together</p>	<p>CIRCLES + ROLES</p> <p>Decisions- making is distributed into circles who make autonomous decisions. People in roles are authorized to make decisions</p>
STRENGTHS	<p>FAST DECISIONS</p>	<p>EASY TO SCALE WITH LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE</p>	<p>FLEXIBILITY (ONLY FOR FORMING GROUPS)</p>	<p>EVERYONE INCLUDED LOTS OF IDEAS HEARD</p>	<p>MANY VOICE HEARD FAST DECISIONS TRUST & LISTENING IN TEAMS CLARITY</p>
CHALLENGES	<p>LACK OF FEEDBACK LACK OF PARTICIPATION & CHOICE</p>	<p>TOPICS GET POLITICIZED TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY</p>	<p>LACK OF CLARITY & FEEDBACK ABUSE OF POWER LIKELY HARD TO FORMALIZE LATER</p>	<p>HARD TO MAKE CHANGES TYRANNY OF THE MINORITY</p>	<p>NEEDS COMMITMENT TO PROCESS & LEARNING</p>

↑ Source: Sociocracy for all. www.sociocracyforall.org/decision-making-methods-comparison/

 <p>WANT TO TALK</p>	 <p>DIRECT RESPONSE</p>	 <p>CLARIFY</p>	 <p>POINT OF ORDER</p>
 <p>AGREE</p>	 <p>DON'T AGREE</p>	 <p>OPPOSE</p>	 <p>BLOCK</p>

OCCUPY TOGETHER HAND SIGNALS

↑ Source: Think, Write, Rethink, Rewrite (2018) www.gidi.io/team-dynamics/2018/09/29/occupy-hand-signals/

- **TASK FOR YOU:** Conduct three group meetings in which people will only use the hand signals as above image shows to express their opinion or vote. See if you note any changes in the team discussions. Here is a checklist you can use to judge if these hand signals and silent voting work for your group.
 - Q . Are you able to simplify your discussions?
 - Q . Are you able to better manage expression of agreement or disagreement without having to disrupt others?
 - Q . Are the quiet members able to express their feelings and opinions more?
 - Q . Have you used Point of Order to redirect an off-topic conversation to this original topic?
 - Q . Have you used Direct Response to demand immediate say to add missing information?

EXERCISE 10:
DEALING WITH CONFLICTS

#PEOPLE #PRACTICE

When several passionate people come together, they also bring their individual journeys, different views, and personal opinions to the group. This exercise aims to illustrate the ways you can address uncomfortable situations after an internal conflict arises in the group as a result of clashes and opposing opinions. We have designed it based on our own experience of conflict resolution sessions of local groups in Huddersfield but also by incorporating the etiquettes of collaborative discourse to address dissonance with commonly held truths as advised by Kanyinsola Anifowoshe and Mikki Janower in *A Community is a Garden*.



→ **TIME ESTIMATED** : 1 hour 15 min for a group with 6 to 8 members

→ **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : A moderator who is in a neutral position and will take notes while facilitating the meeting, a paper with “parking space” written on top and a pen.

→ **DESCRIPTION: STEP 1**

Gather in a circle, with all members facing each other. Set some ground rules as below:

- We will remain respectful towards each other and trust this process.
- We will use the words, “We” over “I”, “Choose” over “Decide”, “We” is always plural.
- We will speak from your mind and heart with transparency and truth.
- We will remember to keep an open mind.
- We will raise hands and let the other person finish speaking before we speak.

STEP 2

- Go around in the circle to express how each person feels about the conflict or disagreement or uncomfortable issue the group is facing.
- For each problem raised, question it, and discuss it as a team. Where possible address each arising matter with a solution.
- In case of difference in ideas or opinions, create space to accept differences between people (you can start with: I acknowledge what you are saying...), share your opinion (following your idea, I would like to share my idea as well...) with openness to criticism and feedback (what do you think about it?).
- In case of interruptions from members, you may want to use the parking space concept where you “park” any comments or questions that may not be related to the discussion at the moment. You are not ignoring the off-topic point that someone has raised, rather you are making sure that the group will come back to this later. This approach ensures inclusivity and transparency without interruption of the flow of the discussion.

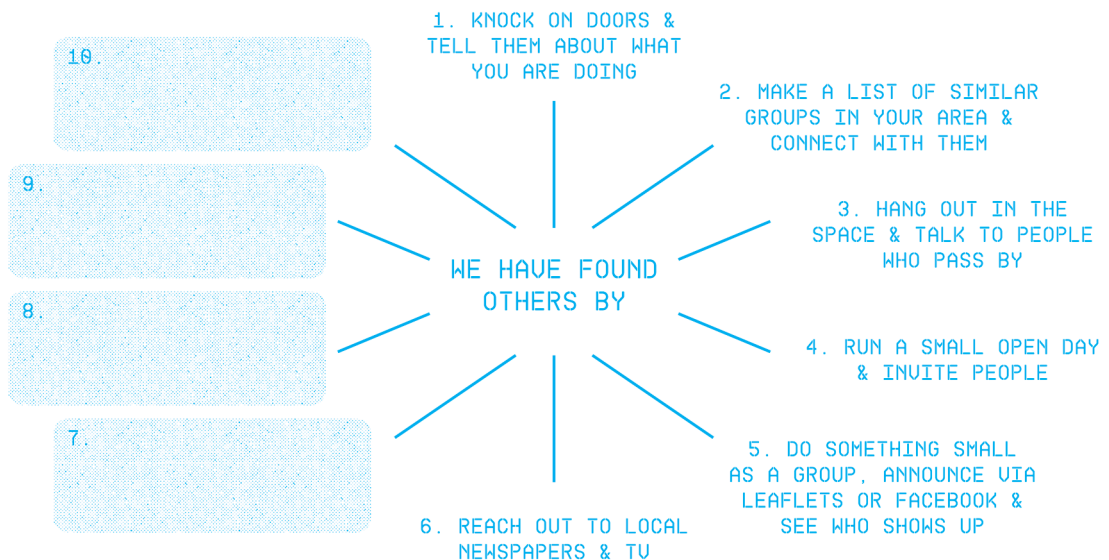
It is possible that you may need several cycles of such chats for the conflict to evaporate. Please note this is a very common experience across local groups. When you face the conflict with a discussion such as above, it can help the group to strengthen its trust on each other, develop its structure and crystallise its coping mechanisms. So, conflicts are a good thing and facing them head on, with compassion, is a great move!

