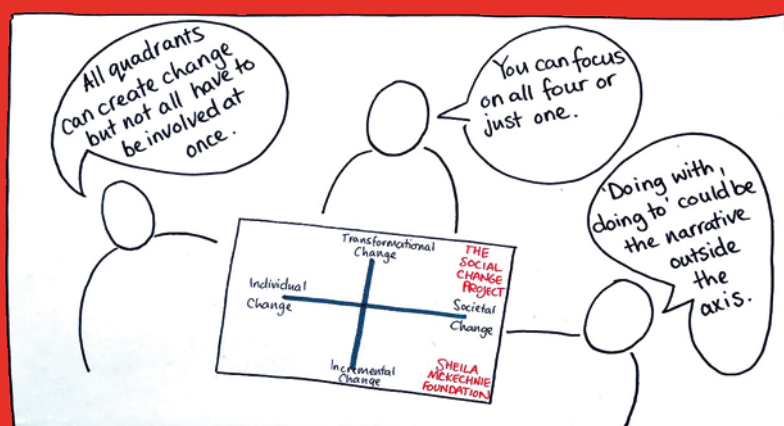# Social Power

BITE SIZE

The Social Change Grid

The Social Change Grid

The Social Change Project sought to answer one critical question: what can we learn about how social change is happening today that can strengthen civil society's future efforts? Over 18 months, around 400 change-makers took part in the conversation.

From our findings emerged a new tool – the Social Change Grid. It helped us to conceptualise the different kinds of change-making activity and the quadrants of power they can harness or influence. Using the grid, we could map how successful campaigns managed to 'pinball' around the different quadrants, taking advantage of events and embedding change in our social fabric.

Using the Social Change Grid

The grid is used to shine a light on our actions in pursuit of change. It does not offer hard and fast answers but instead prompts us to interrogate our plans, to spot gaps and challenge our decisions.

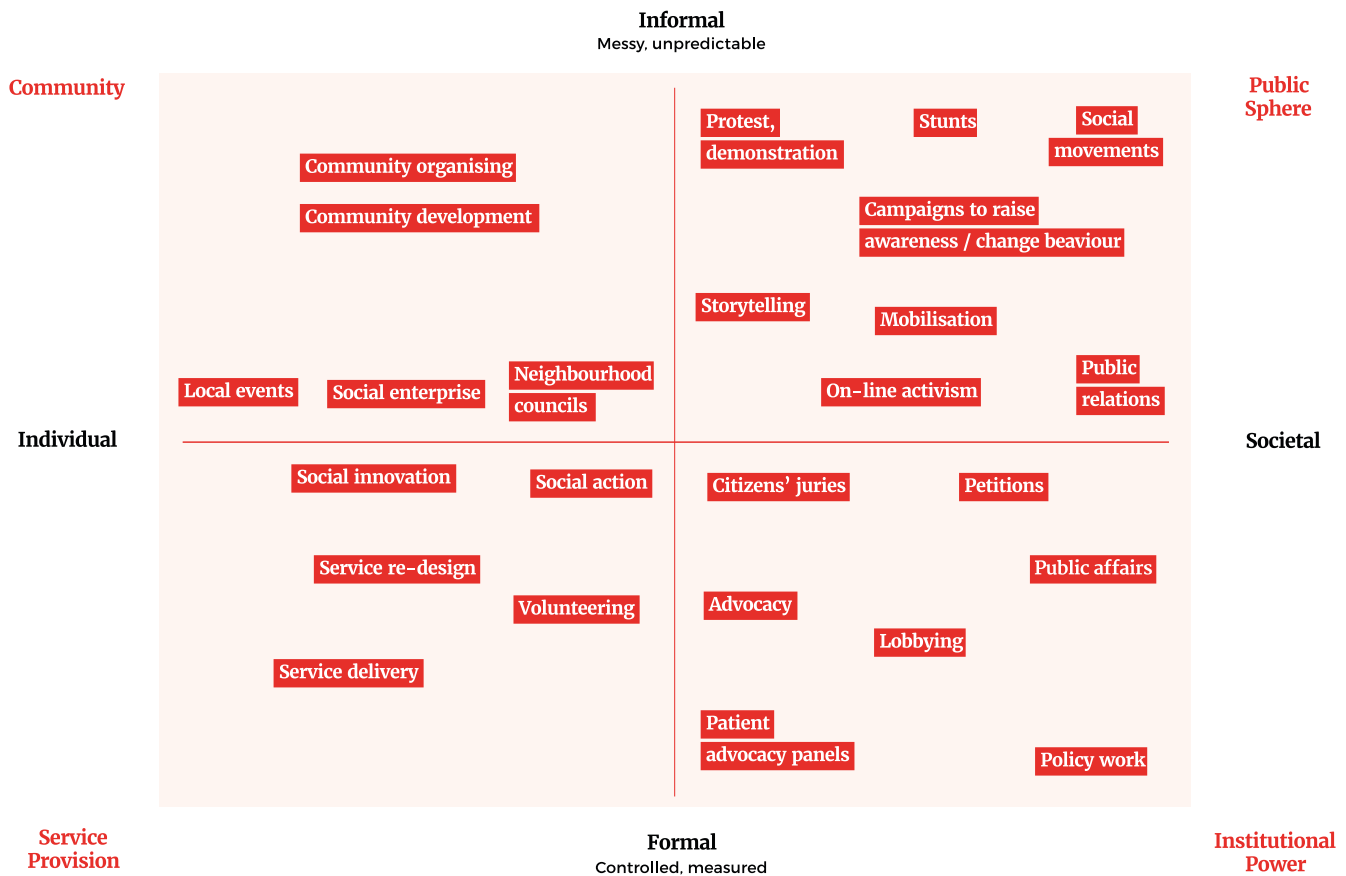Since we launched the Social Power report, we know that:

