Systems to #ShiftThePower

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Contents

Abstract

This paper explores the potential for 'systems theory' to #ShiftThePower from external agencies to local people in the delivery of international development programmes.

The paper is in four parts. Part 1 explains the background to #ShiftThePower and explains why a systems lens is required to achieve its aims. Part 2 describes key concepts in 'systems theory' and how they can be harnessed for social advance. Part 3 suggests that there are five dimensions of systems change required if we are to #ShiftThePower. Part 4 suggests a ten-step framework for taking the work to the next stage.

Part 1
Systems to #ShiftThePower

In Part 1, we examine why we need a systems approach to #ShiftThePower. We give a background to the #ShiftThePower campaign and the problems it is designed to solve.

#ShiftThePower

The #ShiftThePower campaign seeks to reform the practice of development aid and institutional philanthropy. The objective is to tip the balance of power towards local people and away from external agencies in the delivery of programmes. Such a process is designed to ensure that local people have control over the resources they need to enable them to build the communities they want.

The reasoning behind #ShiftThePower is that well-meaning external interventions into communities commonly yield results that local people don't want. Consider the following story:

> Every day, for generation after generation, women in one particular village walked down the hill to the river, filled vessels with fresh water, and carried them up the hill to serve their families and communities throughout the coming day. A large, major development organization installed pumps, pipes, and taps in order to alleviate the burden of this exhausting and demanding activity. However, the women of the village were disgruntled, complained, and worked against this technological intervention.
>
> Getting the water every morning was the one process through which women themselves could gather safely as women. They could connect, share, and discuss issues from their own perspectives. They could organize on areas of common interest. They could provide support for their friends experiencing problems – for example, domestic violence. They could have a bit of fun together. The new water system would take all of that away.

The author of this story, Warren Feek from the Communications Initiative, says that he has heard thousands of similar stories over the years.[1]

The #ShiftThePower campaign would ensure that such stories no longer occur. It encourages organizations in the development space to become small at the centre and transfer power to the edges. Resources should be allocated based on the principle of 'subsidiarity' – a principle that requires that social and political issues are dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution. As well as putting power where it belongs, this model has fewer transaction costs.

The past two decades have seen a flowering of local initiatives that put the principle of subsidiarity into practice. A 2011 report for the Ford Foundation noted:

> 'The immense challenges of climate change, world recession, retreat of the state and mounting inequality, not only threaten the future of the world, but are also breeding a cadre of interesting organizations working from the bottom up of our societies. There is a raft of social enterprises, community philanthropies, social movements, protest groups, women's funds, and hybrid forms that defy easy categorization.'[2]

The report charted the rise of a 'new democratic movement in philanthropy' through the growth of:

> '. . . community foundations, women's funds, human rights funds, and peace funds. Such funds play important interstitial roles in society, harness the power of small grants, build constituencies among people who are oppressed and marginalized, and negotiate the territory between such marginalized groups and governments.'

The emergence of such initiatives challenges the paradigm of development aid being delivered from the top-down. People classed as beneficiaries wish to take control of their communities and to reshape the aid architecture so that they are equal partners in development. As Jon Edwards has recently put it:

> 'Local people are coming together in order to take back control of their own communities, of their own destinies: fighting not just against the often vengeful ineptitude of local and national politics and business but also against agencies previously assumed to be allies in the struggles against poverty, marginalization and vulnerability – the international development sector itself.'[3]

1 This story is included in a paper by Warren Feek. See Feek, W. (2019) 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: An evidence-based strategy and investment paper for consideration by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)', available from: https://www.comminit.com/global/content/empowering-people-and-ensuring-inclusiveness-and-equality-evidence-based-strategy-and-in?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WF-July2019&utm_content=empowering-people-and-ensuring-inclusiveness-and-equality-evidence-based-strategy-and-in

2 Knight, B. (2011) *Supporting Democratic Philanthropy: Lessons from Ford Foundation Programs*, New York: Ford Foundation

3 Edwards, J. (2019) '45° Change shows the way', *Rethinking Poverty*, available from https://www.rethinkingpoverty.org.uk/45-degree-change/45-change-shows-the-way/

The demand for a better deal for local people is what drives the #ShiftThePower campaign. On the basis of its learning from having supported the emerging field of community philanthropy for ten years, the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF) initiated the Global Summit on Community Philanthropy. Held in Johannesburg in December 2016,[4] the meeting adopted the hashtag #ShiftThePower. This had an immediate impact, trending on Twitter in two African countries and in Canada. In addition, the #ShiftThePower campaign had 35.7 million impressions on Twitter over the course of the two days. A follow-up evaluation of the meeting in 2018 showed that #ShiftThePower had taken root as a social movement both in the minds of people who were at the event and those who were not. Of 142 respondents to the survey, 94 had attended the Summit and 48 had not. Asked whether the Summit had made them more aware of the need to #ShiftThePower to local actors in development, 96.4 per cent who attended the summit said that it had a 'major' or 'significant' effect, while 69.5 per cent of those who were not at the Summit said the same.

While the idea has much support, most notably among community philanthropy and civil society practitioners in the Global South, funders and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have been slow to respond. On the international front, INGOs and bilateral donors are stuck in a development lens developed 70 years ago, characterized by resources moving from the Global North to meet needs in the Global South, and a focus on finding solutions. The dominant paradigm involves treating people in the Global South as 'beneficiaries', rather than 'co-creators', with the effect that power is vested in northern institutions that remain wedded to the idea of 'doing to', as opposed to 'doing with', people in the Global South. The current paper is designed to help practitioners to turn their aspirations to #ShiftThePower into a reality.

The need for change

The problem this paper addresses is the growing recognition in the field that we can no longer ignore what Hilary Gilbert calls the 'open secret of development',[5] namely that unless power is shared with local people in developing policies, programmes and projects, development aid will continue to fail, because local people will be at the same place at the end of the programme as they were at the beginning.

This is all the more urgent because the field of international development is dysfunctional. A recent blog by Mary Ann Clements (from the Healing Solidarity Collective) suggests two dimensions to this. The first is that grassroots initiatives are starved of resources by the very institutions established to work towards a better world. The second is that many people working in INGOs experience a value drift between what they are committed to and the climate in which they work. At best, much of their time is consumed with the bureaucracy of aid; at worst, the environment they work in is toxic.

4 Alliance magazine published a special feature on #ShiftThePower to coincide with the Summit. See: Hodgson, J. and Knight, B. (2016) '#ShiftThePower: The rise of community philanthropy', *Alliance*, Vol. 21 No 4, December, pp 31–5

5 Gilbert, H. (2018) *Time to #ShiftThePower? Community philanthropy and durable development*, Johannesburg: Global Fund for Community Foundations, available from https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/time-to-shiftthepower-community-philanthropy-and-durable-dev/

Looking at this situation from the perspective of systems theory,[6] the emergent part of the field (developing from the bottom-up) is starved of resources, while the designed part (working from the top-down) is desperately unhappy. This is a recipe for failure. As Mary Ann Clements puts it:

> 'Buried in the development sector as it currently exists are many, many, frustrated people with very little time to think, whose days are consumed by log frames and budget details and who currently have very little time to be in the practice of building the relationships and actions that will enable us to do things differently.'

The consequences are:

> 'The great majority of us are exhausted, staring at never ending to-do-lists, staying busy with the tasks in hand rather than taking time and space to think a new paradigm into being.'

Think 'systems'

It is increasingly recognized that the only way to #ShiftThePower is through a systems lens. Several GFCF publications have suggested that this is the required approach to obtain the kinds of societies that we want. A report for Comic Relief, for example, states:

> 'Increasingly, the discourse on community is turning to systems theory to understand engagement with, between and beyond communities.[7] This is a 'network' or 'ecological' approach that puts *relationships* at the heart of development. Networks with multiple actors are harder to manage but are more durable. They are able to respond, adapt and re-group when part of the system is blocked. The systems approach is rapidly gaining ground and it is important for funders to be aware of it and to work with others to develop this approach. A systems lens also helps to shift the focus away from two typical donor preoccupations: one around the notion of scale (which tends to emphasize success as linear, financial growth) and the other regarding internal capacity – both of donors and of civil society organizations – which often results in the preference for donors to make fewer, larger grants. This often creates a dynamic of 'winners' and 'losers' at the local level. Instead, systems theory focuses more on the emergence of multiple 'hubs of influence' at the local and regional level, which can connect variously down to communities, across to peers, as well as up and out to global actors.'[8]

6 https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/emergence-and-design-2a295069375f

7 Dupree, S. and Allan, C. (August 2017) *Resilient funders*, Global Greengrants, available from https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-resilient-funder-and-why-does-it-matter-more-than-ever-guest-blog-from-global-greengrants/

8 Hodgson, J., Knight, B. and Wilkinson-Maposa, S. (2017) *New Horizons for Community-Led Development: Recommendations for Funders*, Commissioned by Comic Relief, Johannesburg, Global Fund for Community Foundations, available from: https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/new-horizons-for-community-led-development-recommendations-f/

Changing systems is hard because it involves tackling embedded ways of doing things by established agencies. The status quo carries many benefits for the supply-side of international aid, most notably in the form of jobs and careers. There are vested interests who will resist change. We are, in effect, dealing with a variant of Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy, which suggests that the status quo persists over time because powerful interests in the 'leadership classes' refuse to give up their privileges. A quotation attributed to Upton Sinclair puts this in a nutshell: 'It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.'[9]

Structure of this paper

This paper sets out what needs to change and how it might occur. The goal is to get beyond the aspirations of the hashtag, and to begin to make the necessary changes.

To accomplish this, we need to understand how systems theory works. This is the job of Part 2 of the paper, in which we clarify the meaning of common terms, such as 'a systems lens', 'an ecosystem approach', and 'field building for system change.' Conceptual clarity is important because, while such terms as 'the philanthropy ecosystem' have been imported wholesale into the language of the field, they risk becoming meaningless clichés because they are often used with little grounding in scientific understanding.

In Part 3, we describe five key changes necessary if the #ShiftThePower campaign is to be successful. We produce evidence about why such changes are necessary and what such changes would look like in practice.

In Part 4, we set out a framework for action to #ShiftThePower. This section draws on three retreats. One was held at The Rockefeller Brothers Fund Pocantico Center in November 2017 with members of the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy and fellow travelers including Root Change and the Non-Profit Finance Fund. A second was held at Tewa with the GFCF board and partners in March 2018, and a third was held with the board of the GFCF and board and staff from Community Foundations of Canada in January 2019. The retreats examined how to make progress through a 'systems approach', and reviewed material already produced by the GFCF, the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy and other partner organizations in the field to consider how we might make progress. The retreats concluded that work of the GFCF, so far, has been successful in highlighting the issues and setting out solutions, but current organizational arrangements have reached the limit of what they can achieve, and adjustments are needed.

9 See: https://quoteinvestigator.com/2017/11/30/salary/

Part 2
Key Concepts in Systems Theory

The purpose of Part 1 of the paper is to consider the theoretical context of the work and to demonstrate that the campaign to #ShiftThePower is rooted in sound evidence. We step back from the #ShiftThePower debate to review the science of systems.

