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Effective change strategies for the Great Transition

Five leverage points
for civil society organisations

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Conference background paper
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Content

Introduction

According to WWF's most recent Living Planet Report (WWF 2010), humanity's demand on the Earth's biocapacity is now exceeded by 50%. Two years earlier the *overshoot* was still at 30%. Most trends indicating the health of the planet's ecosystems with its vital supplies for human life like food and freshwater are negative. This course is directly linked with the rapidly increasing demands for natural resources of a growing global consumer class that is enjoying unprecedented levels of material wealth. At the same time billions of people on the planet still live in poverty while inequality in many countries is on the rise.

Focus of this paper | A myriad of civil society organisations[1] (CSOs) all over the planet are working hard to tackle global environmental and social challenges. Yet, in spite of the many successes, the global sustainability crisis remains unresolved and is indeed becoming dangerously severe at many fronts. As Gustave Speth (2008: 78) puts it: "We have won many victories, but we are losing the planet. It is important to ask why."

This paper has the ambition to stimulate debate among CSO leaders and strategists, funders and academics about the adequateness of current CSO strategies. It analyses where potential weaknesses of current CSO strategies can be found. Subsequently – drawing on knowledge from theory and practice across a range of disciplines – the paper suggests a number of leverage points that CSOs can explore to develop more effective strategies and become stronger change agents towards tackling the global sustainability crisis.

The paper refers to the larger professionalised environmental and developmental CSO networks as a starting point for our analysis. Therefore much of the analysis and recommendations apply foremost to these types of organisations. However, because successful future civil society strategies that aim to tackle the sustainability crisis will depend on a very broad collaboration between smaller CSOs and grassroots, faith groups and unions up to an including large international CSO networks, we will try to be inclusive in our analysis and considerations.

The Smart CSOs initiative | This paper is the result of discussions and research undertaken in the Smart CSOs Initiative, a community of practice consisting of leaders from civil society organisations, academics and funders exploring how CSOs can become stronger change agents towards the *Great Transition* to a sustainable society and economy. The project was initiated within the context of the EC funded Action Town[2] project and was led by WWF-UK with support from CSCP. Discussions were kick-started at a workshop in Wuppertal (Germany) in March 2010 and were continued through an online platform (Smart CSOs NING).

The Smart CSOs Conference | This paper has been prepared as a conference background paper to inform and stimulate the Smart CSOs Conference organised by WWF-UK in March 2011 in London. The Smart CSOs Conference is the final conference of the Action Town project.

The paper is not suggesting the silver bullets for tomorrow's successful CSO strategies. The authors acknowledge that the research areas touched upon in this paper are very diverse, broad and challenging. Due to resources and time limits they could not be analysed in depth. However, we hope that our efforts will be a valuable contribution to the debate at the conference and beyond. At the conference, we hope that together with the invited CSO leaders, academics and funders we can take our current thinking to the next level and develop practical ways forward that can build on the work so far.

> " *I hope the exceptionally important Smart CSOs Conference, as it does its work, will draw inspiration from recent events in Egypt and elsewhere. We need an environmental revolution – nonviolent but decidedly activist, a global citizens movement – otherwise governments will continue to ignore the need for transformative change.*" *Gus Speth, February 13, 2011*

1) Definition for CSO used in this paper (adapted from the LSE Centre for Civil Society): Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around social and environmental causes, purposes and values. CSOs commonly embrace a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. CSOs are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, developmental and environmental NGOs, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, trade unions, social movements and civil society advocacy groups and coalitions.
2) Action Town is an FP7 project and kindly funded by the European Commission. Its official name is CSOContribution2SCP.

1 Time to rethink CSO strategies
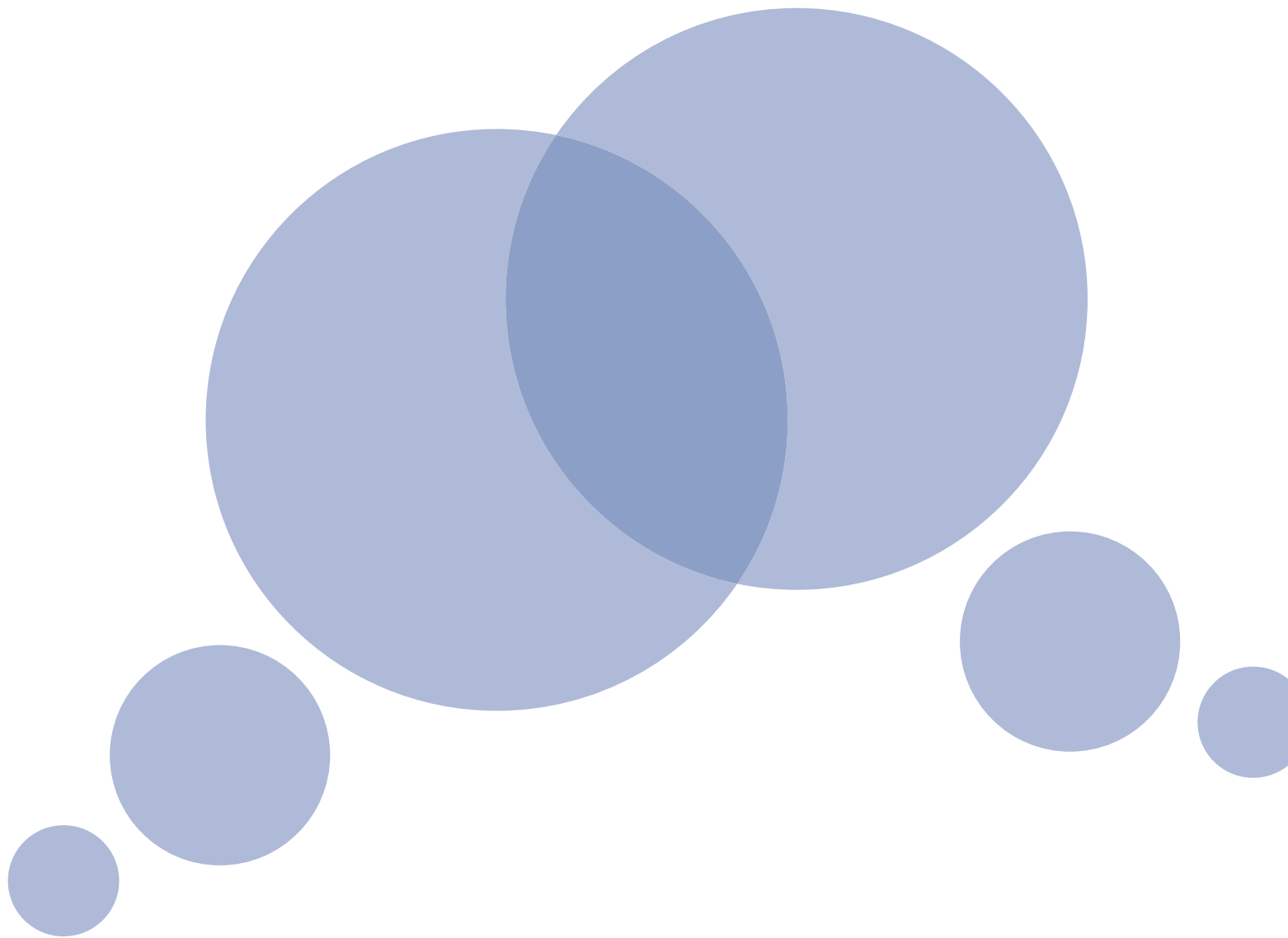
1.1 Systemic global crises

Climate change, food insecurity, droughts, resource scarcity and poverty are different sides of the same global sustainability crisis. While economic development has improved the material living conditions of millions, the capacity of the earth to supply resources and absorb waste is being exceeded with disproportional impacts on the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. At the same time the growing global consumer class with increasingly resource intensive life styles is increasing the pressure on the planet's ecosystems.

These crises are *wicked problems* – issues "with large complexity, great uncertainty, high stakes and steering problems" (Rotmans and Kemp 2003: 7). Local solutions can often not be reached because the

> *We will not change course by addressing each of these [symptoms such as global warming, deforestation; desertification; poisoning of soil, water, air; etc.] as separate issues; we have to address the cultural root causes"* (Sacks 2009)

causes and impacts of issues like climate change and biodiversity loss are often far removed geographically (across the developed and developing world) and/or in time (between current and future generations). In addition, conventional linear approaches to these issues are often failing because of complex feedback loops in the system. For example, so-called *rebound effects* occur, where initially positive results are countered by opposing follow-up-effects further removed in the system (Jackson 2010: 62f). Similarly, issues are systemically interlinked in that a solution to one problem often leads to a different problem (e.g. intensive agriculture has addressed scarcity of food, but has also caused sterile soils and increased GHG emissions Clearly the global sustainability crisis cannot be adequately addressed with a focus on single issues and symptoms. Wicked problems require a much deeper rethinking of the way the economy, the political system and society works.

As today's challenges are complex and interconnected, responses need to reflect this complexity. This raises an important question as to whether the dominant actors in the economy, including CSOs, are responding to these crises in a commensurate manner.

1.2 The lock-ins of government, business and individuals

There is a general expectation for governments, businesses and even individuals/consumers to bring the world towards a path of sustainability. However, the dominant paradigms surrounding these social actors seem to bound their actions and constrain them in developing effective responses for the global systemic crises:

Governments | Path dependencies in the political arena prevent far-reaching societal change (Leggewie and Welzer, 2010: 6). In particular, the social and economic benefits of tackling climate change are not perceived to materialise within the time horizon of elected national politicians in developed countries. Governments therefore are reluctant to act and

bear the conflict between tough action against climate change and the prevailing economic paradigm. Instead, political strategy and action is shaped by short time horizons. The result is often an abundance of long-term targets, but a lack of policies to deliver them (Hale, 2010: 256). In addition, most government responses to global issues like climate change and poverty rely heavily on market and policy instruments. For example trade liberalisation is a typical instrument aimed at reducing poverty and technological innovation is meant to reconcile economic growth with ecological limits (decoupling strategy). Current deliberations around 'green growth' and 'eco-innovations' are variations of this pattern. Intergovernmental agencies such as OECD work on policy recommendations to

help governments target business and consumer behaviour, both by sending out the right economic signals and by raising awareness (OECD, 2010).

Whilst market and policy instruments for sustainability are important, public policy measures focusing solely on technical transitions and green technologies are unlikely to be adequate to the growing challenges, especially if seen in the context of western life styles being rapidly adopted in countries like China and India. As Raskin (2010: 121) has put it, this dependence on incremental approaches would be similar to going up the down escalator.

Business | Today, only a few forward-looking corporations work in partnership with governments and CSOs to establish high standards for socially and environmentally responsible products and services. Under growing pressure, it is likely that more businesses will become allies for a progressive transformation of the global economy (Vogel, 2005 in Raskin, 2010). Still, due to the nature of financial markets and the pressure for fast growth and shareholder value, corporations are constrained in their actions and are left with little margin to act as true *global citizens*. For the next wave of innovation, even conventional management gurus like Michael Porter and Mark Kramer (2011) call for a redesign of the corporations' purpose. The aim should be "creating shared value, not just profit per se" which will reshape capitalism and its relationship to society (Porter and Kramer, 2011: 64). Yet until then, efforts to encourage *corporate responsibility* can be expected to continue to deliver only incremental adjustments to conventional development.

Individuals (consumers) | Much of the more recent policy debate on climate change has focussed on the question of how to achieve the so-called *behaviour change* of consumers towards more sustain-

able consumption. The focus in research and policy has largely been on applying policies and instruments to encourage individual behaviour change. The successes of these attempts have been very limited and while awareness and concerns on global environmental and social issues might be relatively high in many countries, people's behaviour remains in most cases largely unaffected. A striking example of this so-called attitude-behaviour gap is the fact that the most environmentally committed 1% of the UK population fly more on average that the other 99% (Hale, 2010: 261).

The reason for this is that consumer behaviour and motivation are complex and deeply entrenched in habits, emotions, social and cultural norms and economic frameworks. The rhetoric of consumer sovereignty is inaccurate and unhelpful because it regards choice as entirely individualistic and because it fails to unravel the social and psychological influences on people's behaviour (Jackson, 2005: xii).

In fact, individual behaviour is so much embedded in our existing social and economic structures that we often find ourselves 'locked in' to existing systems of provision (SDC, 2006). *Lock-in* occurs in part through *perverse* incentive structures – economic constraints, institutional barriers, or inequalities in access that actively encourage unsustainable behaviours. For this, an individual alone, given his/her role as a consumer, seems to have little power to act as a key change agent.

The above indicates that governments, business and individuals are currently constrained in their potential to develop commensurate responses to tackle the systemic global crises we are facing. There are change agents within government and business and at the individual level; however, the dominant structures are resisting transformational approaches and change. The question becomes: who is best placed to lead and build the momentum for transformative change?

1.3 Current Civil Society Organisation[3] strategies

This brings our attention to the potential of another increasingly important social actor to develop strong agency to tackle the global problems: Civil Society Organisations. Similar to governments, CSOs have a mandate to serve society's interests, but they do not face the same constraints as governments. CSOs have a track record of success in making a positive difference for a better society. More-

3) Although we are referring to more examples and research on environmental CSOs, many of the patterns and conclusions in this chapter are equally valid for developmental CSOs as well as other non-environmental CSOs.

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over, CSOs are often seen as the most trusted social actors amongst people. For example, a poll of almost 5,000 people in 22 countries, says that NGOs command trust among 62 percent of the public – higher than the figures for business, government or the media (Edelman, 2010). From this it becomes clear that CSOs have the power, agency and mandate to be an important force in tackling today's global challenges. Indeed the environmental movement has achieved many undeniable successes over the last decades, e.g. in species conservation, cleaner rivers, and cleaner air. More recently, environmental CSOs all over the world have helped put climate change on the political agenda with some notable policy successes and a high level of public awareness about climate change in many countries.

However, few would deny that the most threatening global environmental and social trends are worsening. Therefore, many mainstream environmental as well as developmental CSOs increasingly recognise that their current strategies and tactics might be insufficient at best and inadequate at the worst.

As part of the research phase of this project we conducted a survey[4] – 22 CSO leaders and researchers were interviewed – and an extensive review of relevant literature. From this body of evidence we have identified a number of core reasons why current CSO strategies are not utilising their full potential to solve systemic issues – we analyse them below:

- Focus on short-term incremental change
- Focus on national and international advocacy
- Focus on single issues
- Few alliances across CSO sectors
- The scientific rational approach

Focus on short-term incremental change
| The work in environmental organisations today is dominated by environmental impact statements and good proposals for sensible environmental action, including calls for market instruments and many other kinds of regulations. Most importantly the underlying assumption of most activities in environmental as well as developmental organisations is that global problems can be solved within the system. There is a general belief in the efficacy of government action and in the usefulness of environmental advocacy within the system (Speth 2008: 69). Similarly, most partnerships between CSOs and global companies are arguably built on the faith that large corporations have

the inherent interest and capability to become sustainable businesses if only they try hard enough.

The vision of many environmental organisations remains inherently based on the assumption that technology will be able to solve most environmental problems. Yet, many campaigns promoting technological solutions are in fact 'dealing-with-the-effects approaches' that lead to quick fixes and to picking the low-hanging fruit. However, quick fixes only address the symptoms, not the underlying causes. For example, whilst car efficiency standards can be tightened and improved, consumers may continue to drive more and more miles because of a lack of efficient alternative public transport. (Speth 2008)

One reason for this is that much of the funding for CSOs is directed towards campaigning for technological solutions, leaving little space to go beyond pragmatic incremental approaches. This holds true for a large part of the funding CSOs receive from the EU, national governments, large foundations and through their corporate partnerships. In addition, there is a general pressure within CSOs to promote positive visions and practical solutions and to be able to celebrate short-term successes that satisfy funders. Consequently, instead of paying attention to long-term transformational change, the work tends to become overly short-term focussed and tactical (Church and Narberhaus 2009: 26). Finally many CSOs are very concerned about coming across as moralising with messages like 'people should consume less'. This is based on past experiences where campaigns with this tone failed.

