

HOW TO REGENERATE





HOW TO REGENERATE:

ESSAYS INSPIRED
BY THE RADIX BIG TENT
LEADERS' SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 2021

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FOREWARD

Ben Rich

Chief Executive, Radix UK.

The starting point for this book was the leaders' summit we held in November, next to St James' Park in London. The subject was regeneration and we covered every possible aspect, from communities to unicorns - from investment to policy on parks.

Our problem has been that, although this is one of our key chosen areas of policy, thinking in the UK has been moving so fast, that so much of the debate is on danger of going out of date. All the way to the recent publication of the government's levelling up white paper in February.

For that reason – and although we have decided to use some of the keynote speeches verbatim – this is not a conventional conference report. It is first and foremost a collection of essays inspired by what people heard there.

I hope, therefore, that as you embark upon this booklet – whether you joined us for the summit or not – that you will use it as a way of looking at, and maybe taking part in, one of the most important debates about UK regeneration that has ever emerged.



INTRODUCTION:

The regeneration debate – a brief guide

Ben Rich and David Boyle



It feels good sometimes, when you are a new thinktank – and Radix Big Tent is also a new kid on the thinktank block – to hit the *zeitgeist*. This book mainly covers the proceedings of our half-day conference on regeneration we held opposite St James' Park in November 2021 – a good three months before the white paper on levelling up was published by the newly rechristened Department of Levelling Up in February 2022. Yet we have been able somehow to prefigure the argument around it.

The key issue is how much the Conservative Party can represent the views of their communitarian wing. This is something they have shown few signs of doing since the days of Margaret Thatcher. Or whether, actually, Tony Blair's withdrawal from his 'third way' communitarianism in 1996 leaves the way open for the Conservatives.

In a comment in the *Guardian* the week after the publication of the white paper – *Levelling Up* the UK – Julian Coman quoted the former Labour theoretician Jon Cruddas harking back to a different tradition of Labour policy:

"To me, with hindsight, 1996 is a story of paths not taken, of missed opportunities. [The result] was a sense of powerlessness that people feel, of exclusion and estrangement, a lack of participation; a lack of virtue in our institutions and our politics".

The problem for Labour is that Coman is wrong about the distinction between what he called I policies and we policies. There is nothing intrinsically Left about we – and nor, in fact, is there anything Right-wing about individualism. I don't believe either Hitler or Mussolini were keen on individualists.

Perhaps the most important question is why so much of what has happened before, and how much has been achieved – by the Eldonians in Liverpool, the Glasgow housing co-ops or in Coin Street on London's South Bank – has been so quickly forgotten.

Whose fault was it that recent governments have shown so little interest in community-driven, bottom-up regeneration?

Traditionally, many have blamed the political Right, and it is true that the Thatcher government was not very interested in sharing power with impoverished communities.

But the conventional Left needs now take an equal share of the blame – given that they are so nervous about appearing populist or Trumpist, that we are not supposed, any more, to doubt what the 'experts' say – or state officials – when most community development has to start precisely with that kind of scepticism. We need to remember that people and communities have some reason for scepticism about conventional regeneration – that somehow all we need

to do is to persuade cities to specialise and to build motorways and IT superhighways, and – *hey presto!*

It could therefore be the political Right which takes the necessary leap of imagination. When Michael Gove launched a report at his party conference last September, called *Trusting the People*, published by the New Local thinktank and the New Social Covenant Unit and written partly by Danny Kruger, Gove's new parliamentary aide, and other Red Wall MPs, it sent a shockwave through those communitarians who have assumed they were among Leftists.

It surprised them because it talks about the next stage of Conservatism which is to "to put power and trust into the hands of the British people". It hardly needs saying that the 'free market' thinktanks – Adam Smith, IEA and Cato – are none too happy about it.

So here are some challenges that any government will need to confront before they take on the community agenda...

1. ARE THEY PREPARED TO GIVE UP A NARROW, DOCTRINAIRE VERSION OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM?

Almost nobody wants to go back to the pre-1970 age of building upwards by targets, launched by Harold Macmillan as housing minister, which led directly to a new generation of slums and to the collapse of Ronan Point in 1968. But equally, it seems to me that the Thatcherite approach by Howe and Lawson to let the market decide alone clearly hasn't worked either. It has raised land and property prices to disastrous levels.

For some reason the entire political establishment believes this is because we have ignored 'price signals' which imply a shortage of homes. But nobody has persuaded most of us how one can ever supply enough housing to satisfy the demand, for example, of Far Eastern investors or Russian oligarchs to buy into the London property market.

In short, it isn't too few houses driving up property prices – it has been the over-supply of mortgage finance seeking too few houses. It is classic inflation, in fact. Subsidising mortgages can only make this worse.

The government, to give them their due, does appear to be beginning to grasp some of this. So what do you do instead?

It will have to be more than the myriad of targets outlined in the white paper.

For the past three decades at least, cities have come to believe they have no economic role, except maybe infrastructure (land use policy, not economics) and training (education policy, not economics). They

have acquiesced in the Treasury's belief that any extra business they could generate would all simply be shifted from business elsewhere.

Any government that wants to make a difference needs to carve out space where the emerging ultra-local economics sector – the local bankers, local energy providers, local enterprise mentors, local procurement radicals, local currency pioneers, who believe they are developing techniques which the cities will use to generate the resources they need from the raw materials and people they already have – can have their head and the resources they need to do so.

We need a new narrative for very local economics, based on local financial and enterprise institutions, which might be embraced by national politicians – and by the Treasury. It is a potentially important intervention to kickstart a vital debate – why mainstream policy-makers are so suspicious of revitalising local economies, the only basis for the real devolution of power.

In particular, the Treasury needs to develop a body of practical knowledge about ultra-local economic solutions and local economic resilience. It could set up an ultra-local policy and delivery unit, learning the lessons from the experience of those local authorities in urban and rural areas which are succeeding in developing working solutions to their economic difficulties. Or else, it needs to relinquish power to the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities which appears less centralising and more open to such approaches.



2. CAN GOVERNMENTS THINK 'SMALL'?

Governments must be aware, above all else, that small business now earns 51 per cent of value added in the UK economy. They should therefore be getting a similar proportion of the business investment available in the UK. If they are not doing so, then it is a sign of serious market failure and we need to provide the intermediaries and institutions which could make this possible.

This is not to suggest that small business needs the same kind of investment as big business – that is the kind of assumption that has caused all the problems – but they do require effort, support and some finance. If half the nation's wealth derives from small business (and it does), then an effective market would make sure that half the nation's effort, imagination and wealth was going into developing that half of the economy.

We all know that nothing like that happens. The vast majority of the effort, imagination and finance bypasses small business altogether. And therein lies the market failure that only local economic institutions could tackle effectively, if only there were any.

