

Institution: Loughborough University		
Unit of Assessment: UOA C19 - Politics and International Studies		
Title of case study: Empowering grassroots movements to evaluate and modify their decision-making practices by sharing and promoting anarchist constitutional principles.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Ruth Kinna	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Prof. Political Theory	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1992-
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Activists frequently link constitutions with law and elite power and underestimate the value of constitutional practice, thus weakening their organisations. Kinna's research reveals that, contrary to established thought, anarchism is a constitutional tradition with effective proposals for maintaining consensual, leaderless organisations. This research insight changed activist understandings of constitutional processes and enabled groups whose members are notoriously reluctant to engage with academics and academic debates to change their practices. Two UK-based groups (independent union <i>Industrial Workers of the World</i> and housing and worker co-op, <i>Radical Routes</i>) adopted Kinna's anarchist approach in constitutional reviews. Further, to evaluate and improve their decision-making practices, four diverse beneficiaries (cooperatives in Bristol and Manchester, <i>Foodsharing Copenhagen</i> in Denmark and <i>Andrými</i>, a citizen space in Iceland) adopted key findings outlined in <i>Anarchic Agreements</i>, a 'how to' guide to constitutionalising, which was co-produced with the strategy group <i>Seeds for Change</i>.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Kinna's research was undertaken in Loughborough's world-leading Anarchism Research Group which Kinna co-founded in 2008. Her research revealed that prominent historical anarchists rejected existing constitutional settlements and proposed antiauthoritarian constitutional methods to facilitate non-hierarchical, and libertarian alternatives. Applying this insight in contemporary political theory she demonstrated the value and purchase of anarchist approaches for democratic grass roots practice.</p> <p>Importantly, Kinna's novel account of historical anarchist thought challenged the anti-constitutional bias of contemporary anarchist thinking. She showed that activists advocating leaderless organisation wrongly underestimate the value of constitutional processes in their own associations. Even groups with constitutions underplay their importance. This can impair effective functioning, especially over time, since consensual agreements about the exercise of power and the fair management of roles and responsibilities are crucial for the maintenance of alternative institutions, group cohesion and morale.</p> <p>Kinna's study of philosopher and propagandist Peter Kropotkin [R1] demonstrated that anarchism's leading nineteenth-century theoretician believed that anarchist constitutions guard against permanent entrenchments of power, not that they eschew any form of governance.</p> <p>Kinna's co-authored essay on anarchism and non-domination [R2] revealed the history of anarchist constitutionalising and showed how it rivals prevailing liberal and republican</p>		

constitutional theory. A second co-authored essay on *Occupy* [R3] used this analysis to develop a distinctive general theory of anarchist constitutionalising. Analysing archival documents produced in leaderless camps in New York, London and Oakland, the essay identified four elements in anarchist constitutional practice: the declaration of principles, establishment of institutions, the adoption of decision-making procedures and rule-making processes. There was no single sovereign or point of authority. Activists failed to appreciate the constitutional character of the occupations, but their experiments were anarchist and constitutional.

Kinna theorised the difference between anarchist and conventional constitutionalism in 'Using the Master's Tools' [R4]. The essay developed the concept of 'free agreement'. In conventional constitutions agreements are regarded as binding, even if they entrench power, and rights cannot be asserted independently of government. In anarchy, individuals and groups are always free to assert their rights to challenge power abuses.

The book *The Government of No One* [R5] described a variety of historical constitutional experiments, showing how principles have been realised in practice.

In sum, Kinna's research produced four key findings:

- Anarchism contains a strong constitutional current [R1, R2, R5]
- Anarchists routinely constitutionalise [R3, R5].
- Anarchist constitutionalising is a complex process. The constitution is not an event or a document [R3, R4, R5].
- Anarchist constitutions differ fundamentally from liberal and republican constitutions because they do not result in the institution of a permanent sovereign authority. Anarchist constitutions are made by the free agreement of participants, they are consensual and they are easily changed [R1, R2, R3, R4].

As an established leader in the field, Kinna was able to develop a project on anarchist constitutionalising with Prichard, (Loughborough PhD, 2008). Funded by the ESRC, the project enabled co-production based on principles of participatory action research with members of two beneficiary organisations, *Industrial Workers of the World* (IWW) and *Radical Routes* (RR).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1 – R. Kinna (2016), *Kropotkin: Reviewing the Classical Anarchist Tradition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-kropotkin.html>

R2 – R. Kinna and A. Prichard (2019), 'Anarchism and Non-Domination', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 24/3 doi: [10.1080/13569317.2019.1633100](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2019.1633100)

R3 - R. Kinna, A. Prichard and T. Swann (2019), 'Occupy and the Constitution of Anarchy', *Global Constitutionalism*, 8/2 doi: [10.1017/S204538171900008X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S204538171900008X)