A systems lens

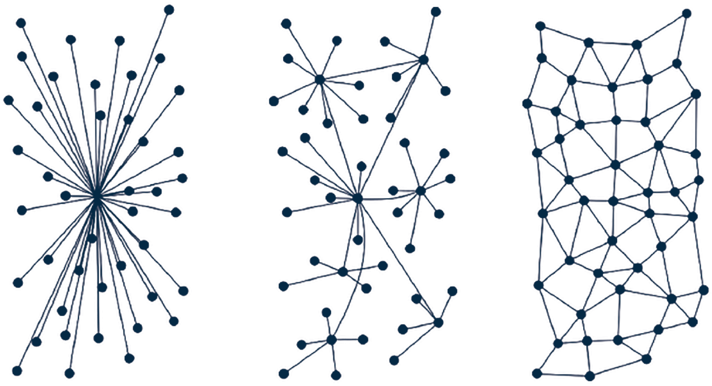
The French railway system is a good place to start thinking about systems theory.[10] In the 19th century, Victor LeGrand created an orderly, geometric railway system which, through rapid, long-distance communications, was designed to bring about the full integration of the country. This was reckoned to be far superior to the Prussian rail system, which was a hodgepodge of lines run by 50 different companies. The French system, known as the LeGrand Star, was the envy of the world.

However, in 1870 when the Franco-Prussian war broke out, Otto von Bismarck could transport nearly twice as many troops to the front lines as the French. The reason was because the jumbled lines allowed six ways of reaching the destination, compared with the single route of the LeGrand Star. This meant that though there was much redundancy in the Prussian system, high traffic would not overload it.

Systems theorists call this the advantage of 'equifinality' – the choice of having multiple means to a single goal. This in turn relates to the principle of 'requisite variety', which states that if you face a complex problem, the means of resolving it must be more complex than the problem itself.

So, while simple linear efficiencies in systems are effective in many circumstances, they can create bottlenecks. In the case of the LeGrand Star, the bottleneck was in Paris, since so many troops had to travel through it, which meant that the system couldn't cope with the volume of traffic.

10 This story is told by Johnson, S. (2014) *Future perfect: The case for progress in a networked age*, New York: Riverhead Books



Centralized (A) Decentralized (B) Distributed (C)

The kind of systems thinking used by the Legrand Star was a centralized network, with all lines radiating out from Paris, while the Prussian system was a distributed network with no centre, an arrangement that is sometimes called the ‘Baran Network’ (after Paul Baran, a researcher at RAND, who designed a robust communications network using ‘redundancy’ and ‘digital’ technology that eventually became the foundation for the World Wide Web). See the diagram (above) used by Paul Baran to give a visual representation of the difference. Note that the distributed network is not the same as a decentralized network, because the latter has primary and secondary nodes in a way that a fully distributed network does not. We will return to a decentralized network later, but for the moment are concerned with the difference between centralized and distributed.

It would be a mistake to think that distributed networks are always superior to centralized ones. The most effective network depends on the circumstances. As a rule of thumb, centralized systems are good at dealing with simple problems; while distributed networks are required to deal with complex ones. The reason for this is that centralized systems inevitably increase the density of a network by including fewer nodes and so speed up transactions through the system; while distributed networks offer a greater range of potential solutions, because the larger number of nodes and lower density in the system creates redundancy, enabling alternative and complex routes to be found.[11]

A common problem occurs when a centralized network is applied in circumstances where a distributed network is required. This was the fatal flaw in centralized planning that Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek spotted. He argued that a centralized network would inevitably be confronted by an information bottleneck as the vast complexities of a society were reduced to a legible form that a small number of planners could use to make decisions.[12] Jane Jacobs eviscerated top-down planning of this kind because it resulted in the lifeless housing projects that sprouted in cities across America as an answer to the housing crisis.[13] Replacing the local, intimate and improvised nature of a city street with a housing estate destroyed the connective tissue of human life and led to the conditions

11 The means of calculating density is as follows. Density = AC PC, where PC = N (N-1)2 (Key: AC = actual connections; PC = possible connections & N = number of nodes in a network)

12 Hayek, F.A. (1945) ‘The use of knowledge in society, *The American Economic Review*. Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 519–530.

13 Jacobs, J. (1961) *The death and life of great American cities*, New-York: Vintage, 1961.

described by Leo Rainwater in his *Behind ghetto walls: Black families in a federal slum*.[14] The big enemy was the automobile because this destroyed street life and reduced the intimate connections that turn neighbourhoods into communities.

The enthusiasm for planned societies that gripped the world in the 30 years after the Second World War came to grief because its method of delivery was based on a centralized network.

The relevance of centralized versus distributed networks

Hopefully, the previous section has underlined the importance of systems theory and its relevance to the distribution of power in the world. Until recently, the funding community has been content to use simple logic models of development that trace grants through to positive outcomes, based on a 'Fordist' model that uses command and control processes to produce standardized goods and services for passive beneficiaries. This is essentially a centralized model of delivery.

Increasingly, the field has seen that this method has not worked, and a distributed model is gaining ground. The growing egalitarianism in the field, combined with modern technology, mean that people now work through an interconnected web of peer networks in which both funders and funded are active partners in choosing what is delivered and who is involved. Co-creation has replaced the production line. These trends have been growing in philanthropy over the past ten years as foundations have played increasingly active problem-solving roles by building fields, brokering collaborative arrangements, and supporting systems change and advocacy. By becoming more strategic and focusing on outcomes, foundations often discover that complex social problems require adaptive solutions that must be developed in partnership with multiple stakeholders. Increasingly, this is being labelled as an 'ecosystem approach.'

Clarifying our terms

The word 'ecosystem' is suddenly being used everywhere. Language matters and we need to be careful because fashions come and go in philanthropy and development circles. Without proper understanding of terms, such fashion can distort. Writing about the emergence of the term 'civil society' after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Caroline Hartnell and I reviewed a comment made by Richard Holloway:

> 'Rarely has there been a concept in the development field that has grabbed people's attention so quickly and become so widely used in such a short space of time as the concept of civil society.'[15]

We rephrased this as:

14 Rainwater, L. (1970) *Behind ghetto walls: Black families in a federal slum*, Chicago: Aldine. Reprinted by Routledge, 2017.

15 Knight, B. and Hartnell, C. (2000) 'Civil society: Is it anything more than a metaphor for hope for a better world?', *Alliance Magazine*, 1 September

Back to contents

'Rarely in the history of development can a term have progressed so quickly from obscurity to meaninglessness without even a nanosecond of coherence.'

The field of development and philanthropy is not good at managing its knowledge. This is emphasized in a recent article by Gerry Salole called 'Déjà vu all over again': The short attention span and the cyclical obliviousness of the philanthropic and development industries. We tend to jump into fads and fashions without being aware that each of them has a history and a provenance, which means we tend to repeat the same mistakes endlessly.

Part of the problem is that there is an abundance of terms that are increasingly used as if they are interchangeable, but which are not. These include 'ecosystem', 'systems theory', and 'field building.' Common to each term is a holistic view of our world according to which the interrelationships between all things matter, and single actions will have multiple effects, so that we cannot solve a single problem without affecting other factors in our world. The implications for community philanthropy of this approach are important but each of these terms means different things, and we should avoid casual use of terms that have more precise meanings in scientific contexts.

There is a deep and dense literature on these points.[16] This is not the place to go into detail, but we should – at the very least – be aware of the ways that these terms are understood before we use them. Here is a review of the main terms.

What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is the complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space. It consists of a community of organisms together with their physical environment. Ecosystems can be of different sizes and can be marine, aquatic or terrestrial. Broad categories of terrestrial ecosystems are called biomes. In ecosystems, both matter and energy are conserved. Energy flows through the system – usually from light to heat – while matter is recycled.

Ecosystems with higher biodiversity tend to be more stable with greater resistance and resilience in the face of disruptive events. An ecosystem can be categorized into its abiotic constituents, including minerals, climate, soil, water, sunlight, and all other nonliving elements, and its biotic constituents, consisting of all its living members. Linking these constituents together are two major forces: the flow of energy through the ecosystem, and the cycling of nutrients within the ecosystem

The fundamental source of energy in almost all ecosystems is radiant energy from the sun. The energy of sunlight is used by the ecosystem's autotrophic, or self-sustaining, organisms. Consisting largely of green vegetation, these organisms are capable of photosynthesis – i.e., they can use the energy of sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into simple, energy-rich carbohydrates. The autotrophs use the energy stored

16 A good place to start is Morton, T. (2018) *Being ecological*, London: Pelican Books

within the simple carbohydrates to produce the more complex organic compounds, such as proteins, lipids and starches, that maintain the organisms' life processes. A particularly good introduction to ecosystems is given in a three-minute TED talk by Eric Berlow.

When we use the term 'ecosystem' outside of its biological context, applying its concepts to human concerns of policy and practice, we must be careful. We must recognize that, to some extent, we are involved in analogical thinking here, and that we are often speaking in metaphor. Most references to 'ecosystem' would be more correctly expressed as 'systems theory.'

Systems theory

An old joke, and one retold by P.D. Ouspensky in his 1931 *A new model of the universe*,[17] is that when God made the world, she did not construct problems in accord with their division into university faculties. While this joke is in a sense simple and silly, it also reveals a profound truth, namely that categories matter and it is difficult to reach broad and general conclusions about a field if the dominant frame of study is narrow and specialized.

The way academia organizes its knowledge tends to militate against overall progress in human affairs because this would involve joining up many branches of thought at the same time, and the rewards of scholarship typically mean that people pursue insights into increasingly specialized fields and there are few people looking at the whole. The antidote to this is systems theory.

Systems theory is the interdisciplinary study of systems. A system is a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts that is either natural or man-made. Every system is delineated by its spatial and temporal boundaries, surrounded and influenced by its environment, described by its structure and purpose or nature and expressed in its functioning. In terms of its effects, a system can be more than the sum of its parts if it expresses synergy or emergent behaviour. Changing one part of the system usually affects other parts and the whole system, with predictable patterns of behaviour. For systems that are self-learning and self-adapting, growth and adaptation depend upon how well the system is adjusted with its environment. Some systems function mainly to support other systems by aiding in the maintenance of the other system to prevent failure.

The goal of systems theory is to discover a system's dynamics. It is designed to uncover the principles, purposes, and methods that yield optimum equifinality.[18] General systems theory is about broadly applicable concepts and principles, as opposed to concepts and principles applicable to one domain of knowledge. It distinguishes dynamic or active systems from static or passive systems.

A critical variable is 'emergence.' The formation of complex symmetrical and fractal patterns in snowflakes exemplifies emergence in a physical system. A termite

17 Ouspensky, P. D. (1931) *A new model of the universe*, New York: Alfred P. Knopf
18 Bertalanffy, L. (1968) *General systems theory: Foundations, development, applications*, New York: George Braziller.

cathedral mound produced by a termite colony offers a classic example of emergence in nature. In philosophy, systems theory, science and art, emergence occurs when 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts', meaning the whole has properties its parts do not have. These properties come about because of interactions among the parts (in mathematical shorthand, W = P + I, where W is the whole, P the parts and I the interactions between them).