3. CAN THEY PROVIDE THE MISSING AGENDA FOR LOCAL INSTITUTIONS?

This is how *Trusting the People* ended – calling for Conservatives to “come together to clear the political pathway to enable power to flow through to the people”:

"Community-powered Conservatism is the only credible approach which promises to improve our quality of life, strengthen our economy and unite our nation. This is a Conservative project for the next decade and builds upon our greatest asset, the people of the United Kingdom."

So, my question is this: if governments really let communities decide on planning applications, and they decide ‘wrong’ according to ministers at the centre – how will they resist the huge pressure to bring in safeguards to prevent these ‘wrong’ decisions?

For example, there is a risk of sounding like a curmudgeon if you quibble about the decision to devolve control of Manchester's NHS budget to the city. Worse, you risk sounding like the old Labour Party's front bench. It is an unequivocally exciting moment for democracy and effectiveness – and rare to benefit both at once.

But there is a quibble about the direction localism is taking, and although the decision to launch a Manchester NHS (can it be local and national at the same time?) is bold and ambitious – it remains the same old pattern.

It is, in short, another block grant from Whitehall, allowing variations no doubt but also with strings attached. It follows the old pattern which has reduced the power of local government for two generations: they have boxed themselves into a corner as delivery agents for Whitehall.

Ask yourself this: would Joseph Chamberlain – who wrested control of Birmingham in 1873 from a group of friends from the Woodman's Arms – have been satisfied with such a client relationship?

No, he would have swept aside these grants and contingent promises and municipalised the local gas company, and have started wrestling with the question of what he needed to do to take some measure of control over his city's economic destiny. He would never have simply accepted that the Treasury would decide economic policy on Birmingham's behalf.

Can Whitehall really provide us with the kind of institution that can genuinely allow local people to take control of their local planning and environment policy?

Coman suggested this was a problem of resources, but we are not so sure. Are those in power in Westminster and Whitehall really ready to let go of central power? We feel sure they will be eventually – because, in a democracy, people get what they want. But local people will need some protection to get involved in local planning, and then – how do you stop the usual rot setting in?

Ben Rich is chief executive, and David Boyle is policy director of Radix Big Tent.



CHAPTER 2

GEORGE FREEMAN MP



Big Tent is based on a simple idea. Over the last five years, across both sides of the Atlantic, we have seen our politics grow more divided and aggressive than ever. We believe that the only way to reconcile differences is through debate rather than division.

Our Big Tent is both literal and metaphorical. Our aim is to bring people from all backgrounds together to find common solutions. We were founded in the aftermath of the appalling and tragic murder of Jo Cox and the Brexit Referendum in 2016 and our mission is to ensure that political disagreements happen through dialogue. Fundamentally, the only way to drive sustainable regeneration and renewal is through communities uniting.

Throughout my career, I have always believed there is more that unites us than divides us. Before entering politics, I founded the Positive Politics, Mind the Gap and Norfolk Way social enterprise campaigns. After university, I founded the UK's first ever localist think tank called the Local Identity Agency. I have always believed that true regeneration and renewal needs a new political approach and that's why I founded Big Tent in 2017.

Since then, Big Tent has grown from a small trial festival to a national movement. Our festival model is innovative and has geographical diversity at its heart. Each year we hold the festival in a different location. This year we went to Coventry and saw the new battery technology of Jaguar Land

Rover, and the incredible dynamism of the digital gaming community.

We met the entrepreneurs developing incredible technologies that are vital to tomorrow's healthcare and tomorrow's digital economy. Through Big Tent's work, we highlighted what a tech hub the Coventry cluster has now become and the extraordinary potential for the future of the local and national economy.

Fundamentally, Big Tent has always been on the side of disruption, not the status quo. As a former technology entrepreneur and as Innovation Minister, I've been lucky enough to see first-hand how important it is to back new entrants into markets and champion the self-employed, start-ups and SMEs. Big Tent's values are firmly aligned with the local, creative and human – not the technocratic, remote and bureaucratic.

Alongside our focus on place, the mission of Big Tent is also to empower people, particularly supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs and leaders at this moment of technological innovation. The pace of technological innovation creates an opportunity to harness the technology and innovation reshaping our society – so that it does for government what's it's done already doing for our day-to-day lives and our economy.

Our mission at Big Tent is to both catalyse this debate and work with policymakers to set out bold plans for delivery AND act as a catalyst for local ACTION: helping make a difference not just make a point.

While the Levelling Up agenda has got to be about connectivity, trains, buses, skills, innovation and enterprise, it also has to be about empowering people in places that have been left behind to take control of their own destiny and drive reform on the ground. Levelling Up must be led by the grassroots to ensure promises become reality.

As Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, that is now top of my in-tray. By supporting local science and technology clusters up and down the country, I have tasked my department to put people and place at the heart of the UK's ambitions to be a Science Superpower and Innovation Nation.

This can never be about a minister in Whitehall handing down policy prescriptions, but about entrepreneurs and scientists on the ground driving regeneration and change. The scale of the devolution and local leadership required demands new forums for galvanising new partnerships for the people and places that have been left behind.

Over the coming months and year, the Big Tent Radix work-stream will explore the regeneration and renewal agenda in areas like the North East, East Anglia and the South West. That's why I'm very pleased to announce that we're taking the next festival to Bristol.

Big Tent is all about doing politics in a new way. As we look around the world and see the tragic events in Ukraine, it is clearer than ever that we must choose unity over division and debate over discord.

My hope is that Big Tent members – from the speakers at the Leadership Summit, our staff team, volunteers and the hundreds of people who attend our events – will play a part in taking the Big Tent message and spirit out into the world and show what a difference this new approach to politics can make both in the UK and around the world.

George Freeman MP is Minister for Science Research and Innovation, and the founder of Big Tent.



CHAPTER 3

STEPHEN KINNOCK MP



My view on Labour's style of 'levelling up' echoes Tony Blair's famous 'education, education, education'. I think that it should be about 'manufacturing, manufacturing, manufacturing'.

The fundamental problems of the British economy can all be traced back to the collapse of our manufacturing sector. In the 1970s, this sector accounted for about 30 percent of our GDP.

It's now at about nine percent. Talent and wealth from the parts of the country we're focusing on today have moved to London and the South East.

We export less and to import more, and the social fabric of many communities has been destroyed.

Labour is the party of work and jobs. With good jobs, you can raise a family and bring opportunities to communities that need them. This isn't just about electoral calculus; it's the moral duty and mission of the party.

We should be talking about a Britain that can stand firmly on its feet, with a post-Brexit vision for the future. We need to talk about the dignity of labour. Not just about the pay-check, but the sense of pride and self-esteem it brings.

There's a real dividing line between ourselves and the Conservatives on this. I think that people do see the Conservatives as being part of this race to the bottom, with zero hours contracts and this huge shift away from manufacturing to financial services in London and the south east.

The collapse of manufacturing sends a message to our young people, that there aren't really great opportunities in their area. It leaves them thinking: 'So I'm going to go off to university to do media studies instead and hope to get a job in London and never come back.'