- Campaigners have used the grid to map their activity and ask whether they need to expand into different quadrants (or connect to others operating in them)

- Senior management teams have mapped organisational activity onto the grid in order to consider whether they need to extend out into other quadrants

- Funders have mapped their grants onto the grid to ask whether they are overly-concentrated in particular quadrants

- Advocates have used the grid to make the case for funding of lobbying, as well as service provision or awareness raising

- Thought leaders have used the grid to explore and map the activity of whole sectors

- Coalitions have used the grid to map where their members' activity takes place, and to ask whether they need to collaborate with others in under-represented quadrants

You can read the Social Power report, including full versions of new tools 'The Social Change Grid' and 'The 12 Habits of Successful Change-Makers', at www.smk.org.uk/social-power-report

The Social Change Grid

Civil society engages in social change in many different ways. To help make sense of this complexity, we developed the Social Change Grid to map the different kinds of activity we encountered. The grid sets out four distinct areas of activity or 'quadrants'.

Informal
Messy, unpredictable

Community

Public
Sphere

Community organising

Community development

Protest,
demonstration

Stunts

Social
movements

Campaigns to raise
awareness / change beaviour

Storytelling

Mobilisation

Local events

Social enterprise

Neighbourhood
councils

On-line activism

Public
relations

Individual

Societal

Social innovation

Social action

Citizens' juries

Petitions

Service re-design

Public affairs

Volunteering

Advocacy

Lobbying

Service delivery

Patient
advocacy panels

Policy work

Service
Provision

Formal
Controlled, measured

Institutional
Power

Community (top left)

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

Service Provision (bottom left)

This quadrant largely encompasses the provision of support. Prior to the foundation of the welfare state, this would be solely the realm of traditional charity, of the giving of alms. Today, it is a mixed economy based increasingly around commissioning. Civil society organisations and private businesses tender on a competitive basis to deliver services. It also includes the work of small, local social enterprises and entirely voluntary entities – local people just helping each other out.

Public Space (top right)

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

Institutional Power (bottom right)

This is the quadrant we might label 'formal power'. It includes government (national and local), international institutions, the legal system, big business, and big civil society organisations too (such as very large charities). These are all entities that have either formal powers to do things and/or resources which give them significant influence and responsibility.

