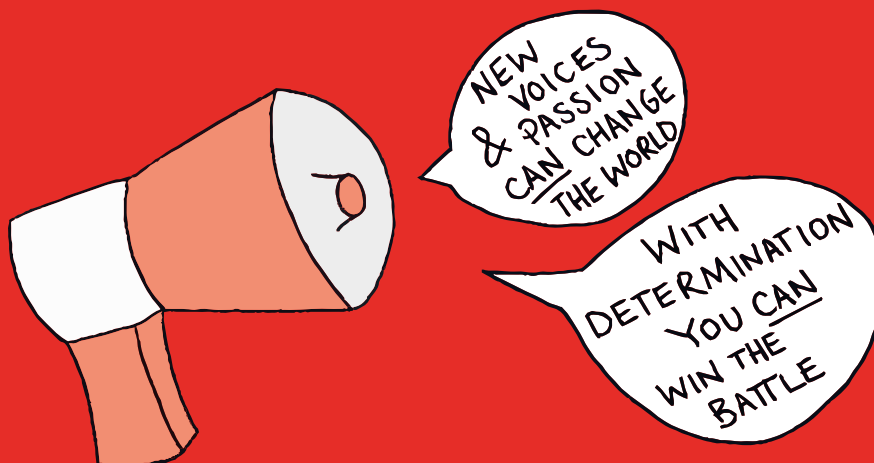
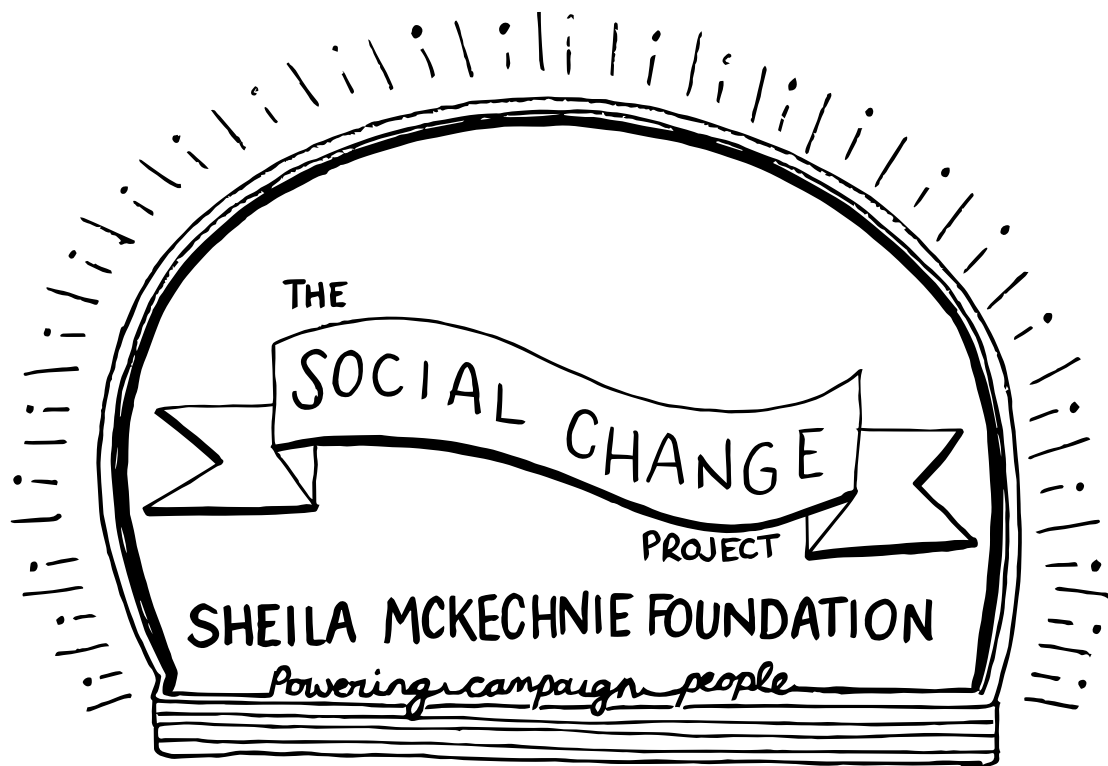


Social

Power

How civil society can 'Play Big'
and truly create change





Illustrations by Mel

Artist and Community activist are two titles I have picked up since being diagnosed with a rare spinal condition.

I use my doodling as a way to take my mind off my pain when I'm at meetings. It also acts as an aide memoire and has helped to open up conversations around creativity as a tool for health and wellbeing.

#CreativityIsMyPainRelief
#FeelGoodCom

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📷 @FeelGoodInsta
🌐 www.feelgoodcom.org

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Foreword

The Social Change Project is important to the Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK). The question it is seeking to answer - and the issues involved - have huge implications for our sector and its work. The scale of the project is also significant for a small organisation like our own, one of just a handful in the UK that exist to build the capacity of those who want to be involved in social change.

These are not easy times. Many in civil society, as elsewhere, are asking whether we are making the progress we want towards the outcomes we seek. A fairer and kinder society. A more equal and inclusive society. A more sustainable society. Civil society exists to try to address these problems. Can we do better? If so, how?

The project seeks to identify the lessons we can learn from recent successes in achieving social change. What we have discovered has given us an intriguing insight into the experiences, needs and frustrations of those who are trying to effect change. This learning has radically altered how we think these people and organisations can be best supported. It has also given us a better understanding of the constraints under which so many change-makers are labouring.

With our tongues in our cheeks, we have borrowed some language from the self-help 'canon' because we hope this report offers the same kind of encouragement and support to help civil society 'play bigger'.¹ At SMK, through this project, we hope to encourage ways of working that will allow such organisations to reach their full potential and be part of the change that so many of them seek. We also hope to help remove some of the constraints that exist externally and are serving to stifle potential.

Our ambition is that The Social Change Project serves as a wake-up call and a rallying cry to galvanise a newly emboldened sector and encourage a new settlement with the state. Both stand to gain.

Making change is not easy or intuitive, and is rarely free – we hope this project also encourages more investment into civil society to build its capacity to make change.

We'd like to thank our funders for their vision and their faith in us at SMK, and our advisory board who generously shared their insight and expertise. We'd also like to thank the many hundreds of people and organisations who took part in this project. We hope we have done you justice.



Sue Tibballs, OBE
CEO Sheila McKechnie Foundation

Executive Summary

This is a report about what civil society could achieve if it were working to its full potential: how it could contribute to positive social change if it were working optimally and without constraint.

It is based on an exploration of existing evidence and, most importantly, a year-long conversation with practitioners. As such, we regard it as complementary to other inquiries currently underway.²

This project brought together those who are consciously and purposively pursuing change whether for one person or across society as a whole. We have provided a space for this unique Community of Practice to talk about their experience, and share their ambitions and frustrations. It has made for a powerful story.

The Social Change Project set out to answer one central question:

What can we learn about how social change is happening today that can strengthen civil society's future efforts?

By 'social change' we mean all types of transformational change – from service innovation to changes in law and policy. And by 'civil society', we understand all 'not-for-profit' organisations that exist primarily to serve the public good.

What did we find?

Change is complex. It is impossible to offer a catch-all explanation that says 'this is how change happens'. However, working with practitioners from many organisation types and sizes, the project has identified:

- how civil society is involved in social change (shown in our new tool, the 'Social Change Grid')
- examples of different types of change from across the grid and what made them successful
- the common characteristics of effective change-makers – how they tend to think and behave that makes them genuinely *transformative*, not just *transactional* (our 'Twelve Habits of Effective Change-Makers')
- the constraints, both internal and external, that prevent civil society from sparking the change that is needed

Taken together, they point to what civil society can achieve when working at its best. We have called this '**Social Power**'. Social Power is the capacity that civil society has to deliver profound transformational change – in individual lives, in communities and in society as a whole. The report shows that it is being held back by working practices and cultures in the sector, and by external constraints.

In the discussion at our Community of Practice away days, people said:

'civil society is the engine of change, but it's not firing on all cylinders, and it's less than the sum of its parts'

and

'[civil society has] a sense of possibility *and* frustration: it feels like it's running up the down escalator'³

Role of civil society

What we saw and heard shows us that civil society is driving extraordinarily powerful social change – from society-wide changes in attitudes and cultural norms (equal marriage), to important changes in legislation (Living Wage), to genuine transformations in local communities and individual lives. There are many examples in this report.

We saw that civil society is often at the heart of the most significant social change. Indeed, it is where much of that change originates and is brought to fruition by working symbiotically with government and, increasingly, with the private sector, the media and the arts.

We witnessed civil society working at its best: unlocking resources, realising assets, building relationships, getting upstream of problems, transforming lives, and sharing power. We found it helping people and communities come together, negotiating change and building consensus. We saw it working in ways and in places the state finds difficult.

² For example, the Civil Society Futures inquiry, chaired by Julia Unwin

³ Community of Practice away day discussion, March 2018

We collected examples of it strengthening policy, holding formal power to account, and righting wrongs.

So, civil society is far from a poor relation of government and the private sector, as some would have it. Rather, when working at its best, it is a place of extraordinary value and potential. More, it is an essential component of a healthy society. Working optimally, without unreasonable constraint and as a respected partner of government and business, it holds the keys to addressing some of society's most pressing problems: from trans-generational issues like climate change, to knife crime and street homelessness. If the future is on the periphery, it is drawn into the mainstream through civil society.

Civil society is not a panacea for social problems – government and business must play a part in both prevention and solutions. Particularly at a time of a reduced state, civil society can and must play a full role. This report makes a case for a new conception of civil society potential called '**Social Power**' and sets out recommendations to unlock this latent capacity.

“‘Social Power’ is the capacity civil society has to deliver transformational change – in individual lives, in communities, and in society as a whole.”

How do we unlock Social Power?

Our Community of Practice expressed concern that many civil society organisations have allowed themselves to become too focused on the model and the money, rather than the mission. They talked about barriers to collaboration, to working creatively, to thinking afresh about how to pursue change. They cited performance management systems that cannot cope with complexity or uncertainty, and that actively work against agility and responsiveness. Increasingly, the sector is working to commercial models and cultures that do not allow them to work in the ways they need to, and which distort value.

Our Community regularly articulated the need for bolder leaders, willing to realise the sector's potential by challenging the status quo within their own organisations and beyond. There was a strong desire for a greater sense of solidarity and common purpose across the whole of civil society. This included greater confidence in our role and value, and some new shared language (popular understanding of 'charity' and the 'voluntary sector' confer a narrow, unsophisticated, low-value status).

Throughout our discussions, there were calls for effective action to make organisations more diverse and inclusive. Ethics also featured strongly, both in terms of what we do and how we work. We need to be trusted and we need to be accountable. We do not have a monopoly on 'doing good' but we are the sector that exists for social good. We must make sure that is always how we proceed and how we are seen.

Addressing external forces

The sector faces external constraints too, notably threats to voice. The Government has recently re-affirmed the right and value of charity campaigning in principle. In practice, the sector is still feeling muted by the Lobbying Act and so-called 'gagging clauses' in contracts.⁴ A large proportion of Conservative MPs believe publicly funded organisations shouldn't 'lobby'.⁵ The wider mood music has given the strong impression that civil society should attend to problems but not seek to be involved in solutions.

Our conversations with the Community of Practice and examination of the wider policy context in which civil society is delivering social change also suggests there is a misunderstanding of value. The notion that civil society should be viewed in the same terms as the private sector fundamentally distorts the way it works, and its ability to deliver optimal impact. Civil society is not the same as the private sector. It exists for different reasons, it works in different ways and it offers different things.

Tools & Recommendations

This report offers new tools to help practitioners review the ways they are working: the Social Change Grid and the Twelve Habits of Effective Change-Makers.

It also sets out recommendations for those who influence the environment in which change-makers are working.

How is civil society active in all these spheres?

For sector leaders:

Be good

Ensure that civil society as a whole is rooted in a commitment to rights and social justice, and a belief in people and their potential. Work to the **highest ethical standards**, be transparent and accountable.

Be clear

Build greater **public understanding and support** for civil society's work.

Be an ally

Encourage a **greater sense of common purpose and solidarity in civil society**.

Be bold

Protect and promote the **voice of civil society** and its fundamental right to speak, to campaign and to protest.

Be mission-led

Champion and invest in **leadership** that is led by mission and that brings a broad understanding of social change.

Be inclusive

Work to **strengthen the diversity and inclusivity** of the sector and work harder to ensure it reflects both the people served and wider society.

Be transparent

Commit to **demonstrating impact**. As part of this, be clear about where the true value of work lies.

Be a student

Invest more in civil society's capacity to effect change.

For government and regulators:

Be a champion

Recognise the **important role and contribution** civil society makes and be a champion for it.

Be an enabler

Re-consider the value of what civil society provides and **ensure funding enables civil society to work at its best – to transform, and not just transact**.

Create stability

Re-instate grant funding that recognises the value of civil society organisations and provides much-needed stability and sustainability.

Don't constrain voice

Re-state publicly the right to speak out and act to protect the **legitimacy and value of civil society campaigning**.

For funders:

Be nurturing

Invest in **growing the capacity of civil society** to effect change.

Be a champion

Use your **own voice and influence** to champion civil society – both its moral duty and legal right to be fully engaged in social change.

Be a connector

Fund more **collaborative work and joint** projects and use **convening power** to bring together those working for similar goals.

Be a truth-seeker

Take a lead on **valuable and meaningful evaluation**.

Be visionary

Provide **longer-term grant funding**, recognising that transformational change often requires longer-term interventions.

1. Introduction

The Social Change Project grew out of a simple observation: that in North America there is a significant industry - made up of for-profits, not-for-profits and academia - devoted to building civil society's capacity to effect change. By stark comparison, there is very little here in the UK.

Indeed, in the UK we don't tend to think of civil society as being about change at all. Instead, it is more strongly associated with the concept of 'charity' and the relief of suffering. There is no consensus here that civil society is where people and communities find a voice, where groups organise to advocate for shared interests, and where citizens hold government and other big institutions to account. Perhaps this is because UK civil society has its identity rooted in the ideas of 'charity' and Victorian philanthropic giving.

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation is one of the few organisations in the UK that does this work, so we take a keen interest in this comparison with our North American colleagues. We made a case to a consortium of independent funders that British civil society also needs to be assisted to play its full role in supporting positive social change. They agreed, and The Social Change Project was born.

For the last year, we have run this Project with one simple question in mind: **what can we learn about how social change is happening today that can strengthen civil society's future efforts?** It is a huge question but one we found a real appetite to try and answer. The conversations we had were fascinating, revelatory, powerful and moving. This report shares what we heard through this project, and what we think it means.

Why now? Our context

The timing for this project is significant. The environment in which we are all working is changing rapidly. Brexit, Trump and the polarisation of politics in the UK have challenged traditional assumptions about political attitudes and affiliations.

At the same time, more public services are being contracted out, which has created new opportunities – and new challenges – for civil society organisations. New corporate models are appearing, trying to combine commercial approaches with social impact. Austerity and cuts in public spending are hitting many communities, and the organisations that support them, hard. Small charities that once enjoyed stable funding find themselves financially imperilled, having to think creatively about how they will survive to deliver their mission.⁶

Trust in civil society has also changed. Along with other establishment structures, civil society organisations have come under attack in the new, fragmented and divided political world. Digital technologies have made it easier to access information, but far harder to distinguish truth from 'fake news'. In a 'post truth' world, where 'experts' are derided merely for being experts, civil society is not immune to challenge.

Media stories about excessive pay, questionable fundraising practices and, most recently, safeguarding standards have dented public confidence in charities. Charity campaigners say the Lobbying Act, and other government measures, have had a 'chilling effect' on their part of the sector. There seems to be a widespread loss of confidence in the legitimacy of campaigning – notably among trustees.

But change brings opportunities too. For campaigners, digital technology has been hugely liberating. There is more public engagement in social change than ever before (at least by volume). People don't just want to pay a membership or make a donation, they want to be active.⁷ Many are taking up the mantle and starting their own campaigns and initiatives.

In summary, the whole business of making change is changing rapidly, and there is much to fight for. That is why civil society needs a strong vision of the future. The Social Change Project is a timely initiative that could provide much needed help.

What do we mean by ‘civil society’?

This project uses the common definition of civil society as the “aggregate of non-governmental organisations and institutions that manifest the interests and will of citizens”.⁸ For us, civil society is made up of individuals and the organisations that represent them outside of government and private, profit-driven business. So charities, community organisations, social enterprises, faith organisations, trades unions, co-ops, CICs, and much else besides. We recognise the boundaries are somewhat fluid, but regard the distinction from government and profit-driven business to be important.