Most mainstream CSO strategies tend to be pragmatic and try to make the system work for the environment and for the poor. However, due to the systemic nature of today's problems and the destructive power of some of the underlying system drivers, focussing on incremental solutions and technical fixes will ultimately not be enough to tackle today's global crises.

Focus on national and international advocacy
| As a direct consequence of this pragmatic approach, much of the current work in environmental CSOs focuses on influencing national governments or international policy processes. Today, CSOs often take the role of policy advisors (Rogall 2004: 257) and/or develop campaigns aimed at mobilising public opinion to lobby governments to take action on climate change or other global issues.

Many mainstream national CSOs do not move beyond this top-down approach. Only a few carry out local engagement projects exploring the potential of local social change projects and empowerment of local change agents for transitions in communities. These activities are usually seen as additional resources that are developing parallel to the system and observed from a distance. As a result, bottom-up strategies, i.e. empowering local communities to understand and act on environmental crises, are rare. Reasons are multiple including their voluntary character, limited funding and scalability problems. (Roling 2010: 42-43)

However, as explained above, path dependencies in politics prevent far-reaching societal change and pure top-down approaches are no longer sufficient for challenges like climate change (Hale 2010). They fail to acknowledge the reality and the limitations of the political economy. Additional or alternative approaches are therefore needed.

Focus on single issues | Most projects
and activities in mainstream CSOs are still organised around single issues like climate change, species loss, toxics, forest and marine protection (Church and Narberhaus 2009: 22) as well as poverty alleviation in developmental CSOs. In fact, many CSOs are still entirely organised around issues and have a strong culture around specific expertise, which is emphasised by the fact that professional pathways in general drive towards deep specialisation (Leonard 2010: xii).

This means that much of the work happens in silos and the connections between the different issues are often not seen. Given the systemic and complex nature of so many of today's problems, the responses through this silo work are often inadequate.

One reason for this is that the interests of donors tend to favour a "narrow issue oriented approach, encouraging CSOs to specialize in delineated niches (or *issue silos*) despite the growing awareness of the interrelated nature of today's challenges" (Kriegman 2006: 10). Furthermore, CSOs also have to demonstrate to funders that their activities are having an impact, which is usually measured in terms of tangible, pre-determined outputs. This means that projects and programmes are designed from the very beginning to be short term, limited in scope and mission, and easily monitored and evaluated. These all limit engagement with *bigger*, more complex issues.

Few alliances across CSO sectors | As a
direct consequence of the single-issue focus there are few effective collaborations and alliances across CSO sectors. The different constituencies of the CSO sector commonly define the problems narrowly according to their own special interest instead of developing visions that link issues in an inclusive way and harness the potential of much broader collaboration and movements. For example when alliances are sought by environmental organisations, other non-environmental CSOs are often invited to unite under the umbrella of an environmental problem instead of trying to identify the common interests and values.

"Environmentalism will never be able to muster the strength it needs to deal with the global warming problem as long as it is seen as a special interest. And it will continue to be seen as a special interest as long as it narrowly identifies the problem as environmental and the solutions as technical." (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2004: 26)

The scientific rational approach | The
history and background of environmental CSOs and their employees are grounded in the natural sciences. The natural sciences have contributed many sophisticated scientific and policy analyses of climate change, species loss, and other critical environmental issues (Leiserowitz and Fernandez 2008); the movement would be at loss without this foundation.
However, rational (scientific) arguments alone will not overcome political and cultural barriers (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2004). The failure of the summit on climate change in 2009 in Copenhagen (COP15) was a clear example of how the assumption that the global political system could be convinced to take strong action by making the scientific rational case was wrong. For CSOs to become successful in influencing our complex political, social and human systems, they need to draw more on, engage with and build on trans-disciplinary knowledge and insights from the social sciences.

Indeed since COP15, the need to gain a better insight into how behaviour change can be facilitated and how messaging can be made more effective and positive is recognised by many environmental and developmental NGOs (Roling 2010: 40-41).

1.4 Need for a new vision and ways of working towards that vision

From our analysis it became obvious that the complexity and systemic nature of the sustainability crisis (and the consequential need for a broad economic and social transition) has not yet been embedded in the work of most CSOs. However, the need to go beyond current reactive *symptoms-related* actions and instead look for radical and transformative change has clearly been recognised by many CSO leaders (Church and Narberhaus 2009: 23).

In theory it might seem plausible that regulatory and market instruments would result in renewable energy and efficiency measures tackling climate change without the need for any major changes in our lifestyles and in the globalised growth based economic structures. However, the complexity of this undertaking in the context of a global population soon reaching 9 billion all aiming to reach Western living standards is putting humanity on an extremely risky pathway. And if viewed in the context of a planet that is hitting its planetary boundaries at many different levels (climate, biodiversity, land use, toxics, fresh water etc.) and where economic growth systematically fails to trickle down to the poor, it becomes obvious that trying to fix environmental and social problems issue by issue while maintaining (or aspiring to) the life styles of the global consumer society, as well as current economic structures and values is clearly an illusion.

If the current globalised shareholder profit maximisation driven economy and our consumerist culture are at the heart of the systemic problems, then a focus on market approaches and green products is likely to reinforce a deeply unsustainable system.

Due to the nature of the crisis, a transition to a truly just and sustainable global society will therefore require broad and deep systemic change across every realm (Kriegman 2006: 9). This includes technologies, legislation, economic and governance institutions, social relations, culture and values (Raskin 2010: 128).

Therefore, future CSO strategies must take into account that the current focus on incremental change within the system will not be sufficient or might even undermine transformative change.

Moreover, attempts by CSOs to tackle the problems issue by issue with a narrow policy approach fail to galvanise the necessary broad public support that would create the political will for more radical government action.

In order to make such a broad and strong movement possible, CSOs urgently require a broad and unifying vision for a sustainable future. Additionally CSOs need to rethink and redesign the ways they work and *how* they try to influence the political, social and human systems towards sustainability.

The remainder of this paper draws on the knowledge gathered through the discussions in the Smart CSOs community as well as through our literature review to start developing a number of leverage points that can help CSOs to become strong change agents towards systemic change.

> "The starting point must be to unravel the forces that keep us in damaging denial ... the profit motive stimulates a continual search for newer, better or cheaper products and services. Our own relentless search for novelty and social status locks us into an iron cage of consumerism. Affluence has itself betrayed us." *(Jackson 2009)*

2 The Great Transition

2.1 What is the Great Transition?

The Great Transition is a conceptual framework for a new vision for a sustainable global economy and society and pathways to get there. It was originally proposed by the Global Scenario Group (Raskin et al. 2002) and has since then been adopted by others like e.g. the New Economics Foundation (Spratt et al. 2010). This paper is not the space to go into the details of the research and ideas that have been developed to date about the changes in politics, the economy and society that would bring about this vision. The sources mentioned above are a good starting point for diving deeper into the vision for those interested.

In addition, and for the purpose of this paper – which is for CSOs to learn from theory and practice new ways to influence politics and society and eventually become much stronger change agents for a sustainable future – we do not all need to (and should not) agree on the same vision for a sustainable future.

Nobody knows exactly how we will achieve a sustainable world, or what it will look like. There is a need for a broad diversity of ideas, approaches and policies to experiment with. Differences in history, culture, geography etc. will ensure and require a broad range of different visions and pathways. However, we argue in this paper that the more CSOs can agree on the core (underlying) values and principles for a transition to sustainability, the more successful change agents they will become.

Below we flesh out the key premises and principles of the Great Transition that are distinctive as well as some of the emerging innovation areas of the new economy. Most importantly we argue that these principles and policies could become important game changers in the fight to tackle global ecological and social crises.

As explained in chapter 1, most CSOs pursue a pragmatic approach, by breaking down the problems into manageable pieces (issues). They try to achieve what is possible in the short-term without attempting a medium to long-term shift in the fundamental parameters in the system like values, life styles and economic structures. This pragmatic approach also means that the focus is on symptoms rather than root causes, leaving little room for unifying frameworks and visions between the different constituencies of CSOs.

The Great Transition turns the current reality around and explicitly demands that CSOs adopt a unifying framework for deep systemic change with a focus on tackling root causes rather than symptoms. Furthermore it is based on the acknowledgement that societal values and life styles, as well as the structures of the current economic system, are not set in stone and that they can and must change if we want to have a serious chance to tackle today's global crises.

Premises | These are some of the distinct premises the Great Transition is based on:

- **Systemic change is needed:** The market and current politics alone cannot solve the systemic global crises, but deep systemic change is required with a change in our cultural values, life styles and economic structures.

- **A shift in cultural values is a condition:** One of the most important pillars of the Great Transition is the emergence of a new consciousness. Currently dominant materialistic cultural values should shift towards more intrinsic (or bigger-than-self) values. This would include a bigger sense of interconnectedness with nature and with others and an empathy with humanity as a whole (global empathy).

- **An economy beyond material growth and beyond consumerism is desirable, achievable and necessary:** A number of empirical studies show that indicators like life satisfaction and individual happiness do not significantly increase and even stagnate when certain levels of material wealth (approx. $15.000) have been achieved (Jackson 2010: 40). This makes the case against further economic growth in rich countries, while of course there is considerable margin for better living conditions and a case for more economic growth for the world's poor.

- **An economic system beyond GDP is possible:** The current fixation on GDP as national and societal success indicator is a social construction that can be changed. It entirely depends on the will of humanity to invent an economic system that is guided by different parameters and that would work for human wellbeing and the planet.

- **A culture beyond consumerism is possible:**
  The same happens with consumerism. While human beings are not born as entirely intrinsic creatures and the human instinct for survival implies a certain level of innate selfishness, most of human behaviour is in reality cultural and today the cultural paradigm in many parts of the world is consumerism[5] (Assadourian 2010: 8). Yet, if business interests and advertisement have created consumerism, the reverse is also possible.

Principles | If the above are the premises of what is needed, desirable and possible, the Great Transition also follows a range of principles that make it a unifying framework for a systemic shift to a sustainable world. The Earth Charter principles on ecological limits, social justice, peace and democracy represent a comprehensive set of principles that are useful for the Great Transition towards the new economy (see also table 1). More concretely, a new economy would have to totally rethink our current systems of consumption and production in order to eventually fulfil its original purpose: a means to an end to serve societal interest. The new economy could be created according to a hierarchy of principles starting from the end followed by the means (see also figure 1).

- **Societal wellbeing principle:** The political and social system would work with the overarching principle to enable people to live a spiritually and socially fulfilling life. The fundamental questions of what is a good society and what is a good life would be in the centre of the debate and the focus of societal and political efforts.

Table 1: The four pillars (sixteen principles) of the Earth Charter

I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life
- Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
- Care for the community of life.
- Build democratic societies.
- Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

II. Ecological Integrity
- Protect and restore biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
- Prevent harm to the environment and apply a precautionary principle.
- Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard the environment, human rights and community well-being.
- Advance understanding of ecological sustainability.

III. Social and Economic Justice
- Eradicate poverty.
- Economic activities and institutions to promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- Affirm gender equality and universal access to social and economic resources.
- Uphold the right of all to an environment supportive of dignity, health and wellbeing.

IV. Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace
- Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels.
- Teach knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
- Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
- Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace.

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5) Consumerism is "a cultural pattern that leads people to find meaning, contentment, and acceptance primarily through the consumption of goods and services" (Assadourian 2010: 8)
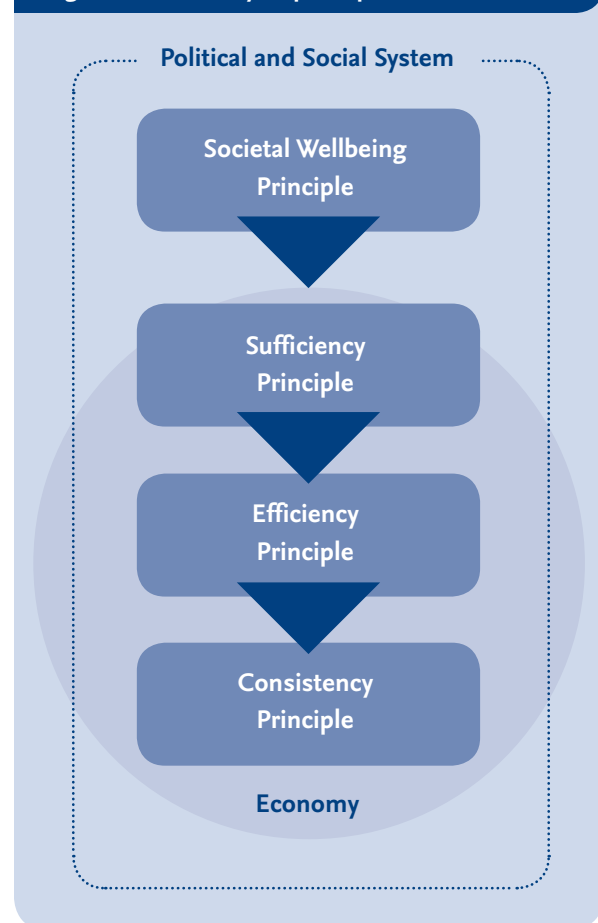
- **Sufficiency principle:** A redesign of the economy could start with the question: What level and what type of consumption do people really need to live a good and fulfilling life? How many homes, flights, cars, shoes etc. are enough? How fast do we need to travel? The slow food, slow cities etc. movements are good examples of how quality of life can be improved by taking speed out of the economy and everybody's life.
- **Efficiency principle:** It could then ask the question of what product-service models can most resource /energy efficiently fulfil a particular identified need. This can be about energy efficiency of homes, vehicles, machines etc. However it can also be about structural questions about our economy such as, how much globalisation of product chains makes sense? Do we need to localise large parts of the economy such as food production? Can we fulfil a particular need more efficiently by switching from product ownership to service, e.g. car clubs (car sharing) or sharing products in a community (e.g. lawn-mower)?
- **Consistency principle:** Eventually commodities (like energy, timber, metals, cotton, fish, water) shall be produced and/or extracted in the least harmful way for the natural environment. This includes foremost the production of renewable energy, sustainable timber, fish, water use etc.

It is important to continue developing more sustainable and efficient technologies and to deploy them under the strict rule of the precautionary principle. However a more holistic approach of transforming the systems of sustainable consumption and production in rich countries, would more realistically allow for a commensurate reduction of the environmental impact. Importantly it would give the poor the necessary margin to increase their level of resource consumption and reach similar levels of wellbeing (shrink and share principle).

Emerging innovation areas for the new economy

| The above is of course a highly simplified model to describe the way that consumption and production systems can be transformed. Achieving this depends on identifying the right leverage points in the system and on a highly complex process of social and political change, most likely a

Figure 1: Hierarchy of principles

Political and Social System

Societal Wellbeing Principle

Sufficiency Principle

Efficiency Principle

Consistency Principle

Economy

coevolving and ideally mutually reinforcing process of cultural and political change. It will require radical changes in nearly every societal and economic institution of our modern world and probably the invention and creation of many new institutions. To mention just a few of the emerging innovation areas for the new economy:

- Big changes will be needed in the labour markets with a rethinking of the distribution between paid labour and non paid labour (Coote et al. 2010). The Great Transition assumes that consumption in rich countries does not increase any more (in economic terms, on average and in the long run). Then consistently wages should not increase and productivity increases should reduce the working week. On the other hand people will increase the time spent in community work or e.g. growing their own food and cooking…
- Alternative money systems with local and regional currencies to increase local resilience and support

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local economic cycles and with a special focus on taking pressure out of the growth economy.

- Important changes in the way global corporations and financial markets operate and in corporate ownership models: Emerging themes include more cooperative type ownership models or changes and limitations in the way shares can be traded in stock markets to mitigate the current short term profit focus and speculation. Ultimately

it is about the transition from the current model of shareholder value maximisation to a model of business that delivers long-term social and ecological value.

