

This open document is for the community call on **ownership and organisation**. It is designed for anyone with an interest in finding out new and innovative ways that organisations are involving the community in different aspects of decision making, from having an input on story ideas and areas of coverage, to deciding how a budget should be allocated.

The video call took place on Thursday 31 January at 4pm CET via Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/221820873>. The full recording can be found [here](#).

You can get a reminder for the next community calls by adding the Accelerator reminders calendar to your Google calendar profile [here](#) ([iCal link](#)).

Leave any questions you have below and we'll make sure they're answered.

AGENDA:

 **Introduction** (5 mins): Ben and Madalina from the Accelerator

 **Speaking** (10 mins+questions): [Yohann Koshy](#), co-editor, **New Internationalist**.

Yohann works on New Internationalist's co-owner/ investment strand. He joined in 2017 when the magazine launched its community share offer, and has played a central role in the publication's efforts to engage co-owners in the past 18 months, including its first [Annual General Meeting](#).

- [Read more about NI's community share offer here](#)
- Check out their community share crowdfunding [campaign page](#)
- Browse the 'community ownership' tab in our [Engaged Journalism in Europe Database](#).

 **Open Q&A and discussion** (20 mins)

PARTICIPANTS ON CALL (please write down your name and organisation when you join the call):

1. Ben Whitelaw, Engaged Journalism Accelerator @benwhitelaw
2. Madalina Ciobanu, Engaged Journalism Accelerator @madalinacrc
3. Yohann Koshy, New Internationalist
4. Amanda Eleftheriades, Clydesider
5. Jenny Watson, Clydesider
6. Quentin Noirfalisse, Médor
7. Javier de Vega, Civio
8. Taras Yatsenko, Tvoe Misto
9. Megan Lucero, Bureau Local
10. Rico Grimm, Krautreporter
11. Catalina Albeanu, DoR

12. Paul Myles, On Our Radar
13. Fiona Morgan, Branchhead Consulting
14. Stella Volkenand, EJC
15. Linda Vecvagare, EJC
16. Szelim Simandi, Merce
17. Pierre France, Rue89 Strasbourg

- New Internationalist was founded in 1973 as a monthly magazine so it's comparatively old in the community engagement ecosystem. It was by charities in Oxford to write about development gap. It is a campaigning mag from the left of the political spectrum and reported on stories in other continents that received little coverage in the UK press. It had 70,000 print subscribers in its heyday and was responsible for the boycott of Nestle on the back of the powdered milk scandal in Africa. They have been critical of globalisation and played a role in the Occupy movement. Yohann joined last year.
- The community share offer came as a result of declining print subscribers, an expectation that news is free and the waning of the political forces that made its name. They were already a workers co-operative and opening it out to subscribers made sense.
- A community share offer meant anyone could buy a share for 50 pounds. It wasn't about getting a return on investment but investing in a social output of journalism. It allowed them to live their principles by having international ownership.
- It surpassed expectations. The goal was 500,000 GBP raised over 700,000 GBP which was surprising. 3,487 people signed up.
- The relaunch issue in September and October focused on peace. They've moved to bi-monthly and they've seen an uptick (in the hundreds) to print subscriptions.
- They've had one AGM of the NI co-operative society. They communicated in the run-up via email and allowed them to vote on topics. From 171 responses, 40% of people (60 people) voted on the topic of 'who owns our seas'. The current issue is about internationalism - they were surprised because it's a theoretical topic. Next issue, following interest in seas, is going to be on climate change and how people can rapidly decarbonise.
- 30 people came to the AGM and 10 people live streamed and it involved hearing people's life stories and how they came to find out about NI. They presented their accounts but it was the journalism part people focused more on
- They asked people if there was a bookshop that could stock the magazine where they lived. Marketing manager Rob Wilmer (sp?) has been inundated with people saying they'll stock magazines. They 'feel like foot soldiers'.
- They also promised to set up a Common Council, where shareholders can oversee and input on the editorial direction and the choice of advertisers. NI are working this out now.
- As always, there's a question of capacity and they're hiring for a fundraising and engagement officer. At the AGM, someone stood up and said they had experience of corporate structure and have helped NI improve what they do.

- "We're working out who are the co-owners that are not subscribers and focusing on whether they could be interested in being subs or why not"

Q&A:

Quentin: It's tricky for us to approach shareholders to become magazine subscribers. How have you managed it?

Yohann: The community share offer was structured like a crowdfunding campaign and played on the idea of creating a better story. We were able to balance the crowdfund message and the share token message with some success.

Amanda: We're a social enterprise with a board but we're looking into becoming a co-operative. Legal implications of that, for-profit versus non-profit?

Yohann: It was built into the legal agreement any surplus was invested in the short term but that any substantial surplus could be paid to shareholders.

Taras: Did you say you'd become profitable within six years? And what is the percentage proportion of each stream?

Yohann: We projected it would become profitable in that time but it was more about what we would do with the money. The vast majority is subscription. A small sum of digital donations on the web. There is also the community share offer. There's also an ethical shop, where we sell fairtrade hampers and print catalogues for Amnesty and other organisations. We're experimenting with Patreon, which is nice and easy to use and allows us to cross-promote other parts of the business.

Amanda: How does the ethical advertising policy work?

Yohann: Someone who worked at NI left and started the SM which helps. Would be happy to share the policy.

Taras: How would you deal with issues where shareholders disagree with?

Yohann: We have an editorial charter which provides us with a means of interpreting complex challenges like climate change. It could come to a head in the AGM. These questions haven't come to a head yet. We always respond to letters and emails about topics like Brexit and Venezuela.

Madalina: How do you split the engagement work?

Yohann: It's a job for the editorial group. The letters from readers go to everyone. One person picks letters to publish in the magazine and responds to shareholders about what they'd like to see. We get a lot of journalistic ideas.

Amanda: Can the common council change the leaning of the magazine?

Yohann: Constitutionally, they're there to make sure we stick to the charter, rather than change it.

Ben: What has changed in the org since the CSO took place?

Yohann: The cultural aspect will take time. We're a 20 person organisation, 1/3 are journalists and some thinking about governance but not all of the time. The AGM was a good lesson in showing that this is a different beast. Every now and again we get a letter from someone telling us they're a co-owner and it adds a different layer. Either they're ideas or generous criticisms. The places I worked before were hierarchical and traditional and it's a breath of fresh air.

Madalina: There's something in the idea of using your members/shareholders as marketing ambassadors to spread the word about your org. Civio is thinking of doing that too

Javier: Our donors are a good way to spread the message and we're working now to find a way to make our readers active

Yohann: We asked people at the AGM about people to stock the mag in bookshops. We have a face-to-face campaigner who has a team of people across the UK who have stalls at universities where people can have conversations about politics or topics covered in the magazine.

Also someone in Sri Lanka asked if they could set up an office so we've sent out copies and he's been marketing the magazine from his newsrooms. We should try and formalise this. We had it before in Japan where someone translated it pro bono. By opening it up, you encourage the spirit of goodwill.

Madalina: This goes back to the idea of community organising, putting these skills in the hands of people so they can do some of these jobs themselves, and also useful if you're thinking about replicating the model of your org in other communities.

Fiona: Thinking of this about building a constituency of partners rather than consumers.

LINKS MENTIONED:

[New Internationalist business plan that accompanied the community share offer](#)

[NI pitch document for potential co-owners](#)

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