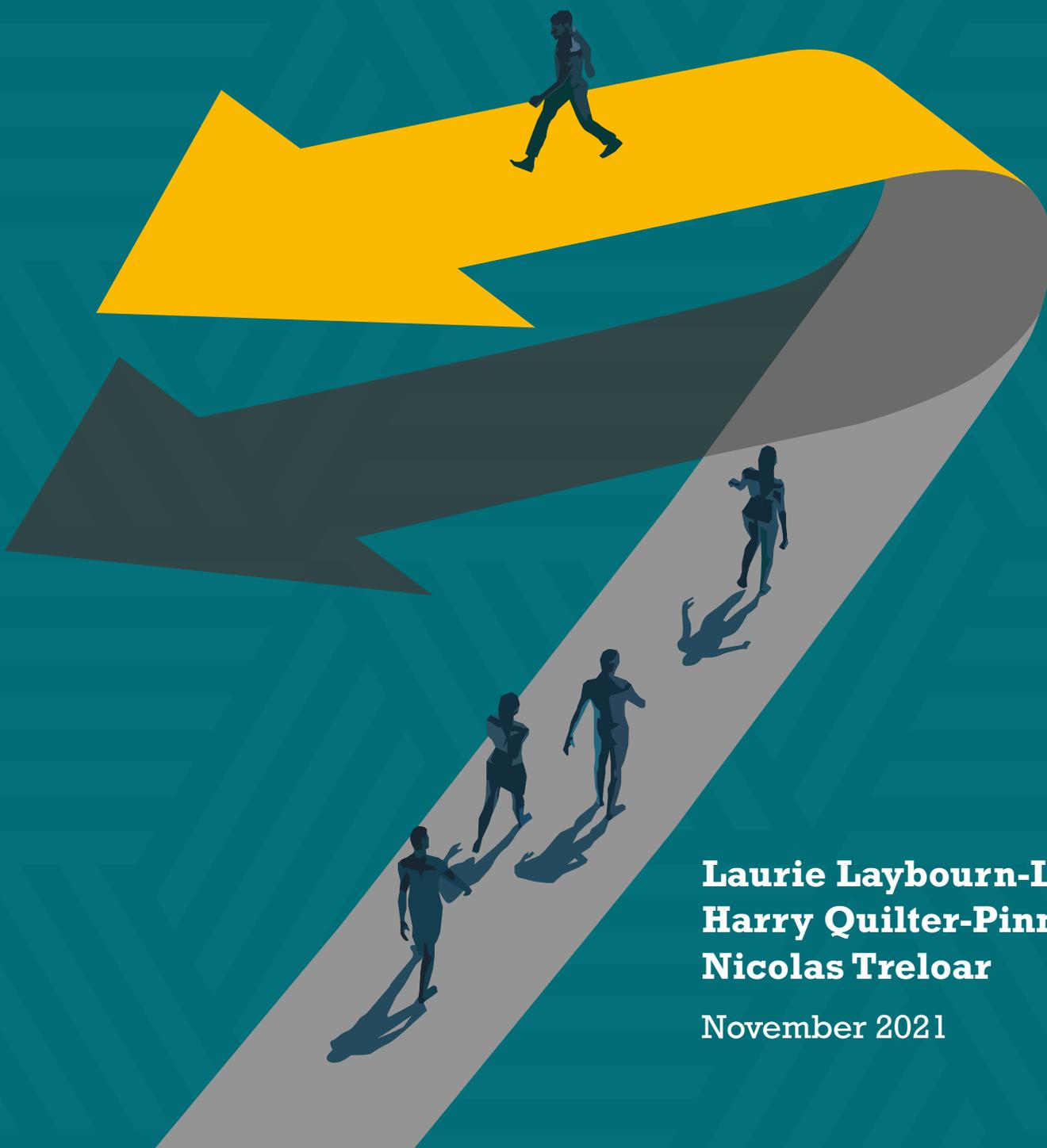


# MAKING CHANGE: WHAT WORKS?



**Laurie Laybourn-Langton,  
Harry Quilter-Pinner and  
Nicolas Treloar**

November 2021

## **ABOUT IPPR**

IPPR, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is the UK's leading progressive think tank. We are an independent charitable organisation with our main office in London. IPPR North, IPPR's dedicated think tank for the north of England, operates out of offices in Manchester and Newcastle, and IPPR Scotland, our dedicated think tank for Scotland, is based in Edinburgh.

Our primary purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce. Other purposes include to advance physical and mental health, the efficiency of public services and environmental protection or improvement; and to relieve poverty, unemployment, or those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship, or other disadvantage.

IPPR, 14 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6DF  
T: +44 (0)20 7470 6100  
E: [info@ippr.org](mailto:info@ippr.org)  
[www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org)  
Registered charity no: 800065 (England and Wales),

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Runnymede, Unit 119, Pill Box, 115 Coventry Road, London, E2 6GG  
T: 020 7377 9222  
E: [info@runnymedetrust.org](mailto:info@runnymedetrust.org)  
[www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Laurie Laybourn-Langton** is an associate fellow at IPPR.

**Harry Quilter-Pinner** is director of research and engagement at IPPR.

**Nicolas Treloar** was a research analyst at the Runnymede Trust during this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to all those who gave their time to be interviewed or to attend the research workshop for this project. Particular thanks go to Halima Begum, Abi Hynes, Richard Maclean, John Page, Iesha Small and Paul Twocock.

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. We do this finding out what works to reduce the risk of children becoming involved in violence, and working with others to build a movement to put this knowledge into practice across England and Wales.

We would like to thank the Youth Endowment Fund for commissioning this research.



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# SUMMARY

**Movements change the world.** Throughout history, loosely organised networks of individuals and organisations have sought changes to societies – and won. From the abolitionist struggle and campaigns for voting rights to #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, the impact of movements can be seen everywhere. Over the last year, IPPR and the Runnymede Trust have sought to understand what we can learn from movements that have made change – as well as those who have fallen short – for our efforts to create change today.

**We did this by exploring what worked and didn't work for four movements from recent decades.** These were:

- LGBTQ+ rights
- race equality
- climate action
- health inequality

## OUR FINDINGS

### *Insight 1: Evidence alone cannot change the world*

The most effective movements seek to change the **goals of society relating to their cause** and the **mindsets of those with power and the public** at large. For example, the LGBTQ+ movement has helped transform attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and, in turn, has shifted institutions and wider society from a position of persecution to greater equality.

Too many movements believe that the best way to achieve this is by evidencing the need for change. In this view of the world, people with power (or the public) simply lack evidence of the problem and how to solve it. This is what we call the **'information deficit'** approach.

This is fundamentally flawed. Instead, successful movements seek to close what we call the **'salience deficit'**, where the public or power-holders do not think the issue is important or see it through a different frame, and the **'power deficit'**, where the people wanting change are not in positions of power or have limited influence on those who are.

To do this, movements build a campaigning infrastructure to **tell compelling stories that speak to people's values and identities** in order to shift the debate, and seek to **capture existing sources of power (eg political parties, media) or build alternatives (such as new coalitions or institutions).**

### ***Insight 2: Movements need a well-developed ecosystem of influence***

Our research suggests that the most effective movements seek to build three key characteristics:

1. **Breadth (diversity):** The ecosystem has a broad range of different groups and activities, from rebels (such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), Extinction Rebellion and OutRage!) to reformers (such as Runnymede, Green Alliance, Stonewall). This allows movements to simultaneously push for change from different perspectives, using different methods.
2. **Depth (capability):** The ecosystem's groups have sufficient resources and ability to undertake these activities effectively including money, talent, and knowledge. This often requires philanthropists to crowd in funding.
3. **Inter-connection (community):** The ecosystem is well connected, whether tangible (such as formal convening organisations) or intangible (eg trust and shared language). This allows organisations to specialise and coordinate change activities – ensuring they add up to more than the sum of their parts.

### ***Insight 3: Successful movements are rarely organic: they require active cultivation***

The **most effective movements have active 'cultivators'**. These organisations do the work that is in everyone's interest but no-one's individual responsibility. This includes:

- **Convening and bridging gaps:** Bringing people and organisations together to build community, develop trust, relationships, shared language, and joint strategies.
- **Resourcing:** Cultivators are often (though not always) funders, but they also seek to crowd in other investors. They focus on ensuring that investment is achieving breadth, depth, and inter-connection.
- **Collective care:** This includes cushioning perceived failures, mediating tensions within the movement and ensuring the wellbeing of organisations and people.
- **Shared learning:** Cultivators encourage experimentation and innovation. They help set goals, measure success and capture and share learnings across the ecosystem.

Many movements lack active cultivators. **In their absence, these movements often miss out on these vital functions and suffer as a result.**

### ***Insight 4: Successful movements prepare for and then harness external events***

Throughout history, high-profile events that the status quo cannot explain or effectively respond to are catalysts for change. These events can offer a movement the chance to increase the **reach** and **perceived significance** of their cause – as well as **reframing how the public or powerholders see it**. They can also disrupt or catalyse new sources of power.

This can be seen in the spike in interest and reframing of the debate following the murder of George Floyd in the US and the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020 and similarly the debate about the environmental crisis after the Extinction Rebellion protests in April 2019. These movements effectively seized the opportunity to reshape the debate.

But **ensuring an event is harnessed for change rarely happens by chance**. If a movement doesn't have the capability to act in the wake of an event – if it lacks the resources and capacity to understand the moment, create a new narrative, and effectively intervene in debates – it will struggle to take the opportunity provided. This seems likely to be the case with the social determinants of health movement after Covid-19.

### ***Insight 5: Movements must mine their assets – and address their limitations***

Movements differ in ‘what they have to work with’ when seeking to make change. Movements that have the biggest chance of success focus **on issues that are relatively simple** and which **impact a large population** who can be mobilised to support change. Causes that are **more congruent with existing systems or norms** are more likely to succeed.

Nothing worth fighting for comes easy – and responding to the challenges of the 21st century requires change that is often incongruent with existing systems or norms. In doing so, movements can try the following.

- **Simplify complex issues:** The environmental movement has fought for clear goals, such as reaching ‘net zero’ greenhouse gas emissions, and broken the problem down into key sectors, such as emissions from power.
- **Make the invisible, visible:** The public health movement introduced evocative ‘smoking kills’ campaigns and the race equality movement has fought to foreground and popularise the stories of those suffering under systemic racism and racial injustice.
- **Increase the power of excluded groups:** The LGBTQ+ movement has recruited new allies focussing on family and friends and built power through political representation.
- **Make change more congruent with status quo:** The environmental movement has championed technology as a way of reducing the economic cost of action and LGBTQ+ movement has focussed on ‘assimilationist’ approach.

However, these approaches do not come without compromise or risk. We believe that movements – whether for economic, environment or social change – face a similar challenge: **simplifications and accommodations that might have helped win change previously now limit the ability to deliver the change some movements seek**. They can result in incomplete change and leave people behind. The challenges of the 21st century require structural change to economies and wider societies and the rebalancing of power.

## **CONCLUSION**

In recent years, the scale and pace of events has led some to doubt Martin Luther King’s creed that, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice”. But we must remember that the arc is only bent by the relentless organised efforts of inspiring social movements. In an age of Covid-19, environmental crisis, and vast inequalities, we can still drive progress but more of us **who seek social and economic justice must redouble our efforts to create authentic, inclusive, powerful, and strategic change**, joining and learning from each other in the process.

# FOREWORD

The Youth Endowment Fund, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Runnymede Trust all exist to make the world a better place. We seek to understand what works in addressing injustice and to use this to secure meaningful change that makes our society more prosperous and just.

As organisations we share a common fear. We don't want to spend years doing research, writing reports, and making recommendations that end up languishing on shelves or online, that are rarely read and never acted on. The risk for organisations like ours is always the same: lots of activity but little action.

That is why the Youth Endowment Fund asked colleagues at IPPR and the Runnymede Trust to investigate what has worked for other movements trying to solve complex, seemingly intractable social problems, just like youth violence. As a partnership we have attempted to take a 'what works' approach to the question of 'how can we make change?'

This report sets out the findings of this research. Its key insight is as powerful as it is simple: more and better evidence is vital, but it will not secure change on its own. Instead, movements like ours must change hearts and minds among the public and build greater power among those who advocate for, or will benefit from, change.

