

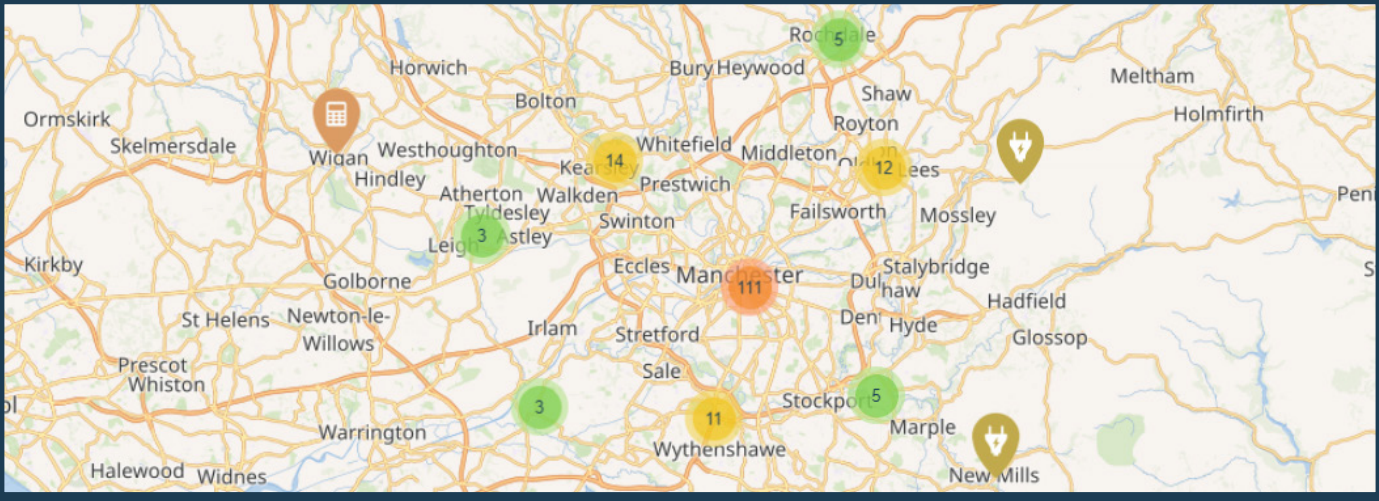
# Transform GM

A Pilot Study of the Social & Solidarity Economy in Greater Manchester





Visit the map at [www.transformgm.org](http://www.transformgm.org).



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# Executive Summary

This report is the result of a pilot study into Greater Manchester's Social & Solidarity Economy (SSE), and draws on work conducted between April and October 2018.

The study was initiated by Jam and Justice's Action Research Collective, following their desire to map citizen-led and alternative social and economic innovations in Greater Manchester. This led to the project, Transform GM, which was designed to reveal and value below-the-radar economic activities.

This report is a companion to the Transform GM map (<http://www.transformgm.org/>) produced as part of the project. Our aim is not to produce a distanced economic analysis, rather to kickstart a conversation about organising to support SSE in the city-region. The report is thus written as a provocation: not only do Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs) exist in Greater Manchester, but they are capable and willing to coordinate activity to drive wider societal change beyond their own reach. This pilot study suggests that many organisations and businesses already see themselves as 'more' than economic agents, and express an active desire to be part of broader social movements. We identify a series of active steps which can be taken, not only to deepen understanding of the scale and scope of these entities, but to begin developing collective agency in the pursuit of social transformation. This report is primarily written for those within organizations and businesses that potentially constitute this more-than-economic activity, and those in a position to support them – whether that be through policy, procurement, administrative or advocacy work.



# Introduction

The economic success of Greater Manchester has been too narrowly defined for far too long.

The common indicators used to measure economic activity – such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross Value Added (GVA) – are useful for measuring the volume of economic activity in our region, but they tell us nothing about the quality of that activity. For example, traditional economic indicators could tell us that our region is more productive, but fail to tell us that this was due to the expansion of a hydraulic fracturing industry owned by an offshore company, with a high gender pay disparity and terrible environmental credentials.

We all know implicitly that there are many different ‘types’ of economic activity. There is a difference between a hydraulic fracturing company funded by a venture capital fund (where a large proportion of the wealth will accumulate in the hands of a few), and a community-owned and controlled energy company that reinvests profits into the expansion of renewable energy. In other words, we know that some economic activity is orientated first and foremost towards environmentally and socially progressive goals, rather than towards profit at all costs.

Over the past twenty years, this type of economic activity has become known as the ‘Social and Solidarity Economy’ (SSE). The SSE has become an increasingly important way of understanding progressive elements of our economy, with both the United Nations<sup>1</sup> and the International Labour Organization<sup>2</sup> (ILO) investing in research and promoting policy to support it. A useful working definition has been provided by Barcelona City Council, which suggests that the SSE is composed of those entities that are:

“independent of the public authorities, are governed by values such as equity, solidarity, sustainability, participation, inclusion and commitment to the community, and are promoters of social change”<sup>3</sup>.

This report begins to identify Greater Manchester’s SSE sector, arguing that it forms a hidden economy that is poorly understood using traditional economic analyses. The social significance of these initiatives comes neither from their GVA contribution nor their ability to improve the ‘global competitiveness’ of Greater Manchester. To the contrary, their value is found in their ability to contribute to a movement that can transform the city-region, implementing sustainable and equitable practices whilst building the necessary socio-economic power to leverage wider change. For this reason, we refer to the entities within this sector as Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs).

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<sup>1</sup> UNRISD 2016

<sup>2</sup> ILO 2018

<sup>3</sup> Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016, p.5

The report suggests three ‘next steps’ to support the understanding, development and impact of the SSE sector in Greater Manchester:

- 1. Deepening Understanding.** Whilst this pilot study has taken the first steps in identifying the SSE in Greater Manchester, it’s only the beginning. A deeper understanding of the SSE needs to be developed amongst those already identified as potential TEAs, learning from what’s been achieved elsewhere, and what we could aspire to achieve in Greater Manchester. This could include meeting and learning from experienced practitioners such as those involved with the Geneva Chamber or Barcelona City Council (see pages 22 & 24 for more on these examples). It’s critical for understanding and ownership to be taken on by TEAs themselves.
- 2. The establishment of a ‘Chamber for the Transformative Economy’.** Populated by Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs), and supported by supplementary organisations and researchers where necessary, this should function as a peer-to-peer forum for the support and development of the SSE sector and its wider aims. The Chamber should play a key role in developing an alternative economic strategy for the city-region.
- 3. Greater Manchester public authorities and other appropriate actors should support the co-production of an impetus plan for the SSE.** If we want a transformative economic sector that can push for wider systemic change, we need to move towards developing an impetus plan for the SSE in our city-region.

