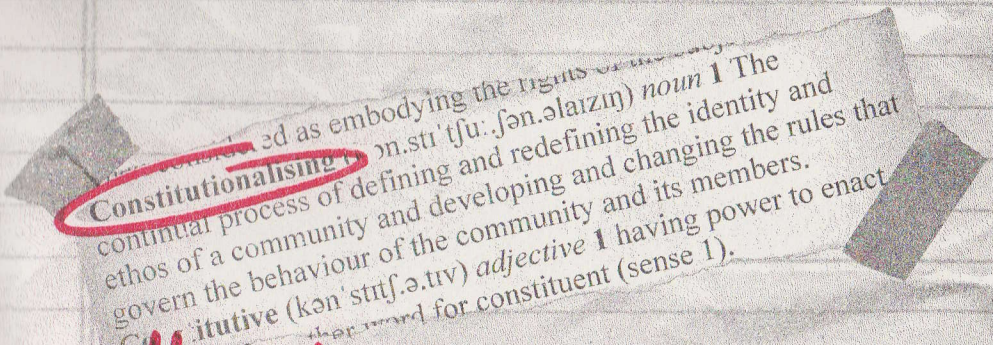
Anarchic Agreements #2



collective power
solidarity
sustaining momentum

A guide to the process of building coalitions and networks

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This guide was co-written by Seeds for Change and researchers from the Anarchy Rules research project. For more information, see seedsforchange.org.uk

A core element of anarchic 'constitutionalising' is balancing power between different players (individual or group) so that the group or coalition as a whole supports everyone's empowerment, and no-one is able to dominate others because of the way the coalition is set up. Guarding against domination is a key concern of anarchic agreements, and this is as important in designing coalitions as it is groups. Having a shared agreement won't prevent the abuse of power. However, the process of creating agreements helps build trust and promote dialogue about how to curb it. Agreements, or constitutions, are tools to help create empowering collaborative cultures, but they are not substitutes for them.

1. Challenges for coalitions

The process of coming together as a coalition has a lot in common with coming together as a group of individuals. However, coalitions are usually larger and more complex than groups, and as such the challenges involved can be amplified. The following three areas pose particular difficulties for coalitions that want to be empowering:

- Building trust and relationships
- Navigating difference
- Accessibility

1.1 Building trust and relationships

Compared to a group, coalitions usually involve a much smaller proportion of people forming direct personal relationships. It is likely that lots of the people involved will never meet. For example, most member groups will probably only send a few people to each coalition meeting. Even if everyone was there, meetings are likely to be larger with less scope for informal interactions. Decision making is less likely to be directly democratic.

Without these direct personal relationships, it is much harder to create a 'feeling' of common purpose and understand each others' priorities and differences. These things are all essential to building a

cohesive group. More people are empowered to participate when they feel comfortable with the people involved. Trust also makes it easier to address power issues without generating conflicts - and easier to address any conflicts that do arise without them becoming 'stuck' or toxic! Therefore, even if a coalition gives high priority to equality in their agreements, it may be harder to build trust in practice.

1.2 Navigating difference

Groups that form a coalition often have less in common with each other than the individual members of member groups. Groups are likely to have some close connections - for example, people work together, live in the same place or campaign on the same issue. Coalitions are often broader. For example, a food bank, an allotment association and a parents' campaign for better school dinners might all be tackling 'food poverty', but they may not have much else in common!

Difference isn't (necessarily) the same as incompatibility! It can be a source of strength. The food bank, allotment association and school dinner campaign might all learn a lot from each other. However, sometimes your differences *will* make things difficult, and it may be better to acknowledge this and keep your work separate, rather than waste energy papering over disagreements. Even if you have enough in common to be able to work together, unacknowledged differences between groups can lead to conflicts, or slow things down because communications get bogged down in misunderstandings.

Critically, differences, for example, social class, can also be a source of power imbalances - they can put one sub-set of people at an advantage over others. It's important to be open to the dynamics in your coalition, and to think creatively about how advantages and disadvantages can be addressed.

meetings involves time and travel, and can be difficult in terms of costs, physical and mental health, mobility issues, juggling other responsibilities etc. This is also likely to mean longer meetings to make it worth the travel time. This again poses difficulties in terms of energy, over-night stays, childcare and so on.