EXERCISE 11:
FINDING YOUR TRIBE

#PEOPLE

Purpose of this exercise is to know about multiple ways through which a new group can meet and connect with more people around them. Current groups in Kirklees report highly on the benefits of sharing and publicity to be positive to bring more people, grow the project's network but also in many cases to bring attention to forgotten places.

- TIME ESTIMATED: 30 minutes.
- WHAT YOU WILL NEED: A pencil or pen.
- DESCRIPTION: Ask yourselves how did you meet each other? Add the ways you have reached out to and found your people.



Here are some more ways local groups based in the Kirklees have used to contact and connect with people in their local area in the recent times. Place a tick next to the ones you would use.



LEAFLET LOCALLY IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



STAY VISIBLE IN A VENUE OR LOCATION



SPREAD BY WORD OF MOUTH



DOING SOMETHING SMALL IN YOUR AREA AND SEE WHO TURNS UP



RUN A SMALL LOCAL EVENT



MAPPING CURRENT VENUES AND SIMILAR PROJECTS



HANG OUT IN YOUR LOCATION/PLACE/ VENUE/SPACE, TALK TO PASSERBY



INVITE THE INVISIBLES WHO ARE OFTEN LEFT OUT



WALKING ABOUT, LEAFLETING, AND TALKING TO PEOPLE



MARKETING THROUGH FACEBOOK PAGE AND GROUPS



OPENING A PODCAST AND YOUTUBE CHANNEL



KNOCK ON DOORS AND TALK TO ONES WHO ARE INTERESTED



USE EXISTING PLATFORMS WHO PROMOTE LOCAL GROUPS



CONNECT WITH THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS AND/OR NGOS

EXERCISE 12:
MAKING A LONG-TERM
ACTION PLAN

#PRACTICE

This exercise presents a guide for developing an action plan that your group can use to develop a vision for long-term. Action plans are useful to communicate your vision with other parties such as the council, funding organisations or even new members. It also helps to break down your end goal into small tasks which make it more practical and achievable.

- **TIME ESTIMATED** : You can take as long or as little as you want. There is no time limit.
- **WHAT YOU WILL NEED** : a pencil or pen.
- **DESCRIPTION** : Below is a template which you can use to design your group's action plan. First think about what is the time period for which you want an action plan. You can go back to Exercise 3 on Page X to see which time periods you had selected as milestones and what your end goals were. Let's say you are designing an action plan for the next 3 months. List the things you need to do and an estimated time to complete each. We have also added a section for your notes on the challenges you may face, your solution, gathering your resource list and understanding if you have any support systems.

It is also important to evaluate how much time and manpower you have to dedicate to this project, especially when they are volunteer hours. Resource 4 of stage 4 expands further on checking in with the group's capacity.

DATE:

.....

THE GOAL YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN MONTHS:

.....

YOUR MOTIVATION:

.....

TIME:

TASK LIST:

.....

1.

.....

2.

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3.

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4.

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5.

.....

6.

.....

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU MAY FACE?

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?

.....

DO YOU HAVE ANY RESOURCES?

WHAT SUPPORT MIGHT YOU NEED?

.....

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

.....

.....



Huddersfield Repair café at Queensgate market
Source: Huddersfield Repair café Facebook page

STORY HIGHLIGHT : HUDDERSFIELD REPAIR CAFÉ



The first Repair Cafés was organised in Amsterdam in 2009. The model has now spread across the world, including around 58 recorded in the UK by 2018. These cafes are open to all free social spaces where people come together to fix broken objects of everyday life such as electricals, clothes, household items, etc. The Huddersfield Repair Café was born when its core members wanted to take local action as a response to the climate crisis. Here are some interesting facts about the Huddersfield repair café according to one of its core organisers Richard Byrne:

- **Bringing model of Repair Café to a local town:** Representative Richard Byrne shared his regular visits to other repair cafes in Leeds and Manchester inspired him to start something similar in his town. The existing model of repair café and learning from other local examples gave it a good point to start.
- **Talking to people and sharing the idea:** The first step was to share the idea with others who had knowledge about mending things and electronics. Richard told us he also found it useful to share with people who were skeptics and had concerns about it. This allowed growth in understanding the dos and don'ts and to learn how to do it taking the don'ts into consideration.

Speaking to local support organisations and council run Creative Kirklees, allowed securing a venue in the town's markethall.