From small building firms to international cosmetic companies, the SSE is about more than marginal improvements to corporate practice. The SSE is that sector of the economy that is committed to transformative change, composed out of initiatives that are often driven by the need to address the ‘grand challenges’ we face as a society.

As the recent Citizens and Inclusive Growth report notes, it’s ‘when traditional economic solutions no longer work and the need for re-invention grows’<sup>4</sup> that we need to find new ways for citizens to be involved in the co-production of new economic strategies. With automation driving job loss,<sup>5</sup> real wages continuing to stagnate,<sup>6</sup> the need for decarbonization within 12 years,<sup>7</sup> increasing inequality in both wealth and income,<sup>8</sup> and household debt worse than at any time on record,<sup>9</sup> we need a dramatic rethink of who should be involved in the development of economic strategy. The solutions to these challenges cannot be provided by policymakers alone; political will has to be matched with socio-economic power and innovative citizen-led alternatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Devaney et al. 2017, p.6

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Cities 2018

<sup>6</sup> ONS 2018a

<sup>7</sup> IPCC 2018

<sup>8</sup> IPPR 2018

<sup>9</sup> ONS 2018b



# What is the Social & Solidarity Economy?

The UK's non-traditional economic sector is remarkably strong. A 2018 report by Social Enterprise UK estimates that the UK's 'social enterprise' sector is 'worth £60 billion to the UK economy and employs 2 million people. This represents 3% of UK GDP, three times the size of the agriculture industry, and 5% of employment – as many jobs as the creative industries sector'.<sup>10</sup> The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated in 2017 that unpaid social care contributes the annual equivalent of £27 billion to the UK's economy,<sup>11</sup> comparable to the UK's aerospace sector (valued at £32 billion in 2018<sup>12</sup>). When unpaid social care is included alongside other necessary (re)productive activity such as housework, cooking, and volunteering, it amounts to an estimated £1.01 trillion - more than half of the UK's GDP<sup>13</sup>.

These numbers are impressive and demand our attention, revealing how the non-traditional economic sector is at the core of how we live. However, discussing this productive and reproductive activity in terms of 'GDP' threatens to trap us in the perspective of mainstream economics. Not only is much of this work unpaid (and thus often discussed as equivalent GDP), but its real value cannot be assessed through comparative economic indicators. Whilst adult social care might be 'worth' slightly less than the aerospace sector in terms of GDP, it's impossible to compare the value of those providing end-of-life care with the production of missile guidance systems.

If we are to understand the real value of this 'non-traditional' economic activity, and how it could help us address many of the grand challenges we face as a society, we need to reframe how we think and talk about the economy.<sup>14</sup>

## Defining the Social Economy

In the UK, the term 'social economy' has been used to refer to the 'range of organisations that have a core social mission, different levels of participative and democratic control by members, and use financial surpluses or profits primarily to achieve their social missions'.<sup>15</sup> A 2017 Joseph Rowntree (JRF) report lists a range of potential activities as belonging to the social economy - including housing associations, cooperatives, informal self-help initiatives, social finance, and 'alternative business models'.<sup>16</sup> Despite producing neither financial surplus nor profits, the JRF report also identified the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) as the largest part of the UK's social economy, accounting for 82% of all activity.

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<sup>10</sup> Social Enterprise UK 2018, p.4

<sup>11</sup> Office for National Statistics 2017

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons 2018, p.5

<sup>13</sup> Office for National Statistics 2016

<sup>14</sup> See NEON et al. 2017 and Gibson-Graham 2013

<sup>15</sup> Vickers et al. 2017, p.1

<sup>16</sup> Vickers et al. 2017, p.2

Definitions of the 'social economy' can be unclear, with many intersecting ways of defining its activity. Social Enterprise UK has adopted an expanded understanding of a 'social enterprise' - one element of the social economy - to include those businesses that:

- Have an enshrined primary social or environmental mission;
- Principally direct surpluses towards that mission;
- Are independent of government;
- Primarily earn income through trading, selling goods or services.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst this definition appears to make a clear distinction with the community and voluntary sector (VCS) - which is largely driven by grants, donations or volunteering - a 2017 report published by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research defines the 'voluntary sector' as including 'those social enterprises where there is a wider accountability to the public via a board of trustees or a membership and all profits will be reinvested in their social purpose'.<sup>18</sup> The same report proceeds to refer to this as the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) - to which it then adds the faith sector and 'below the radar' organizations.

Furthermore, the social economy is sometimes 'used synonymously with the term third sector' - understood as all those activities that are neither 'private' nor 'public' - to offer a definition so expansive as to include not only cooperatives and hospices, but amateur dramatic clubs, golf clubs and lifeboat associations.<sup>19</sup> Uniquely, a House of Commons briefing paper goes as far to equate social enterprise *as* the third sector, a definition which would exclude large parts of the voluntary and community sector.<sup>20</sup>

Arguably, how these terms are defined is largely context dependent, often saying more about the priorities and responsibilities of the individuals or organisations that are using them than the initiatives themselves. For the sake of clarity, this research understands the social economy as designating:

'the universe of practices and forms of mobilising economic resources towards the satisfaction of human needs that belong neither to for-profit enterprises, nor to the institutions of the state in the narrow sense'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Social Enterprise UK 2018, p.3

<sup>18</sup> Damm et al. 2017

<sup>19</sup> Bridge et al. 2013, p. 4,7

<sup>20</sup> House of Commons 2016

<sup>21</sup> Moulaert & Ailenei 2005, p.2042



## Putting Solidarity into the Social & Solidarity Economy

The Social & Solidarity Economy (SSE) - sometimes referred to as simply the 'solidarity' economy - often includes many of the same institutions, businesses and initiatives that compose the 'social' economy. However, the 'theory and practices that come under the definition of the SSE differentiate themselves from the social economy', in that:

'they aim towards the systemic transformation of the economy or are part of a 'counter-hegemonic political economy'.<sup>22</sup> While the SSE includes activities traditionally grouped under the third sector or social economy, such as social entrepreneurship, it distinguishes itself by making explicit a set of values that include solidarity and mutual support towards a new economic paradigm'.<sup>23</sup>

Defining the SSE is thus less about identifying businesses, organisations or initiatives according to a centralized list of principles, but rather establishing their commitment to collaborating and organizing towards more fundamental transformations.<sup>24</sup> This commitment means both improving, and supporting others to improve, their own practices - such as developing integrated SSE supply chains, gender parity, democratizing ownership and control of surplus, and supporting the development of other SSE initiatives - but also coordinating to develop the social and economic leverage necessary to drive more systemic economic, social and cultural shifts.

