

THE BLUEPRINT ARCHITECTS

Platform
2020 - 2025



**WHAT COULD A
COMMUNITY-
LED FOOD
SYSTEM LOOK
LIKE IN TOWER
HAMLETS BY
2050?**



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a purple blouse with intricate white floral embroidery, stands in a community setting. She is holding a grey walking stick. In the background, other people are visible, including one in a red shirt and another in a green shirt. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly near a vehicle or a building.

**HOW DO WE
SELF-ORGANISE
AS A COMMUNITY
OF PEOPLE WHO
CARE ABOUT
FOOD AND LAND
IN OUR LOCAL
AREA?**

WHAT IS THE BLUEPRINT?

(SPOILER ALERT... IT'S US)



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...rege & existing!

...on you
...making
...strategies

dreaming with
roots - standing
on the shoulders
of people before
esp. Tower Hamlets

Waste
management.
eco bricks -

new
narr

imagining
of changing

Dreaming

opening
up (wings
& trailer)

antidote

& alternative

practical ways
that a good
justice
= in practice =

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Introduction
Project aims

01-04

01
02

WHAT WE DID

Gathering community wisdom
Political arts education
Land campaign

04-21

04
07
17

IMPACT

Impact

21-22

21

LEARNING & INSIGHTS

Community led or community informed?
Land redistribution, resourcing and education
Food is political and relational

22-30

25
26
27

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Meet the team
Acknowledgments
Resources

30-32

30
31
32



INTRODUCTION

In 2020, we had many questions.

Why do we feel so disconnected from our food system?

What does food justice mean for us in Tower Hamlets?

What could a truly community-led food system look like for us, in our specific context?

Platform's long history in community-led research brought us into the Just FACT constellation. What we were certain about, was that could not answer these questions alone.

Through a grassroots process of community outreach, we inducted over 30 local food growers, community members and activists, all concerned with questions of food justice, to become the Blueprint Architects. After the first convening, we pushed for Architects to be paid a researcher's wage in recognition of the sector's problematic pattern of extraction of community wisdom. We were intentional about centring marginalised people in this group, and those with direct experience of food injustice in Tower Hamlets.

The Blueprint Architects have been in constant evolution these past five years. Tasked with creating a 'blueprint' for an alternative food system of the future, we have produced two publications, had world-expanding conversations during our convenings, and ultimately discovered that the true 'blueprint' is the strength of both the people that make up a community, and our movements that fight for a better world for us and those that will come after.



PROJECT AIMS

PHASE 1: CREATING THE BLUEPRINT

- Convene a group of 30 community members to make up the Blueprint Architects. This group will contain a diverse range of backgrounds representing community leaders, local residents, schools, organisations or community activists. It is important to centre those with lived experience of food injustice in the borough to shape the future of climate action. They bring a diversity of experiences and perspectives to ensure that project outputs are robust, evidence based and community-led.
- Collectively provide evidence and create practical recommendations of a socially just food system which can be both trialled in our localities in Tower Hamlets, and are scalable to be replicated in other urban areas in the UK and beyond.
- This Blueprint will make recommendations for action, some of which will be piloted by the Just FACT 'Hubs' and 'Labs'. The outcome of this work will feed back into the Blueprint and into our report and resources which will share the learning of the project across sectors within the borough, and outside of the borough.
- The Blueprint will contain a set of realistic practical recommendations for change at every spatial scale and level of governance, from grassroots to national government.

PHASE 2: SEEDING A MOVEMENT

- Recognising the harms of gentrification in Tower Hamlets, and that at the heart of food justice is land justice, seed a campaign for a community-owned piece of land in Tower Hamlets. This includes political education by learning as a community how other land projects have succeeded, or not.
- Use community arts as a tool for public engagement and collecting dreams for the land campaign, through a mobile arts installation that travels Tower Hamlets.
- Create organisational structures that practice non-hierarchical ways of working, to build a group and a movement that has long-lasting power in the community, and is not reliant on short-term funding from NGOs.



“Thank you for organising and encouraging communities to get together around love”



GATHERING COMMUNITY WISDOM

We did not need to reinvent the wheel. Our answers lay in the people living and breathing food justice in the borough already. Coming together with an aunty growing chillis on her balcony, and the local student that self-taught themselves about mushrooms, and the person that had been volunteering at community gardens for years, would be much more generative and grounded in liberatory politics than a removed, academic, and colonial style of research.

