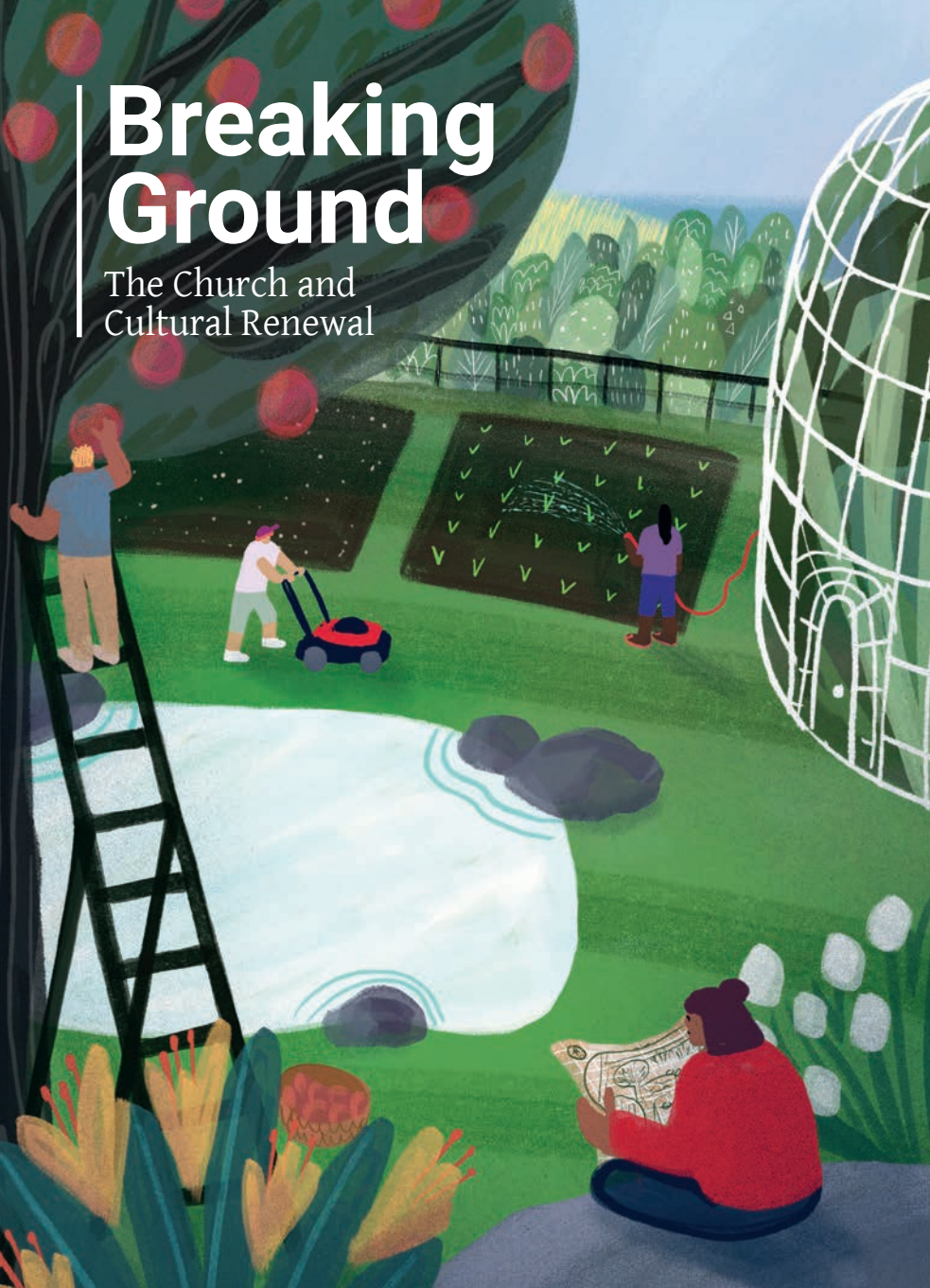
Breaking Ground

The Church and Cultural Renewal



*This report was written in 2021 by **Dr Nathan Mladin** on behalf of **Theos think tank**. Nathan is Senior Researcher at Theos and holds a PhD in systematic theology from Queen's University Belfast. His research, writing, and speaking focus on the intersection of theology and culture, ethics of technology and political economy.*

Original artwork and illustrations: Emily Downe
Report design: Rebekah Davison and Polly Parrott

All content in this publication is licenced under Creative Commons (CC) BY-NCND 4.0. See creativecommons.org/ licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ for details.

Unless stated otherwise, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For further information please contact:
hello@theosthinktank.co.uk or Theos, 77 Great Peter Street London SW1P 2EZ

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.

– Hosea 10:12

Contents

Executive summary

Breaking Ground: The Church and Cultural Renewal is the fruit of a 14-month research project on the Church and culture, which tries to help re-imagine, revitalise, and resource the UK Church in its endeavours towards cultural renewal.

The research process consisted of prayer, theological and sociological research, in-depth scoping interviews, and four roundtable consultations with over 50 Christian leaders, academics, artists, and entrepreneurs working in different areas of Church, culture, and broader society.

A word on definitions:

Church: In the report, the term Church is used primarily in its theological sense, and refers to both the Church's "gathered" or collective expressions – i.e. communities of worship, discipleship, and mission – and the "scattered" dimension of Church – followers of Jesus dispersed and active in different vocational settings, networks, and organisations.

Culture: For the purposes of the report, culture is taken to be primarily a framework of understanding and moral meaning, and consists of prevailing ideas, symbols, and narratives, which are expressed through rituals, habits, cultural artefacts, or objects. While ultimately distinct, culture and society are closely intertwined. Culture is both expressed through, and shaped by social institutions and sectors like law, technology, advertising, business, and entertainment.

Chapter 1 offers a synthesis of four influential theories of cultural and social change.

