

Future of Local Economies Day - 6th of April 2017
Report June 2017

Organisations represented

Billinge & Orrell in Transition, Culture Coops, FarNearer, Greenslate Farm, Hay Transition Towns, Hometown Plus Limited, Localise West Midlands, Regather Sheffield, Sustaining Dunbar, Talgarth Regeneration Group, Transition Network, REconomy Project, Transition Towns Totnes

Session One - What is inspiring you now?

To start the day on a high note, we asked everyone to let us know what was inspiring them now. These are the things we came up with -

<p>Projects, programmes & places Places - Preston, Newcastle Under Lyme – post-industrial culture, Isle of Portland – use of new legislation Preston Model - Mondragon</p> <p>Events – North West REc Event, London LIFT, East Lothian Council REconomy Event</p> <p>Mass/big participation projects – Incredible Edible Network, Parkrun</p> <p>Publications & organisations – NEF, STIR magazine</p> <p>Community Land Ownership e.g. Storas Uibhst, Gigha, Eigg</p> <p>Programmes - Nourish Scotland, Community Energy Scotland, Social Enterprise Academy (work in schools)</p> <p>Projects - Kifinan Community Forest, Burntisland Energy Masterplan, Blue City Rotterdam</p> <p>International networks & examples - Japanese delegation to Totnes</p>	<p>Policy & new practices Use of internet for low-tech solutions/hacks e.g. Farm Hack</p> <p>New legislation – with greater potential for change e.g. Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) & Localism Act</p> <p>New spaces & incubators- Social enterprise Miixer CIC (Dunbar), –Open Project Nights (Brixton), Local Entrepreneurs Forum (LEF)</p> <p>Emerging TN regional network and England Hub Reimagining of waste & steps forward with renewable energy</p>
<p>Culture Devolution – shifting attitudes</p> <p>Mental Health and voluntary sector – thinking as an activist not a victim</p> <p>Culture of collaboration</p>	<p>Other things All the work going on & inspiring people doing it</p>

Challenges and Opportunities – integrating group feedback and post-its

For this session we broke into groups to discuss current opportunities and challenges in the UK new local economy space. It was noted that many things were both challenges and opportunities. Table below shows both individual (post-it) and group responses. To make reading easier, we have tried to roughly organise the feedback thematically, however the groupings are very loose and as you will see there is considerable crossover between different areas.

Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Funding & investment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · New grant funding models e.g. place-based programmes e.g. Big Local initiative (Big Lottery & UnLtd) & Power to Change Empowering Places Initiative · The Worker Coop Solidarity Fund Solid Fund and new models of funding business support · Responsible investment - increasing demand & appetite from investors · Market development for social enterprise · Convergence of market development & entrepreneurial culture · Creation of pipeline for social investors to fund · Local currencies– local banking and time banking – creating buzz & excitement, tools to build community & address poverty · Community Investment models – community investment shares, LEF · Mobilising local/social and financial capital · Revenue model for social economy · New banks and credit unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of local financial infrastructure · Lack of pipeline – with meaningful support for social enterprises · Investment infrastructure & scale - £1b wholesale funding available but difficult to support small players – how can we fund wholesale? · Local currencies – can be exclusive in reach, and difficult to get business model to work · Skills – expertise/supported needed to help write successful bids or investment proposals · Risk – difficult to work out appropriate risk and return
<p>Culture, attitudes & awareness</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Attitude shift (in some places) from service recipients to “we could do this” – success breeds success · Increased confidence – successful projects proving it’s possible · Rise of social entrepreneurial culture – positive experiences a catalyst to growth of problem solving, entrepreneurial culture · Culture of challenge – can lead to power shifts & positive change · Joy in local connection – groups developing those skills – slow down · Radicalise the squeezed middle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lack of entrepreneurial culture – education system preparing people going into work · Rise of entrepreneurial “just do it” culture needs to be more inclusive · General lack of understanding of potential for re-localisation, local multiplier effect etc. · Culture of challenge –can lead to reactionary, closed responses · Harnessing the middle classes as a revolutionary force – currently getting fat on status-quo · Apathy · Fear · Gender – risk of replicating new economy on gendered lines – need to consider how not to replicate the same inequalities · Diversity –new economy sector in UK dominated by white, middle class, middle aged people? · Are hair shirts really bad now?
Austerity, inequality & social divides	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social deprivation and unrest can lead to new opportunities & cooperation · Crisis as opportunity – creative destruction · Funding /benefit cuts creates need for change & new spaces created as state rolls back · Local Authorities cutting services means things must be done differently - some Councils now willing to listen to alternatives, this can unleash creativity · Council land & assets available because cuts means they can’t afford to look after them– e.g. community farm in Wigan (asset transfer) · The emerging precariat - platform co-ops, hacking neo-liberal models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cost of living – especially housing costs – pressure to pay the bills makes risk taking more difficult · Time – people working increasingly long hours – less time to pursue alternatives · Less welfare, less security - basic needs are not being met · Hardship – can lead to change but can also make it harder to change · Fewer options about future · Communities divided by inequality of wealth · Enabling resource poor communities – there can be a type of exclusivity in the “just do it culture” - ability to act is a privilege · Unequal society uneven distribution of wealth, resources and land · Education system under pressure - less creative · Tension between long term local communities and incomers · Is it all just about gentrification – who benefits? (Neo-trickle-down economics)
Government, politics & legislation	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Devolution – opening up new & regionally varied opportunities– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood Planning & Community Rights Legislation (England) – new opportunities to influence policy, build relationships & knowledge - Scottish Community Alliance - well networked group, leverage with Scottish Parliament who are open to change - Community Empowerment Act (Scotland), new 10 year Social Enterprise Strategy & upcoming opportunities for influence policy and raise profile of transition livelihood agenda: e.g. Upcoming Scottish Govt. bills on - climate change, warm homes, good food, circular economy, local democracy - Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) – adjusting decision making criteria - Northern Powerhouse - potentially · New political models – changing things bottom-up – Froom (Flatpack Democracy) shows alternatives are possible · Local Authority funding pressure (detailed above) creates new opportunities in terms of taking over assets & delivering services · New creative engagement with local government and regional government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tory Government · Broken, binary political system · Hostile legislation · Government approach to measuring economic success is limited – short-term · Popular, post-Brexit movement to “take back control” has isolationist, xenophobic & regressive flavour · Devolution – gives impression of opportunities but in some cases (Northern Powerhouse) opportunities difficult to realise on a micro/community scale · Void in/lack of local democracy · Dysfunctional planning system · Lack of creativity within local authorities · Constantly restructuring councils & changes in administration – losing contacts or ground gained · Local Authorities have poor understanding of inward investment –inability to distinguish between Pound stores /betting shops & social enterprises · Even Councils who have committed to doing things differently, often not willing to do so in practice (roll-back) · Connecting bottom up grass-roots, with the top down · Language divide – common language inclusive – growth versus de-growth
<p>Community groups & social movements</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 70 active transition initiative doing something in REconomy space – building human resources & capacity, ripe to do more · TI partnerships – e.g. working with impact hubs/co-working spaces with similar agenda · Incredible Edibles show how to reach broad audience · Community learning exchange programmes & regional local networks sharing good practice (Renew Wales) · Strong community sector in Scotland -20 community led networks under umbrella of Scottish Community Alliance all taking forward aspects of a REconomy agenda · New models e.g. Open Project Nights – weekly facilitated free space with food for community enterprise, Local Entrepreneurs Forums etc. · Shared business models available - “demand aggregators” · Platform coops – grabbing back spaces occupied by Uber and Airbnb · Models from resource poor communities outside the UK – potential to import · Convergence activities – English Futures plans – October event · The building out of economically regenerative eco-systems · Social enterprise - more normal/mainstream, increased confidence and credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Difficulty in finding niches where ‘transition economy’ can survive and compete within the current mainstream economy · Difficult to shift from voluntary activity to local economy livelihoods (limiting accessibility & sustainability) · Speed & urgency – technology opens new opportunities but market currently responding more quickly e.g. platforms like Airbnb/Uber managing to unlock value of unused resources · Lack of money · Lack of access to and - Land price bubble and land ownership structure · Lack of local infrastructure (premises/flexible affordable workspaces, appropriate advice and support, including patient capital Access to resources – especially in poor areas · Physical & social space for local enterprises especially in cities · Maintaining energy and momentum in face of tough challenges · Evaluation & appraisal - need to improve ways of measuring impact & explaining added value · Movement is disjointed and not joined up · Awareness of other groups/projects low - finding & making hyper local connections is difficult · Realism - over-emphasis on inspiration and celebration – not enough discussion about hard graft to get things off the ground, or on what goes wrong · Difficulty creating social conversation because of scale of the challenge · Partnership working - challenge to work together to reach potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divide between groups focusing on immediate needs & those focused long term strategic change - Difficulty in aligning conventional charities and participatory groups
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Sessions 3 and 4: Open space discussions