R4 – R. Kinna (2018), 'Using the master's tools: rights and radical politics', in D. Cooper, N. Dhawan and J. Newman (eds) *Reimagining the State: Theoretical Challenges and Transformative Possibilities*, Abingdon: Routledge, 133-150, doi: [10.4324/9781351209113-8](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351209113-8)

R5 – R. Kinna (2019), *The Government of no one: The theory and practice of anarchism*, (London: Pelican), <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/300/300055/the-government-of-no-one/9780141984667.html>

Research for R1 and R3 was funded by a highly competitive (10% success rate) ESRC Transformative Research Award 2015 (ES/N006860/1). *Kropotkin: Reviewing the Classical Anarchist Tradition* [R1] has been favourably reviewed across disciplines (including *Review*

of Politics, Journal of Historical Geography, Contemporary Political Theory). *The Government of No One* [R5] was shortlisted for the 2020 Alliance of Radical Booksellers' Bread and Roses prize.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Pathways to impact

Impact was realised by participating in the constitutional review processes of the *Industrial Workers of the World* (IWW) and *Radical Routes* (RR), two exemplary organisations in the activist landscape, and by co-producing a pamphlet on anarchist constitutionalising with the well-respected strategy group *Seeds for Change* (SfC). Neither the IWW nor RR had a history of working with academics and members were initially reluctant to do so. The engagement changed thinking about constitutionalising and the guide, designed to help SfC's user groups, stimulated changes in practice.

Impact 1: Empowering activists in the UK, Denmark and Iceland to review and assess their organisations by transforming their understanding of anarchist constitutionalising

(a) The adoption of anarchist approaches to constitutional theory and practice [R1-R5] enabled key members of the IWW and RR to understand why their existing constitutions were failing to meet the needs and aspirations of members and reflect critically on the efficacy of their existing constitutional arrangements. Neither group had been able to find an antiauthoritarian framework to assess their existing arrangements. Kinna's work helped fill this knowledge gap.

The IWW is an independent labour federation with 'regions' on four continents and c. 4000 members organised in 22 UK branches. Its constitution dates to 1905 and the preamble has iconic status in the union. This complicates any review and Kinna's involvement as academic non-member of the union presented further difficulties. As PI for the ESRC grant, Kinna was able to build trust and confidence by using methods of co-production and show that anarchist perspectives were historically credible and compatible with the preamble [R1, R2, R5]. She fed key ideas about anarchist constitutionalising into the 2016 members' survey that investigated the IWW's internal operations. In 2017 she visited branches to discuss preliminary findings and co-authored the survey report [S1]. The Organising Department Chair, a key executive post, commented that this report provided '*evidence of shortcomings in our organisation that needed to be addressed*' and helped the union '*develop and improve participation and democracy ... by making changes to rules, policies and procedures.*' [S4]

RR is a UK network of 37 workers' and housing co-ops, each of which has 4-15 individual members. The review was designed to address concerns raised by some of the 37 member co-ops about the network's aims, notably the perceived detachment of co-op member organisations from the federal body. The review committee had gathered a mass of data from 29 member co-ops but struggled with its presentation and analysis. Joining the review team in 2016, Kinna participated in physical and virtual meetings to discuss principles of anarchist constitutionalising [R2, R3, R4]. She also contributed to its 2018 report [S2]. RR's illustrated guide to the review process [S7] reports that this engagement enabled RR to

'represent what the issues/problems within RR actually are, rather than going on about assumptions about "what the network thinks", and to use this investigation to inform truly democratic reforms in the federation.'

Distinctions between principles, decision-making practices and rule-making processes [R3] proved particularly helpful. The review team's ability to categorise responses enabled it 'to

... *construct something useful from the mass of data we had accumulated*. The report's lead author stated:

'Radical Routes was ... lacking a coherence ... it needed a constitutionalising narrative. We now have that story.' [S4]

(b) As PI on a Higher Education Innovation Fund award (£20,599), Kinna co-authored *Anarchic Agreements* [S3], a guide to anarchist constitutionalising, with *Seeds for Change*. SfC is a high-profile UK-based strategy group with international influence (interlinked with 1500 websites). AA is the only resource SfC have co-produced in collaboration with academics and published under its own banner. Co-production enabled Kinna to disseminate ideas about anarchists constitutionalising to members of SfC and the guide has enabled diverse, inaccessible beneficiaries in the UK, Iceland and Denmark to rethink their habitual approaches to organising and group formation. AA outlines processes for non-hierarchical group functioning without relying on fixed authority [R1-R4]. It explicitly promotes 'anarchist constitutionalising' [R3-R5].