Field building for systems change

Alongside the use of the word 'ecosystem' another fashionable term is 'field building for systems change.' This idea reflects the growing recognition among philanthropies that they cannot address deep seated issues or tackle societal change on their own, and so they increasingly recognize that they need to work together on this. This is increasingly referred to in philanthropy and development circles as an 'ecosystem approach.'

However, this is a category mistake. Timothy Morton dismisses the assertion that human beings can 'take an ecological approach in building a field.'[19] His work suggests that such a statement represents the ultimate anthropomorphic distortion because, contrary to received wisdom, human beings are not the centre of the ecosystem.[20] Rather, they coexist with non-human beings in a state of a mixed relationship of 'hostipality' (an amalgam of hospitality and hostility). Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours (2018) point out that the use of the term 'ecosystem' is a metaphor:

> 'The increased application of ecosystem/ecological thinking to ways of analysing aspects of human organization has employed a metaphorical approach by utilizing abstractions gleaned from observations of the natural world to aid understanding of the human social world.'[21]

Metaphors are useful to guide our understanding, but they are unreliable guides to what actions we should take when we begin work on Monday, because at some point the analogy may well break down so that action will be based on false premises.

This point is illustrated perfectly by Bush Foundation President Jen Ford Reedy in her TEDx talk on ecosystem philanthropy. She highlights the potential pitfalls of quick-fix problem solving that disrupts an ecosystem versus the benefits of longer-term, creative approaches that can change an ecosystem. However, she also shows that this is not a scientific task in the sense that understanding of ecosystems or the application of scientific systems theory will yield the answers to complex problems.

Reedy gives examples of the 'Cobra Effect', which is how apparently well thought-through ecological interventions commonly produce the opposite effect of what was intended. The Cobra Effect originated during British rule of colonial India. The British government

19 Morton, op. cit.

20 Think about the bacteria in your gut and ask yourself the question: 'do I own the bacteria or do the bacteria own me?'

21 Hodgson, A. and Spours, K. (2018) 'A social ecosystem model: Conceptualising and connecting working, living and learning in London's New East', *ELVET Research Briefing No 3*, Institute of Education, March

was concerned about the number of venomous cobra snakes in Delhi. The government therefore offered bounty for every dead cobra. Initially, this was a successful strategy as large numbers of snakes were killed for the reward. Eventually, however, enterprising people began to breed cobras for the income. When the government became aware of this, the programme was scrapped, causing the cobra breeders to set the now-worthless snakes free. This resulted in an increase in the wild cobra population. The apparent solution for the problem made the situation worse.

So, while field building for systems change can learn from ecology and systems theory, it is essentially a series of actions based on hypotheses about what might happen rather than one guided by a firm body of scientific knowledge that can guarantee success.

There is a growing body of interest in field building for systems change from organizations such as Ariadne,[22] Foundation 3.0, the Lankelly Chase Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. There is also a growing literature on philanthropic collaboration, which has been summarized by Collaborate.[23]

A helpful guide called Systems change: What it is and how to do it is based on the ideas of field building, systems theory and ecology produced by New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) and Lankelly Chase. This is full of useful principles and practical advice about:

1. Understanding needs and assets
2. Engaging multiple actors
3. Mapping systems
4. Doing it together
5. Distributive leadership
6. Fostering a learning culture

At the same time, the guide points out:

> 'There is no blueprint for how to bring about systems change, and it certainly is not an easy thing to do. Changing the way systems operate requires vision, persistence and, in some cases, luck. At its core, systems change is about maximising social impact with the resources available, and thinking strategically about problems and solutions while setting aside personal and institutional interests.'

The conclusion from the NPC and Lankelly Chase guide is that there is no 'right way' of doing systems change and the appropriate methodology will depend on the situation.

Unfortunately, there are few current examples of how this is being done, though promising work is being undertaken by the RSA and New Economics Foundations

22 http://www.ariadne-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Ariadne_2017Forecast.pdf

23 Kippin, H. and Swinson Reid, R. (2016) *A new funding ecology – A blueprint for action*, London: Collaborate, Big Lottery Fund and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

on Health as a social movement: Theory into practice and the Near Network on Transforming the humanitarian financing landscape. As the Lankelly Chase and NPC work shows, most literature on systems change is aspirational rather than empirical. While there is a wealth of material that says, 'we need to address systems change', there is little that says, 'we have addressed systems change.'

Rather than looking for current examples, better guides may be found in history by studying systematic campaigns to change systems over time. Two examples stand out here – one from the left and one from the right in politics. One is the search for the economics of democratic socialism during the 1920s and 30s that resulted in the mixed economies that governed Europe in the thirty years since the Second World War (Durbin, 1985),[24] and the other is the process that undermined that vision and reinstated the principles of the free market economy (Cockett, 1994).[25] There are other examples, and it would be useful to examine these to see how they worked. A remarkably successful campaign, for example, was the 50-year effort on drinking and driving.[26]

Making it up

A central theme from this paper so far is that there is no easy fix to systems change. There is little in science or ecology that we can apply directly, though there are some general principles that can be helpful going forward. What we do on Monday is up to us and in our hands. An optimistic way of putting this, borrowing from Luke Skywalker, is to say: 'the force is with us.'

There are good reasons for such optimism. There are changes afoot in the world in which many people are searching for a new 'organizing principle for society' (defined as 'the dominant method by which decisions are made and resources allocated'). 'Fordism', the operating principle that characterized the mixed economy of the social democratic era between 1945 and 1975, has been largely swept away. Social advance was based on a centralized state using a command and control methodology relying on prediction, planning, management and technical ability. This model failed in the 1970s, because it was unable to cope with the oil crisis and the dismantling of the Bretton Woods arrangements that had enabled states to run their own affairs using fiscal instruments to regulate their economies.

The era of the free market which superseded it, and which was based on choice, consumption, private ownership and freedom to manage as the key drivers of decisions, is also nearing the end of its time. We have come to see that the costs – in terms of environmental degradation, financial instability and global inequality – outweigh the material benefits of economic growth. It is not only environmentally sensitive left-wingers such as George Monbiot who see the need for change,[27] but also establishment figures

24 Durbin, E. (1985) *New Jerusalems: Labour Party and the economics of democratic socialism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

25 Cockett, R. (1994) *Thinking the unthinkable: think-tanks and the economic counter-revolution, 1931–83*, London: Harper Collins.

26 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/motoring/road-safety/11215676/50-years-of-drink-driving-campaigns.html

27 Monbiot, G. (2016) 'The thirteen impossible crises that humanity now faces', *The Guardian*, 25 November.

such as Christine Lagarde, who persistently warned about growing inequality when she was managing director of the International Monetary Fund.[28]

Many people in civil society now seek a new organizing principle that builds on the energy and vitality of the emerging economic and social forces which tend towards a more democratic, convivial and egalitarian spirit.[29] The search finds expression in books on 'new power'[30] and 'rethinking poverty.'[31] A particularly thoughtful analysis has been conducted by Pablo Solón, who says we must find simultaneous answers to a variety of bad practices – including capitalism, extractivism, plutocracy, anthropocentrism and patriarchy – and join them up.[32]

28 Iwing, J. (2016) '"Inequality is feeding protectionism", I.M.F chief warns', *New York Times*, 5 April.

29 Goldstraw, K. and Diamond, J. (2017) 'Civil society and a good society: Conclusions from our collaborative conversations', available from https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust/

30 G Timms, H. and Heimans, J. (2018) *New power: how it's changing the 21st century and why you need to know*, London: MacMillan.

31 Knight, B. (2017) *Rethinking poverty: What makes a good society?* Bristol: Policy Press

32 Solón, P. (2017) *Systemic alternatives*, La Paz: Fundación Solón

Part 3
Five Dimensions of System Change

The great success of the hashtag #ShiftThePower is that it has a high emotional appeal without restricting the content of what this might look like in practice. This is a good approach in raising consciousness and rallying people around a common banner, but is less useful as a way of understanding the specificities necessary to change things. In this section, we set out the changes we want and how these differ from what we have now.

There is much about this contained in the GFCF's materials. Hilary Gilbert's paper[33] is particularly helpful in this respect. Summarizing her work and other GFCF materials, there are five main things that we seek to change. These can be set out as follows:

Variable	Actual State	Desired State
Added value	Transaction of resources	Transformation of power
Scale	Big is best	Small is beautiful
Ownership	Colonial	Self-determined
Control of resources	Centralized	Distributed
Evaluation	Linear and logical	Abductive and creative

We will now summarize the main points of difference between the actual state and the desired state on each of the variables in the table.

From transaction to transformation

Beginning with the need to move from a model of added value based on the 'transaction of resources' to a 'transformation of power', there is now much evidence that a transactional approach does not work. People don't want what organizations deliver. In their report *Time to listen: hearing people on the receiving end of international aid*, Mary Anderson, Dayna Brown and Isabella Jean have assembled the views of almost 6,000 people.[34] Their work suggests widespread dissatisfaction. Three complaints are commonplace. First, aid creates dependency; second, it reinforces existing hierarchies

33 Gilbert, H. (op.cit.)

34 Anderson, M., Brown, D. and Jean, I. (2012) *Time to listen: hearing people on the receiving end of international aid*, CDA. Available from https://www.cdacollaborative.org/publication/time-to-listen-hearing-people-on-the-receiving-end-of-international-aid/.

of power; and third, it has little respect for local people. A similar point is made in an award-winning book by Darren McGarvey:

> 'Truth be told, much of the work carried out in deprived communities is as much about the aims and objectives of the organizations facilitating it as it is about local needs. And notably, the aim is rarely to encourage self-sufficiency. Rather the opposite, each engagement and intervention creating more dependency on outside resources and expertise, perpetuating the role of the sector as opposed to gradually reducing it.' (p 98)[35]

Transformation depends on ownership and the full participation of people seeking the change. This is evident in an important study conducted by Hilary Cottam.[36] She shows that people on the receiving end of social services must take charge of what is delivered by professionals, or else the services do not work. Her findings are in accord with the work of Carl Rogers, who showed the importance of person-centred therapy.[37] A critical component is the idea of 'dignity', which is diminished if people on the receiving end of aid do not have control over the outcomes.[38] Despite lofty rhetoric, dignity is typically absent in the aid process and accounts for the high rates of failure, as described by Hilary Gilbert.[39]

To correct this, we must take an 'asset based' approach to development, which entails seeing every person as a potential contributor to positive change, rather than as a beneficiary who lacks something. Such deficit-mindedness is correlated with failure in social programmes.[40]

From big is best to small is beautiful

Turning to the question of scale, the current orthodoxy is that 'big is best' when it comes to achieving results. However, this is not necessarily so and there is evidence that 'small is beautiful' delivers more. Despite generations of experience that large-scale top-down interventions do not work, because they encourage passivity, produce moral blindness and encourage a culture of dependency,[41] the aid industry believes that only big organizations working on a large scale can deliver change. Mary Fifield and her colleagues highlight the 'myths and misperceptions of scalability', showing the limitations of an ill-defined approach to develop the 'capacity to create a large positive

