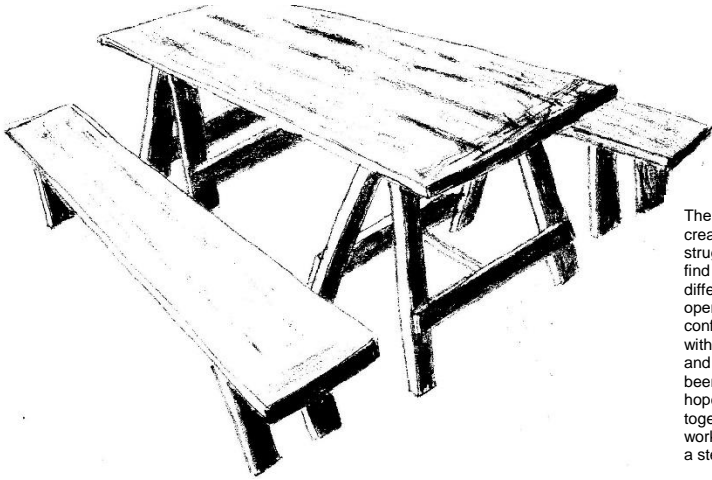


Around the Table: Reflections on Collective Working

This publication comes out of a series of conversations at The Field, a social centre in New Cross, London. The initial conversations were prompted by a collaboration by Zarino M. Lanni, at that point a member of The Field, and Fred Dewey, writer and educator, to apply his working group method of reading Hannah Arendt at The Field. Through this working group method, we aimed to discuss issues of difference, plurality and politics. Here we attempt to continue the conversation that was started there, through some reflections on personal experiences and memories by a small number of people involved in a range of collective projects. These are broader reflections not just limited to The Field, but ones which may shed more general light on processes of collective working in activist spaces.



In this pamphlet Christine Haigh writes about how people may have different stakes in activist projects, reflecting on her time spent as a housing activist and member of two housing cooperatives. Rosemin Najmudin describes her thought processes during the conversations prompted by Fred Dewey and Hannah Arendt and through them reflects on her own conflictual relationship with The Field. Jacob Stringer discusses internal and external stresses involved in organising at The Field, and Claudia Firth, (also co-editor of this publication), describes the friction of social relations in a London housing co-op and the labour involved in repairing and maintaining them. Lastly there is a prose poem on community cohesion by Danielle M. Heath.

The aim of the reading sessions, as agreed among some of The Field's members, was to create a space in which people could speak and have an equal say. We felt that there was a struggle, for the initial group involved in The Field and increasingly for others who joined, to find such a space. That while work had been done to agree on ways of working and to air differences, it had not been enough. While we had elaborated on our values and structures of operating as a collective, they weren't always remembered or adhered to, and sometimes conflicted with day to day decisions that the members managing the space had to make. Like with many groups, some people felt that certain personalities dominated, that cliques formed and people felt excluded. This was disappointing because the overall aim of The Field had been to build alliances between different groups and people, particularly in the local area. We hoped that the working group conversations on Arendt would provide an exercise in thinking together. And that we could become more conscious and able to engage with each other and work together, with the differences and discomforts these can produce. We wanted to provide a step in allowing a multiplicity of voices into the space.

The collective set up The Field to create commons and address the politics of inequality and difference between racialized, gendered, mentally or physically dis-abled or classed bodies. The initial ethos of The Field, was as a space where people from almost all walks of life should be able to find a space, to "sit" around the table and engage with the politics of the place. This at times translated into a cacophony of perspectives that promoted activities such as public debates, the co-existence of disparate groups (i.e. unions, university-related activities, choirs) and individuals using the space, where direct actions, fundraising, decision making for running the place, co-working office space, bike workshops, art therapies, theatre and music rehearsals as well as various leisurely activities from Yoga to art therapy were mostly free and open to anyone. The place captivated the imagination, as a hub for social change through the forging of relationships and the building of solidarity. It seemed important that to learn how to act outside of our comfort zones and to work through our differences was a fundamental step to accomplish this.