Whilst it is desirable to see a greater proportion of economic activity adopting progressive social and environmental principles - which can be measured to some degree - the real strength and value of this sector can't be understood using indicators of economic output. What distinguishes this sector is its commitment, and ultimately its capacity, to contribute to the organization of social and economic transformation. As such we use the term Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs) to distinguish those entities that compose the SSE.

Ultimately, the core idea is simple: alternatives are everywhere and our task is to identify them and connect them in ways that build a coherent and powerful social movement for another economy.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Satgar, 2014

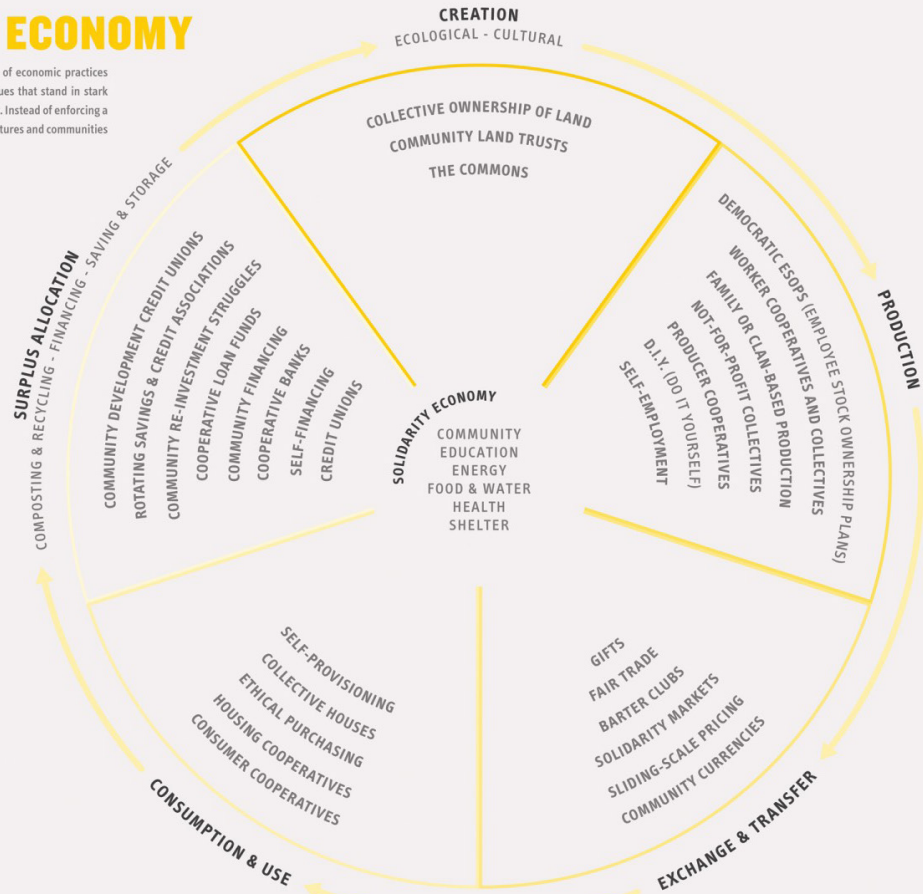
<sup>23</sup> Sahakian & Dunand 2015, p.404

<sup>24</sup> Safri 2015, p.298

<sup>25</sup> Miller 2010, p.3

# SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

The solidarity economy includes a wide array of economic practices and initiatives but they all share common values that stand in stark contrast to the values of the dominant economy. Instead of enforcing a culture of cut-throat competition, they build cultures and communities of cooperation.



WWW.SOLIDARITYNYC.ORG

SOURCE: Ethan Miller/JED Collective

Source: solidaritynyc.org



# How do you see the Social & Solidarity Economy?

Greater Manchester is considered a first-mover in the UK's most recent devolution agenda. In 2017 the city-region elected its first mayor, whilst the Combined Authority (GMCA) received a significant set of responsibilities, albeit limited and under-resourced. According to the GMCA, this outcome built on years of negotiation with Central Government and was heavily informed by the 2009 Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER). The MIER 'articulated the benefits of seeing GM as a single functional economic area, providing a viable footprint for strategic planning that could grow the economy and link residents to the opportunities that growth brings to a region'<sup>26</sup>. However, the MIER's highly conventional approach was premised on attracting inwards investment and making GM a globally 'competitive' city-region. This functioned as a very narrow 'lens' that both restricted how we understand the economic activity of our city region, and foreclosed socially and ecologically progressive approaches to our economy.

To help develop a clearer understanding of Greater Manchester's SSE, we undertook a scoping study that looked to identify who we could consider as part of the SSE, what solidaristic practices are already underway, and what the potential scope and desire is for further collaboration between these entities. The scoping study followed a two-stage process. Firstly, an extensive mapping process, which drew on multiple data-sets and snowballed case identification, led to the production of the online map (publically available at [transformgm.org](http://transformgm.org)). Secondly, a questionnaire was conducted focused on extrinsic qualities, solidaristic practices and network activity of identified entities. The scoping study took place between April and October 2018.

## Building the Map

The mapping process was inspired by other SSE maps such as Pamapam in Barcelona<sup>27</sup>, ESSapp<sup>28</sup> in South America, and SolidarityNYC<sup>29</sup>, and was designed to generate visibility of the SSE as a discrete sector of the economy. Drawing primarily on criteria developed as part of the Pamapam project in Catalonia, a guidance list was developed to help identify cases for inclusion on the Transform GM map. This guidance did not constitute a definitive description of a Transformative Economic Actor, but rather provided indicative qualities to assist us in developing a shortlist of cases to include on the map for further subsequent investigation. Greater Manchester has multiple databases and directories that were considered likely to already contain examples of TEAs. At a minimum, the SSE cuts across other economic forms such as the co-operative movement, social enterprises, and the voluntary sector. However, the challenge of developing new ways to see our economy is that, whilst there is a wealth of databases and directories on initiatives in Greater Manchester, these are each built using their own criteria.