- **Starting simple and small:** The process had its own pace, and it was important to let it happen as it did. We started without any roles and expectations. After the first Repair café, everyone who got involved

wanted to gather for a meeting. The response was enthusiastic, and they reflected on how the day went – what was fun, what went well, what can be improved...

- **Finding roles after the first event:** Rather than having defined roles pre-action, the people found things they enjoyed doing on the first repair café day and chose those roles to play going forward. The roles sustained and formed a core group of people who sign people in, triage them and figure out what fixers will do, set up little processes for the day to function and be managed, while Richard floats around from section to section and manages expectations, people, and situations around the event. No one likes to do boring admin and planning; the doing is fun.
- **Being visible is important:** Being in the town centre at Queensgate market meant there were always some accidental finders. Repair projects such as the 70-year-old teddy bears bring interesting people together and enhancing the social aspect of the Repair. Almost every month, they had a new person turn up to say they want to join us as a fixer. Organic interactions follow with customers and other market stall holders as supporters.

“...we found our roles by being in that space and doing the activity rather than having defined roles pre-action”

— Richard Byrne, Huddersfield Repair Café.



Huddersfield Repair café at Queensgate market
Source: Huddersfield Repair café Facebook page

MAKING USE OF
EXISTING PRINT AND
ONLINE CHANNELS

Spreading word about your group and the work it is doing is useful to grow your project but also to celebrate its impact. Thanks to our collaborators we have produced a list of local media, news portals and third sector support who you can call or email to spread news about your group and its events.

A word of caution: It is good to prepare and firmly put your story across when working with the media or press. Often misunderstandings are created when a project's real story gets lost in the media's angle.

LOCAL MEDIA WHO
YOU CAN CONTACT TO
SHARE YOUR STORY

- **Huddersfield Hub:** independent news website providing a fresh, vibrant and positive voice for Huddersfield.
Contact: martin@huddersfieldhub.co.uk or steven@huddersfieldhub.co.uk or log onto www.huddersfieldhub.co.uk
- **Huddersfield Times:** Covering local news and community interest stories across Huddersfield.
Contact: editor@huddersfieldtimes.co.uk or log onto www.huddersfieldtimes.co.uk
- **Huddersfield Examiner or Yorkshire Live:** Both print and digital, they cover stories of the people of Huddersfield, Kirklees and surrounding villages.
Contact: wayne.ankers@reachplc.com or robert.sutcliffe@reachplc.com or log on to www.examinerlive.co.uk
- **Creative Kirklees:** A free guide to arts and creative events news in Kirklees where you can share showcase your work, add events, and share latest news without any costs.
To do so you will need to create an account here www.creativekirklees.com/join/
- **Kirklees TV:** Local internet based TV covering local news and views of the people of Kirklees.
Contact: www.kirkleeslocaltv.com or call 01484 512752 or info@kirkleeslocaltv.com
- **Yorkshire Post:** One of the longest running newspapers since 1754, it covers news all over Yorkshire.
Contact: Call on 0113 243 2701 or write to mitchinson@jpimedia.co.uk
- **Sangam Radio:** Broadcasting on 107.9 FM in Yorkshire, it is Kirklees only Asian Radio Station that is run by volunteers.
Contact: To get in touch with the team, call on 01484 549947

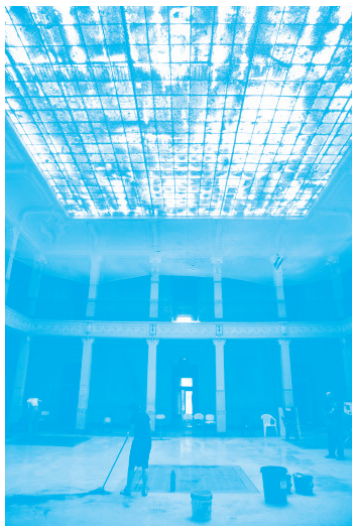
- **Radio Leeds:** Chapter of BBC Radio, it covers the sounds of West Yorkshire.
Contact: get in touch by emailing YourQuestions@bbc.co.uk or using the hashtag #BBCYourQuestions on Twitter.

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS
WHO WILL HELP YOU
SPREAD YOUR WORD

- Third sector Leaders Kirklees is a local charity that work with voluntary and community groups, charities, social enterprise, etc. in Kirklees to help them achieve their aims and projects. <https://tslkirklees.org.uk/>
- Natural Kirklees aims to get people in Kirklees involved in taking care of their local green spaces and natural environments and help them by providing guidance, safeguarding groups and find ways to work with formal sectors. <https://www.naturalkirklees.org/>

YOUR NOTES

A large grid of small blue dots for taking notes, starting from the 'YOUR NOTES' header.



Source: MACAO

Your group has formed its core foundation, has also executed some of its actions and is now preparing itself to move forward with a long-term vision.

We recognise that when you are just starting out, it is best to keep it simple. You can choose to exist as an informal group of locals or volunteers or members with a common interest, who have shared group rules you follow and are working collectively towards what you want to achieve. However, when you grow in numbers, your projects get bigger, when you may need to apply for funds or form partnerships with formal sectors, you may need to familiarise yourself with legal processes, institutional structures, participatory culture, and support tools to help you to maintain your aims and safeguard your group.

At stage 4 we will focus on introducing and getting familiar with tools to maintain and sustain your group's practice. Instead of proactive exercises, we have signposted relevant resources that are immediately available, free and open access. While what the resource list may not be comprehensive, we hope that by reviewing them you will find direction to maintain your growing group.

Whenever you are ready, these resources are there for you to explore.