Many of these communities were the cradle of the first industrial revolution: let's make them the cradle of a green industrial revolution. When I say that to the steel workers in my constituency, they want to be a part of the solution. They know the only future for us is a cleaner, greener manufacturing sector and with steel at its heart.

The Labour Party should be making a bold promise: that we would get our share of manufacturing in terms of GDP from nine to 15 per cent within one parliamentary term.

What role does Brexit play in this? George Freeman and I bear the scars of trying to get a deal through parliament that accepted the result of the referendum, but left us very closely aligned with the single market and I think that that would have been the right thing to do. I think Labour's decision to back a second referendum was a huge mistake.

We've left the European Union so that debate is done and dusted; but there are ways in which we can start to rebuild some of those bridges. Let's now be pragmatic – let's be constructive and maybe some good old British pragmatism will be brought back to the foreground.

Some of these ideas that I'm hearing around me today; it seems to me the obvious way to make them happen is for a form of politics that is more balanced; more coalition-based; rather than divisive and oppositional, which is what we've got at the moment – rather than a somebody comes up with a good idea and then the other person feels they have to oppose it, simply because it was put forward by the wrong party.

We need a different type of politics, bringing people together to find solutions.

Stephen Kinnock MP is a Labour Shadow Foreign Office minister (he is now the Shadow Minister for Defence).

CHAPTER 4

CLAIRE HAZELGROVE

TACKLING BIG LOCAL
CHALLENGES:

PUTTING PEOPLE'S VOICES AT
THE HEART OF CHANGE



From 'levelling up' to tackling the climate emergency in the right ways for a place, local, regional and national governments are facing tough choices and trade offs. There are no easy answers, and certainly no blueprint that can be taken from one place and neatly overlaid on to another.

The debate about national vs. regional power doesn't go nearly far enough, not least because it hasn't been able to. Our mayors and local authorities are fantastic and dedicated ambassadors for their places, yet they still have to wrangle crucial decision-making powers and short-term, competitive pots of money from Whitehall in a piecemeal way.

While the recent Levelling Up White Paper suggests some welcome changes here, this approach has made tackling local challenges and seizing opportunities harder than our communities deserve.

In modern Britain, what we should be in a position to discuss more is how to go about, deepen and learn from decision-making with the community, especially where their own involvement is needed to make change a reality.

So why is this important, what are the hesitations in doing so, how can they be overcome and what can this look like in practice?

Why this matters

Each of our country's towns, villages, cities and islands have unique challenges and opportunities, and local people know what's working and what's not. We each live these realities every day.

Whether that's still feeling like we need to take the car because we can't be sure the bus will get us into town in time for a hospital appointment, not being sure what's being done to regenerate our local high street, or worrying that the homes loved ones need at different stages of life won't be available locally. And all while knowing more needs to be done to tackle the climate emergency to protect this world and its nature for future generations.

We want to do our bit. Yet too often these tough decisions and trade-offs, ones that affect how we live day-to-day and will need us to make changes too, are not often made with us. Traditional one-way 'call and response' consultations are still often the norm, as opposed to discussion and deliberating options together.

To truly meet the challenges facing our communities today, one Council or one business or one local organisation or one resident acting alone is by no means enough. We are in an era that requires whole place-based response and action. And to make that happen, people's voices need to be at the heart of shaping that change. Not on the periphery.

At TPXImpact, we support the public sector and third sector to bring about transformation that matters to improve outcomes for people, places and society, and regularly work with those who want to do more in this space.

The climate conundrum

Take the climate emergency. This has been acknowledged and declared by the majority of Councils (around 300) across the UK. But typically Councils are only responsible for 2-5% of emissions. So while they may convene and drive the local response, they cannot shape and deliver it alone. Businesses, charities, residents need to shape and deliver on a shared plan that works for their community.

This is one of the reasons why we've seen an increase in Climate Assemblies and wider engagement with these other groups within local areas in the last couple of years, to bring a commitment to act to life in a whole place-based way.

What's stopping greater community engagement and participation?

This contemporary way of working on the big issues facing an area requires join up across it, based on trust, respect and reciprocity. To get to that place, it is important to understand some of the reluctance to do things differently, and to look at the benefits and solutions.

From the position of a local authority, we have typically found hesitation to usually be for one or more of four reasons: uncertainty about its usefulness; a perceived loss of control; concerns about costs; and not knowing how or where to start.

For community-led organisations and residents, we have found commonly heard concerns to be based around: uncertainty about how to get involved; a lack of belief that their views will be heard and incorporated; how much time will be



TPXImpact, we regularly support Councils and wider public institutions, like the NHS, to hear people's first hand experiences and journeys when encountering public services, helping them to identify barriers they hadn't expected, and consider different approaches to see more people get the support they need.

2. More cost-effective as you're more likely to get it right

As a result of incorporating lived experience and weighing up trade-offs with people directly, you are more likely to tackle the issue in hand sooner and with fewer false starts. This can save significant sums of money, which can instead be focused on the right solutions.

Starting small and learning is also a good way to get a sense of the costs of a process, without seeking any larger and long-term funding commitments early on.

3. Gamers buy-in and support for the change happening

Through deliberative processes that focus on options and trade-offs, it will be clearer as to what level of support there is for various approaches. In addition, it is more likely that those who took part in the process will want to help bring this change to life. This, supported by wider communications to ensure more people are aware of this partnership approach, can support place-based action for the longer-term.

We recently worked with a Council not only to design and run a range of tailored

community engagement activities to understand local priorities in tackling the climate emergency, but also to identify "climate ambassadors". These were members of the community who were willing to keep working on this with the Council afterwards. In just a few short weeks, over 130 local residents said they would be willing to take this role on. The people and the passion are there.

4. Residents and businesses think beyond Council departments and point to join up.

Even the best public institutions can operate in siloed ways, whereas those outside a Council do not see challenges and opportunities in terms of internal remits. As a result, community engagement processes often have the added value of leading to more cross-Council working. This has the obvious benefits of saving time and money, improving resident experience of engaging with the Council and making delivery smoother.

Good examples of this are Covid-19 Community Hubs that saw more integrated ways of working, as they were focused on a shared challenge. There is also a lot to build on from the pandemic more widely, in terms of the new collaborative response we saw across our areas.

5. Engagement can be focused, avoiding 'wish lists'

Deeper community engagement doesn't mean less focused community engagement. People want to know what they're being asked and how it'll be used. Councils want to make sure they're talking with people

about topics and trade-offs they can truly influence. One of the initial aspects that we work on with Councils is defining the specific question(s) that will be at the heart of engagement.

Deliberation, focused on prioritisation, in its nature helps avoid a 'wish list' scenario. Processes that we have co-designed and facilitated at TPXImpact, like Blackpool Council's Climate Assembly, centre on using tools and techniques to help members determine clear and considered recommendations, having heard from experts from a range of backgrounds to help build confidence in taking part.

Clear parameters make it more likely that people will take part as they know what they'll be doing, and give legitimacy to addressing any other topics that come up separately.