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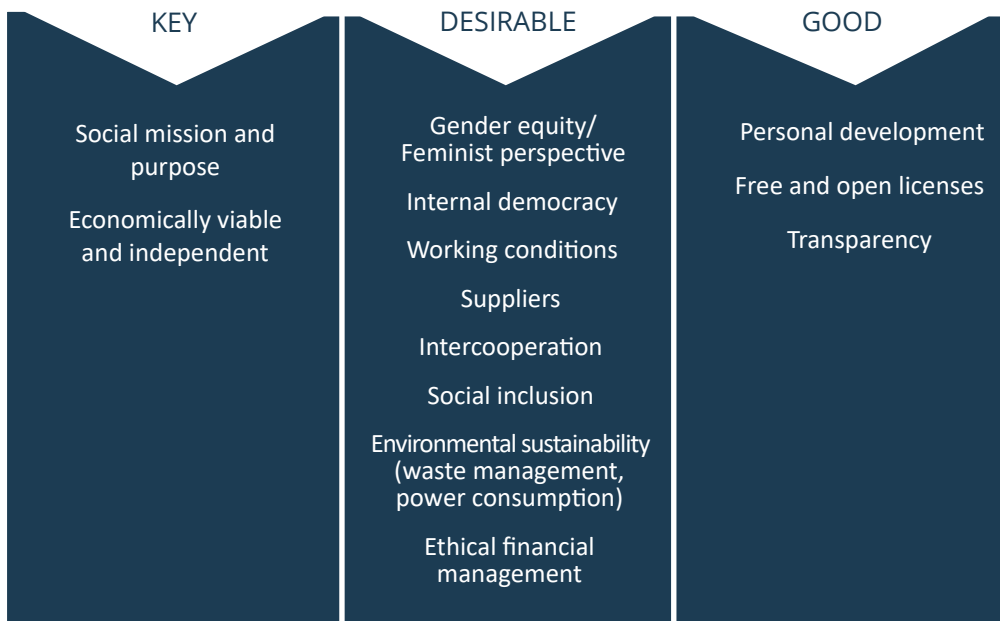
<sup>26</sup> GMCA 2018, p.5-6

<sup>27</sup> [pamapam.org/ca](http://pamapam.org/ca)

<sup>28</sup> [www.essapp.coop](http://www.essapp.coop)

<sup>29</sup> [solidaritynyc.org](http://solidaritynyc.org)

## Transform GM Criteria



For example, whilst Coops UK provides an extensive map of registered Cooperatives in the UK, registration as a cooperative is an indicative but insufficient condition of the transformative orientation of an initiative. Whilst MACC provides a comprehensive database of community and voluntary sector initiatives in Manchester, this reflects the membership of a 'representative' body and includes a range of charities and organisations (such as the Church of Scientology) which would not feature on a map of Transformative Economic Actors.

## The criteria was applied to the following databases:

### Action Together: Oldham and Thameside

[actiontogether.org.uk](http://actiontogether.org.uk)

### Bolton CVS

[boltoncvs.org.uk/directory?page=1](http://boltoncvs.org.uk/directory?page=1)

### Buy Social Directory

[buysocialdirectory.org.uk/directory?search=manchester](http://buysocialdirectory.org.uk/directory?search=manchester)

### Co-operatives UK

[uk.coop](http://uk.coop)

### Fab Labs UK

[fablabsuk.co.uk/tag/hackerspace](http://fablabsuk.co.uk/tag/hackerspace)

### Greater Manchester Social Enterprise Network

[gmsen.net/directory](http://gmsen.net/directory)

### Locality

[locality.org.uk/membership/members-map](http://locality.org.uk/membership/members-map)

### Manchester Community Central

[manchestercommunitycentral.org/whats-happening-manchester/directory](http://manchestercommunitycentral.org/whats-happening-manchester/directory)

### Salford CVS

[salfordcvs.co.uk/organisation-directory](http://salfordcvs.co.uk/organisation-directory)

### Social Enterprise UK

[socialenterprise.org.uk/members-map](http://socialenterprise.org.uk/members-map)

### SSE Solutions map

[socioeco.org/solutions\\_en.html](http://socioeco.org/solutions_en.html)

### Timebanking

[timebanking.org/our-membership/](http://timebanking.org/our-membership/)

[find-your-nearest/#map\\_top](http://timebanking.org/our-membership/find-your-nearest/#map_top)

### Trafford Directory

[trafforddirectory.co.uk/kb5/trafford/fsd/home.page](http://trafforddirectory.co.uk/kb5/trafford/fsd/home.page)

## Questionnaire

All identified initiatives were contacted and invited to fill in an e-questionnaire. This was intended to produce two kinds of information: public information about the project to go on the map (e.g. what each initiative does, location, contact details), and confidential information that allowed us to understand the specific qualities of Greater Manchester's SSE. Additional cases were identified through a snowballing process embedded within the questionnaire, which were subsequently added to the map and then contacted for participation in the questionnaire.

Through this questionnaire we hoped to uncover the motivations behind these organisations and get a better picture of how much cooperation and willingness for cooperation exists at the moment within the SSE. Ultimately, we were hoping to identify the latent capacity and willingness of these organisations to contribute to wider processes of systemic economic and social change.

## Limitations

This research was intended to see the observable tip of a much larger iceberg. Rather than aspiring to produce an exhaustive database, or to provide comprehensive economic data that allows us to 'describe' a sector, our research was focused on developing a 'way of seeing' the SSE. As such, the map represents only a fraction of the entities that could be considered as part of the SSE, whilst the questionnaire data helps provide us with a better picture for iterations and refinements of the map. It gives a flavour of what exists in Greater Manchester, about the ongoing work of the SSE and its diversity.

Those who responded may have done so on a self-selecting basis, in accordance with their interest in the research themes. It's thus important not to assume the findings of the questionnaire data can be extended to apply to the entire data-set. Our process may reflect existing biases or weaknesses in the case-selection of the secondary datasets we've used. This was mitigated against through utilising 13 independent databases in our own case-identification process, coupled with an additional snowballing process.

The map is a provocation - a starting point for thinking differently about how businesses and initiatives in Greater Manchester can develop their collective agency in the pursuit of progressive social transformation. This is a method orientated towards organisation building, not economic analysis. We intend for this to be a first step in a wider shift in ideas and understandings, and for this to be a process that speaks back to itself.

# Transforming Greater Manchester

At the end of this research phase we have over 160 entries on our map and received 30 responses to our questionnaire. As discussed above, these findings are, we believe, just the tip of the iceberg.

