

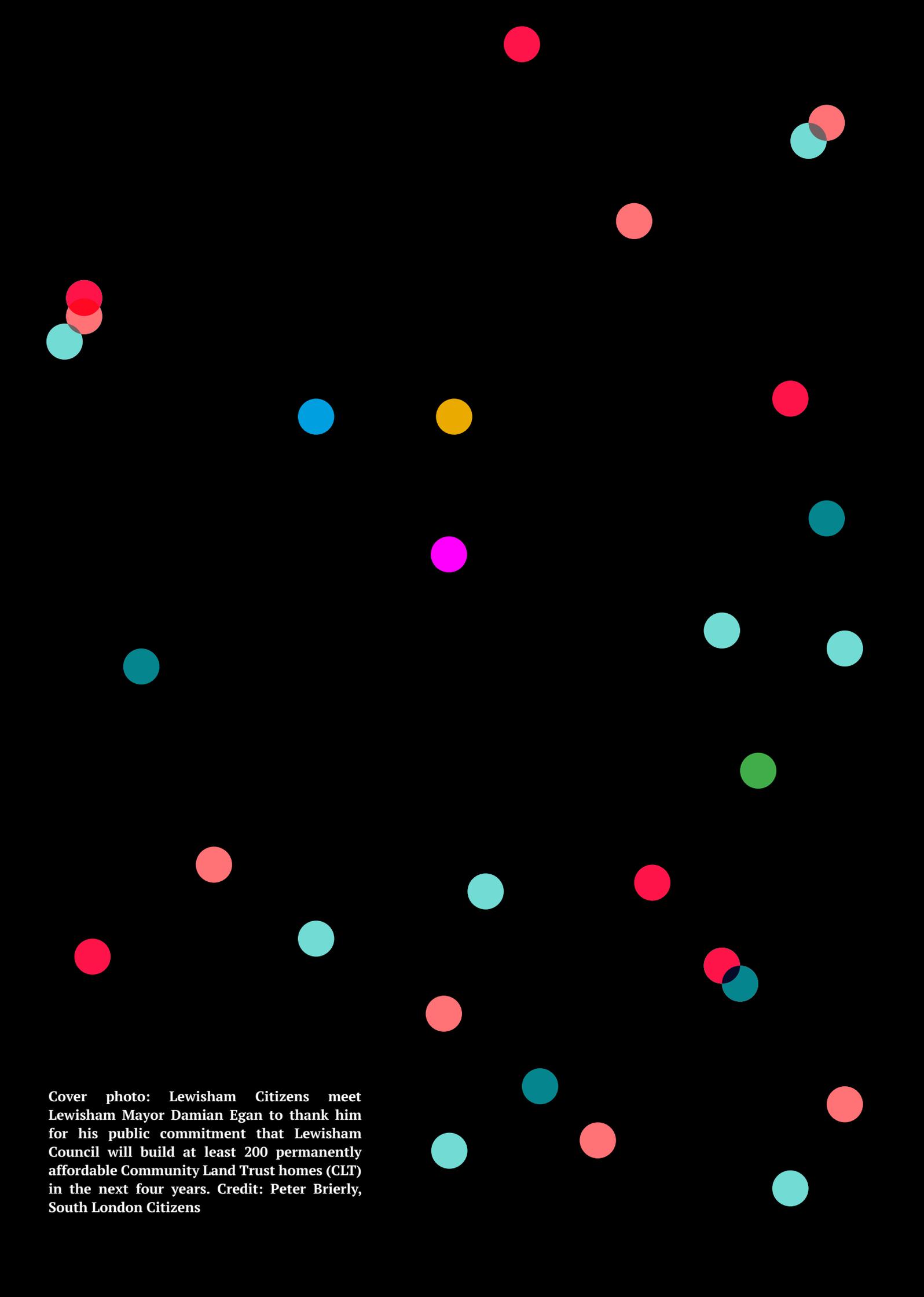


Civil Society Futures.

The independent inquiry

**The Story of
Our Times:
shifting power,
bridging divides,
transforming society**

Nov 2018

A collection of approximately 25 colorful circles of various sizes and colors (red, pink, cyan, blue, yellow, magenta, green) scattered across a black background. Some circles overlap, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Cover photo: Lewisham Citizens meet Lewisham Mayor Damian Egan to thank him for his public commitment that Lewisham Council will build at least 200 permanently affordable Community Land Trust homes (CLT) in the next four years. Credit: Peter Brierly, South London Citizens

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Foreword

Civil society involves all of us. When we act not for profit nor because the law requires us to, but out of love or anger or creativity, or principle, we are civil society. When we bring together our friends or colleagues or neighbours to have fun or to defend our rights or to look after each other, we are civil society.

Whether we organise through informal friendship networks, Facebook groups, community events and protests; or formal committees, charities, faiths and trade unions, whether we block runways or co-ordinate coffee mornings, sweat round charity runs or make music for fun; when we organise ourselves outside the market and the state, we are all civil society.

The task set for this inquiry was to consider the future for civil society. To do this we examined the environment in which civil society operates, the many pressures and changes it faces, and engaged groups, networks, organisations and individuals to develop a shared understanding of what the future might hold, and the role of civil society in shaping it.

What we found is both challenging and exciting.

We believe that civil society has a vital role to play in helping to address the challenges that lie ahead. Re-energised, civil society could be at the heart of the changes we need in our society as whole: reviving our dented democracy, rebuilding our social fabric and enabling us to address the great challenges of climate change and environmental degradation.

But civil society will not be able to do this without changing itself.

We live in a time of change, a time of enormous upheaval – and a time of unprecedented opportunity.

Our **democracy** is questioned and many feel it is under threat. People are hungry for the power to make their lives, their community and their country better. We can see this hunger being voiced from the Brexit vote to #metoo, in the solidarity movements formed around people seeking asylum, in the response of the community around Grenfell Tower. But from national politics to our local neighbourhoods, too often that voice goes unheard – and too often it is turned to anger and division. We witness across the world the rise of populist movements and parties, offering easy answers to tricky questions. Much loved and well-known institutions are being challenged as expectations change, accountability is demanded and trust is no longer a given – as the crises in Oxfam and other charities this year have shown.

But new movements and networks that respond, and organisations that adapt, can tap into this incredible new energy as a force for change, from confronting sexual abuse to communities saving their high streets.

In our changing **demographics** there are tensions and divides between generations, as for the first time within living memory young people experience a lower standard of living than their parents. Our population is ageing, throwing into question old certainties about how we pay for our social safety net and expectations for later life. There are many more people living with disabilities and long-term medical conditions – a triumph for them and for medical science, but our social fabric needs to catch up. Patterns of family life are changing – with more single-person households, more separated families, more self-determination. We have greater diversity and differences in faith, ethnicity and identity than ever before – and that’s a cause for celebration. But it also demands change.

As we’ve seen in social upheavals of the past, such as more women going into paid work during the Second World War, and the waves of immigration in the decades that followed, each change is an opportunity to renew and revitalise our society, to find new ways to value each other and connect.

The transformative impacts of **digital** change, automation and globalisation are reshaping how we work, live and interact. They have brought huge benefits but we also risk a more disconnected, less human, less equal world, with ever-deeper and sharper divisions between places, generations, races, faiths, social classes and more.

But these changes also open up incredible possibilities barely imaginable even a decade ago, to connect with each other, create with each other, understand each other and support each other, if we can shape and use the tools for good.

Both **austerity and inequality** have made life much tougher for many and radically altered the environment for many civil society organisations, for local authorities and for central government. This landscape is fundamentally different from

a decade ago and we must respond in the decade ahead.

It will not be easy, and it questions many of our old assumptions, but from the management of libraries to changing land ownership we can see the seeds of experimentation with new models.

And there are more upheavals to come.

Our **environment** is changing fast, with climate, species loss and other major issues becoming increasingly urgent, affecting current and future generations.

Our **economy’s** future is uncertain, as people on all sides of the political debate question fundamentals such as the future of work, the role of the state and markets, and how we can prosper in the decades ahead.

A strong civil society is urgently needed to shape the future.

We need to take on these big issues for our society, bring people together and lead change. These challenges are urgent, the time to act is now and we must take them on.

But responding to times of greatest need is what we have always done. Civil society is at its best at times of change.

When the Industrial Revolution transformed our cities, it was civil society that organised to combat the squalor and chaos, built housing and supported people to make a better life.

After the horrors of the two world wars it was civil society that supported displaced people, refugees and traumatised veterans, and helped to rebuild our country.

In the 1960s and 1970s we organised anew around homelessness and domestic violence, and in the 1980s, seeing the horrors of AIDS, the gay community mobilised heroically to demand a better response.

Today it is civil society that organises to welcome refugees, to open food banks, to conserve our precious wildlife, to show that black lives matter, to fight for internet freedoms.

Civil society has never just stood on the sidelines and watched. There is a golden thread throughout our history: civil society renewing, reshaping, reinventing and making a difference.

Neither the market nor the state alone can re-thread our social fabric, rebuild our democracy and respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing age. We must be at the heart of it. We must lead the way.

But civil society can't do it in its current form. We must change to be fit for the future.

Civil society risks becoming irrelevant if we do not change. We must be in step with – or a step ahead of – the times we live in.

If we do not respond to people and communities' desire for power, we will lose our legitimacy and waste the potential of the many ways they can have agency over what matters to them. We will waste the tremendous potential of civil society to thrive through change.

If we are not accountable enough to those we are here to serve, we will lose our way and miss abuse and misconduct.

If we do not connect closely enough and deeply enough with the people who matter, we will lose touch and fail to deliver the changes we seek. And if we don't connect within civil society – national and local, small and large, generalist and specialist – we will not rise to the opportunities we face.

If we do not continually, bravely work to build trust, we will lose the essential foundation for everything we do.

As the world we are in changes, so must we. We all have a stake in civil society's future health: government and business and people everywhere rely on us.

So how do we change?

For too long there have been high-level reports that bear little relationship to the real experiences of people working and taking part in civil society.

This report reflects the realities people face and the very significant, focused changes they have told us they want to see – people across many different parts of civil society, at all levels, in all organisations, large and small, old and new. These issues need to be heard and understood, both in Torbay and on the Today programme, they are as vital in Walsall as in Westminster.

We have heard – from long-established organisations and new start-ups, from challenger organisations and from incumbents, from small local charities and networks of young people – that collectively we can and must seize the opportunity to shape the future, rediscovering our enduring purpose: to connect in order to shift power.

We have listened very carefully, and heard time and again that, too often in civil society, size, turnover and short-term measures of impact are treated as the best measures of success. What we have heard loud and clear is that real and long-lasting success comes from the depth and breadth of connections with people and communities, and the opportunity for everyone involved to have some power.

We have heard that people really care about the **place** where they live. Young and old have a passion for their neighbourhood, town, city. And they need spaces where then can meet – can be, can talk, can celebrate, can mourn.

We have heard that people see civil society as a way of expressing their sense of **belonging and identity**. And that this is challenging, and contested, but important.

We have heard that **work** is changing, and that less and less does it provide the meaning and purpose that is essential to us all.

And we've heard that the **ways we organise** aren't always right for what we want to do now. That people are coming together in looser networks and movements, as well as forming charities and new forms of enterprise. And that the ways we organise need to keep pace with people's expectations.

A call to everyone in civil society to commit to a shared PACT.

To change for the future, all of us within civil society and those who interact with civil society need to respond with care, courage and commitment. Local community groups and large national charities, new online movements and established funders, sector bodies, regulators and government.

What needs to be done will be different for each one of us. But together we know how to transform civil society and transform society for the better.

These ideas have come together in a shared PACT for civil society, created from the views and ideas of civil society, bringing together our collective energy and experience. It is a call for all of us in civil society – people, organisations and institutions – to commit to:

- **Power:** consciously shifting power in big ways, sharing more decision-making and control, being a model for the rest of society and doing whatever is needed so that everyone can play a full part in the things which matter to them.
- **Accountability:** holding ourselves accountable first and foremost to the communities and people we exist to serve, revolutionising our approach – including being more accountable to each other and to future generations.
- **Connection:** broadening and deepening our connections with people and communities – especially when it's hardest – for this is the heart of civil society's purpose, bridging the frequent divides that span our society and investing in a new social infrastructure for civil society.
- **Trust:** devoting the time and resources necessary to building trust – our core currency and foundation – earning trust by staying true to our values and standing up for them, and trusting others with vital decisions that affect them.

Some inquiries end with a list of specific recommendations, usually addressed to other people. This one ends with an urgent call for us all to behave differently in order to meet the challenges of the next decade.

It is our behaviours, attitudes and practices that will allow us genuinely to shape the next decade. We know how to do it – we don't need to wait for permission, so let's get on with it.

Julia Unwin

Chair, Civil Society Futures



Civil Society Futures journey.



We've heard from over **3,000** people



Literature review with **186** references



50+ conferences and events



6 youth events



27 community workshops

in **9** places from Penzance to Sunderland



50 interviews by Community Researchers



70 people took part in Let's Talk About Race events



40 interviews with activists and bridge builders



250 meetings with civil society leaders



120 blogs and articles

Learn more about our approach:
civilsocietyfutures.org/approach

Introduction

“It’s a time for real opportunity... everything’s up in the air – actually anything can happen.”¹

It is evident that civil society really matters – it is a valuable and essential part of our daily lives. It is clear to us that civil society, in all its forms, from neighbourhood action to nationally known charity, from communities of faith to social activism, from clubs and societies to self-help and social enterprise, really matters. Without the many social benefits produced by civil society the state could not cope and the private sector could not flourish. Against the many challenges we have faced, including the recent austerity pressures, civil society has played, and continues to play, a big and necessary role in all our lives, locally and nationally: bringing people together, building their confidence and capability, offering a helping hand to those in crisis, delivering services, challenging injustice.

“My hope is that civil society is part of the fabric of a future Britain.”²

But every generation faces new challenges as well as new opportunities. The world has changed, and today it’s changing more than ever – becoming more unequal, more disconnected from power and more divided. We face the real risk of an ‘us and them’ future. Robots replace people in the world of work, artificial intelligence amasses our personal data and impersonal transactions replace human relationships in public services. Decision-making, ownership and power become further and further out of reach for most of us, and we face the prospect of a future in which more and more people feel unheard, feel a loss of control and lose trust in the institutions that frame their lives.



Yet these same changes herald the possibility of positive, life-enhancing transformation.

In just the past two years of the inquiry, major events have shown what a changing world we live in, and that civil society must respond to: the tragedy of Grenfell Tower, terror attacks, the Windrush scandal, the economic volatility of Brexit, the exposure of sexual harassment and exploitation – including in the charity sector – and more.

“People are just that tired... they’ve seen that no one’s been listening to them.”³



Emerging from what we’ve heard is a suggestion that the big role for civil society in the coming years is to generate a radical and creative shift – one that puts power in the hands of people and communities, preventing an ‘us and them’ future, connecting us better and humanising the way we do things. We are talking about people as citizens – individually, and in families, in groups of shared identity, experience or interest, and equally we’re talking about people as whole communities.

Helping people to discover their full potential, hearing their voices, trusting them, their strength and skills, the value they can add. Recognising the abundance of skills and capabilities around us, seeing not just the problems but the great strengths in communities.

“I’d like to see more power being given to the people.”⁴

“[We need] a punk era.”⁵

Is it time to search out what democracy – both the big and the everyday – could become? Can and should civil society be leading the way?

Not allowing people or communities to be pushed around, or left behind, or ignored, or reduced to labels, or silenced. Enabling people to find ways to come together, to experience solidarity, compassion and love for those who are different from them. Providing opportunity and support for people to design, control and own the things they care about – that affect their lives, protecting and preserving what matters to them. Recognising participation may not be open to all - education, ethnicity, age, gender, poverty, disability, place and more play a part. Creating deep democracy, not tinkering at the edges with yet another consultation or putting more and more information online if it excludes some and doesn’t lead to real power.