Through the readings and discussions, which were open to the wider public, we wanted to bring these things literally to the table. To discuss difference in politics and how it is to work within spaces of collectivity, with all their complexities. To 'bring things to the table', is to place them as topics for discussion, but it is also worth focussing attention on the table itself. A table is a thing that people can share and an object around which they can sit. It appears as a metaphor in the Arendt text extract chosen by Fred for the reading sessions. For Arendt, the table is a metaphor for public space: providing the arena for what everyone can see and hear. The space of politics. Sitting and taking up different places in relation to the table, the people who have gathered literally have different vantage points around it. For Arendt this allows for disagreement while also being a stable shared object in front of them. It relates them to each other and separates them at the same time. Fred Dewey describes the coming together of people around the table as a kind of proto-polis, 'the gathering builds a preliminary, or *propaedeutic* leading *into* politics'.¹ This is an introductory lesson in politics defined as people meeting, concerned with what is between them and in front of them. It aims to form a political equality among the differences. While the discussion was productive, some people found Arendt's writing inaccessible. Even so, it seemed to provide a useful perspective through which to debate everyday issues. This sometimes became quite heated. For instance there was a difficult conversation around anti-semitism and feelings ran high. The questions of how or whether listening was always even possible, desirable or just, were real ones that we had to face in order to work towards having an inclusive conversation.

Many different people attended the sessions, including seasoned members of The Field and newcomers. People talked of their experiences of working in groups and collectives and shared challenges they had had to face. Although, the sessions perhaps didn't quite create the space that was needed or affect The Field in the way it was hoped, they produced some useful reflections. The desired space to talk was only fleeting and temporary, and perhaps that is only to be expected. As Arendt says, the space for politics exists wherever people gather together: 'it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.'² This is one of the reasons it seemed a good idea to extend an invitation to write and record experiences of collective working.

Claudia Firth & Zarino Maru Lanni

A Diversity of Stakes in Housing Projects

Christine Haigh

After nearly a decade of working as part of different collectives and projects seeking to challenge the capitalist housing system, it feels like a good time for me to reflect on their strengths, failings and differences. These projects range from the household level, in two different housing co-operatives that both in different ways seek to provide different means of collectively owning and controlling housing, and living together outside of a traditional nuclear family set-up, to campaigns organised at the city or regional level that sought to influence national housing policy. In conversation with one of the convenors of this pamphlet, a theme that emerged from all of these projects was that of the diversity of objectives, motivations and what is at stake for the different actors involved in these collective endeavours, something that I am attempting to elaborate on more coherently here.

As the housing crisis began to bite more acutely in the first years of the 2010-15 UK coalition government's austerity programme (following decades of financialisation of housing), existing grassroots housing groups found themselves reinvigorated and new collectives emerged both to support those at the sharp end of the crisis and challenge those policies that were seen to be causing and exacerbating housing injustice. These included London Renters, a loose coalition of local authority-based private tenants' groups (which has since disbanded and been replaced by the more coherent and representative London Renters Union), and the Radical Housing Network, an alliance of over 30 groups and campaigns across London fighting for housing justice, including council and private tenants groups, squatting and homelessness projects, and those challenging gentrification. In both networks, there appeared to be a diversity of motivations for the involvement of the different member groups and the individuals that represented them at meetings and through online platforms such as email groups.

For some, being part of a network, with the information-sharing and solidarity that this entails, was sufficient motivation for their involvement. This was often reflected in an emphasis on using meeting time for groups to share detailed updates about their local activities, and a desire to identify similarities between specific campaigns and struggles for the purpose of practical solidarity and skill-sharing.

For others, their strategy was dependent on participation in wider coalitions or networks. Housing activists have often organised at the local level because struggles are by definition geographically based and people have often united around a concrete battle for a home (for example, resisting an eviction), an estate (often against demolition or 'redevelopment') or a neighbourhood (against gentrification). However, given that the UK housing crisis is a national phenomena (albeit more acute in some regions than others) and largely attributed to central government policies (or sometimes a lack of them), action at the local level and in particular campaigning directed at cash-strapped local authorities mainly run by opposition parties could often feel inadequate. But local renters groups from across London coming together around common struggles such as unaffordable rents and insecurity of tenure to challenge power holders in the capital while simultaneously remaining rooted in local struggles could make for a more coherent strategy to reform the conditions under which an increasing proportion of the population live.