1. The first model focuses on **the disproportionate role of densely networked and well-resourced elites, institutions, and structures of power in cultural change.**
2. The second draws particular attention to **the role of material conditions**, such as security and economic

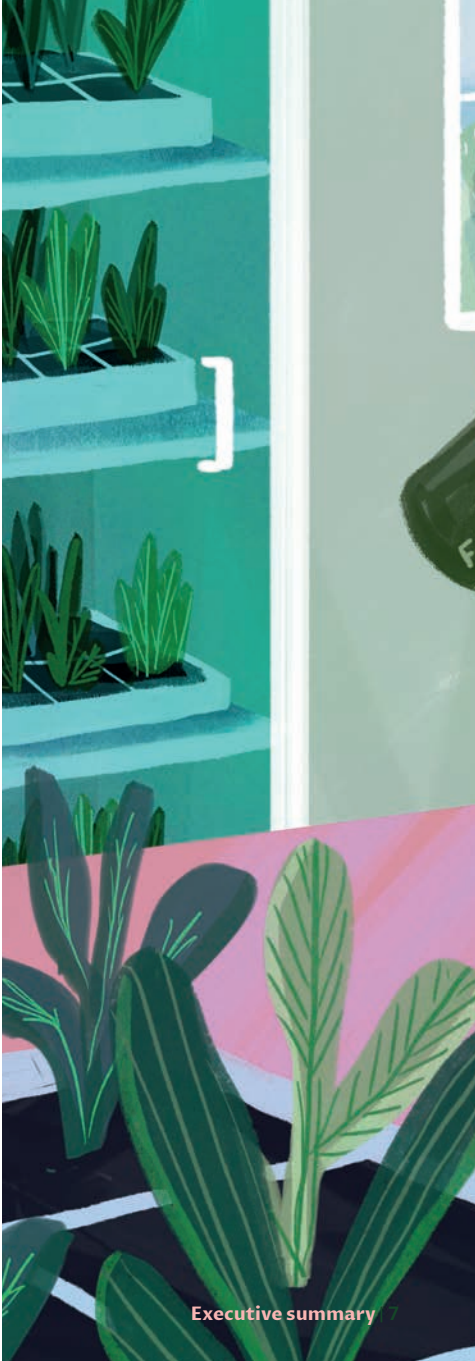
opportunity, **in producing cultural and social values change**.

3. The third employs a distinctive emphasis on **activism**, **leadership,** and the importance of **networks** in achieving change.
4. The final model draws attention to **the dynamics of complex systems, and the intricate distribution of power within these systems.**

Key insights from the four theories are as follows:

— **Material conditions and institutions matter** in producing change. An approach focused only on ideas or a narrow focus on changing "hearts and minds" is misguided on anthropological and sociological grounds: humans are complex creatures, which are not motivated only by rational factors; also, institutions play a decisive role in catalysing or, indeed, resisting change.

— **It is important to understand culture as a "complex system"** with multiple variables and feedback loops, where power takes many forms and is unequally distributed.



— **Cultural change is generally a top-down process**, which begins with highly networked and well-resourced elites situated close to the centre of cultural production, power, and prestige.

— **The most consequential level of cultural change is at the level of the imagination, common knowledge, and perception;** as James Davison Hunter notes, penetrating the "mythic fabric" of society is key to effecting durable change.

In short, cultural change is generally a slow and unpredictable process. Planning to change culture as a whole is misguided – culture is too complex, dynamic, and unpredictable to change as a result of intentional action. Those seeking change in specific contexts and on specific issues should recognise they are working in live, complex, overlapping systems, and therefore train to be skilled improvisers who use whatever the moment or setting they are in "throws at them".

Chapter 2 offers four examples of specific cultural and social changes to test the theories from Chapter 1. These case studies are: (a) the shift to free-market, neoliberal capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s; (b) the achievements of the gay rights movement; (c) Brexit, with a focus on the messaging of the Leave and Remain campaigns; and finally, (d) the rise and (partial) successes of the environmental movement. The case studies broadly support and helpfully illustrate some of the key features of the theories of change laid out in Chapter 1. Specifically, they highlight:

— The importance of **institutions** which incubate **seminal ideas.**

— The necessity of **networks** which overlap and intersect with systems of power.

— The importance of **emotional resonance** and **imagination** (and consequently, the disproportionate cultural influence of **the arts and entertainment industries**).

— That the most successful **change-makers work collaboratively** as much as possible, **plan for the long term,** and are thus able to **improvise skillfully when the key conditions for change emerge.**

Chapter 3 moves from the descriptive to the prescriptive, and offers a brief theology of cultural engagement. Theologian Richard Niebuhr's influential models of "Church and culture" are briefly presented at the

start: Christ against culture; Christ of culture; Christ above culture; Christ and culture in paradox; Christ transforming culture. We note that these models are helpful in framing some of the broad, historically consequential options available to Christians – but they are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, let alone binding.

The rest of the chapter advocates for employing models and frameworks that are more clearly and explicitly rooted in Scripture. We especially note the prevalence and richness of gardening and agricultural metaphors as helpful models for the Church's role in culture.

The approach we ultimately put forward is incarnational and looks squarely to the example of Jesus – his identity, patterns of relationships, and actions – to guide the Church's work in culture. The approach suggested is also contextual, and involves being attentive and responsive to the particularity of cultural contexts.

A Christlike engagement of culture will include:

— **Taking a self-sacrificial (*kenotic)* approach** – *recognising* one's power – i.e. one's resources, networks, and capabilities – and the privileges that come with it, and self-sacrificially *redirecting* this power for the flourishing of others (Phil. 2:5–8).

— **Acting as "cultural gardeners" in culture,** who *care, cultivate,* and *co-create*, with Christ, towards the Kingdom.

Biblically rooted gardening and agricultural metaphors particularly illuminate the posture Christians should take towards culture (as above), and a set of fundamental tasks that will guide this engagement: seeding, planting, nurturing, fertilising, as well as shielding and protecting cultural goods.

Drawing on the theology of Abraham Kuyper and Lesslie Newbigin, we note that the Church is a *foretaste*, a *sign*, and an *instrument* of the Kingdom of God in the world. The Kingdom, we argue, should be the fundamental imaginative framework and orienting vision for the Church's witness and work in culture.

The final part of Chapter 3 draws attention to the interdependence between the "gathered Church" and the "scattered Church", and shows how worship is the primary site of formation for Christlike "cultural gardening" and Kingdom-oriented work in culture.