Together, our organisations are committed to using the insights in this report to shape our efforts in the months and years to come. We will work hard in our respective fields to ensure that our organisations contribute to making tomorrow better than today. And we hope this report will be useful for other organisations working to reduce youth violence and solving the other great challenges facing society.

**Jon Yates, executive director, Youth Endowment Fund**

**Carys Roberts, executive director, IPPR**

**Dr Halima Begum, chief executive officer, Runnymede Trust**

# INTRODUCTION

*“[We] don’t have enough time or the space to talk across [our] movement... about shared threats and opportunities and what we all do well and what we can improve on. We all end up in siloes beavering away on our little bit, feeling burnt out and depressed about change.”*

Workshop attendee



Movements change the world. Throughout history and across the world, organised networks of individuals and organisations have sought changes to societies – and won. Their stories are imprinted on our shared consciousness: the debt rebellions of ancient history, the abolitionist movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, the anticolonial struggles of the last century, and the racial justice campaigns of today.

Some movements are remembered as being uniquely successful such as the movement for voters for women and workers; others, such as the environmental movement, have a long way to go. In all cases, the process of making change is difficult and complex, often more so than it seems in retrospect. Clear victories are rare and often contested, and true change takes far longer than we often imagine.

The mass mobilisation of activists dominates popular conceptions of what movements are and what they do. But banner making and street protest are only the tip of the iceberg. Academics analyse evidence, charities provide on-the-ground services, lawyers tackle injustices in the courts, commentators and spokespeople debate ideas, and policymakers work to change laws. Movements encompass a diverse range of activities all seeking similar change.

This report seeks to understand what key ingredients enable movements to realise significant change – as well as what we can learn from movements associated with partial or little change. Our definition of a movement is broad, encompassing everything from mass public activism, through the work of think tanks and policy advocacy groups, to charities that deliver crucial services.

This report is the culmination of a project undertaken over the last year by IPPR, the UK's leading progressive think tank, and the Runnymede Trust, the UK's leading independent race equality think tank, which was commissioned by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). We wanted to better understand what should be true of a movement for it to better realise change. This is to inform the YEF's work as part of the movement to prevent children becoming involved in violence, our work as think tanks, and to hopefully provide a useful resource for others as well.

We did this by exploring what worked and didn't work for four movements from recent decades, exploring some of their strengths and weaknesses.



### LGBTQ+ rights

How did we go from the treatment of LGBTQ+ people in the early 1980s, during the HIV/AIDS pandemic and with Section 28, to current attitudes?



### Race equality

How has the race equality movement succeeded in achieving change - and fallen short - in the period from the passing of successive race relations acts to Black Lives Matter?



### Climate action

How has conservative action on climate change become an ongoing, core feature of UK politics, in marked contrast to centre-right politics in other countries?



### Health inequality

Why has action on the socio-economic determinants of health and health inequalities not become a foundation of national policy?



We interviewed 30 people – leaders, researchers, campaigners, and practitioners – across these four case studies.



We undertook a literature review around the case studies, of other movements, and of change processes in general.



We held a workshop with leading researchers on how change happens. The full list of those who were involved can be found in the appendix.

# INSIGHT 1.

## EVIDENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

*“Many movements seem to have internalised a ‘common room theory of change’ – that if you win the intellectual argument, you change the world. I don’t think anyone actually believes this is the way to change the world, but they act as if it is.”*

Workshop attendee



## SUCCESSFUL MOVEMENTS FOCUS ON SHIFTING MINDSETS AND GOALS

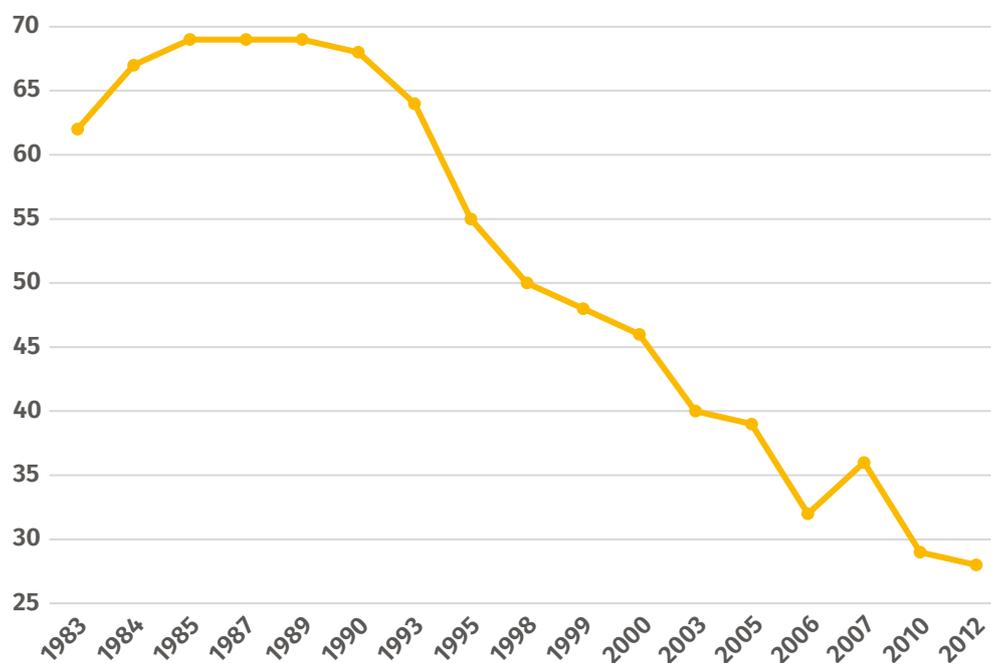
Movements seek to make change through a wide range of mechanisms. A coalition of anti-poverty and development groups used the Make Poverty History campaign to mobilise the public – through marches, white ‘awareness bracelets’, and concerts – to put pressure on governments to forgive Global South debts and improve aid and trade terms. The union movement has always invested in education for workers and their communities, both to improve educational opportunities and to equip these communities with the knowledge to fight for greater rights.

The most successful movements focus on trying to change two crucial elements in society: the goals the system targets relating to their cause and the mindsets of those with power and the public at large (Meadows 1999).

For example, the LGBTQ+ movement has fought against laws which discouraged or excluded their communities from engaging in society on equal terms with heterosexual people. These laws were partly a result of the overall mindset and goals of those with power: that LGBTQ+ people were inferior or even dangerously abnormal and so active measures should be used by the state to enforce inequality. So, the LGBTQ+ movement focussed on dispelling ideas about false differences and normalising their community across society – a process that was remarkably successful, as figure 1.1 shows.

**FIGURE 1.1: MINDSETS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE UK CHANGED RAPIDLY DURING THE 1990S**

Percentage of UK respondents saying ‘homosexuality is always/mostly wrong’, by year



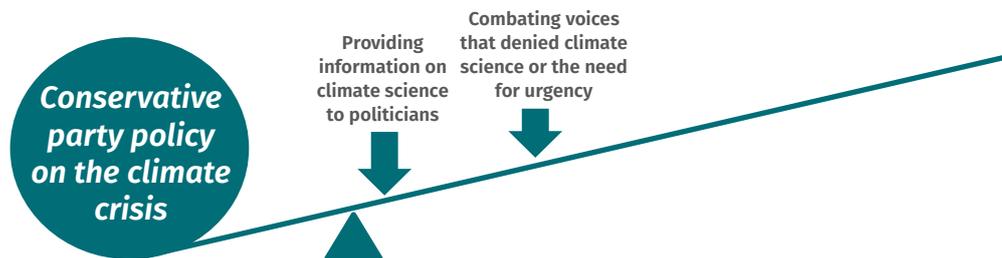
Source: Park et al 2013

## MOVEMENTS SEEK TO SHIFT LEVERAGE POINTS

Goals and mindsets are an example of “leverage points” (Meadows 2008). Societies are huge, complex systems and so movements must be strategic in targeting places to make change. Leverage points are places within those systems where small changes can produce bigger changes throughout the system. Let’s use our climate action case study to illustrate how leverage points work.

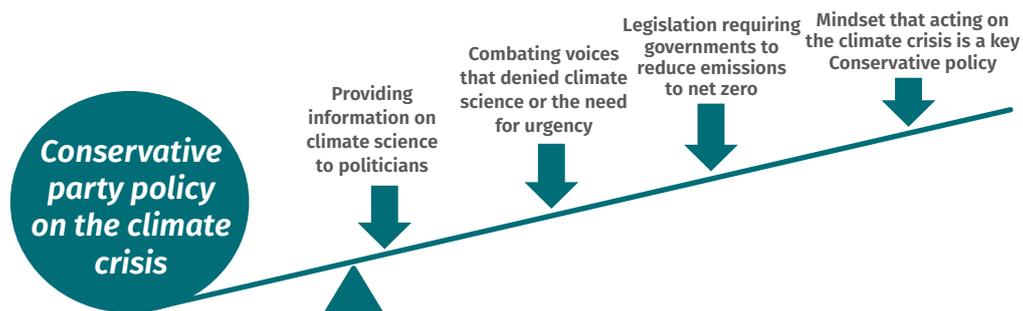
One of the central objectives of those seeking action on the climate crisis in the UK is for the government to largely eliminate greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades. Doing so requires all political parties – and particularly the governing Conservative Party – to accept the need for urgency and to adopt such a goal.

### 1. Shallow leverage points



A range of campaigns and organisations have sought to provide more information to Conservative politicians and party members or have combated the messages of those who have denied climate science or that the climate crisis is an urgent problem. These activities are examples of ‘shallow’ leverage points. It’s important that Conservatives have the right information and that those who are incorrectly doubting climate science are contested but doing so on their own will not necessarily lead to deep change. This is a generalisable lesson on leverage points: it’s often easier to shift shallow leverage points such as access to information or the flow of financial resources – but without changes to fundamental structures of a system, the goals of the system, or the motivations of the participants, they will ultimately be less effective.

### 2. Deep leverage points

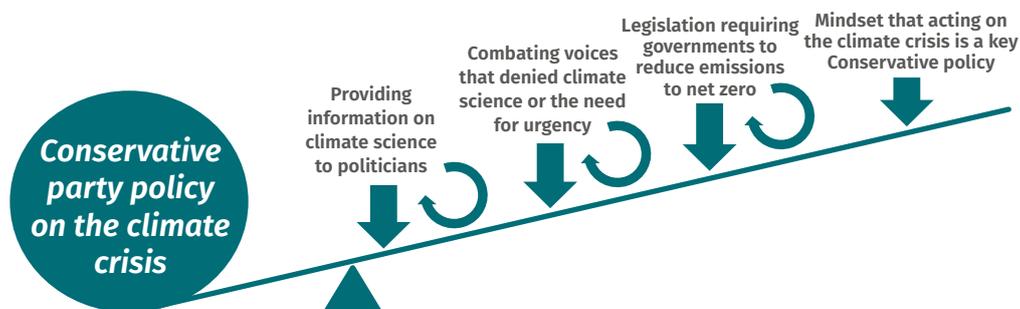


Changing the goals of the system and the mindset of the public and politicians about the climate crisis are examples of ‘deep’ leverage points. While far harder to shift than shallower leverage points, these have potentially huge implications for reaching a movement’s objectives because they are more likely to result in significant behaviour change among those interacting with the system. The Climate Change Act, which legally requires governments to reduce emissions to net-zero, sets such a goal and was fought for by a range of groups. Meanwhile, pressure from key constituencies, such as businesses, faith groups, campaigners, and the media, has helped ensure a mindset shift among Conservatives - and the voters that Conservatives want to win over - that acting on the climate crisis is a

profound responsibility to current and future generations and can realise large benefits for the economy and public health. This shift in the hearts and minds of people and their political representatives enables much bigger change to happen.