The next sections and chapters will concentrate on the question of how the Great Transition to a sustainable economy can happen and how CSOs can become strong change agents towards this vision.

2.2 A model for a systemic transition – meta-theory of change

Developing a theory of change for CSOs for the Great Transition is not an exercise of prediction. Instead it is about developing the most plausible scenario of how CSOs can achieve a vision of a sustainable economy, assuming they are able to mobilise sufficient forces at many levels in a smart way. The theoretical multi-level perspective (MLP) model seems to be an appropriate and flexible enough framework to develop such a

robust theory of change and to explore how CSOs can develop a strong agency towards the Great Transition.

Multi-level perspective[6] | This was initially developed in systems innovation theory and, based on historical studies of the emergence of new technologies and infrastructure. It has subsequently been expanded to more generally explain changes in the

Figure 2: Multi-level perspective (Geels, 2002)

Macro level (landscape)

Meso level (regimes)

Micro level (niches)

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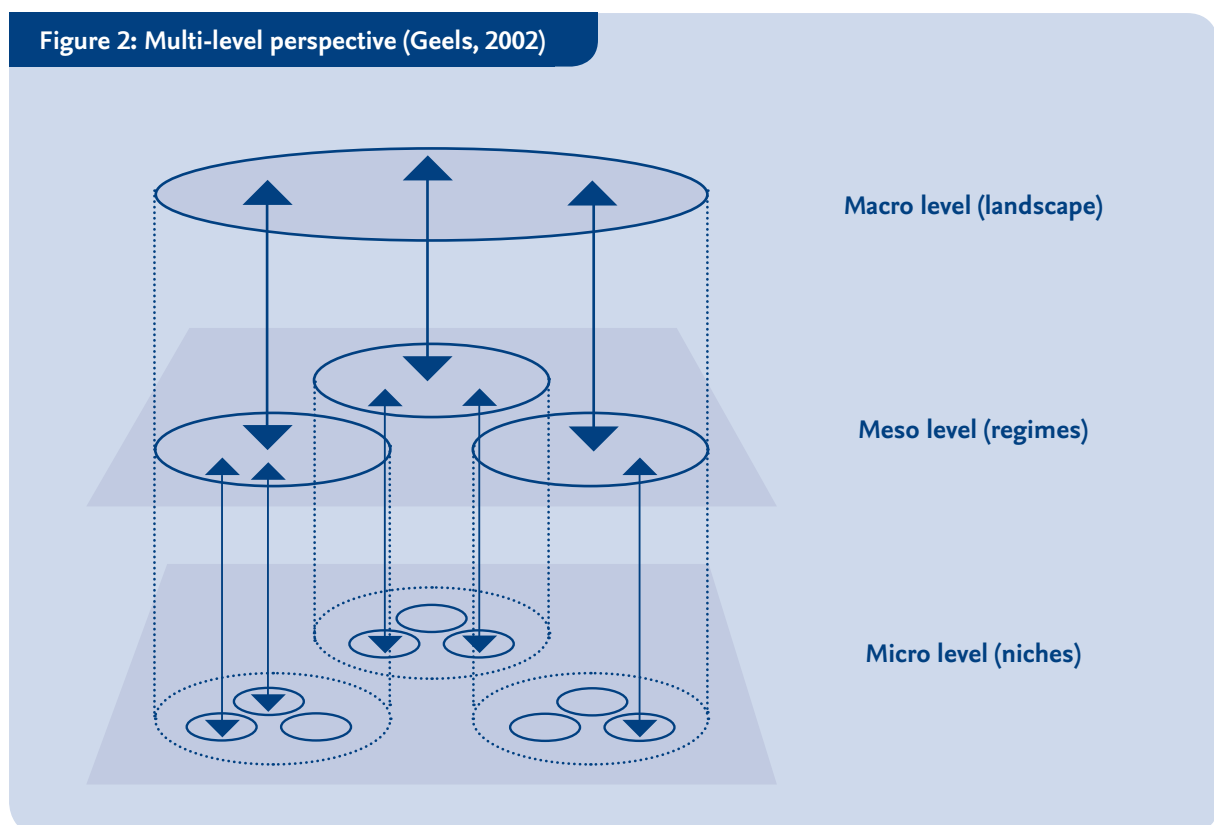
6) This paper does not attempt to interfere in the ongoing academic debate about socio-technical transitions and the MLP. Furthermore we are not claiming a high scientific rigor in relating to the MLP and are making a flexible use of the framework to adapt it to the specifics of the concept of the Great Transition.

systems through which societal functions are realised (Smith et al. 2010: 439), and particularly to explore ways of steering society towards sustainable practices (Rotmans et al. 2001). The MLP distinguishes between three interconnected system levels[7] (see also figure 2):

- The macro-level, or *landscape* is where societal culture and values lie.

- The meso-level, or *regimes*, include the dominant infrastructures and technologies, as well as the current political and economic institutions and the regulatory frameworks (these factors together comprise the current economic system).

- The micro-level, or *niches* is the arena where socio-technical innovation happens. This is where the seeds of the new economy (innovative models of sustainable life styles, business, political and societal institutions, technology etc.) are being developed and experimented with.

The interactions between the three system levels will determine the emergence (or not) of a Great Transition, i.e. the systemic transition to the new economy as outlined above.

Regimes comprise all the structures and institutions shaping the status quo. It is here where so-called *lock-ins* occur: existing capabilities and knowledge, economic cost of changes, vested interests, politics and power relations, established infrastructures, institutions, markets and consumer cultures combine into a complex system that tends to self-stabilize around the status quo and reject any tendencies for systemic change (Scrase et al. 2009: 19ff).

The Great Transition is ultimately about unlocking these structures and institutions and either help them to radically transform themselves or replace them with new ones that are needed for the new economy. This is when radical (systemic) innovations eventually break out of their niches and become mainstream, i.e. they use windows of opportunity and gain sufficient support in the mainstream. As a fundamental pillar of the Great Transition, the macro-level plays an important role in our interpretation of the MLP in that a potential shift in societal values would create a culture of support for the new radical innovations and help them to become mainstream at a much faster pace.

Currently the momentum for such a transition is not sufficient. But we argue in the next section that this could change if CSOs adopt a number of new roles that intervene in the three system levels and can potentially create a new positive dynamic.

Meta-theory of change | Discussions in the Smart CSOs community as well as our literature review have so far identified a number of core leverage points which, if taken seriously by CSO leaders, researchers and funders, could help CSOs to become much stronger change agents towards the Great Transition. We are conscious that our current thinking is not the final recipe for CSOs *to save the world* and that much more debate, research and action research is needed to continuously improve this thinking, but we are confident about our selection insofar as a broad number of leading thinkers and practitioners have come to conclusions that all point in a similar direction.

Table 2 is summarising the five strategic leverage points identified and shows how they are designed to address the weaknesses in current CSO strategies identified in chapter 1.

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7) The MLP literature sees the economic system as an exogenous factor and includes it in the macro-level. For the purpose of this paper where the transition from one economic model to a new one is at the core, we consider the economic system as endogenous and therefore it represents in effect the whole meso-level.

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| Table 2: A new vision and five leverage points to address weaknesses in current CSO strategies		
	Current CSO approach and why are strategies failing to tackle systemic problems	**Strategic leverage points for CSOs to become strong change agents**
Vision	Too much faith in market solutions to tackle environmental and social problems. Deployment of existing and new technology will mitigate most environmental impact. We can tackle the global crisis with specific policies without a need to fundamentally question current cultural values, economic structures and life styles.	The market and current politics cannot solve the systemic global crises. We need to redesign the economy with a shift away from the current growth paradigm to maximizing wellbeing within ecological limits. This will only be possible with a new consciousness and a shift in societal values from extrinsic to intrinsic.
Leverage point 1 **Systems thinking**	Single issues focus, lack of acknowledgement of the feedback loops in the system and the interconnectedness of today's global crises	Systems thinking is a discipline that can help organizations to understand complexity of systems and work more successfully with highly interconnected global issues
Leverage point 2 **A new narrative**	Focus on natural sciences – Too much belief in the power of the rational argument. Need to better understand how to influence social, political and human systems	Insights from cognitive science, psychology and sociology can help us understand how we can work towards a shift in societal values.
Leverage point 3 **Developing new models**	Too much focus on incremental change through advocacy work. Policy processes are locked in the current economic growth paradigm and often fail to result in effective policies	Systemic change requires more focus on socio-technical innovation and bottom up approaches. CSOs can support change agents and the seeds of the new economy in a variety of ways.
Leverage point 4 **A new global movement**	CSOs regularly fail to see the opportunities of cross-sectoral collaboration, partly because they focus on narrow technical proposals but also because CSOs tend to compete with each other. In addition, CSOs haven't focused on the potential of a global citizen movement.	The inclusive nature of the Great Transition offers an opportunity to build large platforms for collaboration. CSOs can learn how to apply successful models of collaboration and support the creation of a new global movement for the Great Transition.
Leverage point 5 **Engaging funders**	There is not much funding available currently for strategies on systemic change. Funding schemes are encouraging focus on short-term outputs, technical policy work and competition among CSOs.	Funders need to be engaged with the need to develop new strategies for the Great Transition and they need to adapt funding and monitoring and evaluation to the requirements of strategies for systemic change (long term, more risky etc.)

We propose that these five leverage points shall work in an interdependent and interactive way and build the basis for a meta-theory of change for the Great Transition from a CSO perspective. A graphical description of the model and how the five leverage points could eventually help CSOs to create the necessary momentum for the transition towards a new economy is attempted in figure 3. The model is based on the MLP explained above.

The model works the following way:

Leverage point 1
Embedding systems thinking in CSO practice:
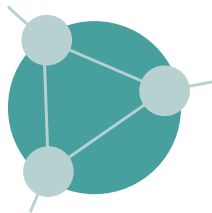
Fundamental to developing strategies which achieve change in the complex economic system, CSOs must better understand the system and also develop processes and structures to continuously learn and improve strategies and interventions. Systems thinking can be used to develop a new vision and strategy based on increased systems understanding. Chapter 3.1 is diving deeper into this leverage point.

Leverage point 2
A new narrative – how CSOs can work with our cultural values:

Insights from cognitive science and psychology help us to understand how CSOs could successfully support a shift towards more intrinsic cultural values (macro level). We argue that CSOs should pay attention to this opportunity much more consistently and use all their means (communications, advocacy etc.) and build large platform of collaborations between CSOs to succeed. Chapter 3.2 is diving deeper into this leverage point.

Leverage point 3
Developing new models – how CSOs can support the seeds of the new economy:

Systemic change requires deep, fast and radical innovation on all fronts (life styles, business, institutions, technology etc.). We argue that CSOs should pay attention to the bottom-up processes of innovation (micro-level) in a more strategic manner and support, nurture and connect the seeds of the new economy so that they eventually become the new mainstream economic model. Chapter 3.3 is diving deeper into this leverage point.

Leverage point 4
A new global movement – from fragmentation to cross-sectoral collaboration:
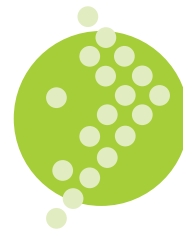
A new global movement that unites a broad range of civil society sectors under one umbrella of the Great Transition principles and values would be a powerful force in support of the cultural and economic transition required. We argue that CSOs should much more strategically and globally link change agents, initiatives and CSOs and create a common voice for the Great Transition. Chapter 3.4 is diving deeper into this leverage point.

Leverage point 5
Engaging funders in CSO strategies towards the Great Transition:

All the above activities will only be possible if sufficient funding is available. CSOs should therefore pay much more attention to involve funders in the need for a new strategic focus and to adapt funding and M&E to the requirements of strategies for systemic change (long term, more risky etc.). Chapter 3.5 is diving deeper into this leverage point.

Leverage points 2, 3 and 4 all suggest that CSOs should refocus a large amount of their efforts towards the macro- and the micro-level. The clear rationale for this is that efforts in these system levels are urgently required to unlock the *regimes* in the current economic system and that the current focus on short-term opportunities for incremental change at the meso-level will not be sufficient due to the vested interests and inertia in the system to keep the status quo.

By no means should CSOs abandon their advocacy activities and their work with mainstream actors. However they should do this much more strategically and with a view to the effects and feedback loops this can create for the macro- and micro-levels. For example

windows of opportunity in national policy can be used to financially support niches of innovation or to create policies that can have a positive impact on cultural values (e.g. national well-being beyond GDP indicators) etc.

More generally CSOs need to develop a good understanding for the feedback loops between the macro-, meso- and micro- level, as they can create powerful synergies that should be used strategically.

In chapter 3 we provide, for each leverage point, some key aspects from theory and practice to prove the strategic relevance for CSOs. Most importantly we are discussing the practical implications of the leverage point for CSO strategies.

Figure 3: Meta-theory of change for the Great Transition from a CSO perspective, adapted from multi-level perspective (Geels, 2002)
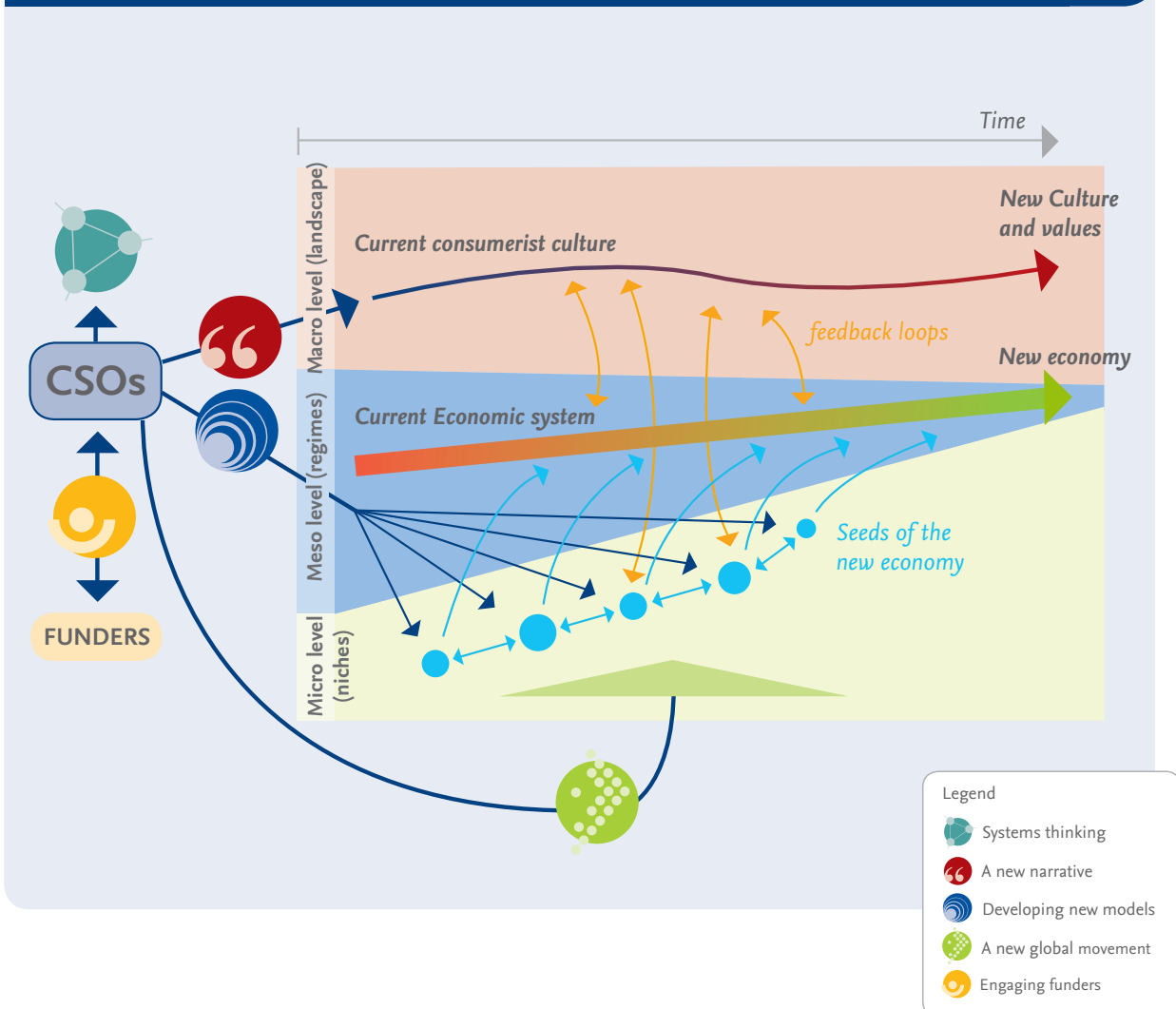
3