“Where is the thing that makes us more than the sum of our parts.”⁶

We know that civil society is not yet fit for this purpose, it lacks confidence, skills and credibility and there are too many examples of charities and institutions being part of the problem. Many people inside and outside civil society organisations are concerned they have lost their connection with the people they are there to serve, become too focussed on protecting reputations and income streams. Too often things are done to and for people, when it could

be about creating conditions for people to do things on their own terms. Too often it’s about perpetuating patriarchal command-and-control,



holding power close, fighting their corner, rather than letting go, building alliances, allowing others to step forward. Some are already trying to change, but funding systems, organisational structures and culture often make it difficult.

“It’s about being brave – change is coming, we can either let it happen to us or be in front of it.”⁷

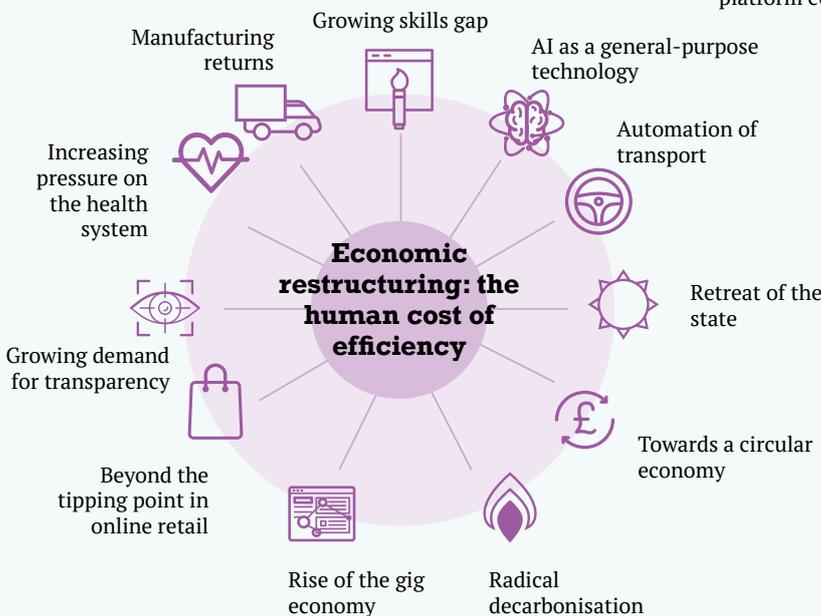
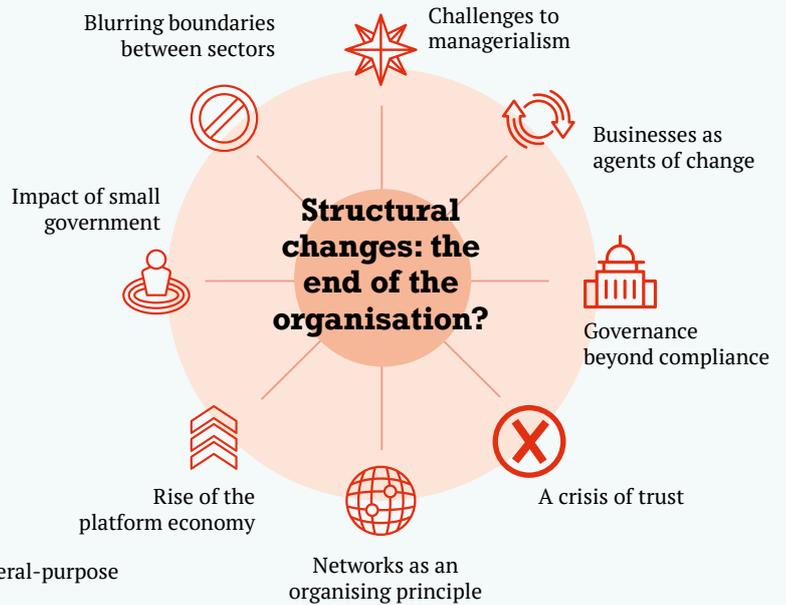
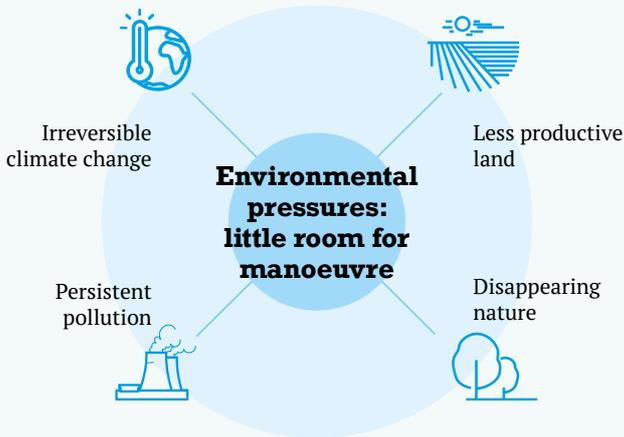
And yet we can see, from countless examples, glimpses of the civil society of the future – capable of putting people first, listening to the voices of many, practising shared, generous and open-hearted leadership, building citizen and community participation, and doing it with creativity and flair, often in networked, fluid and informal ways. Now is the time for all of us who make up civil society to lead our own future.

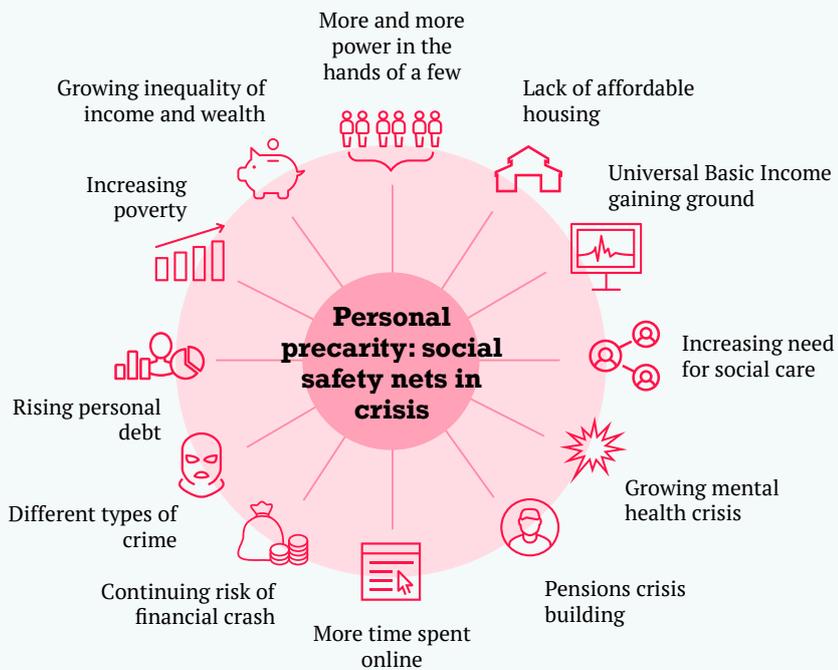
Will you help make it happen? These issues are urgent and call for all of us across civil society to be part of the transformation. Read on to discover more and explore what we can each do to put this into practice. Get involved and share experiences and ideas at civilsocietyfutures.org

“How can we rise to the challenge – what are the moonshots of today?”⁸

What are the trends shaping our future?

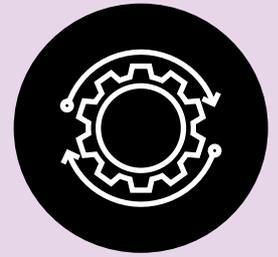
>> These are the trends shaping the future of our country, trends that civil society has a role in responding to, shaping and making a difference to.





Explore the full interactive map:
civilsocietyfutures.org/trends

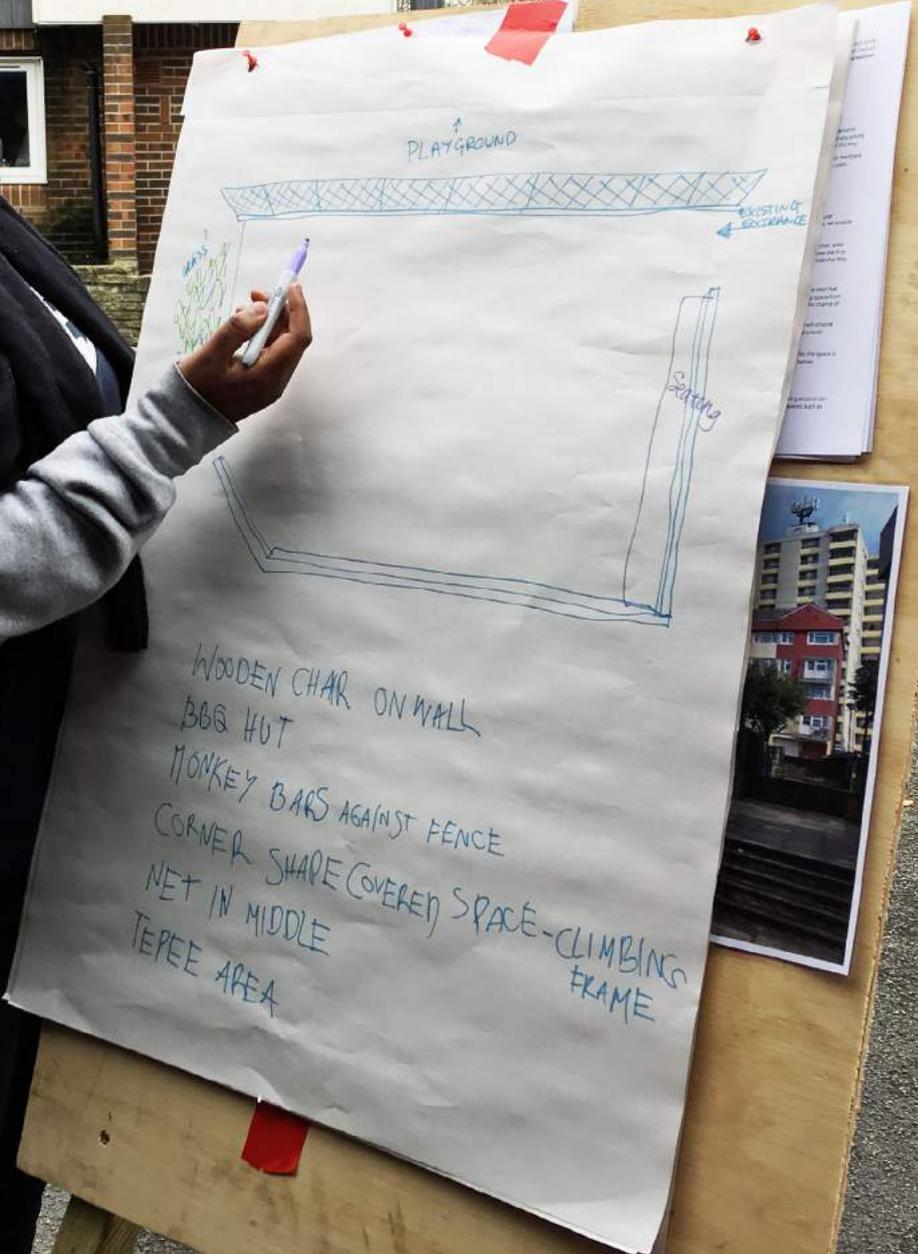
Where is change most needed and how do we get there?



How can we put power in the hands of people and communities? How can we prevent an 'us and them' future, connect us better and humanise the way we do things?

The following are the big, overlapping areas we've heard about where people want change to happen: places, belonging and identity, work and purpose and how we organise. Power, Accountability, Connection and Trust are key to enable change to happen.





Shelter
 playground
 2x
 (f. etc)



The places that matter



Local places matter to many of us, perhaps even more in a digital age – to meet real people, talk eye to eye. Place matters just as much to young people as to older generations. Healthy civil society is rooted in places, and even big organisations need local networks of engagement. But, as the Brexit vote showed, people in many places feel unheard, neglected and ignored, and are hungry for a new vision and the power to make it happen.

Too many feel the places where they live are forgotten...

“Central UK government thinks the north ends at Manchester.”⁹

“90% of individual giving goes to organisations in London.”¹⁰

“A whole part of the city which should be the creative kind of hub, that’s just completely derelict now, and no vision.”¹¹

...and they have too little power to transform them.

“If the council didn’t do it then nobody did it, but we actually need to get away from that.”¹²

“59% of charities said that their boards were not representative of the communities they serve.”¹³

Initiatives imposed from outside rarely have the answers.

“An area that has a strong community will get further than a divided one”¹⁴

“They send in consultants for hundreds of thousands of pounds to tell us the bleeding obvious. It’s like, thanks, but just give us the money and we would have done that 10 years ago.”¹⁵

There’s a desire for collective visions for the places where we live – and local action to make them happen.

“‘Yeah Marks Gate’ not ‘Urgh Marks Gate’.”¹⁶

“What we have in Cornwall is more sun and more wind than anywhere else. Let’s harness that and let’s use it for the people in Cornwall, rather than it going to EDF.”¹⁷

“Individuals need to be given ‘permission’ to change things in their neighbourhood, and to understand that it is both everybody’s right, and everybody’s responsibility to do so.”¹⁸

People want more spaces and ways to come together, to be heard and to hear each other.

“More common meeting spaces where people feel they are part of something.”¹⁹

New types of spaces are appearing, such as [Living Rooms](#), makerspaces, [Fab Labs](#), cafés and co-working spaces. And existing spaces and institutions are opening up and inviting people in, like Toynbee Hall, [Visit My Mosque](#), community pubs and libraries, [20's Plenty for Us](#), [Living Streets](#) and the Church Urban Fund's [Together Network](#).

Local authorities are reimagining their role — this is a crucial moment of opportunity. There are many places already starting this journey: Oldham, with its Co-operative Council ambitions, Essex Council's

priority for people to “control and contribute to their communities”²⁰, [the Wigan Deal](#) and the [Everyone Everyday](#) participatory project in Barking & Dagenham, to name just a few. The local authorities in each of these places are catalysing new and different relationships between groups, organisations and the people who live and work there. Long-standing local and national support and infrastructure networks are exploring what role they need to play now and how best to bring people together.

[CoLab Dudley](#) is a social lab working in Dudley town centre. Run out of a coffee shop on the high street, it initiates and supports ongoing experiments, bringing together unique mixes of local people to address complex social challenges and encourage ‘everyday activism’.

“[My friend], she has got loads of ideas, she wants to set up a community centre for people suffering from mental health disabilities. [...] Coming here and seeing the different types of people who come in, it has opened her up to so much.”²¹



Belonging and identity



We all want to belong and to be treated fairly and equally by others in society. Relevance and meaning in our lives come from relationships, expressing our own identities and being heard, but also being part of something bigger. This is central to civil society's purpose in an increasingly changing, global, individualised and digitalised world.

Many feel our society has become too much about individuals, about competition.

“Me instead of we. We all build our own little empires, we all have our own little gates at the front of our houses.”²²

“We’re pushed further apart by competition for smaller resources and a desire to find our uniqueness, not our common ground.”²³

There is both concern, and complacency, about racism and our collective identity as a society. Tensions are often heightened by the media and the internet.

“Brexit is changing our notions of cultural identity and what it means to be British and brown.”²⁴

“Between 2014 and 2015 there was a 326% rise in reported street-based anti-Muslim incidents.”²⁵

“Social media can narrow horizons and create an echo chamber of our own views.”²⁶

Civil society sometimes reinforces divisions, cutting us up into single identities.

“I hope we have a prosperous future where people from all walks of life can feel safe and included – like they matter in this world”²⁷

People want a shift in values, less individualism and more community, mutual support.

“We’ve got to get away from this every man for himself business.”²⁸

In Mansfield they have created a Welcoming Committee in the town for new arrivals and strangers in the town to meet each other. [CoLab Exeter](#) works with formerly isolated people to connect them with others locally.