During the afternoon there were group discussions on six specific themes. We give an overview below which is based on group video feedback and written notes.

Group One - Joining up initiatives so they make sense in place?

There are many national organisations operating in the new economy space, all offering different types of support to community groups e.g. [Locality](#), [NEF](#), [Co-ops UK](#), Transition Network, REconomy Project, Asset Based Community Development, [Altogether Better](#) (ABCD), [Community Land Trust Network](#), [Power to Change](#).

Local groups tend to be doing lots of different things (livelihoods, housing, asset dev, food etc) whereas the national organisations specialise in specific areas. This makes the support landscape extremely confusing for local groups, who can find it very difficult to work out which of the national organisations they should be working with and what they can offer.

“Why are there so many of you?”

These national organisations are often required to compete with each other both for policy influence, and to secure large chunks of funding which they require to secure their continued survival. This means that collectively these groups absorb much of the funding identified by government for local communities. Although some of this funding reaches local groups via the delivery of programmes, in practice much of the money is syphoned off by the national groups (to cover overheads). This means the amount of money that actually flows to the community level, where the real innovation is happening & the expertise is being generated, can be very limited.

The group identified the [Renew Wales](#) project, funded by the Big Lottery Big Fund, as a great example of one organisation that has done things differently. The Renew Wales model has a very small organisational structure, with a sole focus on brokering peer to peer relationships between similar community projects that are at different stages of development. Peer supporters from one organisation are then paid to use their knowledge and experience to help the other group move their plans forward and get their projects off the ground.

Their model sees a small amount of funding going to the organisation to pay for coordination carried out by local advisors, but the bulk of the money flows directly to local groups in a way that directly contributes to local livelihoods, unlocking knowledge & accelerating the growth of sustainable projects. The result is a much more flat structure than more traditional delivery organisations – focused on collaborative peer relationships rather than a top-down “we are going to deliver this for you” approach.

By creating practical connections between groups the Renew Wales have also managed to develop vibrant local and regional networks and positive feedback loops – with over 250 groups actively engaging with their network across Wales.

The other major benefit of this approach is that the organisation stays focused on meeting the practical needs of the community, as identified by the community, rather than working on what the organisation thinks those needs should be (to meet the outcomes agreed by the government or other funders). This means conversations start off in a much more positive manner e.g. by helping a rugby club get solar PVs on their roof to save them money, you start to build a genuine and valued relationship. This can then lead to deeper conversation about issues like “why solar power”, “why PVs” – meaning you can disseminate more & start bigger conversations.

Other notes

- Local Economic Partnerships think they are fulfilling “our” role - but they are not
- People need face to face engagement first not through websites – community camps at Eden are good examples of this.

Group 2 - Local Government

Why talk about Local Government?

- Devolution and new community focused regional policies (e.g. The Localism Act in England, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales, Community Empowerment Act in Scotland) are throwing up new opportunities for community involvement, power shifts and real change
- Local Authorities (LAs) operate across different policy areas, and are often freed up from the siloed thinking of Central Government
- Exists at a physical scale where practical influence can happen more easily, with more scope to directly engage people

Although mechanisms exist for more community involvement in decision making and delivery of services, take up of the opportunity in some areas is very slow. So what is stopping us?