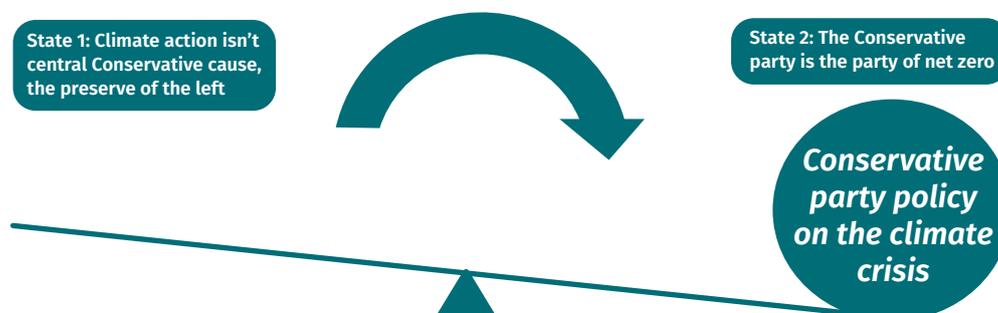
## REACHING A TIPPING POINT

### 3. Connections between leverage points



Movement in one leverage point can drive change in others, building momentum toward deeper change. Better informed politicians could be better at identifying and disregarding the messages of climate deniers and instead support those who sought to pass key laws like the Climate Change Act. In turn, the net-zero goal is now a legally binding goal. This creates a source of accountability which campaigners and the media use to put more pressure on politicians to act and which in turn secures the issue more prominence in the public debate and at elections.

### 4. Cascading change



After a critical mass of leverage points move, change becomes self-fulfilling and, in this case, the Conservative Party's approach to action on the climate crisis tipped into a new state. Before, a lack of understanding of the science and the solutions, the influence of deniers or sceptics, the absence of a critical mass of powerful voices and interest groups, or environmentalism being seen as a preserve of the left, kept the Conservatives in a state where rapid climate action and government intervention weren't necessarily a core Conservative cause. After successive leverage points were shifted, the Conservatives became the party of net-zero and put the climate crisis at the heart of their diplomatic policy through the COP26 climate conference. This new state is held in place by, among other things, denialists having little sway, huge and growing concern and engagement on the crisis from the public, business leaders, and other key constituencies, which have changed political incentives, and the recognition that climate action fits with traditional conservative values.

## EVIDENCE IS IMPORTANT – BUT IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY CHANGE MINDS AND BEHAVIOUR

In seeking to shift leverage points, movements can often use a 'rationalist' model of how change happens. This assumes that people absorb information and then use it to make an informed judgement. As a result, new information that contradicts the person's existing judgement should lead them to re-assess that position and change their mind.

Thinking in this way can lead movements to focus their energies on closing the **information deficit**: people with power (or the public) simply lack evidence of the problem the movement is seeking to solve and how to solve it. If this is true, closing gaps in information will lead powerholders to change their view and seek to implement better solutions. We often find movements overly focus on this area. For example, our interviews suggest that there has been a major focus among the health inequality movement on producing analysis and evidence – particularly building up the academic evidence base – on the social and economic determinants of health at the expense of using this information to make change happen.

It is a common tendency to think that passing a critical threshold of evidence will trigger change. But the evidence is increasingly clear: for most people most of the time, reasoning follows intuition (Haidt 2001). We often use information to justify our existing judgement and not to question it, and so we discount information that contradicts our existing views. This doesn't mean that evidence isn't crucial role in the change-making process: it is vital to get us to the right solutions and it can be influential in the right circumstances. But to push deeper leverage points, we need to change people's mind – their deeply held views about the world and how it works – which means tapping into emotions and values.

This requires closing the **salience<sup>1</sup> deficit**: this is where people – decision-makers or the general public – do not think the issue is important or see it through a different frame due to deeply held values or mental models. This requires a movement to find new and more effective ways of telling the story that speaks to people's values, identities, and aspirations in order to change their minds. The aim of this is to shift the 'common-sense' consensus and mainstream the issue the campaign is championing and the frame through which it is seen that will allow change to happen.

For example, in the mid-80s, 70 per cent of respondents to the British Social Attitudes survey thought that "homosexuality is always/mostly wrong" (Park et al 2013). In response, the LGBTQ+ movement sought to increase the visibility of their community across society, challenging seemingly immovable prejudices, disproving false ideas that there were fundamental differences with heterosexual people, and therefore altering deep views around sexual orientation. This process helped shift mindsets and, thirty years later, less than 30 per cent of respondents thought homosexuality was always or mostly wrong (ibid).

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1 The quality of being particularly noticeable or important; prominence.

## INFORMATION BOX: DOES PUBLIC OPINION MATTER?

Ordinary citizens have often been considered uninterested or unable to engage with political and policy preferences at a deep level. This school of thought concludes that the attitudes of citizens, as measured in surveys or opinion polling, are therefore likely to be unstable, weakly structured, and, when measured in polling or surveys should be considered “pseudo-opinions”.

However, there is now a growing consensus that although public attitudes at the individual level can be contradictory or volatile, that public opinion on many issues across whole populations over time are often consistent and are representative of people’s underlying values, beliefs, experiences and preferences (Page and Shapiro, 1992). This is particularly true of issues which relate to deeply held values or identities and on issues of significant public salience.

Furthermore, the evidence is clear that there is a strong positive correlation between shifts in public opinion – particularly when these shifts are sustained and and salient - and the policies adopted by government (Page and Shapiro, 1983). The causal link between these two factors – policy and public opinion – has been much debated. Two potential explanations have been suggested with very different implications for movements wishing to shift policy:

- *Shifts in public opinion drive shifts in policy.* According to this theory, political parties respond to the democratic will of the people. As the public’s attitudes shift towards issues such as sexuality or climate this will create pressure for policy makers to respond by changing policy. This implies that movements should focus their attention on how to shift public opinion on their cause – the salience and frame through which people see it – in order to change policy.
- *Shifts in policy drive shifts in public opinion.* According to this theory, it is political parties shifting policy – and elites shifting their opinion and ‘signalling’ to the population via communications - that then results in a shift in public opinion. This would imply that movements should focus their influencing efforts on shifting the consensus politicians and other elites and securing policy change, which in turn will follow through to a shift in public opinion.

The evidence on these two theories suggests that both effects exist. Notably, Page and Shapiro (1983) find that in most cases, shifts in public opinion pre-date changes in policy, but that in a minority of cases the opposite effect can be seen. Furthermore, there is a growing evidence base which shows the potential of elites to lead public opinion. For example, O’Grady (forthcoming), finds that shifts in elite discourse (in parliament and the media) in the 1990s pre-dated the shift in welfare policy seen in the 2000s – with the cross-party consensus that was achieved particularly vital in driving shifts in public consensus. Similar effects have been established for polarisation in the USA (Zingher and Flynn, 2015). Furthermore, the evidence increasingly suggests that in many cases these channels may become mutually reinforcing (eg elites shift their opinion or policy, public opinion shifts in the same direction and this results in a further shift in elite opinion or policy).

The implications of these conclusions for movements are profound: they suggest that both an ‘insider’ track of influencing elite opinion and an ‘outsider’ track of trying to win the hearts and minds of the public are both vital. The best and most successful movements will seek to create a cross party consensus among elites whilst simultaneously shaping public opinion directly.

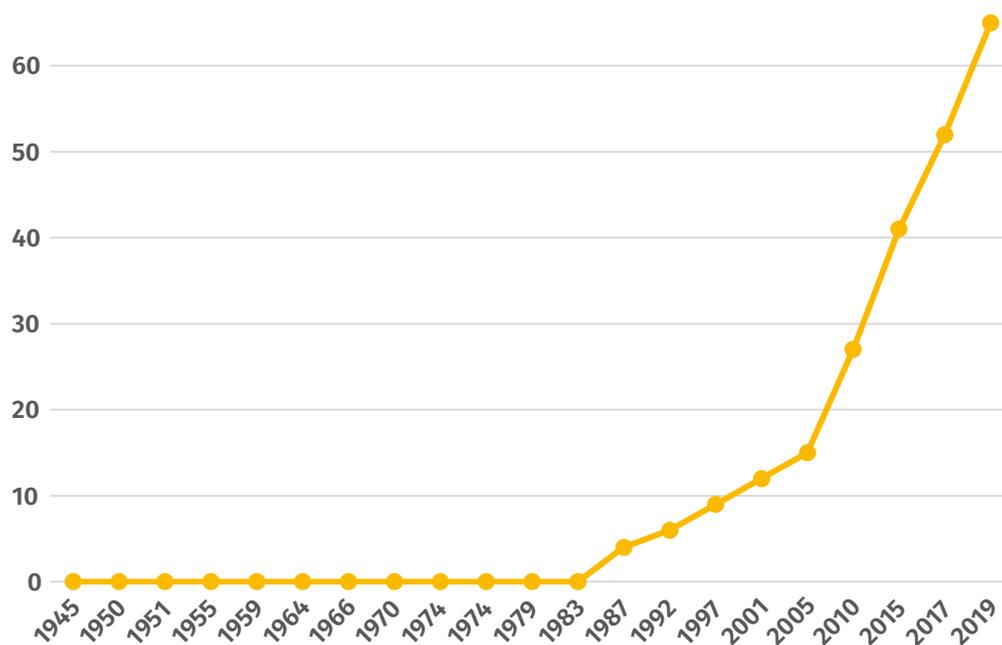
While closing information and salience deficits is important, movements must also close the **power deficit**. This is where the people who seek the movement's ends are not in positions of power or have limited influence on those who are in power. Addressing this requires movements to capture existing bases of power or build alternatives. The power held by a movement can include political and organisational power, such as access to and influence over ministers and the press, or those from the movement becoming leaders in government and business. Power can also result from social capital, access to and acceptance in certain communities and networks, and other forms of privilege, as well as economic power, such as shared ownership of important economic assets.

Power deficits are often the result of deep and long-running factors, such as the marginalisation and outright exclusion of groups by society or the establishment. This can be seen in both the racial justice and LGBTQ+ case studies. In response, both movements sought to build new forms of power and capture, and or influence, existing sources of power such as political parties, the legal system and government institutions. In the case of parliament, representation has increased markedly for ethnic minority groups (see figure 1.2) and for LGBTQ+ people (Audickas and Cracknell 2020). Studies suggest that representation in this form can have a 'transformative' effect on the legislation that is passed (Reynolds 2013).

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**GRAPH 1.2: ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES HAVE BUILT POWER IN PARLIAMENT OVER GENERATIONS**

Number of members of parliament identifying as ethnic minority, by general election year



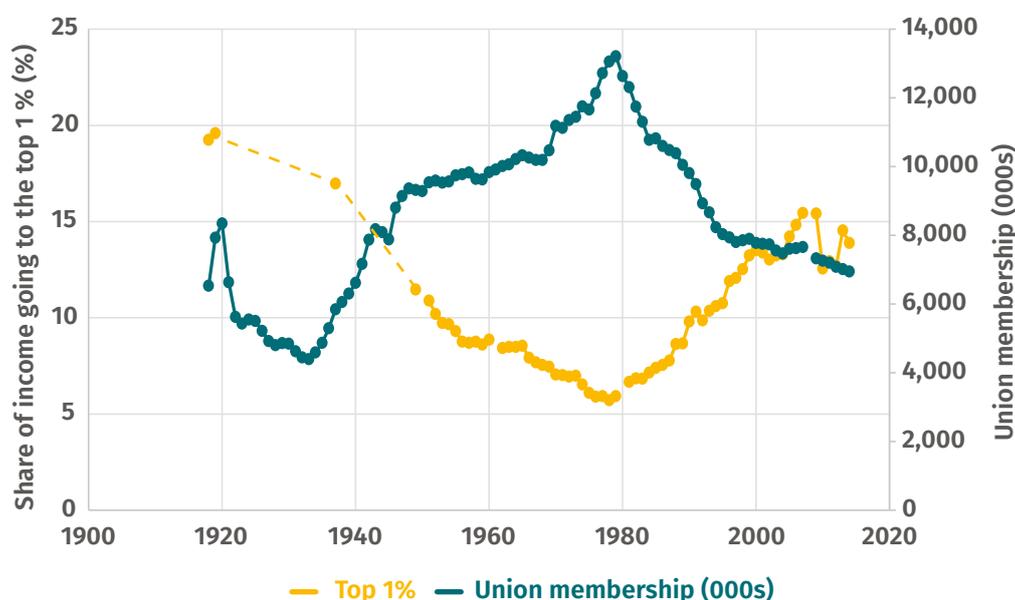
Source: Uberoi and Lees 2020

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Power deficits can also arise from the atomisation – or individualisation – of people and communities. This is because in most cases individuals or smaller communities are much easier for ‘power holders’ to ignore. By contrast, bringing together and connecting people to push for change in unison – creating larger coalitions or movements – has long been an effective way of making change. These can be relatively informal coalitions, for example the Black Lives Matter or LGBTQ+ rights movements, or more formal institutions, for example membership bodies like trade unions (see figure 1.3 on the latter). Technology is thought to potentially increase the potential of people and groups to connect and activate their collective power – sometimes referred to as ‘new power’ (Heimans and Timms 2014) – though this view is not universally shared.