There is a strong desire for ways to come together that transcend divisions based on ethnicity, class and religion. All parts of civil society need to focus on defeating racism and division.

“We need to recognise the many identities we all hold simultaneously and to create routes to civic engagement and representation that can cope with that complexity.”²⁹

With [Sisters Uncut](#) groups sprouting across the country, people banding together around [Community Land Trusts](#) all over England, ActionAid identifying as a feminist organisation and Scope restructuring to provide more voice for disabled people, it is clear that there are other ways of coming together.

Civil society has an important role to play in shaping the future of the digital world.

“Only 12% say [the internet] has had a very positive impact on society... There is a public demand for greater accountability.”³⁰

“We need to make sure that we can shape the way in which we are able to participate in public spaces – and this is as true of Twitter as our town squares.”³¹

The Forgiveness Project collects and shares stories from individuals and communities who have rebuilt their lives following hurt and trauma. The testimonies bear witness to the resilience of the human spirit, and act as a powerful antidote to narratives of hate and dehumanisation, presenting alternatives to cycles of conflict, violence, crime and injustice.

“Honest dialogue is important because through that comes understanding [...] I met people who had wanted to kill me several years before, and vice versa.”³²



Reimagining work and purpose



Dependable, well-paid, meaningful work continues to disappear, and technology is bringing more change – shifting our relationship to work and workplaces, impacting our sense of belonging, affiliation and loyalty. Can civil society help people and communities be heard and take charge of creating a ‘human’ future for work? Can civil society provide relationships and activity that give other ways of finding purpose?

Work has become increasingly insecure, low paid and with long hours. It’s making life harder for people – and affecting how much they can take part in civil society.

“We’ve lost the main industry that supported the town.”³³

“You pick your wages up on a Friday. You get told there and then if you’re working the following week. You can’t plan your life. You can’t get a mortgage.”³⁴

“Only 7% of employees are able to have some time off work to volunteer.”³⁵

And the nature of work is expected to change more radically than at any time since the industrial revolution. People are concerned about the future but feel like they have little say over what happens.

“I fear robots will take over jobs and our purpose is challenged”³⁶

“I fear of a future where our ability to support cohesion of a society

where digital tech / AI create such different relationships across and between communities.”³⁷

Civil society has a vital role supporting people to be heard, to experiment and create visions of how the future of work can be more fair, safe and humane. More and more places are supporting people to work differently, including co-working, co-living and makerspaces.³⁸ There are new organisations forming, unions representing gig-economy workers, [The Future of Work is Human](#) and the [East End Trades Guild](#). There are pilots into different models, like a Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Infrastructure and the [Enspiral Network](#), which was founded in New Zealand and is driven by a vision to make the world a better place through meaningful work.

And civil society offers ways of finding a purposeful life as both a place of work and beyond work – if it can adapt.

“People want to give their time in different ways to a generation ago – for example, online, remotely, in microunits, as a one-off, intensively then not again. Civil society has been poor to respond to this shift.”³⁹

“In the past decade, there has been a noticeable rise in online campaign initiatives (e.g. 38 Degrees), citizen engagement platforms (e.g. They Work For You, Fix My Street) and grassroots movements organising themselves via online platforms (e.g. Momentum).”⁴⁰



Birmingham Impact Hub is blending what it means to live, work, collaborate and dream. It hosts co-working spaces, schools to learn new trades, radical experiments in childcare, support for social entrepreneurs and tea clubs. The common thread is bringing people together to build a better Birmingham and a better world.

“It’s the perfect place for start-ups or for people trying to get to know people in the city, like me.”⁴¹



How we organise



There are huge variations in trust and mistrust within civil society. The media has placed a spotlight on issues from chief executive pay to fundraising practices to sexual exploitation. And the biggest worry is the lack of trust between organisations and groups within civil society. Relationships within civil society have corroded as everyone competes for funding. Big changes are needed to allow smaller groups and more informal networks to flourish — but the established institutions need to change fastest and most profoundly, learning from challengers and the best of what's new.

People may be losing trust in large institutions, including charities, which are too often rigid, unaccountable and distant from the people they are meant to serve.

“Trust and confidence in charities fell from 6.7 out of 10 in 2014 to 5.7 in 2016.”⁴²

“I feel hugely let down by the minority of charity workers who abuse their power.”⁴³

“Institutions are locked into this concrete mudge of just ticking a box [...] with the social skills of a traffic bollard.”⁴⁴

“Monetising and transactional relationships [...] values are becoming economic value.”⁴⁵

Civil society organisations have too often lost their independence and willingness to stand up to government and business as boundaries blur between them.

“Professionalised, brand-driven and beholden to government for their multi-million contracts and big business for their ‘partnerships’, charities are seen to have become part of the very system they were set up to challenge.”⁴⁶

There is inequality within civil society. Larger organisations dominate, while barriers including funding are holding back smaller and informal groups and projects — leaving a hollowed out middle between the two.

“Fewer than 1 in 2 charities are confident they will still be operating in 2021.”⁴⁷

Many are hungry to have a say in reimagining how organisations and networks work — new models of membership, participation, governance and accountability, putting people and communities in power.

“I’d love to be in a place where we have joint decision-making, where we co-produce things, co-deliver things.”⁴⁸

“Without the internet and social media, there would not have been a #MeToo movement.”⁴⁹

“The rise of social media has contributed to an increasingly dynamic process of forming and disbanding communities of interest, in contrast with a more static organisational model dominated by institutions.”⁵⁰



Edge Fund is a grant-making body with a difference. It supports efforts to achieve social, economic and environmental justice, and to end imbalances in wealth and power — and it gives those it aims to support a say in where the money goes, including disabled people, the working class, women, people of colour, LGBTIQI and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

“Edge Fund don’t just distribute funds but redistribute power.”⁵¹



Future generations



>> Young people shaping their own future

“Trust young people – listen carefully and act with them.”⁵²

This inquiry is about the future – and future generations must be at the heart of that.

Throughout the inquiry we heard many expressions of hope that young people will bring about change. That can only happen if civil society is connected to young people, actively shifts power to them, is accountable to them and trusts them. We set out to ensure that the insights of the next generation are properly heard, learnt from and acted upon.

Pioneering youth-led groups that are an active part of civil society came together from across the country, including GL4 from Gloucester, Speaker’s Corner from Bradford, 20 Stories High from Liverpool and Shake from London, in collaboration with three youth ambassadors, inquiry panel member Rhiannon White and Ruth Ibegbuna. What are their hopes, fears and visions for the future?

Work and purpose are a primary concern:

“I fear in the future there will be a reduction in ‘real’ jobs and an increase in zero hour ‘drone’ positions.”⁵³

“I hope to be working for myself and using my platform to elevate people’s stories.”⁵⁴

Belonging and identity feature prominently, including explicit concerns about racism and how to overcome divides:

“I hope we have a prosperous future

where people from all walks of life can feel safe and included – like they matter in this world.”⁵⁵

Place is as important to these young people as it is to other age groups:

“An area that has a strong community will get further than a divided one.”⁵⁶

They want to lead and organise in different ways:

“A fire will be created and the youth will carry the torch.”⁵⁷

“Splitting my time between paid work, ongoing learning, family commitments, seeing friends, supporting my community and volunteering.”⁵⁸



There are fears about the scale of global and social challenges:

“I fear that my children and grandchildren are living in a horrible society.”⁵⁹

“I fear that there will be more war and destruction.”⁶⁰

They emphasised global and environmental challenges more than we heard from anyone else, recognising the imminent threats and need for collective actions:

“I am part of the generation to see the effects of climate change.”⁶¹

“I fear there is still no education on how we’re destroying the planet – we as youth won’t find ways to save it.”⁶²

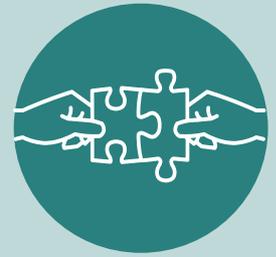
And they have a strong belief in putting more power with people and communities:

“We unleash people power around the world.”⁶³

Watch films and read more of young people’s own voices: civilsocietyfutures.org/youth



How can we shape the future together?



“Our vision for the future is a civil society formed on innovation, boldness and challenge. This is the precursor to a positive and healthy society.”⁶⁴

A time of change

Civil society cannot stand still as society shifts. We have never just stood on the sidelines and watched. Through previous decades and centuries we have responded to change, reshaped and reinvented.

We combated the squalor and chaos of the Industrial Revolution, supported displaced people, refugees and traumatised veterans after world wars, organised on homelessness and domestic violence in the 1960s and 1970s, mobilised around AIDS in the 1980s, and in the last decade have welcomed refugees and opened food banks.

A strong, renewed, re-energised civil society is urgently needed to shape the future now. Today we face big upheavals and crises, and new opportunities that call us to reinvent ourselves again, to transform ourselves and transform society.

Civil society has the opportunity to rebuild our dented democracy, heal social division and resist environmental degradation. We need to lead change and bring people together. There is an opening now that is real and urgent, but in order to meet it we need to be fit for the future.

The world is changing quickly, as we’ve seen in the two years of this inquiry. Collectively, we must transform ourselves – or risk becoming irrelevant. The big message from the many hundreds of discussions we have held and submissions we have

received is that the big role for civil society in the coming years is to generate a radical and creative shift that puts power in the hands of people and communities, preventing an ‘us and them’ future, connecting us better and humanising the way we do things.

We are putting forward a PACT for civil society, by civil society – shared aspirations for us all to commit to, for the decade ahead and beyond. It’s not waiting for permission, or hoping others will provide a plan. It’s civil society making a commitment to get ready for the future. It is a response to the changing world we live in, based on what Civil Society Futures has heard from thousands of people across England.

Carers and chief executives, funders and activists, national networks, major institutions, regulators, civil servants and local authorities, local community groups, young people from Liverpool to Gloucester – many, many people’s voices have shaped this PACT. It is intended to support us all to thrive in the future, and to build on the very best existing initiatives across civil society.

Collectively, we have the power to change ourselves and shape our country and communities for the better. Let’s take responsibility for the future of civil society and society itself.

This change won’t come from outside – it is in our hands. It requires all of us to re-examine and renew our behaviours, attitudes and practices.

“We can only make a change in the world by making a change in our community.”⁶⁵

Navigate the future

The PACT is a map to guide us all in the future: a set of principles, practices and questions that are designed to help each of us forge our own future.

Each person, each group, each organisation, each movement will use it differently. There are no easy one-size-fits-all solutions. This is about getting ready for uncertain futures and thriving in them. Whoever we are, whatever we do, whatever happens in the years ahead, shifting power and fostering deep connections can help us be more relevant to the people and communities around us, and an even greater force for good.

Please read, reflect and share with others. These are practices for the long term. They need ongoing reflection and long-term commitment. There aren't necessarily quick or simple answers.

Some things may be challenging. To change and evolve there are certainly things that are challenging. Judgement and criticism are not helpful. Let us all be open and questioning, listening very carefully to what people are saying and paying attention to the changes around us.

Throughout, stories of what others are doing can inspire us: there are many more of these at civilsocietyfutures.org/stories



Our PACT

>>By civil society, for civil society, shared by us all

Power

>>A great power shift

Too many people feel unheard and ignored. There are too many imbalances of power.

Change in society begins by changing ourselves in civil society.

We don't want to deny anyone the chance to make the contribution that only they can.

We will practice shared and distributed models of decision-making and control.

We will do whatever's needed so that all those who want to – not least those who have been excluded – can play a full part in the things that matter to them, and can bring the wisdom and expertise that we need.

Connection

>>Building deeper, closer connections

At its heart, civil society is and always has been about the power of human connection.

But too often we have lost connections, because the world is changing fast or we have become too remote from the people and communities we are here for.

We will build real and meaningful relationships between people, meeting as equals – especially where this is hard to do.

We will create and invest in better ways to connect that are fit for the 21st century, to create a national people–power grid, energising and universalising social action across communities and across our country.



Accountability

>>An accountability revolution

For too long we've focused only on accountability to funders and to government. It's time we focus on accountability to the communities and people we exist to serve.

Whether we're a long-established charity or a new social movement, we will hold ourselves accountable first and foremost to the people, communities and causes we exist to serve.

We will be collectively accountable across civil society and to future generations.

When we talk about our impact, we will always acknowledge what others have contributed.

Trust

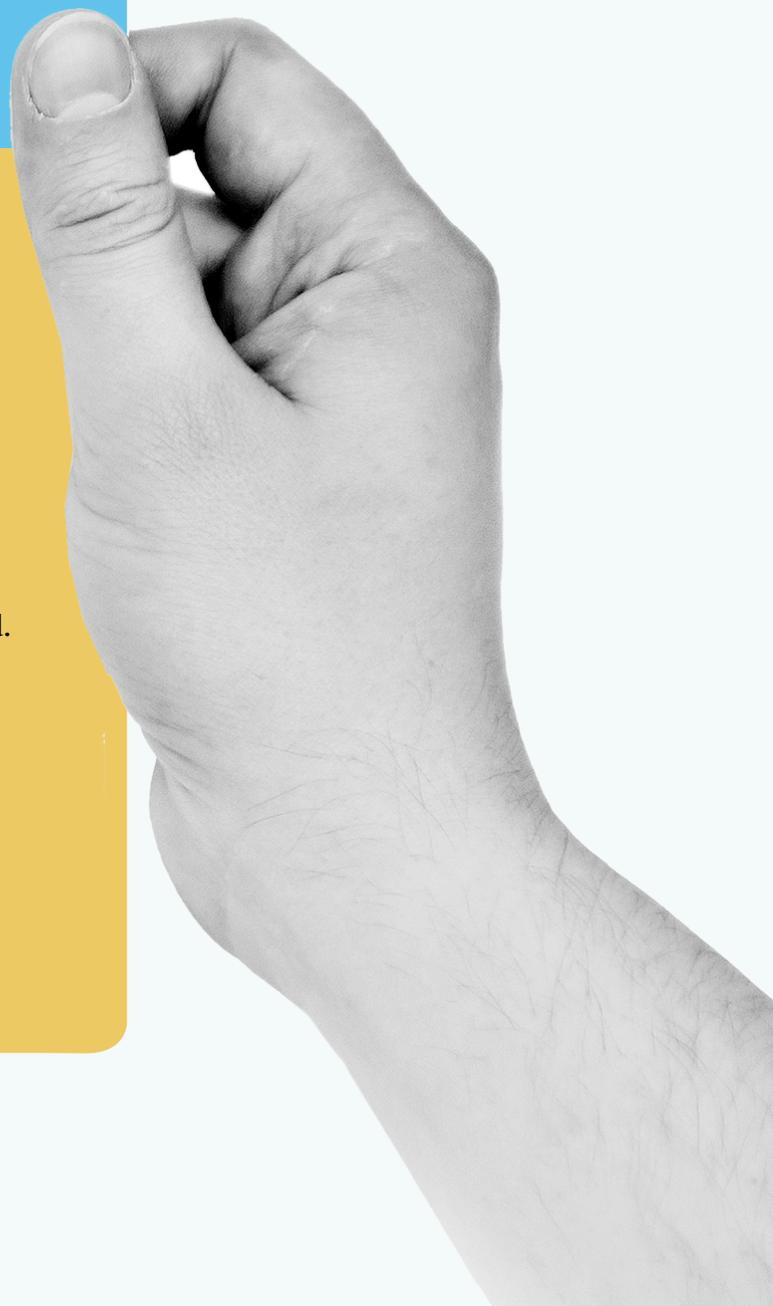
>>Investing in our core currency

Trust is the most important asset we have – even more important than money, it is an essential foundation for everything we do.

Following abuse, damagingly competitive pursuit of funding and loss of faith in institutions, we cannot take trust for granted.

We will build trust by staying true to our values and doing what's right – being honest about our failures and successes, defending rights and calling out injustice.

We will take the time, commitment and care to build trust with the people and communities we work with. And we will trust them to provide insights, make decisions and run things.



THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH



YIELDING PLACE TO THE NEW

Creative response to PACT by artist Rebecca Strickson

Power

>>A great power shift



“The powerlessness of feeling guilty, ashamed or fearful. The power that emanates from trust, love and confidence [...] These overwhelming emotions... Power at times feels like a taboo subject.”⁶⁶

“I want the inquiry to challenge what those of us in power will give up so that power is shared.”⁶⁷

Across our country – and in civil society – too many people feel unheard, ignored, frustrated. Imbalances in power are often at the heart of the issue: who gets listened to, who makes decisions, who is in control.

Change in society begins by changing ourselves in civil society.

The future could include...

Diverse civil society leadership at every level, opened up to people of different genders, ages, ethnicities, attitudes, world views, politics, social class, faiths and more... **Funding decided by the people** it is there to support... Locally designed and delivered public services... Those with direct experience of the issue being valued as experts... A new culture and generation of leadership that understands power, and is prepared to share it and shift it... Traditional organisational structures reimagined and re-energised... More organisations and networks **embrace visionary radical change**... Visible platforms for people to **share their stories and build collective power**.

We want everyone to have the chance to make the contribution that only they can. We will consciously create a healthy, sustainable and more equal civil society.

We will address inequalities and conflict by seeking to understand power and oppression, recognising the power we have and supporting others to discover theirs.

We will practice shared and distributed models of decision-making and control, such as citizen juries, community ownership and participatory grant-making.

We will do whatever is needed so all those who want to can play a full part in the things that matter to them – not least those who have been excluded – so they can bring their wisdom and expertise.



Lankelly Chase

Lankelly Chase is an independent foundation working in partnership with people across the UK to change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage.

Their approach is to develop and support **'action inquiries'** into the changes that are needed, one of which is addressing the question: 'How can power shift to people who are marginalised, so they have the motivation, capability and freedom to become change agents?'

The foundation is working with a network of partners, seeking to learn through a range of experiences, as well as drawing on the rich work others have done in the past. It is an ongoing process, using different methods to understand what power means to people, and trying to uncover the assumptions we all have about this issue.

Watch more here:

civilsocietyfutures.org/lankelly-chase and find out more about their power action inquiry.

London Queer Muslims

London Queer Muslims challenges the dominant narratives about queer Muslims, both in the LGBTQIA+ community and in the Muslim community. The group is a place for the discussion and practice of Islam without needing to debate whether it is acceptable to be Muslim and queer.

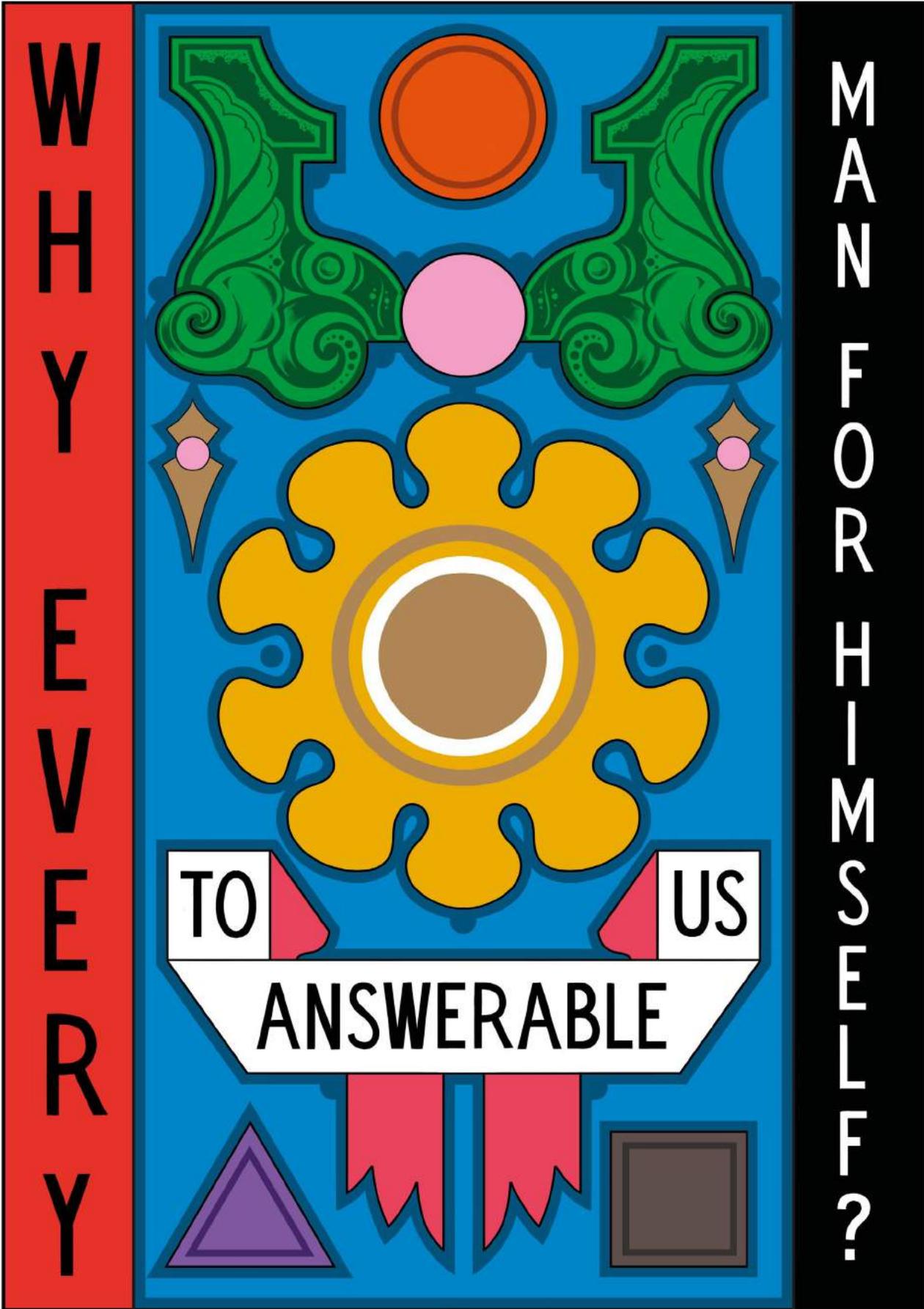
As well as trying to build the power of queer Muslims in London, the group seeks to embody its ideals of inclusion in its own internal practices, by building connections and developing and sharing power among their members – often basing these processes on ancient Islamic traditions.

The group facilitates meetings on a rotational basis, building up the capacity of members so that different people can lead groups, consciously aiming for gender justice when choosing who will lead sessions. And they take all their decisions using a form of consensus based on an Islamic concept called 'ijma'.

Hear more about how the group works:

civilsocietyfutures.org/London-Queer-Muslims

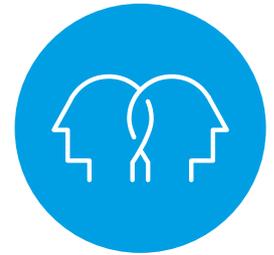




Creative response to PACT by artist Rebecca Strickson

Accountability

>>An accountability revolution



“There’s a real responsibility that falls on civil society organisations, schools, churches and community groups.”⁶⁸

“True accountability builds respect and ownership, and only comes with genuine relationships.”⁶⁹

For too long we’ve focused on accountability to funders and to government. It’s time to focus on accountability to the communities and people we exist to serve.

Civil society organisations fear being blamed for failure, and accountability can too often mean ticking boxes or being timid: form-filling, fear and insecurity, which stifles innovation and doesn’t address what really matters. Paperwork might be completed, but poor practice, abuse and inequality continue.

There is a lack of collective accountability in our systems, and cultures of silence have persisted. Some in civil society knew of abuse at Oxfam and elsewhere, and others knew that Kids Company would fail: there was a culture of silence, and this undermines shared accountability.

The future could include...

Civil society collaborating with local authorities to reimagine their roles, such as [co-operative councils](#) as one example... [New kinds of unions](#) for the gig economy to hold companies to account... A duty to future generations in every organisation’s

What matters most is the people we are here to support and our relationships with them. From long-established charities to new social movements, we will all:

- **Be accountable first and foremost to the people, communities and causes we exist to serve** – where necessary, standing up to funders and government.
- **Be willing to be held to account**, not just expecting others to be accountable to us but being accountable to them and developing new and more challenging ways of being accountable.
- **Commit to building relationships**, putting in the time and effort to seek feedback, genuinely listen and change.
- **Co-design our accountability systems and practices** with those to whom we are accountable.
- **Recognise our responsibility to future generations** and act accordingly.
- **Adhere to common public standards** on critical issues such as safeguarding, health and well-being.

charter... Organisations’ structures and behaviour valued as much as the work that they do – including in measurements, evaluation and funding...

Organisations open and transparent about their practice and their mistakes, learning and evolving... Thriving community media as ways are found to support it, holding to account those in power locally...

Scope

Seven decades after it launched, [Scope](#) has taken big decisions to refocus on its core mission – achieving an equal society in which all disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else – and decided to stop, exit or transfer all other activities. This has involved the sale of care homes and downsizing the organisation, with the loss of hundreds of jobs, and an initial income reduction of 40%. It is now more concentrated on achieving structural change by influencing public policy, the law, markets and attitudes.

In its new strategy Scope has an aspiration to work directly, and more accountably, with two million disabled people each year from 2022. Achieving this requires a shift of the organisation’s operating model, empowering staff and volunteers, providing freedom to innovate and take decisions, embracing digital, data and technology, and shifting culture.

Read more civilsocietyfutures.org/scope



“The principle of being driven and motivated by core purpose and social impact rather than income or size is important for others to learn from. Too often charities who claim to be radical and pioneering are in reality cautious and conservative, and unable, or possibly unprepared, to take difficult decisions.”
Mark Atkinson, Chief Executive

360 Giving

360Giving was born from the desire of a funder who found it hard to see who else was funding initiatives she was interested in, that funders were ‘giving in the dark’ and that the information needed to make strategic decisions wasn’t there. What could the sector do to be more data-driven and more accountable?

The [360Giving platform](#) brings funding information together so that anyone can see quickly what’s being funded in a particular community or sector – and today 100 funders share over £25 billion worth of grants openly. These range from charitable trusts to family foundations, corporate funders, local authorities and central government departments.

All the data can be accessed, downloaded and compared by anyone who wants to better understand how civil society is funded or make better funding decisions themselves. This transparency has not only enabled greater accountability but also more insightful, strategic decision-making – and has enabled funders to think more broadly about what information they collect and how they use it. What questions does it help answer? How can they explain more clearly what they do and don’t fund and why?

Read more here

civilsocietyfutures.org/unlocking-funders-treasure-chests-data/

LET US REASON



TOGETHER

Connection

>> **Building deeper, closer connections**



“I hope we are brave enough to change, live and connect differently.”⁷⁰

“It’s about building up relationships. All of it is about building up relationships.”⁷¹

Connections are vital. To bring together people with shared experiences – and those with different experiences. To make sure those with power listen to those who feel they have little. To identify the change that’s needed and how we work together for that change. To build deep human connections between those with power and those who feel they lack it, and between people who feel powerless to ensure that their voice is heard. To recognise and value the power we do have, whether as members of communities or as leaders of organisations.

Building deep connections is civil society’s historic role, and it has never been more needed. Our society is divided between urban and rural, between north and south, between young and old. It is still deeply divided on racial and class lines. Civil society has an essential role to connect powerfully across these damaging divides and drive lasting social change. But too often we have lost our ability to build connections, because the world is changing fast or we have become too remote from the people and communities we are here for.

The implications are enormous when connections are not made. Society can only understand what is really going on by listening very hard to the voices

of people who know. Communities were concerned about abuse of young girls in some northern towns, the citizens of the Windrush generation were being advised by civil society organisations, but all were ignored. People in Whitehall and many institutions in London were surprised when so many places voted for Brexit, but people working and living in those communities already knew.

We will extend and renew our ability to connect with people.

We will build real and meaningful relationships between people, meeting as equals within and across communities – especially where it’s hard to do.

We will bridge divides across race, gender, generations, social class and more – learning from the past, experimenting with new approaches and listening deeply to different people.

Our infrastructure for connecting groups and organisations is outdated, under-resourced and falling apart, and there are too few connective networks to join up civil society, either locally or nationally.

Together we will create and invest in better ways to connect and collaborate that are fit for the 21st century, combining welcoming and energising physical spaces, with online forums that encourage us to share and to discover – a national people-power grid energising and universalising social action across communities and across our country.

The future could include...

Long-established spaces, such as [Visit My Mosque](#), [Toynbee Hall](#) and [20's Plenty for Us](#), change and develop... New types of spaces open up, such as [Living Rooms](#) and [Fab Labs](#)... Success is measured on the depth and quality of our connections, not

by the number of 'impacts'... Investment in hyper-local community-owned media like [Bristol Cable](#)... People and organisations with radically different perspectives make a point of working together, using their different perspectives productively to create change... Peer support is available for people pioneering challenging new approaches...

The Way Ahead

The Way Ahead is building the future of civil society support in London, providing a system that puts London's communities at the heart of the way everyone in civil society works.

Its system change group brings together stakeholders from across different civil society structures, including funders, local councils, front-line organisations and infrastructure groups, to create new systems that create improved outcomes for Londoners.

In the first three years it has created a shared vision, set up the London Hub, influenced the policies and approach of regulators, given infrastructure groups and councils more confidence in, and understanding of, their roles in supporting civil society, as well as setting up the new Cornerstone Fund to support collaboration and partnerships.

Read more here:

civilsocietyfutures.org/the-way-ahead



Community connectors: Health Connections Mendip

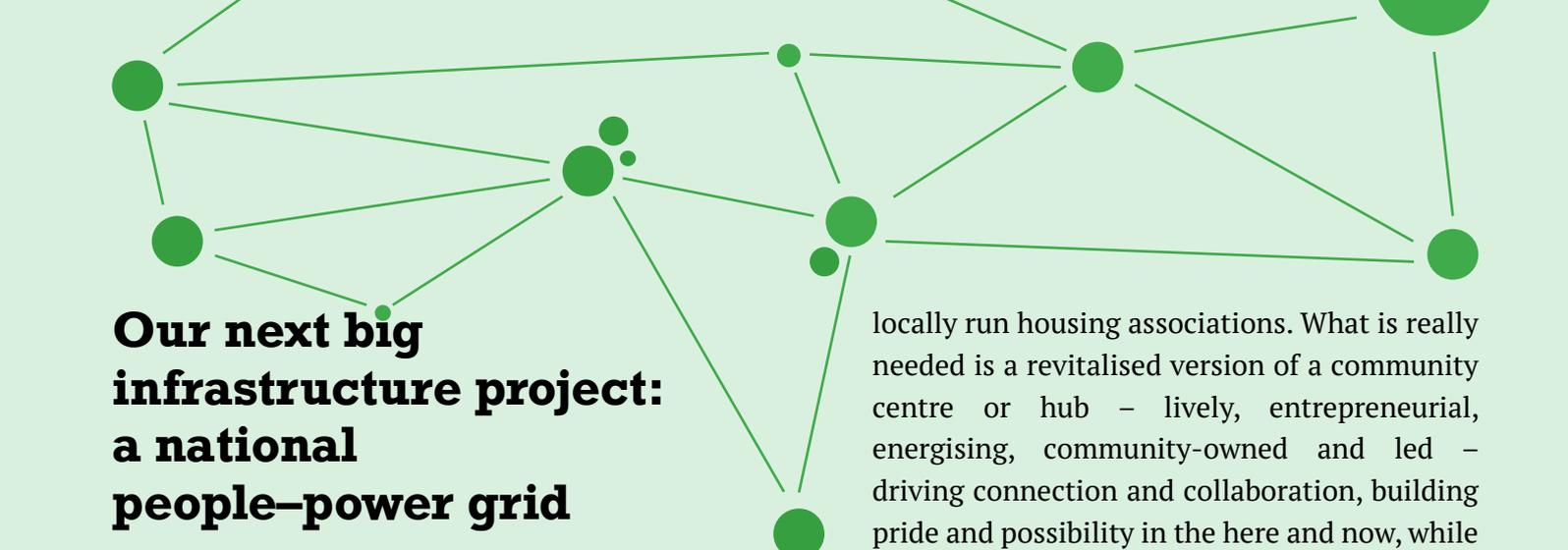
Community connectors are members of the community who know what support and advice is available locally on things like housing, education and debt advice, and who can signpost friends, family, colleagues and neighbours to these resources.