The complexity of coalitions poses challenges too. The amount of information that people have to get their heads around can be overwhelming. Large groups often involve intricate systems and policies, in order to sub-divide tasks and administration, and so are more likely to have formal procedures that feel unfamiliar or bureaucratic to new-comers.

Coalitions may be especially appealing to people who have a lot of ambition to make a big impact. In itself, this kind of ambition can result in positive change in the world. But because of the ways organisations are usually setup, there is a high potential for coalitions to generate a small elite who are difficult to get hold of and extremely motivated! But no-one has all the answers, and networks are only as strong as the sum of their parts, it is important to balance ambition with care and attention to the accessibility and internal democracy of the network, so some people don't end up gaining power at the others' expense.

2. Constitutionalising: key questions

We have broken down the core areas that a coalition needs to address in order to work out how, and how much they will work together. The order of questions we have suggested could be used to structure your meetings. In practice, there is overlap between the sections, and you may need to re-visit your first decisions as you go through the process. Each coalition should consider the specifics of their situation, to work out what will be the best system for them, in terms of empowerment, sustainability and effectiveness. As well as being a useful exercise in itself, the process of working through these

questions will help to build trust and stronger relationships, as you get to know each other better.

In Anarchic Agreements v1, we suggest that the process of agreement should be based on three key commitments:

Conscious: Explicitly discussing things and coming to conscious decisions about how to work together allows more space for everyone to contribute. By contrast, if you simply allow group practices to 'evolve' this can easily lead to informal hierarchies that are hard to challenge.

Consensual: Any rules or ways of working are collectively agreed, and not imposed on anyone against their will. When new groups join, any existing agreements are clearly explained, verbally or in writing, so that their members understand the coalition's core values.

Changeable: Agreements can change over time when circumstances or group membership changes. In this way, any agreements continue to have everyone's conscious consent, they aren't dictated by the founder members.

2.1 What is the coalition?

This is the core question which will shape everything else. It is worth spending time exploring this question. If you come up with an answer that really works, then your collaborations are much more likely to be empowering and sustainable.

This sequence of questions should help you through the process:

What have you got in common?

In can help to start by looking at all the groups and working out what things you have in common - finding the overlap between your different campaigns and projects will help you see how you can strengthen and support each other.

It is also important to recognise your differences. Respectfully acknowledging and exploring differences can make them less divisive, rather than more. It gives you the information you need to create agreements that make sense about how to work together. Open dialogue about your disagreements, fears or concerns makes it harder for opponents to exploit them to undermine you too.

Goals: Consider the long and short term aims of different groups. For example, a short term aim that environmental groups could share might be eliminating plastic. Longer term, some of those groups may be working towards a total restructuring of social and economic practices, others might simply want some reforms within the current system. Think through what impact these differences might have on working together, how wide they are and how you can make collaboration work for everyone.

Values: What principles do you all hold? Are some values that are central to some groups and acceptable to others? For example, a coalition that included some animal rights groups could incorporate veganism into the things they did together, even it wasn't a priority for all the groups. Do you have any clashes in values? If you use the same words to describe your values, say a commitment to equality, do you mean the same thing by this?

Experiences: Sometimes a coalition will be specifically for groups of people who share particular experiences. For example, users of national health mental health services might have mutual aid groups for people with particular diagnoses and come together in a coalition to campaign for better provision. Also think about how your experiences can be transformed into tools to support others.

What do you want to achieve by working together?

It's useful to be clear about what your purpose is in coming together as a coalition. Different coalitions will have different levels of priority on goals, values and shared experiences. Therefore, you could end

up with a pragmatic alliance based around a very specific goal, such as challenging a particularly repressive police behaviour that affects all your campaigns. At the other end of the spectrum, a coalition could be built around shared values of collaboration and mutual aid, and a desire to put them in practice for their own sake. Or your purpose might be the empowerment of people who share a particular experience, regardless of whether you hold the same views or want to do the same things together.