Process

Phase ①

(Jun - Aug '17)

Built the evidence base, and hosted workshops around the country to talk about ‘what works’ and identify the ‘burning issues’.

Phase ②

(Sep - Dec '17)

Hosted events on specific issues to allow for deeper discussion and reflection. Some of these discussions are shared in the ‘Spotlight on...’ sections in the report.

Phase ③

(Jan - March '18)

Pulled learning together and spent two away-days with twenty-five core members of our Community of Practice to explore, challenge and refine our conclusions.

Also published as part of the project: a series of blog posts; ‘Who’s Making Change?’: on-line open source list of examples of effective change-making, and a series of personal stories of change. All available at: smk.org.uk/social-change-project.

How have we worked?

The question that the project set out to address, that of how social change is happening today, is not straightforward. Ask a hundred different people and you will get a hundred different answers. It is easier to see in hindsight, but even then is fraught with complications and caveats.

When thinking about the best way to approach this exercise, we were aware that the people we wanted to learn from, those working in civil society, do not generally have the luxury of time, resources or headspace to stop and reflect on the bigger picture. What’s more, exploring this question with such a diverse range of people from across civil society means they will inevitably bring a wide range of responses and perspectives to the same question.

As such, our approach was necessarily a gradual, iterative process. We started out in our early workshops with some very broad questions and drilled down deeper into specific themes as they began to emerge. We found that through listening, noting connections and bringing this material back to our Community of Practice to respond to, we were able to draw out meaningful insights.

While such opportunities are rare and challenging, we and our Community of Practice found it a hugely valuable and rewarding process to take a step back from the day-to-day work and explore issues on a much broader level, encountering different perspectives and considering our individual parts in the bigger picture.

2. Key Findings

How is civil society involved in social change?

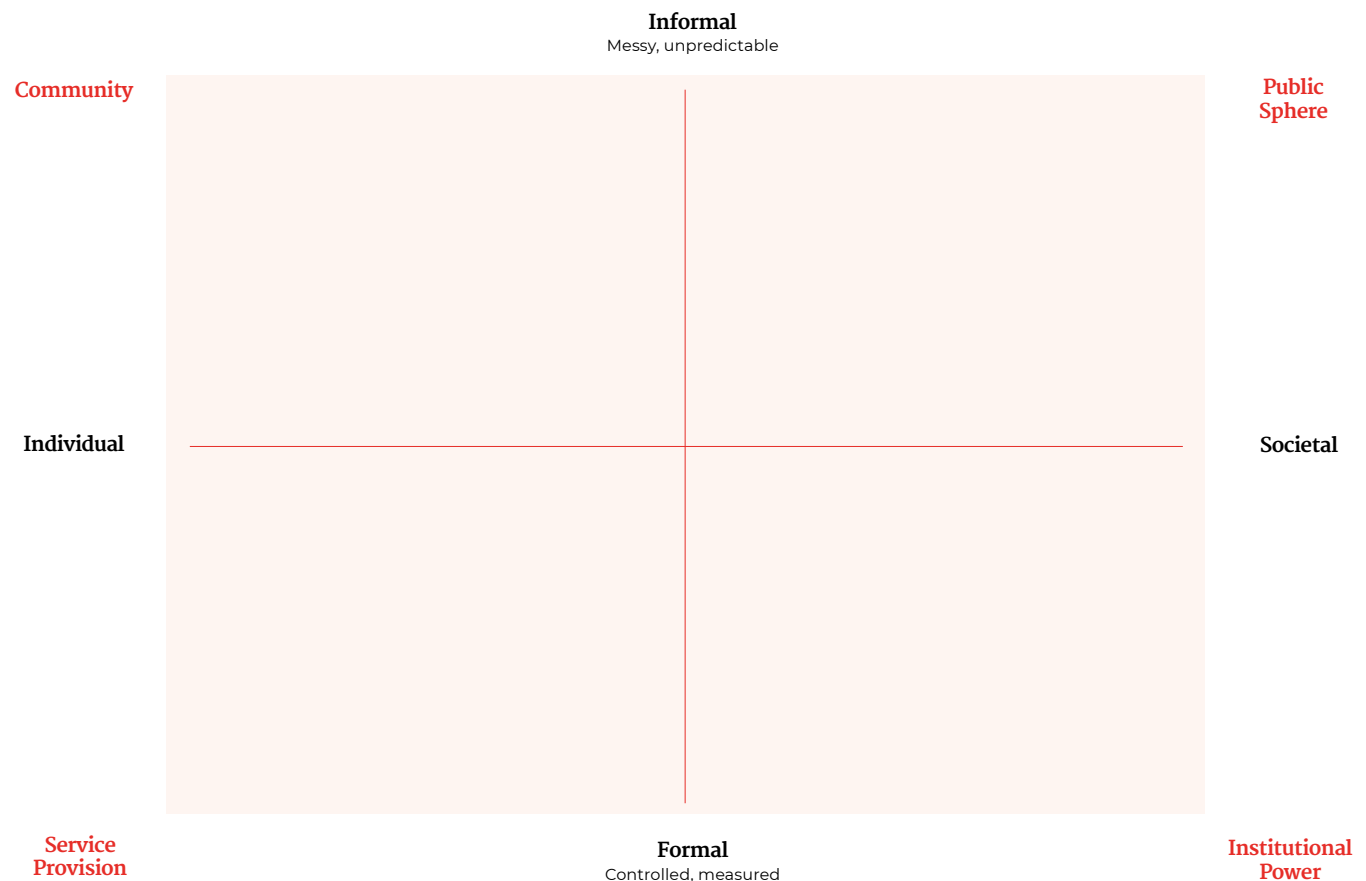
It was very clear early in our conversations with the Community of Practice that they were engaged in social change in many different ways.

While civil society is often mapped out according to the types and sizes of organisations that make it up,⁹ it is less common to try and map it according to the roles it plays in social change.

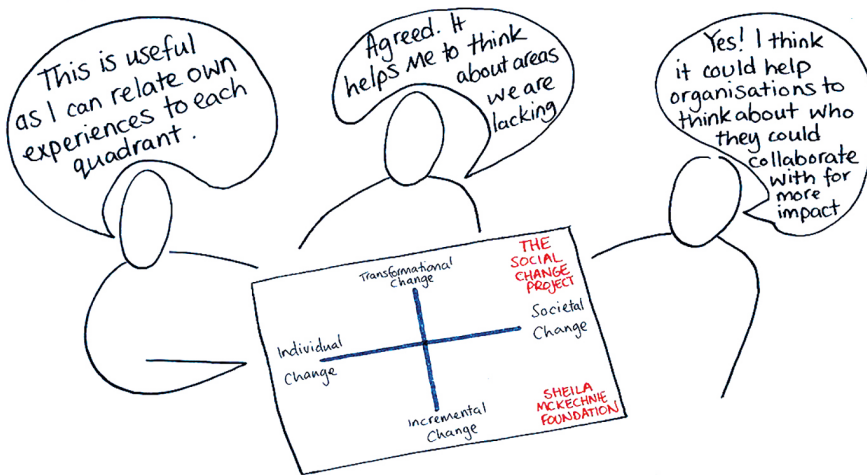
To help make sense of and navigate this complexity, we developed the Social Change Grid. All models simplify reality but, when we tested it, we found it opened up our conversations about change.

The Social Change Grid

The grid sets out four 'quadrants' that demarcate four distinct areas of activity:



⁹ NCVO. UK Civil Society Almanac 2018. Retrieved from: <http://data.ncvo.org.uk/category/almanac/>



Public Space (top right)

This is the realm of public debate and opinion, of social and cultural norms, of civic action. This quadrant is heavily influenced by all forms of media, marketing and advertising, the arts, popular culture, celebrity and influencers. It is investigated by market researchers for commercial purposes and pollsters for party political ones. It is the realm of the social sciences – psychology and behavioural economics, for example – seeking to understand why people and societies think and behave as they do.

Community (top left)

This quadrant is where individuals come together. It includes local activity like community groups and networks, community organising, community development, local businesses and social enterprises. This is also the realm of community spaces and facilities of various sorts, including faith organisations. This quadrant is also where grassroots movements begin, as individuals with shared experiences come together in communities of interest (not necessarily geographical) and organise outside formal organisational structures.

Institutional Power (bottom right)

This is the quadrant of what might be called ‘formal power’. It includes government (both national and local), international institutions, the legal system, big business, and big civil society organisations too (very large charities, for example). These are all entities that have either formal powers to do things and/or resources which give them significant influence and responsibility.

The Axes:

The axes move from ‘formal’ to ‘informal’ on the vertical sphere and from ‘individual’ to ‘societal’ on the horizontal. The further to the left of the grid an activity is, the smaller the number of those involved, down to an interaction with just one citizen. Furthest to the right, activity is population-wide.

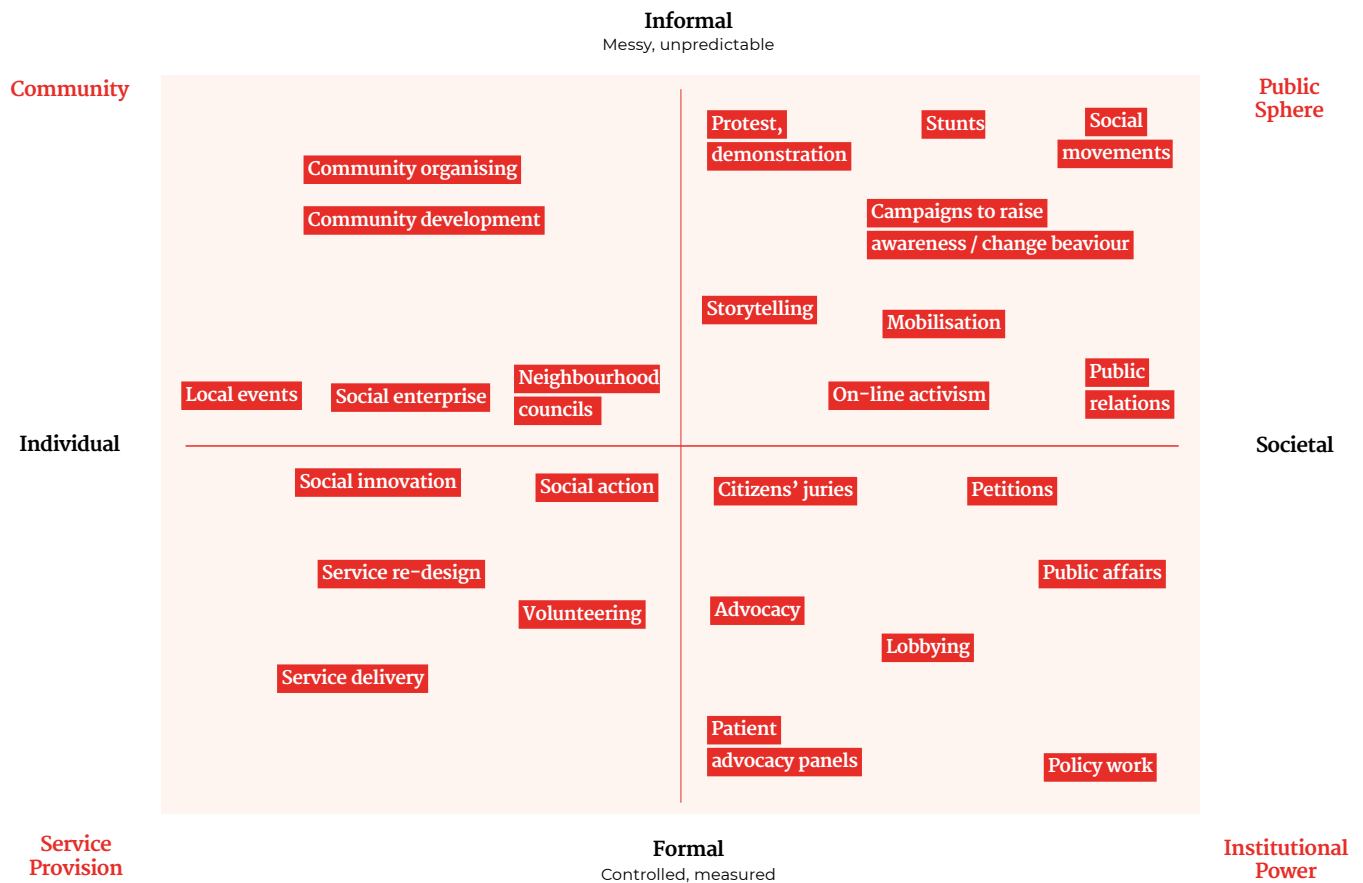
Service Provision (bottom left)

This quadrant largely encompasses the provision of support, whether by the state, a charity, a faith organisation, a social enterprise or a business. Prior to the foundation of the welfare state, this would be solely the realm of traditional charity, of benevolence, of the giving of alms. Today, it is a highly mixed economy based increasingly around commissioning. This includes charities and other civil society organisations, alongside private sector providers, where they are tendering on a competitive basis for contracts to deliver services. It also includes the activities of very small, local social enterprises and entirely voluntary entities – local people just helping each other out.

Formal activity at the bottom is relatively planned, predictable, and measurable (e.g. the provision of a direct service, or the passing of a law or policy). Informal activity at the top is relatively messy, unpredictable, not in the control of one actor, and much harder to track and measure (e.g. the impact of social movements).

How is civil society active in all these spheres?

If we populate the Social Change Grid with the types of activity conducted by civil society, it would look like this:



FINDING: Civil society’s role in social change is much broader and deeper than commonly recognised

This mapping exercise shows just how broad and deep civil society’s involvement in social change is. Civil society organisations are engaged in activity in all four quadrants, influencing social change in myriad ways.

The provision of services to people who need them is just one aspect of what they do. They are supporting people to organise and recognise their own power, they are amplifying the voices of the people they serve to decision-makers, and they are informing and challenging public attitudes.

Public space (top right)

Civil society is highly present in this space. From attempts to mobilise public support around an issue, to longer-term efforts towards building broad-based movements for change, shifting narratives or influencing public attitudes, opinions and behaviours.

There are some powerful examples of civil society playing a central role in influencing public opinion, and laying the groundwork for significant legislative changes, for example, the campaign for same-sex marriage.¹⁰ Civil society organisations also play a key role raising awareness of issues and helping drive behavioural or attitudinal change. The Time to Change initiative is one example, led by a coalition of mental health charities working with government and the private sector.

¹⁰ Tatchell, P. (2014). It was a long fight for equal marriage – finally, it’s here. New Statesman. Retrieved from: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/03/it-was-long-fight-equal-marriage-finally-it-s-here>

Civil society is making good use of new technology, and social media in particular, in this space. Platforms like 38 Degrees and Change.org are facilitating public activism in new ways and established organisations are using social media to help people connect, engage and mobilise like never before. Young people today are using digital tools alongside traditional media and advocacy strategies to re-invent public campaigning - for example, the Never Again campaign set up in the wake in the Florida school shooting achieved legislative change in just 30 days.¹¹ Social media has facilitated the emergence of powerful new social movements like Black Lives Matter or #metoo.

Important discussions are taking place about how civil society can be even more influential in this quadrant. Civil society organisations like Cardboard Citizens or On the Road Media are forging highly effective new partnerships with the arts and mass media. New approaches to activism are emerging, such as Sarah Corbett's 'gentle protest' through Craftivism.¹²

Clearly, there are many competing influences on public opinion, and some notable examples of civil society failing to 'shift the needle'. We heard about a number of live projects which are trying to understand how to shift public opinion on issues including poverty, social mobility and migration.

Spotlight on...

Young People

In recent years, we have seen an energetic new wave of activism from young people, challenging the status quo in how we pursue social change.

Many young people are involved in volunteering but are concerned that their 'social action' has been exploited by initiatives that expect them to work for free without gaining much in return. Crucially, they want the chance to engage politically and use their voice. This view was echoed in a recent House of Lords report.¹³

'Real' social action opportunities might look like those offered by the Advocacy Academy in London or RECLAIM in Manchester, which educate and develop young leaders from marginalised communities to make a difference. This can have powerful effects. When a group of young people from the Advocacy Academy, frustrated at the lack of black actors in TV and film, created their own film posters, it made national headlines.¹⁴

We also heard frustrations. There were experiences of tokenism – being asked to join a panel but not feeling listened to or able to influence decisions. One participant warned that a negative experience like this can be worse than no experience at all, as it will put them off future interaction.