Community connectors play a vital role in Mendip, a region of Somerset, joining up local communities and providing a bridge between local people and health and well-being services as part of Health Connections Mendip.

So far, over 650 people in Mendip have been trained as community connectors – a wide array of people including hairdressers, taxi drivers, drug and alcohol workers, care workers, adult social care workers, primary care staff, sixth-form students, church congregations, peer support group members and hundreds of other members of the public. An average of 20 people a year have been signposted to health services by each community connector – around 13,000 connections in total.

Find out more:

<https://healthconnectionsmentip.org/community-connector/>



Our next big infrastructure project: a national people–power grid

Over several hundred years great nationwide infrastructure projects have been successfully realised – from canals to railways, hospitals to universities, television transmitters to broadband networks.

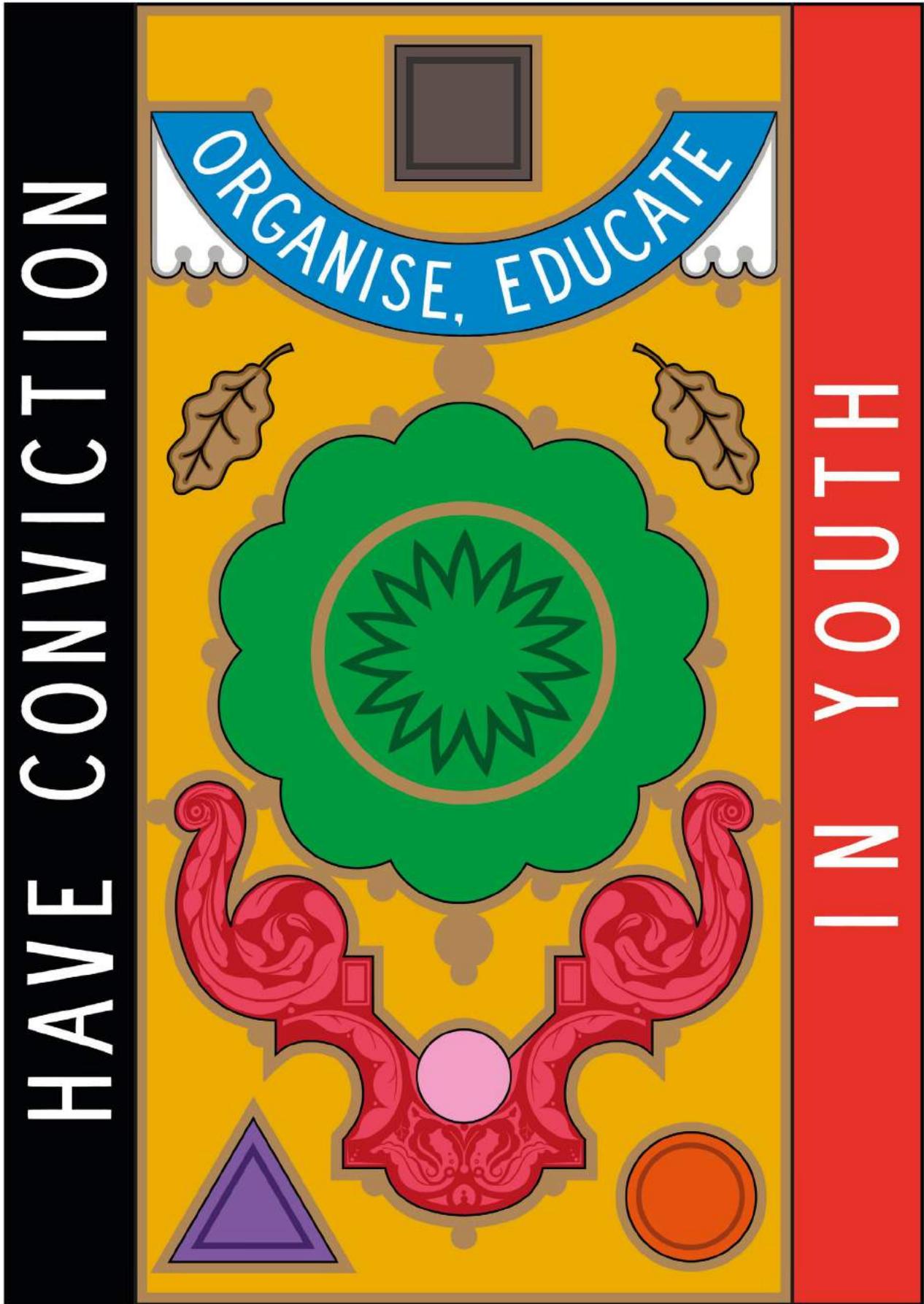
This is the infrastructure that made possible the industrial revolution and the welfare state, and which in recent years has created the foundations for the digital revolution.

What kind of infrastructure will we need for the future? It could include a national people–power grid, operating universally across the country but owned and controlled within our communities, and made possible by:

- **People who connect people.** In every neighbourhood, people who are really, really good at encouraging connectivity to flourish. ‘Community organisers’, skilled at listening, at igniting the impulse to act, at helping people come together to improve their lives and their neighbourhoods and to bring about the changes they want to see. ‘Community connectors’, people who are ready and willing to pick up a conversation with someone who seems to be struggling, tell them about social activities or support organisations, support and encourage them to play a fuller part in community life.
- **Sustained effort.** Locally embedded institutions that feel welcoming and attractive to all sections of the local population, and where associative life can flourish. Pubs, coffee shops, libraries, schools, community health centres,

locally run housing associations. What is really needed is a revitalised version of a community centre or hub – lively, entrepreneurial, energising, community-owned and led – driving connection and collaboration, building pride and possibility in the here and now, while also playing the long game.

- **Digital platforms.** Social media in particular will play a big role, enhancing transparency and exposing injustice, engaging with very large numbers of people, and sometimes helping to shift public debate and behaviour in dramatic ways. New ways to help people come together to generate constructive solutions, and to learn from the experience of others, exchanging skills and knowledge – a [social wiki](#), perhaps?
- **Self-interest.** We need to tap into the great grassroots virtues of thrift, impatience and sociability, and work along the grain of real motivation, the desire lines carved out by love, anger, fear and hope, the give–get relationships, which are most likely to work most of the time for most people. [Time-banks](#), [‘micro-providers’](#) schemes, [community shares](#) schemes, a series of local, regional and national resource banks where investment can be pooled and held in trust for communities to contribute to and draw down from.
- **Solidarity.** Within communities we need to discover the art of solidarity, taking steps to understand why some people are left out, becoming curious about what others are thinking, making time to talk about tensions and disagreements, discovering unexpected shared interests. And beyond individual communities we need platforms that make it easier to find inspiration, share support and drive change, from Hartlepool to Hastings, Penrith to Penzance, building a national solidarity network. Read the full article at: civilsocietyfutures.org/people-power-grid



Creative response to PACT by artist Rebecca Strickson

Trust

>> Investing in our core currency



“We need to move at the speed of trust.”⁷²

“Leave the people who you trust to actually make the decisions they know about.”⁷³

Trust is the most important asset we have. But trust is too often seen narrowly or undervalued. It’s considered important to win over a donor rather than something much more profound – the core currency of civil society. Even more vital than money, trust is an essential foundation for everything we do. Relationships built on trust are very different to those that are not: embodying shared responsibility, shared ownership, collaboration and cooperation. From women’s shelters to online communities, to carers to international development, the real work that enables us to have genuine impact is the work of building trust.

We cannot take trust for granted. Following abuse, financial mismanagement and the damagingly competitive pursuit of funds, alongside a wider trend of declining faith in institutions, trust in parts of civil society may be falling – the data varies, but it is an issue that has come up consistently through the course of this inquiry. It’s not just the public’s lack of trust in civil society organisations that is so damaging, there’s also mistrust between different parts of civil society. Many people have told us they feel large civil society organisations are slaves to their brand, bureaucratic, disconnected from their supporters and too close to government or corporations, which they fail to challenge as a consequence.

It’s time to restore and increase trust in civil society – enabling us to achieve even more – by valuing trust and continually investing in it.

We will stay true to our values and do what’s right, however uncomfortable it may be, knowing it may mean being unpopular. We will be honest about our failures and successes and learn from them, acknowledging others, sharing bravely and openly.

We will defend rights and call out injustice. Civil society is political: we will challenge those in power – even if they fund us – and work with others to fundamentally change systems of inequality and powerlessness. We will also stand in solidarity with others who do this, actively speaking up even when their actions are unpopular.

We will prioritise building trust with the people and communities we work with. We will devote time and other resources to relationships, taking the time, commitment and care that’s really needed. We will find ways to measure trust and reflect it in how we evaluate success.

We will trust people, communities and other civil society groups to provide insights, make decisions and run things – recognising that they often know best about what they need and what can be done. We will live this out in the way we work and the decisions we make, both the big decisions and the everyday ones.

The future could include...

Every process includes time for dialogue and getting to know each other... Communities are trusted to make decisions, to own and control assets such as **land and housing** and **permanently endowed local funds**... National groups have a genuine and deeply rooted **presence at local level**... An end to the Lobbying

Act because we must be free to speak out on political issues – and a refusal to let it stand in our way in the meantime... Shared measurement and understanding of trust... Year zero funding for projects, including significant time to build trust and relationships between people... **Funding is made available for the disobedient** who challenge systems, trusting and rewarding them to do more... Funding is entrusted to people even if they are not connected to an organisation...

Belfast Friendship Club

In 2004, Belfast was rocked by a series of unprovoked racist attacks on its Filipino community. In a population still reeling from decades of civil conflict, mistrust of minorities remained close to the surface. A large group of civil society organisations and charities gradually came together and, in 2009, started the **Belfast Friendship Club**, a safe space for people to meet and build relationships.

It was primarily aimed at anyone new to the city for any reason, but also welcomed locals, who now make up almost a quarter of the membership. And it has flourished ever since.

Belfast Friendship Club meets every Thursday evening, and over the months and years meaningful connections and friendships have been forged, irrespective of backgrounds or identities. The club's strength arises from an ethos of solidarity, equity and respect, and a large, loyal and expanding membership draws newcomers into its warm and welcoming space.

Read and watch more here: civilsocietyfutures.org/belfast-welcoming-refugees-radical-new-approach-speaking/

Shelter

Shelter's ambitious new 10-year strategy aims to tackle the housing 'national emergency', demanding homes that are safe, secure and affordable, and providing holistic support to those at the sharp end of housing problems.

Doing this depends on building trust with many people and other organisations. It plans to take a proactive role in building and working with existing networks, people and organisations across the country as part of a 'movement for change'.

Shelter has looked afresh at its role and contribution to this nationwide movement – recognising how its access to expertise, data and a bank of experts in housing law can help local charities advocating for change. In addition, it has many regional hubs and more than 100 shops, and looks to see these as centres of information and support for other bodies seeking to improve people's housing.

“We will join forces with individuals and organisations, empowering and amplifying the voice of anyone who wants to work alongside us. And we'll seek to recruit 500,000 supporters to defend the right to a safe home.”
Polly Neate, Chief Executive

Read more here: https://england.shelter.org.uk/what_we_do/our_strategy

Putting it into practice

“Social change is always rooted in strong values, beliefs and principles.”⁷⁴

This PACT is something we can all put into practice in what we do as part of civil society.

Change will come through our individual and collective leadership, and through the ways we organise and work together. It needs to be part of our everyday actions and decisions, as well as inform our long-term dreams, visions and strategies. Those with established prestige and power might have more of a role to play – but every one of us can help to lead the way.

Individuals

Below are suggestions of what it might mean personally for each of us to recognise our own role and lead the way – being open, courageous and willing to change our everyday practices. We can cultivate each practice and make them visible in how we work – it’s not just what we do in public and not just about those at the top of groups or organisations. We will each be better at some of these than others, and each day might be different, it’s a constant journey.



Power

>>Consciously shift power

From  **Towards**

Power unaware

I am unaware of my power and privilege, and am not actively working with it to shift imbalances.

Power aware

I am aware of my power and privilege and actively work with this to shift imbalances.

Power over

I exert control over people and activities.

Power with

I create an enabling environment for people I work with, to build and cultivate their power.

Unaware

I am unaware of my perspective and the impact that has on the choices I make, and who or what is listened to and valued.

Self reflection

I am mindful of my perspective and the impact that has on the choices I make, who and what is listened to, and what is valued.

How to put this into practice

Consciously shift power:

- Recognise your own power.
- Bring attention to power dynamics in groups you work with by openly discussing and exploring it with them.
- Support others to build power and become leaders.
- Stand up for everyone, not just the majority.



Accountability

>>Explore and change your accountability

From  **Towards**

Independent

I do things alone, create silos and assume I know best.

Interdependent

I am accountable to those I work and interact with and seek their views.

Scrutiny

I have a predefined view of accountability that is predominantly based on formal processes.

Shared

I build relationships based on dialogue and feedback, which informs how I work on an ongoing basis.

Rigid

I have a fixed way of doing things, even when I know it isn't the right thing to do.

Adaptive

I constantly learn and embrace the unknown, admit mistakes and adapt how I do things.

How to put this into practice

Explore and change your accountability:

- Ask for and act on feedback
- Actively seek diversity of views and opinion about how to improve things
- Identify who you are accountable to today and who else you interact with. Look at what it would take to change this
- Admit and share your mistakes and failures and talk about how that informs your actions



Connection

>>Deepen connections with people and communities

From  Towards

Transactional

I build relationships built on one defining aspect of a person.

Relational

I meet people as equals and recognise we're all complex beings with different identities that intersect and create unique experiences of the world.

Scarcity

I believe people need help, are lacking something and won't change.

Abundance

I believe in the capacity and potential of people to change themselves.

Echo chambers

I build connections with those like me.

Bridging divides

I value multiple perspectives and actively build understanding, connections and collaboration with those who are different to me.

How to put this into practice

Deepen connections with people and communities:

- Understand your own / multiple identities and what this means for your connections.
- Listen to people you might not otherwise and those with different views to your own.
- Find out more about who isn't engaging with your work and try to find out why.
- Make time and create spaces to discuss some of the challenging issues that prevent people from connecting with and supporting each other.
- Understand more about who is working on similar issues in your area: be curious, connect with and learn from them, and try to do something together with them.



Trust

>>Maximise trust

From  Towards

Risk averse

I prefer not to move out of my comfort zone, to speak out, stand up, challenge and act on things that matter in solidarity with others.

Courage and bravery

I speak out, stand up, challenge and act on things that matter and in solidarity with others, even when that's uncomfortable.

Listening lightly

I listen to the facts and what is visible.

Listening deeply

I invest time in people, move at the pace of the slowest and seek different perspectives. I get to know people, am curious and listen deeply to their feelings and needs, and this informs how I choose to act.

Avoiding creative tension

I find it hard to trust people and respect their way of doing things. I avoid challenge, conflict and tension.