The existence of these networks could also facilitate the organisation of collective activities such as protests, trainings or conferences. One site of diversity or potential conflict within these networks was often whether and how to undertake such projects, particularly when their success depended on a certain minimum amount of 'buy-in' from member groups. Typically an enthusiastic individual or group within the network would propose such a project but agreement to proceed would be useful to the network or at least some members, they either could not or did not want to

prioritise their personal or group's resources to help with realising it. In some cases, particularly with fairly straightforward undertakings, such as creating a set of resources of new housing groups, this did not create conflict or resentment, but in more ambitious projects, such as organising a conference or large-scale protest, a failure to gain widespread 'buy-in' from the wider network could result in frustration, burnout for a small number of individuals shouldering the majority of organising work, or even failure in the case of a planned mass mobilisation supported by too few groups.

My more recent experience of organising against the capitalist housing system has taken the form of building small-scale practical alternatives to individual home-ownership and the exploitative private rental market in the form of housing co-operatives. In two projects I have been involved in, one in London and the other in Swansea, individual participation has been driven by a diversity of motivations. One of the strongest in this type of project is typically a fundamental need to house oneself – but within this there can be a variety of motivations, from those who are often excluded from mainstream housing options due to their low income or receipt of Housing Benefit, to those who have the resources to obtain housing through other means yet seek the other benefits of co-housing arrangements such as company, shared meals, support with mental health problems, sharing responsibilities such as parenting or simply the tedious but necessary tasks of managing a house and home.

Surprisingly frequently (including in my own personal experience), people can also find themselves working to build co-housing projects in which they never expect to live. Often this occurs where impending life changes (in my case a move from London to Swansea) means that a project that might once have had the potential to house someone no longer does. Yet the nature of these endeavours often means that we believe in what the project is trying to achieve and want to see it succeed (and not see work we have put in up to this point go to waste). This sense is often enhanced by seeing how often new housing collectives fail to come to fruition – but can shift these actors role from 'doing for us' to 'doing for others', with potential implications for the sense of ownership resident members may feel.

In my current co-op in Swansea, we have also recently been navigating diversity of opinion with regard to expanding the project from a single house to a two-house collective. Motivation has ranged from those who feel that their needs are not met by the current house and while wanting to maintain a high degree of communal living, seek a smaller house with more flexibility about how the degree of communal living, seek a smaller house with more flexibility about how the communal space is used, to those who full support expansion of the co-op as an alternative to conventional housing options both socially and financially but want to stay living where and as they do currently, to those for whom the expansion of the co-op (with the change of membership and living arrangements that this will entail) feels like a challenge that is not necessarily welcomed.

Obviously in these latter collectives where participants live together, the stakes – namely maintaining the structures to remain housed – are typically much higher (although housing campaigns often engage in direct struggles, such as eviction resistance, to try to achieve the same end) and as a result the level of 'buy-in' is greater and the turnover of active members is much lower – although this tends only to be true of established housing co-operatives, with collectives that have not yet housed any of their members often finding it more difficult to retain a stable membership and involvement over an extended period. By contrast, the housing campaigns and networks that I have described have much lower barriers to entry (both for individuals and groups) and their membership, form and function has typically been much more fluid – which brings both strengths and challenges.

Meanwhile, power within such collectives often reflect the traditional privileges such as gender, class, education, race (which often manifest in whether and how people can participate in such meetings) – but may also be the product of more chance circumstance: the campaign that has taken off against all the odds and has more members able to propose and take on new projects within a network, or a couple of co-op members realising that the different living situation they are looking for coincides and they can work together to achieve this. As participants we should be mindful of our intersectional privileges and actively seek to rectify their effects within our collectives as well as within society more broadly but also recognise that these are never the only forces at play.

In all of these collectives, ambiguity over the objectives and diversity of motivation can be a challenge and frequent source of heated debate and conflict – but can also be a strength, widening participation compared to organisations where all actors must share a narrow focus, and enabling participants to have varying levels of involvement according to their resources and objectives. So as participants in collectives such as these, rather than trying to force alignment of objectives where this is not always possible – and may even stifle the diversity of involvement that this may bring - perhaps our priority should be to consciously recognise where there is a range of motivations for participation, and accept and embrace the diversity that this may bring to our organising.