There were calls for more political education and meaningful opportunities to influence decision-making. Others wanted organisations to offer exciting projects to get involved with, but ones that give them the tools to put their own ideas into action. Let Us Learn¹⁵ is a group of young migrants supported by the organisation Just for Kids Law. Their campaign to open up access to higher education for young people with limited leave to remain in the UK has already had success.

Inclusion and representation were identified as barriers, and both were strong themes in our discussion. A lack of diversity in leadership – as one person put it, 'not seeing yourself reflected' – deterred young people from social action. Young people also talked about wanting to 'share their platform' and amplify each other's voices – both to identify the change that they want to make and the way they'll go about it. As one participant summed it up: 'if it isn't inclusive and representative, it isn't changing anything'.

Institutional power (bottom right)

Activity in this quadrant includes all the work civil society organisations undertake to influence formal power – from policy work aimed at setting out new solutions, to advocacy and lobbying aimed at influencing debate and legislation – and to support engagement in the democratic process.

'Speaking truth to power' is seen as an absolutely critical role. It includes bringing front line and lived experience to bear on analysis of policy, scrutinising powerful institutions and holding them to account. Trade unions, sectoral bodies and other associations collectivise organisations (and individuals) to make their voices and influence even greater.

Civil society uses the law in this quadrant. It uses strategic litigation to change existing law, or uses existing legal rights and protections to challenge unfair, discriminatory practise elsewhere. And of course, miscarriages of justice are challenged here – think of Hillsborough and their 29-year campaign for the truth to prevail.

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-43392821>

¹² Corbett, S. (2017). How to be a Craftivist. Unbound.

¹³ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/118.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.theadvocacyacademy.com/#legally-black>

¹⁵ <http://letuslearn.study/>

These functions of civil society are those that inevitably lead to greatest tension with government and other power holders. Measures introduced by the current Government, such as the Lobbying Act and so-called 'anti-gagging' clauses, have contributed to an increasingly antagonistic relationship with the sector. Recent statements by the Secretary of State¹⁶ and the Charity Minister are providing some reassurance, but challenges to the voice of civil society remain a huge concern, as we shall see.

Not all lobbying and advocacy is adversarial. Charities help all sorts of people self-advocate in this quadrant, such as Patient Panels in the health sector, or the charity Fixers, which helps young people tell their stories publicly.¹⁷ There is much interest in bringing more authentic voices into this formal power sphere – sometimes called 'user-voice' – and initiatives designed to encourage better listening on the part of those holding formal power. Organisations like Hope for the Future are using more nuanced techniques to help citizens engage their elected representatives in climate change.

Civil society also plays an active role in the wider democratic process, encouraging participation in democracy by sharing analysis, hosting debate or, more literally, transporting people to the polling station. It can reach out to under-represented groups through projects like Operation Black Vote, for example, or #SHEvotes. Some are seeking to create new pathways into politics and encourage a different type of political participation – the now defunct Crowdpack was an example. Others work to build political knowledge among particular groups, such as The Advocacy Academy or Shout Out, who both work with young people.

It is not only the mechanics of lobbying, elections and voting that are important. Civil society is also a place where citizens come together to discuss, to share, and to negotiate. It can provide opportunities to 'speak truth to power' or simply allow a story to be heard. Being heard can be very powerful. We have seen in the Future of Civil Society inquiry, led by Julia Unwin, that there is a resounding demand for people to feel they have more power.¹⁸

By working vertically to connect people with formal power, and horizontally to bring people and communities together across common interests – or disputes – civil society at its best is a 'connective tissue' in our democracy.

Spotlight on...

Arts and Popular Culture

Arts and culture can present an alternative vision of the world we want to live in. They provoke us to think from a different perspective, can shift public attitudes and, ultimately, create the conditions for policy change.

But how often do we, as change-makers and campaigners, proactively work with arts and culture? Should we be putting more energy into building public consensus? And how can we use arts and culture to do this more effectively?

Through our conversations in the Social Change Project, we have seen some fantastic examples of activists who are using arts and culture to great effect. From the vital role that theatre group Cardboard Citizens played in bringing about and implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to organisations like Creative Minds.

Alice Sachrajda's Riding the Waves report,¹⁹ supported by Unbound Philanthropy, explores how we might use popular culture – such as TV and film, music, fashion or sport – as a vehicle for social change in the UK.

A good example is plastic waste. The foundations were laid by years of environmental campaigning, but the breakthrough in public concern came from the powerful images of David Attenborough's Blue Planet series. Policy change from government and big businesses followed in a matter of months.

How can we develop better partnerships between civil society and the arts? How can we work with artists and commissioners to use the arts to tell authentic stories and amplify marginalised voices? What role can funders play in supporting closer collaboration?



¹⁶ Matt Hancock speaking on civil society in the 21st century, 16 May 2018 – retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matt-hancock-speaking-on-civil-society-in-the-21st-century>

¹⁷ Edwards, L., & McKenna, G. (2016). Giving Social Action a Voice: Reframing Communication as Social Action. Fixers. Retrieved from: <http://www.fixers.org.uk/home/psbt/evaluations.php>

¹⁹ Sachrajda, A., and Peach, E. (2017). *Riding the Waves: How pop culture has the potential to catalyse social change in the UK*, Unbound Philanthropy. Retrieved from www.org/riding-waves-how-pop-culture-has-potential-catalyse-social-change-uk

Service provision (bottom left)

The vast majority of civil society resource, and so activity, is in this quadrant. Of the 168,000²⁰ registered charities in the UK, most work predominantly providing services. Some are huge outfits competing alongside commercial providers like G4S. Others are very small and local, even voluntary, and sometimes set up in response to immediate need, such as food banks. With the introduction of commissioning, more resource is flowing to the top.²¹ Big charities are getting bigger, and small charities are getting smaller.²²

The traditional notion of 'charity' paints a transactional relationship with 'beneficiaries': immediate needs are met and suffering alleviated. However, a growing number of forward-thinking charities are tackling problems in radically new ways. They see themselves as *enablers* not providers, and those they seek to help as people with value and potential who, with the right kind of support, can transform their own lives. The *Good and Bad Help*²³ report from Nesta with Osca includes examples of social justice, asset-based approaches that put users at the centre of the work (see the Grapevine example in the next section).

Also in this quadrant are other types of legal entity, from wholly community-owned assets and co-ops, to social enterprises and Community Interest Companies (CICs). There has been a huge amount of activity and investment in these structures in recent years, accompanied by new forms of finance, such as social impact bonds and social investment. Many are 'start-ups' looking for new ways to combine profit with purpose. There is a lot of creativity and energy in these sectors, and some excellent examples of success (though social enterprise is by no means new and goes back through the centuries, as described in *In Our Hands: A History of Community Business*²⁴ by Steve Wyler).

Despite the numerous bodies that exist to encourage social innovation, and the growing number of instances of innovative service delivery, the Community of Practice were concerned that this is not translating into system-wide change. It was felt there could be more engagement from the social innovation sector with others in civil society, and with institutional power.

Community organising, movements and place-based change (top left)

Recent years have seen community-level activity flourish in civil society. Organisations like Citizens UK and Hope not Hate are dusting down tools from post-war US community organising (as later championed by Saul Alinsky) to work across a wide range of different actors in the community to work together for change.

Other groups are adapting traditional organising models for the digital age. In *Rules for Revolutionaries*,²⁵ Becky Bond and Zack Exley draw on the experience of working on the Bernie Sanders campaign. In contrast to Alinsky's approach, they advocate for a 'big organizing' model, which relies on bold messages ('you won't get a revolution if you don't ask for one') and investment in volunteer leadership. Matt Price in *Engagement Organizing*²⁶ similarly fuses traditional organising models with participation possibilities opened up by the digital era.

Also in this quadrant are found new 'asset-based' approaches to change (e.g. Friends of the Joiners Arms), collective ownership models (some of which have been in place and thriving for decades), Community Land Trusts, and the revival of co-operativism. It also includes new place-based approaches that seek to solve a problem or encourage new behaviours in one geographical area – sometimes, but not always, with a view to scaling up.

Where there is an absence of organised civil society, for example a lack of effective support for young people affected by gangs, grassroots campaigns will often emerge in this quadrant in response.²⁷ There are also the simple acts of neighbourliness that happen in communities, sometimes facilitated by civil society, or events and gatherings designed to bring communities together, such as The Big Lunch.

FINDING: Civil society lacks a common identity and language

Despite common cause, we found a striking lack of a common identity across all of these actors, and few opportunities to come together to build one.

The sheer diversity of civil society activity creates its own problems. Civil society has come a long way from the paternalistic ideas of 'charity': it is made up of many different types of organisations, doing many different types of things, all of which contribute to social change in different ways. But all of these activities tend to have their own networks and their own approaches, and they also tend to access different funding streams.

“A more unified narrative would help the public, politicians and business better understand the range and complexity of work that civil society organisations do.”

²⁰ Charity Commission: <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/showcharity/registerofcharities/SectorData/SectorOverview.aspx>

²¹ *Stronger Charities for a Stronger Society*, House of Lords Select Committee on Charities (HL 133, 2016-17)

²² Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales (2016). *Small & Medium-Sized Charities After The Crash: What Happened & Why It Matters*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/news/research-and-publications>

²³ Wilson, R., Cornwell, C., Flanagan, E., Nielsen, N., Khan, H. (2018). *Good and Bad Help*. Nesta and OSCA.

Retrieved from <https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/good-and-bad-help-how-purpose-and-confidence-transform-lives>

²⁴ Wyler, S. (2017). *In Our Hands: A History of Community Business*.

²⁵ Becky Bond and Zack Exley. (2017). *Rules for Revolutionaries: How Big Organizing Can Change Everything*

²⁶ Price, M. (2017). *Engagement Organizing: The Old Art and New Science of Winning Campaigns*

²⁷ London's knife crisis: meet the people with possible solutions, *The Observer* (8 April 2018). Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/07/who-can-solve-london-s-knife-crisis>

We also lack a common language, which was brought into sharp focus in conversations with our Community of Practice, who were drawn from many different parts of civil society.

Those located on the right of the grid were likely to use the language of ‘campaigning’, ‘advocacy’, ‘lobbying’, ‘activism’ and ‘protest’. Those on the left of the grid tended to actively dislike this language finding it too oppositional, and predicated on the idea of trying to effect a change somewhere else (e.g. in the law). They, in contrast, are trying to bring about change within the people and communities where they are working, where both the approach and language need to be softer. Many practitioners in leading edge service re-design talk about ‘co-production’ or ‘co-creation’. Some talk about bringing a social movement approach (a term that is used in every quadrant, even by government). Those in the top half of the grid had the language of ‘organising’ and ‘mobilisation’ in common.

What is notably absent is a term that gives collective expression to all this activity. ‘Social action’ might be a contender but it is increasingly being conflated with volunteering²⁸. This lack of a common language to express common, or at least largely compatible, aims renders communication within and about civil society difficult. It increases the risk of misunderstanding and conflict, reducing influence and effectiveness. A more unified narrative would help the public, politicians and business to better understand the range and complexity of work that civil society organisations do.

FINDING: the potential to shift attitudes and behaviours (top right) has grown

Using the grid, the Community of Practice felt the most interesting social change today is being driven by the top half of the grid – in the public sphere and in the community. This is believed to be in part due to an increase in citizen activism and social movements, enabled by tech, which is allowing new forms of organising and campaigning to emerge. There has been much talk about power shifting in recent years, most recently in Heimans and Timms’s *New Power*.²⁹ Certainly, the opportunity to share information, to unearth and scrutinise public data, and to create public debate has grown exponentially (public space, top-right). Whether people are more able to translate this into lasting change remains open to discussion.

FINDING: change-makers are too focused on formal power (bottom right)

Given the complexity of social change, our Community of Practice observed that civil society puts too much focus on influencing the bottom right quadrant: formal power.

While there is no doubt that influencing government and other senior decision-makers, and indeed, holding them to account, is a vital role, many in the Community of Practice believed civil society should be paying more attention to what it can do in other quadrants. A strong view is that civil society should be trying harder to shift public opinion, for example, in the top right sphere, to win support for some of the significant changes it seeks. Brexit was mentioned as an example of a national debate in which civil society could have played a much more active role.

FINDING: civil society’s voice is being constrained

The Community of Practice observed that while civil society ‘voice’ is getting stronger in the informal public realm, it is being constrained in the formal political one. According to SMK’s Campaigner Survey, 89% of campaigners (mostly in charities) think the legitimacy of campaigning is being threatened by Government measures such as the Lobbying Act.³⁰ A survey by NfP Synergy³¹ last year found that 51% of conservative MPs think that charities in receipt of public funds shouldn’t lobby. There is clear evidence that there has been a ‘chilling effect’ in the sector, muting civil society voice, at a time when civil society needs to be speaking up and out and playing an active role in public and political debates.

“Civil society needs to be speaking up and out and playing an active role in public and political debates.”

FINDING: the boundaries between sectors are blurring

This occurs most notably with the private sector, where there is a growing engagement with social outcomes. It was felt that civil society could be doing more to work with this trend, and find more ways to collaborate with genuinely committed companies. For some, it is less the sector you are in but what you are trying to do that matters. However, with the Government’s thinking also moving in this direction, anyone wishing to retain a distinction between civil society and business will need to be clear about what civil society’s values are.

²⁸ *The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*, Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement, HL 118 (18 April 2018)
²⁹ Heimans, J. & Timms, H. (2018). *New Power: how it’s changing the 21st century and why you need to know*. Pan Macmillan.
³⁰ *The Chilling Reality: how the Lobbying Act is affecting charity and voluntary sector campaigning in the UK*, SMK (2018)
³¹ <https://nfp synergy.net/press-release/research-with-mps-shows-their-priorities-for-charity-sector#downloads>

Moblab's wider trends for 2018



MobLab's trends are largely focused on new technology, but we found it striking that the use to which it is put is heavily focused on relationship-building (one of our Twelve Habits of Effective Change-Makers, see chapter four).

1. Greater use of bots to connect people with stories

The Messenger bot Charity:Water connects users with a (fictional) girl named Yeshi who lives in rural Ethiopia and spends hours each day walking to find water. Once

someone starts chatting with Yeshi, she asks and answers questions and sends images, videos, audio clips and maps about her journey.

2. Technology is driving decentralised organising

User-friendly platforms are helping people tell and hear each other's stories (used in Australia's #VoteYes marriage equality campaign), organise swift and reactive protests (as in South Africa's #FeesMutFall movement), and set up local campaign responses to national problems (like India's AirAlert platform).

3. Changes to Facebook's algorithm is changing engagement

Broadcasting updates (with cute viral content) is no longer effective, so campaigners are abandoning Pages in favour of Groups. This requires staff to act as individuals, rather than organisations, but focuses on person-to-person interaction.

4. Turning to text

After years of mass email, campaigners in the Global North are turning to text messages as a more direct and authentic form of communication. Meanwhile, the Global South is moving into mobile apps as data and smartphones become more affordable.

5. Globally, it's getting harder and riskier to campaign for change

With civil space being squeezed across the world, we should be aware that it can happen here too. The UK says it's keen to be a global leader in human rights and good governance, so it should keep its own house in order.

Source: Keep Campaigning Fresh: Trends impacting change in 2018, MobLab <https://mobilisationlab.org/campaigning-trends-2018/>

3. Key Findings

How is significant social change happening?

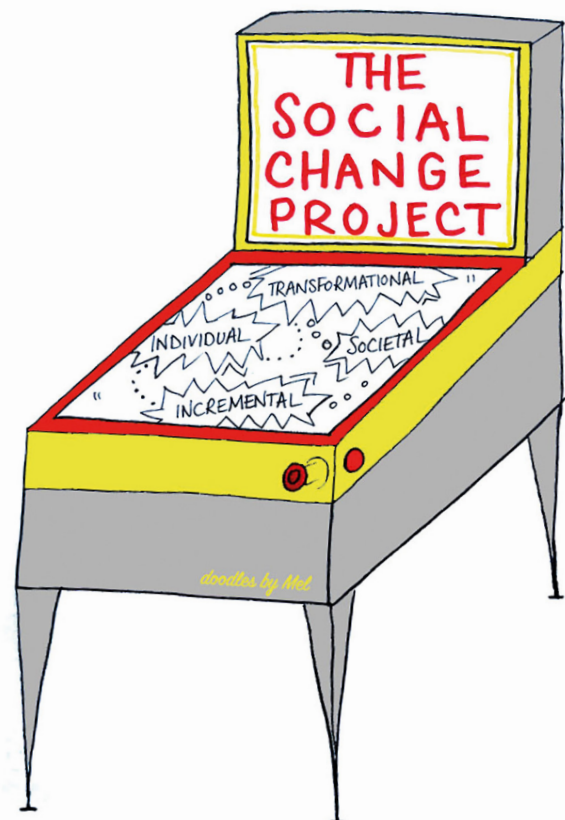
We have seen that civil society is involved in driving social change in many different ways. We have been able to map this shared field of action in the Social Change Grid; we pointed to some of the over-arching trends; and we highlighted the challenge of discussing experiences of change-making without a common language. Our next question was to ask how significant social change is happening today?