Being clear about why you are working together will help determine what form your network should take, how closely you should collaborate, and how much care you need to take to make sure member groups keep their autonomy.

What capacity do you have for working together?

The reality is that working in coalition takes time and energy. Even if in the long run it is more efficient to share resources and tasks between different groups, the process of setting up the coalition will require a lot of commitment in the short term. You will need time to make agreements and set up systems - and also to learn how to communicate and work together. Is it realistic to do that right now? Generally, the more closely you will work together, the more time you need to get to know each other and work out how you will work together.

How closely do you want to work together?

This question is best addressed once you've thought about all the other questions above. The coalition is likely to be more sustainable and powerful if you collaborate in ways that make sense for your situation. Ideally, that means it needs to work for everyone, and not just be driven by a few keen individuals.

Remember that the answer can change over time. Perhaps initially you just want to organise occasional skill-shares for members of the

different groups, but stay open to collaborating more closely as you get to know each other better. If the main barrier is a lack of capacity, could groups which have more time to shoulder the burden of any background administrative work offer to organise meetings or manage a website?

2.2 What particular challenges do you face?

As well as focusing on what you want to achieve, it is worth working out if there are particular factors which will make it harder for you to sustainably work together as empowered equals and offer each other practical solidarity and mutual aid. The list of common challenges for coalitions provides a useful reference point - are there any of these which are particularly significant for you to address? Getting clear about the most significant challenges from the outset will help you come up with agreements which address them.

Building trust and relationships

Are there any particular reasons why trust-building might be challenging for your coalition? For example, are you geographically very spaced out, and lacking resources for face to face meetings? Do some member groups support causes that other member groups are wary of? How do you represent the voices of those who cannot be present? Are you operating in multiple languages, so lots of people in the network can't speak to each other without translation? Or will the individuals who are part of member groups change frequently, meaning you need to build in ongoing opportunities for people to get to know each other?

These kinds of trust barriers can be addressed in your agreements by committing to practical methods, for example, deciding who can speak for the group and how, how to manage the autonomy of member-groups, or creating same-language sub-groups, and investing in interpreters. Be prepared to devote time to getting to

know each other and building relationships *before* coming to any decisions about how (and how much) you want to collaborate.

Navigating difference

Consider the differences between and within the groups in your coalition. In what ways are they likely to give advantage to some people over others? For example, consider a migration-focused network, consisting of mutual aid groups for people seeking asylum, grant-funded campaigning NGOs and 'activist' groups consisting of (mostly) non-migrants wanting to offer solidarity. On the democratic principle of decisions being made by the people most affected by them (also known as *subsidiarity*), people with experience of seeking asylum might want to direct any campaigning on the issue. How can you make sure that your agreements about process and decision-making enable this?

Resource differences are another problem. Coalitions can take a substantial step towards balancing power between member groups by redistributing resources internally. That could be achieved simply by better resourced groups lending out equipment, offering free venues or sharing their media contacts: but be clear about the terms of this aid to avoid anyone in those groups calling in unanticipated 'favours' later down the line. Think how the arrangements can be managed fairly and in the spirit of equality. For example, if an NGO is offering a paid member of staff to support the coalition, the coalition as a whole could be responsible for deciding what that person's priorities should be. Otherwise there is a risk of *increasing* inequalities within the network rather than re-balancing them.

Accessibility

Are there access barriers to getting involved that are specific to your coalition? This could be barriers that all or most of you share, and that everyone probably knows you need to find solutions for. For example, a solo parents' network will definitely need to think about

childcare for meetings; a coalition of people claiming benefits will need to find a way to cover costs that doesn't involve people dipping into their own pockets. If you are running a national campaign that involves urgent decisions between face to face meetings, you will need to address any access barriers to online organising.

Alternatively, the majority culture or practices of your coalition may be fine for most people who are currently involved, but not for others. For example, a network that formed through 'protest camps' may run on the assumption that everyone owns camping equipment and is physically able to sleep in a tent and move around on rough ground.