RESOURCE 1: UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

There are a number of institutional or organizational structures any informal group can follow to give a shape to its working practice, define its roles, safeguard its rights but also manage its focus and expectations.

We have found the following forms of organizational structure on www.gov.uk which will give you an understanding of how they work. By the basic details highlighted below, we hope you will get an overview of what is needed to explore the structures. We have also provided some relevant links for step-by-step advice and explore them in more detail.

STRUCTURES

UNINCORPORATED ASSOCIATIONS

- To set this up a group of people can come together for a shared reason and not to make any profit.
 - It does not require any registration and no costs to set it up. Each member takes personal responsibility for any debts, contracts, and commitment.
-

COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES (CIC)

- It is a form of limited company that works for the benefit of a community and not private shareholders.
 - To set this up, you need a business plan, an asset lock, write a constitution and get approval from Community Interest company regulation and costs £27.
-

CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION (CIO)

- Foundation CIO is run by a small group of people (the trustees) who are the main decision-makers. Associations CIO encourage wider or open membership.
 - You will need to choose a structure, find a name, make a constitution, and apply for registration with Charity Commission using their incorporation form.
 - Step by step guide: www.gov.uk/set-up-a-charity
-

CO-OPERATIVE

- A co-op is owned and managed by its members to meet their shared needs.
 - It has to follow co-operative principles and values. More on www.uk.coop
 - Step by step guide: www.uk.coop/start-new-co-op
-

LIMITED COMPANY

- It is a form of business which has legally separate owners called shareholders and managers who are called directors.
 - Step by step guide: www.gov.uk/limited-company-formation
-

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

- Here you and your partners share the responsibility of all losses, bills, management and profits.
 - You need a name, a nominated partner and register with HMRC.
-



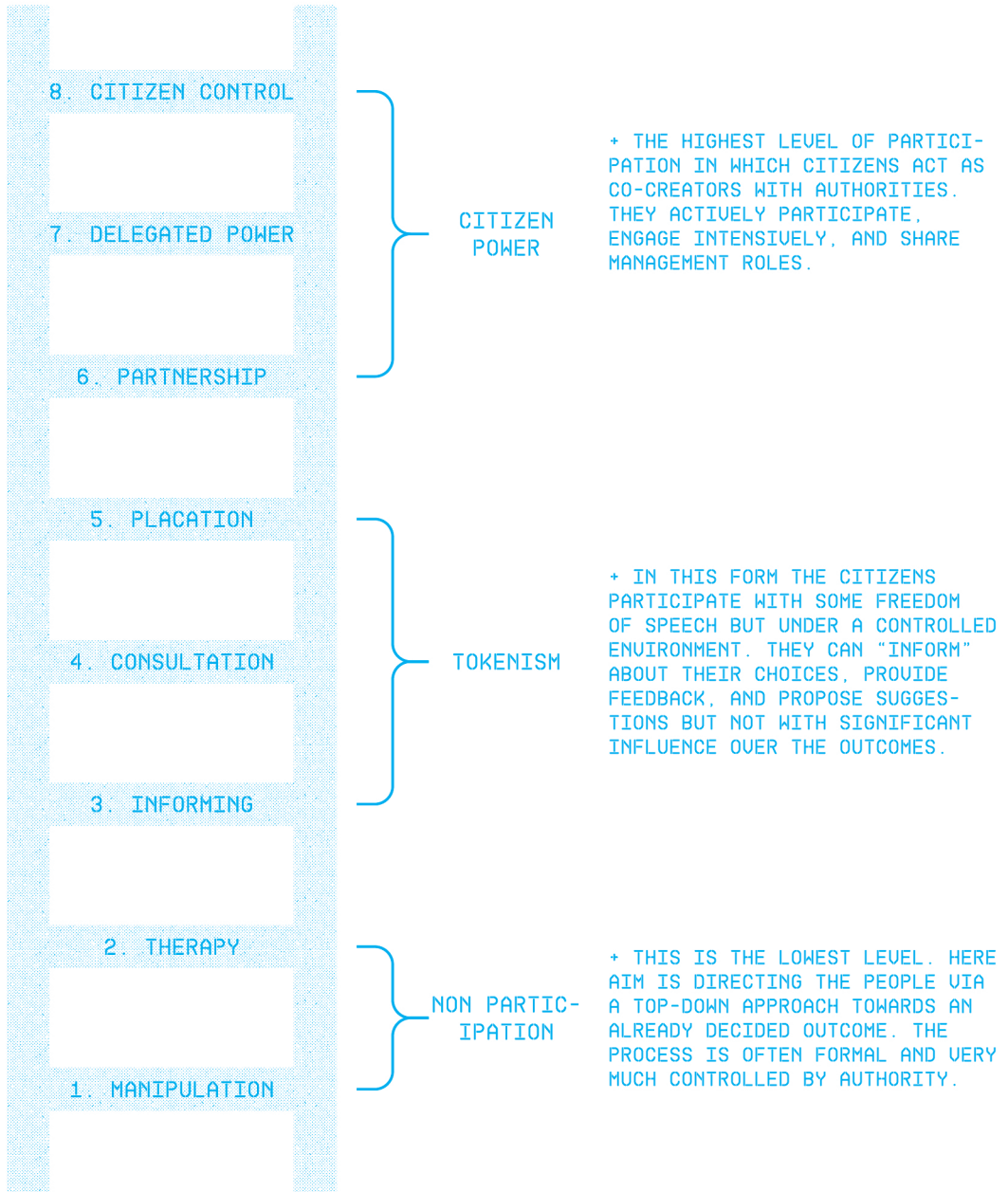
Please note there are also many hybrid formation of structures that you can follow. Some of them have been listed on the very resourceful toolkit called [Urban Commons Cookbook \(2020\)](#) written by Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, Nils-Eyk Zimmermann and Nicole de Vries.