The Axes

The axes move from 'formal' to 'informal' vertically, and from 'individual' to 'societal' horizontally. The further to the left, the smaller the number of people involved – from interaction with just one citizen to population-wide. At the bottom, formal activity is planned and measurable (e.g. the provision of a direct service, or the development of a policy). Informal activity at the top is messy, unpredictable, not in the control of one actor, and harder to measure (e.g. social movements).

What's happening in these spaces today?

Public space (top right)

Here we find attempts to mobilise public support, build movements for change, shift narratives or influence public attitudes. Civil society can help influence public opinion to lay the groundwork for legislative change (e.g. the campaign for same-sex marriage). Time to Change is an example of work in this quadrant to drive behavioural or attitudinal change.

Civil society is making good use of new technology, especially social media, in this space. Platforms like 38 Degrees and Change. org are facilitating public activism in new ways. Young people are using digital tools alongside traditional media and advocacy strategies to re-invent campaigning (e.g. the Never Again campaign set up in the wake in the Florida school shooting, which achieved legislative change in just 30 days). Social media has also facilitated the emergence of powerful new social movements like Black Lives Matter or #metoo.

Organisations like Cardboard Citizens or On the Road Media are forging effective new partnerships with the arts and mass media. New approaches to activism are emerging, such as Sarah Corbett's 'gentle protest'

through Craftivism.

There are many competing influences on public opinion, though, and it has been persistently hard to 'shift the needle' on issues like poverty, social mobility and migration.

Institutional power (bottom right)

This quadrant includes activity to influence and engage with formal power, bringing front line and lived experience to bear on analysis of policy, scrutinising powerful institutions and holding them to account. Trade unions and others collectivise people and organisations to make their voices and influence even greater. Civil society uses strategic litigation to change the law, or existing legal rights and protections to challenge unfair practices. Miscarriages of justice are challenged here.

'Speaking truth to power' is a critical part of this work, which inevitably leads to tension with government. Unfortunately, government policy has become increasingly intolerant of challenge from civil society, especially where supported by public funding. Measures such as the Lobbying Act and so-called 'gagging clauses' are stifling its ability to challenge formal political power.

Civil society encourages participation in democracy by sharing analysis, hosting debate, building the capacity of future leaders, and, more literally, transporting people to the polling station. It can reach out to underrepresented groups through projects like Operation Black Vote and #SHEvotes.

Working vertically to connect people with formal power, and horizontally to bring communities together around common interests, civil society at its best is a 'connective tissue' in our democracy.

Service provision (bottom left)

The vast majority of civil society resource and, therefore, activity is in this quadrant. Some are

huge outfits competing alongside commercial providers like G4S. Others are small and local, sometimes responding to emerging acute need, such as food banks. Commissioning has seen more resource flowing to the top, with big charities getting bigger and small charities getting smaller.

The traditional notion of 'charity' paints a transactional relationship with 'beneficiaries': immediate needs are met and suffering alleviated. However, a growing number of forward-thinking charities are tackling problems in radically new ways. They see themselves as enablers not providers, and those they seek to help as people with value and potential who, with the right kind of support, can transform their own lives.

Also in this quadrant are bodies like social enterprises and Community Interest Companies (CICs). There has been a huge amount of investment in these structures in recent years, accompanied by new forms of finance, such as social impact bonds and social investment. Many are 'start-ups' looking for new ways to combine profit with purpose – but we heard concerns that their activity is not translating into system-wide change. We need to see more engagement by the social innovation sector with others in civil society, and with institutional power.

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

Community-level activity has flourished in civil society in recent years. Organisations like Citizens UK and Hope not Hate are dusting down tools from post-war US community organising to bring together different community actors to work for change.

This quadrant also hosts 'asset-based' approaches to change (e.g. Friends of the Joiners Arms), collective ownership models (some of which have been in place and thriving

for decades), Community Land Trusts, and the revival of co-operativism. It includes place-based approaches to solving a problem or encouraging new behaviours.