Working Together with Stress

Jacob Stringer

At the beginning, organising at The Field filled me with excitement. The project was bursting with possibilities and some days I went home from a meeting or event walking on air. It continued to fill me with excitement for some time after the beginning. Some of those possibilities did become realities, there were great highs and some of the usual lows of trying to do anything experimental. Then, at a certain point, The Field began to fill me with stress. There were times the excitement and stress overlapped and that felt bearable. By the time I left, stress had destroyed all joy. The specific reasons for this change would make fairly dull reading to outsiders to the project. I would rather discuss some generalities I began to see emerging in this and other projects I have been a part of. Stress in organising is often discussed as something to be avoided. Take care of yourself, we are admonished. Make your meetings fun. And so we try to get decisions made without becoming stressed, and that seems like a good goal. But there are, I find myself thinking, many causes of stress, some of which cannot be avoided entirely. I'll discuss here two stress factors, and the possibilities of truly ending them.

The first type of stress comes from our internal drives. We have a dream and want to see it brought into reality. The gap between what a project is and what we want it to be can fill us with tension. Therapy and self-help books have a lot to say about how to resolve this tension, but a lot of it feels unhelpful to those of a radical political persuasion. Learn to accept, be content with what is, we are often admonished. Look within yourself and see that you are creating the stress. Yet it is in the nature of those with radical political views that they are dissatisfied with what is. Trying to suppress that side of ourselves would be to kill part of our identity. And so the project we are building grows, yet grows into something we don't quite recognise from our dreams. As time goes on the divergence grows greater, because life is not controllable in the way we want it to be. How are we to deal with this? Our dreams drive us. Is it time to discard our dreams in order to face reality? That feels like giving up. Why not just leave capitalism as it is then? Why not just wait for the rising seas to find us? Or perhaps we could compromise a little, between our dreams and reality. Compromise? Who wants that? Nobody. But it is necessary for those who want to work collectively. The compromise we must make is not with capital or our rulers, but with those around us and the reality of our collective resources. That compromise so often feels like a loss of dreams that it can become part of our angst about the world. But need it be a source of stress? What of valuing the dreams of those around us? And what of respecting the limits of ourselves and our capacities? Can we not build dreams that encompass other people and our own limits within the world? Perhaps we would have to learn to dream anew, but is that such a bad thing? A change to our ways of being created by pursuing a radical path is bound to include a change to our dreams, isn't it? Yet it is the original dream that drove us, it is our very engine. How can we abandon it? And if we do allow our dreams to change, in a few years' time would circumstances make us abandon that new vision in turn and re-shape our dreams once again? In the end I can only present this as a kind of puzzle, not a solution to stress.

The second type of stress is that which comes from disagreement and outright conflict. At The Field these were low-key at the beginning, which is not to say we agreed on everything, more that one of the problems of 'consensus' decision-making is the tendency for the conflicts to be pushed below the surface for the sake of a functioning organisation. There are also other reasons for conflict to remain hidden: to make life easier, for politeness sake, because friendships might be damaged, because dominant people wield social power, or because you all just want to go home at the end of the night. Hiding the conflict creates one kind of stress, perhaps emerging in sleepless nights or drunken rants to friends not involved in the project. But bringing the conflict out into the open - much healthier, we all agree - often makes the stress worse. Now people are openly upset at things other people are saying. Friendships are being strained, even broken. The conflict begins to poison other parts of the organising. Nobody feels good about meetings. I say 'nobody', but here's something we don't always notice: our tolerance for conflict and the stress it creates varies with our upbringings. Psychologists talk about our ability to self-regulate in response to stress factors; that is to say, our ability to return to a relaxed state when something has caused us to go into alert mode. We differ wildly in our ability to do this. Those who had parents who helped them 'self-regulate' their feelings are more able to hold the conflict without letting it reach their inner core. They are unlikely to take the stress to bed with them. Those with parents whose own stress or neglect meant they didn't learn to self-regulate well will find such conflicts more intrusive. The stress will begin to overrun their lives and haunt their dreams. For a minority whose childhoods were troubled or abusive in certain ways, their stress levels are so high all the time that the conflict will make little difference to them, will simply blur into the constant stress that is life, leading them to feel little need to limit the conflict.