It is less straight-forward to work out what are the most significant barriers to people who aren't involved in your coalition. By definition, the people at your meeting have not faced insurmountable barriers! Make space for people to talk about anything that discourages them from coming and take what they say seriously. Ask member groups to survey members who don't engage in the coalition to see what their reasons are.

2.3 How will you organise yourselves?

What is your shared work?

This will depend very much on your purpose, and so may change over time. Depending on how varied your purposes are and how closely you are working together, your work may be easier or harder to define. For example, if your only purpose is to provide a platform for member groups to help each other out when they need it, then the 'work' may just be to maintain an online space or email list where people can communicate. If you are running a major project together then the actual tasks are likely to evolve as the project progresses, but may include organising finances, publicity, social media accounts, meetings, and so on.

How will you divide up work and responsibilities?

For example, you might try:

Specialised roles: Individuals can be assigned to particular tasks, e.g. drawing up the annual accounts, compiling the monthly newsletter etc. While the experience people develop through specialisation is invaluable for the durability of organisations, it can also lead quickly to new cliques. Thinking about how these roles can be filled is very important. Are they best filed by, for example, volunteers, should they be elected roles, appointed by committee, and/or rotated, with roles always filled from a different member group?

Sub-groups: Working groups can take on particular areas of responsibility, for example finances, publicity etc. These working groups can be made open to anyone who wants to take part or organised on a selection process to consciously mix people up from different member groups.

Rotation: some tasks can be regularly reassigned to individuals or member groups. For example, each group can take a turn to organise coalition meeting.

The best method will depend a lot on your situation For example, if you are low on capacity, then efficiency might be your biggest priority, and you might only have one individual in any specialised role. However, giving areas of responsibility to sub-groups could be better for the long term sustainability of the coalition, because information and skills won't simply be lost if one person decides to leave. This would be especially important if you have a high turnover of members, or it is especially important to ensure different member groups are represented within each area of responsibility. No arrangement is perfect so weigh up the pros and cons and make sure any working group structure is clearly explained to anyone new who comes along. It should be easy for new people to join a group if they want to be involved, but how easy should it be?

2.4 How will you make decisions?

What kinds of decisions do you need to make together?

How much shared decision-making you do will also depend on your purposes and how closely you are working together. Most groups need to balance a need to get everyone's consent on important decisions with a need for efficiency and minimising time in meetings. Working out what decisions really need everyone's input, what can be delegated, or represented, and who is entitled to decide (groups or individuals?), is critical to an effective coalition. 'Everyone deciding everything' may sound democratic, but in reality it may be a recipe for very long and boring meetings that no-one comes to! In practice, it may be better to apply a principle of decisions being made by people who are fundamentally affected by them (subsidiarity again). In this way, coalition-wide decision-making can be reserved for questions with a far-reaching impact like strategy or the annual budget, while day-to-day decision making happens in working groups.

Consensus, voting, or something in between...?

What decision-making method is right for your situation? This is likely to depend on the culture and values of member groups and how much member groups want to protect their autonomy. If empowerment of your members is a top priority, then you might want to go for the highest level of consensus possible. If your capacity is limited, or you need to make a decision quickly in an urgent situation, then you might prioritise efficiency and simple majorities. It will depend on whether you think some activities should be subject to higher standards of consent than others. For example, members may make it hard for anyone to change the coalition's name or operate its social media or bank accounts but relatively easy to alter rules on conduct at meetings. Remember: decision making procedures can have unintended consequences, constraining and enabling in unanticipated ways.

Consensus decision making: Issues are discussed until a way forward is found that everyone affected can consent to. Ideally, the group finds win-win solutions that everyone actively supports, although in practice some people will have reservations that they are prepared to set aside. Consensus allows for just one individual to block a decision from going ahead. The yardstick for a block (or veto) is high - it needs to be a deep and fundamental objection, often described as "I would have to leave the group if this went ahead." Consensus allows for extensive discussion and the highest level of democratic control for everyone involved, but it does require time for people to explore issues and think creatively about different solutions. This makes it very important that only the most important decisions go to the whole group. Difficulties in reaching consensus can create a bias towards the status quo - if you can't agree how to change things, they may default into staying how they are.