Chapter 4 puts forward a series of top-down and bottom-up recommendations for making the Church's work in culture more fruitful and effective.

These are based on the roundtables and interviews with Christian cultural analysts and academics which formed the consultative phase of the research. They are informed by the sociological insights from Chapters 1 and 2, while being embedded in the theological vision cast in Chapter 3.

Top-down: strategic interventions

- **Eyes:** cultivating prophetic attentiveness to culture, and constantly asking: *What is decaying or dying? What are the signs of life? What needs pruning, protecting, and special care?*
- **Heart:** financial support for Christians working or seeking to work professionally in the arts (literature, fine art, performing arts, etc.), creative and entertainment industries, and patronage for organisations and projects that offer training, mentoring, and peer support for them.
- **Head:** long-term support, coaching, training, and funding for emerging Christian public thinkers and journalists: undergraduates, post- and recent graduates – as well as patronage of more established Christian public thinkers, including academics, writers, public theologians, and public theology think tanks.
- **Hand:** funding, and other forms of support, for "faith and work" organisations ("greenhouses", as the report calls them) to provide (a) vocation-relevant theological training, including what we are calling "cultural and political literacy" (i.e. the ability to understand in a theologically informed way the ideas, narratives, ideologies that prevail in a specific sector or cultural setting); (b) spiritual formation in the context of community; (c) industry coaching and upskilling; (d) peer support and professional networks.

For the purpose of cultivating the scattered Church's "cultural and political literacy" we are recommending the creation of an "Alpha Course" type of resource that would combine engaging video presentations, concise and well-illustrated introductions to the key ideologies, cultural narratives, and ideas that prevail in culture (e.g. capitalism, liberalism, techno-solutionism, expressive individualism, transhumanism etc.), reading lists, and discussion guides.

- Specifically for Christian social and business entrepreneurs, we are recommending the creation of an institution, like Praxis Labs in the US, that would combine the elements listed above and embed them in a durable, sustainable institutional form. Such an institution, facilitating explorations between *practitioners* in different fields of culture and society (e.g. business, technology, fashion, entertainment), relevant *social theorists and sociologists*, and *theologians* in a systematic, intentional way over the long term, and in the context of community, would be a powerful arrangement towards cultural renewal.
- We recommend organising and funding sector-specific and cross-sector retreats for Christians with a specific calling towards cultural renewal. A more developed version of this idea would see establishing new urban or rural retreat and community-based study centres.
- We are asking Christian investors, investor groups, and asset owners to consider investing only in sectors and businesses firmly committed to sustainability and de-carbonisation.
- A new fund for "redemptive investment" in entrepreneurial solutions and ventures that especially address the problem of accelerating climate change should be explored with some urgency. Alongside its "climate investments", the fund could invest in faith-based social enterprises. Its philanthropic arm could sponsor some of the other projects suggested in this report.

Bottom-up: evergreen priorities

The priorities listed below are about the Church's work of fertilising its own soil and "creating compost" out of which the more targeted, strategic interventions listed above can develop organically and be sustainable over the long term. They also have in view raising and nurturing fully formed "cultural gardeners":

1. **Discipleship and formation:** strengthening and scaling whole-of-life discipleship in the Church is essential to redemptive and sustainable cultural witness. "Cultural gardeners" should have:
    a. A firm grasp of the biblical metanarrative and the

mission of God in the world and their role within it.

b. A "prophetic imagination" – the ability to see and interpret the world through the lens of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

c. "Cultural and political literacy" – as above, the ability to understand in a theologically informed way the ideas, narratives, and ideologies that prevail in their specific vocational settings.

d. Spiritual practices and healthy life rhythms.

2. **Theological education** needs to shift away from technocratic, narrowly scholastic, or subtly secularised models, towards an integrated approach orientated towards the formation of whole-of-life disciples and whole-of-life disciple-makers (as per the vision above) who live out of a Kingdom-saturated imagination in the totality of their lives.

3. **Community**: the Church's loving, practical commitment to place and people can slowly change the cultural narratives about the Church and the role of faith in society, thereby aiding and strengthening the Church's wider "cultural witness". We note again how the gathered and the scattered Church are interdependent and mutually reinforcing in their "words", "social", and "cultural" witness.

a. Community projects – we note the Church's growing social footprint and encourage further social action as a practical expression of the Church's loving commitment towards its neighbours and as a means of deepening its discipleship in its own right.

b. We encourage churches to consider engaging in "community organising" as a practical way of working for the common good and deepening their witness at the local level. We suggest organisations that help the Church engage in this work should be considered for funding and other forms of support.

Introduction

How does culture flourish? And how can Christians engage culture in a healthy, hopeful, and humble way? These are important questions for disciples of Jesus discerning their responsibility in the world – a responsibility which is often understood narrowly in terms of evangelism and social action, but which more fully encompasses the whole of life, from music, finance, and the entertainment industry, to science and technology. Although the language by which to describe this broader responsibility of the Church is contested, this project began from the following question:

> *What does the Church need to do in a more strategic, joined up and intentional way, so as to help effect positive change or "cultural renewal" in some of the key spheres of British culture today?*

This report offers a theologically rooted and sociologically informed reflection on the Church's responsibility and role in culture. It seeks to help re-imagine, revitalise, and resource the Church's work for "cultural renewal" in witness to the Gospel, love of neighbour, and pursuit of God's Kingdom.

The questions at the heart of this study are vexing, not least since "culture" itself is a complex, contested, unruly notion with fuzzy boundaries. At its simplest, culture refers to a way of life, as when we talk about "French culture" or "corporate culture". In other words, it is "the way we do things around here". Of course, this means that even within a single broad culture there will also be many different subcultures overlapping and intersecting with one another: there is such a thing as French corporate culture, which is distinct from the culture of a French school, or the culture generated by football fans, or rural culture, or Paris. Therefore, when we talk about how "culture" changes, or appropriate Christian engagement of "culture", our conclusions will inevitably depend on the specific cultures in question – not merely "culture" in the abstract.