CONVENINGS

2020 - 2021: We initiated a process of community outreach and recruited over 30 local residents, food growers and activists to form the Blueprint Architects.

2021: Our first convening with Blueprint Architects took place.

2021 - 2023: We held quarterly convenings, resourcing Blueprint Architects a rate of £25 per hour to be community researchers. Through this process, we discussed:

- Would it look like for Tower Hamlets communities to have more control over our food system?
- What does wealth and power being redirected into local communities mean for us?
- The issues inherent to the different stages of the food system: Production, Waste, Distribution and trading, and Consumption.
- The community systems, council policies and individual action we need for a more just food system.

2023 - 2025: The focus of convenings shifted from research to public campaigning and movement building. We began to think about what we needed to build as a community for long-term sustainability post Just FACT funding, and how to ground our group in principles of radical care, social justice and power redistribution.



GATHERING COMMUNITY WISDOM

PUBLICATIONS

We have published two publications. The first publication, *Seeds for a Revolution*, was published in Feb 2023. It told the individual stories of the Blueprint Architects, our relationship with Tower Hamlets, and our journeys into food justice organising. This publication was our mission statement, detailed our reason d'être, and held the beating heart of the project. It was important to reject normative styles to instead include our recipes, stories and dreams.


Our second publication, *Recipes for a Revolution*, was published in Sep 2023. Its subtitle was 'reclaiming our food system for a just food and climate transition in Tower Hamlets and beyond'. This publication deepened the narrative presented in *Seeds*. It explored the political history of Tower Hamlets, the interwoven realities of food, land and racial justice, local gentrification and the composition of the current food system. We then provided detailed policy recommendations, under the categories of Food Insecurity, Advocacy and Agency, Resources and Funding, Knowledge and Training, and Land Use.

PUBLICATION LAUNCHES

To celebrate these feats of community-gathered wisdom, now immortalised as movement resources, we held an event to launch each publication. The first was held at Amnesty International in Feb 2023, and the second was at House of Annetta in Nov 2023. It felt important to set these works into orbit alongside community, and a beautiful shared meal.



Recipes for a Revolution Launch Night at House of Annetta



“What a way to learn about food and community. The way to love, forgiveness and growth is through food!”

POLITICAL ARTS EDUCATION

Following the publications, we began to ask ourselves how we could translate our learnings to the wider community of Tower Hamlets in an accessible and engaging way.

Food is intrinsically creative and bursting with life and stories. Food can be our link to our histories of migration, personal bonds, acts of love, and sustains both us and those around us.

As organisers of food justice, we are uniquely placed to build a movement grounded in the life-force spirits of food-making and food-sharing. With artists amongst us, and drawing on learnings from *Voices that Shake!*, centring the arts was pitched as a joyful entry point that encouraged people to organise around food with our hearts, not just brains.

ARTS ACTIVITY

- We recorded people's Tower Hamlets food stories, and created a collective soundscape.
- We ran multiple creative sessions around food justice, including collaging, creative writing, singing, carpentry, soundscaping, painting, drawing, and other arts and crafts.
- We resourced multiple community members as artists, including young people.
- We began to think creatively how we could respond to the prompt, *what would our kitchens and chicken shops look like in 2050 if we had a community-led food system?*





**Creative Writing x Food Justice workshop
at Materials Festival 2025**

POLITICAL ARTS EDUCATION: THE TRAILER

Prior to March 2024, we had envisaged our creative response to be a two-week immersive exhibition that might recreate a chicken shop or Tower Hamlets food joint. However, we quickly realised that we should not expect people to come to us, when we could go to them. The idea of a mobile arts installation that travels community centres, schools, estates and city farms was borne, and we bought an old coffee truck to convert into our food justice trailer.

SUMMER 2024

We resourced 15 Blueprint Architects to become regular members of our team, working consistent hours in the week, for a period of 8 weeks.

We practiced collective decision-making and self-governed working groups.

We hired two exhibition builders and spent the summer collectively designing, and then building our trailer, creating things like a seed library, planters and a tea shelf.

We resourced local artist Fawziyah Rahman to consult the Blueprint Architects and create a mural, representing Tower Hamlets food, life and community.

We celebrated and launched the trailer, not as a finished product, but as a new community resource, in September 2024 at Spitalfields City Farm.



The Blueprint Architects became more intertwined than ever before. Because of this arts installation process, we were able to mobilise as a collective, and dream about alternative futures together. We were also able to build trust with one another and confront power dynamics, and experiment with collective decision-making and flat structure, of which we gained many fruitful learnings from.