Simple majority vote: Any proposal goes ahead if a majority of the people affected consent to it. This can have the benefit of speed and efficiency. It can also provide a way forward in a situation where it is important to do something, but you can't reach agreement on what! However, if proposals go ahead in spite of fundamental objections this can be damaging in the long run, creating large disaffected minorities, so think carefully about the impacts of this option.

Super-majority vote: In this method decisions will go ahead if they are backed by a high majority – how high will depend on how important this decision is, or its strategic purpose. For some decisions this could be as low as 60%. Others only allow for one block to be disregarded (consensus-minus-one). Radical Routes, a network of UK co-operatives, has a rule where 1 block for every 12 member groups can be over-turned (effectively a 90% supermajority, but of coops, not individuals). Some groups use a super-majority vote of all

members as a back-up, for example if three successive meetings have failed to reach consensus on a proposal.

How do you organise whole group decisions?

If you want your coalition to work with the consent of all its members, then you need to be able to get everyone's involvement in major decisions - at least if they want to. This isn't straightforward, but large groups of all kinds have developed a variety of methods to make it possible.

Spokescouncils: Issues are discussed in member groups, who then each appoint a delegate. These delegates (or spokes) come together to report back on what the different member groups have said and start exploring options they think might be acceptable to all groups. Once they have a good option (or a range of options), they take these back to the member groups. At this stage member groups can either simply agree on the option, suggest amendments or ask for bigger changes. The delegates / spokes then meet a second time to report on what has come from their groups and look for amendments or new proposals that will make the decision acceptable to everyone. This back and forth process continues until a decision is reached. This process can be time-consuming, and requires a high level of skill and self-awareness from spokes, to ensure they are genuinely representing their group and not just themselves in the spokes meetings. It also gives the highest possible degree of power to member groups.

General meetings: This is a meeting which anyone within the coalition can attend as an individual. It may also make use of splitting into small groups for discussion, but actual decision making is done with everyone together. This cuts out the back and forth and reporting of others' views involved in spokescouncil meetings. However, there are often a smaller proportion of people who feel empowered to contribute to large group discussions. Also, once a

meeting gets past a certain size, it can be hard to hear each other, even with microphones.

Remote organising: Up to a point, people can contribute to decision making online. For example, a sub-group could draw up a survey to sound out large numbers of people on a issue before creating a proposed way forward. There are online platforms like loomio that are specially designed for anti-hierarchical groups to explore issues and come to decisions (see loomio.org). Theoretically, online communications should be more accessible than travelling to meet in person. However, notice what proportion of your group actually participates in whatever method you try, and whether it is always the same people. In practice, you may find that more people attend and contribute in a face to face meeting. For many groups, remote organising works well for straightforward decisions, but face to face meetings are still needed for anything contentious or complex.

Who are the decision-making members?

As a coalition of groups, you need to decide whether people participate in decision making as individuals, or as part of a block with the rest of their member group. This decision has more significance if you are using some kind of voting system - for example, do you need 90% of individuals to agree or 90% of member groups?

Having each member group operating as a voting 'block' may be simplest structurally, but in practice it may be complicated if for individuals whose loyalty is divided between the coalition and their own groups (or groups, if they are part of more than one). This question gets more complicated still if the network is made up of a mix of groups and individuals. For example, if several communities opposing open cast coal mining come together, they may be joined by people who want to fight against coal-mining, but don't have a potential mine or local group in their area.

Another factor is whether the member groups have a similar size, or stake in the decision being made. For example, in a network of housing co-ops, should a large co-operative co-housing project with 100 members have the same weight as a household of three people?

2.5 How will you share information?

What information do you need to share?

As a general principle, everyone should have access to information that enables them to participate as empowered members of the network - for example, information about finances, policies and how to contribute to agenda-setting and decision making. There are practical things, too, like how to get hold of shared resources, access social media accounts or find out about public statements made in the coalition's name. This doesn't mean bombarding everyone with blow by blow accounts of everything that's going on, it means well-organised information that people can find when they need it. This needs to be balanced with an awareness of data protection, whether for individual privacy (see: www.eugdpr.org), or because your group is likely to be under surveillance by the state or corporations. For example, if you publish meeting minutes online, how will you protect individuals from being identified?