In seeking to answer this question, we gathered together a wealth of information. We examined and discussed specific examples of change, evaluations, case studies, research, books and reports (see Reading & Resources). We held numerous conversations with our Community of Practice.

From the outset, our research and conversations repeatedly touched on the challenges of learning from change; of the inherent barriers to learning. Key challenges (as set out in more detail in the Appendix) are that: context and the actors within it shift with time; as every context is different, so every intervention is unique (even the same intervention at a different time); clarity is often imposed in hindsight; and not all change-makers have the capacity or wherewithal to evaluate their process.

With these caveats in mind, we considered how best to try and learn from specific instances of change. The grid proved useful, offering an opportunity to map the progress made by different actors on different issues. The results were these rather dynamic pictures, in which activity ricochets across quadrants. The process is akin to a pinball machine with the ball bearing as the change and its movement as its trajectory around different social spheres and actors.

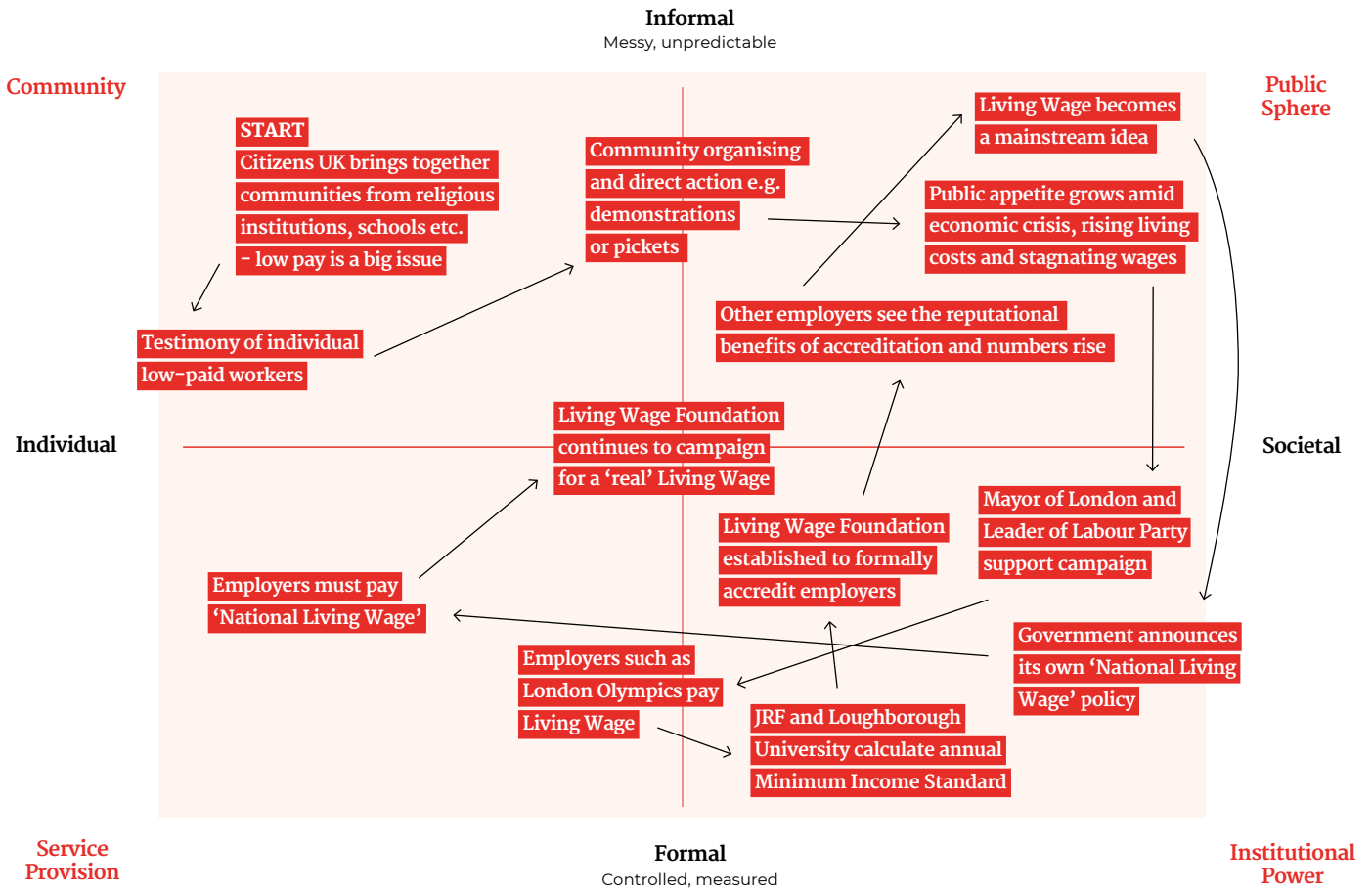
The following grids are three examples of quite different types of change.



The Living Wage

The drive for change starts in the community and is galvanised through community organising. This leads to direct action that, supported by personal testimony, moves into the public sphere as awareness grows.

The story starts to build as it becomes a familiar concept. At this point, it comes to the attention of those with institutional power. Senior political figures start to support the campaign, at which point the concept is co-opted and re-interpreted by the Government. Also in the institutional power quadrant, the Living Wage Foundation is set up to accredit employers under the original definition. Eventually, the issue moves into the service provision quadrant, as those providing services must pay the National Living Wage and individuals start to benefit.³²

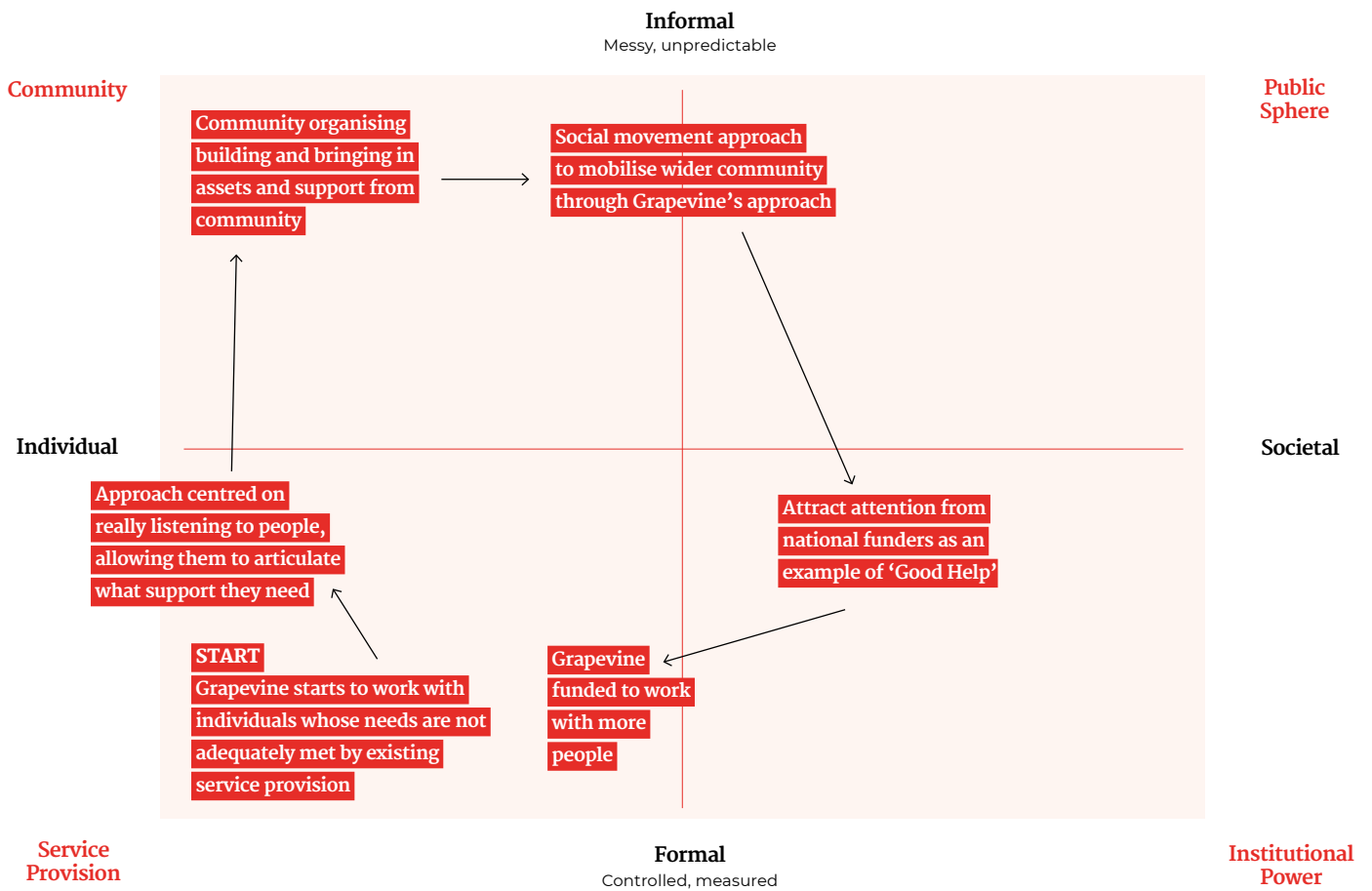


³² CPC, Citizens UK, Trust for London (2014). Living Wage – Evaluation of Special Initiative. Retrieved from: <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/research/publication/living-wage-evaluation-of-special-initiative/>

Grapevine Coventry & Warwickshire

This local charity helps people experiencing isolation, poverty and disadvantage to build better lives. By bringing what they describe as a 'social movement approach', they hope to be not a provider but an enabler, centred on really listening to those who need support.

As Grapevine Coventry & Warwickshire looks outward into the community to see what is already there that could help, they crowdsource ideas and offers and find creative ways to provide the support that is needed. Such an innovative and high impact approach starts to capture national attention. Featuring in the *Good and Bad Help*³³ report sparks new relationships with national funders, allowing them to work with more people and continue to forge new ways of approaching everything from relationships with commissioners to their own monitoring, evaluation and learning.

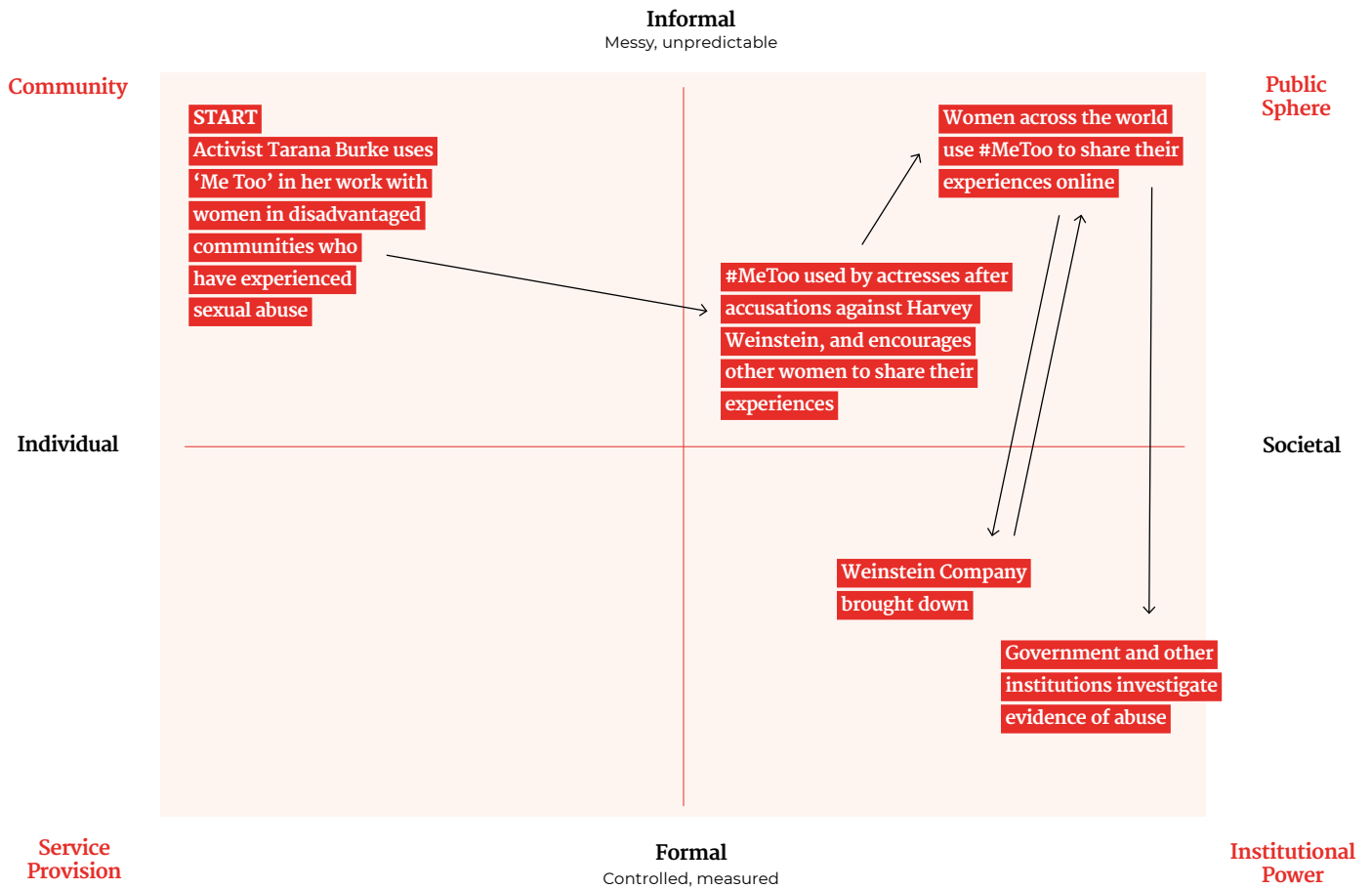


³³ Wilson, R., Cornwell, C., Flanagan, E., Nielsen, N., Khan, H. (2018). Good and Bad Help. Nesta and OSCA. Retrieved from <https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/good-and-bad-help-how-purpose-and-confidence-transform-lives>

#MeToo

This high-profile, international campaign starts with a grassroots community campaign in the United States. The hashtag is used by actresses after revelations about Harvey Weinstein emerge, pushing it into the public space.

Thereafter, social media enables the scale of engagement to grow very rapidly and it becomes a global phenomenon. Print and broadcast media pick it up. Soon, questions start to be asked in other sectors. Evidence emerges of sexual harassment in politics and in the charitable sector, which triggers senior resignations, investigations and new codes of conduct. Weinstein's company folds and he is eventually arrested. Evidence of systemic and long-term social change, or even change beyond Hollywood, will take time to emerge.



What can these results tell us?

Looking across these activities, and these examples, leads us to some conclusions and poses some further questions about civil society's role in social change.

FINDING: Change occurs across quadrants in dynamic ways

The clearest – and possibly most important – pattern that emerges from these examples, and the wider research we have undertaken, is the importance of working across multiple quadrants in the grid. Change may originate in one quadrant, but successful delivery of change appears to require activity across many, if not all. So, significant social change is the result of the actions of many actors across sectors in a broad change 'eco-system'.

“Significant social change is the result of the actions of many actors across sectors in a broad change ‘eco-system’.”

This finding serves to underline the importance of civil society actors working across quadrants in the grid. Some civil society organisations, particularly the bigger national NGOs, do work across all quadrants. National charities often provide services and draw on this to advocate for change, through lobbying and more public campaigning. There can be tensions in this traditional model of one organisation trying to operate across all these areas, however. Where service delivery creates a funding relationship or involves working in partnership with a potential target of influencing, a conflict of interest is created that makes it difficult to criticise. It is hard to 'bite the hand that feeds you'.