RESOURCE 2 :
LEVELS OF
PARTICIPATION

Each citizen-led local project or initiative thrives on a form of participatory culture that the group develops and through which each member shares their opinion and stake.

Understanding levels of participation is helpful for a group to develop its own original culture. This not only empowers its members to have an authentic voice in the decision-making process and maintain individual positions as co-creators, but also to identify instances when participation is tokenistic. Many organisations use this word to mask manipulation or drive forward already decided interventions in which citizens have no say or stake in. When organisations approach communities with the buzz word, understanding what true participation and tokenism is, will provide empowerment, clarity of power and rights and specificity to the discussion.

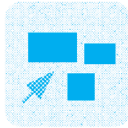
Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969) provides an overview of the 8 stages of citizen participation and can become a tool to evaluate how much real power a citizen holds in the process and their influence in the end results of a public project.



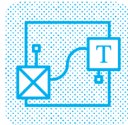
↑ Source: Arnstein, S. (1969) 'A ladder of citizen participation'.

RESOURCE 3 :
FREE DIGITAL TOOLS
- COLLABORATIVE
TOOLS, WEBSITES,
ORGANISATIONS,
SOCIAL MEDIA

The COVID 19 pandemic has taught us the perks of online platforms and digital tools. They can make it easier to communicate, organise and coordinate between multiple members, especially when remote is needed. In this section we have listed some free to use and access digital tools (applications and websites) that can support various aspects of your projects including communication, graphics design and project management. You can also add any other tool that you have found useful.



MIRO: Perfect for remote collaborations, Miro is an online collaborative whiteboard that allows multiple users to brainstorm, work together and plan projects using virtual sticky notes.



CANVA: It is an online graphics design tool with which you can create social media posts, presentations, posters and logos for free. You can use their free templates to add your own text.



GOOGLE FORM: An easy to access online form which you can use to create surveys, event registrations, polls or to take opinions of your members.



TELEGRAM: It is like any popular message apps like WhatsApp or Messenger but it ensures privacy, encrypted, secure and independent communication for free.



ZOOM: A website and app that will let you call your members and have audio and video meetings, chats and conferences with upto 100 people at one time. The only problem is the free account lets you have the call for 45 minutes only.



NOTION: Slightly advanced, Notion is a all-in-one space where you can monitor and manage projects with multiple members of your group.

Add your own:

.....

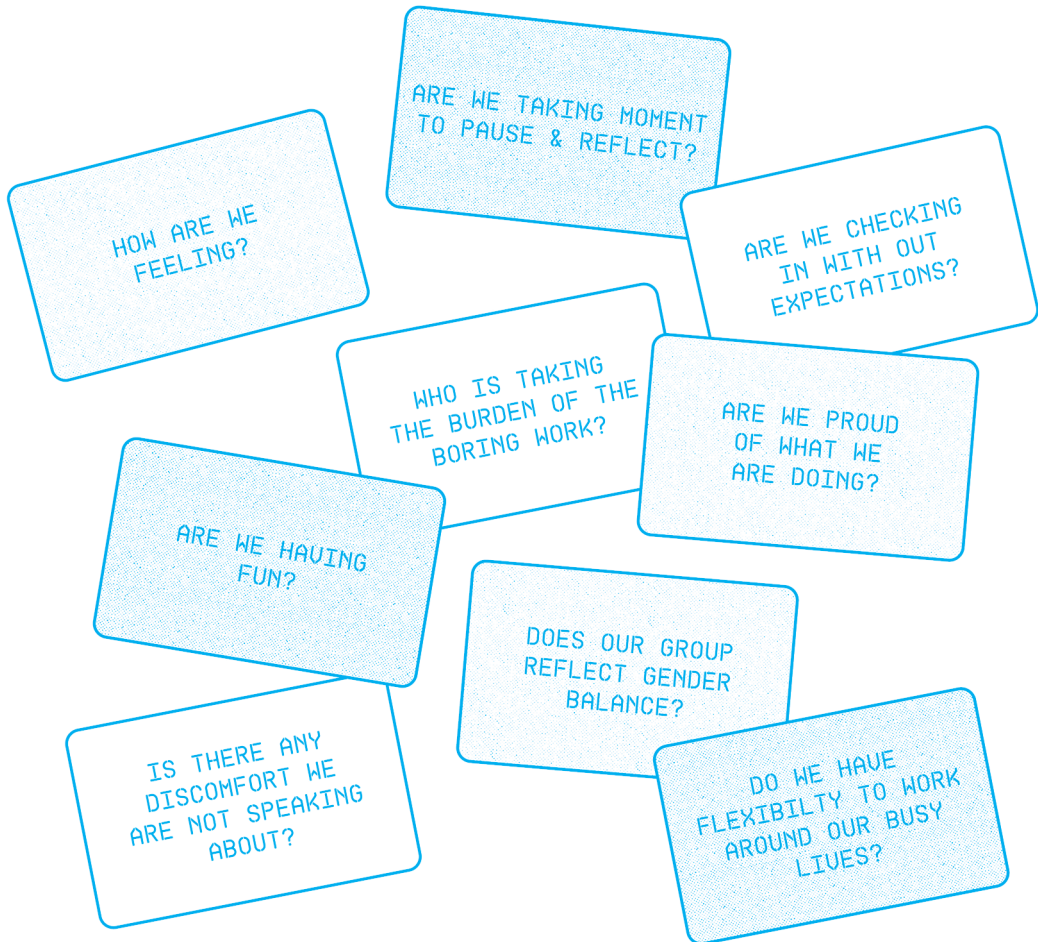


If you are looking for open access and commonly made resources, researchers at [GECO \(2022\)](#) have a list of open-source digital tools which can be found at [gE.CO](#) – tools for generating commons.