What communication methods can you use?

Based on the principles above, think about what information should come *to* people (e.g. by email or social media) and what information should simply be there for people to go and find (e.g. in a shared online space, or an open access office). Make sure it is made as easy as possible for people to get information about how to participate in the coalition - how to put items on meeting agendas, get involved in working groups etc. For example, create a new member induction pack, and start each meeting with a quick run-down of what decision making methods you use and how they

work. Consider also what information needs to be held on a need-to-know basis - for example member contacts should be held in a secure database that can only be accessed by the membership team.

2.6 What policies and 'rules' do you need?

Many people are resistant to policies and 'rules' in anti-hierarchical groups. However, all groups have rules. These might not be written down and can take the form of habits or inherited conventions. There are good reasons to make these explicit, even if they remain informal. Policies and rules provide a way to consciously address issues like power and accessibility, which can often be invisible to people who don't experience marginalisation and exclusion. Having rules can also help to make agreements about what to do when things go wrong *before* a crisis hits. A final benefit of creating rules or policies is that you can create general answers to common problems, which mean that you don't need to take every single question to a meeting. For example, if you have a food policy, then the kitchen team doesn't need to check their menu at every general meeting!

Exactly what polices you need will depend on your group situation, but this is a list of areas that are common to most groups:

Joining and leaving

As a baseline, groups need to be free to leave the coalition if it no longer meets their needs. It is worth planning around this possibility from the start, for example, making sure that the coalition isn't too dependent on any one sub-group or individual.

Not all coalitions are open to new members. If you are, it is worth thinking through and being clear about your membership criteria before a new person or group asks to join. Make sure that any requirements for new members also apply to the established membership!!

There may also be situations where a coalition would want to ask a group to leave, for example if they went against agreed core policies. Specifying in advance what the key rules are and what the process of asking a group to leave would be will make it easier to address issues that arise (see: Anarchic Agreements).

Conflict and accountability processes

Conflict can generate a lot of fear, and people are often reluctant to address it. But voluntary groups of all kinds can fall to pieces if conflict is unaddressed. Having a process already in place can help people through - you may even require that people engage with that process as a condition of membership. This protects the coalition against situations where people are refusing to engage in conflict resolution (or nominally agreeing, but dragging their heels on practicalities like date-setting, with the impact that the conflict isn't resolved!)

You may need different processes depending on the situation. Conflicts are not always straight-forward disagreements or personality clashes between two 'equal' sides. If someone has been assaulted, they are unlikely to want a 'mediation' with the person who attacked them! Rather than a single conflict process, you may need a range of options depending on the dynamics of the situation, and whether the priority is to re-build relationships so people can go on working together, or to create more safety for someone who has been harmed.

What do you want to support?

Creating coalition policies is an opportunity to learn new ways of operating, and consciously create a different culture. You can deliberately adopt new practices that communicate your values to the world, often in a more powerful way than simply writing your mission statement on a website. Examples could include using open

source software; using a Creative Commons or anti-copyright license for your resources; providing fair trade, sustainably sourced, vegan food for your events; buying from co-operatives wherever possible.

Anti-oppression is a vital area for creating positive new practices in order to build a different culture. Social structures of oppression are deeply embedded in mainstream culture, and people inevitably carry them into the groups that they join. Turning these patterns around takes a lot more than simply declaring yourselves opposed to discrimination and hierarchy. Policies are tools for change, both symbolic markers of commitment and benchmarks for improved practice. They should help you enact your principles and demonstrate that it is possible to put them in practice.

3. Building your coalition culture

The agreements you make are only one element of building a coalition that is empowering and sustainable, especially if you are hoping to work in alternative ways, based on solidarity, mutual aid and liberation. The culture you create together is another vital ingredient. Culture is harder to pin down than a set of rules and agreements, but it can be just as empowering or disempowering. We focus here on some of the concrete and practical things you can do to create and maintain a healthy group culture. Some of these things could be considered when making agreements and policies, but we have given them their own section because it is so vital to put them in practice consistently, and not just agree them once and forget about them!