As argued by the *Networked Change* report,³⁴ based on a study of significant social change successes in the US, coalitions are often key to success. It can be better for organisations and groups to link up across the quadrants rather than one organisation trying to operate in all of them. For example, the Coalition for Equal Marriage,³⁵ set up in 2012, included both secular and religious organisations, community and university groups, political groups and media organisations. This diversity of strengths allowed the coalition to engage in every quadrant of the Social Change Grid on different terms and with far greater flexibility.

FINDING: Social change is rooted in principle and passion

From our earliest discussions, our Community of Practice reminded us that social change is always rooted in strong values, beliefs and principles. When asked why they worked for social change, one member of our Community of Practice said, 'I can't not do it'. Behind every instance of social change lies a conviction that something is wrong, unjust, or unfair, and that things can be better.

This does not necessarily translate as 'progressive', as the many campaigns against better sex education, reproductive rights or equal marriage demonstrate.

Quite a lot of the case studies reference the importance of talking about moral imperatives and appealing to the public's sense of fairness and justice, rather than using just rational or economic arguments. A look back through time suggests that this has always been the case:

“The use of moral arguments, empathy and speaking to values is also important, often more powerful than economic or material cases, and allows us to build a broader movement. Today we often feel that campaigns have to be framed in economic terms to be taken seriously by the media or politicians – but it is more important to engage in the moral debates which shape values, world views and decision-making.”³⁶

³⁴ Mogus, J. & Liacas, T. (2016). *Networked Change*. How progressive campaigns are won in the 21st Century. Retrieved from: <http://netchange.co/report>

³⁵ More information at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalition_for_Equal_Marriage

³⁶ Childs, M. (2017). *Campaigning for Change: Lessons from History*. Friends of the Earth.

Spotlight on...

Ethics

What roles do values and ethics play in the pursuit of social change? It can feel difficult to remain rooted in your values when you're fighting to be heard. Is it right to compromise? How much? Where is the balance? As one participant put it 'it's not about the 'how' being as important as the 'what', but the 'how' being integral to the 'what', because that is living your values'.

Many people work for years, decades even before seeing any success. Perhaps certain tactics would get them there quicker, but at what cost? Who would be left behind? And ultimately would it be worth it?

We discussed whether there is a need for a code of conduct for campaigning. Should civil society remain civil in all situations? Should we be holding ourselves to different standards even if others are not?

There is a responsibility on change-makers to consider the wider, possibly unintended, consequences of the ways in which we pursue change. Can we say that we are successful if we reach the specific goal that we set out to achieve, but don't act as a responsible player in civil society? How many of us consider the impact that the narratives and actions we use in pursuit of our own cause might have on other parts of civil society?

Creating a code of conduct was acknowledged to be difficult, but there was demand for more opportunity to think and talk about our values and how to pursue change in a more conscious way.

Is it possible to have a successful but unethical campaign? The public debate about the plight of many Windrush Generation citizens exemplifies this. Characterising some people as 'good' immigrants (the NHS nurse, the teacher, the community leader), may have helped make the case that the Government's policies were unacceptable for this group. But, by extension, did this define others as 'bad'? And what is the consequence of this for long-term social justice? As one participant put it – 'you have to start from your values and be led by that, because otherwise how can you tell whether your campaign is successful?'

FINDING: Civil society is a place where big ideas start, are tested and grow

Social change is galvanised by big ideas that change the way we see the world, make a better world a possibility and inspire us to act.

“Social change is galvanised by big ideas that change the way we see the world, make a better world a possibility and inspire us to act.”

Community activists, campaigners and other public groups work as early adopters of social change. It is where radical thinking takes place, is tested, and bold ideas are expressed and advanced. The Living Wage (above) is an obvious example. It could easily be joined by period poverty, banning single-use plastics, citizen's income or affordable credit, to name a few. These are all concepts that have been around for decades ('pinballing' around the grid) but are now gradually entering mainstream consciousness.

The history of social reform shows that this is a crucial role played by civil society.³⁷ Current evidence shows it is not just public debate that is influenced. Civil society also has a profound influence on those in the private sector too.³⁸ However, there was a powerful view in our Community of Practice that civil society is not using its voice and influence as much as it could, with serious consequences for reform.

FINDING: Relationships are fundamental to change across all quadrants of the Social Change Grid

Relationships are central to change. This is a universal feature, whether found in the innovative approach to support found in Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire's model, or the ongoing conversations between civil society and institutional power structures in the Living Wage campaign. Because they are exchanges between people, the unexpected or indirect benefits can end up being more valuable than those that are predicted. One discussion or decision can yield an insight that requires a swift new approach, way of framing an issue or change of direction. An evaluation of Grapevine's work found that 'what could not have been foreseen at the outset was the way [it] would create capacity for change of all kinds. Deep, extensive, networked relationships have been created that provide the infrastructure for innovation, and naturally regenerate in the face of challenges and in response to demand.'³⁹

³⁷ Childs, M. (2017). Campaigning for Change: Lessons from History. Friends of the Earth.

³⁸ Den Hond, F., & de Bakker, F. (2007). Ideologically motivated activism: How activist groups influence corporate social change activities. *Academy Of Management Review*, 32(3), 901-924.

³⁹ Darnton, A., and Harrison, A. (2017). A Revaluation of Grapevine – Good to Go, Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire. Retrieved from: <http://www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/whats-new/publications-and-factsheets>

FINDING: By witnessing and amplifying lived experience, civil society can drive social change

Much – if not most – significant change originates with civil society bearing witness to people’s lived experience. This may occur as they interact with the people and places they are serving (service delivery, bottom left) or as people start to organise (community, top left). Civil society adds enormous value to the influence we all try to wield individually. It is uniquely positioned to take a long-term view. It is able to look at the experiences of many individuals and spot patterns and emerging needs. It is able to support people who otherwise struggle to make their voice heard. It also finds ways to advocate authentically for those who are unable to advocate for themselves, such as young children or people in other ways vulnerable. By reflecting that experience back to those who hold formal power, they make an invaluable contribution to understanding how policy is being experienced by citizens.

“Much – if not most – significant change originates with civil society bearing witness to people’s lived experience.”

FINDING: Government needs civil society to drive social change

Delivering change often requires influencing formal power, but governments don’t normally choose to act without the support of public opinion. In our examples, the drive for change emerges from the left-hand quadrants and comes to public awareness in the top-right. Where formal power-holders are reluctant to take risky decisions, they look to civil society to build a case for change and persuade others to come on board.

Michael Gove did not wake up one morning evangelical about plastic reduction. His interest is underpinned by years of civil society research, discussion, and activism; it has depended on early advocates, who were dismissed as eccentric, coming back again and again with resilience and passion; it has been built at every level, from neighbourhood groups worried about local recycling to global activism by Greenpeace; it has waited for the public to be ‘ready’ for stronger policies on plastic use, as ‘early adopters’ show the rest of us that it can be done and interest is stoked by popular media like the BBC’s Blue Planet.

FINDING: Civil society can drive change the state can’t

Operating very locally (left quadrants), civil society is able to work with people and within communities to design and support tailored change. Local charities, in which staff and volunteers share experiences with the vulnerable people they work with, and who they know personally, are credible and trusted. This applies as much to working with young people caught up in gangs, drugs, or knife crime, as to persuading older people to accept the help they need. This work often falls somewhere between community self-help and statutory services. Many charities are working at a forensic level in communities, providing services and support to people the state often struggles to reach. East London-based Community Links, for example, runs local services to increase the number of people taking up screening for cancer. Because they are known and trusted, local organisations are able to reach and engage communities that the state finds difficult to reach.

Many such organisations are operating on a shoestring and lots of goodwill, with most paid service contracts still going to big providers. Smaller, community-led initiatives, even those without any paid staff, told us they struggle to access basics like space, advice and encouragement.

“Because they are known and trusted, local organisations are able to reach and engage communities that the state finds difficult to reach.”

FINDING: Social movements alone probably cannot create lasting change

The characteristics of social movements (agile, unpredictable, distributed, broadly focused) are very different from those of charities and voluntary groups (structured, governed, regulated, tightly focused). Large-scale public movements generate ‘heat’ – a desire for change – that can be converted into concrete, lasting change. Activists, however, are sometimes criticised for not using the appetite that protest can generate. For example, in *Hegemony How-To – A Roadmap for Radicals* Jonathan Smucker⁴⁰ critiques the Occupy movement for being too insular and purist.

⁴⁰ Smucker, J. (2017). *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*. AK Press.

There is also a challenge for established civil society organisations. They bring in-depth analysis, specialist skills and experience of operating in other quadrants of the grid, but may need to invent entirely new ways of working in order to collaborate authentically and effectively with emerging social movements. The very different natures of movements and civil society organisations raises the question of whether 'social change movements' can ever be artificially seeded or created.

It is worth noting that faith groups, such as the Quakers, successfully channel their members' emerging interest in political questions into deeper consideration of the issues. There may be important lessons here that would help to build bridges between organisations and movements.

FINDING: Change takes time and is never 'done'

Despite comments about the increasing pace of change, as characterised by campaigns like Caroline Criadoz Perez's push for new banknotes to feature at least one woman,⁴¹ lasting systemic change is usually long-term and can take decades. Every major, society-wide social change we looked at, from equal pay to same-sex marriage, not only required decades of work across every quadrant of the Social Change Grid, but is still on-going in terms of achieving full expression. Indeed, change is not an inherently one-way process. As one of our Community of Practice put it, 'civil society at its best is eternally vigilant, as some things aren't irreversible.'⁴²

“Civil society at its best is eternally vigilant, as some things aren't irreversible.”

Conclusion: Civil society holds huge potential to effect change. It has 'Social Power'.

Looking across these examples, why they worked and the difference they have made shows that civil society, when working at its best, it is a place of extraordinary value and potential. Working optimally, without unreasonable constraint and as a respected partner of government and business, it holds the keys to addressing some of society's most pressing problems: from trans-generational issues like climate change, to knife crime and street homelessness. Moreover, it is an essential component of a healthy society.

This report makes a case for a new conception of civil society potential - called '**Social Power**'. Social Power is the capacity civil society has to deliver transformational change.

“Social Power is the capacity civil society has to deliver transformational change.”

Civil society is not a panacea for social problems – government and business must play a part in both prevention and solutions. But, at a time of a reduced state, civil society can and must play a full role.

The next section will look at what blocks and unlocks civil society's Social Power.

⁴¹ How social media helped me get Jane Austen on to £10 notes.

Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/apr/11/how-social-media-helped-jane-austen-banknotes-caroline-criadoz-perez>

⁴² Community of Practice away day discussion, March 2018

4. Key Findings

What makes some things succeed where others fail?

Having looked at these trends in civil society, what can we now say about how individual instances of change happen? Why do some efforts succeed where others fail? And what can we learn that might be useful as we think about how to strengthen civil society's future efforts?

While there is no simple formula, no one 'golden arrow' or 'silver bullet', we have found that successful change-makers tend to think and behave in similar ways.

FINDING: There are shared characteristics of success

In our reading and discussions with the Community of Practice, we found patterns in the behaviour and thinking of effective actors. Indeed, it is quite startling how similar the approaches of change-makers are in completely different settings, pursuing completely different goals.

The evidence already indicates that successful change-making has to be multimodal and cross-sector in its approach. What behaviours or habits make someone or an organisation more likely to conceptualise, plan and deliver such activity?

Working with our Community of Practice, we identified and refined twelve core features of effective change-makers. Some of them describe ways of thinking, some are about practice, and some are about the principles and approaches that underpin their work. Taken together, we think *The Twelve Habits of Successful Change-Makers* (see below) capture a completely fresh approach to thinking about how to build civil society capacity to effect change.



The Twelve Habits of Successful Change-Makers

1. Mission first, not model or money

A common feature across all the examples we looked at – whether led by organisations or individuals – is that they are relentlessly mission-led. Nothing diverts them from their ultimate goal. Whether the parent trying to secure the support her child needs, or Nigel Farage trying to persuade the UK to leave Europe, both examples are characterised by an absolute focus on their end goal. This is why the best campaigners are those who are literally ‘on a mission’. Think of Doreen Lawrence.

In bigger organisations, mission connects people to their passion, to their values and allows lots of people to come together around common cause. In the *Fifth Discipline*,⁴³ Peter Senge identified that:

“To empower people in an unaligned organisation can be counter-productive ... Shared vision is vital for the learning organisation because it provides the focus and energy for learning – generative learning occurs only when people are striving to accomplish something that matters deeply to them.”

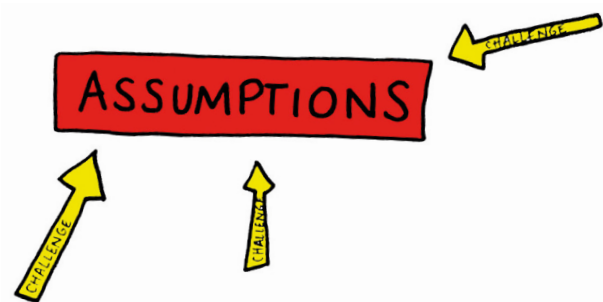
While it may seem obvious to be mission-led, it is very easy to get blown off course. There is a huge pressure on every kind of organisation to secure income, to grow, even just to survive. What can – and very often does – happen is that organisations become more focused on securing money, or maintaining the model, than pursuing their mission. It takes brave leadership, whether coming from the board or the senior leadership team, to be willing to completely change organisational strategy – and model even – in order to pursue mission in a different way.

There are some notable examples. Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive at Scope, who, along with his board, agreed that they could be much more effective in achieving their mission if they divested the charity of all direct services to

become an enabling organisation instead. Impressive as it is very often big, established organisations that find it hardest to change. Yet, the risk is that, if they don't, they will cease to be effective and will eventually be overtaken and rendered obsolete.

Mission also matters to public perception. If the first and most frequent experience the public has of a charity is a request for money, then eventually this will be seen as their primary concern. To restore public confidence, the public needs to experience charities for what they stand for – what they exist to do – not just the fundraising appeals. That Oxfam, an organisation set up to campaign, was so easy to dent in the press recently is a cautionary tale.

2. Looking at the bigger picture (whole-systems approach)



Successful change-makers recognise that change is complex. They constantly review their strategy to ensure they are pursuing change in the best way. They ask, where does power lie now? Who or what can I influence? How are trends helping or hindering me? What can others do better than me? Who can I get to help?

Effective change-makers are open to working with new partners and in new places. They will constantly think about how they can move their goal forward. Duncan Green calls this ‘dancing with the system’.⁴⁴

Donella Meadows uses this phrase too:

“You have to work hard at it, whether that means rigorously analysing a system or rigorously casting off your own paradigms and throwing yourself into the humility

of not-knowing. In the end, it seems that mastery has less to do with pushing leverage points than it does with strategically, profoundly, madly, letting go and dancing with the system.”⁴⁵

The practice of 'systems thinking' is gaining ground. Organisations like New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) have produced guides to help practitioners work with it.⁴⁶ Tools like Theories of Change have been devised to help practitioners to develop more flexible strategies and plans.

And yet, the 'dancing feet' of change-makers are often tied down by organisational structures and cultures that do not allow for such an approach. Organisations and funders often want to know in advance exactly how any project will be delivered, and what outcomes secured. The requirements of budgeting, performance management and reporting are all built around predictable linear planning processes. Even Theories of Change, introduced to allow for flexible planning, are seen to be having the opposite effect by committing organisations to fixed ways of working.

The requirements of performance management play a big role here. For a great many practitioners in our Community of Practice, a clear plea is for more fit-for-purpose, flexible approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning that allow them to interact meaningfully in complex systems. Indeed, good campaigners are natural systems thinkers. Bigger, more traditional organisations could do well from seeing how they work, and thinking about the sort of environment that can support them. This is likely to create a whole-organisation culture which could help the entire organisation have more impact.

Spotlight on...

Governance

How do we choose the right organisational structure to help us achieve our mission? There are a wide range of different legal structures to choose from, each with their own pros and cons, but perhaps the most fundamental distinction is between for-profit and non-profit organisations.

The overall conclusion of our discussion was, in fact, that legal structure is less important than the culture

of an organisation. Effective governance should instil a culture of change-making through the whole organisation, driven boldly by mission, ensuring that everyone understands how they can contribute towards that bigger goal.

So much of the culture of an organisation depends on its leadership. Hiring board members can be difficult – balancing the right skills, expertise and passion for the cause. Are boards keeping up-to-date with how organisations work – by looking for change-making or digital expertise, for example? A diversity of experiences, skills and perspectives strengthens the ability of an organisation to achieve its mission, but structural factors narrow the pool of people who can take on the role. Do meeting arrangements, for example, exclude those who can't afford to take time out of work or who have caring responsibilities to attend?

