

A Vision for a New Democracy in The UK

Here's a vision for what could emerge from our decentralised community democracy building projects across the UK. But first, some quick bits on vision, its uses and abuses:

"When activists mistake heaven for some goal at which they must arrive, rather than an idea to navigate Earth by, they burn themselves out, or they set up a totalitarian utopia in which others are burned in the flames. Don't mistake a lightbulb for the moon, and don't believe that the moon is useless unless we land on it." ~ **Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark**

"Vision without action is useless. But action without vision does not know where to go or why to go there"

"More than that, vision, when widely shared and firmly kept in sight, brings into being new systems" ~ **Donella Meadows**

"Perfection is a stick with which to beat the possible. " ~ **Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark**

Building our web

By connecting all of our different communities who are using local assemblies, we will be able to coordinate, communicate and engage in mutually beneficial collective decision making.

"In the long term, a system of dual power would transform into what we call communalism or democratic confederalism: an allied network of interdependent communes or regions that work together in a directly democratic way.

On the local level, the neighbourhood assembly makes the decisions and decides the course of action. On a bigger level, these organisations band together in what is called a confederation: a body of recallable delegates with imperative mandates, directly accountable to their communities.

*This body would allow communes to exchange resources, support each other, and make democratic decisions. Without this kind of networking, collaboration, and interdependence across borders, local movements are just that: local, isolated, and doomed to fail, again and again. But through international confederation, we can pose a real threat to global capitalism and the ruling class" - **Symbiosis Research Collective (article)***

"What, then, is confederalism? It is above all a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages,

towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. The members of these confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policymaking one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government.” - Murray Bookchin, The Next Revolution: direct democracy and the promise of popular assemblies

This is how we could build our power without needing to be cookie-cutter copies of one another.

Connecting Neighbourhood Assemblies

How could assemblies connect? They would need a standard criteria for legitimacy, elected delegates and could connect over specific shared issues. E.g.:

Criteria for legitimacy:

- All reasonable effort made to invite everyone in an area.
- Regularly attended by over 150 local residents.
- PA process closely followed.

Delegates:

- Are elected by the assembly with precise mandates
- Are recallable by the assembly
- Are for administering the decisions of the assembly not setting the agenda.

Different types of assemblies for different issues:

- Assemblies can divide into themes:
 1. Health
 2. Education
 3. Etc
- Delegates from these smaller themed assemblies can then meet at higher levels

Higher level councils

Higher level councils (district, county, etc.) could be reformed so that all councillors are delegates from “lower level” neighbourhood assemblies. This would allow them to coordinate and collaborate on matters that affect the whole region. They would make efforts to give as much power, resources and decision making to the bottom layer (the neighbourhood assemblies) as possible. See the image to the right explaining the Rojava model.

Dual Power and local authorities

Dual Power is the idea that parallel systems of government and power are crucial for catalysing system change: without an alternative, we cannot withdraw our participation in the existing

system.

“A revolutionary transfer of authority to popular organs of radical democracy requires the preexistence of such participatory institutions, not a naive faith that they will be conjured into being out of a general strike, mass retraction of public support, or insurrectionary upheaval.” - John Michael Colon et. al.

Community, Democracy and Mutual Aid (essay)

It is an open question whether our new democratic structure would best exist separate from the existing council system (the “dual power” method), or as a new way of managing it. Here are some scenarios for how local assemblies could interact with the local council:

- **Good:** the local assemblies input and shape a local council’s policy.
- **Better:** a parallel council of delegates from neighbourhood assemblies input directly into decision making, where they elected individuals are just conduits.
- **Best:** the council structure is changed so that it is only made up of recallable delegates from the local assembly.

As higher and higher levels of the council system are “reclaimed” by a popular democratic movement, this movement will gain influence, support from the people. This influence could be used to demand that power, decision-making and resources are devolved from the state to the locality: a re-localisation of politics and democracy.

Creativity

One of our biggest threats is fulfilling the mainstream perception of more democracy as more boring, deadening meetings. If we want to build a democratic revolution we will have to draw on all of our resources of creativity, play and joy.

“Revolutionary moments are carnivals in which the individual life celebrates its unification with a regenerated society,” wrote Situationist Raoul Vaneigem. The question, then, is not so much how to create the world as how to keep alive that moment of creation, how to realize that Coyote world in which creation never ends and people participate in the power of being creators, a world whose hopefulness lies in its unfinishedness, its openness to improvisation and participation.” - Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark.

“Every one of us who has experienced a meeting, or a seminar, or a conference, or a class which was exciting, enabling, or even transformatory knows exactly

what real democracy feels like. It feels like the moment when the meeting is as thrilling as a good party; or conversely, when the party seems as potentially meaningful and significant as a good meeting. Perhaps it feels like the moment when the distinction between a party and a meeting seems harder to sustain, or at least unimportant.” - **Jeremy Gilbert Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism**

We need a structure that allows maximum creativity and play, just the bare minimum to ensure accountability, inclusion, efficiency...

“...political and social institutions should be judged at least partly in terms of their creativity, which is to say in terms of the extent to which they facilitate the expression of that creative potential which is implicit in any set of social relations. How far do schools enable collaborations between students and teachers to develop new and innovative forms of learning and knowledge? How far do clinics enable patients and doctors to find innovative ways of improving public health? How far do broadcasters and other cultural institutions enable genuinely new ways of thinking and feeling to emerge?

These would be the criteria for judging political institutions according to this logic: as opposed to the neoliberal managerialist demand that such institutions be judged in terms of their ability to meet a predetermined set of ‘targets’, or the conservative communitarian demand that they enable given communities merely to remain exactly what they already are, these democratic criteria would ask how far they enable any given collectivity to explore its own potential.”

- **Jeremy Gilbert Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism**