Community build days with our trailer during summer 2024



What we want on our trailer by Honufa Islam



Tower Hamlets food, community and life
Mural by Fawziyah Rahman

POLITICAL ARTS EDUCATION: THE TRAILER

RESIDENCIES

We identified longer term residencies (at least 3 months) as an ideal period of time for the trailer to tour Tower Hamlets' community spaces. The idea is that the trailer does not arrive a finished product, but is instead adopted by the venue and its communities, to leave their indelible mark in shaping the trailer's story.

SUMMER 2025 AND BEYOND

During summer 2025, the trailer embarked on its first three month residency at Stepney City Farm. This was immensely fruitful. From July to September 2025, we delivered 16 workshops, including political linocutting, arts, crafts, food and dreaming with young people, painting a planter to resemble a Tower Hamlets tower block, and 5 workshops about food justice with intergenerational groups

The trailer was also open every day on the farm, so we predict approx 7,500 people saw it. There were prompts on the trailer related to the past, present and future of local food justice, which people have been able to engage with even when we haven't been physically there.

The trailer then moved to Spitalfields City Farm, and we will continue its residency tour around Tower Hamlets until it can live on our land project.





Arts, crafts and food justice
by the Home Ed Farmers at Stepney City Farm
facilitated by Maymana Arefin



Political linocutting by the Green Care group at Stepney City Farm

POLITICAL ARTS EDUCATION: THE TRAILER

“DREAM-CATCHER”

The trailer was described by one person as a “dream-catcher”. As part of our workshops, we ask people of all ages to imagine what they would do with a piece of land that was to be used for the wellbeing of themselves and their community. These dreams will fuel our land campaign.

The past, present and future of food justice in Tower Hamlets with our trailer for the Power of Food Festival 2025



THE LAND CAMPAIGN


The culmination of this stage of community-led research with the Blueprint Architects brought the resolution that, at the heart of food justice is land justice.

Precarity of land in Tower Hamlets is rife. As one of the fastest gentrifying boroughs in London, most people have limited access to growing space, and the council favouring developers means that community spaces we have grown to rely on for access to fresh air, nature and food growing are facing unprecedented risk of closure.

What we need, now more than ever, is access to land that is for us and by us. It is politically important for this piece of land to be situated at the heart of Tower Hamlets, to tell the story of reparations and land justice.

This is a long-term vision, and the fruits lay as much in the process as in the destination. We want to undergo a process of community education by visiting and learning from other land projects. We must then also put in the work to create a self-organising entity, with robust structures that encompass non-hierarchical working, anti-oppression, care and conflict management processes.





“My piece of land would be very pretty. I would transform it into a farm to look after animals, grow veg and share it with the family and community. There would be healing for everyone and we would forget about stress and anxiety and see everyone happy”



***“A future full of pancakes
and chicken nuggets for all!”***

a conversation with my six-year-old
about revolution

Cynthia Dewi Oka

when 3 feet of sunshine missing two front teeth
asked me why do we need revolution
all i had was a grenade in my mouth.

i held him for a while and watched him draw
clouds and trees and ladybugs and a house
filled with everybody he loves

when was the last time we put to image
what we thought the world should be
when did it become enough to know
how to promptly explode

i said to him he was much better equipped
to figure out the revolution than his mama
that if i don't he's got to disarm this bomb
and throw it out the window

cause the revolution is not about self-defense
it's about self-creation, it's about seeing farther
than the walls directly in front of us