**FIGURE 1.3: UNION MEMBERSHIP OVER THE LAST CENTURY MIRRORS THE SHARE OF INCOME GOING TO TOP 1 PER CENT OF EARNERS**

Union membership (1,000s) and share of income going to the top 1 per cent (%), 1918–2014

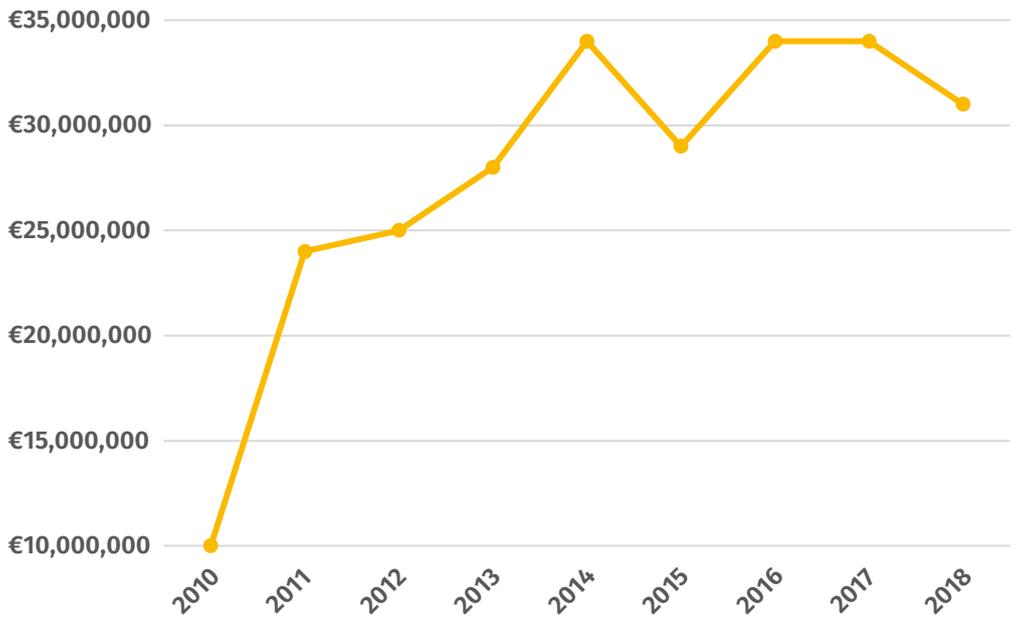


Source: Dromey 2018

Closing the power deficit also requires movements to resist and overcome the entrenched power of the status quo and groups that have an interest in resisting change. These groups resist change for a variety of interrelated reasons, including because they earn money from the way things are, they deny or are largely ignorant of a problem/injustice, or that their identity and values are bound up in the status quo. For example, the oil and gas industry have an economic interest in the continued burning of fossil fuels and, therefore, the worsening climate crisis. In turn, the top oil and gas firms have spent over a quarter of a billion euros lobbying EU governments to water down, delay or stop laws to stop climate breakdown, as figure 1.4 shows (Corporate Observatory et al 2019).

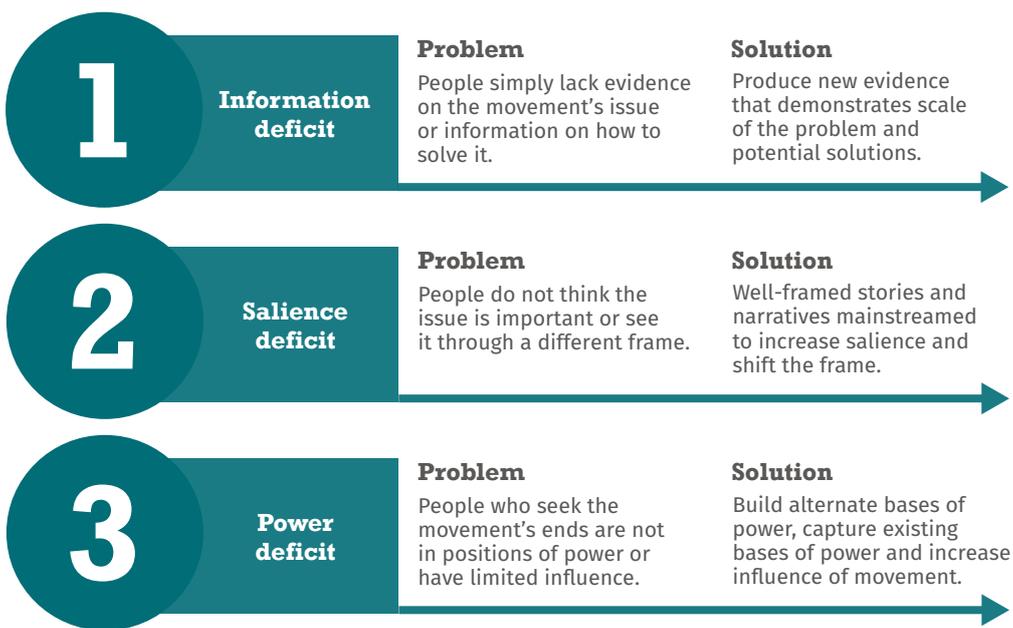
**FIGURE 1.4: WEALTHY ECONOMIC INTERESTS HAVE HUGE POWER OVER POLICYMAKING**

Declared annual EU lobby spending of Shell, BP, Total, ExxonMobil and Chevron and their fossil fuel lobby groups, by year



Source: Corporate Europe Observatory et al 2019

**FIGURE 1.5: CLOSING DEFICITS OF INFORMATION, SALIENCE, AND POWER INCREASES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A MOVEMENT IN SHIFTING LEVERAGE POINTS AND MAKING CHANGE IN THE COMPLEX SYSTEMS OF SOCIETY**



Source: Authors' analysis

# INSIGHT 2.

## BUILD AN ECOSYSTEM OF INFLUENCE

*“We’re great at analysing, building an evidence base, and coming up with policy ideas. We have been for decades. But there’s no real movement. We’re in an elite and we [only] focus on elite research.”*

Interviewee, health inequality case study



Movements usually comprise a wide range of groups undertaking different activities: an ‘ecosystem of influence’. If the movement is sufficiently well developed, this ecosystem will, together, cover the bases needed to close information, salience, and power deficits, and to effectively shift leverage points.

Effective ecosystems of influence have three main characteristics.

1. **Breadth (diversity):** The ecosystem has a broad range of different types of groups and activities, ranging from research through campaigning to frontline services.
2. **Depth (capability):** The ecosystem’s groups have sufficient resources and ability to identify and move leverage points, including money, talent, and knowledge.
3. **Inter-connection (community):** The ecosystem is well connected, whether tangible (e.g. formal convening organisations) or intangible (eg trust and shared language).

## **AN ECOSYSTEM NEEDS TO BE BROAD (OR DIVERSE) TO DRIVE CHANGE ACROSS LEVERAGE POINTS**

Making change requires movements to be made up of a diversity of groups that undertake a variety of functions. This is vital because it allows a movement to simultaneously push for change from different angles and perspectives: to target multiple and different leverage points, using different methods. This amounts to a ‘division of labour’. Bill Moyer, George Lakey and other social change activists have categorised the key elements of an ecosystem’s diversity into four areas: rebels, reformers, organisers, and helpers (Moyer 1987, Lakey 2016, Adams 2019).<sup>2</sup>

- **Rebels** push for radical change and draw attention to the scale and nature of the problem, such as those taking part in occupations or street protest.
- **Reformers** work with powerholders who have direct influence over policy and practice. These could include academics, think tanks, or charities.
- **Organisers** build coalitions and organisations to drive change, such as founding the non-profit that supports street protesters or working in a union to bolster turnout.
- **Helpers** prioritise service delivery to directly combat the problem, often on a local level. This could include delivery charities, community support groups, and public service practitioners.

While there is overlap between the categories, they are useful for broadly grouping elements of the ecosystems we studied. As figure 2.1 shows, we found that the conservative climate movement and those interacting with it have a wide diversity of groups and activities, covering the breadth of functions needed to challenge the status quo in multiple, mutually reinforcing ways. By comparison, the health inequality movement is far more concentrated on reformer-researchers and helpers (in certain areas of the UK, for example devolved action in Marmot Cities and devolved governments such as Greater Manchester)<sup>3</sup> but lacks breadth in rebels and organisers. These do exist for particular determinants of health, such as housing and poverty, but are not necessarily connected with those seeking action on the collective social and economic determinants of health.

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2 Other frameworks such as the ‘social change grid’ developed by the Social Change Project (2018) split these by public, community, institutional and service provision which while different share many of the same features.

3 See: <http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/> and GMHSCP 2019.

**FIGURE 2.1: INDICATIVE MAPPING OF CLIMATE AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH ECOSYSTEMS<sup>4</sup>**

	Climate action	Health inequality and socioeconomic determinants of health
Rebels		
Reformers		

<sup>4</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of groups in any category.

Organisers		
Helpers		<p data-bbox="1045 996 1189 1153"><b>Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership</b></p> <p data-bbox="941 1198 1284 1243"><b>Coventry: a Marmot City</b></p>

Source: Authors' analysis

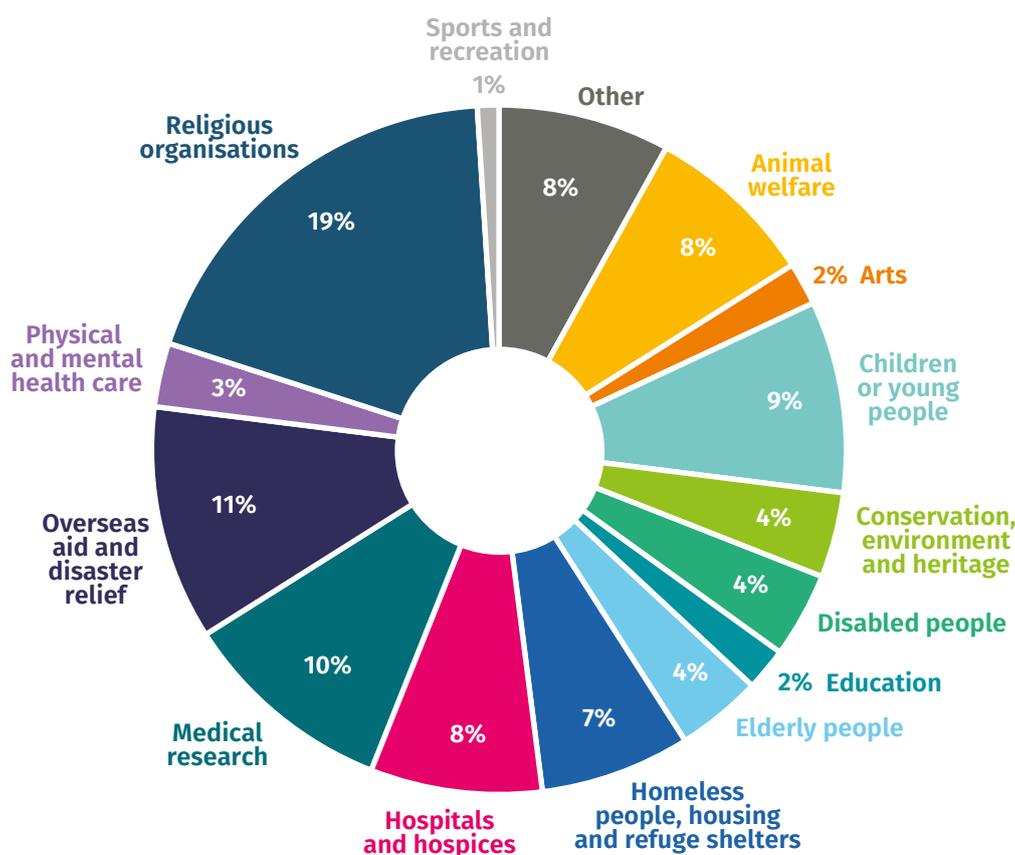
### **A DIVERSE ECOSYSTEM NEEDS DEPTH (OR CAPABILITY) TO PLACE SUFFICIENT PRESSURE ON LEVERAGE POINTS**

If an ecosystem enjoys a broad range of functions that allow it to tackle multiple leverage points using a variety of methods, the main question becomes the degree to which these functions have a sufficient level of resources, capability, and capacity to fulfil these roles effectively. Key capabilities include the talent (a pipeline of motivated, skilled people) and knowledge base (access to timely and useful intelligence and to legal, communications and campaigning expertise) a movement can draw on.