How to get started.

1. Map your existing (and missing) community networks.

Look at the full geography and demographics of your community. Who have you got strong relationships with already? Where? Who are people most impacted by a range of key local issues? And the most influential? Where are your gaps? Which voices and lived experience are missing in your engagement right now? Which groups and organisations might help you reach those? This initial mapping is something every organisation can do, and will form the foundations of a plan for engagement.

expected of them; and whether this will just be a one-off without any change in how things are typically done.

These are all natural and important questions to ask and should be kept in mind when looking to deepen community engagement.

Why engage the community more deeply in key decisions?

1. Better solutions are developed, incorporating lived experience

Through learning more about the realities different people face in tackling an issue, or accessing a public service, the approaches you then consider acting on will be better informed, and more likely to help. At

2. Review your current activity levels, strengths and gaps when it comes to deeper community engagement

In addition to understanding your networks, it's important to gain as full a picture of activity with the community to-date. Have there just been statutory consultations when required, or anything more? Have your communications team been running any wider engagement on topics via social media? What's gone well, less well and why?

These are all good foundational questions to look at, and align your current activity levels against what you would envision success to look like for your community engagement. This helps you to set out what's working well, where there are gaps, and what to aim for next.

3. Look at examples from elsewhere

Lots of your peer organisations will be, or will have been, grappling with similar questions. Some will have carried out some useful community engagement activities that you could also learn from. A bit of light research can highlight some great events and case studies. Get in touch with those who ran an interesting sounding process and find out more from their similar vantage point. People are generous in this space - wanting others to succeed for and with their communities too.

Looking beyond Citizens' Assemblies, there are good examples across the country of how Councils are involving local people in focused decisions. One of them is North Ayrshire Council's excellent participatory budgeting processes, which invite local

proposals for funding for youth, community and arts projects. These are then voted on by residents and supported by the Council. Another is Newham Council's engagement of residents and businesses in prioritising different investment options for their local Queen's Market.

4. Ask the community what they'd want this to look like.

There are useful approaches to community partnerships to consider from around the country, and discussing whether any of these feel right for your place, or what might instead, can be a good place to start.

Examples within the climate space alone, which can of course be applied to other themes and more widely, include the Camden Climate Change Alliance, a not-for-profit network founded by the London Borough of Camden and key businesses. Focused on delivering local plans the council shaped with the community, the Alliance brings together over 270 organisations from business, third sector and schools and supports them to make a positive impact on the environment with tools, resources and guidance.

In Oxfordshire, the county council funds the social enterprise 'Community Action Group Oxfordshire', which supports local communities to organise and take action. It now consists of over 80 groups focusing on community-led climate change action, organising events and running projects to take action on issues including waste, transport, food, energy and biodiversity. This has seen over 50,000 volunteer hours contributed locally.

In Bristol, where the city council was the first in the UK to declare a climate emergency, the Mayor established a new 'One City' strategic partnership, seeing all parts of Bristol come together to tackle complex issues. This included a new 'One City Environment Board', made up of representatives from the public sector, private sector and third sector, and led to the creation of the collective action-focused 'One City Climate Strategy'. This sets out a city wide vision for reducing carbon emissions, not owned by any single organisation.

5. Pilot an engagement activity.

Having looked at your existing networks, activity and examples from elsewhere, piloting an activity is the best way to start to put some of this into practice. Testing and learning in reality will help show you and others (both internally and externally) what the benefits are, and what else you may need to put in place to be successful.

It is important to have a clear goal in mind, and to think through from the outset how you will maintain engagement with those who take part. You can help manage expectations by being open with those you engage with throughout that this is a pilot, and seeking their feedback on the process.

Starting small will also help allay concerns about potential cost and show you what a larger process may entail. You do not need to start with a citizens' assembly. Within this pilot, bring others with you internally.

Where appropriate, invite senior officers and elected members to see aspects of the pilot in practice for themselves and make sure that you are sharing progress throughout and lessons afterwards.

Any organisation thinking about how to deepen its community engagement and put people's voices at the heart of change is ahead of the curve. You are likely to become one of the teams others come to learn from. Don't let striving for the perfect get in the way of making a good start here - give these steps a go.

When public institutions, elected representatives and people who live in the places they serve come together to shape and deliver change, the potential is enormous.

Claire Hazelgrove is Community and Political Engagement Director at TPXImpact (formerly FutureGov).

CHAPTER 5

PROFESSOR STEPHEN SMITH

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION
OF INNOVATION FROM UNIVERSITY LABS
BEYOND START-UPS



The UK is recognised for creating small start-ups, but the challenge is growing these into larger companies or unicorns. Why should this be?

Is it the difficulty of getting hold of the larger levels of capital required to grow? Is it that there is no guide to help post-start-up companies through the next stages? Are there cultural and attitudinal issues in the UK that can result in companies pursuing growth in other countries - such as the US and New Zealand - which are more supportive for growth?

Is it that the costs of goods and services is high in the UK compared to other countries? Is it that we are not strong at selling or marketing in the UK, which is required to grow companies at scale?

The problem is that it is usually a 10-15 year journey to build a unicorn or larger company. Funding is undoubtedly difficult - there are start-up funds for early stages, but in biotech particularly, you need sufficient extended funds to continue the development of companies through the pre-revenue phase.

[We also still have a chronic problem of getting levels of investment to allow companies to grow. We still have a mentality of what is the minimal amount that we need to grow the business rather than what is the optimal amount of resource we need to achieve our goals with sufficient redundancy in the figures to take the company over the inevitable set-backs that are a daily feature of biotech and medical research.

Nor are there enough private long-term sources of capital outside of the 'golden-triangle', we need money in Manchester or Newcastle, for example (though there are more smaller grants and some angel investors).

The good news is that the first scale-up fund in the north east, North East Capital, is now being trialled. There is also a database of spin-out deal terms across every university called Spinout FYI - helping company founders with added transparency when they are negotiating deals.

Some of our suggestions at the meeting included:

Connecting PhD students and SMEs, and starting to build an understanding of what is needed.

Encouraging small companies with innovation and flair to work with universities. Universities could provide support by supporting founders of companies to create the interconnected networks that are required for growth - although it was noted that there are currently no incentives for universities to do this.

Getting universities to adopt a model like the Barclays Tech fund, which invested in marketing skills.

Providing faculty with the opportunity of a sabbatical in a SME - often their SME - after which they can re-enter the university with no detrimental effect to their subsequent academic career if their commercial venture fails or they choose to go back into the academic world. The US does this much more smoothly and effectively than we do.

We need to look at the whole innovation eco-system to change culture. For example, we could connect PhD students and SMEs to start to build an understanding of what is needed. Even provide them with financial remuneration unencumbered by HMRC.

There isn't a guide to help post-start-up companies through next stages - we need to industrialise the process.

So how do you bring places like Cambridge into rest of UK? We need a broader definition of innovation, not just manufacturing. We also need new ways of working, not just start-ups. Nor should we just think of linear models of universities and commercialisation.