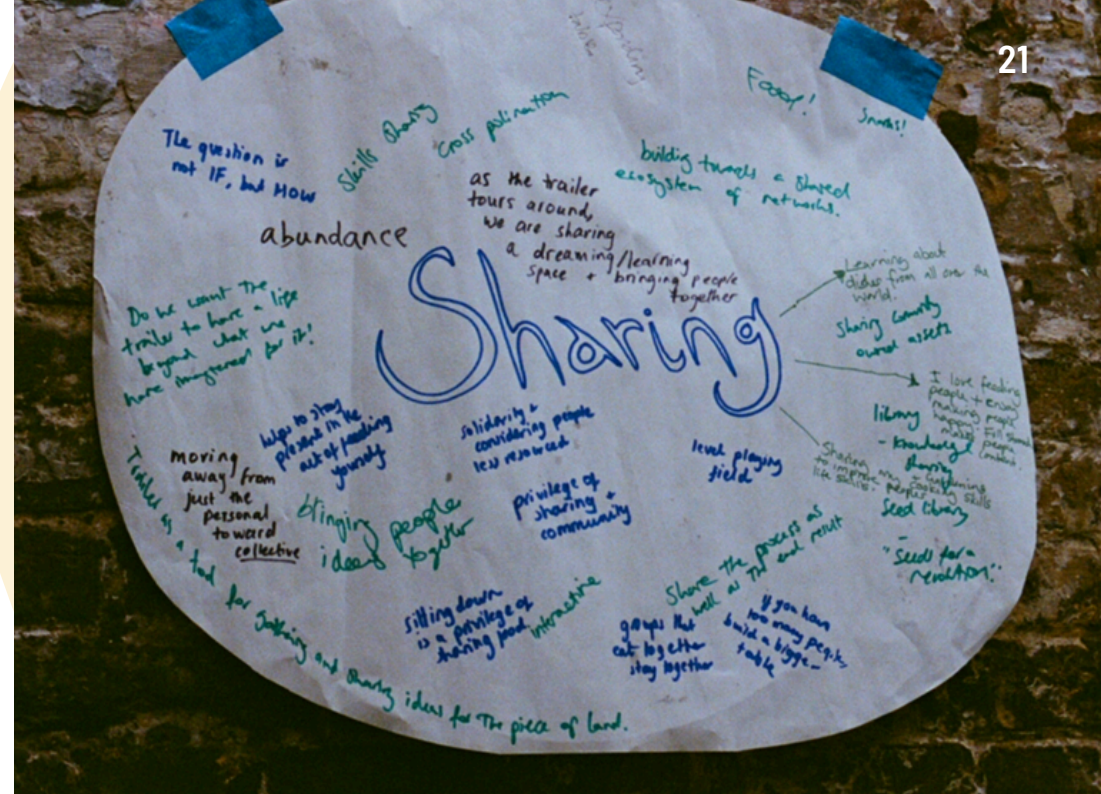
and my six-year-old has got a head start.

Reading a book about parenting and this poem reminded me of the workshops with the trailer x from Susy, Communities Programme Manager at Stepney City Farm

IMPACT

There is tangible evidence of the impact this project has had over the last five years including the number of local residents and businesses it has engaged, the amount of resources it has redistributed back towards local communities, and the amount of sessions we have run exploring food and land justice in Tower Hamlets. We have shared a brief overview of some of these numbers but we also want to explicitly reject the idea that the impact of any community project can or should be summarised through reporting.

A core tenet of this project is to embrace the power of our collective dreams and dreams are, by nature, intangible. The deep level of trust and care built between community members and the hope for what this project represents for our future in Tower Hamlets are things that can only be truly understood experientially and relationally. To truly feel the impact of this project, we therefore invite people to meet with us, over a hot cup of tea under the shade of our community trailer in Tower Hamlets, and to learn reciprocally.



NARRATIVE SHIFTS

The community-led research within our two publications have already begun to sow the seeds for narrative shifts within both the funding and policy landscapes towards a food system that is centred around justice. The upcoming food strategy by Tower Hamlets Council has stated that their commitment to deep systemic transformation is building upon our research, amongst other sources.

Additionally, as members of the steering committee for the Food Census 2025 by the Food Ethics Council, we foregrounded the need for land redistribution and community wealth-building to be prioritised by funders in the sector. Our close partnership with the Food Ethics Council is ongoing and reflects the national impact that this project has had. [Here](#), they reflect on how our approach has impacted their own.

IMPACT

67 community members engaged as Blueprint Architects

27 local artists, mostly from marginalised backgrounds, resourced


7,800+ people seen the trailer

2 publications published


35+ workshops delivered to the public



“We achieved something so beautiful together. I was very happy to be trusted and paid for my creativity. I will remember that summer for the rest of my life”

A photograph of two women in a room. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored sweater and has a joyful expression, laughing with her mouth open. The woman on the right is wearing a purple and orange striped sweater, large headphones, and is holding a microphone, also laughing. In the background, there is a door with a window, a poster with the word "POWER" in red, and some shelves with papers.

“The work I do here feels like my legacy. It is what I want my children to see of me”



“This spaces makes me feel so much joy and hope! Thank you for creating such a beautiful space. All power to all people”

LEARNINGS & INSIGHTS

COMMUNITY-LED OR COMMUNITY INFORMED?