35 McGarvey, D. (2017) *Poverty safari*, Edinburgh: Luath Press
36 Cottam, H. (2018) *Radical help*, London: Virago
37 Rogers, C. (1980) *A way of being*, New York: Mariner Books.
38 Knight, B. and Sahai, C. (2018) 'Dignity and development', Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, available from http://www.psjp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Dignity-and-Development.pdf
39 Gilbert, H. (op.cit.)
40 Fritz, R. (1989) *The path of least resistance*, New York: Ballantine Books.
41 Wright, C. (2000) *A community manifesto*, London: Routledge.

impact . . . through budget size, numbers of constituents, number of regions, and other quantitative benchmarks.'[42]

High rates of failure tend to occur because size and systems get in the way. In *Small is beautiful*, E.F. Schumacher showed that in social organization, diseconomies of scale set in at a very early stage.[43] In any organization, while the number of people increases in an arithmetic progression, the number of relationships increases in a geometric progression. This is shown in the following table:

People and relationships in an organization

Number of individuals	Number of relationships
4	6
10	45
100	4,950
500	124,750
1,000	499,500

As organizations grow bigger, they become more difficult to manage. Psychological research repeatedly shows the importance of the number seven (plus or minus two) in the way we process information.[44] For example, while we can typically remember a list of seven items in our short-term memory, this becomes almost impossible if there are nine or more items, at which point we have to write a list. Applying this rule to how we manage relationships in organizations, once a group increases beyond seven people, it needs to split into smaller groups to manage the complexity of the relationships involved (while we can manage 21 simultaneous relationships, it is hard to manage 28). As numbers increase, we begin to get the information blockages we saw in the LeGrand Star.

This explains why large organizations need to split into departments or working teams. Alongside such specialization comes the need for the centralization of authority, financial control and accountability. Sociologist Max Weber described this process as the 'iron cage' that traps individuals in systems based on teleological efficiency, rational calculation and control, leading to the bureaucratization of social order as 'the polar night of icy darkness.'[45] The damaging consequences of bureaucratic society were highlighted by Ivan Illich in *Tools for Conviviality*, who wrote that beyond a certain point, scale frustrates the end for which an organization was originally designed, and so becomes a threat to society itself:

42 Fifield, M., Hodgson, J. and Pelosi, N. (2017) *An untapped resource? The extractives industry and community self-management of assets*, Johannesburg: Global Fund for Community Foundations, available from https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/an-untapped-resource-the-extractives-industry-and-community/

43 Schumacher, E.F. (1973) *Small is beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered*, London: Bond and Briggs. This is the 'network effect' in which the formula is #relationships = #people x (#people -1)/2

44 Miller, G. A. (1956) 'The magical number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information'. *Psychological Review*. 63 (2): 81–97.

45 Weber, M. 1994) Political Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), Ed. Peter Lassman. Trans. Ronald Speirs. Cambridge UP, 1994

Back to contents

> 'Society can be destroyed when further growth of mass production renders the milieu hostile, when it extinguishes the free use of the natural abilities of society's members, when it isolates people from each other and locks them into a man-made shell, when it undermines the texture of community by promoting extreme social polarization and splintering specialization, or when cancerous acceleration enforces social change at a rate that rules out legal, cultural, and political precedents as formal guidelines to present behavior . . . At this point it becomes irrelevant whether an enterprise is nominally owned by individuals, corporations, or the state, because no form of management can make such fundamental destruction serve a social purpose.'[46]

If they seek growth, market share and influence, charities are not immune from such developments. Scandals at Save the Children and Oxfam UK show, in the words of the International Development Committee of MPs, an 'abject failure' to deal with longstanding concerns about sexual exploitation. In addressing the issue, the organizations have shown more concern for their reputations than for the victims. But this is not all. Former staff have suggested that, behind the disgrace, there are factors of ambition that subvert the noble charitable goals of the institutions. Writing in *Open Democracy*, Jonathan Glennie notes that one of the goals of Save the Children was to 'take down Oxfam.'[47] The desire for growth and influence have led to falls from grace of other charities, including the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, whose relentless search for growth led to a culture of 'workplace bullying and harassment.' This is very serious. These developments have been the last in a long line of events that have reduced trust in charities, which has hit an all-time low.

We can see therefore that a vision of a good society based on large institutions may be a flawed idea. Not only that, but scaling-up often fails in its own terms. In their review of research on state capability, Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock have explored the processes of scaling up: what works in one location and transposing it to another is mere isomorphic mimicry and commonly fails to take root in the new place because the cultural factors that made it work in the first case are absent in the second.[48] This leads to a lack of implementation capacity among governments, which tends to produce failed programmes. That large institutions are not addressing the problems for which they are set up is a prime reason why people are losing faith in establishment institutions,[49] and there is now a global crisis of trust.

Some organizations are better at building trust than others. Root Change distinguishes between two forms of capacity building that make a critical difference. The 'Capacity 1.0' organization has strong systems in place, is well managed, and can respond consistently

46 Illich, I. (1973) *Tools for conviviality*, New York: Harper Row, p. Xxiii

47 Glennie, J (2018) 'At what cost? A reflection on the crisis at Save the Children UK', *Open Democracy*, 27 May. Available from: https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/jonathan-glennie/at-what-cost-reflection-on-crisis-at-save-children-uk.

48 Andrews, A., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M. (2017) *Building state capacity: Evidence, analysis, action*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

49 Crewe, I. and King, A. (2013) *The blunders of our governments*, London, Oneworld

to the everyday challenges it faces. It operates with high efficiency and accountability. However, Capacity 1.0 organizations are not necessarily good at creating and maintaining a 'can-do culture' of committed volunteers and staff who collectively achieve fundamental, far-reaching, and sustainable social change – particularly in response to challenges arising from new contexts.

While the 'Capacity 2.0' organization has highly evolved systems, processes and procedures (the core Capacity 1.0 attributes), it also is extraordinarily adaptive and well prepared to function in a world of rapid change and complexity. The Capacity 2.0 organization focuses outwardly and cultivates extensive stakeholder involvement. It emphasizes impact through innovation, entrepreneurship, brokering, leveraging resources, partnering, advocacy, and networking. The goal of the Capacity 2.0 organization is to work on the priorities of poor or vulnerable populations, finding innovative solutions that include them as partners in the process.

Capacity 2.0 organizations understand the importance of trust. To build trust requires a degree of intimacy. In a study of economic development, Neil McInroy showed that trust is more likely to flourish at the local level, where people know each other and engage with one another frequently.[50] He shows, for example, that business people care little about campaigns to end poverty at the national level, but are more likely to become involved at the local level because they care more about what happens on their patch. Intimacy is easier too in small scale structures with teamwork, conviviality and shared interests. Such arrangements make sharing power easier.

There remains the challenge of how small-scale structures can manage large scale programmes. Mary Fifield and colleagues explore the potential of community ownership through three key organizational elements: governance structure; collective asset management; and strategic programme impact. Her findings are positive. She challenges the assumption that communities don't have the capacity to manage large-scale assets. She suggests:

> '. . . when large-scale assets are involved, community foundations are more likely to effect a paradigm shift rather than a simple transposition of actors if they cultivate an atmosphere of transparency and cooperation, strengthen capacities and build new skills among all stakeholders, and encourage proactive iteration.'[51]

From colonization to self determination

This brings us to the question of who controls such action on the ground. To answer it, we need to examine the history of 'development' and, when we do, we find its colonial roots. The idea of 'development' was conceived during the Second World War when the British Government's Foreign and Colonial Office began to consider running down the

50 McInroy, N. (2016) *Fostering a good local society*, Manchester: Centre for Local Economic Strategies.
51 Fifield et.al. (op.cit.)

British Empire.[52] In the context of the cold war, President Truman's Inaugural Address on 20 January 1949 set out the agenda:

> 'I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development.
>
> Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens.
>
> We invite other countries to pool their technological resources in this undertaking. Their contributions will be warmly welcomed. This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies whenever practicable. It must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom.
>
> With the cooperation of business, private capital, agriculture, and labor in this country, this program can greatly increase the industrial activity in other nations and can raise substantially their standards of living.'

This speech defined the terms of development, dividing the world into three (with the First World as the West, the Second World as the Communist Bloc, and the Third World as the Global South). The idea of 'Overseas Development Assistance' (ODA) was born and organizations such as Oxfam and Save the Children built themselves up to deliver it.

Although Communism has disappeared, the distinction between 'developed' and 'developing' is still in common currency, despite evidence presented by Hans Rosling that rising global prosperity has rendered the distinction redundant.[53] While the myth of 'us and them' persists among development professionals, the rise of inequality within countries, rather than between countries, is fast becoming a more pressing issue.[54]

Alongside these geopolitical changes, public attitudes to the idea of 'development' are undergoing profound shifts. Bruna Seu found that people are no longer connecting with humanitarian issues and are reluctant to support distant sufferers over time. And yet, development professionals are behind the curve on this. Research conducted for the Webb Memorial Trust by polling company YouGov suggests that charity advertising showing images of hunger or homelessness are losing power. Such an approach reduces people to a bundle of needs. This in turn increases the sense of 'otherness' of people on low incomes and reduces their dignity. It also produces deficit-saturated thinking and leads to no useful strategies either to end poverty or to create a fairer society. Focus group discussions suggested that a modern approach would be to

52 Knight, B., Chigudu, H. and Tandon, R. (2002) *Reviving democracy*, London: Earthscan

53 Rosling, H. (2018) *Factfulness*, London: Macmillan

54 Veereek, J. (2015) 'Increasingly, inequality within, not across, countries is rising', World Bank, available from http://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/increasingly-inequality-within-not-across-countries-rising

treat everyone as an asset who can contribute towards society, building on what people have, not what they lack.[55] The age of paternalism is finally dying.

Yet, as Darren McGarvey (a.k.a. the rap singer Loki) points out in *Poverty safari*:

> 'This sector . . . behaves much like an imperial power; poorer communities are viewed as primitive cultures that need to be modernised, retooled and upskilled . . . on the assumption that people in these communities don't have any ideas of their own.'[56] (pg 97)

This leads to an endless chain of self-serving job creation projects for development sector elites, while casting local people as passive bystanders, and often denuding community organizations of their most skilled staff.[57] The way that elites perpetuate themselves in the social change industry is reminiscent of 'the iron law of oligarchy' set out by Robert Michels.[58] Gerry Salole has recently investigated the role of the 'development set in perpetuating poverty.' Addressing poverty from 'comfortable offices and cushy hotel board rooms', he says, 'we run a constant risk of losing sight of the end goal . . .'

There are three characteristic behaviours in philanthropy and the development industry that impair progress in achieving the world we want. These are: egos, silos and logos. All three concepts are based on imperialist self-promotion of individuals and organizations on the supply-side of the funding relationship, and do nothing for the people who are meant to benefit.