RESOURCE 4:
EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN
TOOLS

Staying in touch with the human side of things is crucial in such fast-paced projects, especially when we are in the survival mode. We forget to prioritise the emotions and feelings that form around the project. A check-in session at regular intervals to keep in touch with the rising feelings and emotions is highly recommended. This not only builds awareness about your capacity as a group, helps problem solve but also creates space for the fact that its ok to have feelings and establish a good practice to talk about it.

Below are some prompts cards that may help to do a quick check-in at the start of any group meeting.



Please note these cards contain questions that will bring for suppressed emotions and lead to uncomfortable conversations.

RESOURCE 5 :
FINANCES

After a certain period of time, you may want to gather some funds for your project. A few things to remember.

1. Funding can come from the most unexpected source. So, explore multiple options –across categories, sectors, and scopes.
2. Applications take time to write and even more time to hear the results. It is a good idea to either have a dedicated working group who will only focus on the application or work on the application when it is not your group's peak work time such as winter for growing groups or rainy season when you cannot be on the streets.
3. Having an evidence-based portfolio ready is a great head start to pitch to potential funding bodies. This portfolio can consist of your group's manifesto, photos of your work, comments from people involved and impact stories.
4. Most funders will ask for evidence such as your constitution, bank account details, your committee, risk assessment/public liability insurance. You may need to go back to resource 1 of this section if you are an informal group.



START A CROWD FUNDING AT:
GOFUNDME.COM
OR JUSTGIVING.COM




NATIONAL LOTTERY
COMMUNITY FUND:
TNLCOMMUNITYFUND.ORG.UK



COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS
BY SUPERMARKETS & BANKS



FUNDS FROM ARTS COUNCIL,
COUNCIL SCHEMES



FUNDING POTS OF
LOCAL ORGANISATIONS
INCLUDING YOUR LOCAL
GP OR UNIVERSITY



THIRD SECTOR SUPPORT
ORGANISATIONS SUCH
AS TSL KIRKLEES:
TSLKIRKLEES.ORG.UK

RESOURCE 6 :
TIME MANAGEMENT

One of the biggest struggles for any volunteer community are its volunteer hours. What may come across as free labour is actually the primary currency that volunteers pay to support and keep these local projects alive- their valuable time. This is a hard reality to sustain especially when they have been developed by a community with little to no support from the market or the city authorities. When everyone has to earn a living and manage their own lives before committing their free time towards a common goal, this valuable time becomes crucial to manage.

Regular meetings: To ensure all members gather at least a few times a month, select one weekday and one weekend every month. Make sure everyone agrees to putting these two days as recurring days on their calendar. This method has been used by many groups including Fartown Forest garden community who meet every first Saturday and third Wednesday of each month. More established groups such Incredible Edible Todmorden meet every first Sunday of each month. Others such as Cornerstone Cooperative Housing have business meetings on the 15th day of every month. The Making Space has flexibility to meet online once a month and only active members attend more regularly than others.



Tracking Volunteer hours: You may want to keep records of how much time each person puts in. This is not to point fingers at who has done less but can be a very useful document for funding applications, to encourage volunteering, to see where people like to spend most of their time and measure its impact on the wider community. Here is a sample of simple chart you can use.

YOUR GROUP NAME :

NAME :	CONTACT INFO :	ACTIVITY :	CHECK-IN TIME :	CHECK-OUT TIME :	TOTAL HOURS :

Please remember there will be times when you will find very few people in the room. While this may feel demotivating it is completely natural. Creating space for flexibility to work remotely, focus on different things and having options of meeting days may allow some breathing room in this case.

YOUR NOTES



The Making Space at Queensgate Market
(Source - Making Space Facebook page)

STORY HIGHLIGHT : THE MAKING SPACE , HUDDERSFIELD



The Making Space is the brainchild of two artists Amy Hirst and Rachel Walker, who had interests in doing things in empty shops and a space for skillshare. Andrew Wilson was the third person to get involved. It aspired to be a makers' space and co-working environment to encourage sharing of skills and knowledge around arts, craft, and technology. We wanted to highlight a few things from their journey.

The process started before the space existed. Before acquiring the actual space, the cooperation started by gathering pledges from people asking if they will become a member when they find a space. They outlined what the membership process and costs will look like. Regular monthly meetings were held at local coffee shops to get a grip on what they were doing which led them to find a space at Media Centre in Huddersfield. They also hosted a small give-it-a-go makers event at Huddersfield local library to encourage interest. **Local media's coverage of the event** also helped to gather interest and connect with people. Finding the space that fit the agenda, tight budget and needs took almost 18 months.