Some of this "culture" will be expressed through what sociologists call "material culture", encompassing the objects or cultural artefacts through which people express their identity and choices. For example, this might be architecture, food, art, or clothing. However, "the way we do things" also encompasses the less concrete values, beliefs, narratives, patterns of communication, symbols, rituals, and practices shared in common by a particular group, which together identify them as a collective. They both encapsulate and generate meaning and understanding for that group of people. This is "non-material culture" – and it is just as (if not more) important to people's identity and experience of the world.

An even broader definition would see "culture" used interchangeably with "society", so also encompassing social structures and institutions like law, business, technology education, and political systems. Nonetheless, while the relationship between culture and society is clearly a two-way street (in which culture is shaped by social structures and institutions and vice versa) they are not the same thing. On the contrary, the level of influence of such institutions varies from place to place, and is therefore itself culturally contested – as is the causal relationship

between cultural expression and the legal, political, and educational frameworks which practically govern a community. Does cultural change require legal change, or cause it? Do politicians set cultural norms, or follow them? Do powerful individuals and institutions guide the wider public, or reflect trends already bubbling up from the grassroots, or both? Above all, what tools do ordinary people have to enrich culture for the better where they are? These are key questions for anybody trying to understand how (and why) cultures change.

For the purposes of this report, culture is primarily understood as a framework of understanding and moral meaning, and consists of prevailing ideas, symbols, and narratives (i.e. immaterial culture), which are expressed through rituals, habits, cultural artefacts or objects (i.e. material culture). While distinct, culture and society are closely intertwined. Culture is both expressed through, and shaped by, social institutions and sectors like law, technology, advertising, business, and entertainment.

The first chapter of the report outlines a number of prominent theories of cultural change as a means of understanding cultural dynamics more fully. The second chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of these theoretical models through a consideration of four recent real-world examples of cultural and social

Culture is primarily understood as a framework of understanding and moral meaning, and consists of prevailing ideas, symbols, and narratives (i.e. immaterial culture), which are expressed through rituals, habits, cultural artefacts or objects (i.e. material culture). While distinct, culture and society are closely intertwined. Culture is both expressed through, and shaped by, social institutions and sectors like law, technology, advertising, business, and entertainment.

change: (a) the shift to free-market, neoliberal capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s; (b) the achievements of the gay rights movement; (c) Brexit, with a focus on the messaging of the Leave and Remain campaigns; and (d) the rise and (partial) successes of the environmental movement. In the third chapter, we move from the descriptive to the prescriptive, and offer a brief theology of cultural engagement. We especially note the example of Jesus, and the prevalence of gardening and agricultural metaphors in the Bible as helpful models for the Church's role in culture. In the final chapter, we consider how the Church might draw on the insights gleaned from the sociological survey (Chapters 1 and 2), and put forward a series of practical recommendations, both from the top down and bottom up.

01 Theories of cultural change

This chapter synthesises four main theories of cultural and social change relevant for this project, which contain distinctive emphases and overlap in illuminating ways. The first is offered by University of Virginia sociologist James Davison Hunter, whose analysis focuses on the disproportionate role of densely networked and well-resourced elites, institutions, and structures of power in cultural change. It is intended specifically as a corrective to the "hearts and minds" theory of change, which is also briefly summarised as part of our discussion of Hunter's work. The second model, put forward by University of Michigan sociologist Ronald Inglehart, draws particular attention to the role of material conditions, such as security and economic opportunity, in producing cultural and social values change. The third, by Leslie Crutchfield of Georgetown University, employs a distinctive emphasis on activism and (similarly to Hunter), leadership, and the importance of networks in achieving social change. The fourth and final theory, articulated by the international development academic Duncan Green, focuses on the dynamics of "complex systems" the role of norms, and the intricate distribution of power within them.

James Davison Hunter: elites and top-down change

James Davison Hunter's model identifies the many ways in which a purely ideas-focused model of cultural change is inadequate. Cultural shifts do not occur as the result of changed "hearts and minds" alone, but are driven by the imbalance of power, centred in elite institutions, amplified by networks, and are most effective of all when all these overlap. Ideas matter – but without networks and institutions to amplify them, not all ideas have cultural salience.

In his book, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, sociologist James Davison Hunter starts by outlining one of the most influential theories of cultural change in America today: what he calls "the common view", or the "hearts and minds" model (explained in the green box below).[1] Hunter diagnoses this model as the dominant understanding of culture among modern American Christians – but argues that it is deeply flawed as a theory of change.

The hearts and minds model: a brief presentation

According to this model of change, culture is simply the outworking of personal beliefs and values. The essence of culture is found in the hearts and minds of individuals, and people's basic beliefs about the world – including their beliefs about morality and the meaning of life – shape their behaviour and decisions about how to spend their time, what careers to pursue, what institutions to create, how to raise children, and so on. Hunter helpfully explains: "As the logic goes: if people's hearts and minds are converted, they will have the right values, they will make the right choices, and the culture will change in turn."[2]

CULTURE = BELIEFS + VALUES

CHANGED BELIEFS → CHANGED VALUES → CHANGED CHOICES → CHANGED CULTURE

It is this implicit theory of culture that motivates many Christians to share their faith through evangelism, to engage in politics, and be involved in various institutions of civil society. The logic is always the same: culture changes when individuals' beliefs and values change – one person at a time – so personal transformation is foundational to (and precedes) cultural transformation. On this model, cultural change is understood to be a democratic, bottom-up process: anyone can become a change-maker, a William Wilberforce, a William Booth, or a Dorothy Day.

Hunter argues that the inadequacy of the "hearts and minds" model is clear from the outset, because, despite a high percentage of people identifying as

Christian in the US, American culture (understood in terms of its business norms, laws, academic and popular culture) remains largely secular and materialistic. In 2010, the year the book was published, 86-88% of Americans said they had a faith commitment – and indeed, while this figure has decreased since then (the Pew Research Centre estimates the religiously unaffiliated grew from 17% of the population in 2009 to 26% in 2019), the US remains overwhelmingly religious by standard sociological measurements.[3]

For Hunter, this fact alone is at best in tension with, and at worst contradicts, the "hearts and minds" theory of change. Something else must be going on.