## A snapshot of the Social and Solidarity Economy in Greater Manchester 2018

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This section is primarily based on the outcome of the mapping phase with some integration of quantitative data from the questionnaire. This gives a snapshot into the the geography, size, and sectoral distribution of the SSE. As a pilot study, these findings should be considered indicative. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the qualities of the SSE sector, a full research phase – ideally led by existing members of the SSE in association supported by experienced researchers – would need to develop a more comprehensive database of cases and obtain a greater number of questionnaire responses.

**Typology:** In terms of the sectors represented “agriculture and sustainability”, “spaces, places, & hubs”, and “land and housing” were the largest sectors represented. “Care, health, & wellbeing” was the smallest with only 3 initiatives mapped. Whilst this typology is in part a reflection of the ‘visibility’ of certain sectors (e.g. credit unions and community finance) it is particularly noticeable there wasn’t a single IT project on our map.

**Legal Form:** The most common legal forms were cooperatives (including producer, consumer, housing and mixed) and registered charities which accounted for about a third of all projects which responded. Of particular note is the breadth and diversity of legal forms taken, suggesting that databases which privilege only certain legal forms (such as cooperative, or community interest companies) will be offering a partial view of cases that could function as part of a transformative economy.

### Legal Forms



- co-operative (32.2%)
- charitable organisation (22.6%)
- community benefit society (12.9%)
- community interest company (9.8%)
- social enterprise (6.4%)
- corporation (3.2%)

## Number of initiatives within each sector



x 3

Care, Health & Wellbeing



x 28

Land & Housing



x 19

Food, Drink & Hospitality



x 8

Energy & Utilities



x 14

Arts & Culture & Media



x 34

Agriculture & Sustainability



x 11

Tech & Manufacturing



x 22

Community & Collaborative Finance, & Advice Services



x 36

Spaces, Places & Hubs

**Geography:** The geographical spread of these initiatives shows a heavy focus of projects in city centres, with Manchester city centre in particular having the largest amount. The three largest concentrations of these initiatives are Manchester city centre (43), East Manchester (12), and South Manchester (12).

**Scale:** Of those that responded, 50% considered their initiatives to be local in scale, just over 20% considered their projects to be city-wide or regional, whilst only one respondent considered itself to operate at a national scale. However, this is based on the responses we gathered. We know of one international chain (Lush) which did not respond, but that has the potential to be considered part of GM's transformative economy.

A quarter of respondents had more than 10 paid members of staff, with the largest employing 70 people. 27% were run entirely by volunteers, and another 20% had just one paid member of staff. 80% of respondents had a membership structure, with just over a quarter having more than 50 members. The three largest memberships were 400, 850, and 1576 members.



## The Bigger Picture: Values and Aims of the Social and Solidarity Economy

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This section explores the values, ethics, and goals of the SSE, primarily based on responses to our questionnaire. Our respondents were predominantly from four categories: “Spaces, Places, & Hubs”, “Energy & Utilities”, “Food, Drink & Hospitality”, and “Land & Housing”.

Our respondents overwhelmingly “aspire to be part of a wider social movement” (83%) and intend for their work to contribute to wider social change in their local authority, Greater Manchester, and beyond. However 63% of respondents don’t perceive their work as political. This discrepancy potentially reflects a narrow understanding of politics as a discrete sphere of activity - such as voting, petitioning or demonstrating - at the exclusion of broader efforts to organise positive social transformation.



**83%** of respondents overwhelmingly “aspire to be part of a wider social movements”.

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Questions focused on the priorities and success criteria of SSE initiatives revealed a shared set of understandings. Half of respondents valued both social justice and environmental sustainability as “very important” elements of their work with the majority of all respondents seeing both “important” or “very important” factors. 86% of respondents agreed that economic independence (rather than relying on grants) was an “important” factor in evaluating their initiatives’ effectiveness, with 73% of those making this a “very important” factor. Whilst participants in the SSE understand economic independence as key to the effectiveness of their projects, this should not be understood as a commitment to pursuing economic growth. Indeed, only 10% told us that annual growth in turnover was a “very important” factor in assessing their effectiveness.



**86.7%** of initiatives perceived economic independence as being important or very important to their effectiveness. Whereas, less than half (36.7%) considered growth in annual turnover as an important indicator of effectiveness, with only 10% considering it ‘very important’.

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Although a diversity of values underpin these organisations - for example in whether environmental sustainability or social justice is prioritised - the majority assess the effectiveness of their organisation based on their ability to contribute to a movement for economic alternatives. There is a clear tendency for respondents to see themselves as fitting into a change process that goes beyond not only their neighbourhood, but their city. There is a balance to be struck between place-based social change, and the capacity to foment and contribute to wider societal shifts.

## Networking and Relationships

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Two thirds of respondents believed coordination with other initiatives around “social, environmental, or political goals” was “important”, with just over a third of all respondents telling us this was “very important”. When it came to networking and building the SSE, 73% of respondents believed that developing a “strong collective voice for economic alternatives” was “important” or “very important”, 60% thought the same for helping to “support the establishment or development of similar initiatives”. Whilst independent economic sustainability is paramount, the majority of initiatives deemed that “supporting the emergence of similar initiatives” was a greater indicator of success than increasing their own turnover.

Most of our respondents (75%) have had contact this year with projects mapped on our website and almost all (87%) have spoken to an initiative similar to their own in the past year. Over 60% are involved in a formal network with similar initiatives.

When asked about their most important relationships most respondents mentioned projects and institutions within Greater Manchester, though one respondent mentioned an international connection of importance, the Kenyan Slum Dwellers Federation. However, overall the pattern is of networks and relationships within Greater Manchester. It is also worth noting that whilst a number of the initiatives report relationships or working with councils, Manchester City Council is notable in not being reported as an important partner by any of the initiatives. Local Authority agencies have supported several of our respondents to find and secure venues, for example.

Whilst over two thirds of respondents have shared best practice and received advice or training from similar projects, only a third have provided financial support

to similar projects. Respondents have reported offering advice for how to acquire premises or register as cooperatives, and some of the larger initiatives report how they set aside percentages of profits to support new initiatives with similar values. Over half of respondents prioritise other ethically driven projects in terms of procurement and supply chains. Specific sectors have specific patterns of support: for example, initiatives in our “spaces, places, & hubs” category commonly offered free meeting or office space to community groups.

Whilst more understanding is needed, a significant proportion of initiatives are actively collaborating to develop collective economic strategies - whether these be common procurement strategies or integrated supply chains. Building greater collective strength within the SSE is not starting from nowhere. Nonetheless, there is a clear opportunity to understand how these initiatives can increase their own and collective effectiveness, and the strong desire to find ways to collaborate in developing a wider counter-hegemonic economic movement in our city-region.