Funding is usually one of the biggest factors in helping an ecosystem develop its capability. Some movements have more resources than others (see figure 2.2) though all movements argue the need for more investment. Some movements have also proven more adept at making the strategic case for additional investment. For example, the environmental justice movement has successfully got trusts and foundations to sign up to a Funder Commitment on Climate Change, which aims to increase investment (Roeyer et al 2021).<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the race equality movement has struggled to secure enough investment which has constrained its development.

**FIGURE 2.2: SOME CAUSES ATTRACT MORE MONEY THAN OTHERS<sup>6</sup>**

Proportion of total donations by cause in the UK, 2018



Source: CAF (2019)

In the absence of significant funding, movements can develop depth (or capability) in other ways. Notably, movements have always relied on the talent and knowledge of volunteers to fight for their cause, but this inherently privileges those movements with supporters who can afford to or have the educational background (or connections) required to fulfil this function. For example, the LGBTQ+ movement has always relied on the voluntary expertise of (often white, middle class) LGBTQ+ lawyers, legislators, doctors, and journalists. Other movements would struggle to access this talent pipeline without the financial resources to pay for them.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://fundercommitmentclimatechange.org>

<sup>6</sup> This data only includes individual giving. It does not include the donations of trusts and foundations which are likely to have very different giving profiles.

## AN ECOSYSTEM NEEDS TO HAVE STRONG INTER-CONNECTION (COMMUNITY) TO SUPPORT COORDINATION

*“So much of what we achieved was down to...relationships between people across the community. They’re intangible...not the kind of thing you capture with data or put in an end of year impact report. But they were crucial.”*

Interviewee, LGBTQ+ case study

Connections across the breadth and depth of an ecosystem are also crucial to driving success. Without adequate connections there is a risk that movements fail to add up to more than the sum of their parts by lacking coordination or complementarity. Two broad types of movement ‘infrastructure’ can build help to these connections across an ecosystem.

- Hard **infrastructure** comprises the more tangible ways of connecting ecosystems, such as regular community forums, shared assets (meeting places) and mailing lists. These can be more formal, such as organisations whose purpose is to convene and help organise the ecosystem, or more informal, such as the chief executives of organisations staying in touch.
- Soft **infrastructure** is less tangible and includes the shared language used by an ecosystem and the level of trust existing between groups. A key element of soft infrastructure is holding a shared set of beliefs, values, broad goals, and, crucially, having a shared belief in being part of a coherent overall purpose.

Interconnection is crucial for identifying shared threats and opportunities and, in response, organising coordination and cooperation across the ecosystem. The most effective infrastructure enables ecosystems to harness antagonisms between the parts of the system – for example, rebels and reformers – more productively.

For example, in the LGBTQ+ movement during the 1990s, the groups OutRage! and Stonewall took different approaches to campaigning, with the former focussing more on direct action and the latter on parliamentary lobbying and similar advocacy. While the relationship between the groups was often antagonistic, they were able to achieve an effective choreography, with the ‘outsider’ tactics of OutRage! helping give cover to the ‘insider’ approach of Stonewall. This was achieved through both hard infrastructure, such as community events and meetings between groups, softer infrastructure, like the trust built but informal social connections between both elements of the movement.

Cultivating interconnection is one of the most important and valuable investments a movement can make. But these investments must be strategic. New institutions or initiatives aimed at delivering breadth, depth or interconnection should be built to complement and firm up existing and organically developed infrastructure. Failing to do this can be inefficient and duplicative, stifle innovation, and be overly antagonistic. For example, connections between pro-climate-action conservative groups and politicians developed naturally and were encouraged and supported by subsequent organisations, not imposed top-down by any one group.

# INSIGHT 3.

## CULTIVATORS ARE CRUCIAL

*“It all looks like a seamless process of growing awareness and action. But it didn’t feel like that at the time! There were some things that were clearly missing, jobs that needed to be done, and activities that were sorely needed. So, we built them. We were acting on a need in the moment.”*

Interviewee, climate action case study



## EFFECTIVE CHANGE MOVEMENTS DON'T JUST HAPPEN – THEY NEED CULTIVATING

Some movements have organisations that support them in developing breadth, depth, and interconnection by helping build the shared infrastructure needed to for them to succeed. Their main aim is to ensure that the organisations and people within a movement add up to more than the sum of their parts. They do the work that is in everyone's interest but is no-one's individual responsibility, such as bringing a range of groups together, building trust, and investing in shared strategies across the ecosystem. We call these organisations 'cultivators'.

### ECOSYSTEM DYNAMICS

There are several dynamics that frequently occur within change ecosystems that might benefit from active cultivation.

- **Local and national change:** Local groups and activities are often sources of innovation across an ecosystem. Examples highlighted in our interview include local LGBTQ+ support groups (helpers), BLM activist groups in cities (rebels), new climate pressure groups (organisers), and local councils pioneering new approaches to the social determinants (reformers). They can provide proof of concept for new approaches to change, build momentum that spreads to other communities and expose the scale of the problem. But there are often limitations to what local changemakers can achieve in the context of a national or international system which places significant constraints on local places and people. Similarly, there are often barriers to scaling up: it can be hard to replicate models at different scales and contexts. The best movements therefore usually have links between local and national/international organisations or groups. This ensures that there is action to shift national or international levers to enable greater change at the local level. It also ensures that national and international action is cognisant of the lived reality of the people they are seeking to help.
- **Elites and a diverse public:** Change-makers, especially at the national level, are still more likely than not to come from more privileged backgrounds: to be highly educated, to be white, to be male and/or to live in wealthier parts of the country. These people have a huge amount to contribute to achieving change. But it is increasingly important that change movements represent the full diversity of those they seek to champion and of society in general. This is needed to help build power for groups that have often been excluded or marginalised, such as minority ethnic communities, migrants, people from lower income backgrounds and people with disabilities or learning difficulties. In turn, they foreground crucial perspectives, such as issues of intersectionality and justice, which are at the heart of many of the causes movements seek to champion. They also bring innovation in activities and organisation, such as the range of campaigning groups that have sprung up in response to a perceived failure of existing movements.

- **Rebels and reformers:** Ecosystems that succeed have both organisations and groups that are pursuing change through an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ track, such as in the case of OutRage! and Stonewall in the LGBTQ+ movement. However, this diversity of perspectives and approaches can lead to antagonism. But this does not have to be a flaw: indeed, antagonism within ecosystems can be a motor of innovation. The perceived failure of mainstream race equality and environmental campaigners helped spur Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion. This has opened new space for reformers or those organisations in the mainstream to push for more ambitious change. However, these antagonisms must be harnessed effectively. If these antagonisms run out of control they can cause significant division across an ecosystem, diminishing impact.

Many if not most movement ecosystems lack cultivators, which is a key factor behind their lack of breadth, depth, interconnection – and, in turn, their impact. In the absence of cultivators, there can sometimes be little scope for organisations in an ecosystem to have the ability to identify shared opportunities and threats and to organise around them across the ecosystem.

Cultivators can build a range of hard and soft infrastructure that is useful for enhancing an ecosystem and its impact. These often come in four broad areas.

- **Convening and bridging gaps.** Bringing people together builds community, helping develop trust, relationships, shared language, and other soft infrastructure. This can be through general spaces, such as regular socials or forums to discuss general strategy, or through strategy-specific spaces convened to discuss particular opportunities and threats and to organise responses, including to emergencies and other time-sensitive moments.
- **Resourcing**, which includes the role a cultivator can play in bringing other funders to invest in the movement – a crucial condition for ensuring adequate resources. Cultivators can also act to better match supply of and demand for resources, by understanding the gaps in ecosystems – deficiencies in breadth, depth, or interconnectivity – and channel resources towards new or existing initiatives that will address these weaknesses. They can combat the huge inefficiencies and waste that result from poor organisational development and management – which many movements suffer from – by providing off-the-shelf organisational and HR policies, lists of potential company directors/trustees, and access to low-cost legal advice and services.
- **Collective care** and other less tangible but critical elements of leadership can be supported by cultivators. These include cushioning and contextualising the shared reaction to (perceived) failure and success, mediating difficult relationships and tensions, and ensuring high standards of – and investing in mechanisms for – self-care, such as collective access to mental health support. These can be some of the most challenging aspects of the role, requiring constant ‘smiles and stamina’.
- **Shared learning** through experimenting and allowing failure as a cultivator and providing a learning hub capable of capturing and sharing lessons from across the ecosystem. Most movements lack a shared space for understanding and learning from past success and failure.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD CULTIVATOR?

*“Convening is exhausting...and [can be] demoralising. But someone has to do it... and without it our communities are not as cohesive, and our actions aren't as aligned. So that someone has to be tough and friendly and focussed.”*

Interviewee, race equality case study

Effective cultivators therefore need strong capabilities in three key areas.

- 1. A social licence to operate.** Cultivators and those working in them need to have strong relationships with people across an ecosystem and establish and maintain high levels of trust in their work. So, listening, being engaged and humble with a diversity of outlooks, and representing that diversity, are crucial. They must also take the initiative to act on goals and opportunities that are beyond the scope and organising capability of individual groups. Listening and leading can present moments of contradiction and effective cultivators adopt a spirit of “humble audacity” in making things happen that otherwise wouldn't (Martlew 2017).
- 2. Promoting pan-movement strategy.** Cultivators can invest in important research that identifies leverage points and opportunities and threats to the movement's agenda. These can be used to develop a shared understanding of the ecosystem's priorities and pan-movement strategy: the direction that the strategies of individual organisations are working toward. In turn, this can help these organisations identify their value-add and how to work with others.
- 3. Focussing on broad metrics of impact.** The most advanced cultivators are those who are led by outcomes that create a generally positive political environment for the ecosystem. This contrasts with the prioritisation of, for example, the volume of report outputs and quantitative measures of media impact, all of which are important, but can dominate conceptions of impact. Experimentation, failure, and learning are all crucial and can be promoted by a cultivator, particularly when working with funders.

Many funders are well-positioned to act as cultivators. This is because they have some control over the distribution of resources across an ecosystem, which confers significant power, profile, and connections. They might also have an overview of the ecosystem and consider its activities from a pan-movement perspective, beyond short-term tactical interventions by individual groups.