As a result of *Anarchic Agreements*, SfC changed the way it assesses and addresses organisational weakness. One of SfC's lead organisers commented that the experience of co-production with Kinna increased *'the detail and fluency of our understanding of this area, which in turn has impacted on the support we are able to give to the groups we work with.'* [S4]

Jed Picksley, a UK community organiser with 20 years' experience of facilitation, adopted AA to re-structure workshops with community groups and co-ops, social centres and farms in Birmingham, London and Herefordshire. AA has served as a *'primer'* for new groups, *'renewer'* for established groups *'bonding agent'* for declining groups [S6].

A group-organiser for *Andrými*, a citizen space in Reykjavik with c.3k Facebook followers, *'read the pamphlet'* when the group was *'formalising itself'*. The ideas *'brought up ... in meetings'* stimulated *'debates about to what extent we need to formalise structure and rules and what our "demos" was for.'* [S4]

Foodsharing Copenhagen, an anti-food waste group that works with foodbanks and homelessness charities across the city, *'ran a workshop ... based on the content of the pamphlet'* to counter *'the emergence of hierarchical structure'* sparked by the influx of new members [S4]. The group had evolved from a handful of activists into a network of 700 paid and unpaid volunteers with c.22k Facebook followers. Managing the internal power dynamics of the network and building relations with city authorities and donor organisations presented significant difficulties. In 2018 the group reported that its workshops on AA had helped clarify how members could operate *'without a clear leader'* [S4] while also saving 13000 tonnes of food and feeding over 16,000 people.

Impact 2: Empowering activists to remedy weaknesses in constitutional practices in the UK, Denmark, and Iceland

Kinna's co-authored report on the IWW member's survey resulted in constitutional changes. The IWW's 2018 Annual Conference adopted the report's recommendation *'to limit the number of consecutive terms officers can hold'* [S1] by resolving to restrict branch officers to two consecutive two-year terms [S5]. In response to the report's finding that BAME and non-binary populations were underrepresented in the Union [S1], the Conference introduced *'organising posts'* for BAME and LGBTQI+ communities [S5]. In 2020, IWW implemented the report's recommendation to *'develop training for new delegates and officers'* [S1], creating an online platform to deliver officer training, new member inductions and equalities and organiser training [S8].

Anonymous organisers in Bristol and Manchester (unwilling to share information about their groups) changed practices after reading AA. A Bristol co-op member 'used *Anarchic Agreements*' in 'a working group' to 'come up with some conflict resolution steps' where none previously existed [S4]. In Manchester an organiser

'read Anarchic Agreements' when experiencing 'difficulties in a workers' co-op'. Their testimony continues: 'It helped me identify ways that the problems had to do with a lack of shared goals, accountability systems and clarity about our decision-making processes. That ... gave me the confidence to address the issues and I'm pleased to say the co-op has now massively turned around ... Since then, I've been involved in setting up the local Extinction Rebellion group, which gave me a chance to apply some of the lessons at an earlier stage!' [S4]

Finally, *Foodsharing Copenhagen* used AA 'to draft and formalise a group constitution and set rules/guidelines about how key decisions get made'. [S4]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The evidence includes reports Kinna co-authored with initial beneficiaries, IWW and RR; the 'how-to' guide, *Anarchic Agreements*, Kinna co-produced with SfC, which was used by activists to assess constitutional arrangements and remedy weaknesses; testimony attesting to the impact of the research on constitutionalising; documents detailing actions taken by IWW following report recommendations.

- S1 – **IWW Report, 'Democracy and Participation in the Union' (2017)**. Report based on the analysis of data gathered from a members' survey, co-produced with members of the IWW as part of a constitutional review process, which led to constitutional change.
- S2 – **'I'm not really interested in giving Nazis access to Housing': Preliminary Report of the 5.1 Sessions' (2018)**. Co-produced report on RR's constitutional review which examined concerns about the existing constitution. Kinna drafted notes for co-production before being invited to join the review team to participate in discussions about anarchist constitutional practice and comment on report drafts.
- S3 - **Anarchic Agreements (2017)**. With **SfC** members, Kinna participated in the design and drafting of the pamphlet and featured with members of SfC in a 4-part video explaining anarchist constitutionalising.
- S4 – **Testimony from beneficiaries (2018-2020)**. Copies of emails from members of partner groups (IWW, RR) as well as named and anonymous users of *Anarchic Agreements*.
- S5 – **IWW Motions as Carried at Conference**, minutes of 2018 conference resolutions passed in response to Kinna's co-authored IWW report [S1].
- S6 - **Jed Picksley's commentary on AA (2019)** for facilitation in community-building and co-op activism (scan of handwritten documents and transcript)
- S7 – **'Clause 5.1 and Beyond' (2020)** illustrated guide to 'I'm not really interested in giving Nazis access to Housing': Preliminary Report of the 5.1 Sessions'.
- S8 – **IWW Online Training programme (2020)**. Copy of static website pages.