As a nation we are seriously good at the innovation bit. It is the delivery of the commercial and financial benefits to which we now need to turn our attention, not by changing or over burdening our innovators with tasks they are ill suited to, but by creating a new cadre of individuals with the commercial skills to build the unicorn companies of the future.

Stephen Smith is a director at Netscientific and a Radix fellow.

CHAPTER 6

TOM CHANCE

COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS



Danny Kruger closed the leader's summit by suggesting that community land trusts (CLTs) should become much more common. He was echoing a theme of the day, and a growing topic among politicians from all parties, that of community ownership and power.

There is growing evidence of the benefits of community-led approaches to housing. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities recently published an academic study on community-led housing and loneliness. It found community-led approaches reduce loneliness and foster social cohesion, both through the physical designs, the preference for sociable spaces, and the process of bringing people together to develop, manage and steward their homes.

Other recent research finds wider health benefits, higher environmental standards and a greater public support for housebuilding. All at a pace comparable to private and social developers, while achieving medium to high value for public money.

In the last decade, there has been growing support from policymakers in national and local government for CLTs and other forms of community-led housing. Policies like the Community Housing Fund have seen the pipeline of new homes swell from around 5,000 five years ago to potentially 23,000 today.

Bristol, the host of the next Big Tent event, has long been a hotbed of community-led housing activity.

It boasts over 1,000 homes in the works, from teeny Tiny House schemes on garages

to the Southmead Development Trust's 120-home regeneration project. Students are taking over a hall of residence as a co-operative. Council tenants are building their first two flat-pack homes in outsized back gardens so their children (with grandchildren) can get a home of their own. First time buyers are being trained up to do the fixtures and fittings in their half-finished homes.

Bristol City Council has supported this through a social value-oriented land disposal framework and internal capacity to facilitate projects.

But in Bristol, as across England, it remains a niche pursuit. It's something for small, awkward sites, existing in a parallel world to the major developments in the city centre.

There is only so far one can go in supporting growth from the bottom up, particularly in competitive land and housing markets that are hostile to any kind of new entrant. Small private builders have been in terminal decline since the 1980s for many of the same reasons that community led housing has struggled to take off.

It therefore remains a tough road that few can travel. Too many of those most in need of affordable housing, most in need of power and agency, are left behind, benefiting only as passive end users where affordable homes are built.

While CLTs are over-represented in the most deprived parts of our country, only a tiny minority of those excluded from the market by their poverty, race or age are actively involved in running them.

Kruger's suggestion raises the question: how would it become commonplace?

Our sector is working on ways that you can rewire the housing market, soldering community agency and ownership into existing models of delivery and management.

Build-to-rent flats are managed as co-operatives; intergenerational care and retirement communities are cohousing communities; new garden communities and their affordable homes are co-created with and stewarded by local people through CLTs.

These are not theories – there are real-world examples of each, but they are rarities. The question is how, with sticks and carrots, policymakers could see them more widely adopted.

One of my great inspirations is the 'Wessex' or 'Middlemarch' model of CLT-housing association partnerships, which has seen more CLT homes built in Dorset, Somerset and Devon than most of the rest of England.

The real lesson from this is, I think, often misunderstood. What the local enablers did was to run an action research project to establish: what did communities trying and struggling to 'do' CLTs actually want to achieve? What 'rewiring' model could achieve 80 per cent of this, with a greater chance of success? How can we develop a professional role to facilitate this, one that has value for the party in the process with the money, so it becomes a self-sustaining enterprise?

Homes England has tentatively supported this model, asking the last round of applicants for Strategic Partnerships to set out their plans to partner with CLTs. One made it a major feature of their bid. Others have decided to do more of these kinds of projects as a result.

This is the model that so enthused Kruger. Not only because it helps to deliver more homes in sensitive locations in a way that communities can support. But because it builds local capability, it reduces loneliness, it improves social cohesion.

What other models can we develop that match the conditions and opportunities in different local markets?

The prize here is more than housing units. It's a different way of seeing the value of housebuilding.

Talk of community power often focuses on pubs, libraries and community centres. These matter, of course. But there are 24 million homes in England, in every community, worth £7.6 trillion. Imagine the impact if we went from 0.6 per cent of our housing stock being community owned to 6 per cent. That would still put us below many other European countries, but could have a transformative impact on our social fabric.

Kruger raised the question: how? We need to find the answers and make them happen.

Tom Chance is the chief executive of the National Community Land Trust Network.



CHAPTER 7

JAYNE WOODLEY

HOW CAN THIS SOLVE THE
HOUSING CRISIS FOR
THE LEFT BEHIND?



There is systemic inertia in the housing market despite the essence of a home or shelter being one of the most basic of human rights, something that has somehow long been overlooked, when such a significant proportion of our modern day economy has been built around the creation of a housing market.

This is a market which now excludes the majority from access, either by renting or owning, what could be considered truly affordable housing – in other words, no more than 40 per cent of income.

Albeit, unsurprising, when the very foundation of this housing market is based on such a finite resource as land, the value of which has grown exponentially relative to many other resources that are in similar limited supply.

Even back in 1909, Winston Churchill argued that “land differs from all other forms of property... which is a necessity of human existence, which is the original source of all wealth, which is strictly limited in extent, which is fixed in geographical position...”

However, it is much more complicated than simply apportioning blame to the finite supply of land, as perhaps the real challenge lies in understanding who actually owns the extremely valuable 60 million acres that make up our green and pleasant land. Despite 160 years in operation, it seems even the Land Registry is still a work in progress - its records remain incomplete in terms of being able to make sense of the complex web of secrecy that currently surrounds land ownership.

And this matters because, if we acknowledge that there is a housing crisis and one that could be eased by making more land available, how can we even begin to identify what land could be developed more affordably and prioritised accordingly within our future plans?

Where is the urgency and priority to finally break up this apparent housing monopoly and reintroduce more social and community housing? Will it take something more radical like widespread civil disobedience or even a new National Land Movement like the Suffragette protests to achieve more homes that are affordable, safe and secure?

If the government is serious about levelling up and addressing policies to improve the life chances for those 'left behind', why is there so little discourse on both the current and future stock of affordable housing? Where is the political will and cross-party long-term ambition to tackle this most critical social problem?

Its absence is both unfathomable and most concerning given the absence of stable housing has long been acknowledged as the common thread that runs through all the inequalities, disadvantages and injustices that exist in our modern democracy?

All the while everything, from a growing home population, property incentives which allow non-UK nationals to 'buy' permanent residency and humanitarian immigration unlikely to recede, tells us demand will continue to exceed supply many times over, and momentum will soon be out of control.

And herein lies the conundrum. In an era where homes can out earn their owners on an annual basis in many areas across the UK, it seems housing has become 'a national savings scheme' of divine reverence; and yet our current tax regime appears to play a significant role in perpetrating this most inequitable of situations.