# Building the Social & Solidarity Economy

This pilot study has taken a first step in identifying and supporting the development of the Social & Solidarity Economy in Greater Manchester. The SSE is populated with a diverse range of Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs), defined not only by a social or environmental mission and a commitment to improving internal practices, but the desire to collaborate and organize towards more fundamental socio-economic transformation.

Whilst traditional economic analysis is useful for telling us about the size of this sector - such as the number of people employed, the amount of money 'recycled' in the region, or the total financial contribution to Greater Manchester's economy - the real value of the SSE cannot be understood solely in these terms. If we want Greater Manchester to be 'one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old',<sup>30</sup> we need to harness the capacity of TEAs not just as examples of best-practice, but as organisations and initiatives with the collective potential to drive wider societal change. Moving beyond a traditional distinction between 'market' and 'state', we need to develop and support those parts of our economy that are committed to coproducing paradigmatic shifts in how we produce our food, essential utilities, finances, education and services.

This pilot study has demonstrated that Greater Manchester is populated with organisations and businesses that already see themselves as 'more' than economic agents, some of which are already pursuing solidaristic practices, and most of which express an active desire to be part of broader social movements. Inspired by examples of how the SSE has developed and been supported elsewhere, we sketch out three next steps for how we could deepen our understanding and take steps to strengthen and consolidate the SSE in Greater Manchester. These are actions that can be taken by TEAs themselves, supported by research organisations and think-tanks, and facilitated through supportive policy from both local and combined authorities.

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<sup>30</sup> GMCA 2017

This report suggests three next steps in supporting the understanding, development and impact of the SSE sector in Greater Manchester:

1. Deepening understanding
2. Establishing a 'Chamber for the Social & Solidarity Economy'
3. The co-production of an impetus plan for the SSE

## 1. Deepening Understanding

Whilst this pilot study has taken the first steps in identifying the SSE in Greater Manchester, it's only the beginning. A deeper understanding of the SSE needs to be developed amongst those already identified as potential TEAs, learning from what's been achieved elsewhere, and what we could aspire to achieve in Greater Manchester. This could include meeting and learning from experienced practitioners such as those involved with the Geneva Chamber or Barcelona City Council (see the next two steps for more on these examples).

This pilot study developed guidance, drawing on established criteria used elsewhere, to help identify entities to be included on the map, but it's important for understanding and ownership to be taken on by TEAs themselves. In the case of the Pamapam project, entities have all been scored against criteria following an assessment process, and organisations are then supported in strengthening their solidaristic practices.

As the development of the SSE is crucially about the relationships and the collaboration between organisations, it is critical that this deepening of understanding is driven by the organisations themselves. For this reason, a second step is the establishment of a Chamber for the Social & Solidarity Economy.

## 2. The establishment of a Chamber for the Social & Solidarity Economy

Populated by Transformative Economic Actors (TEAs), and supported by supplementary organisations and research where necessary, the Chamber should function as a peer-to-peer forum for the support and development of the SSE sector and its wider aims. The Chamber should be actively supported in developing a richer and more extensive understanding of the TEAs in Greater Manchester, moving beyond the 'usual suspects', and ensuring as comprehensive geographical reach as is possible.

The Chamber could operate at the interstice of existing networks and associations - not least Coops UK and the GM Social Enterprise Network - working as a collaborative space rather than being defined by the priorities of any one existing body. It should expand to include businesses and initiatives that may direct significant surplus towards transformational projects (such as the cosmetics company Lush) and that are open to the transformation of their business practices, and invite the input of associate researchers to support its activity.

The Chamber should develop understanding between its members regarding its capacity to act collectively as a social agent, understanding how and where it could act to intervene in the general social interest. In practice, this means the Chamber has the responsibility not only of developing the intrinsic capacity of its members, but identifying how it can intervene externally to support the development of a productive economy defined by social and environmental needs rather than profit. Not least, recognizing the imperative to 'include citizens as economic policy makers'<sup>31</sup>, it should adopt a strategic role in the co-production of a new strategic socio-economic strategy for the region.

## APRES-Genève Chambre, Geneva

The APRES-Genève Chambre was based in Geneva, Switzerland, and was initiated by a number of local actors that participated in the Second World Forum in Brazil, 2002. As of 2015, the Geneva SSE Chamber counted 260 member organizations that were engaged in all forms of economic activity, including financial services, adult education, cooperative housing, local agriculture, education, work integration, construction, community services and fair trade. Some organizations are small in size, while others count several hundred workers. The majority of APRES-Genève members existed prior to the creation of the chamber, meaning they had already been practising social and solidarity economic activities, sometimes for several decades, without necessarily seeing themselves as part of a movement.

All the members signed up to a charter and set of values, including: 1. Social well-being: to be, not to have; 2. Participative citizenship and democracy: each voice counts; 3. Ecology: produce to live, don't live to produce; 4. Autonomy: autonomous but not individualistic; 5. Solidarity: 1+1 > 2; 6. Diversity: rich in our differences; 7. Coherence: say what we do and do what we say.<sup>32</sup>

The Chamber received funding from the municipality of Geneva between 2009-2015, which supported the recruitment of 5 staff. For more details: <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/sii/apres-ge>

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<sup>31</sup> Delaney et al. 2017, p.6

<sup>32</sup> Sahakian & Dunand 2015, p.412

### 3. The co-production of an impetus plan for the SSE

Whilst the Greater Manchester Combined Authority is tasked with developing a new Local Industrial Strategy<sup>33</sup> for the city region, it is unclear whether this will progress beyond conventional understandings of growth that only take into account productive and monetary factors. As the introduction to this report sets out, an increase in the volume of activity tells us nothing about its quality, and gives us no guidelines as to the type of activity we want to promote. If we want a transformative economic sector that can push wider systemic change, we need to move towards developing an impetus plan for the SSE in our city-region.

In the immediate term, there is a role for Greater Manchester public authorities, such as the GMCA and other business and social enterprise agencies to support this process, such as through providing seed-financing to assist the development of the Chamber for the Social and Solidarity Economy. However, the Impetus Plan itself must be produced through a properly co-productive process that recognizes the diverse expertise of Transformative Economic Actors. A permanent process for the co-production of a supportive policy should be opened, and public authorities should work with the Chamber to develop and implement the impetus plan.