And where is the voice of the people that the organisation exists to serve? It may sound like a great idea to bring someone with lived experience onto the board, but they must be supported to play a full role, not just tick a box. We heard from young people who felt disillusioned after being offered tokenistic roles, without any chance to influence decisions.

In practice, a wholehearted focus on mission means asking difficult questions. What is the most effective way to pursue our mission? How can we make best use of our resources? Is our cause better served by changing our activities or merging with another organisation?

3. Being adaptive and responsive

'Events, dear boy, events', as Harold MacMillan famously said. Social change is often driven by events. For example: the Kings Cross fire is thought to have played a key role in building public support for the smoking ban; the tragic Grenfell fire is leading to a new level of conversation around safe housing, social equity and inclusive communities; the image of Alan Kurdi, the young boy on the beach in Greece, mobilised a whole new level of response to the refugee crisis. Effective change-makers understand this and are able to adapt and respond quickly when events happen.

Bringing about social change is not a linear process – it takes unexpected turns and rarely follows a plan. Navigating this complexity requires flexible, agile thinking and action. But many people talked about the difficulty of working within restrictive organisational processes that don't allow for this complexity, and presume a linear progression of change. How can we better equip our organisations with the flexibility, the adaptability and the openness to experiment

⁴⁵ Meadows, D. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

⁴⁶ Abercrombie, R., Harries, E. & Wharton, R., (2015). *Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/systems-change/>

and take risks to thrive? Are we reading the world accurately and taking sufficient account of new trends, horizon-scanning for future possibilities?

The speed with which smaller and grassroots activists can organise can also leave bigger players behind. We are already seeing powerful social movements, like #metoo, grow very rapidly and generate sometimes indiscriminate change. There is a risk here if more experienced and thoughtful players are not involved. Micah White, in *The End of Protest*,⁴⁷ predicts that 'bureaucracies take time to react to emerging movements, turning this differential into an advantage for protestors is one of future social movements' greatest strengths'.

4. Persistence, perseverance and resilience



Social change rarely happens overnight. It can be a long, difficult and slow process to achieve truly transformational and sustainable social change. Successful change-makers are in it for the long term. They use setbacks as opportunities to learn and respond accordingly. They are tenacious and resilient and, even when things get really tough, they just keep going.

Looking at past instances of change allows us to see that key breakthroughs often only occur after years of hard work. It's important to remember that persistence now will lay the ground for future success, allowing change-makers to persevere when things get difficult, keeping their vision and the bigger picture in mind.

When setbacks occur, they should be used as opportunities to learn and respond accordingly. However, we heard frustrations about organisational cultures that do not allow for failure. We also heard a desire to be able to take risks and learn from the results.

How to build in resilience was a question that came up repeatedly in our discussions – burnout was a big concern. Working for change can be tiring, under-resourced and feel unrelenting. Coming together with others for support was seen as a way to help with this, and there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of self-care for campaigners and change-makers.

As noted in the Networked Change⁴⁸ report from NetChange, 'unseen by most observers, many of the most successful major advocacy campaigns we studied spent years building up power, scaling their networks and honing their story away from the limelight, before they broke into national consciousness and scored dramatic victories'.

In the same report, Emily May, Executive Director at Hollaback!, says:

“There is a myth that creating deep-seated social change is somehow all about winning ... organising is all about resilience. You'll get hit in every direction you can imagine – but if you keep getting up, and trying again, eventually you'll win.”

5. In whose name?



Our discussions around what drives social change placed people firmly at the centre, as captured in the familiar phrase 'nothing about us, without us'. This is not only about co-production, collaboration or consultation, or being 'empowered' to be part of change. It's about giving people the tools of change themselves, a wholesale devolution of power and resources.

A strong theme is the importance of authenticity and lived experience in activity. This is creating some interesting challenges for larger organisations that want to encourage more 'user-involvement' but struggle to genuinely devolve decisions and resources.

This is also about legitimacy. In order to bring about effective change, we must understand the issue and what needs to change. This comes from working with the people who it will affect, as their insight will generally define what success looks like. Where possible, entities should be led by them, and ways found to include their voices and ensure that civil society is representing the full diversity of perspectives.

Is it acceptable for one group to be driving change for another? One person posed a challenge with a quote from the West Wing – ‘the decisions are made by those who show up’. But are we questioning why others aren’t there? What can we do to better include those who aren’t in the room?

Unfortunately, according to Baljeet Sandhu’s *The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change* report, while there is widespread appreciation of these ideas, progress has been slow. She says, ‘sharing power with experts by experience is rare, whilst excluding them from decision-making processes is common’.⁴⁹

6. Primacy of relationships

A powerful theme in all our conversations was the primacy of **relationship** in social change. Much social change is fundamentally about relationship. Whether between an advocate and the Minister responsible for a policy area, or a service-provider and the individual they seek to support, change depends hugely on the quality of the relationship.

Relationships of trust hold huge transformative power. For those in need, who may have many good reasons to be distrustful, and even resistant, a relationship built on trust offers an opportunity to be open to change. Only when vulnerable people really feel a provider is on their side, respects them, is committed to them, will they take the risk of personal change. Many small and local charities have built up these relationships over many years. It is what allows them to do the work they do. Clare Wightman from Grapevine Coventry & Warwickshire says this is really the value that her charity offers (see point 11 on evaluation, below).

In other quadrants of our Social Change Grid, relationship is equally important. In campaigns and advocacy, those with experience know that relationship and persuasion are two of the most powerful tools in the toolbox. No matter how much formal power they hold, all people respond to human connection. To feel listened to, to feel heard, to feel respected, to feel supported is a powerful motivator. To be shouted at, to be accused, to be challenged, can have the opposite effect. This is not to say there aren’t times when it is right to do this – to express anger, to criticise, to confront – but successful change-makers do this consciously, knowing what it can and can’t achieve.

Spotlight on...

Digital

Too often we think about ‘digital’ (tools, communications, platforms) in isolation or as an add-on. It is, arguably, just a different medium through which we transfer the same principles, ideas, tactics that we use in real life. It also brings a new particular set of opportunities, challenges, ethical dilemmas and implications for those working for social change.

Through online communication we can now mobilise huge numbers of supporters and reach decision-makers at the touch of a button. Many feel that mass online actions have become ineffective and, as the Social Change Agency’s *Lost Voices*⁵⁰ project suggests, can breed a cycle of mistrust between citizens, MPs and organisations. How can we make digital actions more impactful, person-led, and meaningful?

There are also fresh ethical challenges – identity, trustworthiness and agenda can be hard to verify. Do we need a new concept of ‘digital citizenship’, as one of our participants suggested?

Digital tools are useful for finding and building communities of interest around a cause. When used effectively, they can help to reach new audiences. They can also give greater control and decision-making to supporters and networks. But we also heard about a dearth of best practice and sharing of learning.

Despite these opportunities for democratisation, barriers exist online just as they do offline. People who already have other vulnerabilities are more likely to suffer from digital exclusion. Given that it is involved in so many aspects of our lives – from communicating with friends and family, to applying for jobs or accessing information about rights – digital exclusion risks further worsening other divides.

Should we be investing more in our own digital capacity, to help us more effectively serve our cause? Do we need more digital expertise in leadership to ensure that we are keeping up-to-date.

⁴⁹ Sandhu, B. (2017). *The value of lived experience in social change: the need for leadership and organisational development in the social sector*. Retrieved from <http://thelivedexperience.org/report/>

⁵⁰ Social Change Agency (2018). *Lost Voices*.

7. Understanding other people’s interests and motivations – even when it makes us uncomfortable



‘I don’t like that man, I must get to know him better.’

This quote from Abraham Lincoln struck a chord with many people during discussions about what a more effective civil society would look like. Frequently, effective campaigners talk about trying to put themselves ‘in other people’s shoes’, in order to better understand how they think and what they are driven by. Whether a framing exercise to position a campaign for a broad audience or an influencing strategy for a particular stakeholder, the aim is to start by understanding who they are, how they currently think and why they might change their minds.

This is a particularly powerful tool when turned on those we seek to influence and those we don’t agree with, even when it makes us uncomfortable. There was a real appetite from our Community of Practice to ‘start new conversations’ across divides and ‘break out of our tribes’ to better understand each other. There was particular awareness of the risk of being stuck in an echo chamber while social divides are growing wider or opening along new dimensions.

8. Radical listening and an asset-based approach

Many instances of successful social change we found were built around what we have termed ‘radical listening’, often accompanied by an ‘asset-based’ approach. Both proceed from a belief that people and communities have value, capacity and potential and with the right support, can be agents of their own change. They also believe people are best placed to define the change or support they need and the role they want to play. Service-providers and initiatives that have the power to transform listen to people in a wholly open way, actively seeking not to impose their own agenda or preconceptions. They see their role as enabling activity or support, not imposing it.

‘Asset-based’ approaches are also at the centre of some of the most interesting community initiatives. Taking the view that local people are best-placed to manage a local resource, forward thinking local authorities and funders are handing over local facilities to community control.

9. Collaborating rather than competing

Many instances of successful social change are not the result of one person or group, but rather a collaborative effort. For ambitious change, this is absolutely essential – we can’t do everything by ourselves as an individual or single organisation but, by working with others who have compatible goals, we can aspire to more systemic change.



These might be public and formal, such as End Violence Against Women. Or less public, but still formal, such as ‘white-labelled’ collaborations of partners behind one campaign message, with their own organisational profile invisible, for example, Time to Change or Malaria Must Die.

We also heard frequently about effective collaboration that remained both informal and hidden (and, therefore, not possible to cite). Most commonly, this was where larger ‘insider’ organisations allowed smaller, less constrained ‘outsider’ organisations to raise the volume on an issue by being outspoken and challenging, which motivated policy-makers to have the ‘insider’ conversations needed. The benefits of this approach cuts both ways.

There was a strong appetite amongst our Community of Practice for greater and more effective collaboration. But there were also frustrations with the barriers preventing this – organisational ego, competition for funding, the time and resources required to set up and maintain networks or coalitions. According to the NetChange report again:

“When a campaign is clearly branded as an organizational initiative, there is little chance that it can be adopted more widely. When the campaign is designed

to be open from the beginning, to function more like a hashtag and a shared rallying point for a wider coalition of independent actors, this enables a shift from cause campaign to wider social movement, and the result is often much greater impact and reach.”

While ‘white-labelled’ campaigns may be successful, they can also cause conflict with fundraising and attribution, and they require a willingness to put brand aside in the interest of mission. And how do we choose who to collaborate with – do they need to share all of our values, or just have a compatible shared goal? Are we willing to share resources and decision-making? Do funders need to take a lead by providing more funding aimed at facilitating collaboration? Does the policy environment facilitate or constrain such work?

10. Knowing our tools

Making change happen is complex, and there are many tools and tactics we can draw on. How do we choose the right tools for the right opportunity, not just sticking to the same approach, or seizing upon tools just because they are new? People talked about the need to understand all the resources available and when to deploy each one as opportunities arise.

Many of these issues were explored in our workshops, and the discussions captured in the ‘Spotlight on...’ sections. These include best use of the law, digital tools and popular culture.

A strong message from the Community of Practice was how valuable it is to come together with other change-makers to share ideas and experience, and hear about the approaches that others have taken. Change-making, as we have seen, is a living, breathing discipline. There is rarely only one approach, and what might have worked last year may not next.

Change-makers right across our Community of Practice expressed frustration at the lack of resources and support available for them to be able to convene in this way – particularly from different parts of the Social Change Grid. We found through our conversations that an issue someone may be struggling with in one part of the grid could be easily answered by those working elsewhere. Involving service-users, for example, can pose a challenge to a large

long-established charity. But a smaller, more local entity, which could be a charity, a social enterprise or a CIC, may excel at this and offer sound advice.

Spotlight on...

Use of the law

There is much to learn from how the law has been used to pursue social change. It can be used to empower, inform or persuade, as well as to challenge or enforce. And it can be used in different ways: education to ensure people understand and can assert their rights; strategic litigation, bringing legal action on behalf of a smaller group to improve the situation of an entire group; or direct challenge, for example of an employer on how they treat their employees. Sometimes, only a change in primary legislation will do.

Some of the common features of good practice identified in our discussion included: collaborating with others who have shared objectives; locating people at the centre of the work; and understanding the structural context of the change you are trying to achieve.

Could we use the law more effectively? There was concern that there is a tendency to jump straight to strategic litigation, rather than using the law in ‘softer’ ways, such as ensuring people are aware of their rights. There was also a warning about unintended consequences – where a win for a particular case can lead to a change in narrative that disadvantages other groups or has impacts elsewhere.

The changes to legal aid were mentioned as a barrier, undermining the principle of access to justice. We also heard from campaigners who felt it was difficult to access good legal advice, or more specifically, the right kind of advice for their work.

How can we build better connections and help change-makers access legal expertise? Is there a need for better signposting and guidance? How could change-makers think more strategically about use of the law, beyond just strategic litigation?

11. Evaluating what matters and learning from it

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) can feel like a distraction if not an actual impediment to change. Those pursuing change need to show their impact to justify investment, and they need ways to evaluate what's working to inform future decisions. But MEL approaches predicated on predictable outcomes, and which are easily measurable in financial terms, can be anathema to effective working. As one participant put it: 'We sow seeds. We don't deliver outcomes.'

For service providers, the key to successful MEL is first to know where the value lies – what are we really trying to do? As we saw above, some organisations are thinking about this in radically different ways - as residing in relationship, for example.

Leading edge approaches to MEL acknowledge that it may not even be possible to know up front where real value will be created, and that those delivering a project are not always best placed to define it. Re:Valuation,⁵¹ a wholly new approach to MEL, allows participants in an intervention to define for themselves its value as they take part.

Campaigners and organisers know that social change is complex, messy and it can take a long time to see progress. But they say they feel under pressure to demonstrate their impact using fixed, linear evaluation models, which push them into focusing on shorter-term thinking and planning. The outcomes that are messier, take longer to achieve, and are more difficult to demonstrate are often the most rewarding. Our response to complexity should not be to focus on the 'easier' activities, but rather to develop better models of evaluation to reflect this complexity.

So how do we find models that account for complexity? We spoke to NPC, who suggested how we might apply a systems-led approach to thinking about social change,⁵² and highlighted the pitfalls of applying a linear version of Theory of Change. As one participant pointed out, conceptual models are useful only if you recognise that they are an approximation of reality, and can switch easily between the two. 'It's not a map of the system,' they said, 'it's a map of the system in your head'.

Evaluation should not just be a tick-box exercise to please funders or management. It should be a chance for meaningful reflection on what is working, what isn't working and how we can learn from that and improve. Failures are often the most valuable opportunities for learning. How can we encourage a culture of learning from failure despite organisational and funding pressures? Perhaps we should take some inspiration from Engineers Without Borders Canada, who publish an annual 'failure report'.⁵³

Hahrie Han's research⁵⁴ found that:

“Reflection ... is an integral part of the work that activists do, because it is at the point at which they can step back and learn from their experiences. This learning has both an individual and collective component ... Group reflection is about ... understand[ing] the value of collective action and develop[ing] a sense of the power they can build ... Private reflection develops the individual activist's sense of personal agency and identity as an activist.”

12. Taking responsible risks



One of the barriers to effective change that participants raised during the project was risk aversion in organisations. Of course we have a responsibility as change-makers to consider the wider, possibly unintended consequences of the ways in which we pursue change. Should we choose the tactics that enable us to reach our goal quickly, whatever the costs? Who would be left behind, and would it ultimately be worth it? Can we say that we are successful if we reach the specific goal that we set out to achieve, but the narratives and actions we use to get there damage other parts of civil society?

⁵¹ TDarnton, A., and Harrison, A. (2017). A Revaluation of Grapevine – Good to Go, Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire. Retrieved from: <http://www.grapevinecovandwarks.org/whats-new/publications-and-factsheets>

⁵² Abercrombie, R., Boswell, K. and Thomasoo, R. (2018). Thinking Big: How to use Theory of Change for systems change, New Philanthropy Capital. Retrieved from: <https://www.thinknpc.org/publications/thinking-big/>

⁵³ Failure Report (2016), Engineers Without Borders. Retrieved from: <http://reports.ewb.ca/category/2016-failure-report/>

⁵⁴ Han, H. 2014. How Organizations Develop Activists: Civic Associations and Leadership in the 21st Century. Oxford University Press

However, it is also important to ask the question: what is the risk of not doing something? Taking responsible risks is a necessary part of being true to our mission. People want to be able to try out creative and innovative ideas, where there is a good case for doing so. With the right contingency planning and impact monitoring, sometimes taking risks can be the most responsible action.