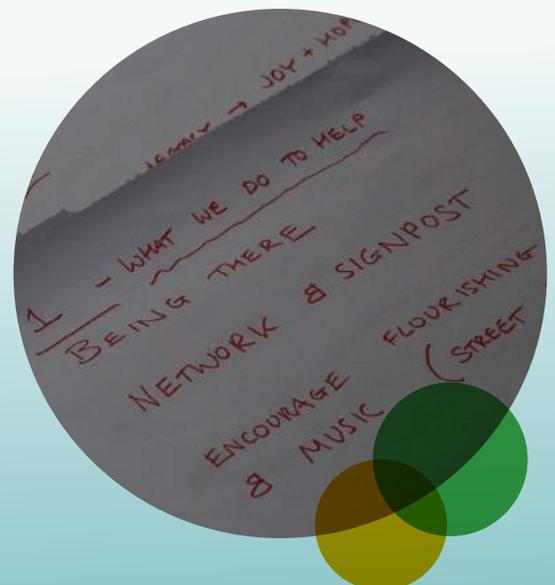
Embracing creative tension

I trust people and the process and see value in people doing things their way. I find ways to work with challenge, conflict and tension in a constructive way.

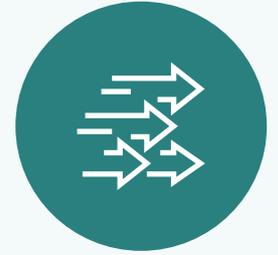
How to put this into practice

Maximise trust:

- Notice when you're taking or avoiding risks. Ask what you would do in that situation if you were ten times braver.
- Understand how to gain trust and acceptance within different spaces and communities.
- Make time to seek out different perspectives and views and to listen deeply.
- Admit when you don't know, and ask for support.



Organisations, groups, networks and movements



Much of the PACT is about what we do when we come together, whether that's in a formal organisation or any other way.

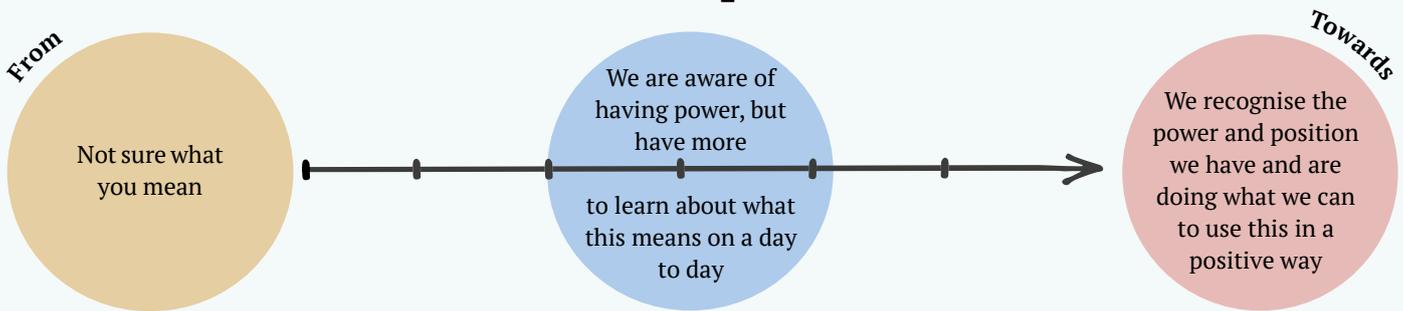
Below are questions designed to help you begin reflecting on what it means collectively for you. It is an opportunity to start a conversation with those you work with, to bring to the surface different perspectives on your work and to identify areas you might wish to change or work towards.

Beyond starting this conversation, there are number of other areas for groups' and organisations' ways of working that you could usefully explore:

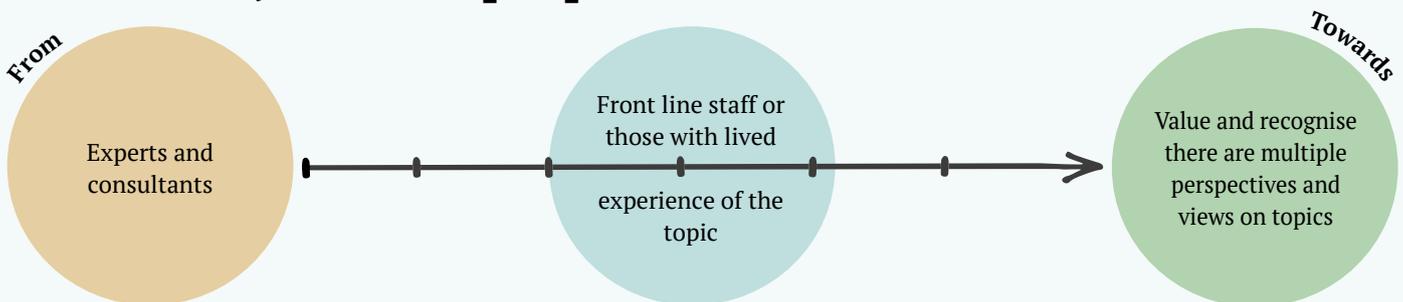
- Use the PACT as a basis when you review how well you are doing.
- Integrate and use the PACT to inform your strategy and planning cycles.
- Look at your story and narrative – be clear about your purpose, role and contribution to long-term change on each of the areas of the PACT.
- Develop your own PACT manifesto for your group or organisation that supports your activities and culture.
- Review and evolve your HR, recruitment and pay practices.
- Review your governance and decision-making approaches.
- Critically review your feedback approaches and mechanisms.
- Develop an approach to conflict resolution.
- Create explicit measures of connection and trust (and mistrust) in your group or organisation.
- Include honest reflections in your annual reports on your practice, learning, failures and questions you're working with.
- Find other ways to live out the PACT: for example, create connections and shift power and money by buying services from within civil society – from meeting spaces, catering, IT support, design and research to grounds maintenance.

Power

How well do we understand our own power?



Whose views, voices and perspectives do we value the most?



How do we make difficult and important decisions about the work we do?



How do we work with other groups on issues of equality or justice?

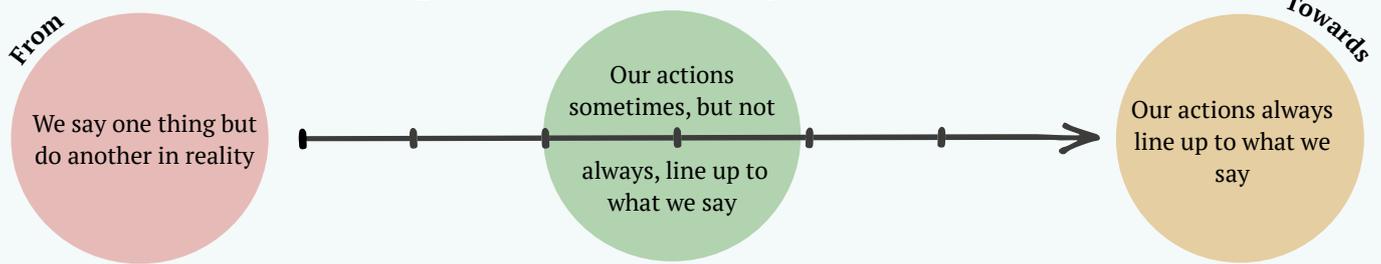


Want to explore more?

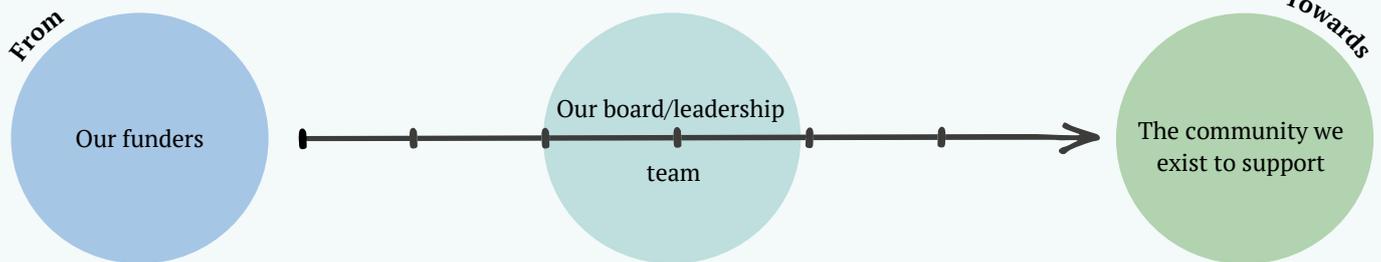
- [Power and Privilege: A Handbook for Political Organisers](#) (NEON)
- [Social Power – How Civil Society can ‘Play Big’ and Truly Create Change](#) (Shelia McKechnie Foundation)
- [Power cube – understanding power for social change](#) (Institute of Development Studies)
- [Losing Control](#) - a movement for people who want to let go of power to unleash social change (Social Change Agency and Practical Governance)
- [“But Wait, I’m Woke!”: The Trials of the White Male](#)
- [Manager](#) (Guppi Bola)
- [People Power and Technology: The 2018 Digital Understanding Report](#) (doteveryone)
- [Power: A practical guide for facilitating social change](#) (Carnegie Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
- [Power Moves – Ignite the power of your philanthropy for equity and justice](#) (National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy)

Accountability

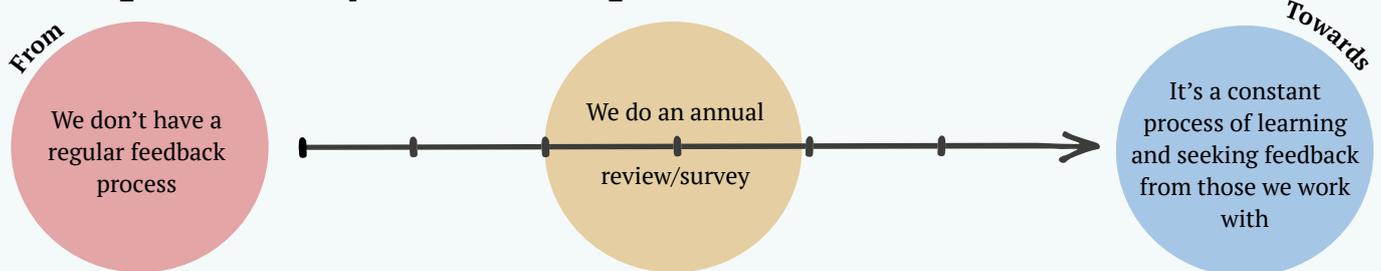
Do our actions line up with what we say we do?



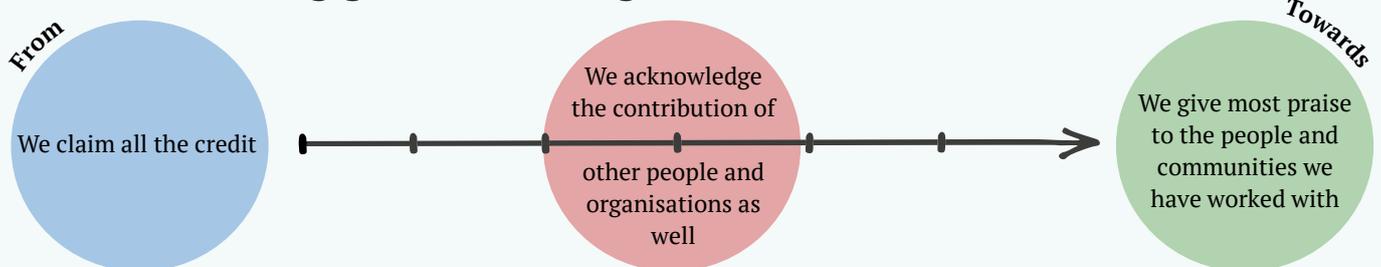
Who mainly drives our group's/organisation's agenda?



What processes/systems are in place to seek feedback?



When something goes well who gets the credit?



How do we view our strategy and approach to change?

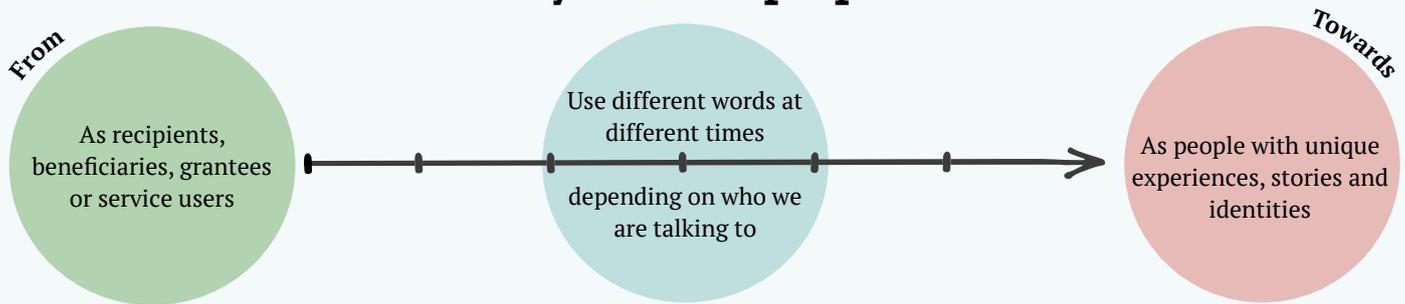


Want to explore more?

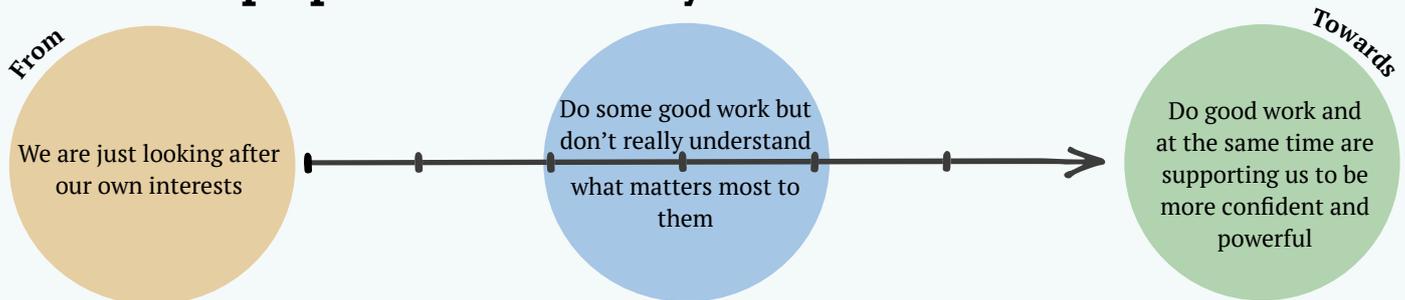
- [Charity Governance Code](#) – a practical tool to help charities and their trustees develop high standards of governance (Charity Commission)
- [Resilient Roots Accountability Initiative](#) (Civicus)
- [Loomio](#) – a tool for collaborative decision making (Loomio)
- [CoBudget](#) – tool for collaborative budgeting (CoBudget)
- [Enspiral Handbook](#) – handbook of alternative agreements and practical guidance (Enspiral)
- [Future of Community Enterprise](#) – a vision for a future accountability with community enterprises (Power to Change)

Connection

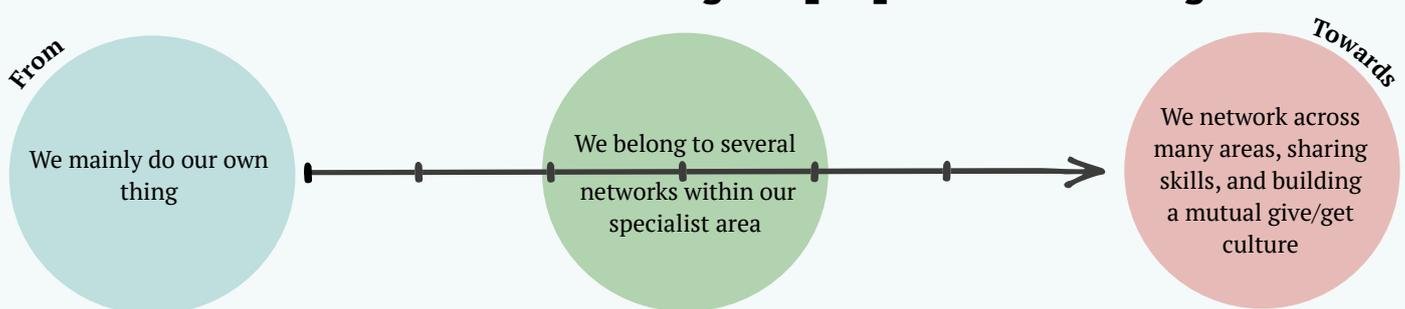
How do we view and actively describe people we work with?