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

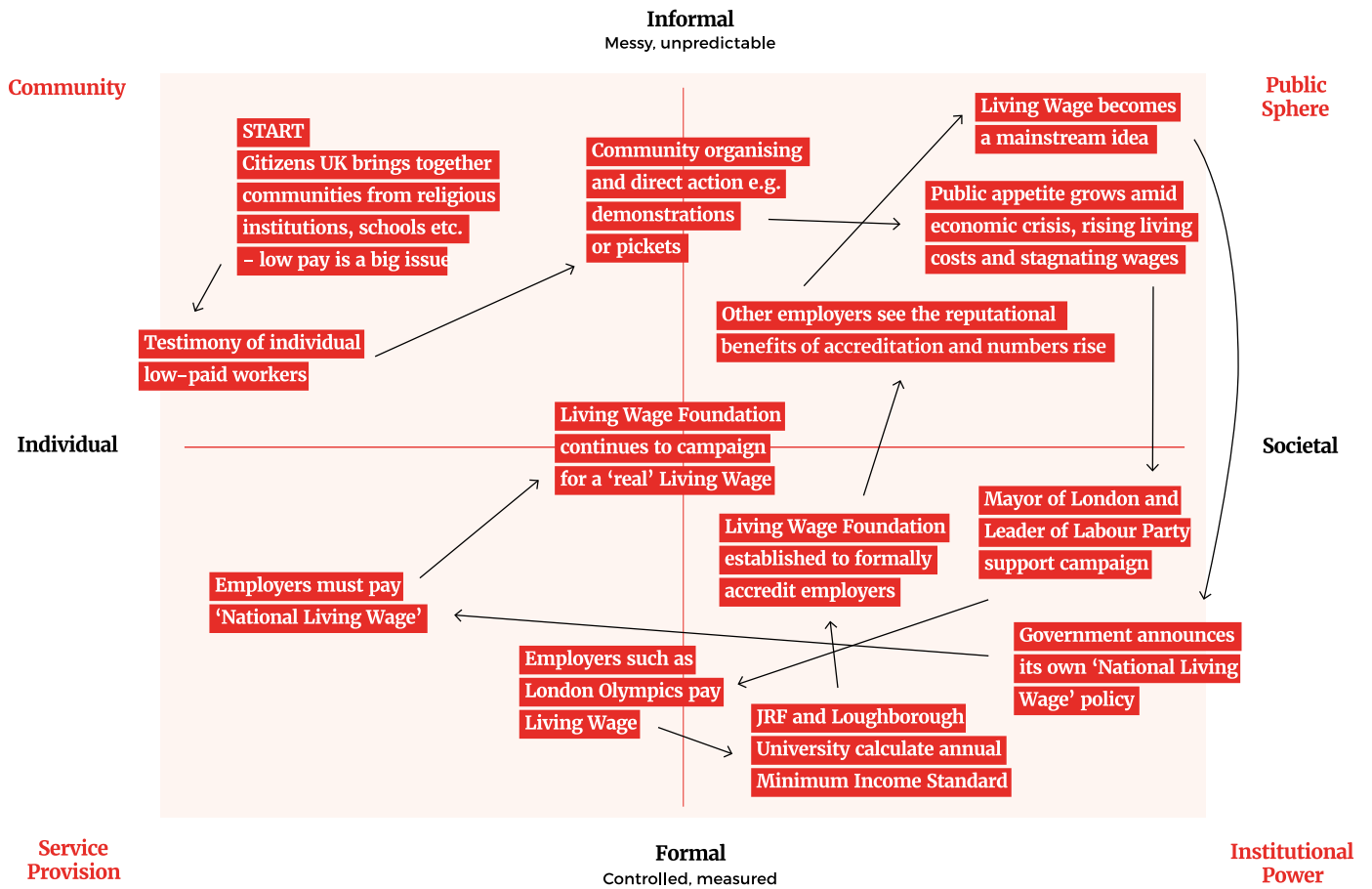## How does change happen in the Social Change Grid?

We mapped instances of social change across the grid. From these, and our wider research, we were able to draw conclusions about how change happens across and between the different quadrants. The Living Wage campaign example is reproduced below, but you can find more in our full report.