The answer is to flip the power pyramid so that people on the receiving end of development get to decide the outcomes of the work. This takes us to the idea of participation. A leading advocate for putting the poor at the centre of the processes of development policy is Robert Chambers.[59] The widespread acceptance of a 'participatory' approach is in part due to his work. This includes the techniques of participatory rural appraisal.

As Mary Fifield and colleagues have shown, it is feasible to give control of development to people who would normally be on the receiving end of it, a finding that speaks to the wider experience of the GFCF. The experience of the UK bears this out. Peter Beresford finds:

> 'Many groups facing poverty have shown their ability to achieve change with thought-through strategies, including parliamentary, campaigning, virtual and direct action. They also provide legitimate ways of drawing on and making public their personal difficulties and hardship, without reducing it to

55 Knight, B. (2017) *Rethinking poverty: What makes a good society?*, Bristol: Policy Press

56 McGarvey, D. (2017) *Poverty safari*, Edinburgh, Luath Press

57 Anderson, M., Brown, D. and Jean, I. (2012) *Time to listen: hearing people on the receiving end of international aid*, CDA. Available from http://cdacollaborative.org/publications/listening-program/lp-books-and-major-reports/time-to-listen-hearing-people-on-the-receiving-end-of-international-aid/

58 Michels, R (1915) *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001, http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/michels/polipart.pdf.

59 Chambers R. (1997) *Whose reality counts: Putting the first last*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

> the level of 'sad stories' and statistics. Such organizations, led by users, offer much more hope for the future.'[60]

From centralized to distributed control of resources

We have already seen the limitations of top-down planning in the experience of the LeGrand Star. The limitations of centralized state planning using a command and control methodology relying on prediction, planning, management and technical ability have been shown by Chris Wright in his *A community manifesto*.[61] A particularly vivid illustration of how the application of such methods in appropriate circumstances appears in *The psychology of military incompetence*, in which Norman Dixon describes examples of how remote planning of military campaigns by authoritarian generals commonly ends in disaster.[62]

One of the deleterious effects of inflexible top-down methods of control is the removal of initiative among people on the lower rungs of the hierarchy. As early as 1830, Alex de Tocqueville summed up the dangers of petty rules in organizations and how they undermine not only dignity but our essential humanity:

> 'It must not be forgotten that it is especially dangerous to enslave men in the minor details of life. For my own part, I should be inclined to think freedom less necessary in great things than in little ones, if it were possible to be secure of the one without possessing the other.
>
> Subjection in minor affairs breaks out every day, and is felt by the whole community indiscriminately. It does not drive men to resistance, but it crosses them at every turn, till they are led to surrender the exercise of their will. Thus their spirit is gradually broken and their character enervated; whereas that obedience, which is exacted on a few important but rare occasions, only exhibits servitude at certain intervals, and throws the burden of it upon a small number of men. It is vain to summon a people, which has been rendered so dependent on the central power, to choose from time to time the representatives of that power; this rare and brief exercise of their free choice, however important it may be, will not prevent them from gradually losing the faculties of thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves, and thus gradually falling below the level of humanity.'[63]

Modern capitalism, with its algorithm driven profit motive and coldly bureaucratic welfare systems, enacts Alex de Tocqueville's warning. Robert Peston, in his masterful *WTF?*, describes the dehumanizing character of our elite-driven top-down society. With high rewards for those at the top, disregard for everyone else has been a key driver of

60 Beresford, P. (2017) 'Endless reports on poverty do little to change government policy – there's another way', *The Conversation*, 11 December, available from https://theconversation.com/endless-reports-on-rising-poverty-do-little-to-change-government-policy-theres-another-way-88740

61 Wright, C. (2000) *A community manifesto*, London: Earthscan

62 Dixon, N. (1976) The psychology of military incompetence, London: Pimlico

63 Tocqueville de, (1830) *Democracy in America*, online at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch4_06.htm

the anti-authoritarian backlash that produced Brexit in the UK and Trump in the US.[64] A study by Hope Not Hate has mapped the consequences of this approach, showing the geographic distribution of people with different social attitudes, which suggests deep divisions at the heart of society in the UK.[65]

Society's operating system is increasingly based on 'efficiency', defined by the lowest possible transaction costs. This may be a good way to run a society if you are an accountant, but its effects are devastating for social affairs. As Julia Unwin has pointed out, it is our relationships, not our transactions, that get us through the tough times.[66]

Politics, both from the left and the right, has tended to reinforce this approach, undermining the value of 'ordinary people.' The great thesis of E.P. Thompson's *The making of the English working class* is that ordinary people, including those on low incomes, are competent to run their own affairs. Thompson identifies two fallacies.[67] One is what he called the 'Fabian orthodoxy', in which 'the great majority of working people are seen as passive victims of laissez faire.' The other is the 'orthodoxy of the empirical economic historians', in which working people are seen as 'a labour force, as migrants, or as the data for statistical series.' Thompson suggests that these orthodoxies 'tend to obscure the agency of working people, the degree to which they contributed by conscious efforts, to the making of history.' (pg 18) This agency, as John Bird shows, through both his work and his writings, needs to include people who are poor.[68] The Industrial Areas Foundation, which trains community leaders in the US, has an iron rule: 'Never do anything for anyone that they are capable of doing for themselves.' Otherwise, you are diminishing them and taking away their dignity.

The early Labour movement understood this very well. Heavily influenced by William Morris, who argued that without dignified and creative human occupation, people become disconnected from life, early trade unions were as much concerned with the creative potential of working people as they were with material factors such as pay and conditions.

More than a century later, the idea of the dignity of labour and the creativity of humanity has been pushed to one side. In *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, Yuval Noah Harari suggests that the vast proportion of humanity faces the prospect of redundancy.[69] As we enter an age of algorithms, driven by the combination of artificial intelligence and biotechnology, we will see more and more jobs done by machines and those that remain tending to be low-level service jobs. Keynes foresaw this almost 90 years ago, and suggested that the end of constructive work would be a testing moment for humanity because through our work we find much of the meaning in our lives.[70]

64 Peston, R. (2017) *WTF?*, London: Hodder & Stoughton.
65 Carter, R. (2018) Fear, hope and loss: Understanding the drivers of hope and hate. London; Hope Not Hate
66 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/bobktltn
67 Thompson, E.P. (1963) *The making of the English working class*, London: Victor Gollancz.
68 Bird, J. (2012) *The necessity of poverty*, London: Quartet Books.
69 Harari, Harari, Y.N. (2018) *21 lessons for the 21st century*, London: Jonathon Cape
70 Keynes, J.M. (1930) 'Economic possibilities for our grandchildren ', *The Nation and Athenaeum*, 48(3), pp 358–73.

Without constructive meaning, humanity can fall prey to dangerous ideas. As people lose their once secure income, perceive elites living high on the hog, and feel that immigrants are doing better than they are out of the welfare system, we produce a toxic groundswell of opinion that means that people go in search of a strong leader who will take them back into a romantic past where their lives were OK. Populist parties have more than tripled their support in Europe in the last 20 years, securing enough votes to put their leaders into government posts in 11 countries and challenging the established political order across the continent.

One of the reasons why the 'taking back control' slogan worked so well in the Brexit referendum was that it combined two ideas that are commonly absent from our lives – ownership and creativity. In a series of articles for the Guardian, Aditya Chakrabortty has researched initiatives that do just this. The title of the last in the series is Yes, there is an alternative. These people have shown how to 'take back control.' However, he also shows that centralized control of resources discourages this. He identifies 'two big shackles [that] hold in check the growth of more alternatives.' Easily the biggest is capital, he says: ventures such as co-ops struggle to raise the necessary cash. Second, 'the overwhelming centralisation of the British state can stifle development of bottom-up initiatives.'

To maximize local creativity, we therefore need to devolve control of significant resources to the local level, so that creative entrepreneurs can gain access to the capital they need for their innovations. Such devolution should go hand in hand with Robert Peston's recommendation that we reframe the education system to promote creativity among children, as opposed to forcing the rote learning of, for example, trigonometric formulae and other tasks that are easily accomplished by machines.[71]

Rethinking Poverty suggested a three-fold process of devolution of public expenditure: first, to local authorities; second, to community organizations; and third, to young people in the community. That would build an enabling framework for innovation in the future, with decisions taken at the lowest level in the system.

This approach fits with how two key concepts in systems theory – 'emergence' and 'design' – push in opposite directions, but combine to bring about advance. Physicist Fritjof Capra argues that the generation of new forms arises when the instability of the existing ecosystem creates the need for a new order. This happens through a process of collective creativity:

> 'Emergent structures. . .provide novelty, creativity, and flexibility. Emergent structures are adaptive, capable of changing and evolving.'[72]

Emergent structures are a force for change and arise from informal networks and communities of practice. They need to be contrasted with 'design structures', which provide the formal rules and routines that are necessary for effective functioning and are

71 Peston (op.cit.)

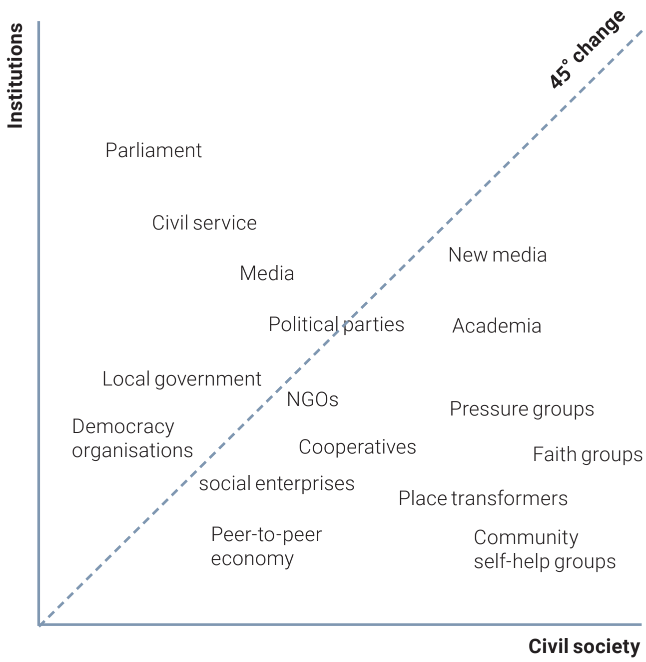
72 Capra, F. and Luisi, P.L (2014) *The Systems View of Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.319–320.

a force for stability, but do not have the necessary responsiveness and learning capability to make progress.

Both forces are necessary. He says:

> 'In every human organization there is a tension between its designed structures, which embody relationships of power, and its emergent structures, which represent the organization's aliveness and creativity. Skillful managers understand the interdependence of design and emergence.'