But this doesn't stop other organisations from playing a cultivator role. We have seen that think tanks sometimes play this role by, partly because of their role in the collection and analysis of evidence – which can be an arbiter of internal debate (an impartial convenor) – but also because of their access to ‘power holders’. For example, Green Alliance – a leading non-party environmental think tank – works to help coordinate the Greener UK coalition of 12 major environmental organisations, which together have a combined public membership of over 8 million people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See: <https://greeneruk.org/about/coalition>

# INSIGHT 4.

## PREPARE FOR AND RESPOND TO EVENTS

*“[The BLM protests in] 2020 brought diversity to our movement. But we lacked capability because the demographic most impacted by racism lacks privilege and power, and we’ve been chronically under-funded for decades. So, we weren’t ready for the 2020 moment, which held us back.”*

Interviewee, race equality case study



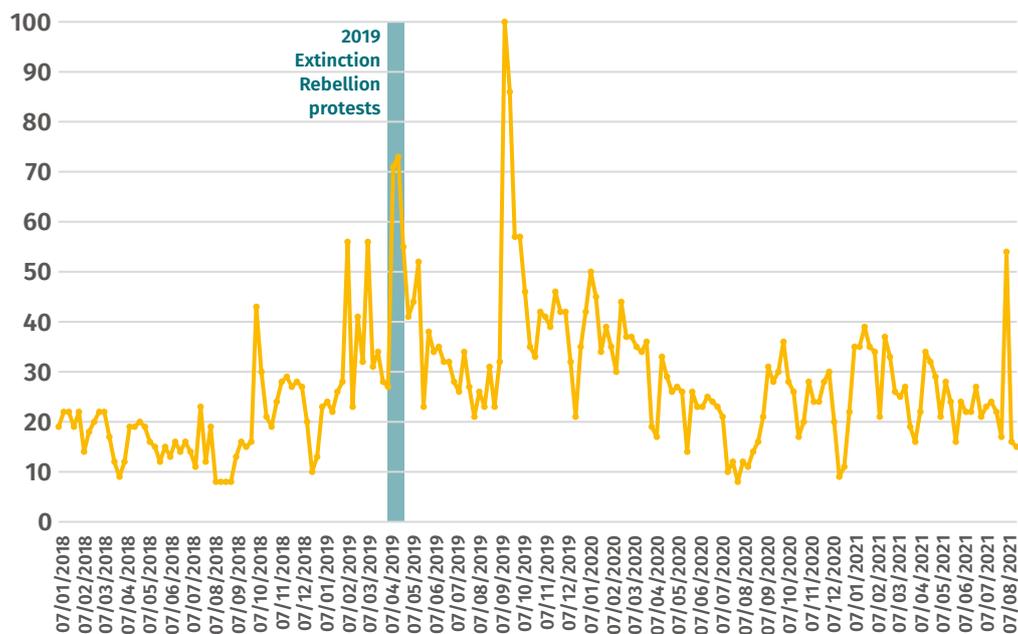
Events are drivers of change. Throughout history, high-profile events that the status quo cannot explain or effectively respond to are catalysts for change. These events can often come as a surprise to movements, such as the 2007/08 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. In all cases, movements can impact the *reach* of an event (the scale of awareness among key powerholders or the public at large) and the *perceived significance* of the event (how important people think it is and the frame through which they see it) for how society should be organised.

Events can help to close the salience deficit by propelling an issue to the top of the public debate or reframing how it is perceived by the public or decision makers. For example, the anger over the murder of George Floyd in the US was utilised effectively by racial justice campaigners to further spur the Black Lives Matter movement. This helped increase the reach of the clear injustices of systemic racism (see figure 4.2), overcoming the barriers that meant similar events in the past had passed with little mainstream attention and without spurring debate and engagement across society.

The same can be seen in the example of Extinction Rebellion protests in April 2019, after which the UK Parliament declared an environment and climate emergency. The protests, which included the occupation of multiple sites across London and other cities around the world, dominated media headlines and social media activity, as figure 4.1 shows. The Extinction Rebellion protests also show how movements can create events of their own – though this might be more challenging and riskier than responding to ‘external’ events.

**FIGURE 4.1: THE EXTINCTION REBELLION PROTESTS SUCCESSFULLY CATAPULTED THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS UP THE AGENDA**

Search interest in the UK for “climate change” between 1 January 2018 and 30 August 2021; a value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term, while a value of 50 means that the term is half as popular

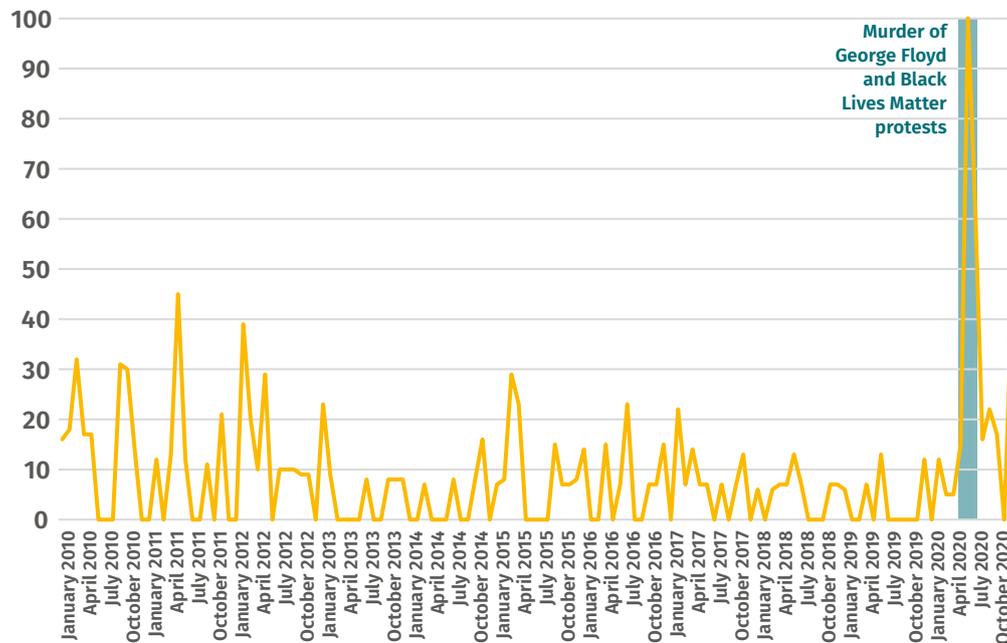


Source: Google Trends<sup>8</sup>

8 See: <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2018-01-01%202021-08-30&geo=GB&q=%2Fm%2F0d063v>

#### FIGURE 4.2: THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD AND THE SUBSEQUENT BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS PUSHED DISCUSSIONS OF ANTI-RACISM UP THE AGENDA

Search interest in the UK for “anti-racism” between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2020; A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular



Source: Google Trends<sup>9</sup>

Events can also be used to help address power deficits. This is because events can stimulate change in who holds power by disrupting existing sources of power. Think of how movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have used events to change hiring practises in elite institutions or demand for diverse spokespeople in the mainstream media. They can also create new power: think of how events like the AIDS crisis or #MeToo movement have ‘bonded’ people into a bigger and more activated movement.

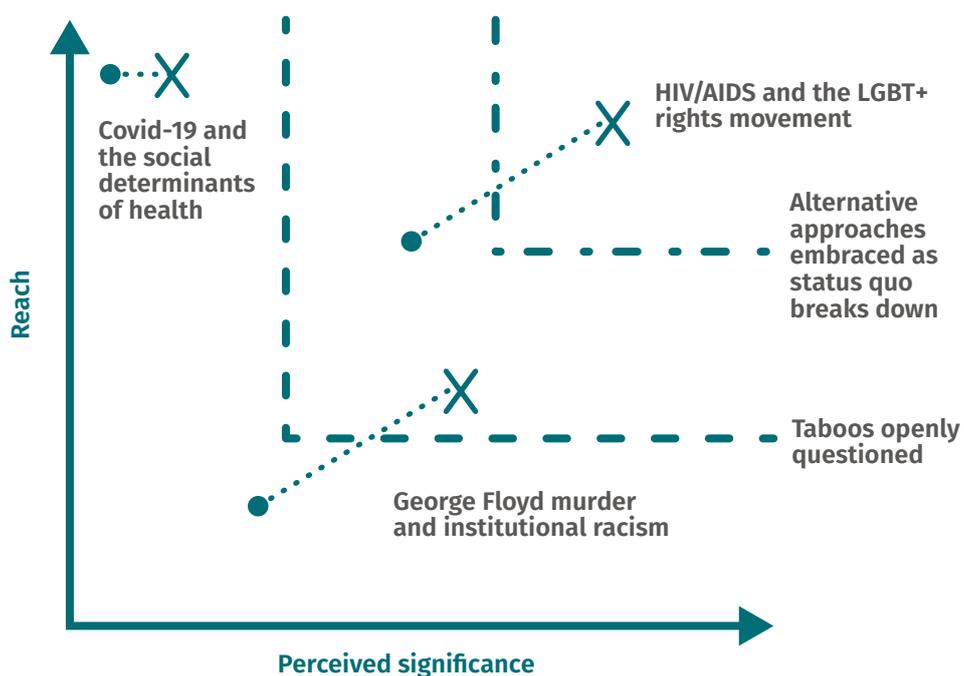
But ensuring an event is harnessed for change rarely happens by chance: it depends on how the event is collectively interpreted and acted upon and who leads the process by which that process occurs. If a movement doesn’t have the capability to act in the wake of an event – if it lacks the resources and capacity to understand the moment, create a new narrative and intervene in debates – it will struggle to take the opportunity of increased reach or perceived significance to make change happen.

This could be the case for the social determinants of health movement in the wake of Covid-19. The pandemic should be the turning point which exposes the need to think differently about health. But while the social determinants movement has closed much of the information deficit, it seems unlikely that it has the means (alternative narratives, campaigning infrastructure, diverse spokespeople) that would allow it to close the salience deficit and create new sources of power in order to change our collective approach to health.

9 See: [https://trends.google.co.uk/trends/story/US\\_cu\\_SjnIUUnMBAADx6M\\_en](https://trends.google.co.uk/trends/story/US_cu_SjnIUUnMBAADx6M_en)

Ultimately, the aim is for the reach and perceived significance of an event to pass a threshold where existing taboos are questioned and the status quo begins to become delegitimised as it struggles to explain what is happening or react convincingly. In turn, alternative approaches become increasingly attractive and compete to become the dominant way of thinking about the issue. This was the case in the wake of the tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the injustice of Section 28, which galvanised the LGBTQ+ community to drive change on their treatment in law and public attitudes, as point 3 on figure 4.3 shows.

**FIGURE 4.3: EVENTS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SHIFT THE REACH AND PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANCE OF A CAUSE IF THEY ARE HARNESSSED BY MOVEMENTS**



Source: Authors' analysis

### INFRASTRUCTURE IS IMPORTANT FOR MAKING THE MOST OF EVENTS

Maximising impact during events requires movement ecosystems to be prepared. Preparedness differs between movements. There is now an abundance of evidence, media output, and spokespeople who are ready to draw attention to and explain the growing impacts of the climate crisis, something which took decades to build. In contrast, race equality campaigners struggled to dominate the media framing around the Black Lives Matter protests in summer 2020, partly due to a lack of investment in a deep, diverse and connected ecosystem prior to the BLM.

No movement can ever be perfectly prepared to grasp the opportunities afforded by events. But there's a lot that can be done. These include having timely intelligence – to know that an event is happening before others – and infrastructure that enables the ecosystem to organise in response. It's particularly important for movements to have pre-existing and mature mechanisms that match movement resources with powerholders, including the movement's interpretation of why an event is happening and what should be done in response.

This is because, in fast-paced moments of change, powerholders are often grasping for explanations and alternatives, the timely delivery of which can lead to greater impact than in periods of stability. As Milton Friedman, an economist who played a key role in the movement for free market economics in post-war America, said, “only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around” (Friedman 2020).

Influencing the media narrative during events is particularly important – and there is much that movements can do in advance to ensure they’re well positioned to do so. Movement communicators can often be seen as the ‘usual suspects’, discounted or even dismissed by some audiences for having a predictable angle on an event. This is partly a result of a movement’s use of language and framing that might not be salient for certain target audiences. In turn, movement communicators might not regularly feature in the media in normal times, putting them at a disadvantage.

Instead, movements need a diversity of communicators who can cut through to key audiences, who use language that is catered to these audiences, and who already appear in the media or are well-placed to do so in response to events. This can be achieved through building some key infrastructure, which is useful in normal times and can ensure greater readiness for events, including:

- **Framing research and resources.** This starts with research to understand the perspectives, including assumptions and mental models, of target audiences. Frames and narratives are then developed, tested, and used for framing guides that are employed across the ecosystem to ensure coherent and more effective communications. These resources are updated to ensure they’re relevant and timely. The FrameWorks Institute is an example of an organisation that develops framing resources (FrameWorks Institute 2021).
- **Spokesperson networks.** Identifying and training spokespeople, who are served by a dedicated secretariat that matches them with opportunities in the media and provides ongoing support, drawing on the framing resources. These networks can also ensure movement spokespeople are more diverse and representative.
- **Strategic communications hub.** An organisation that supports communications strategy across the ecosystem and provides materials that are ‘unbranded’ and therefore can be used and modified by a range of organisations and individuals. These hubs undertake research to monitor aggregate media activity and sentiment and identify key opportunities and threats for the movement.