- Policy jam - Central Governments don't know how to get the message out & turn policy into practice
- Governmental contradiction – some Government departments pushing for devolution, others seeking more control
- Austerity - LAs under pressure to deliver more for less, making Officers fearful of stepping outside their boxes & less willing to take risks - also push to achieve efficiencies via big contracts, the merging of services & a one-size fits all approach
- Lack of awareness - Officers, members and communities unsure of new powers and how to use them – very uneven implementation
- Speed & siloes – LA processes move slowly making change difficult and time consuming. Within a LA departments can often be disjointed, contradictory and prescriptive
- Local democratic deficit – disconnection and disillusionment with local politics
- Role confusion – confusion over roles and powers of LA Officers, Members and Citizens – who is actually in charge? What is a public servant? Aren't citizens now just customers?
- Party political system - often dysfunctional at local level, adherence to “party-lines” inhibits collaboration between people and limits options in terms of what is best for local communities
- Lack of practical partnerships - closed culture & governance rules of LAs limits engagement with groups well placed to deliver (e.g enterprises & faith groups)

What do we need to turn opportunities for achieving community power into reality –

- New leadership models – move from single heroes to something more collaborative
- Local training - for Officers & Members on new powers, appropriate roles & how to work differently
- More confident, active citizens with higher expectations – increased awareness of new powers & capacity to use them
- More awareness of what is possible and what local people are achieving in other places
- Wider recruitment - creating a new generation of Officers to promote new approaches
- Adoption of participatory processes - allow for better facilitated conversations & collective decision making
- Peer support & partnerships - encouraging creative partnerships between LA and other organisations. Also creating learning opportunities between places to increase confidence.

What Local Authorities can usefully offer/what should their role be?

- Providing specialist skills and practical advice
- Commissioning of services based on local need
- Regulation & powers - e.g. using planning powers to get community orientated results
- Professional skills – using expertise to support layers of delivery

What can we do now to help change happen?

- Share our experience - people with direct experience of positive projects share experiences & success stories and help shift expectations
- Share practical examples - highlight great examples from other places e.g.
 - [Caring Town Totnes](#) – where Officers have moved their thinking from “them to us”
 - [Flatpack Democracy](#) in Frome – move away from party politics to more participatory and inclusive decision making

- [Mondragon Spain](#) - federation of cooperatives in Basque region of Spain employing over 75,000 people, across 250 organisations and the 10th largest company in Spain in terms of asset turnover
- Promote new attitudes - helping LAs 'reframe the problem' in a way that moves to engaging with people as whole human beings. Also recognising the local lived experience as expertise.
- Promote new models & approaches e.g. [Citizen's Jury](#) decision making models developed by the [Jefferson Centre](#) – how can communities come together round development (random plus process)
- More engagement, relationship building & skill sharing - work with & within organisations to build relationships & promote better facilitation & decision making
- Accountability - play role as critical friends asking timely questions & ensuring means balance with ends

Group Three – Sheffield & the Regather Journey

[Regather Works](#) started as part of Transition but ceased to be part of the movement a few years ago. Since then they have been working on a lot of different activities and also became increasingly aware of other groups with similar goals in their local area.

Two years ago Regather Works embarked on the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Community Economic Development (CED) planning process, in partnership with neighbouring organisations Sharrow Community Forum and Portland Works.

The CED is a process of research and conversation carried out by groups operating at a very local level. In this case the area included three Council Estates and associated green space.

The CED project gave the partners an opportunity to identify and articulate a set of problems from the bottom-up, and in a way that had not previously been understood at a city or devolved city level. Out of this process they identified the idea of a Little Sheffield and a Big Sheffield - with the likes of Regather, Portland Works and Sharrow Community Forum operating at the little scale, and the big anchor institutions like the Universities, City Council & the NHS operating at the other.

This framing allowed them to see how the two scales had become substantially misaligned. They then looked to identify an intervention that would strategically align interests across the different levels and institutions, and hit upon Urban Agriculture & the creation of a Sustainable Food City.

At the "little" scale Regather were already running a veg box programme in partnership with local producers of fresh products which was reaching about 200 consumers. They recognised that to have a real impact they would need to scale up their operations which would mean acquiring new land and technology.