These considerations have led Compass and Rethinking Poverty to work on a new theory of change called: 45° Change. In 45° Change: where bottom up meets top down, Neal Lawson and Caroline Hartnell explain that there is much energy and innovation going on in civil society, public services and the new economy. People and organizations are pioneering new forms of collaborative action – much of it accelerated by new digital technologies and social media. Local authorities are experimenting with citizens' assemblies and participatory budget making; communities are setting up self-help groups for pressing needs like adult social care; people are combining to provide for their energy needs or to share their resources and/or time. Initiatives light up the sky like fireworks and we see a glimpse of the good society ahead of us. This picture is very like that presented in Rethinking Poverty, which talks about 'bottom-up' meeting 'top-down.' The theory of change can be represented schematically as follows:



The expression '45° Change' refers to the meeting point between the horizontal emergent social, economic and political practices and the vertical designed actions of state and other institutions. Interaction between emergence and design is the fault-line through which a new society can be born.

From linear and logical evaluation to abductive reasoning

We need to transform what is known in scientific circles as 'the hierarchy of evidence.' Although there are several different versions, an influential one, which places different research techniques in order of their relative authority, is as follows:

1. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) with definitive results
2. RCTs with definitive results (confidence intervals that do not overlap the threshold clinically significant effect)
3. RCTs with non-definitive results (a point estimate that suggests a clinically significant effect but with confidence intervals overlapping the threshold for this effect)
4. Cohort studies
5. Case-control studies
6. Cross sectional surveys
7. Case reports[73]

The hierarchy is a useful guide for testing the value of interventions where the goals are clear and the variables are clearly measurable and it is possible to set up a counterfactual situation so that a control group can be used.

It is not, however, appropriate for situations where people are working in complex environments in which they are trying to make social advance, when there are few resources available and little scientific expertise on tap.

A different method is needed in these circumstances because, while the scientific paradigm works with designed structures where there is an element of predictability through a linear relationship between an intervention and a desired result, it does not work with emergent ones where the outcome is uncertain. In situations where there is no tried and tested answer that has worked before, the job is to use our moral imagination to find new solutions.[74] For this, we need a different method of assessing progress.

We need a method that helps actors in their search for change to understand and guide their actions, not one that stands apart and assesses it from a neutral point of view. To accomplish this, we need a method that possesses three interlinked features. First, it should be phenomenological. Essentially, this means that the research focuses as much on what people think is true as what is actually true. What matters is the content of people's minds or consciousness, so that what is real is what people think is real. To explore the consciousness of other people, the researcher needs to adopt an exploratory frame of reference, to be open-minded, inclusive, and empathetic.

73 Greenhalgh T (July 1997) 'How to read a paper. Getting your bearings (deciding what the paper is about)'. BMJ. 315 (7102): 243–6. doi:10.1136/bmj.315.7102.243. PMC 2127173. PMID 9253275

74 Lederach, J.P (2005) *The moral imagination: The art and soul of peacebuilding*, Oxford University Press

Second, the method must be normative. Values are at the heart of how people see, think and feel about things, and it is not possible to lay these on one side. The researcher cannot maintain the fiction of being value-free or neutral. In recent years, particularly since the growth of organized sciences, what counts as knowledge has tended to become concentrated in fewer and fewer minds. Because 'knowledge is power', society has become further polarized between the powerful and the powerless, building on a related dichotomy between 'haves' and 'have nots.' The researcher must decide whether they wish to increase or to reduce the polarization. Neutrality is not an option because academic 'business as usual' will contribute to knowledge among the powerful, but not the powerless, and, in the process, will increase the gap – no matter what the researcher's intention.

Third, the method of research should be action-based. The object is to raise consciousness so that people can begin to close the gap between their current and their desired realities, and change their situation in ways that they determine. The researcher acts as a change agent in the process.

The outputs from research based on these three characteristics – phenomenological, normative and action based – will seek greater insight about our world, as opposed to absolute truth. The criterion for assessing the value of the research will be based on the principle of abductive reasoning.

Abductive reasoning addresses weaknesses associated with deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive reasoning is criticized for the lack of clarity in terms of how to select theory to be tested via formulating hypotheses. Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, is criticized because no amount of empirical data will necessarily enable theory-building. Abductive reasoning, as a third option, overcomes these weaknesses via adopting a pragmatist perspective. The abductive researcher seeks to choose the 'best' explanation based on the evidence. Conclusions are interpreted in the light of what is the best action to be taken to meet the underlying perceptions and values of people involved in the work.

Part 4
A Framework for Action

In this section, we make practical suggestions about how to harness the power of systems thinking to #ShiftThePower. The object is to move from a positioning of campaigning to one where its practice is embedded in the field.

The process set out here is a rough guide, rather than a hard and fast set of rules. It is important to work on the principle of 'create and adjust', so that there is a process of continual improvement. The ten actions are a heuristic device, not a formula to be rigidly applied.

Ten actions are as follows:

1. Choose the domain
2. Think 'who?' not 'how?'
3. Use the network effect
4. Develop an outline plan
5. Embrace conflict
6. Develop the narrative
7. Formalize the network
8. Develop a resource plan
9. Enlarge the network
10. Review progress

Action 1 Choose the domain

It is one thing to talk about the need for change; quite another to deliver it. While civil society is alive with ideas, the complexity of issues is apt to overwhelm us. The first step is to acknowledge the sheer magnitude of what is involved while – at the same time – refusing to be overwhelmed by it.

To make progress, we need to decide the domain that we wish to work in, and to frame the problem in a way that we can address it with a method that we can use. Otherwise, the size of the problem will paralyze our capacity to act.

We are not taking on the whole problem of power imbalances in the world. Essentially, we are taking on the issue that the GFCF has been focusing on since its inception, namely:

> 'How to tip the balance of power in funding arrangements towards local people and away from external agencies?'

This question was considered at a meeting organized by the GFCF in March 2019. The group drafted a preliminary manifesto that sets out draft criteria of success for the campaign:

#ShiftThePower A Manifesto for Change

If we want to create a genuine alternative to existing ways of deciding and doing, we need to:

1. **Embrace** a vision of a 'good society' built around core values of equality, democracy and sustainability and a set of organizing principles based on global solidarity and distributed leadership.
2. **Cast** off the restrictive framework of 'international development,' which is defined by money and power and which creates artificial barriers between communities and movements in the global north and south.
3. **Move** away from a system that is preoccupied with quick 'solutions,' and is premised on and organized around the transfer of funds. Change how we approach, and seek to measure, the notion of success.
4. **Creatively** find ways to unlock the inherent power of communities in determining their own development course - however they define it – and let the language of 'beneficiaries' and 'recipients' be a thing of the past.
5. **Move away** from 'building capacity' as defined by external actors and requirements, towards community organizing and movement building, where 'capacity' equates to relevance, rootedness and constituency.
6. **Ensure** that external funding recognizes, respects and builds on local resources and assets, rather than over looks, undermines or displaces.
7. **Expand** our horizons beyond money as the central driver of change, and place greater value on other kinds of infinite non-financial assets and resources (knowledge, trust, networks etc)
8. **Change** the language we use so that it enables new ways of working and thinking, rather than constrains them. And challenge the dominance of English.
9. **Change** ourselves. We need both humility and boldness, and to be ready to challenge our own power and to listen to and work with others.

In short, we want a future that is negotiated, participatory, and widely owned, and which is developed through values and processes based on movement generosity rather than the success or failure of one organization over others.

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Back to contents

Action 2 Think 'who?' not 'how?'

Having got the bare bones of what changes are needed, the next step is to decide how to implement them.

A common mistake in thinking about change strategies is first to work out what needs to be changed and how, write a report about it and then try to persuade the organization or organizations that have the power to make the change to do so. The problem with this approach is, as Connel and Kubisch have pointed out,[75] the organization receiving the recommendations has no ownership of the report and is free to reject or ignore it.

To take an example, a recent report on poverty from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation calls for 'an end to the freeze on benefits and tax credits to increase the incomes for almost 14 million people by an average of £270 by 2020/21 [and] . . . to build at least 80,000 genuinely affordable homes per year.' The recommendations were immediately rejected by the government who questioned the accuracy of the report. This kind of approach to change is a characteristic feature of think tanks in the poverty lobby in the UK, and there is no evidence that it makes any difference to government. Moreover, the constant repetition of an issue can inure the wider population to caring about the problem. In 2013, Julia Unwin, who at the time was chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, referred to the 'angry and fruitless debate' about poverty.[76] The only clear winners in a situation where a report is presented and rejected are the media who delight in bad news stories and in unresolved conflicts.[77]

This example shows the error of asking the question 'how do we produce the change we want?' Answers to the 'how?' question tend to produce a technocratic, product-based answer that can be put into a Gantt chart with roles allocated to powerful agencies such as government, together with recommendations to a range of stakeholders who are expected to comply with a top-down plan. The problem is that plans of this kind never work. Since they have to be driven from the centre, they struggle to achieve wide ownership among all the people necessary to make the plan work. A clear example is the Labour government's programme to reduce poverty between 1997 and 2010. Since it had little ownership outside a narrow policy elite, it could be easily dismantled following the 2010 election.[78]

Instead of the 'how?' question, we need to ask the 'who?' question. This takes us straight to a 'people first' approach where the key currencies are agency and power. If done well, this will lead to a process that is widely owned and shared. In working on the society we want, we all have to be involved and each take responsibility for ourselves. The key is co-creation, which is a method that sticks, because when the job is finished everyone

75 Connel, J.P. and Kubisch, A.C. (2008) 'Applying a theory of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: progress, prospects, and problems', available from https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Applying-a-Theory-of-Change-Approach-to-the-of-and-Kubisch/af410504d2cfe5a812808c16d0a4418784d9da64

76 Unwin, J. (2013) *Why fight poverty?* London: London Publishing Partnership.

77 See https://www.rethinkingpoverty.org.uk/rethinking-poverty/knowing-facts-reduced-poverty-now/

78 Kate Bell and Jason Strelitz (2014) *Decent childhoods: Reframing the fight to end child poverty*, Webb Memorial Trust: https://www.rethinkingpoverty.org.uk/publications/decent-childhoods

owns the result. The process is not therefore restricted to the agency of elites but includes everyone, which can bring in unexpected allies.

This is the key to a transformational approach. This shifts us away from being a supplicant to the government or some other power-holder, and puts the power into our hands. From here we can assess our assets (what we already have in our hands to build the process of transformation) and how we can build trust (bringing others into the process so that we can share the journey going forward).

Action 3 Use the network effect

As we have seen, answering the 'who?' question, gives primacy to the idea of 'agency.' A GFCF report commissioned by Comic Relief[79] identified the following key elements of 'agency':

An actor: an agent of change – i.e. taking decisions and making things happen – and not just a recipient of aid.[80]

A resource: a source of knowledge, experience and assets to mobilize and tap into, rather than a gap or deficit to fill.

A network: a resource for collective problem-solving through shared efforts – decision making and action – rather than isolated entities cut off from one another and operating alone.

A formidable force: an influence to reckon with and take seriously, to engage with on equal terms, rather than pay lip service to.

On this analysis, agency is not a single idea but a composite one with many different dimensions. This satisfies the central tenet of equifinality, which is that the solution to any problem must be more complex than the problem itself.