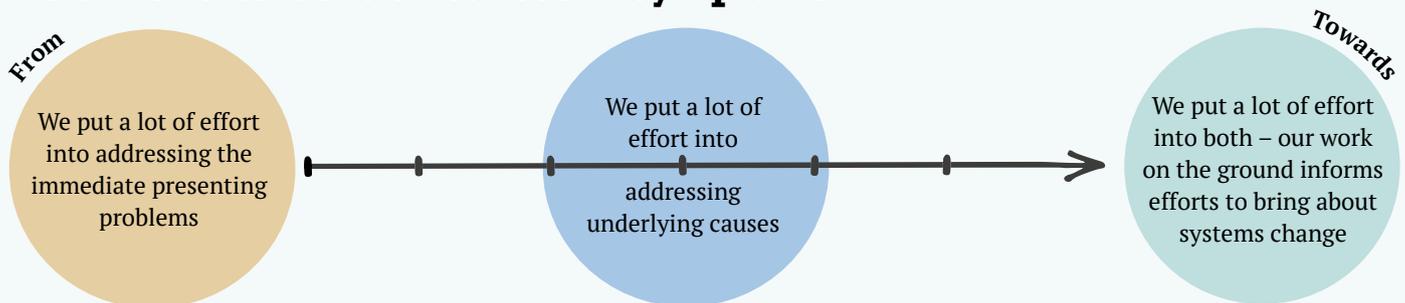
What would people we work with say about us?



Are we well-networked with other aligned people/networks/organisations?



Do our efforts focus on causes or symptoms?

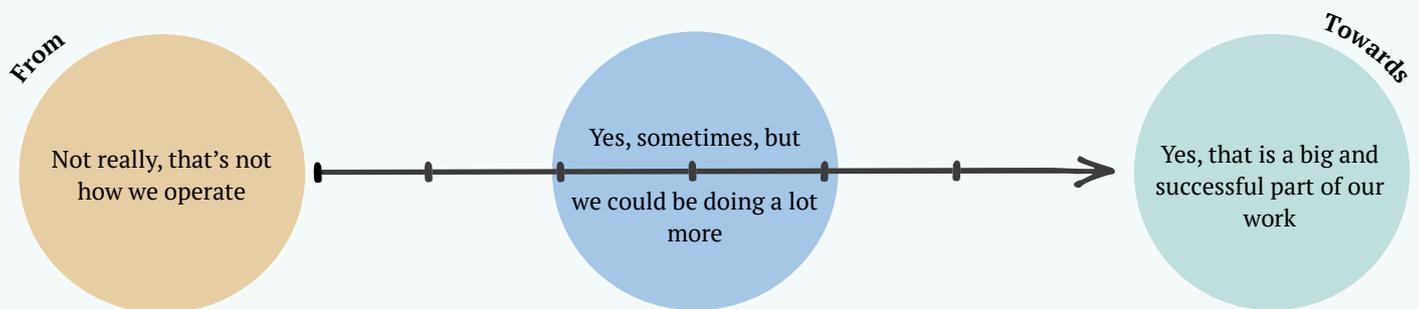


Want to explore more?

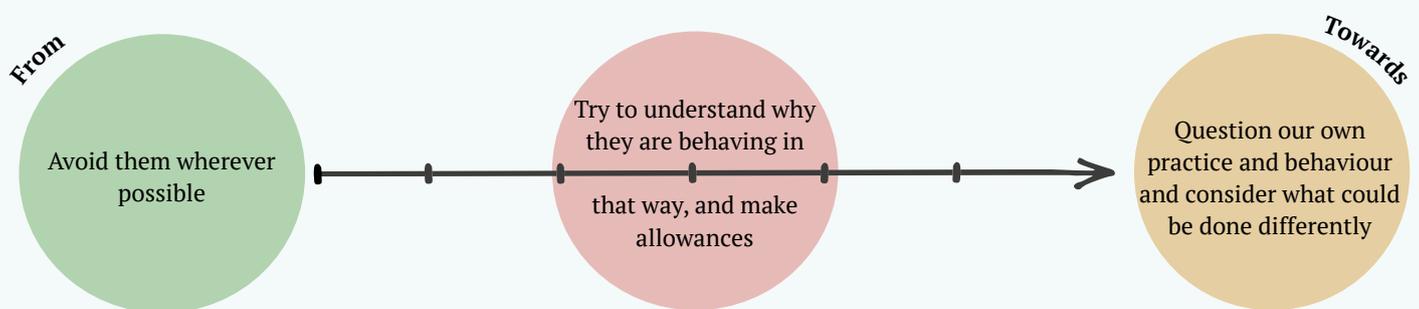
- [The State of Collaboration - How Ready are We to Work Together?](#) (Collaborate)
- [Four essential ingredients of collaboration](#) (Forum for the Future)
- [Identity-based forms of organising in civil society: good or bad?](#) (Asif Afridi)
- [Racial Diversity in the Charity Sector](#) – leadership principles and practical recruitment advice (ACEVO and Institute for Fundraising)
- [Walking the Talk on Diversity: What is Holding the](#)
- [Charity Sector Back from Putting Words into Action?](#) (NPC)
- [Getting Started](#) – A guide for communities on doing research (ARVAC)
- [Safer Spaces policy](#) – guidelines to create a respectful, understanding and kind space where people feel able to express themselves and ask questions without fear of reprisal or humiliation (Sisters Uncut)
- [Time to Change](#) – employer pledge to demonstrate a commitment to change how we think and act about mental health in the workplace (Time to change)

Trust

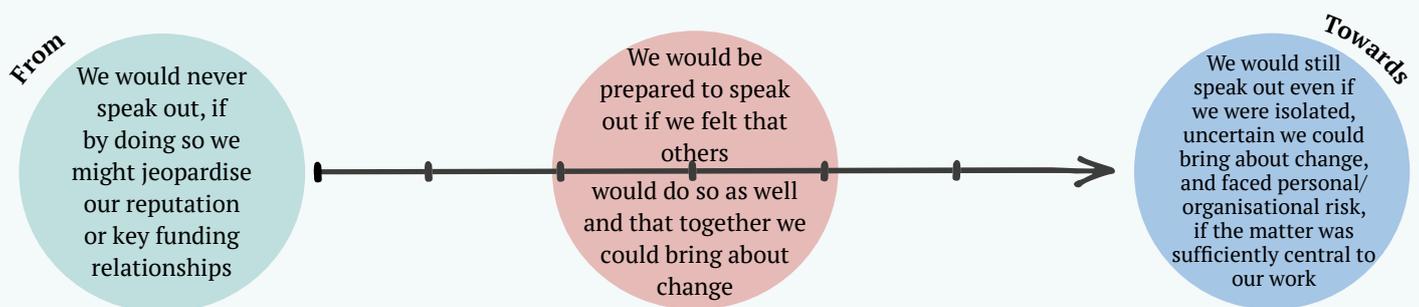
Do we create opportunities, places or spaces in which people come together and build trust?



When people disagree with us and behave in challenging ways, what do we do?



Are we prepared to speak out on something fundamentally wrong, even when that might anger those who hold power over us?



Want to explore more?

- [Charity Code of Ethics](#) – a guide for how to recognise and resolve ethical issues and conflicts
- [The Future for Communities: Perspectives on Power](#) (IVAR and Local Trust)
- [Detectorism Insights #1](#): Stories, provocations and cultural portraits from an experiment by participatory Social Lab, CoLab Dudley (CoLab Dudley)
- [Community Leadership](#): Tales from the front line of community based organisations (Various)
- [Civil Society Futures Conversation Toolkit](#) – a guide for hosting a conversation about the future (Civil Society Futures)

Let's talk about **race**



“Our wounds will only heal if we tend them.”⁷⁵

Racism has been high on the public agenda during this inquiry. Whether it's hate crime on our streets, the treatment of the Windrush generation or Islamophobia in the media, there are increasing concerns that we are becoming a more racist society.

But mostly we heard little about race in our many conversations and workshops across civil society, and so commissioned a specific piece of research to surface issues and find solutions. Asif Afridi (an inquiry panel member) and equality organisation brap spoke to black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) voluntary sector organisations, large organisations within civil society, such as ACEVO and Big Lottery Fund, as well as those with lived experience of racism and race inequality.

It brought to light the difficulties much of civil society has in talking about and acting on race, racism and race inequality – and solutions to help us all. Read more at civilsocietyfutures.org/race

Why isn't civil society talking enough about race and race inequality?

Some parts of civil society are discussing these issues, but it's too often muted or insufficient. Research participants cited a number of reasons:

- A lack of focus within public policy.
- A perceived decline in political work on race, with more focus on service delivery within the BAME civil society groups.
- A belief that we now live in a post-racial society.
- Framing in the media of topics like immigration or Islamophobia as distinct and separate from race equality.
- More comfort in discussing workforce diversity, and less comfort in discussing patterns of discrimination and racism affecting wider society.
- Lack of confidence to talk about race if you are from a white British background, for fear of getting it wrong.

Opportunities for progressing race equality

Despite the need for greater investment in race equality work locally and nationally, change needs to come from within civil society. A lot of this comes down to personal skills, taking responsibility, and relating and talking to one another differently about this topic. It also requires us to make this a priority and to pursue it with confidence and certainty.



We need a vision for race equality in civil society that includes, but goes beyond, workforce diversity to include concrete outcomes that address structural causes of inequality.

Using the PACT framework, there are some practical steps we can all take:

“When you look at some of the statistics around leadership and governance around race, there is clearly a disconnect between those that are trying to deal with the issues within our various communities and the leadership.”⁷⁶

Power

>>Consciously shift power

From  Towards

Unrepresentative

The ethnic diversity of my senior leadership team is not something I consider.

Representative

I take active steps to ensure those in leadership positions are representative of our diverse society and have the right skills, experience and values.

Tokenism

I do engage with people from ethnic minority backgrounds and recruit them, but I don't give them real access to power.

Sharing power

I think about and measure whether people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel listened to and whether they have access to power.

Not listening

I don't value, hear or understand the views and experiences of those that have experienced race inequality and racism.

Actively listening

I engage directly with and learn from the lived experiences of those who have experienced race inequality and racism.

Practical actions

- Recognise how some views are currently seen to have less credibility or are not heard within civil society – think about the role you personally could play in changing that.
- Review and improve the ethnic diversity of your workforce.
- Gain feedback from staff and people you work with – do people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel listened to, do they have power, do they feel they have the choice to act and progress in a way they value?
- Find support to reflect upon and use your personal power to make a positive impact on race equality.
- Listen to people's lived experiences of race inequality and act on what you hear.

Accountability

“People expect our organisation to say some of these things [...] People assume I have an axe to grind. We need trusted people in civil society [...] The big charities need to step up and be advocates for it.”⁷⁷

>>All of us taking responsibility

From  Towards

Race equality work is too hard for me

I can't do work on 'race equality' because it is too big or challenging an issue, I might get it wrong and I might be called 'racist'.

Displacing responsibility

People from ethnic minority backgrounds and organisations that work with and are led by them are the experts – it is their responsibility to progress race equality, not mine.

Closed to feedback

I work to progress social justice – I don't need to gain feedback about whether I am representing or meeting the needs and interests of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

I recognise and work with personal discomfort

Despite personal discomfort and fear, I take active steps to learn about race equality and the role I can personally play in progressing it.

Taking responsibility

I take an active role in progressing race equality, and I use my power, profile and resources within civil to raise awareness about this agenda.

Open to feedback

I gather and listen to feedback about what I do. I understand whether people from different ethnic backgrounds experience the support I provide differently, or whether I am representing their interests effectively.

Practical actions

- Personal reflective work to increase confidence in talking about race, starting with this article <https://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>.
- Organisations: identify how race equality impacts your work, where it is missing at present and how it could be better included, and take steps to receive feedback on your work and the services you might provide.
- Funders: revisit and co-produce ideas of the impact and outcomes you expect from grantees that are funded to work on race equality – be clear and ambitious about the impact on race equality you expect from yourself and others.

Connection

“The binaries are breaking down and we need to reflect that complexity in our response to that.”⁷⁸

>>Coming together to address race equality

From  Towards

Division

I don't feel solidarity with others working on race equality within civil society, and don't feel able to learn about their work or engage with them.

Diversity within ethnic groups not recognised

I am doing work on race equality. I don't need to recognise the other aspects of diversity that intersect with 'race', like gender, disability, sexual orientation and so on.

Race equality is a stand-alone challenge

I work on race equality alone. Other social justice movements don't understand what I do and I have little to gain by connecting with them.

Building relationships

I actively think about my relationships with others within civil society, and work to be more curious about what others are doing on race equality and to become a better ally.

Diversity within ethnic groups recognised

I actively seek to understand a diversity of views and experiences within ethnic groups based on gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and so on. I create spaces where a diversity of views on race equality can be heard.

Race equality is linked to other challenges in society

I work to explore shared interests with others working on social justice issues in my community (such as food poverty or environmental justice). I aim to understand what they are doing and seek opportunities to work with them to progress race equality too.

Practical actions

- Build connections with other groups – those you already collaborate with and those you don't – to act on race equality.
- Funders: fund groups that work across different communities/identities.
- Learn more about intersectionality: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9202/Guide-to-Intersectionality/doc/Intersectionality_Guidance_Feb_18.doc.

Trust

“Without discussing history, it becomes hard to expect different outcomes and to build trust and equity between people from different backgrounds.”⁷⁹

>>Trust and history

From  Towards

Not recognising distrust

I am doing or funding work on race equality, I don't understand why people aren't engaging with me.

Recognising distrust

I recognise that past history and bias can affect how much I trust others and how much they trust me.

Not engaging with the past

The past is behind us and I don't want to talk about it. Talking about the continued effects of colonialism, empire and class is painful, or I'm not aware of it.

Engaging with the past

I am open to discussing and learning about uncomfortable topics of race inequality and histories of racism and discrimination.

Practical actions

- Listen and understand the perspectives and experiences of others – engage with historical issues and events (e.g. empire and colonialism).
- Understand your own role in continuing inequality.



Ecosystem and structures



This inquiry has deliberately and consciously concentrated on what civil society can do itself, and it has heard from people, organisations, networks and movements that are driving fundamental change.

But civil society does not exist in isolation: it is part of a large and complex ecosystem. It is shaped, influenced, supported and formed by the environment in which it operates. In turn, it has an impact on that environment, both the market and the state – they are interdependent and, increasingly, civil society, government and businesses need to work together for a thriving society. Each also has a direct interest in doing so.

Neither the public sector nor the market would be able to cope without the civil society action taking place everywhere across the country. It is the people informally helping their neighbours, getting involved with schools, food banks, sports clubs and tenants associations who power communities and make public services viable, from health to education, housing, policing and much more. It is the consumer organisations giving feedback to business, the workers and tenants organisations asserting rights. It is the organisations of people with disabilities that have made the inadequacy of some services so clear.

This is true nationally and locally. The level of interdependence and the power of civil society is too often overlooked. This risks undermining confidence in civil society. And yet it is civil society that helps to shape the national conversation. It is civil society that connects people without power to those with power, and enables people who feel they haven't got power to come together.

The ecosystem within which civil society operates has a critical role in enabling civil society to thrive.

The actions of government – from the operation of the benefits system, through to the funding settlement for local authorities, and policy on social care – fundamentally shape the environment within which civil society works. Austerity and the reduced capacity of local authorities have had, and will have, a major impact. Equally, the operation of the markets, from the precariousness of employment through to the state of our high streets, shapes and affects what civil society is able to do.

There are other actors within the ecosystem too, many of whom are also part of civil society, including funders, commissioners, national bodies and leadership support groups.