They realised that millions of pounds of business development and growth funding was available at both the city region and local authority level, but that to secure it they would need to start engaging with these institutions in a language they understand. Using their "big/little" concept they started to think about how by working in partners operating at the big level they might be able to tap into the city-level infrastructure in a fundamentally different way.

Since then, they have engaged with the Skills Bank (a spoke of the Regional Growth Hub) regarding a bespoke training request. As a result they are now working with Sheffield Hallam University to develop a hi-tech market-garden/horticultural training programme.

Group four - Investment pipeline - how to invest in lifeboats

Pension funds, foundations & individual investors have trillions of pounds to invest. There is a growing demand for new ethical investment options BUT at present investors are struggling to lend to community businesses, social enterprises and local projects. Why?

- Projects too small scale for large investors - new pathways and linkages needed

- Social Enterprises – may be grant dependent, lack the confidence to take on risk (particularly if this involves risking other local people's money) or the skills to seek investment
- Current model about money flowing from A to B & probably extracting a return in opposite direction, which doesn't necessarily align with broader aims of the movement

What other contextual issues are in play -

- Pensions changes - more demand for ethical pension investment, new options for personal control over your pension pots
- Stigma of debt - many people involved in community business, especially in poorer areas, may have had a bad experience with financial services industry & are reluctant to engage
- Big banks – Despite financial scandals big banks enjoy an enduring reputation as the most credible financial services providers among UK consumers. Withdrawal from the high street and removal of paper money could undermine this creating space for new players.

So how can you create a pipeline for investment to local and social projects? What models work?

- Local 'impact investment' for social projects – where local people invest in social projects and get financial and/or non-financial social returns
- Local Investment Funds & [Community Development Finance Initiatives](#) (CDFIs) – people donating money to be loaned on a revolving basis or given out in grants
- Micro-finance – amounts low and helps distribute risk which is identified as barrier to many
- Peer to peer lending – where successful enterprises help nascent ones, concerns about ethics of passing on risk within the community
- Community Shares – well trialled but can be high maintenance. Set up of common bonds could be an option?
- Voluntary Local Tax - raising new local taxes e.g. German Church Tax set at approximately 8/9% of income tax and raised €9.2bn in 2010
- Community Funds - where members pay small amount e.g. £1 per week into investment pot (see [Solid Fund](#) in Group 6 below)
- Credit Unions & community banking – identified as a great mechanism where they are well supported ([Robert Owens Community Bank](#)) – vital we use them & influence investment

Important considerations

- Non money investment – important to enable non-monetary community investment options to include people who can't buy in, can't invest with money. Examples from Washington The Lion.
- Shifting roles - establishing a community of investors can be a powerful way of getting people to reconsider their relationship with local social business. Example - Local Entrepreneurs Forum
- Culture change needed – not useful to tell stories about being victims. More powerful to raise awareness of trailblazers and existing avenues through FX and crowdfunder, CDFIs.
- Scale - initiatives need to work at a reasonable scale. Bank of Brixton too small to work, not enough lending power. Bank of Lambeth looks more feasible. Again in Sheffield original Community Economic Development area too small. Now looking to expand area of operation. Can achieve scale through linking of smaller networks, not necessarily one big mass.
- Start-Up funding - Most enterprises will need some form of initial funding to get to being investment-ready.

Key questions for key economists -

- Could we look at new taxes or digital currencies linked to Land Value? If so could this enable communities to benefit from the uplift in land value stimulated by new development, and reduce the pressure of rapid gentrification?
- Are any there organisations who might be well placed to provide a link between investors and the smaller projects - possibly through the set-up of new Local Investment Funds?

- Community Development Finance Initiatives/Associations are massive in the States but not here. Is culture the main barriers? If so what can be done to create a shift?
- If Credit Unions like Robert Owen Community Bank are making a difference, how might we support the growth of credit unions? Could we play a role in promoting and propagating them?
- Confidence gaps, negative experiences of the financial services industry & stigma of debt were all identified as potential barriers to pursuing investment. Grant funding considered safer and less risky. What can be done to increase local understanding and confidence of investment options?