It is generally now accepted that it would be electoral suicide to upset this cash cow of permanent house price inflation. There are simply too many well-connected lobbies and too many powerful and entrenched vested interests working strongly in favour of the housing market, when what we really should be honing in on are all the alternatives that could provide welcome disruption and upend the market for the common good.

Most recently, we have seen the stamp duty tax 'holiday' on property transactions during the Coronavirus pandemic and are left wondering how could that have ever passed a 'levelling up' litmus test?

Likewise, the reality and impact of historic policies that have seen the sell-off of council housing and have left many councils now overly dependent on stock owned by private landlords and housing associations (HAs).

Many of the latter are corporate behemoths, exploiting their tenants and taking every legal opportunity to renege on their missions to house the most vulnerable.

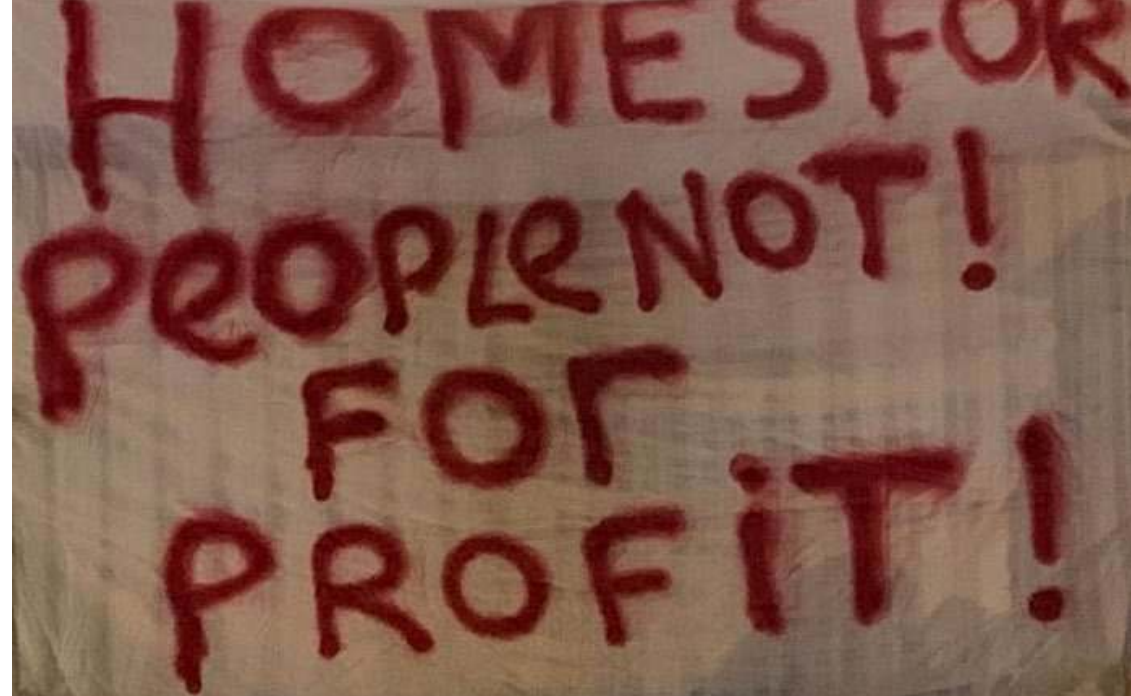
How can a collective operating surplus of circa £4 billion across the housing association sector even be possible when there are limitations on any increases in social rents? Well, it seems HAs (Housing Associations) have found opportunities to levy annual increases in service charges, disproportionately growing the total percentage cost of housing for their residents.

Residents who are all too often also facing daily battles to fight for repairs and maintenance in unsafe accommodation, attempting to deal with a system that is no longer fit for purpose, with teams who are often inexperienced, under resourced and lacking in human compassion?

Housing is a human right and a problem that needs cross party commitment to a range of long-term strategies that put homes first above all else.

Doing otherwise runs the risk of being our ultimate downfall and great public institutions like the NHS will continue to find it increasingly difficult to recruit into vacancies, thus putting the lives of the nation further at risk.

What is even more frustrating is that such alternatives do already exist and in places across the country are already making an impact and do have the potential to make a significant contribution to ease the growing crisis if scaled appropriately and at speed.



If we are to avoid a housing revolution, I urge us all to collaborate our efforts and support solutions that could reverse the situation we now find ourselves in and as debated in our workshop last November, these could include:

Abolishing the Right to Buy to prevent this from being the greatest obstacle to local authorities building.

Scaling Community Land Trusts to provide a source of affordable homes in perpetuity.

Allowing local authorities to borrow on the open market to build housing.

Introducing a comprehensive inheritance tax on property.

Engaging with the banking system to offer different products.

Regulating Airbnb 'landlords' who are profiteering from housing stock.

Jayne Woodley is former chief executive of Oxfordshire Community Foundation

CHAPTER 8

GABRIEL CHANAN

COMMUNITIES AND THE WHITE PAPER



It is hardly a surprise that, as Lisa Nandy says, the Levelling Up White Paper comes up with no new ideas. But nor is it a damning criticism. It is virtually impossible to come up with new ideas about achieving equality. The question is whether old ones will be used to maximum effect.

The model is built with bricks from the Urban Programme of the 1980s, the Single Regeneration Budget of the 1990s and the New Deal for Communities of the 2000s – a succession of programmes which transcended change between Conservative and Labour governments.

The idea of a 20-year trajectory echoes Tony Blair's 1998 pledge: 'In twenty years' time, no-one will be disadvantaged by where they live.'

Of course, no-one is held accountable at that distance. But it is realistic to recognise that equality needs a long process. In fact New Labour kept their regeneration project going for a good ten years, and it showed concrete results. It was then stopped in its tracks by the economic crash of 2008. We would be looking at a very different starting point now if the incoming Tory-LibDem coalition of 2010 had built on that foundation despite difficult years, instead of making a virtue of dismantling it in the name of austerity.

Gove is starting with a slim purse, and what money there is seems to be poorly targeted, but his Department's money alone will not determine whether this scheme works. Regeneration money even in the best of times is only a fraction of government money going into disadvantaged areas. The idea of addressing employment, transport, technology, education, health and crime in parallel at least reflects the fact that all these issues are interconnected on the ground, and that the goal of equality requires changes of priorities, allocation and evaluation in all government departments.

The departments have already, of course, got their own objectives, but by subjecting them to the criterion of improving equality, the Levelling Up agenda ought to be able to achieve more leverage than its meagre resources suggest.

The main lesson that does not seem to have been learned from previous programmes is that improving outcomes on all social issues depends as much on mobilising creative community involvement as on money. And that means focusing down on real localities where people meet and interact – neighbourhoods, estates and villages, not just regions and local authorities. Life expectancy differs as much from one neighbourhood to another as

it does between regions, but it is only at neighbourhood level that you can get to grips with it through creative projects, co-produced by agencies and communities.