Throughout this inquiry stories, both good and bad, have come to light about the ways in which all these different actors work together.

People have spoken of blurred boundaries, and mutual support, as well as challenges, and the impact of decisions that have then directly influenced the outcomes of civil society.

This has included many successes and collaborations:

- Local authorities working collaboratively and imaginatively to share the resources in a place to build the confidence and capability of a place.
- Constructive joint working in which mutual support was the watchword.

- Support from local business for civil society in the area.
- The blurring of boundaries between the state and civil society, with shared programmes of work.
- Civil society organisations getting support from businesses both for skills, space and funding.
- Organisations – public, voluntary and private – increasingly taking seriously their role as anchor institutions, working across boundaries to shape better futures.

But there are also problematic experiences:

- Poor commissioning practices that ignored the skills and knowledge held in civil society, and made their independent operation difficult.
- Labour market conditions that made engagement in civil society incredibly difficult.
- Apparently careless funding decisions that prevented civil society bodies from contributing.
- Suddenly vacated high streets, leaving desolation and challenge, with no time for planning or remedy.
- Enforced competition that made a truly connected civil society hard to achieve.

If civil society is to renew itself, the ecosystem will need to change too.

Civil society, government and business: the PACT has implications for all of us, in whatever sector we work.

And the people–power grid social infrastructure that we propose above could be a major long-term initiative involving all of these actors, bringing people together everywhere across the country to ensure that this ecosystem works to connect people with each other – the enduring purpose of civil society.

Let us all work together to support thriving communities and a thriving future society.

Funders of civil society, such as grant making trusts and foundations, national, regional or local community foundations, part of civil society or public sector grant makers

Reflect the PACT in everything you do and develop the funding ecosystem to support people and communities to build their capacity for change

This could include:

- Supporting and helping to build the people–power grid.
- Endowing and helping to build local endowments that can be directed and owned by people in the community.
- Starting to measure the depth and breadth of connections, taking them just as seriously as you take other impacts.
- Shifting power by making sure that local communities and people with lived experience make and are involved in funding decisions.
- Recognising that trust takes time to build, by paying for development and start-up of projects with time to build connections and trust, not just ‘delivery’.
- Co-designing accountability mechanisms together with those receiving funding, and only demanding accountability that is simple, proportionate and necessary.
- Taking risks that reflect the very real risks taken by people in communities every day.
- Assessing the depth of connections when assessing funding proposals, and recognising that building social capital, alongside achieving social change, requires support, engagement and long-term trust.

Commissioners such as CCGs, housing associations, local authorities

Change your contracting practices to reflect the PACT.

This could include:

- Engaging the people–power grid to support and help design local and specialist commissioning practice.
- Developing social value clauses that allow better informed commissioning decisions to be made.
- Ensuring that the costs of the time and effort needed for trust, relationship building and connection are included in funding for projects – not just ‘delivery’.
- Jointly designing contract specifications with civil society.

National infrastructure bodies such as NCVO, NAVCA, ACEVO and EDF

Promote changes in culture and practices, explore and invest in deliberate and thoughtful connections across civil society.

This could include:

- Investigating how to develop the people–power grid.
- Using the PACT, promoting it across civil society, supporting your members in their use of it, and promoting the difference that it makes.
- Promoting widespread shifts in culture and practices, to recognise and pursue success differently from the current norms of income, size and short-term impacts – instead prioritising areas such as depth and breadth of connection, levels of trust and shifting of power.

- Explicitly working to address inequality in support provision across the country and with regard to particular types of civil society organisation.
- Working collaboratively with peers to ensure that the limited resources available for support to civil society are used to greatest effect.
- Encouraging collaboration and the sharing of resources across civil society: for example, larger organisations sharing premises, skills, experience and funding with smaller organisations at the community level.
- Encouraging civil society organisations to concentrate resources on issues and areas of greatest need.

Leadership support, such as ACTION, CLORE and ACEVO, working with new and existing learning providers

Ensure that you are developing leaders at every level – both volunteers and those who are paid – to meet the challenges of the PACT.

This could include:

- Providing great practical support for leaders in civil society, supporting the changes in behaviours and leadership standards for a 21st century civil society, with power, accountability, connection and trust explicitly reflected in the ethos and the content of all training and support.
- Developing leaders who recognise and pursue success as depth and breadth of connection, levels of trust and shifting of power, rather than short-term gains.
- Developing nationwide, cross-sector peer models of learning and development.

Regulators and government, such as the Charity Commission, CQC, Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive

Work with civil society to create an enabling environment to support its future.

This could include:

- Including the areas of the PACT in how your measure whether organisations are meeting their charitable purpose, and other measures of success.
- Gathering intelligence from civil society.
- Listening to the challengers and trouble-makers.
- Supporting and being open to new forms of civil society organising, and different models of meeting purpose.
- Ensuring that the voice of civil society can be heard – this will mean regulators explicitly emphasising the role of civil society in providing feedback and knowledge, and doing so publicly.
- Government providing long-term investment in communities through a Community Wealth Fund.

Local authorities

Proactively work with civil society to overcome future challenges at a local level and support thriving local communities.

This could include:

- Transferring decision-making power to local communities, for example participatory budgets, citizen juries and community commissioning of service, among other means.
- Alliance building with civil society, other local public spending bodies and the private sector, to ensure that all the resources in a community

are mobilised to develop resilience.

- Listening carefully to sections of the community that are most dependent on services, and protecting their interests when spending decisions are being made.
- Providing grants, making appropriate asset transfers, and focusing on commissioning and purchasing locally.

Businesses

Understand what your role is, and support and collaborate with a flourishing civil society.

This could include:

- Acknowledging your dependence on the operation of a revived and re-energised civil society, and working to enhance its capacity.
- Building on the deep collaboration that already exists in some areas to ensure that these connections help to renew civil society, not exhaust it.
- Investing in the people–power grid through funding, secondments, provision of physical space, training and engagement.
- Considering local civil society in your procurement and partnership decisions, and recognising the skills and knowledge that civil society contributes.
- As anchor organisations, working with civil society to shape places, recognising the power of procurement, recruitment and reputation.

The future together



“My hope for the future is that civil society is ingrained in who we all are.”⁸⁰

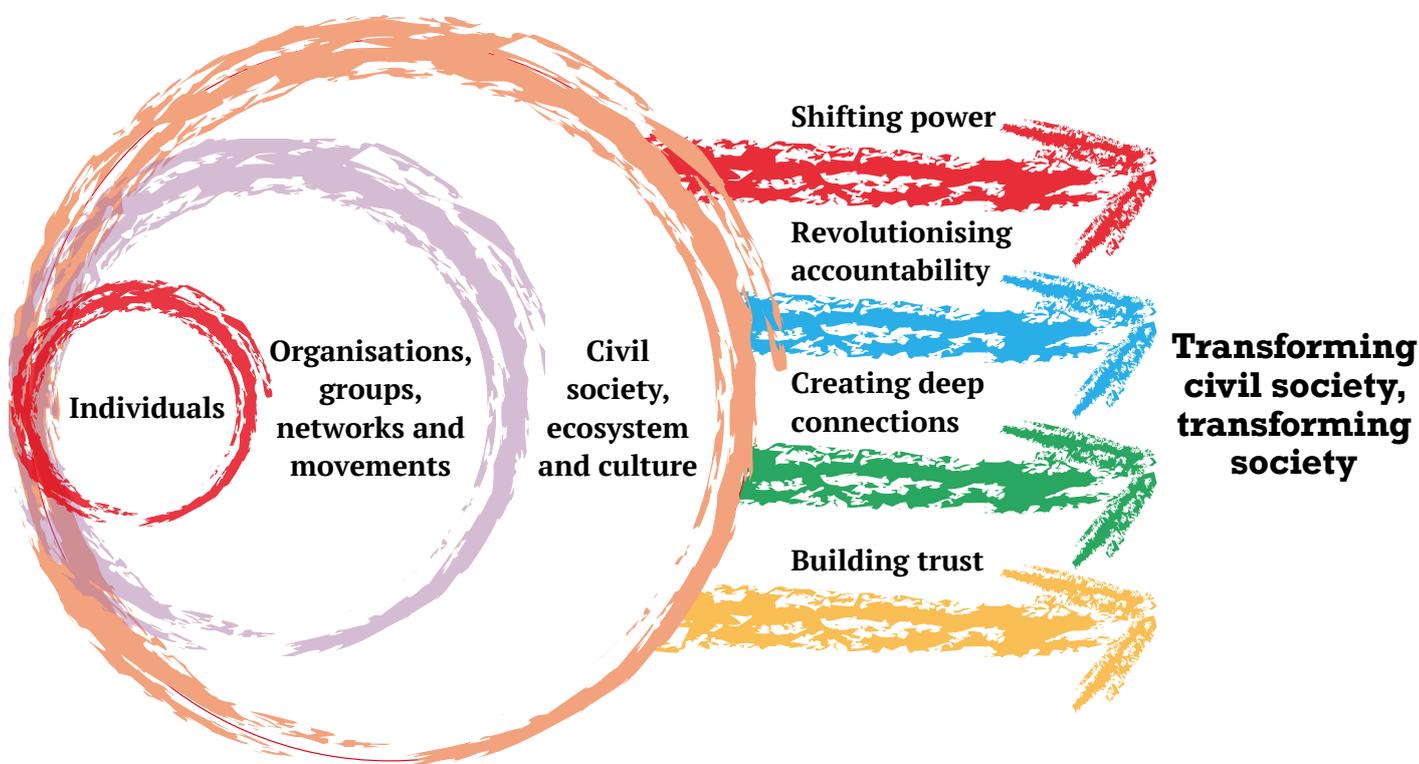
“We have the potential to be extraordinary.”⁸¹

Civil society has always been about coming together – to celebrate, to connect, to face our greatest challenges, to create justice.

To embrace the decade ahead, we need to change simultaneously as individuals, communities, organisations and systems. We need to work together through a shared endeavour.

Let us shift power, revolutionise accountability, build real, meaningful connections and invest in trust.

www.civilsocietyfutures.org



Who we are



The inquiry was guided by an independent panel of people, bringing a unique set of skills and perspectives to this journey, ranging from theatre-making in South Wales to technology investment in Gaza, local government in the North of England to the world's alliance of civil society organisations.

The panel was chaired by Julia Unwin, who was Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for 10 years and Charity Commissioner from 1998–2003. It included Asif Afridi who works for brap, a national equality and human rights charity; Sarah Gordon, business editor of the Financial Times; Bert Massie, a leading disability rights campaigner, who served on the panel before he sadly died in October 2017; Debu Purkayastha, Managing Partner at 3rd Eye, a venture capital and private equity firm; Dhananjayan Sivaguru Sriskandarajah, Secretary General of CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations; Rhiannon White, co-founder of Common Wealth Theatre; Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive of Oldham Council; and, Steve Wyler, an independent consultant and former Chief Executive of Locality, with 30 years experience in the field of social change.

The inquiry was powered by a collaborative team of individuals, bringing skills from four unique organisations: Citizens UK, with its roots in communities across England; Forum for the Future, with its experience of helping people figure out how the world is changing and how best to respond; Goldsmiths, University of London with its expertise in research; and, openDemocracy, to engage discussion and debate about the role of civil society in England.

The inquiry was funded by eight foundations: Baring Foundation, Barrow Cadbury, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, City Bridge Trust, Esmée Fairbairn, Lankelly Chase, Lloyds Bank Foundation and Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Additional research support was provided by NCVO.

Thanks to all those who have been part of the extended team making Civil Society Futures possible: Margaret Bolton, Adam Dinham, Deborah Grayson, Calum Green, Sunny Hundal, Laurie Macfarlane, Julia Oertli, Adam Ramsay and Cathy Runciman.

Team



Joe Hall



Louise Armstrong

Panel



Julia Unwin



Khadra Aden



Debu Purkayastha



Rhiannon White



Matthew Bolton



Carolyn Wilkins



Danny Sriskandarajah



James Goodman



Steve Wyler



Bert Massie



Natalie Fenton



Huan Rimington



Asif Afridi



Sarah Gordon



Corina Angheloiu



Tom Greenwood

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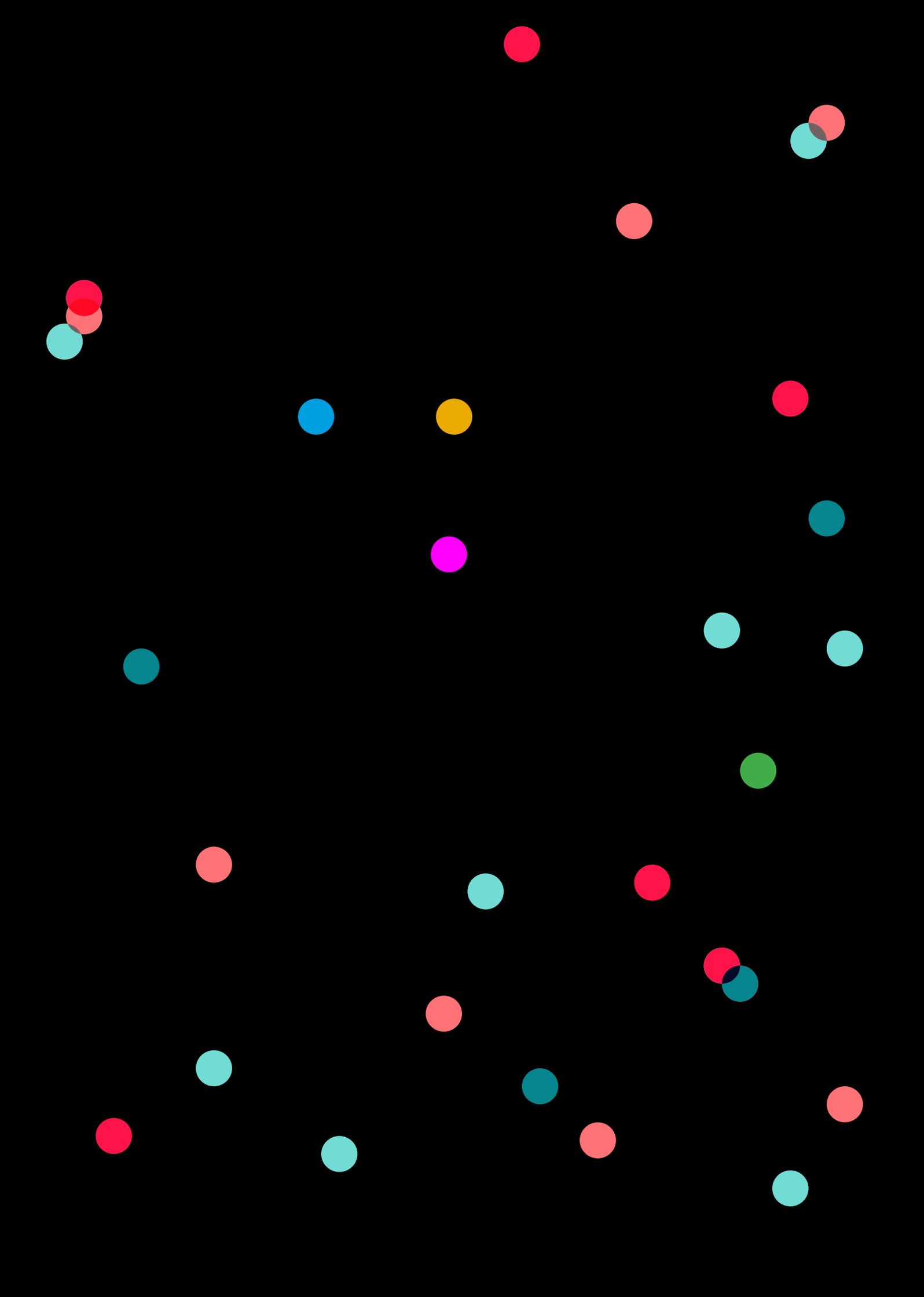
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