Currently the Making Space continues as **a cooperatively run space** at the Media Centre in Huddersfield. Through an open-to-all-interested motto, it gives its members access to the space, equipment, and tools to those who want to work from the space, run events, start a business, and share skills. As a cooperative all members have an equal say in its running. Although members do not meet or work from the space regularly, an online planning meeting is a recurring event for each month. In terms of sustaining as a resource, a good **mutual agreement with the landlord** gave them more room to stay as a cooperative space over time.

The Making Space is **not just limited to a physical space but acts as a social and creative network** to connect and collaborate. It supports makers in Huddersfield town by providing digital and analogue tools, fosters collaborations across different fields and for various kinds of making and encourages sharing of skills with each other and with the public. Over time it expanded to two more temporary public spaces in the town centre, fostered many creative ventures and engaged more members focused on arts and craft.

Although it had its peak, over time it became more difficult to maintain the culture of the cooperative, especially as the founding members moved away and new members came in and out. The cooperative has been experiencing **a gradual winding down** as the network became loose and its culture changed. This may be because the project itself had a natural lifespan which had to do with a fixed group of people for a certain period of time. But one cannot deny that even if the space itself may naturally cease to exist, the Making Space has **created a network of collaborators** and creates all over the town with its ethos of coworking, connecting and collaborating. As such its legacy is carried on in principle and spirit in other creative spaces, whether temporary or permanent, social or physical.



The Making Space at Queensgate Market
(Source - Making Space Facebook page)

YOUR NOTES

WHAT 'S NEXT?

This booklet has become possible as a result of various on-going activities we have been invested in for the past few years and because of securing a small research fund that focused on participation.

We had originally proposed this booklet or toolkit as a tangible and 'measurable' output of our research project. However, we feel the real gain is in the process we followed. It implies that the uniqueness is in the fact that we built it from scratch, without preformed ideas, but rather from conversations with relevant actors and not-for-profit organisations. The process has indeed been more relevant than the output itself. We have added more details about our approach and process in the next section – Additional Notes – if you are interested to learn further.

It is now time to test it on the ground. We would like to invite the readers and users to test, experiment with and expand the ideas and exercises we have presented in this booklet. Depending on the outcome of this trial phase, we may amend and develop the toolkit further. We may also distribute beyond the originally conceived boundaries and/or transform it in an open-access tool for activists.

Being inspired by local people and organisation, we hope this works or, at least, do more than other existing toolkits. It should offer one or more directions to those willing to act.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

How did we approach the project?

To realise this project, first, we explored the following concepts which heavily informed our approach towards the research.

1. Starting from the ground up

Where to start is a question we all often ponder on – who asks what question, who participates, who steers. We, the authors of this booklet, wanted to take a step away from starting the quest with the assumption that as researchers we already knew what needs to be in the book. Adaptation of this bottom-up approach in our research meant we would seek its lines of enquiry and direction from within the knowledge and experience shared by the research participants. Thus, the study began with participatory workshops to discuss ground level experiences and identify patterns, challenges, tools, and questions collectively.

2. Working with the multiplicity of actors

We recalled the term *spatial agency* by Nishat Awan, Jeremy Till, and Tatiana Schneider (2011) that acknowledges the contribution of

multiple agents and not just the experts. Here spatial refers to not just a physical space but is a social collective which is shaped by those who live in it and the social, ecological, and global networks that surround it. Agency, on the other hand, is acting through alternatives which challenge the normative patterns and assumptions.

Awan et.al define spatial agents (2011) as actors who through self-organised motivations use and intervene spatial tactics and actions described as “acts of redistribution, redefinition, intervention and reinvention of processes” (p. 2) to shift from being passive citizens to active co-producers/shapers of their built environment.

Throughout the project we have undergone cycles of consultation and feedback sessions with a multiple range of voices engaged in various bottom-up experiences in the region of Kirklees. As spatial agents these voices represent collaborative groups who are heterogenous in composition, open access to newcomers and non-hierarchical in structure. Thus, each session led to further shaping of the research findings through the lenses of the spatial agents and their embedded knowledge.