Between the grand aims of top-down improvement there are some thin hints about community involvement. The 'Community Ownership Fund' 'will enable more fans to take control of their vital local assets such as football club grounds'. And £44m will be unlocked from the Dormant Assets Scheme to support charities, social enterprises and vulnerable individuals.

There will be consultation on the best causes for a further £880m including a community wealth fund, youth and social investment. The £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund 'will be decentralised to local leaders as far as possible... to regenerate communities, boost people's skills and support local businesses'. And young people will have 'opportunities to volunteer'.

But all this is vague and fragmentary. As far as community involvement is concerned, this is pretty much where ideas on regeneration stood in 1990. The narrative does not recognise that the government's most vital ally in tackling inequality is the stratum of social networks, community and voluntary groups that keep society going at neighbourhood level.

The programme is directed at 'forgotten communities'. Forgotten by whom? Not the people who live there.

On community involvement, we are faced with thirty years of political amnesia. But it's worth recalling that the Major-Heseltine government went on to produce the Single Regeneration Budget, which eventually

became a carrier wave for community involvement, and this was amplified in New Labour's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

Of course, this created a raft of new problems about how to orchestrate top-down and bottom-up inputs, but that is exactly where the key to improvement lies.

There are plenty of voices now calling for community empowerment, but they don't yet appear to have made any impact on the Levelling Up agenda. Nor are they likely to unless they can re-activate the process which changed minds and policies in the 90s and 2000s. The problem they face is that in Whitehall 'community' is a cosmetic, not a concept. The way to establish objectivity in this sphere is not to bang on about communities as if they were things, but to focus on community activity.

Community activity, unlike 'communities', is an objective factor in regeneration, not just a vague aspiration, and it needs to have targets and budgets alongside health, housing, employment, education and crime. Where amenities and support for community activity are poor there will be fewer groups, sparser networks, more isolation, less participation, weaker public voice, poorer mental and physical health, lower attainment and less enterprise.

It is by investing community empowerment with the same status and backing as the other objectives that the regeneration package can become a dynamic force.

Gabriel Chanan is a researcher, evaluator and theorist on community engagement and development. He manages the Health Empowerment Leverage Project (HELP).

CHAPTER 9

TOM BRAKE

PEOPLE POWER: HOW CAN WE GET COMMUNITIES INVOLVED IN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES?



Adam Hawksbee and I wanted to look at the ways in which communities can get involved in discussing how levelling up might work for them.

How do we identify what they as a community actually want, when - at the moment - there is a tendency for the centre just to decide what they want to know when they are actively engaged in that process of levelling up?

So we asked in our session how you create institutions in a hyper-local situation? There are, we said, three levels -

1. *One strain is where people come together to achieve something, like rescuing local shops.*
2. *Where those groups start to be used for other objectives, as when the local shop starts making school meals.*
3. *The third area might be the most challenging for policy-makers, when you have broad umbrella institutions that can build capacity...*

There was some chicken-versus-egg disagreement between people about whether action or consultation and participation came first. "I have some disagreement about the value of participative democracy," said Local Trust chief executive Matt Leach. "The challenge with participative approaches to democracy is that they serve to reinforce the power, the power stays in the same place - it doesn't create the institutions that we need, it fails communities through a lack of trust... That sense of trust isn't necessarily created by the state; it is created by relationships between people. It isn't that I'm not hugely in favour of participative democracy - I've advocated for it in the past - but alongside that, we need to look at those institutions that really build relationships with people."

The government assumes that people really want jobs where they live. But when they asked their target groups, jobs came further down their lists - above them, they really wanted places to meet and things to do.

In one area, a popular pub was shut and the library was closed. They are now community-run. There used to be pubs, community centres and churches, but they weren't state run - they were managed by the local community.

One difficulty pointed out to us was that, especially if you are a working parent, it takes a very special person who wants to get involved in that kind of project.

Another was the way in which some local authorities spend their money. There is a prospect that some local authorities will spend some of their levelling up money on roundabouts. "If you talk to traffic engineers, they can spend absolutely tons of money, quite pointlessly," said one participant.

Yet citizens' assemblies could and should be about providing local authorities with better information. Assemblies are made up of random samples of local people. They will not be the 'usual suspects'.

Actually, as Matt Leach said, every community relies on those 'usual suspects'. Local Trust, for example, is trying to grow the number of 'usual suspects' who can turn their hand to community management.

The importance of doing things, not just consulting people, because in practice - people need to feel more confident before they will willingly get involved in participation.

There are now said to be 1,500 cities around the world doing participatory budgeting - where they tell local people, "here's the money and you decide what's appropriate".

That is an exciting prospect.

Tom Brake is director of Unlock Democracy and former Lib Dem MP for Carshalton.

CHAPTER 10

ASHOK GUPTA

INVESTMENT:
A NEW CAPITAL CONSENSUS

Our economy is failing to meet the needs of society. We need to reduce inequality and regenerate those communities left behind. Demographic ageing continues to place heavy strains on both our health and pensions systems, whilst we are failing to meet the housing and education needs of younger generations.

And critically, we need to massively reduce our use of carbon along with greening the economy. All this against a backdrop of two years of pandemic and many years of persistent low productivity.

All these problems have three things in common. First, a widespread recognition across political parties. Second, the requirement for capital expenditure well beyond anything the government could provide alone. Third, a perception that these challenges are politically too difficult to tackle due to potentially requiring high taxes and undeliverable decisions.

However, if we can release the full potential of private pensions and investment funds, the opportunity exists to offer politicians a politically acceptable solution to these problems.

Fortunately, the UK is blessed with large pools of private savings - around £8 trillion. Of this, savings for retirement represent approximately 75 per cent. Successive governments have called for investment into the UK by funds and other institutional investors. Yet despite this, investment monies are not reaching the parts of the economy in need. It appears we have, more than anything, an irrigation problem.

Chronic underinvestment has hobbled the UK's economic performance and has

resulted in a highly inequitable economy that is over-reliant on certain sectors, such as the inherently unstable finance and real estate sectors. Achieving levelling up, net zero and other social objectives will require both a step up in the level of investment and a redirection of existing investment. There is cross-party support for this, yet why are the large institutional investors not responding?

Our investment system, which should be oxygenating the economy, is sclerotic. The investment system should provide significant levels of the type of investment capital needed to support society's needs, given that the bulk of investment by individuals is for retirement and that industry requires long-term risk bearing capital. Yet the way it currently operates - converting long-term capital into short-term investment - represents a problem for individuals and society. Capital invested for shorter periods and able to bear less risk provides industry with less resilience, less ability to manage uncertainty and less ability to innovate. In turn, this leads to fewer jobs and jobs of lower quality.

Numerous studies have highlighted deep flaws in how the investment system operates and identified structural problems such as:

- *Regulation of the system is misguided and contributes to poor outcomes.*
- *The government continues to provide significant tax benefits only to support a flawed, unsustainable system.*
- *Poor regulation has permitted capture by vested interests who extract excessive rent from the system.*

Chatham House Sustainability Accelerator, FinSTIC, Lankelly Chase and Radix have combined to conduct research, build a consensus around specific policy solutions to this problem.