Five leverage points for effective change strategies
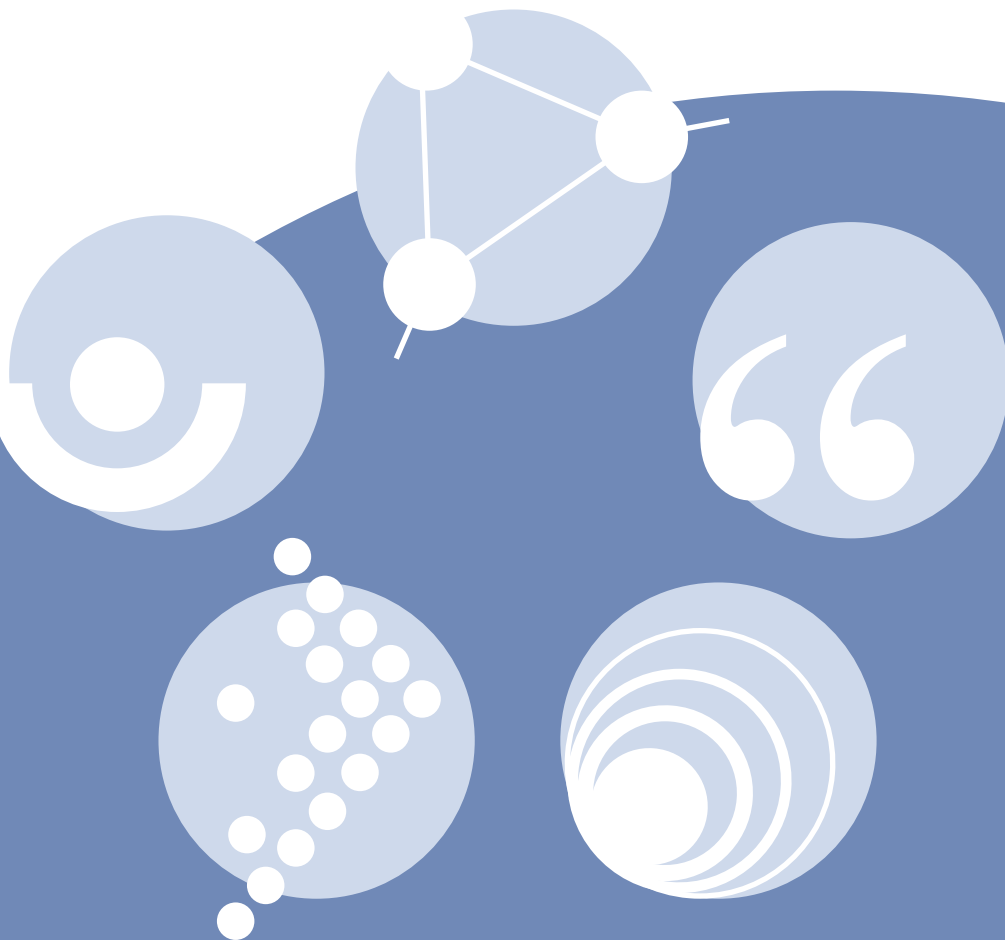
3.1 Embedding systems thinking in CSO practice
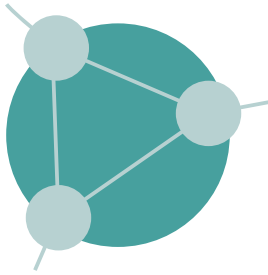
Strategic context and rationale | Due to their systemic nature, *global wicked problems* like climate change cannot be adequately addressed, without understanding the complex feedback loops in the wider system of which they are a part. Indeed climate change, food insecurity, biodiversity loss, poverty and other social issues are all interconnected problems, which share common heritages (Johnson 2010).

However, at present many CSOs (not unlike other organisations) often choose strategies, which fail to account for such complexity and consequently are falling short of their objectives. For example, the environmental crisis is often broken down into *manageable pieces* such as deforestation, cleaner production or consumer behaviour (Leonard 2007). However by reacting only to specific parts of the sustainability crisis, CSOs risk creating unintended consequences, which adversely impact other parts of the system. For instance, an intervention (such as laws which increase the efficiency of buildings or cars) can at times have the direct effect of reducing energy consumption. Nonetheless, because this can lead to making energy cheaper, it may also have a long-term negative effect on the absolute energy consumption as it could induce demand. This so-called *Jevons paradox* – an extreme version of the *rebound effect* – demonstrates that actions rarely impact a single target in a linear way and any unintended consequences are the result of a complex web of interactions and feedback loops within the whole system. Managers, policy-makers and CSO leaders are continually surprised by such counterintuitive consequences of many of their decisions and whilst more and more people talk of *system solutions*, this is often only rhetoric (Magnuszewski et al. 2010: 2). The thinking from theory and practice elaborated below suggests that CSOs can radically i prove their impact if they start making use of the available capacity building tools, leadership programmes and processes for organisational change that all draw upon the logic of systems thinking.

What can we learn from theory and practice? | Systems thinking is increasingly recognised as a means to study and communicate about our complex, evolving world. It is a common tactic for people to assign the cause of a problem to an event or person. In contrast, systems thinking broadens the discussion by placing events in a wider context, both in space and time. Systems thinking is a perspective, language and set of tools that emphasise relationships, connectedness and context. Because a system is a set of interdependent, interrelated parts that make up a complex and unified whole, the whole system cannot be fully understood by only analyzing its parts and displays dynamics that are surprising and non-linear. Taking this perspective enables us to identify certain trends and behaviours not always evident at the immediate scale of the event, find connections between seemingly disjointed problems and design solutions based on the interconnectedness of systems.

Behaviours and events in a system are determined by the system structure of which they are a part. A system's structure is made up of different elements, all connected through a complex web of interconnections. These linkages often form feedback loops: closed chains of causes and effects, which form virtuous or vicious cycles. Climate change is such an example. Higher temperatures lead to increased evaporation, which in turn contributes to increased water vapour concentration in the atmosphere. More water vapour enhances the greenhouse gas effect causing temperatures to get even higher, and the cycle is closed.

It is often the operation of such feedback, which explains why our intervention efforts are frustrated by unexpected outcomes. These are what we refer to as *wicked problems*: situations that stubbornly resist solutions because the problem emerged from a messy tangle of different factors operating at different scales.

Finally, we can go even deeper and explore how real structures are shaped by our thinking. We create internal models of the world – mental models, which we use for making sense of the world and taking actions. Often our mental models (out thinking) allow system-

ic problems to persist. Some verbal examples of mental models, taken from (Meadows 1989: 71), include: (1) *'All growth is good – and possible. There are no effective limits to growth'*, (2) *'technology can solve any problem that comes up'*. However, we are not always conscious of these models, and they are especially dangerous when we are not aware of them and therefore cannot identify and revise the source of our opinions. Systems thinking allows us to open these black boxes and discuss them in an open space in order to test these assumptions and adjust our mental models to the challenges we face. Mental models can be conveyed as visual icons, verbal expressions, even in diagrams. (Magnuszewski et al. 2010: 3-5)

System thinking, if applied strategically, can help to:

a) Identify root causes of sustainability problems and tackle change resistance | Harich (2010) suggests that many common policy responses to environmental issues (e.g. taxes and energy subsidies) often fail because they only tackle the symptoms of the problem and that problems persist due to 'systemic change resistance': "the tendency of a system to continue its current behaviour despite efforts to change that behaviour" (ibid. p37). Instead the challenge is to identify and address the 'root cause' of change resistance, defined as the "a portion of a system's structure that 'best' helps to explain why the system's behaviour produces a problem's symptoms" (ibid.p57).

Figure 4: System Thinking
(based on Senge, 1990; cited in Magnuszewski et al. 2010: 4)

Events

manifesting in

Trends - Behavior over Time

determine

System Structure

condition

Mental Models

What has just happened?

What's been happening? Have we been here or some place similar before?

What are the forces at play contributing to these patterns?

What about our thinking allows?
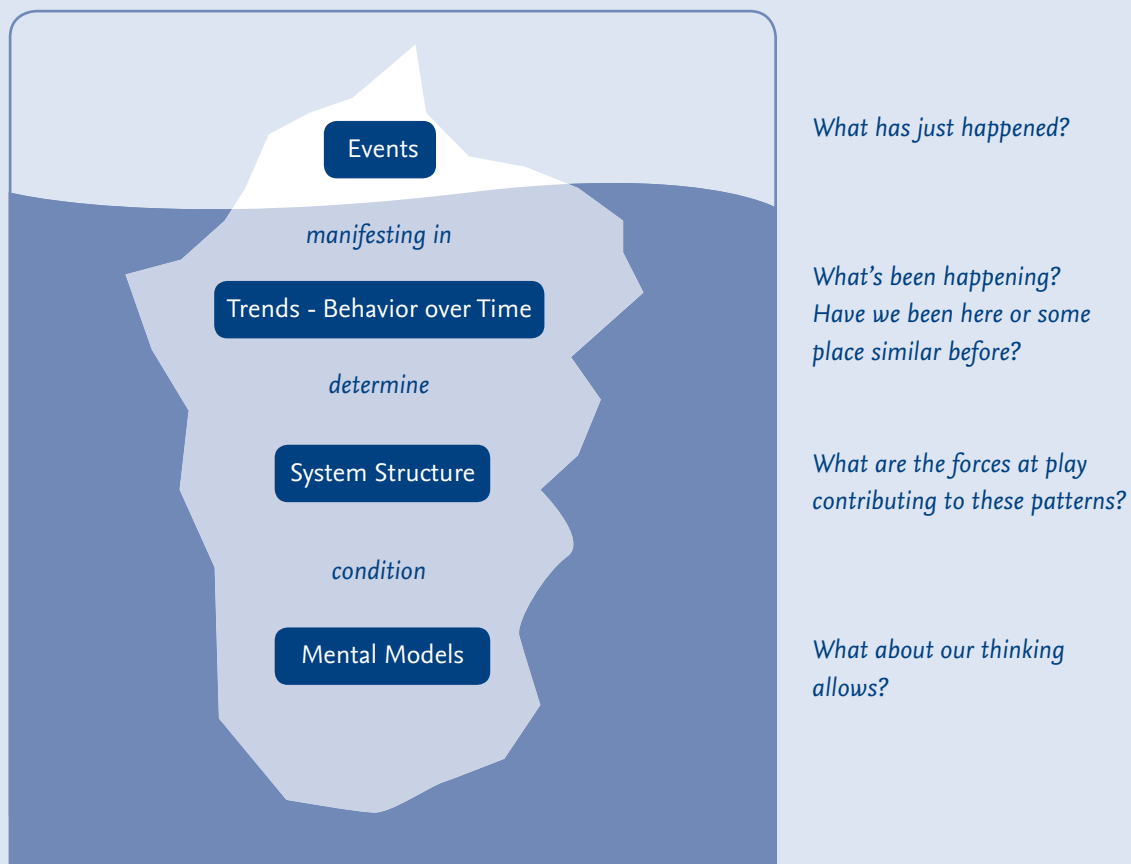
b) Identify effective leverage points | These are "places within complex systems where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything" (Meadows 1999: 1). They can be identified by investigating the system structure of a complex problem and then highlighting a number of possible solutions as changes in the existing structure. The likely consequences of the possible solutions can then be traced, thus enable us to identify solutions that address root causes of the problem without adverse side effects. Increased leverage can be found by diving to the deeper levels of the iceberg depicted above and draw our attention to and shift system structures and mental models. Addressing this level of change counters short-sighted decision-making and gets us off the problem solving treadmill.

Practical Implications for CSO Strategies
| It is at the very heart of the meta-theory of change for the Great Transition that deep systemic change is required to tackle global interconnected sustainability issues. Neither traditional ways of tackling problems issue by issue nor a linear cause-effect analysis will adequately contribute to solving any of these problems. It is therefore a condition for future success that CSOs embrace systems thinking as a discipline to see the world and to create strategy. There are a variety of tools (to help us to examine system structures) and frameworks (to help us think, act and work systemically), which CSOs should consider:

- Systemic organisational learning processes
- Individual systems thinking capacity building tools
- Programmes to build systemic capacity and leadership

a) Systemic organisational learning processes
Thinking and acting systemically can be best achieved as part of a continuous process of development towards becoming a 'learning organisation'. Defined as

'…*organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together*' (Senge 1990: 3).

The basic rationale for a learning organisation is that in order to understand how actions and policies might impact other parts of the system (therefore avoid unintended consequences) organisations must have a spir-

it of inquiry (i.e. to ask why this is happening?), to be flexible, to learn from their experiences and apply that learning to their next task (Wheatley 2008: 45).

Organisational learning processes are based around a family of methodologies known as action research. Action research essentially involved learning from experience by creating spaces in which participants engage in cycles of action and critical reflection (Reason and McArdle 2004).

Systemic action research works by establishing multiple action inquiry sites across an entire issue terrain, thus engaging groups across the breadth of the system to participate in ongoing cycles of: evidence gathering, insight generation, action planning, action and reflection on action (Burns 2007: 19). This process has been successfully used to help organisations develop a clearer understanding of the effects of their actions elsewhere in the system and to change their strategies accordingly in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Adaptive management is a process for linking learning with policy and implementation. Similar to systemic action research, it involves learning from experience and modifying subsequent behaviour or policies in light of that experience and new systems knowledge gained (Stankey et al. 2005: 1).

b) Individual systems thinking capacity building tools
A series of different tools exist to help us to examine system structures, how these structures might generate problematic behaviour and subsequently identify high-leverage interventions. Collectively they work by helping people to see what they normally do not consciously think about or discuss; namely complex interactions between system elements and feedback loops (Magnuszewski et al. 2005: 200). Whilst the range of tools suit different situations, some examples include:

Causal loop diagrams: An effective means to identify complex relationships is to use diagrams. Causal loop diagrams (see figure 5) graphically depict systems variables and the causal links between them and proceeds with the identification of feedback loops. As the web of relations take shape and the system structure is revealed, certain issues and problems become increasingly understandable. Causal loop diagrams

Figure 5: Causal loop diagram (from Wikipedia, B. Jana)
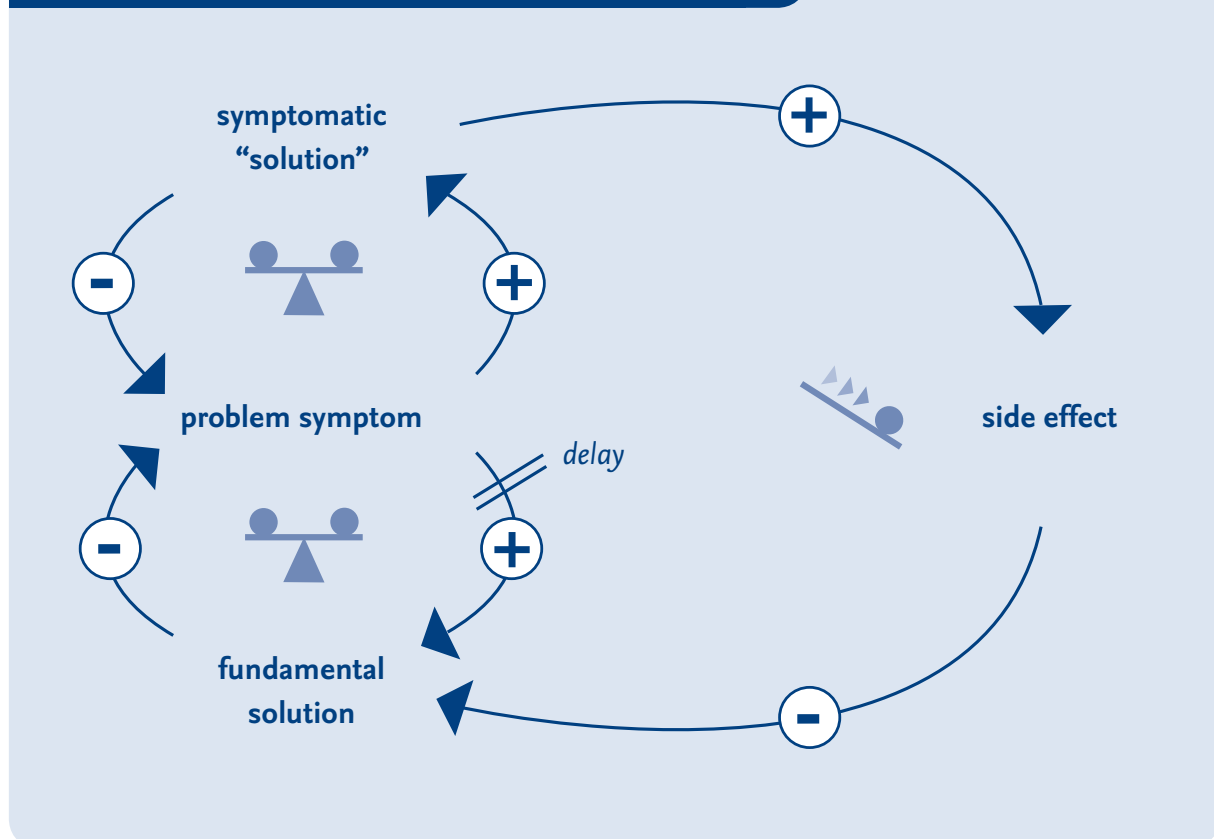
have proved to be a valuable tool to enhance communication between actors engaged in the problem (by developing a shared graphic language) and can help in planning successful system interventions (Magnuszewski et al. 2010: 9).