Alongside the media, similar infrastructure can be built for political parties. These include organisations that provide a ‘clearing house’ between elements of an ecosystem and politicians. These are organisations that help aggregate the views of key constituencies that matter to certain politicians, as well as knowledge on the problem and policy solutions. They act to effectively frame these for political audiences, as well as provide a space for politicians to consider and build coalitions. These can create virtuous feedback mechanisms in which demand from politicians can be encouraged, met, and deepened. For example, the Conservative Environment Network provides some of these functions in relation to conservatives seeking more action on the climate crisis (CEN 2021). Overall, cultivators can be well-placed to develop such infrastructure for the media and political parties.

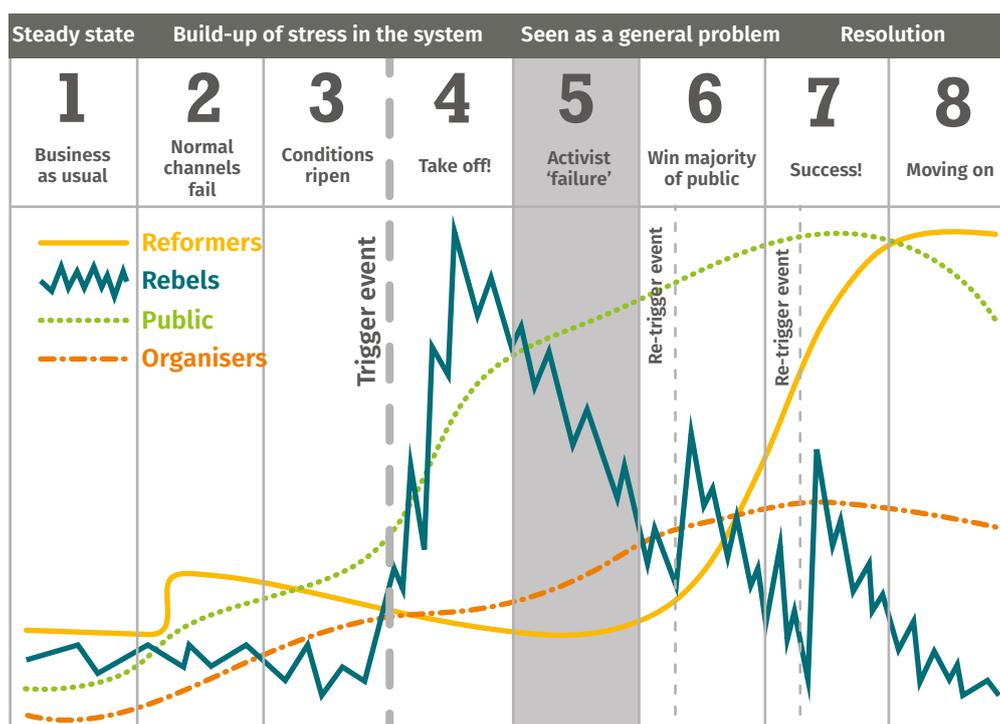
## THE PROCESS OF CHANGE CAN FOLLOW A FAMILIAR RHYTHM, WITH EVENTS PLAYING A KEY ROLE

*“One of the biggest drivers of antagonism [in movements] is a shared inability to see that some people have to be on the outside shouting in and those on the inside have to take a different approach. But together they add up to an effective strategy for change.”*

Interviewee, health inequality case study

The Movement Action Plan (MAP) developed by social activist Bill Moyer mapped these stages based on case studies of change (Moyer 1987). The MAP has contributed to movement theory around the world. Rebels, reformers, organisers, and helpers all play crucial roles at certain points. In Moyer’s original formulation, these groups sought to promote change in normal times. But it was only until events (‘trigger events’ in his formulation) provided the catalyst for what he calls the ‘take-off’ of a campaign – the point at which people are activated and the public debate shifts – as figure 4.4 illustrates.

**FIGURE 4.4: EVENTS CAN HELP TRIGGER A MOVEMENT TO REACH GREATER SCALE OR SIGNIFICANCE**



Source: Moyer 1987

The model helps us understand the perceived failure of activists and that rebels needs reformers and vice versa. Rebels grab the limelight during events, sometimes becoming synonymous with the problem in the moment. When change does not come immediately – as is often to case – they and others associate much of the initial activism with failure. But their role of rebels is only one among many. Reformers soon take on the momentum for change, providing a mechanism for taking forward the movement’s change agenda with powerholders. Meanwhile, successive ‘re-trigger’ events are exploited to keep the issue live. All along, organisers help rebels and reformers.

It can be useful for ecosystems to have a shared idea of where they are on the process and on what scale they are operating. For example, the Climate Change Act or the newer net-zero goal have been criticised by some environmental campaigners as only being long term targets and offering a foil for government inaction. But they have created momentum and focus that could potentially lead to deeper change, and therefore should be understood as being part of change that is earlier on in the cycle, or part of a longer cycle.

# INSIGHT 5.

## BUILD ON YOUR MOVEMENT'S ASSETS, MANAGE ITS LIMITATIONS

*“[If more than 80 per cent of people are in favour of change, securing it is easy. This is the tipping point beyond which something becomes mainstream - there is a consensus. If there is much less support than that, more work is needed. Either you need to persuade people who are agnostic to change their mind – to get a majority amongst the public”*

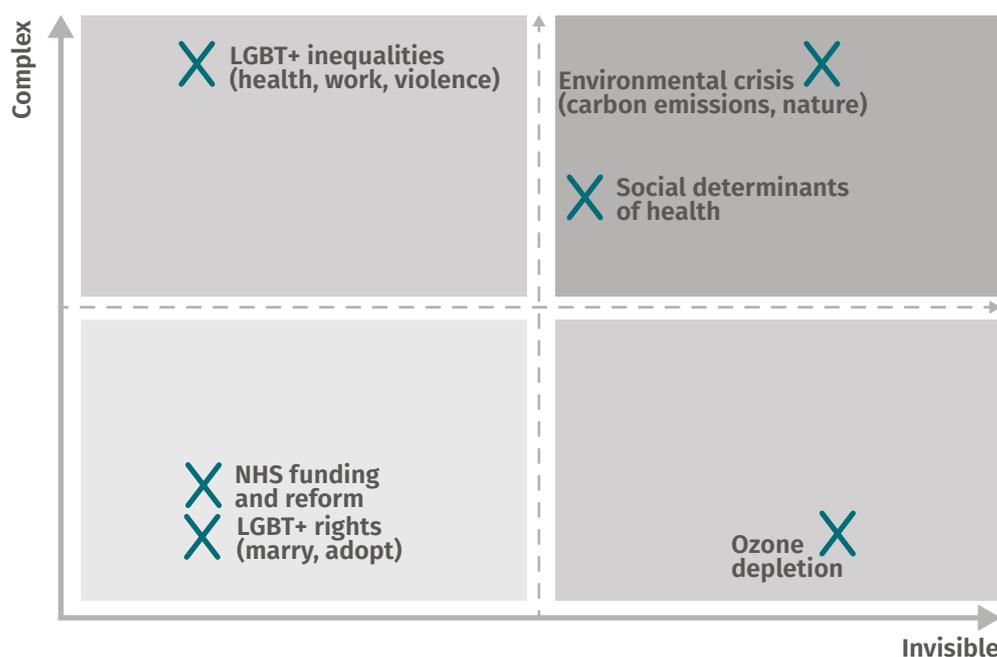
Interviewee



Movements differ in ‘what they have to work with’ in seeking to make change happen. They operate in different contexts, have differing assets to leverage and face different degrees of opposition. Our research highlights four dimensions that are particularly important.

1. **Complexity of the issue:** All big change is difficult to achieve. But some issues are relatively easier to shift if the political will can be summoned. They are what is often called in the complexity literature ‘simple’ or ‘tame’ problems. LGBTQ+ people can be given the right to marry through an act of parliament. By comparison other issues are more complex because the power to shift them is dispersed – they require behaviour change by all people, all of the time – or because they are multi-causal so there is no one simple message or action can deliver change. Examples of more ‘wicked’ problems include addressing LGBTQ+ bullying or day-to-day discrimination, the environmental crisis or health inequalities.
2. **Visibility or immediacy of the issue:** Some social issues are immediately visible and apparent. This makes it easier to galvanise those impacted or persuade others of the need for change by exposing the impact of not doing so. Those movements which relate to people’s identity are particularly easy to activate. By contrast, the impacts of other social problems might be more hidden from view, the impacts are delayed, geographically distant or less obviously linked to people’s identity. For example, the impact of racism or homophobia is immediately apparent to those impacted by it, is intrinsically linked to their identity and can be exposed to those who might be sympathetic to the cause (however difficult this last part can prove in practice). In contrast, the environmental crisis or the social determinants of health might be less visible: the impact is cumulative over time and the impacts will often not be felt until much later. It is also less easy – though not impossible – to link it to people’s identity. This can sometimes make it harder to activate people and build a coalition for change in the present.

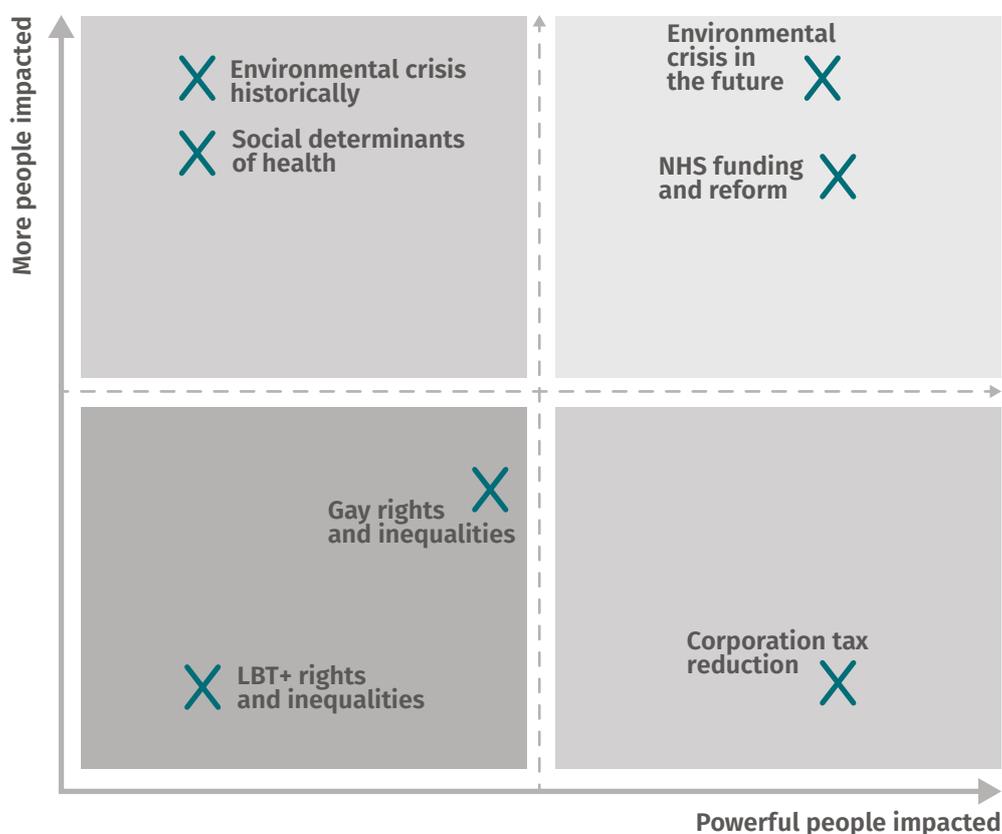
**FIGURE 5.1: SOCIAL ISSUES THAT ARE BOTH INHERENTLY COMPLEX AND INVISIBLE SUCH AS THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO SHIFT**