Examples of people experimenting with interesting models -

- [Local Investing Opportunities Network](#) (LION) of East Jefferson County, Washington - group of citizens creating opportunities for local businesses, individuals, and local investors to network.
- [Les Moore & Open Money](#) - a wealth-acknowledgment information system

Group 5 - Sustainable Local Currencies

The group started by looking at two models of currency or way of recording value – one is Bristol pound (based on Sterling) and other is time banks.

The two models are very different and are trying to do very different things. In different ways each model has flaws which makes them quite exclusive;

- [Bristol Pound](#) – only useful if you have sterling to start with. This means it can seem exclusive and more for “cupcakes and coffee” rather than everyday essentials that people need. Also business model relies on a high volume of transactions - can run into difficulties if people don't spend.
- [Timebanks](#) are only any good if you have time and don't really create livelihoods, which is no good for people who need to earn a living to meet their needs. Group noted that due to rising house, food and energy prices more and more people are falling into this category.

The group spent the rest of the session considering potential ways to improve on these models & other new ideas of ways to unlock value -

- Adopt the Demurrage system or ‘money that rusts’– currency loses value over time which creates an incentive to spend to make money circulate faster. Method adopted in Stroud and many examples of this working well ([Stroud Pounds](#) depreciate 3% every six months, thereby members have to attach a stamp of the value of 3% of the face value to keep the currency valid). Question over environmental impact of incentivising consumption.
- Base currency on local land value tax - meaning community gains value from any uplift in land value following from development not just the landowners
- Carry out more measurement & impact studies - to evaluate how the schemes work, consumer spending behaviour & who benefits
- Create new exchange systems - so people who are time rich but cash poor can trade time for other things e.g. food vouchers - would allow people to get something back & increases self worth.
- Opportunity to take community fridge model for food and explore how this could be used to unlock other perishable resources e.g. cinemas, buses etc.
- Money based currencies often seem based on ‘early adopter’ model and can feel exclusive - keen to find new ways to address barriers and make it easy. reverse this making model more inclusive. Finding way to convert time into money seems like a potential starting point. Not least by finding ways to account for the rapidly expanding “caring economy” and finding ways to put value in people's pockets.

Interesting models identified included -

- Development of [Mutual credit circles](#) (WIR)
- [Spice](#) - time credits with digitised points system
- Newcastle Under Lyme - Hometown Plus Sunshine Points being planned (with precedent in Holland)

Group 6 - From volunteering to livelihoods

The group started thinking of two questions -

- How could individuals be paid to set up enterprises
- How could people playing a 'connector role' be paid (e.g. people supporting the development of new social enterprises and the support infrastructure for new enterprises)

On the connector role -

- This role needs to be properly recognised as a new role, with an eco-system of support
- Individuals can create a 'mixed economy' of income to meet their needs e.g. by doing a bit of lecturing, workshop facilitation, consultancy etc.

Then considered how can existing funding streams and money be used for Connectors to be supported?

- Working on a limited number of projects for free can be a gateway into paid consultancy work
- Rather than recruiting Business Support Officers, Local Authorities could hire & pay connector consultants (who possibly work as part of a co-op) to deliver specific projects/commissions
- This would need Local Authorities and other commissioning bodies to be prepared to spend their money differently - useful to show models of where alternatives are working
- Successful enterprises (who may have received help in the past) could pay a tithe into a general pot to be used to pay Connectors to support the set-up and growth of newer enterprises e.g. pay £1 per week into a fund distributed in either grants or loans (see Solid Fund below)

On the individual entrepreneur role -

- Seeing work as 'voluntary time' is unhelpful - need to start thinking more as activists/entrepreneurs. Also noted that volunteers can be helpful!
- It is not a level playing field - easier for people with the time, financial resources & attitude to get things moving. As living costs are getting higher, finding ways of bringing living costs down might be part of the solution e.g. housing coops
- Also need to create sources of funding to enable people who do not have the capacity to give their time for free to be supported for a period of time before their idea becomes viable
- Models for this exist within the co-op movement e.g. [Solid Fund](#) invites people, organisations & co-ops to join. Each member pays £1 per week into the fund. Money used to pay for education and training for members. Decisions made collectively through a Loomio discuss & decide group. Fund currently standing at approximately £50k
- Co-working spaces like the [Impact Hubs](#) facilitate organic, peer to peer support, as entrepreneurs naturally mix in a space. Possible that some of the surplus made by individual enterprises within a co-working hub could be channeled back into business support.
- Informal peer support networks between established and emerging enterprises also happening in other places e.g. there is a trickle down of support happening through Local Entrepreneur Forums.
- At [Regather](#) in Sheffield they build R&D into their overheads to support new trading activities
- Integrated time-banking schemes could be another option
- Need to consider what scales these coops, networks and support initiatives should work on. Possibly lots of small, not big is the way forward.