Simulation and role-playing games: These games allow us to explore the dynamic consequences of our assumptions in order to design more effective policies and strategies. Each participant can take a particular role, address the issues, threats, or problems that arise in the situation, and experience the effects of his/her decisions as well as those of other participants (Magnuszewski et al. 2010: 11). These games have been successfully used as ways to simulate how people address complex resource decisions such as sharing water for irrigation in Africa (Barreteau et al. 2001) and land use change around national parks in Poland (Krolikowska et al. 2007). Role-playing games are highly flexible and leave room for the demonstration of individual initiative and imagination, which is an advantage in games involving policy-making.

c) Programmes to build systemic capacity and leadership | Embedding systems thinking in CSOs would also include the preparation of future CSO leaders through specifically designed sustainability leadership programmes that focus on learning to deal with complex systemic challenges. E.g. *The Masters in Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability* at the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Sweden teaches a whole-system, trans-disciplinary approach to sustainability and focuses on:
- A framework for strategic sustainable development
- Organisational learning and leadership required for sustainability decision-making. Staff capacity building programmes (which utilise the tools de scribed above) would then compliment this leadership training.

3.2 A new narrative – how CSOs can work with our cultural values

Strategic context and rationale

A future sustainable economy that will have to radically reduce its material throughput is at odds with today's dominant materialistic and individualistic values. These values lie at the very basis of today's unsustainable consumption patterns.

Many communication strategies aimed at achieving more helpful individual behaviour for social or environmental matters (or *bigger-than-self*[8] problems) are in fact appealing to materialistic values dominant in today's society. Whilst using a marketing approach – by for example appealing to people's status – can encourage people to buy greener products and services (for example electric vehicles instead of combustion engine vehicles), it can in turn reinforce materialistic values. As discussed in chapter 1, greener products are an insufficient response to an environmental crisis that is deeply rooted in the system. Therefore green marketing approaches conflict with the need for an expression of more intrinsic values to achieve the commitment and action for deeper systemic changes and the required shifts in life styles.

The evidence we lay out below suggests that CSOs have a real opportunity to work towards a shift in cultural values if they consistently appeal to intrinsic values (e.g. sense for community, affiliation and self-development) and avoid activating materialistic ones. This will require a broad collaboration of CSOs across the range of different CSO constituencies that all work with a *new narrative* aligned with the principles of the Great Transition. The wellbeing of society, global empathy and a sense of interdependence with the natural environment are essential elements of the new narrative.

As this body of research is sincerely considered, the thinking needs to be integrated in CSO strategies across the board, ranging from communication strategies (what and how we communicate) as well as policy development (creating policy feedbacks on values).

What can we learn from theory?

The idea of human beings as solely rational decision makers is very incomplete. Scholars (Lakoff 2010: 72; Leggewie and Welzer 2010: 7ff) have shown that facts play a limited role in people's choices. Instead, decisions are often unconscious and driven by emotional factors, among which cultural values play an important role (Roth 2007: 343). Whilst across cultures and countries the range of values is highly similar, materialistic values are predominant in the modern global consumer society. High levels of exposure to television advertisements or generally living in a very competitive environment, for instance, can contribute to enhancing materialistic values in individuals. Also, government action and discourse may play an important role as policy shapes and co-creates the social world (Jackson, 2009:95). By consistently working towards a more competitive and growth oriented economy, policy undoubtedly enhances materialistic values.

The importance of intrinsic values for social and environmental causes | According to Kasser (2010), all values are organised in systems. They are either compatible or conflict with each other (see also figure 6). Research has shown that the more dominant materialistic values are, the more unhelpful a person's behaviour will be with regard to bigger-than-self problems. In contrast, the more dominant intrinsic values are, the more likely a person will show helpful behaviour on *bigger-than-self-problems*.

Whilst intrinsic values are part of everybody's identity, they have been weakened in today's consumer culture (Crompton et. al 2010: 5). Consumerism can be understood as "a cultural pattern that leads people to find meaning, contentment, and acceptance primarily through the consumption of goods and services" (Assadourian 2010: 8). Even though consumerist values might be predominant in current societies, studies have shown that the quality of social relationships (linked to intrinsic values) is one of the strongest indicators for the subjective wellbeing of a society (Oishi et all. 2010: 467).

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8) The Common Cause Report (Crompton, 2010) uses the term 'bigger-than-self' problems when referring to societal concerns or global issues like climate change, poverty, human rights violations etc. An individual's personal effort in addressing these problems is often not directly benefiting the individual but will have a wider benefit for society.

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Figure 6: Circumplex model of values (Crompton 2010:29)
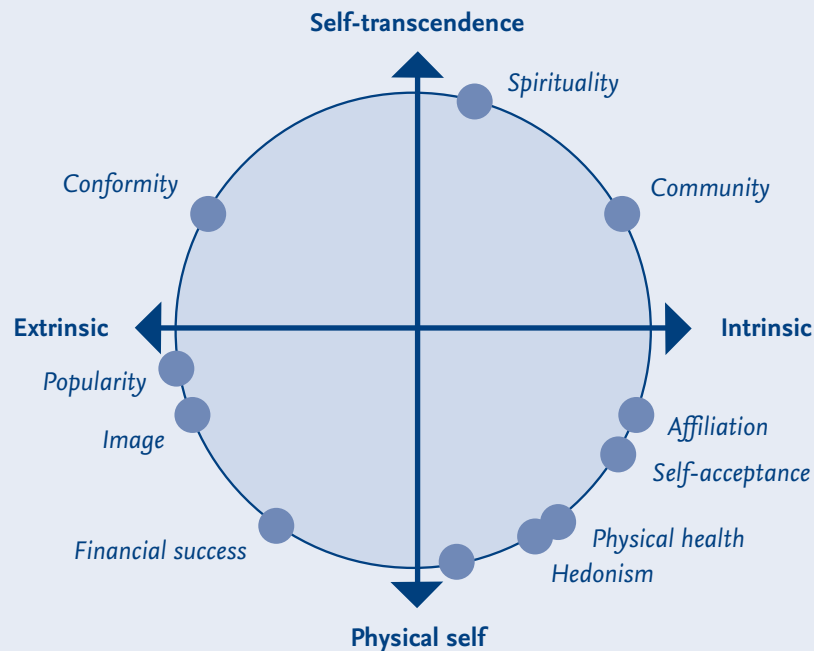
The importance of frames for promoting values

Insights from cognitive science suggest that the influence of institutions and politics on values can be better understood by the way human cognition operates. Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality (Lakoff 2010: 74).
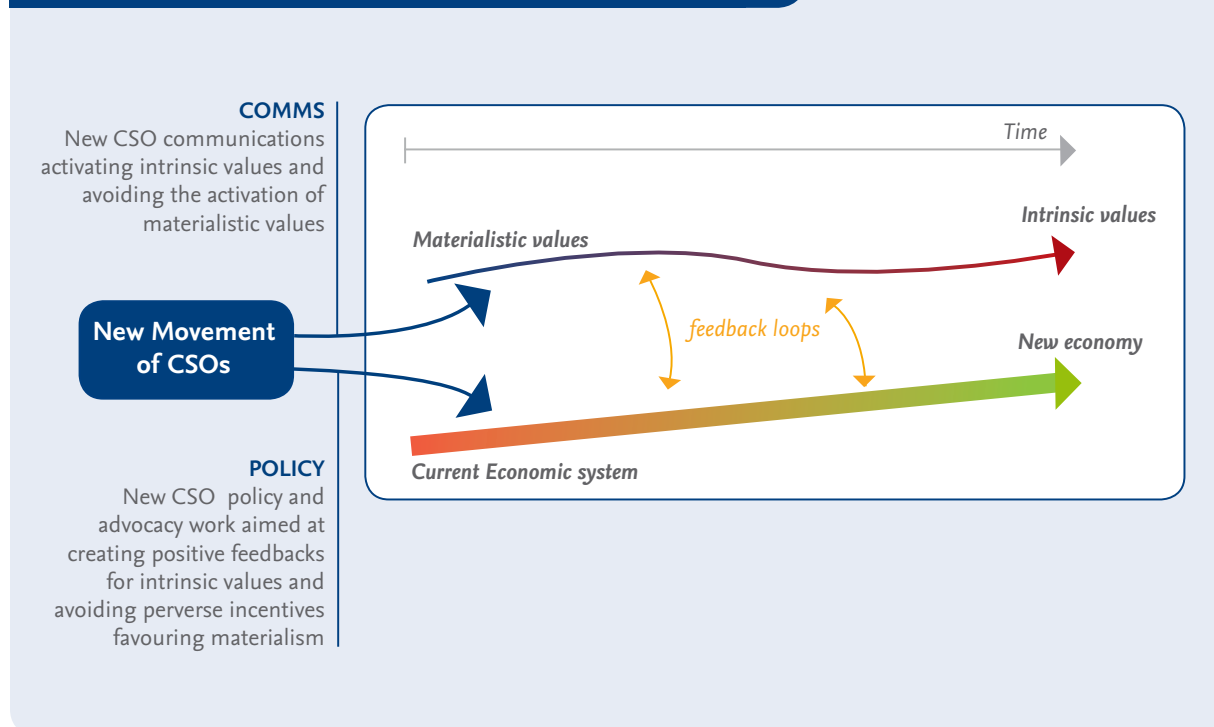
Deep frames – the cognitive structures found in the long-term memory – are closely linked with cultural values. Deep frames are relatively stable, but are not unchangeable (Crompton 2010: 42).

There is an important distinction to be made between 'activating' a deep frame and 'strengthening' a frame. Activating deep frames is comparatively easy, as it can be done immediately through the particular use of language that resonates with a deep frame. To strengthen a deep frame is a more longer process. For example it can be the result of repeatedly activating deep frames. However, language is not the only way to activate or strengthen a deep frame. The constant interaction with particular policies and our institutions can have a profound effect on people's deep frames and therefore on people's values. The so called 'policy feedback loop' happens when public policy has an impact in shaping people's dominant values, which in turn impacts on public policy. (Crompton 2010: 43)

Practical implications for CSO strategies

| There is increasing agreement among communication experts that values should play an important role in campaigning strategies. Therefore the attention has moved away from simply presenting the evidence and the rational case for change towards acknowledging the important role of values and emotions. The debate in the CSO community is now increasingly focussed on whether we really need a shift in dominant societal values from extrinsic towards intrinsic in order to successfully address some of the most pressing bigger-than-self problems. Dominant value structures can indeed be used to a campaign's advantage, for instance by supporting campaigns for electric cars (Rose 2010: 9), rather than trying to reduce materialistic values. However, as Crompton (2010: 34) argues, a campaign appealing to extrinsic values by tapping into existing value structures might create

Figure 7 – A new narrative in practice: Words, policies and actions

COMMS
New CSO communications activating intrinsic values and avoiding the activation of materialistic values

New Movement of CSOs

POLICY
New CSO policy and advocacy work aimed at creating positive feedbacks for intrinsic values and avoiding perverse incentives favouring materialism

Time

Materialistic values

Intrinsic values

feedback loops

New economy

Current Economic system

'collateral damage' and further enhance and consolidate extrinsic values, while the changes achieved with the campaign will not effectively address the systemic challenges we are facing. They require much deeper behaviour changes, which are unlikely to be achieved within the current set of dominant cultural values.

The implications of this thinking for CSO strategies can be profound and can affect every corner of an organisation. The work should start with gaining a better understanding of an organisation's own values and the values it is aspiring to and then continue with developing a holistic value smart strategy. This might include the need to totally rethink the processes of campaigning and communications, and will certainly affect fundraising (see chapter 3.5 for the need to engage funders in these strategies).

As described in figure 7, as a starting point we suggest two areas where the theory laid out in this chapter will have profound implications for CSOs:

- Communications – If CSOs across the board consistently activate intrinsic values and avoid activating materialistic ones through all their communications, they can have an important impact on cultural values

- Policies – If CSOs use the indirect impacts from policies in all their work from policy creation, advocacy as well as on-the-ground projects and partnerships, they can create important feedbacks on people's values and can expect subsequent feedback loops on policy (a virtuous circle).

This iterative process will deliver a vital contribution for the Great Transition and the shift towards a new economic model.

Implications for how CSOs communicate – Creating a new narrative | CSOs can use the empirical evidence on values as well as the theoretical work from cognitive scientists to seriously re-think how and what they communicate to all their audiences. They should work to understand if a particular campaign or piece of communication is helping to activate or strengthen helpful or unhelpful frames for the bigger-than-self causes they pursue. In addition, the trade-offs between a potential short-term benefit and a more long-term collateral damage on values should be an important aspect to consider when designing a communication or campaigning strategy. CSOs should build their communication strategies upon a transparent, inclu-

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What is a narrative?

Narratives can be understood as frameworks for people to understand their lives. They are a way to make sense of life. Humans have always told each other stories of their lives. Culture is the overarching sphere, in which humans construct their realities. These realities are not simply existent – they are narrated.

A narrative cannot be a single story, but embraces a large range of stories. It can include values, tools, metaphors, pictures or stories. They are not one-dimensional or only one-directional, but are constantly reshaped, forgotten and remembered. Narratives are relentlessly altered by the interaction of people and across cultures and societies. Narratives can be very big, but also very local and specific in context.

Different religions have diverse narratives of how the world was created, just as the narrative of evolution displays another. Narratives can also be very specific such as the 'American dream' narrative about dominating nature and exploring new frontiers, by which mankind is aiming to succeed over wilderness. Today this narrative can still be found at the basis of the US-American and many other societies, who continue to try dominating nature with technology and individual survival strategies to reach high social status and become materially rich.

The new narrative of the Great Transition would help to strengthen or embed deep frames which are helpful in addressing the sustainability crisis. It would help to overcome the nature-culture divide that separates humans from 'nature' (Latour 2009) and start to understand humans as a part of their environment.