This analysis fits with how social change works. Sociologist Randal Collins has studied how social progress occurs throughout history:

> 'The most important pattern for the emergence of new thinking has remained the same down the centuries and millennia . . . the network.'[81]

The best-known example in the western world, he argues, is that of Ancient Greece but more or less contemporaneously, Indian philosophy blossomed and Confucianism emerged in China. Collins continues:

> 'Since that time, the pattern of networks of thinkers has remained prevalent throughout the world. And I see nothing so far to suggest that the forms of

79 Hodgson, J., Knight, B. and Wilkinson-Maposa, S. (2017) *New Horizons for Community-Led Development: Recommendations for Funders*, Commissioned by Comic Relief, Johannesburg, Global Fund for Community Foundations, available from: https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/new-horizons-for-community-led-development-recommendations-f/

80 www.coady.stfx.ca/tinroom/assets/file/ABCD_Interpretive_Summary.pdf

81 Collins, R. (2009). *The sociology of philosophies*. Harvard University Press.

intellectual innovation or the dynamics of the networks might change in the current information age.'[82]

We already have a good network. This includes good organizations, some inspiring thinkers, activists and leaders, a co-operative model of working, an ever-growing constituency and increasing interest from a range of different organizations. When you consider that we also have good resources, including a track record of achievement, a powerful body of evidence and good writing, and a range of emerging opportunities, we can consider that we are in a strong position. Measured by standard measures of size, we are small and marginal, but our influence is nevertheless considerable and we have the makings of a new paradigm. Malcolm Gladwell has shown that being small is often an advantage in change processes because of the nimbleness it brings.[83]

Given our assets, we are in a good position to become a formidable force. We know that there is already much strength in the #ShiftThePower campaign, as it is being used in lots of different ways by many different people. A key task is to join the strands up to make a stronger and more coherent force. So, the question becomes how to create a single formidable force that begins the process of connecting the strands.

This implies meta-level field-based thinking. It cannot be the preserve of a single organization or a narrow approach. Nor can it rely on a single constituency, such as the community philanthropy 'family.' We need a method that is both broad-based and inclusive gaining support from multiple quarters. This means that we need allies that currently lie outside of the community philanthropy space.

Working with a diverse group is central to progress. To avoid the problem of tunnel vision, it is important that members of the network are influenced by those from other fields of endeavour. John Fullerton in his work on regenerative capitalism talks about the 'edge effect', a term borrowed from the ecologists – where two different habitats overlap, a greater diversity of species is found.[84] Such an approach is in line with modern 'systems thinking.' This stresses the importance of different disciplines to come together and exchange ideas. The idea is that most events and institutions depend on complex systems and if you want to understand them, you have to consider the system as a whole, not just a specific component in isolation. An issue of *Alliance* in 2012 presented a series of articles discussing this and featured interviews with ecologists Buzz Holling and Bob Ulanowicz and theoretical physicist Geoffrey West, all of whom drew attention to the importance of networks, the parallels between natural and social phenomena and the virtues of studying how networks function in order to understand and make progress on some of the problems besetting us.[85]

82 The top 100 Global Thought-Leaders' in GDI Impuls, Wissenmagazin fur Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Handel, No. 4, 2013

83 Gladwell, M (2013) *David and Goliath: underdogs, misfits, and the art of battling giants*, New York: Back Bay Books/ Little, Brown and Company

84 Fullerton, J (2015) 'Regenerative Capitalism: How universal principles and patterns will shape our new economy' Capital Institute: New York, http://capitalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015-Regenerative-Capitalism-4-20-15-final.pdf. Fullerton describes 'a self-organizing, naturally self-maintaining, highly adaptive *regenerative* form of capitalism that produces lasting social and economic vitality for global civilization as a whole.'

85 These interviews are included in Networks and philanthropy (2012) *Alliance magazine*, 1 December 2012

Here, we can learn from Citizens UK. This uses an organizing method based on power and action to develop social justice. There are two key dimensions if you want to address power structures: organized people and organized money. This entails building a broad-base of people who want change and your own money so that you are not dependent on the idiosyncrasies of funders. It prioritizes personal relationships, membership of institutions rooted within the community, and a pragmatic approach to influencing people who hold power in government, business or public life. Citizens UK works with a diverse group of leaders from schools, universities, hospitals, mosques, churches, synagogues, charities and other community groups.

The GFCF already uses an approach that in many respects is like Citizens UK. The approach, however, is an implicit one and the next task is to make it explicit. To do this, we should conduct a force field analysis, which is a technique originally developed by Kurt Lewin that divides people and organisations into four categories in relation to their attitude and energy towards #ShiftThePower. There are people who will:

1 Make it happen – be part of the agency driving forward

2 Encourage it to happen – not driving forward but having an indirect effect by assisting those who are

3 Let it happen – people who are neutral about change

4 Stop it happening – people who will block any proposals emerging

Our starting point should be with the first category, that is those who will make it happen. We should conceive of this as a small 'cell' or 'cabinet', not as a board or an organization. It should be a tightly knit group of people, bound together by common values and trust, who conspire together – in the original sense of that term which means to 'breathe together.'

The group will operate a form of collective leadership, which gets beyond the trap of the single leader or single organization. Individuals in the group will be committed to the process as part of their life goal, as opposed to a pathway towards individual career development. The group will be custodians of the flame of change, influencing but not gatekeepers or controllers of the action. They will agree on principles, but not necessarily on details. Once agreed upon, decisions will be binding on all members of the group.

Action 4 Develop an outline plan

The first, and perhaps most important, task for the cabinet is to draft an outline plan. This will address the key elements of strategy – what is to be achieved and what will it take to do it?

The plan will be conceived as an outline and not a blueprint. Its task will be to guide action and not to control it, so that others outside the group feel that they have a big part to play. The plan will be based on a process of 'create and adjust.'

The plan will cover:

- Approach:
    - Identification of underlying structures of power
    - Pathways to progress and key variables to make the difference
    - Finding pressure points for influencing the desired change
    - Setting out a timeframe for action
- Development and dissemination of the narrative
- Development of the network – this will involve finding people who will support the venture in practical ways
- Resource plan
- Arrangements for learning and review

Action 5 Embrace conflict

Conflict is an inevitable part of change. In his 'West India Emancipation' speech at Canandaigua, New York in 1857, Frederick Douglass said:

> 'If there Is no struggle, there Is no progress.'[86]

The change we seek is structural and vested interests within the structure are likely to resist our efforts at change in a variety of ways. There is likely to be a spectrum of responses ranging from casual disregard at one end, to active opposition at the other.

The stance to take is perhaps to take the high moral ground and trade on the fact that it is increasingly accepted that society needs a new narrative. The scale of the gathering crisis suggests that the future must be very different from the past, as must the means to get there. The best approach is to follow a principle developed by Buckminster Fuller:

> 'You never change something by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.'[87]

This approach has the advantage of being positive and constructive, as opposed to negative and critical, and invites people to join us in creating a new path, rather than defending old and tired positions. We can bring both a lens of 'reform' of the existing system for development aid (where gaps exist, where practice and institutions can be adapted and built on) and a lens of 'redesign' towards a new development paradigm that shifts power to communities. The key question here is how external funders can transfer power and responsibility to people who are often marginalized, while simultaneously: maintaining appropriate oversight of the work; developing feedback mechanisms to

86 Available at: http://www.blackpast.org/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress

87 Cited by Quinn, 1999, p 137. Quinn, D. (1999) *Beyond civilization: humanity's next great adventure*, New York, Three Rivers Press

evaluate results and share learning; and ensuring robust mechanisms of accountability and transparency. The GFCF and its partners are well placed to begin to have dialogue with key funders to help them make this change happen.

At the same time, there is room for challenge. Hilary Gilbert[88] shows that many organizations occupy space and resources and yet are doing little. There are at least three sectors that provide a considerable barrier to progress. The first is the INGO sector, which, save for a few counterexamples, has not yet begun to address ways of throwing off their colonial approach to the work. The second is academia, which, despite one or two individuals, has contributed very little to the development of the field and whose culture militates against the development of collective knowledge that is useful for practitioners as they go about their daily tasks. The third is the funding community, which, again despite some notable exceptions, fails to understand the importance of #ShiftThePower and is still fixated on a top-down view of the world with the view that an investment in a few scattered projects or a thematic programme can deliver the change that is required.

A first step in addressing these blockages would be to set out what is needed from each of these sectors. GFCF has already done this in the case of the Grantcraft guide for funders: How community philanthropy shifts power: What donors can do to help make that happen. A similar exercise could be undertaken with INGOs. Here, it might be useful to work with Oxfam since there is evidence that rethinking is taking place. In the case of the academic community, work with Candid on how knowledge can be organized and shared in ways that counter the elitist tendency for academia to shield its knowledge beyond high paywalls.

The output of work from these three strands would be new ways of working for the organizations that would be in tune with #ShiftThePower. This would alter the mindset from its present 'poor solutions for poor people' identified in Rethinking Poverty, to John Ruskin's maxim 'When we build, let us think that we build forever.' The key here is to change the climate to a people-based approach in every social intervention we take. We need to move people away from the idea of short-term technocratic fixes towards meaningful long-term investments in solutions that are found by people who are affected by a problem. This would identify the key roles of what INGOs do, what academics can do and what funders can do.

Action 6 Develop the narrative

There is no shortage of good papers on #ShiftThePower. In addition to the draft manifesto we described earlier, a number of reports and blogs can be found on the GFCF website. In addition, #ShiftThePower fits well with George Monbiot's view of the 'new politics', which he suggests should be based on community engagement since this is necessary to pull us 'out of the wreckage' from our 'age of crisis.'[89]

88 Gilbert (op.cit.)

89 Monbiot, G. (2017) *Out of the wreckage: New politics for an age of crisis*, London: Verso. See also his Ted Talk at https://www.ted.com/talks/george_monbiot_the_new_political_story_that_could_change_everything?language=en

What we lack is 'impact data.' There is work to do here to demonstrate that investment in community pays off in terms of producing good societies. However, Warren Feek has compiled:

> '. . . a selection of compelling (data/results; solid methodologies) research-derived evidence for the impact of these principles and strategies that centrally include empowerment, inclusiveness, and equality.'