Why, then, is the "hearts and minds" model limited? Hunter identifies several flawed assumptions underlying the theory. First, he criticises its indebtedness to *idealism*: a school of thought which takes ideas as the basic reality and downplays material factors (for example, natural events or economic and political developments) in determining the direction of history. It therefore superimposes a logic and rationality onto what are often accidental or uncontrollable events, and ignores the power of specific institutions of cultural production and distribution (e.g. academia, media, and business) in generating, shaping, and organising culture. As a result, it also underestimates the difficulty of permeating culture and influencing its direction.

Idealism also misunderstands agency ("Who is acting?") by assuming a capacity to influence where there is either none or a very limited one – a problem Hunter similarly attributes to the *individualist focus* underlying the "hearts and minds" approach. As we will see below, Hunter argues that change most often occurs not as the result of any one individual, or even a significant mass of individuals, but through coalitions and networks.

Third, Hunter identifies a misguided and pervasive influence of *Christian pietism* informing the "hearts and minds" model. Christian pietism is a tradition that sees the cultivation of one's individual spirituality or "relationship with God" as being paramount in the life of the Christian, often at the expense of engagement in social and cultural life. This is connected to the persistence among many Western Christians of a sharp divide between areas and activities of their lives deemed "sacred" (e.g. Bible reading, prayer, attendance of religious services, religious festivals, pilgrimages)

and those deemed "secular" (e.g. going to the cinema, sealing a business deal, composing music, drawing up spreadsheets).

Having critiqued one model of cultural change, Hunter offers an alternative – the most relevant features of which are presented below.

Rather than being free-floating, truth claims always take shape and are embedded in institutions. While individuals do have some agency, Hunter attributes greater agency to institutions such as the market, the state, education, social and traditional media, scientific research, and the family. These institutions are not mere containers of ideas and values, but are agents in their own right: they "act back" on individuals, shaping individual imaginations, sensibilities, and habits. In other words, they have formative power.[4]

Consequently, culture should be understood as *a form of power* that is unevenly distributed across society. The individuals and institutions who control the production and distribution of the prevailing ideas and narratives within a culture have disproportionate power relative to those who consume them. This power begins with credibility (see the power of celebrity endorsements to make a book successful, or the prestige of Oxbridge relative to low-ranking universities) and affords such influencers with the capacity to set the horizons of normality and possibility – and as such, to define reality. This capacity is amply illustrated by the power of popular art and entertainment, particularly in films and TV series, to normalise lifestyles (including setting widely assumed standards of beauty) and identities (e.g. LGBT) through compelling fictional representation.

The uneven distribution of cultural power is seen also in the way cultural production and symbolic capital are organised in a fairly rigid structure of "centre" and "periphery". As Hunter explains,

> *The individuals, networks and the institutions most critically involved in the production of a culture operate in the 'centre' where prestige is the highest, not on the periphery, where status is low.*[5]

We might compare the power of a widely read broadsheet or mainstream publishing house to a local newspaper or small religious publisher here. Each field (publishing, entertainment, education) has its own centre and periphery, as well as its own logic and dynamic, although fields intersect and interact in complex ways.

That said, although durable cultural change tends to come from the top and the centre, "it typically comes from outside of the centre's nucleus". In other words, it is not those in the very centre of cultural power and prestige who initiate change. Establishment, status quo bias, and institutional inertia all work against this. Rather, innovation comes from those *close enough* to the highest echelons of power – and is then dispersed within networks and institutions of cultural production to educators and popularisers. In turn, such networks and institutions disseminate further downstream to practitioners who apply ideas and knowledge in tangible ways.[6]

Contrary to accounts emphasising the power of single individuals to shape culture (a "Great Man" view of history), Hunter crucially argues that culture is generated within networks:

> *The key actor in history is not individual genius but rather the network and the new institutions that are created out of those networks. The more "dense" the network – that is, the more active and interactive the networks – the more influential it could be. This is where the stuff of culture and cultural change is produced.*[7]

Durable cultural change tends to come from the top and the centre... from those close enough to the highest echelons of power, and is then dispersed within networks and institutions of cultural production to educators and popularisers.

Charisma or competence without a network carries little transformational weight.

This is not to say that ideas are irrelevant. On the contrary, some ideas are very influential and have significant cultural consequences. However, certain conditions have to be met for an idea to drive change. Despite rare examples of bottom-up change through mass mobilisation of the grassroots or mass protests (for example, the recent surge in support for environmental

> "The key actor in history is not the individual genius but rather the network and the new institutions that are created out of those networks." – James Davison Hunter

causes, discussed as a case study in the next chapter, or various political revolutions in the 20th century in former Communist countries), Hunter again stresses that the "deepest and most enduring forms of cultural change nearly always occur from the 'top down'". **This is the work of elites, or "gatekeepers who provide creative direction and management within spheres of social life." These elites are active in "well-developed networks and powerful institutions", and their work is generally highly conceptual and abstract.**[8]

The most durable changes in culture are those that penetrate at the level of imagination and shape a society's "frameworks of knowledge and discussion, the perception of everyday reality" – or "the linguistic and mythic fabric of a social order".[9] This is culture's most profound layer and it often takes time for change to be visible at this level. Such change seldom happens as a result of grassroots movements. Rather, popular culture expresses deeper cultural transformations occurring higher up the ladder of cultural change.

World-changing is most concentrated when networks of elites and the institutions they lead overlap. Change achieves momentum when cultural, social, economic, and often political resources overlap and the networks of elites within the relevant fields

The most durable changes in culture are those that penetrate at the level of imagination and shape a society's frameworks of knowledge and discussion, the perception of everyday reality.

and sub-fields collaborate and act in common purpose.