Economist Tim Harford, in *Adapt*, highlights three steps to adapting effectively:

“First, try new things, expecting some will fail. Second, make failure survivable: create safe spaces for failure and move forward in small steps ... And third, make sure you know when you’ve failed, or you will never learn.”

Case Study

Campaign to Save the Joiners Arms,

Haringey

Famous LGBTQI+ venue, the Joiners Arms pub, was closed in 2015 by developers intending to replace it with a luxury residential development. Friends of the Joiners Arms (FOTJA) activated people and groups, nationally and locally, to help preserve a venue on the site that would be run in the interests of the community.

They held regular, well-attended meetings designed to appeal to a broad and diverse community, many of whom felt excluded from changes happening in the local area. The campaign held protests outside the venue, and fundraising parties which attempted to keep the spirit of the Joiners alive and motivated people to stay engaged.

Their first success was persuading the council to give the pub Asset of Community Value status. There followed a successful campaign to ensure any future planning permission would provide space for a new LGBTQI+ venue on the site of the original pub.

FOTJA say: 'The legendary Joiners Arms was opened as a queer venue by David Pollard in 1997, and quickly established itself as a debauched yet caring alternative to the prevailing norms of queer pubs. Now, for the first time in history, a planning condition has been used to protect the LGBTQI+ nature of the venue, including a 25-year lease and financial support for the leaseholder.'

We plan to bid for the lease in order to open London's first community-run LGBTQI+ pub. Our aim is to represent London's diverse queer communities and fight back against the tide of gentrification.'

@Joinersliveson

<https://thejoinersliveson.wordpress.com>

Some of the twelve habits used

Driven by mission and vision

FOTJA's vision was a community-run LGBTQI+ pub, and the values that underpin such a venture run through their tactics and communications. Inclusive and community-driven, respectful and bold: the efforts made to imbue all activity with the spirit of the Joiners Arms kept supporters motivated and the campaign focused on its ultimate goal.

In whose name

Throughout the campaign, testimony and leadership were provided by people directly affected by the closure and with personal experience of living without such venues in other places. This gave every interaction an authority that would be hard to match by anyone else.

Collaborate rather than compete

FOTJA won support from other groups working to save LGBTQI+ venues, community pubs and London's night-time sites. As a result, they had some knowledgeable allies when it came to drawing research and business knowledge to help make their case.

Persistence, perseverance and resilience

When developers offered an LGBTQI+ venue as part of new plans, it would have been tempting to claim a partial victory. However, judged against the values and criteria they were using, the proposed venue fell well short of being a space that genuinely benefited the community. Even at the risk of losing the space altogether, they persisted and ultimately won.

Case Study

No One Turned Away campaign

& Back the Bill coalition

No One Turned Away (NOTA) was Crisis' campaign for every homeless person who approaches their council to get the help they need. Under English law, most single homeless people were not considered to be 'in priority need' and were often turned away by councils to sleep on the streets.

Crisis saw that this was devastating for individuals and a poor use of resources as it is much harder to solve people's problems once they are homeless. NOTA called for duties on councils to help all those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

NOTA built strong evidence of the problem, including innovative 'mystery shopping' research conducted by Cardboard Citizens that powerfully demonstrated the impact of the law on single homeless people. Crisis went on to build detailed proposals for legal change, to gain political support and to secure a Private Member's Bill with a strong chance of success. Additionally, within a context of cuts, they campaigned to protect sufficient funding to deliver any new duties.

Both a public-facing and public affairs campaign, NOTA also became a coalition campaign at a vital time when it was rebranded 'Back the Bill' to create the widest possible collaboration.

The campaign achieved the first significant change in homelessness legislation in England for 40 years. From April 2018, English councils must help people when they are threatened with homelessness – when they receive notice, rather than having to wait until they have a bailiff's date.

Even before the Act takes effect, councils around the country are taking steps to improve their policies and procedures. Along the way NOTA campaigned to 'protect the Homelessness Prevention Grant'. It succeeded in entirely protecting the grant, and won extra funding for preventing homelessness.

Some of the twelve habits used

Understand other people's interests and motivations – even when it makes us uncomfortable

An expert panel, including representatives from other homelessness organisations and councils, built and demonstrated the wide-ranging support for reform. Each brought different priorities and analyses to bear on a shared problem, making sure the solution was framed appropriately for different audiences.

Collaborate rather than compete

Throughout the campaign, Crisis involved a wide range of homelessness and housing organisations in delivering and developing elements of the work. Competition and ego couldn't be allowed to get in the way of success. The white label 'Back the Bill' branding of the campaign, which removed Crisis from its identity, was an important part of this.

Knows their tools

Persistence, creativity and passion were underpinned by solid research, strong communications, relationship-building, and expert knowledge of Parliamentary process and political lobbying.

Primacy of relationships

By embracing potential opponents (including councils who might agree with the objective but balk at further duties being imposed), Crisis avoided unnecessary opposition arising in the first place.

Case Study

Vote Leave –

EU referendum campaign

Vote Leave was the official campaign in favour of leaving the European Union (EU) in the run up to the 2016 referendum. The UK voted to leave the EU with 51.9% of the vote.

Vote Leave was officially founded in 2015, but campaigns to leave the EU had been running in many guises since June 1975, when the UK voted to join the Common Market. Arguably, campaigners had been developing their narrative, their understanding of voters and political messaging for over forty years.

Vote Leave chose to focus on security in the face of a rapidly changing world. The headline was taking back 'lost control' of policy making, and Britain's powerful place in world politics. Meanwhile, they painted the EU as floundering in the face of 'technological and economic forces that are changing the world fast'.

The campaign's talking points can be seen as a masterclass in implied messaging. 'Deport dangerous foreign criminals' could be heard as 'there are dangerous foreign criminals overrunning our streets'. 'Create new jobs with new trade deals' could be heard as 'EU trade deals are taking jobs from Britain'.

Both the Leave and Remain campaigns were criticised for failing to offer reliable information to the public. One of the most contested examples was the famous Vote Leave bus painted with the words 'We send the EU £350m a week – let's spend it on the NHS instead'.

Some of the twelve habits used

Mission first, not model or money

Arguably one of the most mission-focused campaigns ever, it rarely committed itself to details. This allowed a very broad church of supporters to get on board and avoided disagreements about exactly how a post-Brexit UK would work.

Persistence, perseverance and resilience

The call to leave Europe had been repeated for decades, to the point where it became one of the greatest sources of conflict within the Conservative Party. Persistence and perseverance were written through the movement like letters in a stick of rock. Resilience came in the form of spokespeople skilled in the art of getting a central message through without being distracted by questions or facts.

Knows their tools

Regardless of the now much-discussed ethics of digital campaigning, there is no doubt that Vote Leave and its allies excelled at it. Using analytics software, the campaigns 'scored' voters on likely support and then targeted advertising, door knocking and telephone contacts.⁵⁵ A smartphone app that was downloaded by tens of thousands of people, that allowed them to access their contacts as they were encouraged to sign up friends and family.

Understanding other people's interests and motivations

Messaging was honed to appeal to both decided and undecided voters, harking back to an undefined past in which Britain was 'greater' while painting a picture of a frightening and insecure future.

5. What is holding civil society back?

Our Social Change Grid has shown just how rich and diverse civil society is. The evidence in this report has then shown the potential of civil society: the **Social Power** it holds when it is working at its best, without unreasonable constraint. We have also explored what it is that makes some organisations and people effective at unleashing Social Power – allowing them to transform not just transact – captured as **‘The Twelve Habits of Effective Change-Makers’**.

However, in order to unleash Social Power, civil society needs to work – and be enabled to work – with these ideas. We have heard on this journey about the very many ways in which civil society is being constrained – both internally and externally. Taken together, they are serving to radically diminish civil society potential. They are limiting Social Power.

Organisational barriers

Very broadly, those working in smaller organisations or in informal networks said they found it easier to work in the way that they want – but lack resources and support. Those in larger organisations – and charities, in particular – have plenty of resources but find their organisational structures and cultures are hampering their efforts.

1. Lack of a clear social change model/too narrow a focus

Many practitioners feel their own organisations don't have a sufficiently clear approach to social change, encapsulated in a robust strategy or 'theory of change'. Many reported an assumption that 'campaigning' is only about a narrow range of activities – often policy and public affairs. As we have seen, change happens when activity occurs in many quadrants of our Social Change Grid – so limiting 'campaigning' to a narrow area of activity diminishes its potential.

Campaigning – or pursuing change – has to be a strategy understood and owned by the entire organisation, led by senior management and Board. Campaigns teams can play a valuable role leading these strategic review processes, but ultimately their work has to be integrated into the whole organisation. Without this clarity, many in our Community said they spend too much time on 'internal campaigning' to secure internal buy-in. If this takes too long, energy is wasted and important opportunities are lost.

2. Internal Integration

Without a clear and compelling narrative about how they will achieve their mission (such as a 'theory of change'), tension tends to arise between fundraising and campaigns teams. The messages and strategies that work for fundraisers are often not the ones that work for campaigns teams – and very often fundraisers will win because revenue is regarded as more important. This is not simply a case of people buckling down and finding a way to work together. It represents a fundamental contradiction in the way many organisations behave, and how their supporters and the wider public experience them. If the social purpose and impact of the organisation is drowned out by urgent requests for money, the brand and the organisation are left very vulnerable to shifts in public attitudes. It is critical that messaging and activity across teams tells the story of the organisation's mission and impact.

3. An overly constraining performance-management model

The move towards a more commercial culture in civil society has come with a more commercial approach towards performance management. Targets, KPIs, outcomes – all need to be stated up-front, and then constantly measured and monitored until a project is complete. As we have seen, real social change just doesn't fit this model. Our Community of Practice reported this culture constrains agility, responsiveness and creativity. There is concern that it is distorting funding relationships to the point where everyone is just 'gaming' the system by quoting 'outcomes' and 'targets' they have no idea if they will achieve. The Community also observed that campaigning is increasingly focused on policy change, because it is relatively short-term and measurable. This is ironic, given it is the activity many on the Conservative benches seem to find so uncomfortable.

This isn't to say that civil society organisations shouldn't have to demonstrate impact and be accountable. They should, but more appropriate models are needed that assess social value in better terms than pounds and pennies saved.

4. A lack of resources, support and encouragement

Unsurprisingly, our Community of Practice talked about a lack of resources and support for their work. Many complained about a lack of funding for campaigning and advocacy. Those working at a community level were more focused on basics like space, advice, information and encouragement. Individual change-makers said they often feel 'burnt out' and wish there was more personal support for them. Some urged caution about turning campaigning into an overly formalised discipline. Many of the best change-makers are absolute naturals working without any formal training – and often without really thinking that what they are doing is campaigning at all. Think of the parent trying to secure the support their child needs from a health system, for example. It was encouraging to hear the level of value our Community attached to simply bringing different practitioners together – particularly from across different parts of the eco-system. What one bit of the system is really good at is likely to be exactly the weakness another part of the system is trying to address – user involvement, for example.

Sectoral Challenges

5. An internal culture in the sector based around commissioning and a market-based model

The move to commissioning and the introduction of the idea of a 'market' into civil society distorts and even conceals the value of what it does. Markets are competitive, based on profit and seek to maximise the return on investment (ROI) as quickly as possible. Transformer organisations are not competitive, but collaborative; they do not see their value primarily in financial terms but in social and human ones; and they are in it for the long term. Civil society organisations are not the same as commercial ones and they should not be commissioned on the same basis.

Related to this, too many civil society organisations seem to be driven by growth and sustaining their model, rather than mission and impact. Transformer organisations always put their mission first and are willing to change both their model and fundraising activity in support of mission.

6. Not ensuring our legitimacy – in whose name?

Absolutely central to the legitimacy, reputation and trust placed in civil society organisations is the need for a sector which is inclusive, diverse and representative. Our Community of Practice frequently observed, as have many others, that the sector is none of these things and that this is impeding our ability to do our work.

7. A lack of bold leadership

Many of the conversations with our Community of Practice, while recognising the inherent challenges in the system within which they operate, identified a lack of bold leadership as a significant constraint. All of the challenges listed above can be helped by leaders who have a different conception of civil society and are willing to fight for this both within and outside their organisations.

External constraints

8. Don't constrain voice

Without the voices of people affected, lasting change can't happen. Whether campaigning for change on a public platform, or helping an individual to turn her life around, voice is absolutely central. It is the difference between being active and passive; to having agency and not; to decision-making being informed by real experiences, and not; to having a say and a stake in decisions and power – and not. This is the case whether those decisions affect us individually or collectively.

Constraining voice in one area, in the institutional power quadrant, for example, prevents civil society doing its work by diminishing the potential power of people's voices everywhere else. True, it can be uncomfortable when views are expressed very close to power, but constraining voice constrains civil society potential. It is true to say that voice needs to be used thoughtfully – rarely does just shouting alone change things, and when seeking to build relationships, attack rarely leads to trust. But the freedom to speak is absolutely fundamental.

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9. Not recognising our true value

Linked to all of the above - and arguably at the heart of it - is a failure to recognise the real value that civil society organisations, working at their best, offer. For example, transformational service providers see their real value as being in the relationships they can build with people and how the strength of this relationship can help someone vulnerable find new strength and capacity. Community organisations know it is the trust that the community has in them that is their most precious commodity. It is this trust that allows them to go to places and work with people in ways the state struggles to do. For national campaigning organisations, it is their public reputation, what they are seen to stand for, their ethics and integrity, which is core to their value. If Oxfam were a private sector company, their recent reputation crisis would have seen £'s knocked off their bottom line. For Oxfam it is actually worse than this. This loss of trust in their reputation - their 'brand' – affects their ability to do the work they were set up to do.

10. Being funded in ways that support this

Inextricably linked to the point about value, civil society also needs to be funded to do what it does best. The shift to commissioning, withdrawal of grant funding, a lack of long-term sources of funding all impede civil society doing much of what it does best.

Passion, the desire for change, an understanding of the answers, are not the preserve of those in civil society. But civil society does exist for a different purpose. All actors in civil society - wherever located, however constituted - exist for social gain. We do not need to make a profit. We do not need to pursue power to govern. This does give us a unique role that we need to remember and protect at all costs.

6. How can civil society be strengthened?

Here we set out the clear calls from our Community of Practice for commitments that can strengthen the change-making capacity of civil society as a whole. They are for senior leaders in the sector, independent funders, government and regulators.

For sector leaders:

Be good

Ensure that civil society as a whole is rooted in a commitment to rights and social justice, and a belief in people, and their potential. Ensure that it works to the **highest ethical standards**, is transparent and accountable. While civil society does not have a monopoly on doing good, it exists primarily for social good, so the public and others, rightly, expect high standards.

Be clear

Build greater public understanding and support for civil society's work. Consider the use of language and concepts that best communicate its breadth and depth, and positive contribution to social change. Ensure the public know civil society for its mission – not just calls for money – and that trust and confidence remain strong.

Be an ally

Encourage a greater sense of common purpose and solidarity in civil society. Seeking more connectivity and collaboration across its parts, in recognition that it is only by working together that really significant change can happen. Recognise and value others' work and share knowledge and resources, ensuring that the actions of one set of organisations in the sector doesn't adversely affect another.

Be bold

Protect and promote the voice of civil society and its fundamental right to speech, to campaign and to protest. Seek to ensure voice isn't compromised by conditions of funding, or conflicts with funders. Encourage a culture of speaking up and out, build a higher public profile for civil society leaders and encourage them to champion their causes with passion and confidence.

Be mission-led

Champion and invest in leadership that is driven by mission and that brings a broad understanding of social change. Find leaders, both for the executive and board, who can build a social change approach into whole organisation strategy, across all internal functions. Find leaders who are willing, and know how to devolve power and resources.

Be inclusive

Work to strengthen the diversity and inclusivity of the sector and work harder to ensure it reflects both the people served and wider society. Ensure this diversity extends to senior management, leadership and boards. Where possible, create opportunities to involve people with lived experience – not just in a tokenistic way, but where their voice is valued and has an impact.

Be transparent

Commit to demonstrating impact. As part of this, be clear about where the true value of work lies, and, if necessary, think again about how best to evaluate that work and report social impact. Encourage more honest self-reflection in the sector. Be willing to admit to failure, and seek to learn from mistakes.