Example: The Living Wage

The drive for change starts in the community and is galvanised through community organising. Direct action is supported by personal testimony, which moves into the public sphere as awareness grows. The story starts to build. It comes to the attention of senior political figures, who support the campaign, at which point the concept is co-opted and re-defined by the Government. Also in the institutional power quadrant, the Living Wage Foundation is set up to accredit employers under the original definition. Eventually, the issue moves into the service provision quadrant, as those providing services must pay the National Living Wage.

Finding: Change occurs across quadrants in dynamic ways

The clearest pattern that emerged was the

Informal
Messy, unpredictable

Community

Public Sphere

START
Citizens UK brings together communities from religious institutions, schools etc. – low pay is a big issue

Community organising and direct action e.g. demonstrations or pickets

Living Wage becomes a mainstream idea

Public appetite grows amid economic crisis, rising living costs and stagnating wages

Testimony of individual low–paid workers

Other employers see the reputational benefits of accreditation and numbers rise

Individual

Living Wage Foundation continues to campaign for a 'real' Living Wage

Societal

Employers must pay 'National Living Wage'

Living Wage Foundation established to formally accredit employers

Mayor of London and Leader of Labour Party support campaign

Employers such as London Olympics pay Living Wage

Government announces its own 'National Living Wage' policy

JRF and Loughborough University calculate annual Minimum Income Standard

Service Provision

Formal
Controlled, measured

Institutional Power

importance of working across multiple quadrants. Change originates in one quadrant, but success appears to require activity across many, if not all.

Some organisations do work across all quadrants. National charities often provide services and draw on this to advocate for change, through lobbying and public campaigning. There can be tensions in this model. Where service delivery creates a funding relationship, a conflict of interest can be created that makes it difficult to criticise a 'customer'. It is hard to 'bite the hand that feeds you'.

Coalitions are often key to success. It can be better for organisations and groups to link up across the quadrants, rather than one organisation trying

to operate in all of them. The Coalition for Equal Marriage, set up in 2012, included secular and religious organisations, community and university groups, political groups and media organisations. This diversity of strengths allowed them to engage in every quadrant of the Social Change Grid on different terms and with greater flexibility.

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

Social change is galvanised by big ideas that change the way we see the world, make ideas into possibilities and inspire us to act. It is where radical thinking takes place and is tested. Community activists, campaigners and other public groups work as early adopters of social change.

The Living Wage (above) is an obvious example. It could easily be joined by period poverty, banning single-use plastics, citizen's income or affordable

credit, to name a few. These are all concepts that have been around for decades ('pinballing' around the grid) but are now gradually entering mainstream consciousness.

The history of social reform evidences this crucial role played by civil society. It is not just public and political debate that is influenced, civil society also has a profound influence on the private sector.[1] We encountered deep concerns that civil society is not using its voice and influence as much as it could, with serious consequences for social reform.

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

Much significant change originates with civil society bearing witness to people's lived experience. This may occur as they interact with the people and places they are serving (service delivery, bottom left) or as people start to organise (community, top left).

Civil society adds enormous value to the influence we can wield individually. It is uniquely positioned to take a long-term view. It is able to look at the experiences of many individuals and spot patterns and emerging needs. It is able to support people who otherwise struggle to make their voice heard. It also finds ways to advocate authentically for those who are unable to advocate for themselves, such as young children or people in other ways vulnerable.

By reflecting that experience back to those who hold formal power, they make an invaluable contribution to understanding how policy is being experienced by citizens.

Finding: Government needs civil society to drive social change

Delivering change often requires formal power (bottom right), but governments don't normally act without the support of public opinion (top right).

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

Finding: Social movements alone probably cannot create lasting change

The characteristics of social movements (agile, unpredictable, distributed, broadly focused) are different from those of charities and voluntary groups (structured, governed, regulated, tightly focused).

Activists are sometimes criticised for failing to harness the appetite for change generated by large-scale public movements. The challenge for established civil society organisations is to develop entirely new ways of working in order to collaborate with emerging social movements.

You can find out more about the Social Change Grid in our full Social Power report at smk.org.uk/social-power-report

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

THE SOCIAL CHANGE PROJECT

SHEILA MCKECHNIE FOUNDATION
POWERING CAMPAIGN PEOPLE

Read the full Social Power report at
smk.org.uk/social–power–report