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<sup>33</sup> For a breadth of examples of how public policy can support the SSE, see Utting 2017.

## Social & Solidarity Economy Impetus Plan, Barcelona

Beginning in 2015, Barcelona City Council began promoting ‘a change in socio-economic model’ with the aim of progressing towards a ‘plural economy, which involves:

- **Democratising the infrastructure of common resources** (water, land, energy, knowledge, etc.), which must be managed by society or, where this is not possible, by administrations.
- **Subjecting the market to the demands of the common good**, and therefore regulating it democratically, through local, regional and national governments and the general public.
- **Promoting a demonetised economy** based on the principles of reciprocity and self-consumption’.<sup>34</sup>

As part of this strategy, the council participated in the co-production of “The Impetus Plan for the Social & Solidarity Economy”.<sup>35</sup> Throughout 2016, over 100 meetings were held with the Commission for the Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy and the different actors that compose it, leading to the co-identification of needs and opportunities and a range of policy proposals. To support the co-production of the design and delivery of these policies with the Social and Solidarity Economy, the council has created a “Participative Area” with the function of:

- Promoting, sharing and comparing tools and analytical studies so that they become a reference for joint working.
- Discussing proposed public policies for promoting and strengthening the Social and Solidarity Economy in the city.
- Promoting and fostering working groups on specific themes and co-production spaces for specific projects and objectives.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018a

<sup>35</sup> Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016

<sup>36</sup> Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018b





# Conclusion

Greater Manchester has a wealth of businesses and organisations that see themselves as ‘more’ than economic entities, many of which are already pursuing solidaristic practices, and most of which express an active desire to be part of broader social movements. Through conscious and active coordination, these Transformative Economic Actors have the potential to play a significant role in developing an altogether different understanding of what type of economy we want to promote in our city-region.

Conventional approaches – which often refer collectively to these entities as the ‘social economy’ – have largely focused on the internal qualities of these organisations, rightly drawing attention to their progressive practices and social and environmental missions. In looking to emphasize the importance of this sector, these approaches tend to provide economic data (such as number of employees, average growth rate, or GVA) that facilitates comparison with the conventional productive economy. Whilst such descriptive analysis is informative, it tends to reiterate an economistic perspective that equates the significance of the sector with its relative ‘size’.

This report argues that the real strength and potential significance of this sector can’t be understood using conventional economic analysis. To the contrary, what distinguishes this sector is its commitment, and ultimately its capacity, to contribute to the organization of social and economic transformation. This sector is thus defined not only by intrinsic characteristics – such as sustainable procurement practices, gender-pay parity, or worker/employee control of surpluses – but outwards-facing efforts to contribute to societal change beyond the reach of their own organisational activity. In suggesting that Transformative Economic Actors should be constitutive of a social and solidarity economy, we are viewing and interpreting these entities as political actors with the capacity to contribute to the development and implementation of a new economic paradigm.

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# Appendix I: About Jam & Justice

Transform GM is part of the ESRC Jam & Justice project. Jam and Justice is a research project which aims to create a unique space for social innovation to co-produce, test and learn from new ways of governing cities. 'Jam' is about trying to bring together different partners in Greater Manchester to innovate to address shared problems. 'Justice' is about re-connecting with those who have been disenfranchised and excluded from the search for solutions. We are particularly interested in the value and practice of coproduction to address complex urban problems and understanding how we can bring different groups together to achieve fairer and more inclusive outcomes for different groups.

Jam & Justice is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Urban Transformations programme, a portfolio of projects in the UK which examine major changes taking place in cities across the globe (<http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk>).

Jam & Justice are also supported by the Realising Just Cities UK programme which is part of the international Mistra Urban Futures centre for sustainable cities ([www.jamandjustice-rjc.org](http://www.jamandjustice-rjc.org)).

The project started in January 2016 and will end in July 2019.

The 'Jam & Justice' research methodology brings together academic and non-academic researchers – with different knowledge, skills and resources interested in making devolution matter in Greater Manchester – to test and learn about the theory and practice of co-production in research. Known as the 'Action Research Collective', the group's primary role has been to initiate, develop and undertake comparative learning from action research projects. These are:

- Young People Missing from Decisions
- Councillors for the People
- People's Republic of Energy
- System Doesn't Work
- Space in Common
- Care at Home
- GM Decides
- People's Procurement
- Transform GM



# Appendix II: Abridged questionnaire

The original questionnaire was conducted using GoogleForms. This appendix provides an overview of the questions related directly to the publication of this report.

## Organisation Summary

Scale of Operation: Neighbourhood - City - Regional - National - International

Number of Paid Employees (FTE)

Number of Volunteers (FTE)

Number of Members (if applicable)

What is the legal form of your initiative (multiple choice - thirteen options)

To what extent would you agree with the following statement (1-5 Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)

- We aspire to be part of a wider social movement
- Our work is political
- We intend our work to contribute to social change in the same local authority we're based in
- We intend our work to contribute to social change across Greater Manchester
- We intend our work to contribute to social change beyond Greater Manchester

To what extent are the following characteristics important in evaluating the effectiveness of your initiative (1-5 Not at all important - very important)

- Annual growth in turnover
- Supporting the establishment/development of similar initiatives
- Active coordination with other initiatives around social, environmental or political goals
- Economic independence (i.e. reliance on income generation rather than grants)
- Contribute to development of strong collective voice for 'economic alternatives'
- Social justice
- Environmental Sustainability

Which of the following has your initiative undertaken in the last 12 months (Yes, No, Unsure, Not Applicable). If you answered yes, please indicated up to three of the most important collaborations.

- Spoken or communicated with an initiative similar to your own
- Collaborated as part of a formal network or coordination with similar initiatives
- Provided financial support to similar initiatives
- Provided financial support to non-economic initiatives i.e. campaign groups
- Developed collective economic strategies with other initiatives (e.g. common procurement strategy, shared funding bids, integrated supply chains)?
- Advocacy work directly related to your business interest?
- Advocacy work non directly related to your business interest?
- Shared best practice with similar initiatives
- Received training or advice from a similar initiative
- Does your supply chain prioritise those initiatives you believe to share your values?
- Have the workers or members of the initiative been directly involved with economic decisions of the initiative (ie. setting of wages, direction of surplus expenditure or investment)?

Do you agree with the following statement: “Our initiative is looking to contribute to wider social change”? If yes, please indicate what this statement means to you

How many of the other initiatives on the map have you had contact with over the past 12 months? ([www.transformgm.org](http://www.transformgm.org))

Have we missed any initiatives you think should be on the map?