Be a student

Invest more in civil society's capacity to effect change. Commit more resource to a continual process of learning and development – ongoing 'R&D' – that allows the sector to continually ask how change is happening, and what civil society can do to optimise impact. Invest in tools that help civil society work smarter – from horizon-scanning to making better use of data – and share them. Invest in people – in their knowledge and skills. Support infrastructure and specialist organisations that build civil society capacity.

For government and regulators:**Be a champion**

Recognise the important role and contribution civil society makes and be a champion for it. Understand that the public interest is serviced by both challenging and championing civil society. Build a new partnership with civil society based on a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

Be an enabler

Re-consider the value of what civil society provides and ensure funding enables civil society to work at its best – to transform, and not just transact. Recognise that civil society does not work in the same way as the commercial sector so should not be commissioned on the same basis. Review the use of performance indicators and targets that can distort effective working and compromise impact.

Create stability

Re-instate grant funding that recognises the value of civil society organisations and provides much-needed stability and sustainability. Ensure funding reaches across civil society, including to smaller and local organisations, and to infrastructure organisations.

Don't constrain voice

Re-state publicly the legitimacy and value of civil society campaigning, including by charities in keeping with Charity Commission guidance (CC9) and charitable purposes. Listen to the concerns around the Lobbying Act and work with regulators to ensure it is not constraining civil society voice. Remove grant standards that seek to restrict campaigning. Allow civil society to speak openly whether self-funded or publicly-funded.

For funders:**Be nurturing**

Invest in growing the capacity of civil society to effect change, from strengthening evidence to creating new spaces for collaboration, and sharpening skills and practice. Commit more resources to a continual process of learning and development – on-going 'R&D' – that allows the sector to keep asking how change is happening and what civil society can do to optimise impact. Invest in tools that help civil society work smarter, from horizon-scanning to making better use of data. Support infrastructure and specialist organisations that build civil society capacity.

Be a champion

Use own voice and influence to champion civil society – both its moral duty and legal right to be fully engaged in social change. This includes campaigning, lobbying and advocacy. Encourage other funders to make a similar commitment, reviewing their own approach to social change and ensure policies do not exclude activity that is legitimate and legal. Encourage and support grantees to have a clear approach to social change and invest in their capacity to be effective change-makers.

Be a connector

Fund more collaborative work and joint projects, bringing together activity from across the quadrants and drawing on complementary strengths. Take a view on social change outcomes, and fund accordingly. Use convening power to bring together those working for similar goals.

Be a truth-seeker

Take a lead on valuable and meaningful evaluation. Define what needs to be assessed, indicators and milestones in partnership with grantees and beneficiaries, measure what you value, and recognise complexity. Build acceptance of failure into monitoring and evaluation, giving grantees the opportunity to recognise what does and doesn't work, and to learn from it. Include capacity building for measurement and evaluation in budgets. Fund joint thematic evaluations, pooling the measurement and evaluation budgets of organisations working on a similar issue to conduct a sector-wide evaluation.

Be visionary

Provide longer-term grant funding, recognising that transformational change often requires longer term interventions, where progress may not be seen in just a year.

7. The Future

The Social Change Project has brought into focus the many ways in which civil society contributes to social change. It has shown that significant change happens when different actors work together across civil society; that civil society is where much significant change originates; and that civil society does things and goes to places that the state finds difficult.

Most importantly, this project has illustrated the potential that exists in civil society. The capacity for change that comes from both the way civil society works at best, and the resources it holds. We have called this potential 'Social Power', and we accord it equal status with political and economic power.

This project has also identified the characteristics, or habits, that are shared by effective change-makers. The ways in which those who are successful in delivering change tend to think and behave.

However, it has identified the many constraints – both internal to the sector and external – that are stopping change-makers from being able to work in this way. The ways in which Social Power is currently being constrained.

Our recommendations for government and regulators, and for funders, are inextricably entwined. The results of this project, and other concurrent investigations, should be the springboard for serious, large-scale discussions leading to a new approach to civil society. One that recognises its unique value, accords it due status, and which allows civil society to work at its best.

Civil society itself needs to nurture a more unified identity and sense of shared purpose. It needs to be confident in its contribution and value. It needs to be brave and bold about how it will operate. It needs to be an ally to itself.

Much as we hope government, regulators and funders will embrace our recommendations, we believe the keys to a flourishing, positive future are in the hands of civil society itself. We need to learn from and draw inspiration from our own, long experience as a society within society.

In the words of Gandhi:

“If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. ... We need not wait to see what others do.”

We at the Sheila McKechnie Foundation will continue to do all we can to help build the capacity and confidence of people and organisations to be effective change-makers. We are committed to continually asking 'how is change happening' and to bringing practitioners together to consider this question. We will also carry on our work to ensure the environment for change-makers everywhere is as supportive as possible.

Here's to the future. And a more confident, collaborative civil society that is using its social power to the full.

8. Community of Practice

People from all the organisations below contributed to this project. Many thanks to you all.

10:10 Climate Action
 38 Degrees
 Act Build Change
 AD Research and Analysis Ltd
 Advocacy Academy
 Agenda
 Amnesty International UK
 Asylum Matters
 Barrow Cadbury Trust
 Better Way Network
 Bite the Ballot
 Blagrove Trust
 British Red Cross
 Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
 Campaign to End Loneliness
 Cardboard Citizens
 Cardiff University, School of Journalism, Media and Culture
 Chester Voluntary Action
 Children and Families First
 Children England
 Chrysalis
 Citizens UK
 Civil Exchange
 Clarion Housing Group
 Community Links
 Compass
 Coram
 Crisis
 Crowdpack
 Democracy Club
 Democracy Matters
 Detention Forum
 Dignity in Dying
 East Anglian Air Ambulance
 Ella Baker School of Transformative Organising
 Emmaus Coventry & Warwickshire
 Equality Trust
 FairSay
 FeelGood
 Family Planning Association
 Girlguiding
 Global Justice Now
 Goddess Education
 Goldsmiths University
 Good Law Project
 Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire
 Happy City
 Hope for the Future
 ILGA-Europe
 International Drug Policy Consortium
 John Moores Foundation
 Joseph Rowntree Foundation
 Just Fair
 Just for Kids Law
 Khulisa
 Law Centres Network
 Legal Education Fund
 Liberating Arts
 Liberty
 Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales
 Local Trust
 Locality
 m2
 Macmillan Cancer Support
 Medact
 Methodist Church
 Migrants' Rights Network
 Mind
 More Onion
 More United
 MVDA
 mySociety
 NatCen
 NEON
 New Philanthropy Capital
 Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service
 NewCycling
 Newspeak House
 North East Solidarity and Teaching (N.E.S.T)
 North of England Refugee Service

NSPCC
NUS Scotland
Oasis Trust
ONE Campaign
Open Media
Outlandish
Paintings in Hospitals
Partnership for Young London
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Poole Borough Chaplaincy
Power to Change
Prospect-us
PS21
Public Law Project
Quakers in Britain
Radical Housing Network
Rainbow Services Harlow
Raleigh International
REACT
Regional Refugee Forum
Reopen Newcastle Turkish Baths campaign
Restless Development
RNIB
Sandbag
Save The Children UK
Scope
Skills For People
Small Axe
Social Change Agency
Sogi Campaigns
South Gloucestershire Disability Equality Network
StopAids
Student Hubs
Surrey County Council
Surrey Youth Focus
Sussex Community Development Association
Sustrans
Sutton CVS
The Campaign Company
The Children's Society
The Creativity Partnership
The Eden Project
The Pixel Project
Together Trust
Toynbee Hall
Trades Union Congress
University College London
Unbound Philanthropy
United Purpose
University of Birmingham
University of Westminster
vInspired
VOYAGE
We Can Win
WECH - Waltherton and Elgin Community Homes
Westend Women and Girls Network
Wildlife and Countryside Link
Women's Aid
Workers' Educational Association
WorldSkills UK
You Should See The Other Guy theatre company
Youth Access

9. Reading & Resources

How change happens

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Podcasts

Better Angels: <http://theirworld.org/better-angels>

ChangeMakers: <https://changemakerspodcast.org/>

The Advocacy Iceberg: <http://www.coeandkingham.org.uk/podcast/>

100 campaigns that changed the world: <http://www.stevetibbett.com/podcast.html>

Good Charity Bad Charity: <https://audioboom.com/channels/4943302>

Blogs

Natasha Adams: <https://thinkingdoingchanging.wordpress.com>

Jim Coe: <http://www.coeandkingham.org.uk/our-blog/>

The Thoughtful Campaigner: <http://thoughtfulcampaigner.org/>

Alice Fuller: <https://analyticalactivism.wordpress.com>

Andrew Purkiss: <https://andrewpurkis.wordpress.com/>

Appendix

Objectives & Process

The Social Change Project set out to explore two important, linked questions: *How does social change happen? And, what can we learn that can strengthen civil society's future efforts?*

Our three areas of interest/objectives:

- Understanding what enables and impedes social change
- Recommending responses to help practitioners to enhance their effectiveness and to know when they are being effective;
- Providing thought leadership and strategic advocacy towards strengthening the conditions in which positive social change can thrive.

Phase 1

July and August 2017 – building the evidence base, finding out 'what works' and identifying the burning issues

One of the primary aims for Phase One of the Social Change Project was to surface the 'burning issues' for people engaged in social change. We started by recruiting a Community of Practice very deliberately drawn from right across civil society. We facilitated two half-day and five full-day workshops across England engaging with 86 participants from a wide range of organisations and settings. We also held one-to-one meetings with key change-makers and with those who are interested in the project, but were unable to attend a workshop.

You can read more about these issues, how we came to them and the questions they provoke, in the report from Phase One: The 'Burning Issues'.

Phase 2

September - December 2017 - exploring the 'burning issues' in more depth

During Phase 2 we held a series of events inviting members of our Community of Practice, as well as partners with specific expertise, to explore each of the 'burning issues'

in more depth. The events each focused on an open discussion around four or five questions, giving space for other thoughts and insights on the topic:

- Ethics and social change (with Quakers in Britain)
- Use of the law in pursuing social change (with Jolyon Maugham QC)
- Collaboration – coalitions, networks and alliances for social change (with Impact Hub Birmingham)
- Governance models, organisational structures and social change
- Measuring and evaluating social change (with New Philanthropy Capital)
- Creativity and social change (with Cardboard Citizens)
- The future use of digital tools in social change (with mySociety)
- Young people and social change (with Mena Fombo)

Over 120 people came to one of these events. Not everyone, though, could make it to an event and we were keen to provide opportunities outside of these to enable as many people as possible to contribute and offer their perspectives.

Blog posts

Many of those who came to our events were inspired to write something about the topic we explored, and we also reached out to those who we felt had something particularly different or significant to contribute. These blogs allowed us to give a platform to a wider range of voices, as well as to summarise some of the conversations from the events for those who weren't able to be there.

Who's Making Change?

As part of assembling the evidence base to inform our analysis of what was working well in change making (and what we was not) we created the 'Who's Making Change?' list during Phase 2. This is an open-source online list, which anyone can contribute to. We hope that this list provides an opportunity for those involved in social change to connect with others, or to be inspired.

Personal stories of change

There is immense richness in individuals' stories of social change. As part of Phase 2, we began to gather these stories, inviting people to share with us why they do what they do, what they are most proud of, what sustains them and what social change means to them. We shared these stories on our website.

Desk research exercise

We undertook a desk research exercise, looking at the existing literature on social change the both in the UK and elsewhere and issued a call for evidence. The Project has brought together an extensive bibliography of case studies, evaluations, academic papers and research reports, thought leadership pieces, toolkits, guides and books. (See Full list is available on the SMK website)

Phase 3

The final phase of the project was bringing together all the contributions, research, conversations and stories we'd had with the Community of Practice over the past year.

At the beginning of March 2018, we spent two away days, with a group of around 20 core members of our Community of Practice. We presented some of our emerging findings and invited our participants to explore, challenge and refine our conclusions. This was hugely valuable. The feedback was encouraging, and, as our Community of Practice have said throughout the project, the opportunity to take time out of day-to-day work, and bring together such a wide-ranging group to think through these issues, is both rare and highly appreciated.

Design principles

The Social Change Project was designed with the following principles in mind:

- All participants are co-investigators inquiring into and exploring how we understand 'social change' and how to create the conditions for it to flourish, with authority and integrity.
- We believe less in identifying definite answers than in the power of shared understanding in how to respond to the material of complexity as we experience it.
- 'Community of practice' is our objective: we hope to create the conditions for a sustainable community of practice that will gather around shared concern to better understand social change.
- Grounded in experience: the content of our inquiry is our shared and diverse experience of trying to do good work in the different contexts in which we work.

- We recognise that there is change happening at all levels of society and social change will mean something different in each context.

Availability of information

We set out to find existing evidence of how change is happening in the UK. The availability of good evidence sources was a challenge. They may exist internally within organisations, but it was surprisingly difficult to find honest, open, good quality evaluations of campaigns and social change initiatives in the public domain. Even accounts of successful instances of social change, where an organisation had played an important role and should be pleased to tell their story, were difficult to find.

Despite this challenge, we were able to look at a range of evaluations, case studies, books and reports (see bibliography). We also held a great number of rich and varied conversations with our Community of Practice. There is a real desire amongst our Community of Practice to share learning about what does and doesn't work. This evidence gap points to a need for civil society to more openly reflect on and share experiences, successes and learning.

Limitations of analysis

There is much we have learnt from the evidence we found. However, there are inherent limitations to any analysis of a subject as complex as 'how social change happens'. Certainly, we cannot expect to find a universal formula, given that:

- **Every context is different and so every intervention is unique in its own way.** Issues play out in radically different ways, depending on the dynamics around them and the nature of the changes sought. This reduces the viability of reading across from one experience to others.
- **Context and actors shift with time.** Because the context is constantly evolving, it is difficult to say whether something that worked in the past would work again. There's also dynamic co-evolution occurring, as change-makers adapt to changing circumstances (making change is itself changing), which again makes it hard to draw generalised conclusions from past experience.
- **Clarity is hard to achieve.** Defining 'success' and identifying different contributions from complex, messy, sometimes heavily-contested accounts is hard. Clarity is often imposed in hindsight, and not all change-makers have the capacity or wherewithal to evaluate their process.

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How Civil Society can Truly Create Change

SHEILA MCKECHNIE FOUNDATION

The Social Change Project
Review & Refine
MARCH 2018

doodles by Mei

Civil Society

noun
Society considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity.



'BEST DAY' DESCRIPTION

DARKEST DAY DESCRIPTION

CIVIL SOCIETY

POSITIVE, VIBRANT
CROSS CULTURAL MOVEMENT

INEFFECTIVE, FRAGMENTED
ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN SILOS.

WITH DETERMINATION
YOU CAN WIN THE BATTLE



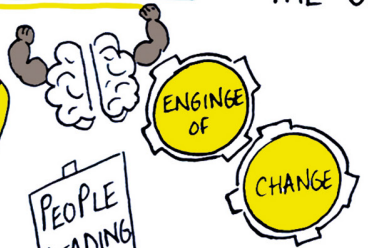
WE CELEBRATE MINOR VICTORIES
BUT WE ARE LOSING THE WAR.

CACOPHONY

NEVER BECOMES FULL ORCHESTRA

CACOPHONY

of where good society is created.



PEOPLE LEADING CHANGE



RICH IN GOODWILL, TALENT & PASSION

NOT FIRING on all cylinders



poorly understood by the public

People living in echo chambers

DRAINING



COLLECTIVE ACTION TRANSFORMS COMMUNITIES



Working in Silos

SELF INTEREST ORGS ONLY LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES



Not talking or learning from each other

BATTLES ONCE WON HAVING TO BE FOUGHT AGAIN!

PLATFORM FOR CHANGE
Personal
social
political

TAKE BACK CONTROL!

**We believe people should be able to shape their world.
We exist to help them do just that.**

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation is the UK's leading provider of training and support to those seeking to bring about positive social change. We act as a powerful voice for this community, and celebrate excellence through our National Campaigner Awards.

We deliver a wide range of training including one-day campaign workshops, our five-day Influencing Change course, plus intensive masterclasses. We work with those just starting out to seasoned professionals.

We work to ensure the public and policy environment for campaigning is supportive, and undertake research to inform thinking and practice in campaigning and social change.

We bring the campaign community together to share new ideas, knowledge and resources, build confidence, nurture talent and accelerate impact.

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