Across the 5 year span of this project, we have experimented with many different approaches to being 'community-led' and continue to explore what this means in practice.

A key learning has been that for a project to be 'community-led', involvement from local communities cannot just happen at the point of decision-making, after the priorities and direction of a project have already been set. Choosing which road to take towards a destination that has already been decided cannot be a meaningful form of community leadership or ownership.

We have committed to the priorities of this project reflecting the priorities of communities in Tower Hamlets, even if that involves radical shifts in direction or rhythms. This necessitates working at a slower and more intentional pace and prioritising relational aspects of the work over traditional outputs.

This project, as any project should, has been shaped by continual learning. Some of these learnings can be found in our two publications, *Seeds for a Revolution* and *Recipes for a Revolution*, as well as our trailer, which is an ongoing, active and intentional learning process.



LEARNINGS & INSIGHTS

LAND REDISTRIBUTION

Food justice and food sovereignty require land redistribution. The spatial precarity that community growing spaces experience due to their leases and tenancy requirements are the most common limiting factor in allowing them to continue work. Particularly in Tower Hamlets, where developers are increasingly encroaching into community spaces and displacing whole communities, the call for land redistribution is a demand to recognise that local communities here already know and practice life-affirming ways of being, and we should be able to be resourced to continue to do so on our terms.

RESOURCE WITH ABUNDANCE

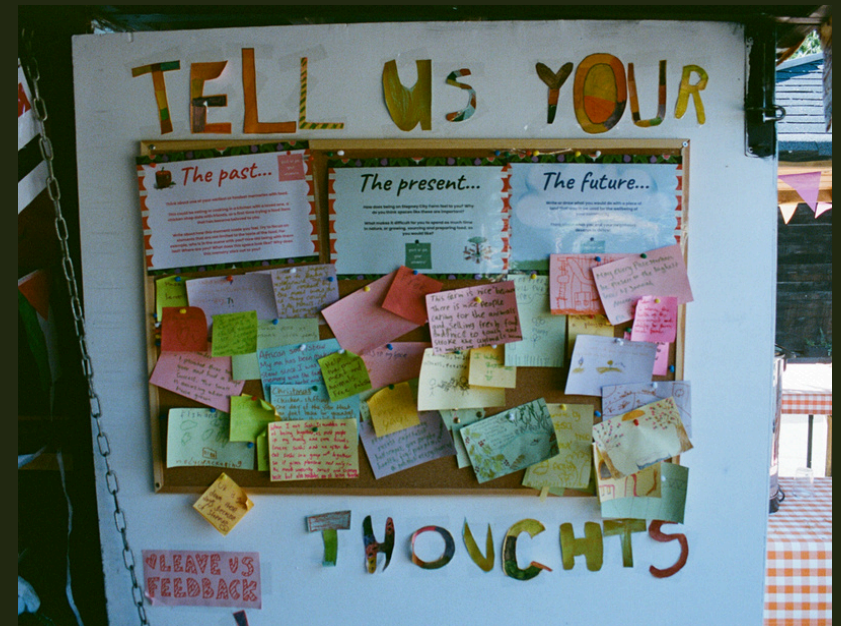
Every aspect of this project has been made possible only through the time and wisdom of the Blueprint Architects and the countless community members who have offered their insights. We recognise that even as it brings us joy, this is work - the co-creation of art, the beautiful collective dreaming and the bountiful conversations. This work should be resourced just as much, if not more, than the admin and reporting that are easier to understand.

The farming and growing sector in particular is often dependent on volunteer labour that replicates harm along existing lines of oppression. To disrupt systems of extraction, local communities must be materially resourced for their valuable work.

EDUCATION WITH NOT EDUCATION OF

So many forms of community learning, whilst well-intentioned, can often still replicate harmful hierarchical power dynamics.

Through our trailer, we've used an arts-based approach to learning to recognise that education is most impactful when it is embodied and mutual. We learn more from the people who engage with our project, from elders to children, than we can ever hope to offer, and we will always remain grateful for their generosity.



LEARNINGS & INSIGHTS

FOOD IS POLITICAL

Our relationship with food cannot just exist at the point of consumption, or even just around food growing. Conversations about food must include conversations about why it is the same communities, and foremost racialised and working-class communities, that historically and contemporaneously experience violence through the food system.