Source: Authors’ analysis

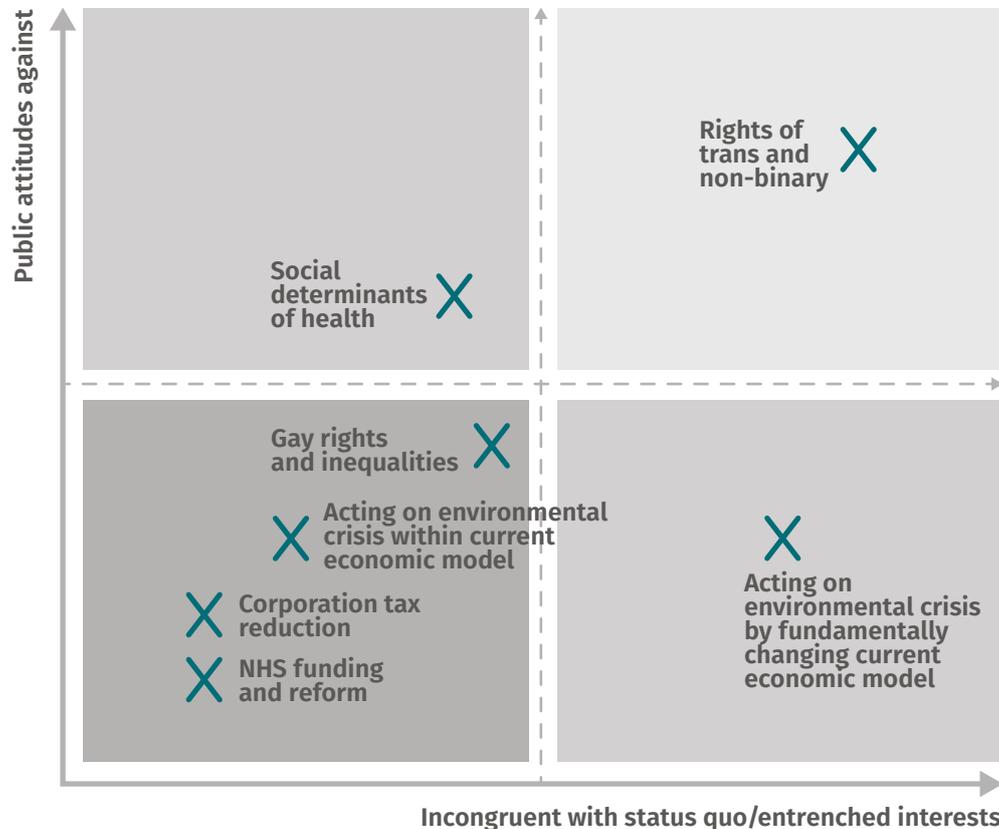
3. **Scale and power of affected population:** The amount of people affected by the social issue the movement is highlighting is vital. Some issues impact on a large group of people who are more likely to be already motivated to push for change, or more persuadable to do so. By contrast, others only directly (or obviously) impact a small group. This can be seen, for example, in the difference in the number of gay relative to trans or non-binary people. Furthermore, the power of these groups is also vital: the gay community includes many powerful, educated, white men who have championed change. This has helped secure gay rights. This has not historically been true of those facing racism or who are part of trans or non-binary communities.
4. **Amount of power – entrenched interest – set against change:** The degree to which the issue being championed by a movement is congruent with existing power structures and interests or social norms and beliefs is also vital. For example, action to protect the ozone layer (a very successful example of change) could be achieved without fundamentally challenging the liberal market economy model dominant in the UK and the US. It is much less clear that this is possible to achieve net zero decarbonisation in the coming decades. The contemporary environmental movement might therefore have to be much less congruent with the existing power structures than previous efforts. The degree to which people and organisations are actively opposed - have overtly conflicting beliefs - rather than agnostic, and therefore persuadable, is vital (see figure 5.3).

**FIGURE 5.2: SOCIAL ISSUES THAT IMPACT SMALLER GROUPS OF LESS POWERFUL PEOPLE ARE HARDER TO SHIFT**



Source: Authors' analysis

**FIGURE 5.3: SOCIAL ISSUES THAT OPPOSED TO DOMINANT SOCIAL BELIEFS AND INCONGRUENT WITH EXISTING POWER STRUCTURES ARE HARDER TO SHIFT**



Source: Authors' analysis

These dimensions combine to shape the size of challenge faced by a movement and what assets it has to deliver change. Put simply: these are the main determinants of the scale of the salience and power deficits. Those movements that have the biggest chance of success are focussing on issues that are relatively simple in nature, impact (directly or indirectly) a large population – in the clear and immediate ways – who can be mobilised around to support change, and as causes are more congruent with existing systems or norms.

But nothing worth fighting for comes easy. Most movements don't have all these components in their favour. Indeed, the existence of a movement is usually precisely because these challenges stand in the way. Instead, they are trying to tackle 'complex' or 'wicked' problems, that are not always visible or immediate, impact on smaller or less powerful groups, and push against power structures and social norms that are very entrenched.

The good news is that our research – and history – tells us that while this makes change harder to achieve, it does not make it impossible. Salience and power deficits are not destiny. However, it means that there is more burden on movements themselves to act to simplify issues in the public debate, make the invisible impacts of the status quo visible, broaden the coalition for change by exposing how injustice impacts all of us, and build power to counteract entrenched interests.

Movements must identify barriers to change and find ways to overcome them by leveraging their assets. We set out some stylistic potential approaches to doing this by using examples from our case studies in table 5.1.

**TABLE 5.1: POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO OVERCOMING THEM**

Potential barrier	Possible responses	Examples
<b>Complex issue</b>	Break the issue down into its component parts. Reframe the issue to simplify it in public debate.	Environment: used progress on ozone depletion and then air pollution to highlight the issue. Environment: simplify the goal ('net zero') or mechanism ('focus on transport').
<b>Invisible or distant issue</b>	Find innovative ways of exposing the problem. Reframe the issue so it feels more urgent and immediate.	Health: Smoking kills campaigns to make the invisible more visible. Environment: moral power of youth campaigns on scale of the problem and limited time.
<b>Small or excluded impacted population</b>	Create new allies to reinforce power of coalition. Put excluded groups into positions of power.	LGBTQ+: recruit family and friends (straight, cis gendered allies) to the cause. Racial justice: get people from minority ethnic groups into power.
<b>Powerful interests against change</b>	Find technologies/strategies that make it less challenging to those in power. Increase the power of those in favour of change and marginalise those against.	Environment: champion investment in technology to improve economic costs of transition. LGBTQ+ or racial justice: increase people from these groups in power, campaign to increase voice (BLM, PRIDE) and make racism/homophobia socially unacceptable.

Source: Authors' analysis

## MOVEMENTS HAVE REACHED A COMMON, CRITICAL MOMENT IN HISTORICAL PROCESSES OF CHANGE

*“Equality in law got won. But equality in practice remains a distant dream.”*

Workshop attendee

*“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives... Our struggles are particular, but we are not alone.”*

Audre Lorde (1982)

However, the approaches set out above to overcome the barriers to change do not come without compromise. Simplifying the story of what causes a problem or how it can be solved undoubtedly risks missing out on nuance or overpromising on delivery. For example, distilling the climate crisis to ‘net zero’ risks missing the overlapping nature crisis and the intersections of both with social and economic justice. Similarly, efforts to make an issue feel more urgent and immediate may tip over into being alarmist or engender a feeling of fatalism.

But perhaps the biggest risk is that in trying to win a wider coalition of support or decrease the entrenched interests against a cause, we fail to tackle the root cause of the problem. In the case of climate action, for example, some parts of the movement have increasingly posited that the climate crisis can be addressed

without significantly challenging the distribution of power in the economy nor the inherent mechanisms within capitalist economies that drive environmental destruction, including consumerism driven by the profit motive and exploitation of nature and communities and entire countries resulting from the need to minimise costs of production.

In turn, movements have often sought an 'assimilationist' model of change, seeking to capitalise on similarities between the movement and those in power and have therefore been dominated by particular demographic groups, often largely middle-class white Western men. Using the climate action example again, this has led to a historical marginalisation of those who are disproportionately impacted by the environmental crisis and who have contributed the least to causing it, including countries in the Global South and black, indigenous, and other people of colour. In the LGBTQ+ movement, this has seen those who are not white, gay, cis gendered people often left behind.

It is becoming increasingly clear that movements – whether seeking economic, environmental, or social change – face a similar challenge: the simplifications and accommodations set out above can limit their ability to realise the change they seek. Two implications seem increasingly clear.

- 1. Connecting movements is vital.** While movements can simplify the goal by focusing on a single issue – rights for gay people, reducing greenhouse gases, stopping racism, improving health outcomes – in reality, these issues are inseparable. Equality in law for sexual orientation or ethnicity might mean little in practice if most people within these communities cannot live 'equally' in practice because of deprivation, lack of access to opportunities, poor health or threat of environmental crisis. Societies are complex systems in which progress in one area is dependent on progress in others. There are no single, isolated issues.
- 2. Movements are only as powerful as their least powerful member.** Power is something all movements seek to build. But into the future, this power must be more broadly shared and inclusive. It must be built with the explicit goal of resolving the lack of diversity within movements and the power of those people in wider society. It is also essential that this power challenges the vested interests at the heart of contemporary capitalist economies, from fossil fuel companies, through those who determine and enforce the rules of financial markets, to the vast power imbalances at the heart of the global economy - and therefore how and for whom investments are made across society. It is only by taking on these big challenges that genuinely transformational change can occur.

# CONCLUSION

In recent years, the scale and pace of events has led some to doubt Martin Luther King's claim that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice". Instead, we must remember that the arc is only bent by the relentless organised efforts of inspiring social movements – as Luther King originally meant it. In an age of Covid-19, the environmental crisis, and vast inequalities, we can still drive progress – but those of us seeking social, economic, and environmental justice must redouble our efforts to create authentic, inclusive, powerful, and strategic change movements, as so many of us are already doing. This paper sets out some ways of how to further that effort and we hope you've found it useful.

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# APPENDIX:

## PROJECT INTERVIEWEES AND WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

Name	Organisation	Case study/workshop
Ayla Holdom	Stonewall	LGBTQ+ rights
Ben Goldsmith	Conservative Environment Network	Climate action
Lord (Chris) Smith	Labour peer	LGBTQ+ rights
David Buck	The King's Fund	Health inequality
Professor David McCoy	Queen Mary University of London	Health inequality
Isabella Gornall	Seahorse	Climate action
Dr Jo Bibby	Health Foundation	Health inequality
Joss Garman	European Climate Foundation	Climate action
Karen Chouhan	National Education Union	Race equality
Professor Kate Pickett	York University	Health inequality
Professor Katherine Smith	Strathclyde University	Health inequality
Keith Allott	European Climate Foundation	Climate action
Kieron Boyle	Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation	Health inequality
Kim McIntosh	Child Poverty Action Group	Race equality
Lord (John) Deben	Climate Change Committee	Climate action
Lord (Michael) Howard	Conservative peer	Climate action
Lord (Michael) Cashman	Non-affiliated peer	LGBTQ+ rights
Professor Sir Michael Marmot	University College London	Health inequality
Professor Paul Cairney	Stirling University	Health inequality
Paul Martin	LGBT Foundation	LGBTQ+ rights
Phyll Opoku-Gyimah	UK Black Pride	LGBTQ+ rights
Professor Claire Alexander	Manchester University	Race equality
Professor Matt Cook	Birkbeck University	LGBTQ+ rights
Richard Black	Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit	Climate action
Ryan Shorthouse	Bright Blue	Climate action
Sam Hall	Conservative Environment Network	Climate action
Siddhartha Mehta	Medact	Health inequality
Sir Peter Bottomley	Conservative MP	Race equality
Dr Tony O'Sullivan	Keep Our NHS Public	Health inequality
Warren Heppollette	Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership	Health inequality
Ian Burbidge	The RSA	Workshop
Nick Martlew	Digital Action	Workshop
Harry Quilter-Pinner	IPPR	Workshop
Nick Treloar	Runnymede Trust	Workshop
Laurie Laybourn-Langton	IPPR	Workshop
Natascha Adams	Freelance	Workshop
Funmibi Ogunlesi	NEON	Workshop
Iesha Small	YEF	Workshop
Paul Twocock	YEF	Workshop
Carys Roberts	IPPR	Workshop
Sharath Jeevan	Intrinsic Labs	Workshop
Dr Halima Begum	Runnymede Trust	Workshop
Thomas Cave	Turn2us	Workshop
Anam Parvaz	Oxfam	Workshop
Laura Russell	YEF	Workshop
Caleb Jackson	YEF	Workshop
John Page	Runnymede Trust	Workshop

Interviews and the workshop were held under the Chatham House Rule. Some interviewees or workshop attendees were compensated for their time.



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