The caveat here is that durable change is achieved through efforts stretched across many years; "the most profound changes in culture typically take place over the course of multiple generations", so cultural change of any kind should realistically be understood as a multigenerational project. **However, "when cultural and symbolic capital overlap with social capital and economic capital, and, in time, political capital, and these various resources are directed towards shared ends, the world, indeed, changes."**[10]

Ronald Inglehart: the materialistic view

Echoing Hunter's rejection of idealism, the political scientist Ronald Inglehart leans in a "materialist" direction, in the sense that he gives priority to material conditions over other factors (cultural or otherwise) in explaining broad shifts in values. His distinctive thesis is that, as material conditions improve and survival is no longer under threat, people shift from "materialist" values, which concern physical and economic security, to "post-materialist" values such as concern for the environment, gender and racial equality, and freedom of speech.[11]

Just as James Davison Hunter rejects any purely ideas-based understanding of cultural change as inadequate, Ronald Inglehart perceives material forces (even more explicitly than Hunter) as key determinants of cultural change. Inglehart notes that since the Second World War, Western society has seen a significant shift away from a focus on traditional values and norms like marriage, towards greater focus on values related to autonomy and self-expression.[12] The same shift is documented in a reduction in intergenerational living arrangements, an increase in divorce rates (from 1860s to 2010s), and an increase in individualist language (including, strikingly, the decline of popular names, such as George, Frank, Joe, in favour of more unusual names in the US). Taken together, these indicate rising individualism which, in turn, strongly correlates with a steep decline in social capital, a marked decrease in memberships in voluntary and civic organisations (for example, bowling leagues, fraternal societies, boy scouts, and so on), lower levels of voter turnout, and declining trust in

governments and institutions more broadly.[13]

Inglehart argues that this transition from "materialist" to "post-materialist" values is one component in a broader shift from "survival values" to "self-expression values", which is transforming prevailing assumptions in politics, religion, gender relations, the relationship between "in groups" and "out groups", and environmental concern and protections – as well as the fate of institutions.[14] Inglehart gives objective material conditions (such as scarcity or abundance, and economic conditions such as high or low levels of inequality) priority in explaining why people's values and worldviews change.

Of course, different societies will manifest this basic shift differently depending on underlying cultural factors: for example, a historically Christian Orthodox society would respond differently from a Confucian or a Protestant society to changes in existential security and economic conditions, and therefore yield different sets of values. These, in turn, would not converge simply because of their common material progress, even under the force of common technological and economic developments – but they would all travel in the same basic direction.

Inglehart's theory of cultural change draws amply on survey data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey, from 1981 to 2014. The data is collected from more than 100 countries that cover over 90% of the world population and results from hundreds of representative national surveys. It is robustly tested in connection with various social spheres and cultural questions, including gender equality, democracy, individualism vs collectivism, and the economy. For example, the growth in inequality, with its documented ramifications, is a significant factor which helps explain the rise of xenophobic authoritarian politics. On Inglehart's theory, it is objective scarcity, which translates into existential insecurity, that has traditionally correlated strongly with the rise of authoritarian leaders and politics. However, the recent rise of authoritarian anti-democratic populism, in Hungary, Italy, and the US (pre-Biden 2021) is explained not by objective scarcity per se but by the highly unequal distribution of available resources. Inglehart therefore lays the blame for the rise of anti-democratic sentiment and politics at the feet of contemporary, financialised capitalism

and its role in widening inequality. Nevertheless, in his last book, with Pippa Norris, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*, he still points to the political responses, or lack thereof, to economic conditions and cultural factors as still salient.[15]

Another significant contribution of Inglehart's work is the emphasis he places on emotions, irrational processes, and biases as sources of value changes. This is in line with recent developments in the social sciences and humanities, which have shown the significant role played by emotions in cognition, behaviour, and values;[16] it also supports Hunter's theory that rational ideas do not change culture alone.

The direction of cultural change, Inglehart also shows, starts from the "social centre" and spreads outward to the "social periphery".[17] Once again, this chimes with James Davison Hunter's understanding of the role of elites in producing cultural change, although Inglehart refers to the direction in which *social* change happens, whereas Hunter refers to the direction of broad-scale *cultural* change.

Leslie Crutchfield: activism and bottom-up change

Unlike Hunter, Leslie Crutchfield focuses on bottom-up social activism as a key driver of change. She diagnoses several key markers of successful social activism through an analysis of specific and bounded cultural shifts driven by successful social activist movements. Within this focus on the power of activism, her most relevant emphases are the importance of networks, a "leaderful" style of leadership, and leveraging the power of story and imagination.

In her book, *How Change Happens*,[18] Leslie Crutchfield considers the shared elements of social activism to identify six patterns of successful social change. We highlight the ones that are relevant to this project below.

***Turn Grassroots Gold*: Crutchfield argues that successful social movements are fuelled by a symbiotic relationship between elites and ordinary people. Energy must rise from the grassroots, while leaders play a significant role in facilitating the process**. She writes: "The most successful organizational leaders understand they must turn their approach to power upside-down and let local activists lead."[19] Effective

leaders therefore harness the energy of the grassroots, not least by nurturing bonds between members and enabling collaboration in the pursuit of the movement's animating cause.

Leadership is a widely invoked and arguably overused notion, but Crutchfield manages to bring it to life through her notion of "leaderful" movements. Successful social movements are neither leaderless, anarchic, and completely spontaneous, nor leader-led in what are often rigidly hierarchical structures. Rather they are *leaderful* – with leaders dotted and networked throughout a movement, setting direction as well as sharing power, inspiring from the front but also running alongside or energising or coaxing from behind. This, she shows, requires "letting go of ego, as well as putting cause and mission ahead of personal or organizational power."[20]

Like Hunter, Crutchfield highlights the importance of networks, coalitions, alliances, and other forms of collaborative engagement across sectors, disciplines, and other boundaries in pursuing change. **She also presupposes and calls for particular virtues, including patience, humility (or in Crutchfield's words "ego adjustment"), and not least competence.** Again, this requires the sophisticated combination of different forms of power (leadership and followership) in pursuit of common goals, rather than the idolisation of isolated individuals.