3. The process is iterative and expanding

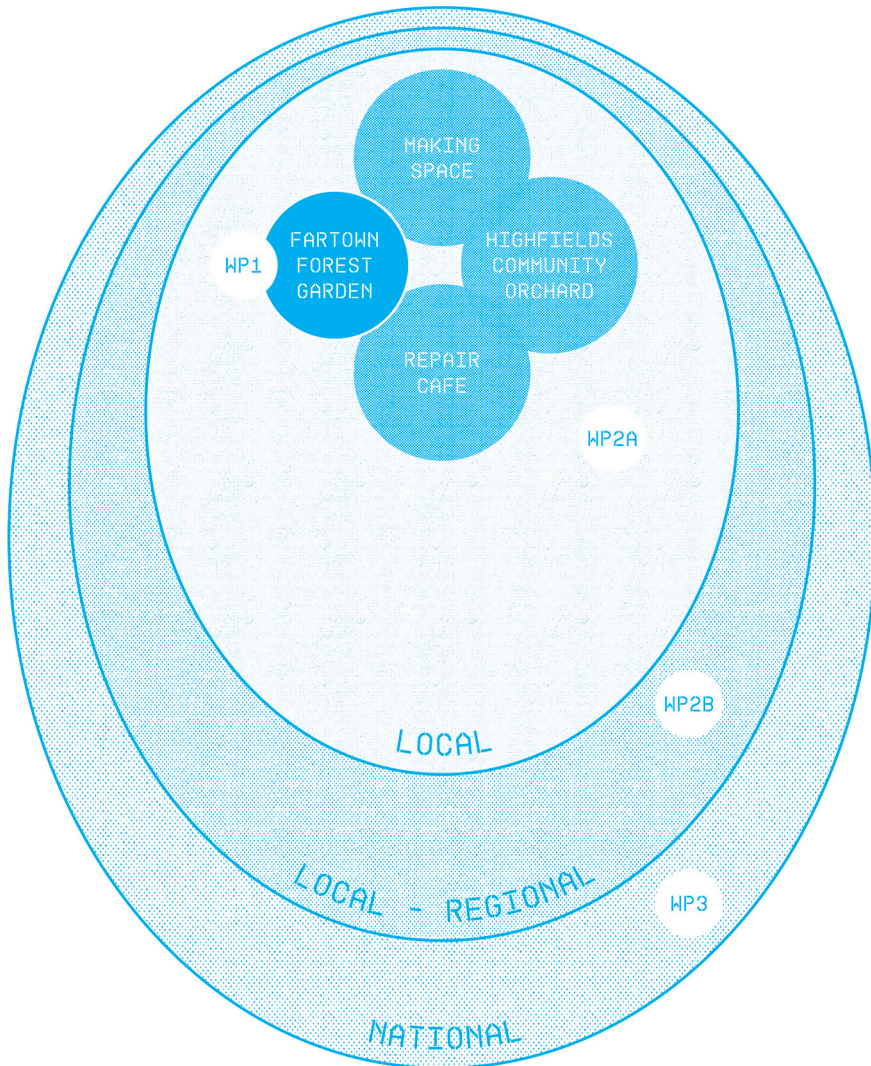
What we unfold in this booklet creates a basis to start discussions and does not draw conclusions. It is not a tell-all how-to guide to show how to “do” such projects. It aims to prompt reflections, trigger trajectories and initiate conversations between future and existing active citizens, local organisations, formal sectors, researchers, and facilitators. As such the outcome is not a finished product rather will be tested in various community settings and developed further.

The process we followed

We started this study with actors of one new grassroots group called Fartown Forest garden community (FFG). It is to be noted that one of the authors is part of this informal group which made this a natural starting point for our understanding of grassroots experiences from this group. By analysing data gathered through group discussions, participatory workshops, and field work, we were able to draw themes and patterns which illustrated the gaps and needs.

In the next phase we radially grew our sphere to consult with other local groups, not-for profits, activists, third sector organisations established in Kirklees and evaluate their processes against the themes and patterns we noticed at FFG. This was an opportunity to not only draw connections

between group experiences but also enrich the toolkit with their feedback. At phase 3 we invited grassroots groups, activists, creatives, and organisations from all over the UK and consulted the scope of the project in relation to their work and experiences.



WP1: Learning from the newly formed informal group Fartown Forest Garden Community.

WP2A: Consult with other local groups in Kirklees.

WP3: Feedback sessions with regionally diverse grassroots groups, activists, and not-for-profit organisations.

WP4: Workshop with activists and community organisations with nationwide networks.



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Tabassum Ahmed is currently concluding her PhD at the University of Huddersfield. Her research explores commoning protocols by active citizen groups in West Yorkshire, UK in the face of the climate crisis. In particular she is gaining expertise in architectural ethnographic study of socio-spatial practices while co-producing spaces of urban commoning. Tabassum is an architect from Bangladesh and takes an active interest in community empowerment, diasporic identity, and environmental activism. She has co-led a number of research projects, including Temporary Tactical Urbanism in 2019, Urban Commons & Commoning Practices in 2020 and Climate action and Visual Culture in 2021.

Ioanni Delsante is Associate Professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the University of Pavia- Italy, and Reader in Urban Design and Departmental leader for Internationalisation at the University of Huddersfield (UK).

He has particular expertise in the areas of urban commons and urban transformations in Europe, South America and China, having organised workshops, exhibitions and international conferences/symposia on these topics, including the conferences Regional Urbanism in the Era of Globalisation (Huddersfield, February 2016) and The City as a Commons (Pavia, September 2019).

He has been the recipient of a number of grants for research projects, including Moruzzi Road beyond a Road (2021), Commoning Kirklees (2022) and the Erasmus+ KA220 Project named 'Socially Situated Architectural Pedagogies'.

He co-leads the AUDe (Architecture and Urban Design) Research Lab at Pavia University (<https://aude.unipv.it/>), and he initiated the research network The City as a Commons (<http://cityascommons.unipv.it/>) through which he coordinated an International Conference and a Design Summer School in 2019.

His vast number of publications include "Mapping Uses, People and Places: Towards a Counter-Cartography of Commoning Practices and Spaces for Commons. A Case Study in Pavia, Italy" (2020), "Cultural Ecology and Cultural Critique" (2019), "Temporary and Tactical Urbanism as Drivers of Alternative Forms of Urban Transformations: A ResearchLed Exhibition in Huddersfield as a Live and Exploratory Project" (2019), "The City of Commons" (eds) (2019). He is co-editor of the Journal of Architecture, where he is currently editing a Special Issue on architectural commons.

Ioanni has been curator of a number of international exhibitions on architecture and urban design, as the exhibition of Chinese architect at La Triennale of Milan (2012), the East-West China exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery (2016), 'The City of Commons' at University of Pavia – Festival Itaca' (2019), 'Temporary-tactical urbanism' (2019) and 'Commons and commoning practices' (2020) hosted by 'Temporary Contemporary' at Huddersfield.

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