Effective facilitation: If people have a positive experience of participating in meetings, they are more likely to stay actively involved in shaping the coalition. Good facilitation is about more than enabling focused, efficient decision-making. It creates space for different perspectives, different needs and access requirements, different ways of thinking and contributing. Facilitation also plays a

role in making sure people are welcomed to the space, that everyone has the information they need in order to participate.

Space for reflection and feedback: There is no one-size-fits-all set of rules for how to create an empowering space. However, creating space for people to reflect on and share their experiences of being part of the coalition will give you all a wealth of information about how to change things so they work better for more people. Create a range of different formats for people to contribute, for example: training sessions, online discussion spaces, review meetings, even feedback forms. It is also easier to maintain a culture of accountability in the group when it is easy for individuals to give feedback to each other - for example working group meetings could also include a chance for people to review their experience of working together.

Social time: This is an essential ingredient for many people to build trust and relationships, and so feel able to participate. Longer or residential meetings allow for people to spend informal time together, not just talking about what's on the agenda. Consider games, music or opportunities to do practical work together for people who find more structured social time easier than chatting. Be aware that longer or residential meetings won't be accessible to everyone, even if you provide childcare and travel bursaries. Can you also have regional get-togethers, working group meet-ups or even space for informal chat online to increase the range of people who can feel connected?

Accessibility: Accessibility needs to be an ongoing conversation, not something you tick off at the beginning of forming a coalition. Keep asking people about their access requirements when organising events - existing members may be have changed their circumstances, as well as new people having joined. As well as physical requirements like ramps and hearing aid induction loops, encourage people to share any requirements related to mental

health, language barriers, neuro-divergence, childcare responsibilities, finances etc. If you really want your meetings to be accessible, be prepared to give it a high priority in your budget and planning time, and think creatively about solutions.

Mutual support: Thriving groups are often maintained by personal relationships in which people offer practical and emotional support. When these relationships are purely informal, they are often unfairly distributed. People with the skills to ask for what they need inevitably receive a lot more care, and people with the skills and willingness to offer end up shouldering an unfair burden of emotional labour. Try experimenting with more structured ways of creating supportive relationships. For example: a mediation and listening team, a buddy system, peer support groups, action learning sets etc.

Conclusion: Connections within a wider movement

Effective coalitions are important building blocks for social change. Connecting with other groups and networks opens avenues for practical solidarity and for forging strong, plural movements. It's easy to find examples of mutual aid in times of crisis: people habitually build coalitions to help each other out during floods or after other disasters. What happens to these in the long term? The old authorities eventually step in, take over, initiate inquiries, write reports and do nothing. Building alternatives means learning to sustain these experiments and extend them. Coalition building provides an opportunity to do this by learning about constitutionalising. It provides an opportunity to extend learning about constitutionalising and pick up new ideas and ways of looking at things from other networks. We think of anarchic coalition-building as an on-going experiment which offers new ways of organising and of establishing enduring alternatives to top-down systems. It will have far greater reach if we share stories about what worked and what didn't work with others and use those stories to inform future organising.

4. Further reading

Seeds for Change and Anarchy Rules research group (2017) *Anarchic Agreements*

https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/anarchic_agreements

Kinna, Prichard and Swann (2016) 'Iceland's crowd-sourced constitution: hope for disillusioned voters everywhere'

https://theconversation.com/icelands-crowd-sourced-constitution-hope-for-disillusioned-voters-everywhere-67803

Richard Moyes, Thomas Nash, Article 36 (2011) 'Global Coalitions: An introduction to working in international civil society partnerships'
http://www.globalcoalitions.org/contents

Seeds for Change: '*A consensus handbook. Co-operative decision-making for activists, co-ops and communities*'

https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/handbookweb.pdf

Seeds for Change: 'Effective groups. A guide to successful group organising, from starting up groups to keeping them going'

https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/effectivegroups.pdf