To be effective, the new narrative needs to be inspiring, positive, engaging and non-technical. It needs to appeal to people's intrinsic values. By focusing on the potential of a higher quality of life for people in a less consumerist world – i.e. the things that increase people's happiness and well being in the long run – it can be engaging and stem off the tendency of citizens and governments to block their listening. It can offer a positive long term societal vision based on equality and well-being, rather than consumer-based growth.

sive and reflexive understanding of the frames that they appeal to and the values they deepen hereby.

But most importantly, CSOs should not see themselves in isolation when considering new approaches towards cultural values. The Great Transition offers a framework for CSOs to take a step away from focusing on their 'special interests' (like e.g. climate change) and the current narrow policy focus and instead to co-develop a narrative that can align the different CSO sectors under an umbrella of common values and principles. This new narrative should speak to the hearts and minds of a very large number of people and tell a creative and emotional story of who we are and who we need to be and tap into the creative worlds of mythmaking (Shellenberger / Nordhaus 2005: 34). "It is the age of the poets, philosophers and psychologists not the scientists and policywonks who need to bring people on board" (Speth 2010).

The collaboration between CSOs and the potential of harnessing the power of a broad movement across the different sectors of civil society organisations is a vital element of the Great Transition and the shift in cultural values. Chapter 3.4 dives deeper into the implications.

Implications for CSO policy and advocacy work

While this paper argues that policy is not the only necessary strategy to effect change, we do not suggest that CSOs should completely abandon policy and advocacy work. To the extent that CSOs are engaging in policy and advocacy, they can benefit from using an understanding of values, frames and narratives in their policy as well as their communication. CSOs should not only consider the impact from communications on cultural values. This is not only about words, about how we say things and what we say. Ultimately a new narrative cannot be shaped alone by words but these need to be consistent with the basic underlying ideology embodied in everything CSOs do. Everything CSOs do can have direct and indirect impacts on cultural values.

As discussed above, values are heavily shaped by people's experience with public and private institutions. Reconsidering CSO campaigns and advocacy work with regard to how it can influence public policy and achieve positive policy feedbacks on values, should

therefore be an important element of a future 'value' conscious CSO strategy.

Ultimately a smart CSO value strategy needs to pay attention to the root causes of today's consumerist cultural values. It is inherent in the system that people's values are profoundly influenced by a global economy dominated by large corporations seeking to maximise their sales and profits and by governments that are under pressure to create more economic growth for their domestic economies. This means that smart CSOs need to be continuously countering and creating new possibilities (we suggest in the idea of a Great Transition) that can de-activate the negative impacts of advertisement and strengthen the deep intrinsic frames.

As explained in chapter 3.1, systems thinking can help CSOs to identify powerful leverage points for systemic change and start acting with much more focus on tackling the root causes of materialism. Tackling these root causes requires CSOs to find new ways of influencing the material economy. As explained in chapter 1, there are important barriers in mainstream political institutions that prevent the success of radical policy proposals that go beyond the current system. The next chapter (Developing new models) will therefore point at the importance of bottom up approaches for systemic change.

However, fortunately mainstream politics has many windows of (policy) opportunity that smart CSOs can use and should use to have an indirect impact on values.

Maybe the most striking example for such a window of opportunity is the current debate on beyond GDP indicators in many countries (like e.g. France, Germany, Austria, UK). The fact that national governments now often openly acknowledge that the current sole focus on GDP growth is often not benefitting society and might lead to negative impacts on the environment is a very important opportunity. CSOs should create large cross sector alliances to push governments a big step further from talking about to implementing a set of national indicators that would make wellbeing and environmental sustainability the key success indicators for nations. This would be an important step to start changing the national narrative from 'economic growth' to a much less extrinsic 'societal wellbeing'.

Is it possible to achieve this shift from materialistic to more intrinsic values within the short time frame we have, for example, to tackle climate change and avoid catastrophic consequences? Examples in history show that cultural values can shift in a relatively short time span.

However, it is probably fair to say that we do not know what can be achieved and how long it would take to have a major impact if CSOs across the board start to work much more consciously and strategically towards influencing cultural values like we suggest above, but the size and influence of the CSO sector in many countries should give hope that this shift can be achieved. That is if CSOs across the board start to be fully conscious and strategic in working towards a new narrative and a culture beyond consumerism.

3.3 Developing new models – how CSOs can support the seeds of the new economy

Strategic context and rationale

A fundamental path shift (The Great Transition) requires complex learning processes and fundamental innovations. Due to the inherent path dependencies and the short-term focus of politics and business, this cannot be delivered solely by national politics, international negotiation processes and mainstream industries (see also chapter 1).

The thinking from theory and practice we lay out below suggests that CSOs should get more actively and strategically involved in catalysing bottom-up innovation initiatives as well as supporting and linking up change agents who otherwise remain isolated in their communities and organisations.

Change agents who are developing the seeds of the new economy and society play a fundamental role. They can be found at all levels (community, city, industry sector, government etc.), and spread innovation by questioning mainstream worldviews and challenging entrenched attitudes (Leggewie 2010: 9).

Developing new models (of production, consumption, organisation, ownership, and governance), through bottom-up innovation for the new economy, is an important element of the meta-theory of change towards the Great Transition that we lay out in chapter 2.

Importantly the new practices and models need to be aligned with the principles of the Great Transition (chapter 2). This means that they will actively support: the transition from materialistic values and lifestyles to a focus on community values, quality of life and a sense of global citizenship (global empathy); and the transition from an economy configured to maximise economic growth to one that operates within ecological limits, works according to the principle of subsidiarity, and maximises societal wellbeing. However, it will not be sufficient in itself to create many parallel niches of innovation.

Ultimately they need to be scaled up and mainstreamed and more importantly, they need to be part of a bigger story that tips the system towards the new paradigm with new rules of the game. We argue below that these processes of innovation, with their phases of experimentation, scaling up and mainstreaming offer a variety of roles that CSOs should take on as an ecosystem of organisations, each fulfilling their particular role and playing to their particular strengths.

What can we learn from theory and practice?

Systemic innovations | Transition theory and evolutionary economics focus on the importance of *niches of innovation* at the micro-level in the process of change in large-scale socio-technical systems, such as food, energy, buildings and food. These systems are 'socio-technical' in the sense that they consist of diverse elements such as technology, infrastructure, policy frameworks, and human actors from producers, retailers and consumers to legislators and regulators.

Studies of past transitions show that innovation plays a pivotal role in the process of systemic change. An experimental innovation process carried by a range of projects/experiments can be called a 'niche'. It is a protected space where actors are able to experiment with radical innovations without direct competition from the dominant socio-technical system. Learning processes and flows of knowledge between experiments promotes the scaling-up and spread of solutions. Some innovations eventually manage to become mainstream (they become part of the *socio-technical regime*) when they manage to create and/or use an opportunity in the regime and offer answers to system-wide problems. (see Geels et al. 2004 for a summary of the literature).

Innovation is not an end in itself and does not inevitably lead to more sustainable systems – indeed many large-scale transitions of the past led to fossil fuel-based infrastructure and technologies. So the Great Transition will require innovation oriented

towards environmental and social goals, and better understanding of the interplay of human, technological and ecological systems. Although the very nature of evolution and its multi-actor innovation processes is at odds with the notion that they can be steered, the conditions of innovations can be influenced, and actors like CSOs and governments can facilitate and intervene in innovation processes.

Transition research has usually been focussed on processes of *technological* change on the supply-side of systems. However, the vision of the Great Transition also requires social innovation that supports and accelerates the development of new cultural values, discussed in the previous chapter, and the mainstreaming of less materialistic, more sustainable lifestyles. As we discuss below, grassroots initiatives and networks could be seen as a key site of innovation for the Great Transition. (Seyfang and Smith 2007: 584)

The Great Transition also differs to a large extent from the subjects of analysis of transition theorists as it envisions a paradigm shift of the whole system and not only a part of the system, or sub-systems. Attention has to be put therefore into the qualities of innovation processes as to their potential to eventually contribute to tipping the system.

A range of factors can influence the success and sustainability of innovations – among these are the provision of financial support and the role government and intermediary actors. Government can create or remove barriers for innovations at different stages of the process, and can provide the conditions for sustainable innovations to flourish.

One challenge in spurring innovations is that local experiments often remain isolated without being linked up to each other (Geels and Schot 2010: 548). Too little attention has been paid to interaction between experiments, e.g. the exchange of information, interaction between social networks. The consequence is that a lot of potentially successful innovations founder or simply do not find application outside their niche. Many authors are therefore highlighting the importance of creating conditions where new initiatives can be linked up with ongoing innovation projects and experiments (Kemp 2008: 382).

Opportunities at the local level | The local level (communities, cities or 'grassroots') in particular offers huge opportunities to prototype sustainable practic-

es and lifestyles. The proximity to the citizen can create a culture of participation that goes beyond environmental concerns. For example local policies to mitigate climate change nearly always affect other domains. These 'co-benefits' are so persuasive that they should not be ignored (Creutzig/Kammen 2009: 302). Strong action against climate change at the local level can have co-benefits in making cities more liveable through regained public space, noise and pollution reduction and social inclusion (from reduced car traffic), improved health (from more walking and cycling) and local resilience (from reduced energy use).

Communities are already showing their ability to innovate as they face the brunt of mainstream development and the socio-ecological crisis. Despite adversity, citizens are taking ownership over their communities and creating relevant, forward thinking solutions of local scale. The trend of local living and sharing learning at a larger scale is gaining momentum through initiatives such as Transition Towns, la 27e Région's Territoires en Résidences, Global Ecovillage Network, Slow Cities, Design of the Times Festival (DOTT), Urban Villages, the Oasis Game, Bioregionalism… (Horwitz on Smart CSOs NING, 11 October 2010)

In addition (to creating new networks and initiatives), there is need to further realise the potential of established community groups, such as schools, churches, sport clubs and residents' associations to address sustainability and lifestyle change in more familiar and mainstream settings (Wreford on Smart CSOs NING, 6 October 2010).

Communities strengthen the case for a systemic transition to sustainability by providing tangible examples of its feasibility, and they can provide strong signals to national governments that there is a demand for new ideas by the public (Hale 2010: 265).

"Community leadership is therefore perhaps the most exciting, yet the least explored and supported … Some of the most exciting opportunities … have emerged without any encouragement from national level. Both government and national third sector organizations need to offer far greater support and encouragement" (Hale 2010: 269).

Practical implications for CSO strategies

| The opportunities to accelerate the development of new models and to support their adoption and practice in the mainstream arena offer

a variety of roles to CSOs. Clearly, the ecosystem of CSOs for the Great Transition requires further analysis and discussion. For the *Developing New Models* leverage point, we suggest to consider the following four roles:

- Support local initiatives and facilitate learning exchange for the new economy
- Initiate and engage in sector-wide systemic innovation
- Advocate policy change to support innovation and grassroots projects
- Support innovations to scale up and become mainstream

a) Support local initiatives and facilitate learning exchange for the new economy | There is a need to support, facilitate and accelerate the trend for grassroots community initiatives and local government leaders who are ready to lead the way towards the new economic model.

The Transition movement is a good example of the power of online collaboration and knowledge sharing between initiatives in many different countries. But while connections *within* movements and initiatives are sometimes in place, connections *between* different networks are often lacking. This prohibits the flow and scaling-up of innovations across geographical and social boundaries and leads to the emergence of spontaneous disparate projects rather than a systemic shift (Horwitz on Smart CSOs NING, October 2010).

This is an important gap that larger CSO networks could potentially fill. They could facilitate the learning exchange between communities/projects and help them to join up. In addition they could support the various disparate local initiatives with expertise and help them to have a clear definition of sustainability and to be strategically aligned with the Great Tran-

> **Change begins as local actions spring up simultaneously in different areas. If these changes remain disconnected, nothing happens beyond each locale. However, when they become connected, local actions can emerge as a powerful system with influence…**(Wheatley, 2006)

sition. Apart from the practical value this would add, creating linkages between networks all working towards the Great Transition can also have the benefit of creating a sense in communities that they to belong to a bigger process and increase their commitment.

Through the creation of learning cycles, CSOs can ensure that innovation in the different prototypes for the new economy across the globe is accelerated. This would help to spread ideas that work while supporting and nurturing a growing number of initiatives. It is important to link up these initiatives to avoid that the wheel is constantly reinvented and the creation of a culture of collective innovative action and practice is supported. Also, networking and communication increases the chance for creating tipping points towards the new system.

In particular, CSOs operating at the national and international level can play an important role in this kind of building capacity and sharing best practice through facilitating exchange of knowledge, learning and experience in open source online platforms (Wreford on NING, 6 October 2010).

There is a broad range of areas where this exchange would create value. Apart from exchanging learning and experiences about policy and practice for the new economy, online platforms can also provide a pool of collective resources for tools and processes for dialogue for groups and communities of practice for those who want to start new initiatives or improve existing ones.

b) Initiate and engage in sector-wide systemic innovation | Apart from supporting and strengthening existing local initiatives, a different way for national and international CSO networks to get involved in systemic innovation is through initiating new niches of innovation and helping to create those types of core innovations in systems of consumption and production that have real potential to transform the system towards the new economy.

Practically, CSOs can create initiatives with the aim of bringing together change agents who are willing to collaborate on systemic change projects in a particular sector (e.g. Finance, Transport, Food). Importantly, to create meaningful collaboration towards a common aim, actors brought together shall share the values and principles of the Great Transition.

A powerful starting point for these types of initiatives are systems thinking tools like those discussed in

chapter 3.1. Collaborative projects where the different actors involved get a common understanding of the feedback loops and power dynamics in a the system can identify systemic action research projects (Burns 2007) that have the potential to tackle root causes and contribute to the Great Transition.

A larger CSO can focus its role in such an initiative on acting as a convener with a clear value and principle driven purpose and then facilitate the learning exchange between a range of systemic innovation projects. The brand and fundraising power of a large CSO network can be important factors that justify this role. Sector-wide initiatives of this kind can however be an expensive and time-consuming endeavour. Nevertheless, through collaboration with other organisations CSOs can share the financial burden and benefit from broadening the convening power and expertise in the initiative.

Two examples of a CSO acting as a convenor of a sector-wide systemic innovation initiative are the *Finance Lab* (financial sector) and *Tasting the Future* (food sector). Both initiatives were initiated by WWF-UK and created a *niche* for a broad range of sector change agents to collaborate on transformative system innovation for sustainable finance and food systems respectively.

Another role for CSOs in sector innovation is to become more actively involved in a specific sector innovation action research project. For example, the recent interest in social entrepreneurship, could be a real opportunity for CSOs to partner with social venture capitalists and sector innovators in order to shape large scale social business models aligned with the Great Transition. The brand recognition and trust many CSOs enjoy with citizens/consumers, can contribute to the success of such an endeavour.

c) Advocate policy change to support innovation and grassroots projects | It is clearly part of the rationale of this document that CSO advocacy is facing important barriers when it comes to the type of government action commensurate for the Great Transition. Nevertheless, there are always windows of opportunities in national policy that need to be intelligently used to support the type of bottom-up innovation initiatives being discussed in this chapter.

For example, in the UK, new opportunities (and risks) are emerging from the coalition government's Local-

ism and Big Society agendas. CSOs need to collaborate more to ensure these new policy developments promote local level innovation for the Great Transition.