We can try to resolve these stressful conflicts, but I do not take the view that they can always be resolved. Sometimes standpoints or personalities are too far apart, sometimes the demands of our inner selves are set directly against the desires of others. Even when we can resolve the conflict, people's reactions to it arise not just from their views, or their level of investment in the debate, not even just from their learned reactions to stress, but also from the way they have been raised to regard conflict itself. Is conflict an okay thing to live with, or is it to be smoothed over as soon as possible? Is conflict a bit of a game, or is it a catastrophe? People react differently too to

'losing' an argument. In consensus decision-making losing is not really supposed to happen, but in my experience it does. How it feels to us to lose depends to a high degree on our histories. The emotional landscape of our upbringings then creates a whole set of stress factors that can intersect with class, race, gender, in complex and difficult ways. It is difficult to talk about this publicly, for perhaps many people don't recognise their own stress response, or have no wish to talk about its origins. Yet it lurks there whether we talk about it or not. We could perhaps create more of a therapeutic culture within our organisations, attempt to recognise our traumas and how they prevent us working together, but even if everyone were willing to engage with such a culture, therapy is a long process and not always successful. Unless we can reach a utopia where every childhood is trauma-free, conflict and our differing responses to conflict will continue to create stress among us.

I wish we could organise without stress, yet I think there's something inevitable in its appearance among those trying to create a new world: tensions must arise in the process of creating anything collective and anything new. Perhaps if we accept this we can begin to understand more about stress, where it comes from, how to negotiate with it. And yes, I feel sure we can reduce our stress by learning more about each other and how to work together. But I suspect we must work with stress as we must work with other less welcome certainties of political organising - setbacks, exhaustion, moments of doubt - not as something we can get rid of entirely. It's good to talk about the joys of political action, but I've never met anyone who found it to be all joy. Stress always creeps in. We can't wish it away and we can't design it away with more fun meetings. Perhaps we should talk about that.

Reflections on Living in a Housing Co-op

Claudia Firth

There are over 200 housing co-ops all over London, most of which came out of campaigns and social movements of the 1970's and 80's. Because of this, most of them, like the one I live in, have been in existence for a long time. Many were set up by a small group of people who wanted to live together, while others such as this one, were set up as an empty shell, with basic 'off the peg' structures and policies for self-management. This means that shared knowledge, values, ways of living and doing have to be constantly rewritten and negotiated by a group of people who would not necessarily choose to live together. It is a very mixed organisation, in which people come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of occupations: teachers, taxi drivers, retail staff, lecturers, doctors. A large number of residents have been in the co-op since it was set up over twenty years ago, but there is also a flow-through of new people arriving as flats become empty. These new residents come into the existing relations with all its historical baggage. Mostly they get involved but sometimes they get put off and back away if it looks too difficult and acrimonious.

I'm not sure what I expected when I moved in, but living in a co-op, while very rewarding, is not always easy. While cooperation exists in all areas of life, it is often accompanied by rivalry and competition and these often surface into cooperative life even as people try and do things differently. I want to highlight here some issues around collective living and working I have come across in the years I have been living cooperatively.

Housing co-ops tend to pride themselves on the upkeep of the buildings they inhabit, but the upkeep of the social relationships within the organisation can sometimes be neglected. The repair and maintenance of the social fabric is just as important as its physical repair and maintenance, but is easier to ignore. Social interaction takes work. It is invisible labour that is not always valued. Small gestures like nodding or saying hello to a neighbour in a lift, corridor or courtyard, can be significant for the ongoing functioning of the organisation. This is similar to those of a workplace, and small gestures of recognition can reaffirm neighbours' common status to each other on an everyday basis. The significance of these tiny gestures becomes clearer if the knowledge of them as transactions is ignored and they aren't reciprocated, or don't take place at all. Their absence might be read badly, as a sign of ambivalence or even hostility. With neighbours who share a building and a supposed sense of community, this becomes even more acute, as unlike a workplace, there are less boundaries, you cannot leave at the end of the day and it is more likely to catch people in those liminal spaces and moments between public and private, in pyjamas to pick up the mail or the washing, or in the transition between work and home.

These are moments when the self might be a little unravelled, dishevelled or not totally together and the mixing up of different modes of address have the potential to cause irritation or upset. This can be particularly the case for those members that have taken on management roles and might be expected to respond in a certain way when they are thinking of themselves as being 'off duty'.