In pursuing tangible social change, Crutchfield encourages activists to target "hearts and policy", referring not to the ungrounded idealism critiqued by Hunter above but (agreeing with Hunter) directly encompassing both legislative change and people's imaginative and moral inclinations. Of course, not all cultural changes have a policy application, at least not immediately, but Crutchfield helpfully highlights the importance of devising change strategies predicated on an authentic view of human beings as more than "brains in a vat", as creatures of story and emotion not simply cognition and calculation. She exemplifies these ideas through changing norms and cultural expectations in drunk driving and gay marriage.[21]

Moving from an activist focus, and **again illustrating the persuasive power of art and cinema** in particular (as with James Davison Hunter's recognition of the power of the imagination and the disproportionate credibility of some outlets over others above), Crutchfield describes how Joe Biden credited his change of heart

regarding same-sex marriage to the TV show *Will & Grace.* Leaders of significant social as well as cultural change "realize that to achieve lasting systems change, they must change public attitudes so people believe the changes they seek are fair and right." She goes on to note that, "whether emotional, visceral, heartbreaking, or inspiring, winning movements lead with messages that connect with people at their human core."[22]

Another useful principle delineated by Crutchfield in working for change is her emphasis on the need to reckon with "adversarial allies". These are groups or networks of individuals with a common agenda that, instead of pooling resources and working in coalition, quarrel over the details of how their vision for change should dominate the agenda.

> *The difference in winning movements is that leaders manage to put their egos and organizational identities to the side (if only temporarily) so disparate factions can come together around a common agenda – although the path to victory can be arduous and never linear.*[23]

Crutchfield identifies having a "network mindset", that is, an openness on the part of leaders to work as much as possible in coalition and collaboration rather than pushing a personal organisational agenda, as crucial for achieving change.

Duncan Green: a power and systems approach

Like Crutchfield, the international development academic Duncan Green also focuses on the markers of effective activism in his study of cultural change. However, Green reckons more explicitly with the influence of (and therefore, the need to understand) three important categories: complex systems, power, and norms. These can be used, Green shows, to foster or prevent change at a variety of levels – community, country, or even at the global level – and Green's discussion of each is summarised in three sections below.[24]

Systems

Duncan Green's emphasis on systems and "system thinking" is to caution against linear, cause-and-effect thinking about change. Instead, the "power and systems approach" championed by Green "encourages multiple strategies... and views failure, iteration and adaptation as expected and necessary" when dealing with complex systems. Engaging complex systems, Green argues, is more like raising a child than baking a cake.[25] **In**

other words, it is about improvising with what you are given, rather than following a strict recipe.

Green here takes his cue from environmental scientist Donella Meadows' definition of system as "an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something."[26] Thus, he defines a system as an interconnected set of elements that is organised to achieve a purpose. **Complexity arises from the multitude of relationships, interplay, and feedback loops among the elements of a system** (we might bring to mind the many elements of a crowd on Oxford Street, or a flock of starlings at dusk).

Change in complex systems, argues Green, is *generally* a slow and steady process (e.g. technological or demographic changes) – yet is occasionally punctuated by sudden, unexpected, and unforeseeable jumps. These happen during what economists Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson call "critical junctures" – windows of opportunity created by crises, systemic failures, changes in leadership, or natural disasters (including pandemics) which create an appetite for new ideas and perspectives.[27] Such junctures open the door to possibilities of reform and change which would have been previously unthinkable. Green identifies the Second World War and the Great Depression as two epoch-defining events which triggered, among others, the process of decolonisation and a change towards a greater role for government in economic and social life.[28]

Green argues that activists for change need to shift from seeing themselves as architects and engineers of change to "ecosystem gardeners". This entails flexibility, seeking constant feedback, remembering that success, however defined, is often accidental, undertaking parallel and simultaneous experiments, learning by doing (and failing), convening and brokering relationships, and bringing both usual and unusual suspects together to work in common purpose.

Along similar lines, Green advocates a shift from a posture of control to a posture of *cultivation*. This involves nurturing richer and more diverse systems of change without trying to control them. Apart from any moral and theological considerations, this is because culture is such a complex system. We build on this and the previous insight extensively, and from

a theological perspective, in Chapters 3 and 4 of the report.

Power

Any change-maker must reckon with the nature and distribution of power. Power lies at the heart of change. Power analysis is an essential preliminary step in working for cultural change.

Starting from the assumption that power is ubiquitous, multifaceted, and there is "no such thing as a power vacuum", Green goes on to delineate the different forms power takes and to discuss their key characteristics.[29] He first distinguishes between visible and hidden power, between hard and soft power. Visible power is the most common form and often gets a bad press because of the way it is often abused – whether in the world of politics, business, or racial relations – but it is key to positive change. Yet behind the expressions of visible power (i.e. politicians, corporate executives, etc.) there lie more subtle interactions between less visible agents who trade in "hidden power". This refers to "what goes on behind the scenes" but also "the shared view of what those in power consider sensible or reasonable in public debate." **Dominant narratives about the good life are manifestations of hidden power, which determine the boundaries within which visible power is able to operate.**

In addition, Green outlines four types of power:

1. Power *within* – personal self-confidence and a sense of rights and entitlement (easily morphs into "power with" and "power to").
2. Power *with* – collective power, through organisation, solidarity, and joint action.
3. Power *to* – effective choice, capability to decide actions and carry them out.
4. Power *over* – power of hierarchy and domination.[30]

Green notes how behind visible hierarchies of power one should always look for subtle interactions between diverse groups of players. An effective power analysis requires a deep understanding of the different kinds of power at work in the culture, and how it is distributed and wielded by various (especially unfamiliar) bodies; it "tells us *who holds what power* related to the matter, and *what might influence* them to change". In this way, power analysis is a *prerequisite of a viable*

plan for change *and setting strategy*, as well as the starting point for *identifying allies*, particularly those who are not the "usual suspects". It also helps with anticipating potential events that may open the door to change.[31]

Norms

Norms come in various forms – social, legal, moral, cultural – and change organically, over time, in a non-linear fashion. Norms themselves are complex systems. They appear fixed and thus give a sense of stability to those who adhere to them, but they evolve continuously. Norms about women and their roles in society have changed dramatically in the last century. What were the drivers of these changes? The right to vote? Employment outside the home? The invention of the washing machine? The contraceptive pill? Girls' education? Access to information? All of the above! Green confirms Inglehart's theory which stresses the decisive role played by material conditions in producing change. In this case, "the evolution of gender norms was an accidental by-product of structural changes in the economy."[32] So too, for example, Green observes urbanisation and the arrival of technological artefacts such as the television underlying the rise of the soap opera. This underlines how unpredictable cultural change can be.