Food justice is also inherently racial justice, migrant justice, worker justice - we must be expansive about the world we are organising towards.

We must also be both contextual and global. We cannot have food justice in Tower Hamlets without addressing the exploitation of our siblings in the Global South and recognising how we, here, fit into global systems of extraction. And vitally, we cannot have any justice anywhere without a free Palestine.

FOOD IS RELATIONAL

Food is at the centre of so many of our lives and can therefore be the centre of so many beautiful ways of community-building. By opening up conversations about food memories, we've learnt that food can create space for deep and personal relationships to emerge. We practice that by sharing food with each other and recognising that some of the most important work can happen unintentionally during the lunch break!





“This is such a beautiful space. I feel inspired and part of a movement. Hearing people’s memories, thoughts and dreams made me feel connected. This is community! Thank you!”

This is an excerpt from *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9:35 a.m., I am usually in a lecture hall at the university, expounding about botany and ecology—trying, in short, to explain to my students how Skywoman’s gardens, known by some as “global ecosystems,” function. One otherwise unremarkable morning I gave the students in my General Ecology class a survey. Among other things, they were asked to rate their understanding of the negative interactions between humans and the environment. Nearly every one of the two hundred students said confidently that humans and nature are a bad mix. These were third-year students who had selected a career in environmental protection, so the response was, in a way, not very surprising. They were well schooled in the mechanics of climate change, toxins in the land and water, and the crisis of habitat loss. Later in the survey, they were asked to rate their knowledge of positive interactions between people and land. The median response was “none.”

I was stunned. How is it possible that in twenty years of education they cannot think of any beneficial relationships between people and the environment? Perhaps the negative examples they see every day—brownfields, factory farms, suburban sprawl—truncated their ability to see some good between humans and the earth. As the land becomes impoverished, so too does the scope of their vision. When we talked about this after class, I realized that they could not even imagine what beneficial relations between their species and others might look like. How can we begin to move toward ecological and cultural sustainability if we cannot even imagine what the path feels like? If we can’t imagine the generosity of geese? These students were not raised on the story of Skywoman.

Our project deals in imagining what the path feels like.

MEET THE TEAM



SUMAYYAH ZANNATH

Sumayyah works on this food and land justice project in her community in Tower Hamlets. She has a background in research, community organising and creative storytelling and facilitation. Alongside her work at Platform, she is also part of Land in Our Names, a land and racial justice collective, and the Nejma Collective, a prison abolitionist group.



RADHIKA JANI

Radhika also works as an organiser on this food and land justice project in Tower Hamlets. She brings her love for writing and community arts to this work, emphasising the importance of joy, togetherness and care in our activism. She has a background in theatre, youth work and creative facilitation.



THE BLUEPRINT ARCHITECTS

The Blueprint Architects are the beating heart of this work. Each deeply embedded in their own communities, they bring with them an immeasurable wisdom of food, growing, activism and Tower Hamlets, and their insights formed the bedrock and political compass of all we did, and continue to create.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the people that shaped this project, past and present, and leant your experiences, joys, insights, kinship, and hearts to this work, a deep and resounding thank you. May those that come after us, in Tower Hamlets and beyond, be better for the recipes for a revolution we made together.

Alani Shafiq
Ameen Kamlana
Andy Philpot
Aneita Lewis
Aqeelah Malek
Aska Welford
Cameron Bray
Chrissy Harrison
Dallas O'Dell
Didem Snaith
Dunia Tigris Gensler
Ella Frost
Farha Bi
Fatima Musa
Fawziyah Rahman
Fran Edgerley
Honufa Islam
Juliana Kuperman
Kadeza Begum
Kamrul Islam
Kennedy Walker
Kerran Kaur (aka Keke)

Lauriem Mompelat
Liam Williams
Linda Tai
Lizzy Mace
Maymana Arefin
Melanie Salisbury
Nambi Kiyira
Nicola Power
Rachel Hippolyte
Radhika Jani
Rebecca Evans-Merritt
Rokiah Yaman
Romana Gill
Shaheda Aziz
Sonja Dunser
Sumayyah Zannath
Tom Estioko Blunt
Yolande Barnesly
Zana Millen
Zinebe Maach



RESOURCES

- Check out [*Seeds for a Revolution*](#)
- Check out [*Recipes for a Revolution*](#)
- Follow [our Instagram](#) to stay up to date with [news of our trailer](#)



THE BLUEPRINT ARCHITECTS



POWERED BY
Wen.