National CSOs with resources and experience in national policy advocacy should play an important role in supporting bottom-up initiatives in basically two ways:

- To lobby government to create the right framework conditions that facilitate the emergence of socio-technical innovations for the Great Transition (provision of resources, space for learning, exchange and development of innovation niches).
- To link with grassroots and sector innovation initiatives and support *their* advocacy work for policies that remove barriers for innovation projects. This means that government should provide necessary protection and nurturing of niche innovations, for example with the help of governmental subsidies, the establishment of partnerships or other policy interventions (Hommels et al. 2007: 1093).

d) Support innovations to scale up and become mainstream | If innovations are to be part of a bigger story that tips the system towards a new paradigm, they need to be used strategically. Large CSO networks can use their communications and advocacy expertise to help the most promising innovations to become mainstream:

- CSOs can use windows of opportunity in government (but also in business) to advocate changes in policy that can help the most interesting innovations to scale up. These should be innovations that have the potential to tackle root causes in the system, like e.g. those that help to localise the economy or can have an influence towards a less consumerist culture. The more feasible and desirable the innovations are for incumbent actors, the more likely there will be support in adopting them.
- CSOs can give systemic innovations visibility in the public. The more new initiatives become visible, the more they will be seen as valid (mainstream) options for example for new lifestyles.
- Gathering the evidence from grassroots experimentation and aggregating them into compelling messages to decision makers as well as the general public may be another opportunity for CSOs to help overcome barriers to change.

3.4 A new global movement – from fragmentation to cross-sectoral collaboration
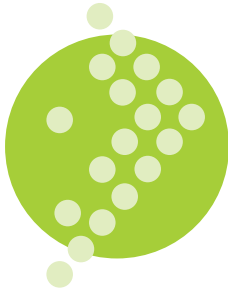
Strategic context and rationale

One of the characteristics of current environmental CSO strategies is that mobilization of citizens is not seen as a major professional concern. Organisation of a grassroots movement and mobilisation of a green political movement have taken a subordinate role in comparison to policy advocacy and partnership work with governmental agencies and business (Speth 2008: 70).

In addition, there is a lack of cross-sectoral CSO networks putting forward a rigorous and inclusive global alternative with an integrated program for fundamental change. As discussed in chapter 1, with its current focus on special interests, CSOs have serious limitations in articulating a unified vision of change, and coalescing disparate groups for coordinated action. "Most basically, civil society lacks philosophical coherence: a shared understanding of the challenge and a coordinated vision of planetary solutions." (Raskin 2010b: 126)

A systemic global citizens movement would be a critical historical agent for the Great Transition (Raskin 2010b: 126). The increase of peoples' activity over the past two decades has both made such a development possible and highlighted its necessity.

The necessity of a Global Citizens Movement becomes evident when we acknowledge that top-down change strategies do not work on their own, individuals are reluctant to act alone, and that there is a growing population of people forming communities of practice along new forms of consciousness and political culture.

According to Raskin, "The global transformation will require the awakening of a new social actor". A *Global Citizens Movement* (GCM) engaging masses of people, "nurturing values of human solidarity, ecological resilience and quality of life" is necessary and possible. This movement would "embrace diverse perspectives and movements as separate expressions of a common project". (Raskin 2010a: 3)

Civil society activism needs to evolve in a way that will allow it to play a pivotal role in assuming a leadership function in giving life to a GCM (Raskin 2010a: 3). In order for a Global Citizens Movement to materialize, civil society has to rise above the current 'politics of opposition' and develop new models of leadership and collaboration.

Despite the potential to build on natural synergies, existing movements are severely limited by current political realities. Among social movements seeking to ally in the Global Justice Movement (including indigenous, feminist, labour, peasant, human rights, environmental and socialist) it is difficult to move beyond protest and articulate a common proactive agenda. Issues, priorities and even goals often conflict. (Kriegman 2006: 13)

Another formidable obstacle in the way of collaboration is the current leadership styles embedded in CSO practices. The product of a competitive funding environment (see chapter 3.5), hierarchical command and control style of leadership is not conducive to collaboration, and hinders CSOs from supplementing progressive grassroots initiatives. In addition, due to the focus on the top-down change and government advocacy (see chapter 1), the potential of citizens' movement gets omitted.

As we lay out below, the vision of the Great Transition offers a real opportunity for collaboration and a broad movement as it is inclusive and is aimed at tackling the root causes of issues campaigners fight for across the board. But it also means that CSOs need to learn new ways of leadership and ways of collaborating.

## What can we learn from theory and practice? | Paradoxically, CSOs have been increasingly transformed from traditional participatory and democratic forms [Grassroots] into professional, oligarchic, and non-participatory organizations

SMART CSOs

[*Astroturf*] (Brulle & Jenkins 2005: 153). Despite the fact that the environmental movement still boasts a very mobilized membership base, the general trend has been "the rise of the professional movement organization as the dominant form of political representation". This raises salient concerns about "the viability of contemporary civil society as a site for effective citizenship and democratic action" (Brulle & Jenkins 2005: 152).

The greatest possibility for a GCM lies in growing interconnectivities and global movements for social justice and ecological integrity. Existing movements are the expressions of the growing desire for alternative modes of global development (Kriegman 2006: 12). In particular community, local and regional initiatives have been strongest in terms of exerting leadership (see chapter 3.3). However, linkages among grassroots initiatives remain underdeveloped, undermining their political clout as well as cultural influence. The Great Transition envisions a GCM that is "a crucible for experimenting with and developing multilayered, nested forms of association and cross-scale democracy, one that is as localized as can be and as

Figure 8: From networks to communities of practice to systems of influence (Wheatley & Frieze 2006)

NETWORKS

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

SYSTEMS OF INFLUENCE

SMARTCSOs
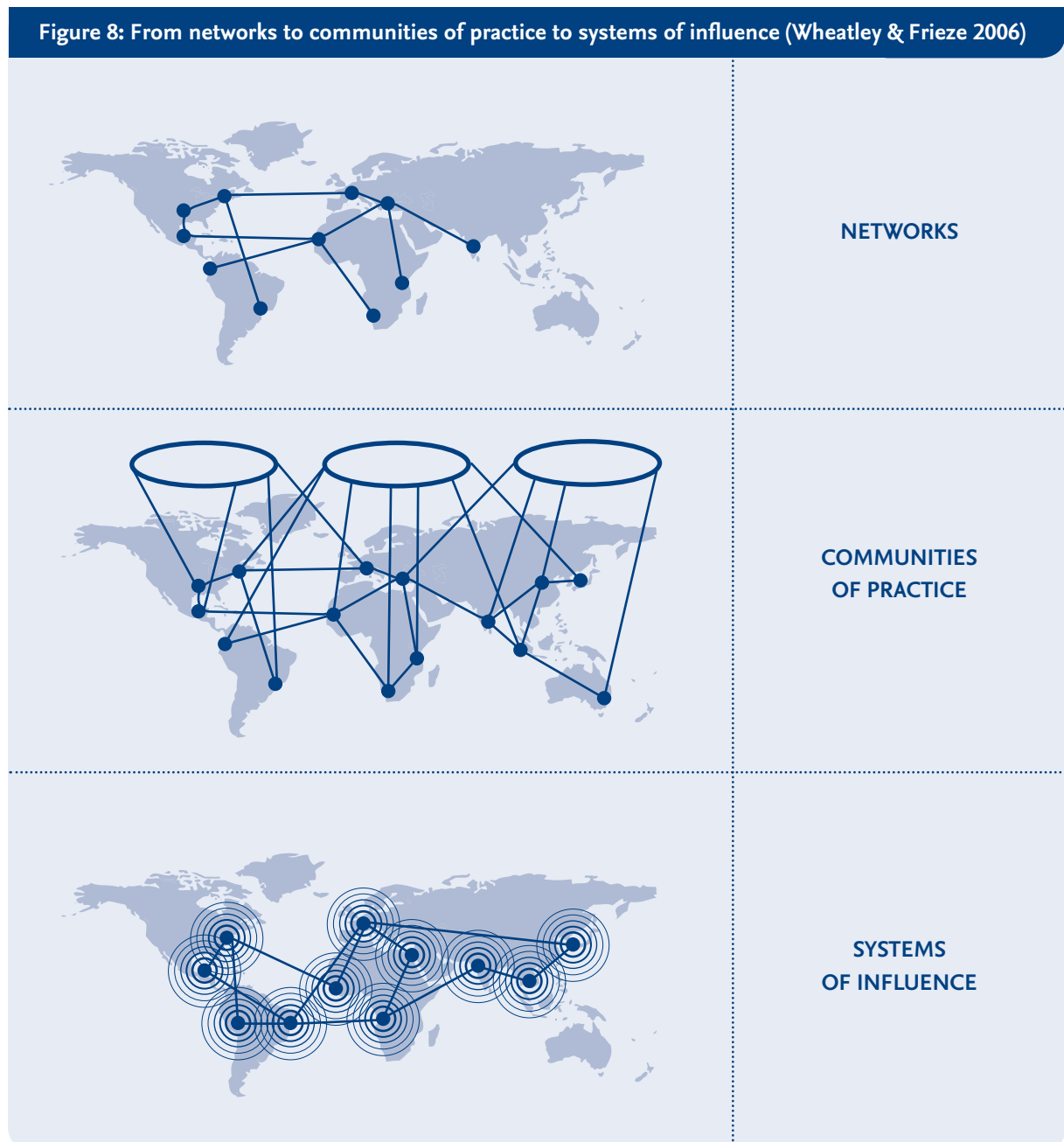
global as must be" (Paul Raskin e-mail correspondence 5 January 2011). Here, CSOs have a critical opportunity to galvanize localized energy if they embrace the insights provided by studies on 'emergence' and their analysis on the dynamics of networks and systemic change.

Emergence theory focuses on the process of "how living systems begin as networks, shift to intentional communities of practice, and evolve into powerful systems capable of global influence" (Wheatley and Frieze 2006). Reframing the long-held assumptions on the dynamics of organising social change, emergence asserts that "hierarchy and control mechanisms" are not the only form of organising and certainly not the most efficient. Self-organising networks, on the other hand, are held to be the pre-condition for emergence. Wheatley and Frieze (2006) point out that a vital point is to understand the dynamics of networks and the lifecycle of emergence. With greater understanding of these dynamics change makers can experiment with nurturing networks "to intentionally foster emergence" (ibid. 3).

The four-stage model "Name, Connect, Nourish, Illuminate" developed by the Berkana Institute offers a promising blueprint of how CSOs can nourish networks towards emergence.

Hale suggests that the desired civil society of the future would foster "action networks that influence individual and community behaviour". This collaboration would develop "new sources of advocacy and influence, by demonstrating the synergies between climate change and other agendas and enabling different groups to identify their particular means of exerting influence" (Hale: 269).

Yet, without changing hierarchical leadership and oligarchic decision-making structures, CSOs may stifle instead of cultivate grassroots initiatives and emergence.

Moreover, building collaborative models to establish a broad movement towards the Great Transition poses serious obstacles that CSOs will have to overcome. How can organisations with different goals and priorities set collective goals? How does a group balance diversity and unity? How do different organisations/individuals leverage talents and complement work of one another? In short, even if we agree on a shared vision, how do we agree to work together to tackle different aspects of an interconnected problem (Birney on Smart CSOs NING, November 11, 2010).

Practical implications for CSO strategies

| Both Raskin and Kriegman argue it is unlikely that a Global Citizen Movement for the Great Transition will spontaneously emerge through bottom-up self-organisation. It is here, where CSOs could play a pivotal role in taking the lead on various fronts and help facilitate the birth of the GCM. We suggest three important areas CSOs should engage with:

- Overcome barriers for cross sectoral collaboration
- Create large platforms of common learning and collaboration
- Establish critical connections for a global citizens movement

a) Overcome barriers for cross-sectoral collaboration

As discussed in the previous chapters, the Great Transition offers a framework that CSOs can use to move away from a narrow single-issue policy focus and to move towards a vision that can align the different CSO sectors under an umbrella of common values and principles.

However, as we have pointed out throughout this document, CSOs often face a variety of challenges and barriers that need to be tackled to make cross-sectoral collaboration most fruitful.

In chapter 3.1 a number of tools and processes are discussed under the concept of systems thinking. Applying these tools strategically will naturally lead the way towards an organisational culture that moves away from a narrow single-issue policy focus. An organisation that embraces the global interconnectedness of systemic issues will naturally see the power of cross-sectoral collaboration.

Another success factor for cross-sectoral collaboration can be the development of less hierarchical structures and CSO leadership. Very hierarchical structures might be suitable when dealing with hierarchical national and international policy processes. However when the power of bottom up innovation and the in depth relationships with a large range of change agents become major focus areas, flat hierarchies and decentralised decision making are key. For this, CSOs need to empower their work force and build the capacity for good decision-making. In the internet age where knowledge is more distributed than ever, centralised decision making is not fit for purpose any more. As the successes of Google (with an extremely flat hierarchy) and Wikipedia (with its vast network of

collaborators) show, collaboration of the future will require very different organisational setups than those of many of today's organisations.

In addition, funding plays a critical catalysing role for cross-sector collaboration. Funding needs to encourage collaboration and discourage detrimental competition among the different CSO sectors. Additionally, instead of putting a heavy paper work for reporting on single issues, measurement and evaluation frameworks should acknowledge systemic challenges and encourage cross-sector work. These ideas are expanded in chapter 3.5.

b) Create large platforms of common learning and collaboration | This paper is clearly making the case that large platforms of collaboration, which go beyond the special interests of CSO sectors, are urgently needed. A critical mass of collaborating organisations could build momentum to tackle the root causes of today's systemic global crises and facilitate a cultural shift away from materialism.

Ideas on what these platforms of collaboration can and should look like, and what they would do more concretely, requires more reflection and discussion.

However, emerging themes are clearly the need to collaborate much more strongly on mainstreaming systemic bottom-up innovations for the new economy.

Another opportunity for large cross-sectoral CSO platforms is the current debate in many European countries with regard to the deficiencies of GDP as a national success indicator. If CSOs from various causes come together under a common platform to lobby for the establishment of meaningful 'Beyond GDP' indicators, there would be a good chance to make a good step towards a new economy.

The Common Cause Working Group (Crompton 2010) is an example of how a group of CSO networks are coming together to work collectively and sharing a common interest to activate and strengthen those cultural values which have been shown empirically to underpin people's concern about a range of problems – from climate change to poverty to species extinction.

c) Establish critical connections for a global citizens movement | Increased focus on "critical connections" is essential to develop networks with emergent qualities. Taking a movement/idea to scale may not depend on convincing masses from the beginning, but

instead, on establishing critical connections. These connections, once established and nurtured, would act as springs of new knowledge and communities of practice.

For example, the *Widening Circle Model* suggested by the Tellus Institute anticipates a phased process of organizational development, beginning with a relatively small group of committed people, supported by loose networks of individuals and organizations. While conducting its activities, the initial circle would develop a strategy for expanding to the next circle, a pattern that would continue with each successive phase. In this manner, the organization would pause periodically to evaluate and adjust, reorganizing for a larger circle and enhanced program (Raskin 2010a: 4). CSOs can support the expansion of the circles in these kinds of initiatives by providing their resources and expertise. They can help to create an effective structure and a culture of trust that would strengthen initiatives like the *Widening Circle Initiative*.

Additionally, large CSO networks can use the power of their trusted brands to inspire their members and broader range of citizens towards a Global Citizen Movement. The messages of small, dedicated, thoughtful formations can be strengthened if large CSO networks provide their back up.

3.5 Engaging funders in CSO strategies towards the Great Transition

Strategic context and rationale | The previous chapters suggest a number of important changes in CSO strategies that, if taken seriously, can considerably strengthen the role of CSOs in tackling global systemic problems. However due to the important influence funders have on CSOs, CSO strategies for the Great Transition will be most effective if they are understood and supported by funders.

Foundation support has been important for the development of new environmental organizations, strengthening formal policy advocacy for environmental policies and for promoting public awareness on environmental issues. Foundation support, however, has also "limited the development of the environmental movement by channelling resources to specific environmental discourses and types of organizations" (Brulle & Jenkins: 152). This is particularly salient in the philanthropic funding of environmental foundations where the strategic and political persuasions of funders influence organizational strategies (ibid 152). In Chapter 3.4, we laid out the argument that "the strength of global civil society remains circumscribed by…organizational and philosophical fragmentation". One cause of this fragmentation is that "the interests of donors and the dynamics of professional organizations tend to favour a narrow issue oriented approach to work, encouraging NGOs to specialize in delineated niches (or "issue silos")" (Kriegman 2006: 4).