Examples from other places -

- [Mondragon](#) in Spain - operating at scale running banks, universities and more - money flowing from their anchor institutions stays local.
- [The Preston Model](#) (using Mondragon/[Cleveland model](#)) - helping statutory funding stay local
- Solid Fund - £1 donations into communal pot

Post presentation discussion & observations

Overall discussion started looking at general framing, moved on to discussion about what individual businesses need and then moved on to talking about the future of REconomy or a broader movement, with a final

conversation about potential for systemic change. There was some fluidity between these areas, so in a limited number of cases comments been moved to reflect this.

Framing our work

- Are we selling ourselves short by focusing on the community aspects/benefits?
- Does this put us in a small Community Economic Development Box?
- Would it be a stronger message if we focused on the real economic & commercial potential?

Community Businesses

Scaling-up & moving on

- Funding streams often start-up and then scale up. Need to work out how to do local scale-up.
- When organisations move from planning to delivery stage, they can start to take on new roles e.g. developer, banker, commissioner. Need to have the confidence to inhabit their new roles, and the ability of their alternative delivery models.
- Although scaling-up can seem scary, problems are often solved and risk can be diminished when things get bigger.
- Can be useful of thinking in terms of scaling up at an intensely local level e.g. Open Project Nights

Adaptability

- Need to be able to change language to suit the audience.
- As community groups move into the business of delivery, culture can shift. It is important to remember our values. If the connection with our activities and values becomes fragile, we need to take time out and question why we are doing it.

Network & REconomy

Do we need an internal REconomy network?

- People seem interested in shift towards entrepreneurial culture
- There may be a role for spreading “what works”.
- Useful to share tools and connections
- Being part of a supportive network, where people with experience are willing to stand besides people starting out, can help people have the confidence to start doing things

Organisational culture & funding orientation

- REconomy work should not just end because funding is ended? If so would this make us more business-like and businesses more community-like?
- Query over non-profit orientation. Can feel like work is done in a ‘client service’ way. TN feels like a network or mature community franchise.
- Potentially better to take a more activist-led approach in the future. Noted that in current funding climate funded third sector bodies are struggling whilst activist-led organisations are often more sustainable as they keep plodding on.
- Funding challenge can give you an edge, it can be useful to feel uncomfortable.
- Need for money can be over-emphasised. By building strong relationships, events and activities can be run for nothing.
- We are also about sustainability, and it is important to think about modes for making it sustainable.
- Possibly useful to consider a mixed approach. Question over whether people working on delivering local projects have the capacity to give time to network or peer mentoring (see below). Asking for more time can start to cost a lot.
- Old-fashioned funding models might not be right. Community Banks and Credit Unions might be an alternative. Could there be a REconomy Fund, like the Solid Fund?

Peer to peer mentoring

- Thanks A lot of interest in the Renew Wales model. Scope to try it in England & possibly something people would be interested in exploring
- Query whether this model based still relies heavily on securing external funding which is a real limitation (see funding orientation above)
- Seems like peer to peer champions can have huge benefits, and if small amount of funding helps this happen maybe it that is useful. Could we have a mixed-contribution-economy/funding-mix?
- There are examples of people who are earning a living from advising people on how to do REconomy work. Are paid advisors the way forward?