While there is a good understanding of the operation of each element in the investment system already, there is little understanding of

- a) how money flows through the system,
- b) what factors constrain or facilitate flows of money to certain parts of society and away from others, and
- c) how incentives drive behaviour leading to undesirable and unsustainable outcomes.

What has happened to this £8 trillion of individuals' investment pots and how are new flows being invested?

This project aims to support policy change to improve the productivity of retirement money helping to realise societal objectives, by deriving evidence-based policy recommendations through simultaneously working with industry participants and policymakers to build support for such change, tapping into existing industry momentum and frustration.

Policy solutions would be derived from a systems-wide analysis of the investment system, identifying the causes of the roadblocks - focusing on how incentives influence behaviour and drive outcomes - and how they can be removed.

Outputs will be technically detailed but with clearly articulated wider and political implications. Solutions and policy proposals would be designed for the benefit of society and the economy.

The coalition is currently raising funding and is initiating a project to:

- **STIMULATE:** undertake academic research that builds an understanding of investment system mechanics.
- **CONVENE:** convene a cross-section of interested parties from investment, finance, regulation, academia and public policy to inform that research and create a common understanding of the challenges and the policy levers capable of improving capital flows.
- **FRAME:** identify specific policy solutions, framed to appeal to politicians and policy-makers.
- **INFLUENCE:** build a coalition to promote these policy solutions leading to change.

Ashok Gupta is chair of Finstic (Financial Systems Thinking Innovation Centre).



CHAPTER 11

BIYI OLOKO

GLOBAL BRITAIN: CAN THE UK
REGENERATE IN ISOLATION?



It's a no-brainer that Britain is an island and open: you *can not* regenerate in isolation. That needs to be key to our industrial strategy – because we need investment in relevant areas of UK.

According to Chatham House, 'Global Britain' has become a catchy label for the government's ambition to be an indispensable member of whatever team it joins. Global Britain is a pathway to global influence.

It requires extra investments by government and spending on British diplomacy.

It involves an expanded presence in EU countries and major capitals of the world, focus on new regional players, such as the African Union, supporting development assistance and British commercial interests.

The positive image of Global Britain must be earned, not declared.

Multiculturalism brings integration and better decisions - different groups with different strengths - into the equation, so somehow we need to draw that all together.

Strategy is key, and it ought to be at the centre of our thinking. There just needs to be a greater sense of drive – everybody wants to buy British, but do we want to sell British? Global Britain, in that respect at least, begins at home.

Global Britain: we need to make it about what we can contribute, rather than what we can take.

Four decades ago, China's GDP was on par with Malawi (if you had a bike, you were very rich. Now there are 400m middle classes) – how did they do it? It is worth remembering that this is the ultimate story of regeneration in our lifetime.

Once upon a time, Jermyn Street shirts were made in Britain. That is no longer the case, so that can't be the pillar of our revival.

It may also be that Britain is not ready for manufacturing at the moment, because it would take at least ten years to improve this sector through education?

So what can be done?

We can certainly learn from Japan, where they have fewer resources, but became a global leader through sheer hard work. We also need to make sure we protect what we have.

Some industries have public interest (strategic value), so there should be legislative support to prevent hostile foreign takeovers in those circumstances.

But the unarguable key point is that the UK obviously needs the outside world and vice versa. For example, the City of London is still the dominant player in global transactions!

Biyi Oloko (FCA, FCCA) is a director with Stephen Simeon and is also treasurer-trustee of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association. He holds a number of NED roles in Africa and the UK.

CHAPTER 12

DANNY KRUGER MP

AFTERWORD



Britain is the most spatially unequal country in the developed world – and has been for generations. If you look back to the 1930s, there were political debates about the same, distressed areas, and we – the political class – have been trying over all those decades, to do something about it.

What's different this time? The majority my party won at the last election was on the votes of people who have had enough of the orthodoxy that we can drive the

nation's prosperity from the south east and redistribute the fruits in the form of welfare payments and public service support.

This is a deeply wrong model. Rather than redistribution, we want every part of the country contributing to prosperity.

Levelling up means focusing on the roots of prosperity, not just redistribution.

It's why we're not just focusing on big infrastructure investments, but on things like broadband connectivity. We need to look at the social foundations of prosperity and the real roots of well-being, so places can develop the local skills base and, once again, be towns that attract capital. Government has a big role to play, but ultimately it will be driven by the private sector and, crucially, by civil society.

We now have an actual, deliverable plan that is being implemented, and people can have absolute confidence it's going to happen. Long-term, we will be judged on the improvements in living standards and connectivity that people elected us to deliver.

Brexit enables us to reform the state aid regime so that the government can actually support industries in the regions it wants to, without being constrained by EU rules. The new system we've designed to replace EU funding is a better system, more responsive and reflective of the needs of local places, not one done by an algorithm in Brussels.

We will not have delivered Brexit unless we allow people to take back control, not just from Brussels, but from London. It would be outrageous for any of us sitting in London to say what Huddersfield needs is this, what Gateshead needs is that. Prosperity has to be driven from the place that needs it.

There needs to be a real commitment to empowering local decision makers and that, to my mind, means a partnership of local government, of the local business community, civil society and ordinary people themselves.

We are laggards in the development of democracy. Having been forerunners a hundred years ago, we are now behind many other countries who are better at engaging people in decision-making.

I think we need a big conversation about where power resides and how to properly organise it. I would like to recover the energy of the Big Society in those early days of the coalition government, when there was a huge drive to empower communities and reform public services in a way that put power in the hands of people, frontline professionals and the users of services and local communities.

We can have the housing that we need without the resistance that comes from letting the 'big volume' housebuilders, who don't frankly care about the community or the look and feel of a house, or its appropriateness, decide what is built.

In the government report I wrote when we were going through this extraordinary moment of everybody working from home or furloughed, I saw the power of people taking responsibility and supporting neighbours. We need to build on that. We've discovered an enormous, latent reservoir of community power and cannot think that the only agency which should have any authority in a place is the local council, as currently constituted.

Danny Kruger is Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities.

HOW TO REGENERATE

RADIX BIG TENT

Our political system is failing. Political debate has become polarised and short-sighted leading to a loss of trust not just in politicians but democracy itself. Traditional parties exclude millions, the media is no longer independent, while many think tanks are too narrow in focus and too dependent on corporate sponsorship to promote systemic change.

It is time for a revolution of empowerment to enable us all to take part in political discussion and to shape our responses to the challenges of the future. Radix Big Tent is our answer.

Radix, the think tank for the radical centre and Big Tent, which creates space for non-partisan discussion about big policy issues, are coming together to change the conversation and reframe and revive meaningful political debate. Together, we aim to provoke, develop and promote new conversations about and ideas for the regeneration and renewal of our society.

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