This reveals something about the different sets of social relations that exist within the co-op. There are those of neighbours, relatives, friends and co-workers and these can overlap and coexist, or be quite separate. The boundaries between them and which ones are operating at particular times might not always be clear. There are also different levels of neighbourliness with varying degrees of distance, closeness and reciprocity. In particular, there is the relationship between co-op members who have taken on management roles and those who have not. This was one of the first things I noticed when I moved into the co-op. I remember getting into a lift and somebody saying, 'they've put the rents up again', as if it was an outside body, when in reality, it would have been a small group of their neighbours setting the rent levels, and the decision would have been agreed by the majority of co-op members. And while those in positions of management rotate quite often, there can still be a feeling of 'us' and 'them'. Much of neoliberal society is based around notions of a service economy with an emphasis on customers and service providers and this culture of service provision leaks into the cooperative sector. Within a housing co-op, all members are theoretically both the customer as a tenant, and the service provider or landlord, as part of the wider collective. This can be confusing and tenant/members still sometimes expect a particular kind of service from the co-op even though they in effect have both roles.

Social interactions are generally governed by a myriad of unspoken rules. These are shared usually within a culture, including the culture within an organisation. In cultures where there is an attempt at a high level of democracy, there is also the potential for more issues to become contestable. In a self-managed organisation like a co-op, everyday issues can very easily become contested and partly because of the overlapping of these different types of social relations, it can be difficult to figure out how to deal with this increase in contestation. This political aspect of debates, disagreements and decision making can test people's relationships with each other and sometimes cause minor abrasions. If these difficulties are not dealt with or repaired or mended at the time, they can start to pile up and become hardened like layers of geology. Tiny resentments can build up over time and it can become more difficult to work together as a group. The longer the organisation has existed, the more difficult it can be to deal with historical issues such as cases of disagreement between neighbours. Sometimes people may not talk to each other because of something that happened a long time ago or it can just be awkward and difficult to get people involved. An influx of new members can sometimes help as long as they also don't get embroiled in historic arguments that resurface.

While a housing co-op has a reasonably flat structure and everyone is a volunteer, hidden hierarchies can still very easily occur. Bullying can and does happen and has happened within my co-op. Sexism and racism, while not overt can also affect people's relationships with each other and exist within the wider cooperative movement as they do in society as a whole. Sometimes people in positions of management see themselves as having power and want to hold onto it, consolidate or turn it into a little kingdom. There can be unspoken disagreements about how power should operate. Tensions between different ideas of cooperation and what this means in practical terms

Inclusion?

Rosemin Najmudin

The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution.

Hannah Arendt, *The New Yorker*, 12 September 1970

Attending the discussions, I was reminded of the quote above. I questioned mine and the groups' involvement, our decision to participate (or not) and what was to be gained from such conversations. I decided that it was best to think of my own reasons for attending and to try not to judge, but I was affected by others. Some wanting to be there but not listen or choosing to sit alone outside the group.

Having reached an age where I feel confident, I want to expand my own activism with others. My background is in education, culture, diversity, inclusion, equality and community engagement. I like learning, sharing ways to learn, empowering others and I am a firm believer of local sustainable politics, sharing resources and knowledge. I thought I was quietly assertive. I research and always try to talk to others. The difficulty is to listen and be listened to. I am Ugandan Indian and feel I am often fighting a western culture that tries to make me feel inferior. Luckily in the Arendt conversations this was not the case. I did feel listened to on issues of equality and activism in the 1950s that were applicable to issues today. Some of the conversations were academic and I set myself the task to put them into practice.

Generally I feel at ease with people, I believe that it is in talking that we negotiate and learn. I believe that communication is key, we can learn and teach, share experiences and listen to the other's point of view. However I know that not everyone thinks the same, so how can we progress? As well as talking, I think we need to do. We need to be active and do things together. But suggestions only work when people are willing. How do we put this into practice? Does everyone share these thoughts and feelings? Will everyone want to include everyone or is there power in excluding? A clear example is The Field where we held the discussions. Since I joined the project, it has been mainly led by one person, even though in reality it was meant to be community-led.