He continues:

> 'The key direct impact data, hyperlinked so that a summary of the research can be accessed, is followed by an indication of the strategy implemented, the research methodology, and the country/region in which the development initiative and research took place:

- 1.78 times more likely to use a modern family planning method [Community dialogue; spousal communication; gender dynamics; cross-sectional household surveys at baseline and end-line; Kenya]
- 47% of viewers with ability to name a development-related action they had taken[Resilience; community connection; television programming; radio discussion; quantitative surveys combined with qualitative research; Bangladesh and Tanzania]
- 11.6 percentile educational gain [Early child education; early child development; entertainment-education; research-driven action; meta-analysis of 24 studies; multiple countries in South and North]
- 1.38 times more likely to remain uninfected from HIV [Condom use at sexual debut; communication campaigns; entertainment; multi-stage disproportionate, stratified sampling; South Africa]
- A very low (0.142%) propensity to refuse oral polio vaccine (OPV) [Participation in community meetings; women involvement; local non-governmental organisation (NGO) engagement; qualitative comparative analysis (adapted); Nigeria]
- 5.5% increase in relief expenditures [Local radio; local language; public accountability; media development; panel data regressions for states and years; India]
- Public funds captured by corruption down 60% [Democratisation of knowledge; community organisation; local media networks; repeat public expenditure tracking survey; Uganda]
- 72% increase in girls having their own savings [Economic empowerment; peer-led platforms; critical dialogue; gender perspectives; baseline and endline survey data; Ethiopia]
- 24.6 percentage points (improvement) for minimum dietary diversity, minimum meal frequency, minimum acceptable diet, and consumption of iron-rich foods [Intensified interpersonal counselling; mass media engagement; community mobilisation; mother-to-mother support groups; randomised controlled trial; Bangladesh]

- Improved gender attitudes by 0.2 standard deviations . . . programme participants report more gender-equitable behaviour [Participatory classroom sessions; community mobilisation in schools; use of media tools; folk art; randomised controlled trial; India]
- Decline in homicide rates of 66% [Municipal investment; neighbourhood infrastructure; participative municipal budgeting; creation of public spaces; permutation tests to estimate differential change; Colombia]
- 20% reduction in maternal mortality [Participatory women›s groups; community mobilisation; systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials; Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Nepal]
- Improvement in seat belt use, oral health, alcohol consumption, smoking and mammogram screening by r.15 to r.04 [Mediated health campaigns; behaviour change; meta-analysis of existing studies; United States].'

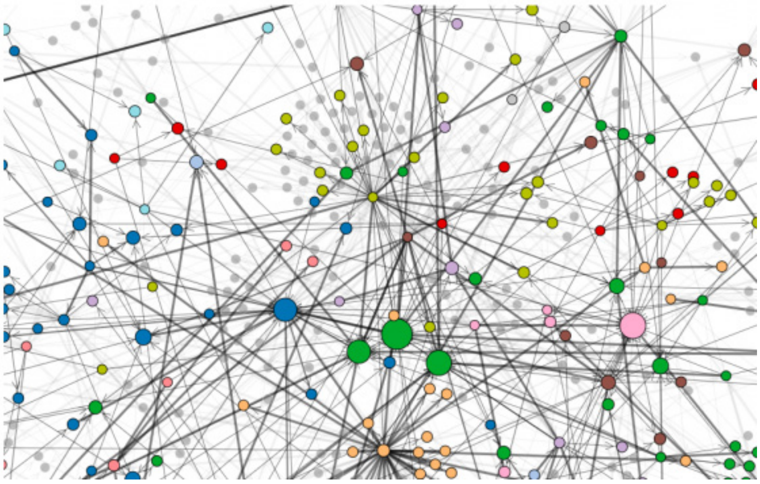
The GFCF is currently working on the issue of measurement in community philanthropy. Developing this work further will help us to frame the value of our work more clearly. The goal will be to weld together the abductive reasoning framework we discussed earlier with ways of measuring progress that fit the complexity of development situations using both 'hard' and 'soft' indicators.

Action 7 Formalize the network

The GFCF has already built a strong network, which is one of the key features of the definition of 'agency' (as we discussed under Action 4). At the core of the network are the 150 or so organizations supported by the GFCF over the past 12 years with whom there are warm relationships based on a sense of equality, sharing and mutual learning, which comes from the sense of being on a shared journey to #ShiftThePower. During this period the GFCF has developed relationships with many other kinds of organizations and is widely regarded as a thought leader in the field.

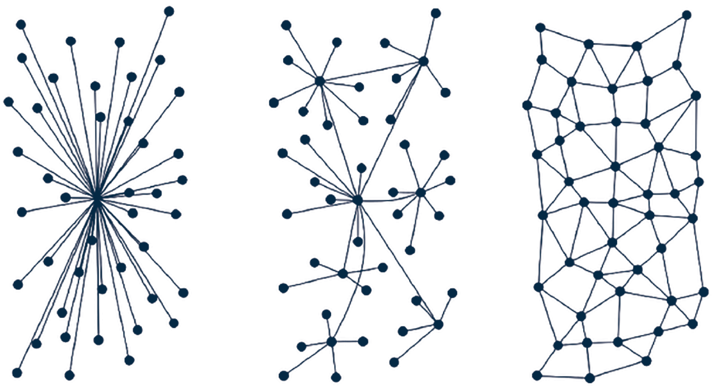
The best way to show the power of the network is through the mapping undertaking by Root Change. The maps visualize various kinds of relationships between organizations in the field. An example of what this looks like, taken from a Root Change map of work done by Local Works is as follows.

Network map – local works map BiH



It would be useful to review the state of the field to identify the key nodes in the network to see who has the most capacity to make things happen. This exercise should result in a decentralized network. This has some features in common with a distributed network but is significantly different from it because it has key nodes in a way that a fully distributed network does not.

Decentralized networks are far more common than distributed ones because networks tend to organize themselves naturally into hierarchies with some members more central than others.[90] In Baran's diagram (first shown on page 11), the decentralized network is the one in the middle.



Centralized (A) Decentralized (B) Distributed (C)

So, our first task is to draw a map of the key nodes in the network that have the power to change things, and to reach out to them and ask them formally to be part of our plan. These are our 'primary partners.' This is the group that will be responsible for what Citizens UK calls 'actions.' The theory is that 'action is the oxygen of the organization' and that in choosing to take such action, the purpose is to create a reaction that will be a specific gain on the road to the desired destination to #ShiftThePower.

90 https://medium.com/@jonaldfyookball/mathematical-proof-that-the-lightning-network-cannot-be-a-decentralized-bitcoin-scaling-solution-1b8147650800

Whatever the gain on a specific issue (for example a living wage or refugee rights), the underlying gain should be to change the political space so that power shifts from establishment institutions to people in communities. In the jargon of political science, such actions bolster the 'demand-side of governance' in relation to the 'supply-side.'[91] Different primary partners will work on different issues, but the common denominator is power. They can be drawn from many sectors, not just the community philanthropy field, but might include members of other networks such as Rethinking Poverty, Compass, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies and others.

Each primary partner will be different with different competences, but all will play a leadership role. The cabinet will not control the actions of the primary partners but will work with them based on mutual self-interest to co-ordinate action and to use common branding to be part of the #ShiftThePower movement. The GFCF has an important brokerage role here – encouraging collaboration, stimulating new initiatives and being a repository of knowledge that the field can use.

Action 8 Develop a resource plan

We need to develop a resource plan because we will not get far without a systematic understanding of the resources that we have and a strategy for expanding them in such a way to #ShiftThePower. We have already seen that the effectiveness can be inversely correlated with organizational size, and the pursuit of organizational growth can have harmful consequences. This means that we need to keep small and nimble and only use the right kind of resources.

Earlier we framed resources as a key part of agency, and defined it far more broadly than money. Earlier, we defined a resource as 'as a source of knowledge, experience and assets to mobilize and tap into, rather than a gap or deficit to fill.' This is an asset-based approach that values what we already have – money, thought leaders, network and constituency – that we and our partners can bring to the table.

One way of maximizing what we already have might be to use Blockchain to develop a cryptocurrency to enable transfer of time and money between different parts of our community. An example of how this might work is given by HullCoin. This enables people to translate work that people do as volunteers into purchasing capacity in shops, and is particularly useful in a setting where there is little money to be had. This approach means that a community can take charge of its resources and does not need to rely on external funding agencies and institutions such as banks.

The resource plan must enable us to have 'our own money.' So much funding comes with strings attached that prevent, rather than enhance, system change. It is difficult to be funded to develop a new paradigm while funders are in thrall to an old paradigm.

There is, however, a big opportunity with the #ShiftThePower group of funders because they see that they must change. At their meeting in London on 28 September

91 Knight, B., Chigudu, H. and Tandon, R. (2002) *Reviving democracy*, London: Earthscan

2018, the group decided that they would 'be ambitious about furthering practice to #ShiftThePower, rather than merely tinkering at the edges' and 'be . . . open about the means of achieving this.' This is a key partnership that we should develop.

Action 9 Enlarge the network

As we have already noted, we have a family of organizations that are working with us to #ShiftThePower. To be taken seriously, we need to extend that network and to broaden it beyond the community philanthropy community. The 45° Change theory gives us a framework for developing this.

To build the power we need, the network should develop organically and trade on the enthusiasms of the primary partners, since the key medium driving success will be energy. Partners may want to work on a range of issues and, so long as they have a clear and direct relationship with the wider #ShiftThePower agenda, they can be brought into the fold. To take two examples from the Rethinking Poverty network, #thehullwewant works with local communities to give a platform to their voices by exploring their dreams, needs and solutions for their city. It has many community partners and works together with councillors, MPs, service providers and unexpected allies from the private sector to #ShiftThePower and develop transformative change in communities and society. Tyne and Wear Citizens works on diverse issues, including the living wage, hate crime, mental health and refunds for schoolchildren claiming school dinners, but their entire energy derives from the desire to win campaigns that increase the power of local people. The issues they select are important, specific and above all winnable. Each win increases the power of citizens.

Joining up these local actions into an umbrella in which local efforts gain national and international recognition is a powerful hook for organizations to badge themselves as part of the #ShiftThePower campaign. This can be joined with other efforts in Rethinking Poverty to develop #ThePlaceWeWant in several locations. Such initiatives can be joined up through the Common Platform being developed by Compass. This process will yield a critical mass and by force of common use will bring into existence a new paradigm.

Action 10 Review progress

Central to systems theory is the idea of 'the learning organization.' The architect of this approach is Peter Senge who believed that 'learning organizations' continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.[92] He argues that only those organizations that adapt quickly and effectively will be able to excel in their field. To be a learning organization, two conditions must be present. The first is the ability to design the organization to match the intended or desired outcomes, and second, the ability

92 Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Currency Doubleday

to recognize when the initial direction of the organization is different from the desired outcome and follow the necessary steps to correct this mismatch.

This approach requires that we monitor progress. The most appropriate way of doing this is through social network analysis – giving us a way of describing power as in the relationship between organizations. This can be done by Root Change mapping. The maps turn ‘systems theory’ into ‘systems practice’ – telling us who is in the system and what they are doing to move the agenda forward. They give insights into the complexity of the interactions and force us to abandon simple logic models that tell us the journey of resources between two points – input to outcome. To measure change, we rely on coefficients that involve many different actors in their interrelationships with one another.

The unit of analysis in the map is not the single organization but the interrelationships between those organizations. This gives us an analysis of power based on space occupied and energy flows between different organizations in the system. If a system is pulling in a single direction to #ShiftThePower, we have a complex force that fulfils the conditions of requisite variety which means the complexity of the solution must exceed the complexity of the problem. If we take this approach, eventually the myth of the single grant or single philanthropic programme will be exposed for the fantasy that it is. If we want to #ShiftThePower, complexity theory rules.

The GFCF works with individual community foundations and other local grantmakers and their networks, particularly in the global south and the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Through small grants, technical support, and networking, the GFCF helps local institutions to strengthen and grow so that they can fulfil their potential as vehicles for local development, and as part of the infrastructure for durable development, poverty alleviation, and citizen participation.

About the author

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