

# THEORY OF ACTION



**This is a ‘Sliding Doors’ moment, balanced on the brink of a world that is collapsing or a pivot into something transformational. What’s our theory of action?**



Almost every system that modern human beings have invented needs to change. Systems change needs to lead to paradigm change: to a transformation of ourselves and the patterns of belief and expectation we live by. How to do so in time? Guided emergence, tilting the playing field, scarcity or abundance mindsets? Which adventure are we choosing?



— COVID was the trailer for the climate change movie. The tech came faster than we thought, but the whole question of implementation and interdependence caused our execution to totally fail. Why? Because of a lack of deep understanding and appreciation for interdependence. We didn’t see that if we don’t vaccinate the entire world, staying safe won’t work. So how do we learn, agree and organise ourselves?

— We may not get to the technological saviours because we struggle to organise ourselves. After a decade of green-on-green fights, we are tripping over our own feet. The climate movement is going to have to become a proper political movement: make it simple and do things that are transformative. We are facing a political set of choices with a small ‘p’ and a big ‘P’.

— Politicisation of climate change is an illumination of the conundrum between “tech will save us” and “tech will fail us”. Humans need to save humans.

— We are not thinking how we will scale the tech – across the political divide. The tech world builds for the rich, after which it becomes available for the poor. This is the mindset shift we need: design for the bottom of the economic pyramid; make the most vulnerable places secure and thriving.

— We don’t get things right before a crisis – integrated solutions bringing science and policy for collective action together. We have to solve all parts of the problem simultaneously. Disaster leading to an understanding is more likely to be the trajectory. Kim Stanley Robinson is right – Ministry for the Future – but catastrophe may need to happen in a western nation before the world really wakes up.

— We have to go tactical – build the tactical playbook, build new systems and invite people across to them. Our job is to build coherent alternative possibilities – small islands of coherence that can create massive traction.

— It is about creating parallel markets and allowing them to compete in the world. Down the middle of every situation there runs a crack – cracks that can be exploited to make a shift. If you can demonstrate that things are possible then they become seen as viable.

— But we are not going to solve global narratives based on working in the cracks. People who want to deliver the kind of change we need have to be confident enough to win the argument.

— One way of looking at the problems we need to address is to distill them down to questions of human nature. Are there conditions in which people are more likely to be patient or less patient? Human behaviour is infinitely malleable, if that is your goal.

— In the end it comes down to a handful of people who decide the world is going to be a different place and act upon it. Networks are crucial. Without that we don’t get a run rate of change.

## TROJAN HORSES

Buildings are responsible for 40 per cent of the world's emissions. We know how to build buildings that are carbon regenerative. Builders are adversely incentivised not to do so, and the institutions that support them, and could change this, are stripped of capacity and based on perverse values.

There is a market of people who want to do the right thing, but they can't get access to the core resource of land. Open Systems Lab is working to create a new class of property ownership based on fairhold. The aim is to create an open source, modular family of template lease agreements for landowners to make land available as a low-cost platform for sustainable building: a Creative Commons for land and property, leveraging reciprocal needs and carbon benefits.

## REGENERATIVE SOLUTIONISTS

**Global Solutions Alliance** launched by Regenerative Intelligence is working to accelerate knowledge and awareness of the solutions we have and the solutions we need to create a regenerative society moving from extraction to restoration and abundance with equity at the centre.

Their assumption is that we will not achieve systems wide transformation in eight years so we will have to learn through trauma and we will transform in crisis. In preparation they are training thousands of people to be 'regenerative solutionists' so that a base for mass movement is ready, drawing on a toolkit to change the world on an open access, non-competitive basis. Part of the theory of action is to propagandise those solutions on a massive scale, working in concert with others across the world.

EIT Climate-KIC is Europe's leading climate innovation agency and community, supporting places and industries bridge the gap between climate commitments and current reality.

This is one of ten insights derived from a series of conversations hosted by EIT Climate-KIC. Thinkers and practitioners from multiple disciplines discussed emerging trends, challenges, possibilities and implications for climate actions.

“How do we make the first Trojan horse for a new farming system and get that to scale? It is a question of hacks and tactics at the right scale.”

“I don't think we can avoid the issue of needing to deal with the extreme right wing. They will not assist the process; they will put it in reverse.”

“Geopolitically things will get worse, people will become inured to the sight of children dying and yet islands of hope and creative alternatives will exist.”

“What if democracy became a platform and we started a race to build the most resilient platform on basic principles of de-corruption and justice.”



## TRANSFORMATIVE INNOVATION FOR POLICYMAKERS

How do we become the verb of doing better and going faster with systemic transformation? Verbs open possibilities and shape habits. Could organisations work with policy makers to help develop pragmatic theories of change for urgent, transformative innovation, which does not mean doing the same things more quickly, or throwing more money at innovation, but rather doing different things. What is needed is a toolkit for how to do differently, starting with the social contract.

## LEVERAGE THE POWER OF PLACE

Scale is our principal challenge – how to get the bright spots, the 'pixels' of good solutions and network effects to scale. The one thing that communities and companies have agency over is place; place anchors a sense of self and identity. A focus on place-based transformation could be reinforced as a form of pixelated healing. Once cities, regions, businesses and individuals engage in positive ecosystem services in the places they relate to, their agency becomes larger.