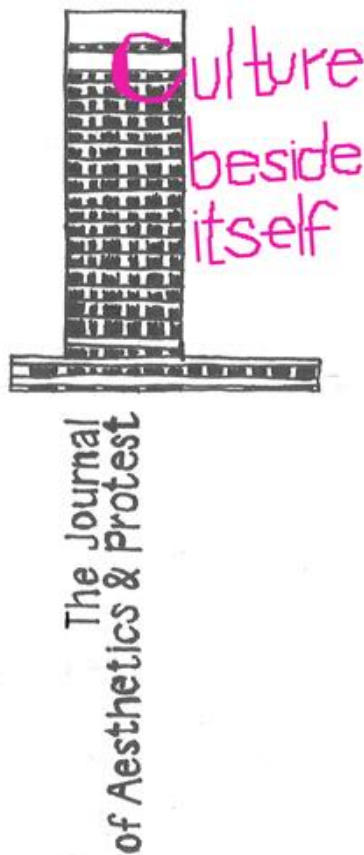
During the Arendt conversations, discussions flowed. Sometimes were difficult to hear and at other times there was an ease and commonality. We cooked and shared food, made each other drinks, broke into small groups and shared as a large group. I made friends and widened my network, however recently I have found that I am excluded and communication from The Field has ceased. I have tried to ask why this is, but no-one seems to be able to give me an answer. I am excluded and doors have closed. I gained and I lost.

can also arise. This is especially the case if people come from and are used to different traditions of group working such as traditional trade union models which tend to be quite hierarchical in nature, or more non-hierarchical models.

It is not always easy to disagree effectively in a way that is respectful and productive. Most people don't have a lot of experience of cooperation. Working together in a way that is productive for the whole organisation takes practice and thought. It seems that perhaps cooperative social relations have to be learnt or re-learned. Education, one of the seven principles of the cooperative movement seems really important in this context in order to communicate the culture to members and encourage reflection and learning.

Written policies can also be useful to work against potential abuses of power, bullying and discrimination. However the question of how much structure to establish can be tricky. On the one hand, informal social structures can allow hidden hierarchies to go unchecked while on the other, too much bureaucracy and structure can be stultifying.

Reflecting on these issues, it seems that building and maintaining social infrastructure is really important for keeping an organisation such as a housing co-op healthy and thriving. Maintaining good social relationships is just as important as mending the windows and doors, giving the walls a lick of paint or cleaning the corridors. Perhaps goodwill could be treated as a form of wealth to be built up in a similar way to the financial reserves that every co-op has to keep in order to run smoothly. Goodwill could be generated in the tiny every day interactions between neighbours, in trying to dig down and loosen up historical issues between people, through social events and respectful communication. If this was understood and taken as a core value, it could potentially act as a buffer to the political wear and tear that self-governance can produce.



Community Cohesion

Danielle M. Heath

There are many definitions, common objectives and reasons for coalition.

A cohesive community shares a unique vision without precision but incision of a sense and a reason for belonging as a given right to all in our diverse community and where people's heritage is truly celebrated.

A space where cultural differences bring fresh insights and they are not diluted with prejudices overnight.

Strong relationships are formed, nurtured and healthily maintained between people from all backgrounds in a common ground; overcoming typical challenges in the struggle for a place to simply be, within a society where class solidarity versus agents of industrial capitalism chew the best of humankind and spit out to the streets what's left.

Did you notice that bird nest?

There is no clarity on what to do next.

They say "Never mind", but my sense of cohesion is not blind and my solidarity goes on override.

Where does the interest align on social capacity and formal politics in our cultural realm?

Our cosmopolitan margin often marginalized leaves a lot to be desired.

Politeness while it all seems a mess is encouraged less and less. Who cares?

Swimming against the tide is also pointless.

Before we can shout that we all can access opportunities to learn and grow as humankind, first we have to ensure it is included in the institutions, written in their constitutions, put into day -to -day practice, without malice. Not for a special event but for good practice.

I am all for regular requests for revision and amendments of laws and policies to incorporate a more cohesive approach to people, which evolves with the times and reflects that we are equals in the eyes of the laws that govern the land.

¹ Fred Dewey, *From an apparent contradiction in Arendt*

to a working group method, Berlin: re: public, 2016, p. 23

² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018 (1958), p.198