Today, a variety of funding opportunities are available for CSOs and researchers – from philanthropic, corporate, and community foundations, to public agencies. While private foundations have significantly increased their support to global challenges such as public health, poverty, and climate change, like CSOs, only a small share of the funding is directed to niche projects that are focussing on affecting social change[9,10]. The systemic global sustainability crisis, in particular, remains predominantly within the domain of the climate change initiatives of environmental foundations and/or falls within the purview of environmental projects and programming[11].

This overlooks the need for interdisciplinary projects and research. Worthy of attention are the *Cooperation* and *Capacities* segments of the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP7), as they facilitate interdisciplinary, transnational, and multi-stakeholder collaboration on research and innovation (European Commission 2010). Despite some good initiatives, the current overarching funding environment fails to cultivate organizations, strategies, and activities necessary to tackle systemic challenges. This section on engaging funders lays out arguments as to what the problem is and explores opportunities for a transition to a new funding paradigm with a systems change orientation.

Some critical and interrelated questions to explore are:
- Under what constraints do funders operate?
- How do current funding strategies influence CSO activities?
- How have strategic mistakes on the side of foundations led CSOs to a fierce turf war and driven wider progressive visions into a ditch?
- How can some of the financial and technical capacity of foundations be mobilized to catalyze systemic change strategies?
- How can the CSO-Funder relationship be rewired, or if necessary, reformulated, so that it fosters effective funding, which in return, cultivate learning CSOs?
- What type of funders is most likely to fund systemic change strategies and research linked to the Great Transition?
- How can systemic change strategies be best monitored and evaluated? How can projects in these areas meet funding criteria to demonstrate change over the short term?

9) The growth in number and wealth of private foundations, especially in the U.S. and the EU, in the last two decades is striking. In the U.S. alone, which has the most dynamic and wealthy foundation environment, foundations assets increased from $143 billion in 1990 to $565 billion in 2008, while overall foundation giving increased from $8.7 billion to $46.8 billion in the same period (Spero, 7). International giving of U.S. foundations increased from $680 million in 1994 to $6.2 billion in 2008. A sample of 55.552 foundations in the EU-15 found combined assets of approximately €237 billion and total spending of €46 billion (EFC, Facts and Figures, 5-6).
10) A breakdown of foundation giving clearly shows that there is significant geographical and issue-based specialization. See, International Grantmaking IV: An Update on US Foundation Trends, Foundation Center, and Foundations in the European Union: Facts and Figures, European Foundation Center.
11) Despite the fact that "most innovative funders in UK philanthropy" increase their support for environmental issues, funding of systemic problems still remains low (Cracknell et al., 10). "Less than a fifth of the money granted by the core group of 97 trusts is directed to systemic environmental challenges" (ibid, 13). When funding is directed at systemic issues it is generally under the premise of climate change related work.

Barriers to Change | As with any complex system, the problem is not exclusively of CSOs or funders but of the relationship as a whole. Here we lay out some problematic characteristics of the CSO-Funder relationship.

Foundations remain predominantly single-issue and short-term focused | Funders remain overly risk-averse for lack of proper evaluation tools available, to the extent that they inhibit the development of learning organizations. Further, a competitive funding framework fosters narrow, techno-fix, output oriented and short-term strategies, which bring about significant overlap and duplication of CSO activities. Funding strategies such as those proposed by the report, *Design to win*, may further this unconstructive trajectory, "which takes a narrow sectoral and technological perspective on climate change, and neglects the critical issues of power and public commitment" (Hale 2010: 265).

Currently, most foundation support goes to environmental organizations that work from the discourses of conservation and preservation. Organizations that utilize more radical discourses and emphasize changes in the structure of power receive little support[12].

Michael Shuman emphasizes that the tendency to overspecialize and adopt narrow focuses works contrary to the understanding that "the core institutions of a successful political movement must be multi-issue" (Shuman, 1998). Further, Shuman emphasizes an urgent need for more multi-year support and reducing time-consuming bureaucratic hurdles in the name of accountability. He argues that long-term support

of public scholars would enable the development and promotion of new ideas.

Given that CSOs are largely influenced by their funders, it is of little surprise that if funders are focused on the short term and are siloised in their approach, so too are CSOs.

Dealing with risk and uncertainty | The funding literature points to the *financial independence* of foundations as "philanthropy's comparative advantage", which in turn enables *flexibility, risk taking, and a long term vision* (Design to Win, 5; Spero, ix).

Yet, funding change is risky business. Despite the positive framing of foundations, there are tensions between funding innovation and change (perceived as high risk) and between funding 'safe' projects with certain outcomes (perceived as lower risk). At the moment, funders often default to the 'low risk/low reward' bracket, partly because they lack decision-making tools to point towards the 'high risk/high reward' bracket.

'Where the Green Grants Went 4' explores "why grant-makers find it difficult to act on climate change or other systems-wide environmental problems". They found that: first, it is easier to mobilize efforts towards tackling effects rather than root causes. Second, system-wide problems have a "non-tangible or open-ended nature", which makes it difficult to draw out concrete blueprints for action. Eleni Sotos from the Funders Workgroup for Sustainable Production & Consumption argued on the Smart CSOs platform: "if the overarching description [of systemic change] is too sweeping [without] a solid plan for how

Table 3: Foundation Grants by Discourse of Recipient Organization, 2000 (Brulle & Jenkins 2005)				
Discursive Frame	Amount of Grants ($ in Millions)	Distribution of Grants by Amount	Number of Grants	Distribution of Grants by Number
Wildlife Management	$ 3.63	5.1 %	20	2.8 %
Conservation	$ 8.74	12.2 %	61	8.6 %
Preservation	$ 27.57	38.5 %	220	30.9 %
Liberal Environmentalism	$ 19.89	27.8 %	222	31.2 %
Environmental Justice	$ 1.05	1.5 %	43	6.0 %
Deep Ecology	$ .84	1.2 %	36	5.1 %
Ecofeminism	$ .14	.2 %	6	.8 %
Ecotheology	$ .46	.6 %	7	1.0 %
Undetermined	$ 9.26	12.9 %	96	13.5 %

12) While this bias in environmental funding is most elaborately documented in the US context (see Table 1), the EFN publications, Where the Green Grants Went 4, maintains this conclusion for the UK and European contexts. In the period of 2005-07, approximately 70% of grants issued in the UK went to conservation and preservation work.

to achieve the change, it will sound too nebulous and unattainable".

Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools | The funding literature remains in overall agreement that "there is a lack of tools and systems to evaluate work aimed at driving social and political change" (Cracknell et al. 2009: 15).

While improving scientific understanding of complex processes is vital, the fact of the matter is that uncertainty is an unavoidable part of systemic challenges. Hence, new monitoring and evaluation tools need to incorporate uncertainty.

Another fundamental problem of current funding and CSO activities stems from how we evaluate success and how do we deal with failure. The prevalence of uncertainty necessitates integrating learning from experience into project evaluation.

Under-utilization of available funds and tools

Despite the urgent need for interdisciplinary research to foster systemic change, the available funding and instruments like the EC's Mobilisation and Mutual Learning (MML) Action Plans on Societal Challenges[13] is not used to the full extent.

The funding schemes and instruments available under FP7 call for a demanding application process and heavy administrative effort and mobilization. Unfortunately, many CSOs lack the capacity and/or administrative resources to deliver satisfactory applications. In addition, collaborative projects between different actors (i.e. CSOs, research institutes, businesses, etc.) bring about issues of conflicting priorities and ambitions.

Moreover, funding under these schemes is often partial, requiring CSOs to co-finance their intended activities by seeking partners to match the funding. Lastly, publicity of funding schemes by the EC remains limited.

Opportunities to engage funders

Strategic Opportunity 1: Mapping and clustering to identify gaps and avoid duplication | An important opportunity to transition into a new funding paradigm comes from funders' own understanding of the need for more strategic work on part of CSOs. At the moment, funders see overlaps and redundancies in the work done by CSOs. It can be difficult for funders to

choose between the many 'competing' projects, which may lead to less grants getting made in this area.

Clustering and mapping CSO activities might provide direction for funding. It is important to collaborate with funders to develop a coherent ecosystem of CSOs where each CSO finds and defines its strategic role in the Great Transition. This will enable determining how particular groups add value and identifying where the gaps and redundant types of work are.

Strategic Opportunity 2: Working with change agents in the funding community | Brulle & Jenkins point to "alternative foundations", "public charities" as sources that fund to a greater or lesser extent organizations, which work from non-mainstream discourses. However, neither these institutions nor how they operate differently is identified. There is significant need for research in the activities of alternative foundations, their grant-making principles, and evaluation criteria.

Strategic Opportunity 3: Developing and adopting the right set of M&E tools | An opportunity to change this is to engage funders in the rationale of need for the Great Transition. Once funders understand that commensurate long term impact can only be achieved at the price of clearly defined short term outputs, new adequate criteria for funding on systems change projects can be defined. This will require significant innovation in monitoring and evaluation processes for system change strategies.

New M&E practices such as "crowd evaluation" as well as the development of open IT systems (for faster spreading of learning gained in projects on systemic change) may aid and accelerate the transition from output oriented to learning organizations. However, there is still tremendous need for appropriate M&E tools to be co-developed by funders and CSOs.

### Strategic Opportunity 4: Utilizing and publicizing EC funding schemes | Potentially, initiatives like SMART CSOs can compensate for the publicity shortage of ongoing schemes and financing instruments by creating a ready-made venue of diverse stakeholders for the EC. Further, with the publishing of the Green Paper on FP8, the EC is entering a collaboration period intended to improve and streamline funding schemes for the next period[14]. This can be an opportunity for a future SMART CSOs initiative or hub to provide extensive feedback during this process.

13) MML Action Plans are tools aiming to address scientific and technological challenges by facilitating collaboration among CSOs, research institutes and other stakeholders with different and complementary knowledge and expertise: For more information see: ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/ssh/docs/mml_en.pdf

14) According to Research Fundamentals, the Green Paper on FP8, suggests several improvements to the FP. Some important themes appear to be 'clarifying objectives', 'simplifying participation', 'reducing complexity', and 'broadening participation' (http://fundermental.blogspot.com/2011/01/fp8-green-paper.html).

4 Next steps

SMARTCSOs
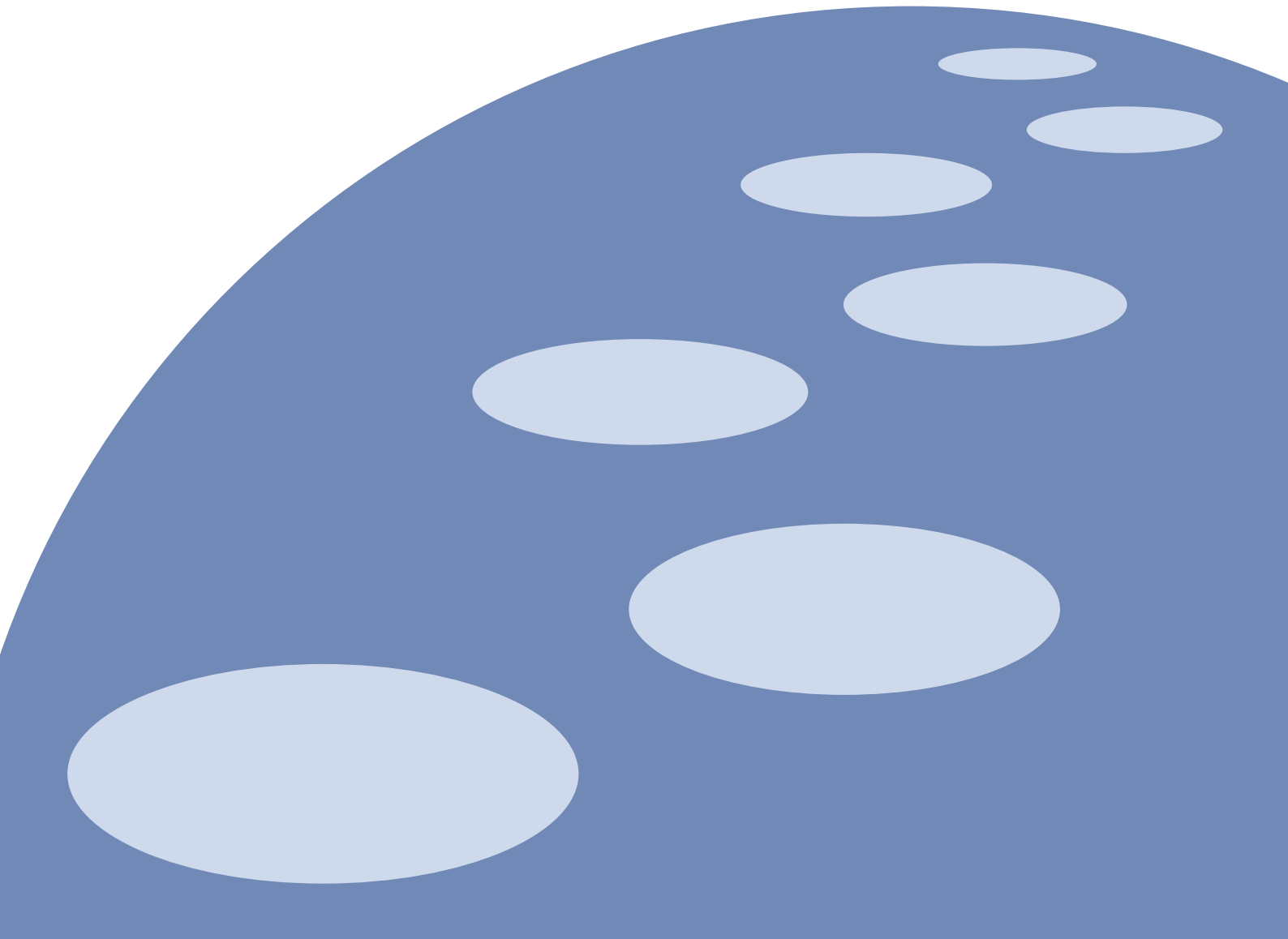
Drawing on thinking from theory and practice from a variety of disciplines, this paper calls on CSO leaders and strategists to reconsider current strategies and practices. It points at a number of leverage points for a holistic transformation of the CSO sector to become a strong CSO ecosystem for tackling global wicked issues.

We hope that the five leverage points and the meta-theory of change described in this paper will inform and stimulate the debate at the Smart CSOs Conference and beyond.

However, the discussions and research in the Smart CSOs Initiative during the past year have only laid the foundation. For those who want to become successful internal and external champions for a strategic shift in the CSO sector, many questions about the practical implications remain unanswered so far.

The purpose of the Smart CSO Conference is to define these questions more clearly and then jointly develop practical ways forward.

Some ideas for next steps are:

- Engage with EU funding mechanisms (e.g. FP8) to achieve that more funding becomes available for trans-disciplinary / transition research on wicked problems as well as for CSO work on systemic change.

- Organise workshops to engage private funders in the Great Transition and to explore practical implications for funding.

- Organise joint project between experts, funders and CSO leaders to develop framework for M&E for the type of systemic change work (focussed on bottom-up approaches and value shift).

- Systems mapping projects to systematically explore key leverage points for the Great Transition.

- To build specific staff capacity building tools on systems thinking for the Great Transition and start pilot projects in organisations

- Create space for internal debates in organisations on the Great Transition as a vision for the organisation.

- Start project on framing in European countries – what frames need to be strengthened for the Great Transition?

- Start project on policy feedback on values – what policies can strengthen helpful frames in different societal / political contexts?

- Build large-scale CSO coalitions on Beyond GDP indicators involving research and policy development with subsequent campaigns.

- Organise research on understanding under what circumstances local innovation can really contribute to tackling global issues.

- Research on ecosystem of CSOs – where are the gaps (where are overlaps) – which organisations would be most suited for which role?

- Explore in depth how CSOs can effectively support the creation of a global citizens movement for the Great Transition.

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