# Appendix III: List of mapped Initiatives

## Space, Places & Hubs

Bridge 5 Mill  
Salford Lads Club  
Levy Market  
Partisan  
Moston Miners Club  
Salford Unemployed & Community Resource Centre  
Langworthy Cornerstone  
Future Artists  
Levenshulme Inspire Centre  
Green Fish Resource Centre  
Nexus Art Cafe  
N.I.A.M.O.S  
Tree of Life  
Projekts MCR  
Platt Fields Bike Hub  
Love Withington Baths  
Mustard Tree  
Birch Community Centre  
ANGELS Community Centre  
4CT limited  
Mechanics' Institute  
Station South  
St Thomas Centre  
Paradise Works  
Rogue Artist's Studios  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
OpenSpace  
United Estates of Wythenshawe  
Lucie's pantry  
Islington Mill  
Salford Lads' Club  
Bridge 5 Mill  
Victoria Baths  
Friends meeting house

## Care, Health & Wellbeing

Lush (Trafford)  
Lush (Manchester Arndale)  
Lush (Manchester City Centre)

## Arts & Culture

Islington Mill  
FC United of Manchester  
Reform Radio  
Unity Radio  
Salford City Radio  
Wythenshawe FM 97.2  
The Phone Co-op  
Big Issue (North)  
Marc the Printers  
Octagon Theatre  
Paradise Works  
Rogue Artist's Studios

## Energy & Utilities

Greater Manchester Community Renewables  
Saddleworth Community Hydro  
Stockport Community Hydro  
Bury Community Hydro  
Biomass Energy Co-Operative  
Oldham Community Power  
Torrs Hyrdo  
Carbon Co-op  
The Phone Co-op

## Digital, Tech & Manufacturing

Leigh Hackspace  
Madlab  
Trestation  
Hackspace Manchester  
Hack Oldham  
Manchester Repair Cafe  
Trafford Fab Lab  
Fab Lab Manchester

## Land & Housing

Birch Housing Co-op  
Green Door Housing Co-operative  
Surma Housing Co-operative  
Tac Housing Co-operative  
Cordata Housing Co-operative  
Six Fingers and a Tail Housing Co-operative  
Sparkle Housing Co-operative  
Castle Rockdove Housing Co-operative  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
The Burrow Housing Co-operative  
Plan B Housing Cooperative  
Willow Park Housing Trust  
Shout Tenant Management Organisation  
Windsor Albion Co-operative  
Springs Tenant Management Committee (TMC)  
Sholver Tenants Management Organisation  
Equinox Housing Co-operative  
Hollin Emb  
Carrbrook Tenant Managed Housing Co-operative  
New Barracks Tenant Management Co-operative  
New Longsight Housing Co-operative  
Sensible Housing Co-op  
Z A H housing co-operative  
Commonplace Housing Co-operative  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
Sensible Housing Co-operative  
Rockdove Rising Housing Co-operative  
Homes for Change

Continued overleaf...

## Agriculture & Sustainability

Unicorn Food Cooperative  
Kindling Trust  
Manchester Veg People  
Incredible Edible Levenshulme  
Real Food Wythenshawe  
Glebeland City Growers  
Eighth Day Cooperative  
Platt Fields Market Garden & Kitchen  
Hulme Community Garden Centre  
EMERGE  
Fareshare  
Veg in the park  
garden needs  
Lalley centre  
Barnabus  
Woodbank Community Food Hub  
FarmStart Woodbank  
FarmStart Abbey Leys  
Red Co-op  
Popup Bikes  
Skip the Tips  
Tree of Life  
Timber Recycling in Manchester (TRiM)  
Wesley Community Furniture  
Platt Fields Bike Hub  
Inventors Forum  
Fairfield Recycling  
Station South  
Barnabus / Longsight Community Church Collaborative Allotment Project  
The Lalley Centre Community Allotment  
Garden Needs  
Veg in the Park  
Three Bees Co-operative  
Bicycle Doctor

## Community & Collaborative finance

Manchester Credit Union  
Hoot Credit Union Bolton  
Irlam and Cadishead Savings and Credit Union  
St Bernadette's (Whitefield) Credit Union  
Oldham Credit Union  
Salford Credit Union  
South Manchester Credit Union  
Voyager Alliance Credit Union  
The Co-Operative Family Credit Union  
Welcome Credit Union  
Cash Box Credit Union  
Manchester Unity Credit Union  
Metro Moneywise Credit Union  
Stockport Credit Union  
Trafford United Credit Union  
Unify Credit Union  
Fallowfield Credit Union  
St Aidan and Oswalds K.S.C. Royton Credit Union  
The Banana Enterprise Business Centre  
1GoodTurn (Timebank)  
Harpurhey Timetraders (Time Bank)  
Real Neighbours Wythenshaw (Time Bank)  
One Manchester Timebank  
Community Time Bank

## Food, Drink & Hospitality

Real Junk Food Project Manchester  
The Herb Loft Café – The Real Junk Food Project Tameside  
Fur Clemt Café – The Real Junk Food Project Wigan  
The Common Wealth Café – The Real Junk Food Project Bolton  
Uprising Bakehouse  
Fareshare  
Village greens  
Manchester MIND Cafe (Harpurhey)  
Manchester MIND Cafe (Hulme)  
Earth Cafe  
Nexus Art Cafe  
Old Abbey Taphouse  
The Common Wealth Café – The Real Junk Food Project Bolton  
The Kitchen  
Bolton Wholefood Co-operative  
Cowherds  
Real Junk Food  
Village Greens Prestwich  
4 Lunch  
Good Mood Food



## About this publication

This report documents the findings of an investigation into Greater Manchester's Social & Solidarity Economy (SSE), and suggests a series of steps to help increase its potential to contribute to the progressive transformation of our city-region.

The SSE is comprised of those businesses and initiatives that are independent from public authorities, governed by values such as equity, solidarity, sustainability, participation, inclusion and commitment to the community, and are promoters of social change.

This report suggests we need a new way of seeing these types of initiative, not simply as independent 'economic' actors pursuing ethical business practices and social goals, but as political actors that can help develop our collective capacity to address society's grand challenges.

This report suggests the establishment of a publicly resourced 'Greater Manchester Chamber for the Transformative Economy'. Alongside developing the peer-to-peer support of member organisations, it should come to play a central role in developing an alternative and actor-led economic strategy for the city-region.

This research and report are part of the ESRC's Jam & Justice research programme, led by the Universities of Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham, and the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation.