Values & future focus

- We have the luxury of standing for something
- Great to be in a space are people are naturally collaborating and not competing
- Lots of players in the new economy/local economy space. We have a network of amazing people already doing stuff & can bring entrepreneurs to the table. Is TN uniquely placed in the arena?
- Does REconomy in the future need a clearer/stronger agenda of what we would like to see?
- Needs to be more discussion about what and who the economy is for

Politics and convergence

- Many people in UK (especially the North) are feeling disillusioned. People are sick of things and want change. In other countries people have managed to channel these feelings & deliver transformational change.
- (Noted in earlier workshop on currencies: Things feel different in places like Spain, Portugal and Greece where there is a sense of communal crisis. In the UK is it more of a drip, drip, drip that picks people off - making it more difficult to get activity off the ground).
- Things are already becoming intensely political e.g. hacking local political structures. Bringing that together with a vision of system change is a real opportunity.
- How might this be accelerated? Is it about bringing together digital-business-community? Is it about giving real life (international) examples of where big change has happened including the voices of those whose lives have changed?
- Scaling up and connecting is key - wider than Transition or REconomy?
- Catalysing entrepreneurial culture is part of the story, but more systematic change needed.

International dimension




- People can do REconomy work anywhere. National differences exist
- Are there opportunities to import idea of projects that are working in poorer communities in other countries, to deprived areas of the UK?
- There is interest in being more connected and with people in other places and being part of an international movement.

Scaling up a movement

- As a movement we can seem stuck between thinking super local or global
- What is the best way to 'hold space' for rapid scaling up?
- Need to get networked, need to recognise the opportunity of power and paradigm shifts, need to be open to working across boundaries.

Examples of inspiring people and organisations

<p>Independents for Frome</p>

	<p>Independents for Frome (IfF) operates primarily at election times. It is a way to enable truly independent candidates to stand – and win – local elections in Frome.</p> <p>In 2015 all 17 IfF candidates were elected and will serve until 2019. They now operate as Frome Town Council. The councillors continue to adhere to the Ways of Working which guided the selection process of candidates and which underpin the open, positive and constructive approach to local politics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ifF Ways of Working • ifF Successes • Frome Town Council website <p>The model of local politics developed by IfF is now being replicated and adapted quite widely. This is promoted through Flatpack Democracy, which sets out a DIY guide to share our initial ideas. Find out more:</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/flatpackdemocracy/</p>
<p>Robert Owen Community Banking</p>		
	<p>Providing fairer, local finance to homes, businesses and communities across Wales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their objectives • Community Energy Fund • Making a Community Investment • Fair business loans
<p>Mondragon Corporation</p>		
	<p>A federation of worker cooperatives in the Basque Region of Spain founded in 1956. It employs c. 75,000 people in over 250 organisations across industry, finance, retail and knowledge. It is the 10th largest company in Spain in terms of asset turnover.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mondragon website • Guardian article from 2013
<p>Preston City Council</p>		



Council leader Peter Rankin believes Preston can benefit from the co-operative Cleveland model (also based on Mondragon) where workers co-ops are set up to supply local institutions. Preston council committed to a co-operative initiative for economic development in 2011 and in 2013, the council employed the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, to help identify 12 large institutions anchored to Preston, including the city and the county council, the university, the police and the hospital. It looked at redirecting the £1.2bn total annual spending power of these anchors to local businesses. The council is looking at setting up a local bank to provide loans to small businesses and becoming a municipal energy provider.

- [The Cleveland Model](#)
- [CLES](#)
- [The Preston co-operative initiative](#)
- [Guardian article \(April 2017\)](#)

Renew Wales



Renew Wales was set up by a group of community practitioners to help 200 community groups tackle the causes and impacts of climate change through advice, training, mentoring and technical support from other experienced Community Practitioners. The support is peer to peer from people who have already delivered projects in their communities.

- [Renew Wales](#)
- [Register your group](#)

Scottish Community Alliance



Aims to help the community sector in Scotland to develop its own distinct identity and voice so that it can campaign effectively on a wide range of issues. Two main functions – to promote the work of local people in their communities and to influence national policy development. Engages with over 2000 community based organisations.

- [Scottish Community Alliance](#)

Solid Fund



Fund aimed at developing a self reliant network of workers cooperatives. Members each pay £1 per week into the fund and can apply for support for education and training. Funding decisions made by members via online discuss and decide group.

[Solid Fund](#)