Against material changes, leadership also plays an important role in changing norms – and celebrity endorsements can be pivotal. We might recall, for example, the impact of Princess Diana hugging a boy with AIDS at the height of the pandemic during her visit to New York in 1989. Governments also engage in norms-change through nudging.[33] **However, Green notes government rarely establishes new norms. Rather, these are incubated and advocated by activists and other grassroots actors**. Again, environmentalism epitomises bottom-up, activist-led change – but there are other times, writes Green, when norms change because they are backed by a powerful constituency who has a vested interest or sees an opportunity in the proposed change. Green illustrates this with the way, after decades of activism on gay rights and gay marriage, polls started to show a majority of the population supported same-sex marriage for the first time only in 2011. In 2013, following the shift in public sentiment, six US senators changed their position and declared their support for gay marriage.[34]

Furthermore, and deeper than grassroots activism, let alone

government, Green again identifies art (in its widest sense) as exerting a powerful influence in shaping sensibilities and attitudes. Green notes: "I am convinced that in the UK the writers JK Rowling and JRR Tolkien are among the most powerful influences on future generations of activists."[35]

The Power and Systems Approach put forward by Green presupposes multiple strategies rather than a single, linear approach, and requires growing comfortable with failure, working iteratively, and adapting *en route*. Failure, iteration, and adaptability are normal, even necessary, rather than a lapse. Constant interrogation, curiosity and humility, self-awareness and openness to diversity are required. Such an approach

> *encourages us to nurture a genuine curiosity about the complex interwoven elements that characterize the systems we are trying to influence, without abandoning our desire to take action. We need to be observers and activists simultaneously.*[36]

The four theories: a brief comparison

Having now considered our four influential theories of change in detail, where can we identify points of agreement and divergence?

First, both James Davison Hunter and Ronald Inglehart are explicit and insistent that material conditions do matter – perhaps more than aspiring change-makers might like to think. "Idealism" is a trap, insofar as it misunderstands both human nature and the level of control any one individual human has over culture. Understanding the material conditions affecting culture at any one time is therefore central to understanding what cultural dynamics are at play, as further supported by both Crutchfield and Green's analyses of what makes a successful bottom-up movement.

Along similar lines, all four theories discussed above are clear that it is not enough simply to change people's minds at an intellectual level. Human decisions and cultural norms are embodied, emotional, and even irrational. While Crutchfield at first glance seems more open to ideas-based change than Hunter or Inglehart with her focus on "hearts and policy", this is fundamentally a further affirmation that humans are more than "minds on a stick". The same is reflected in Green's focus on "norms", and the power of art and storytelling upon popular attitudes.

In this sense, the recognition of human nature operating beyond the intellectual level points to a further significant point

of agreement across our four theories of change: **that the most important level of cultural change is at the level of imagination, common knowledge, and perception – so that penetrating the "mythic fabric" of society is key to effecting durable change**. The entertainment industries (as well as political or media campaigns which appeal to the level of the imagination) therefore have disproportionate influence over culture.

That said, levels of influence over our collective imaginations are not spread evenly – even within these key sectors. **To this end, we especially note James Davison Hunter's analysis that cultural change is generally top-down, beginning with highly networked elites situated close to the centre of cultural production, power, and prestige**. Here, Hunter is clear that networks are more important than individual efforts in cultural change. He argues more forcefully than any of our other three theorists that change comes from the top, even if not the nucleus of power, and ripples out from there. Hunter is notably sceptical about the power of popular movements to effect meaningful and lasting cultural change.

In contrast, Leslie Crutchfield and Duncan Green are both primarily concerned with what makes an effective bottom-up movement and the role of activism. **Both advocate for taking a systems lens to the question of change**. Such an approach arguably avoids reductionist analyses and opens up the view on the whole set of factors, agents, and dynamics involved. As a guardrail, it prevents schematic and simplistic interpretations of change, particularly protecting against rash conclusions against what made any change agenda or strategy successful. **But there is an important difference between Crutchfield and Green. Crutchfield refers almost exclusively to the internal system and inner workings of grassroots activism**. She explains, for example, that taking a systems approach enables seeing social change movements "not simply as extensions of charismatic gifted men and women fighting for societal change, but as systems in and of themselves"[37] with dense relationships and feedback loops between the actors involved and the constraints under which they operate. **In contrast, Green analyses the ingredients of effective activism *within* the wider political, economic, and cultural systems and their complex power dynamics**.

But there are also similarities. Both Crutchfield and Green repeatedly stress the importance of building

networks, alliances, trust, and connections among key individuals/stakeholders in implementing change during "peace time", so that when a "critical juncture" arises, no time is wasted to effect the change that now becomes possible. **Likewise, both emphasise the importance of leadership in making change happen.** Leaders cast vision, inspire, mobilise, build bridges and coalitions, drive bargains, and foster "power within". They require legitimacy to do this. Leaders "operate at the interface between structure and agency, striving to leave their mark on the institutions, cultures, and traditions in which they live and work." Green allows for a wide palette of leadership styles, from "the bull-in-a-china-shop" to "charismatic visionaries" and "backseat drivers".[38] Similar to Crutchfield, Green acknowledges leaders, like power, are not to be found merely at the top, but everywhere within a movement. Both mention the capacity to build effective alliances and networks of change-makers as vitally important in pursuing change. **In this sense, while Crutchfield and Green are more interested in how to build an effective social movement, the marks of success they identify mimic many of the necessary conditions for change identified in Hunter's analysis of power within elite circles and institutions.**

Finally, all our theorists recognise that cultural change is generally a slow and unpredictable process. Those who seek cultural change must be aware they are working within live, complex, and overlapping systems – just as durable cultural change is also a multigenerational endeavour. There are no silver bullets or recipes for enduring cultural change.

Yet change does happen – sometimes, seemingly, at pace. What, then, can we learn about these cultural dynamics from some of the most striking recent examples of cultural shift? In the next chapter we assess the theories of change outlined above against four real-world case studies, which together explore some of the most striking changes in recent British culture.

References

1. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 6-16.
2. Ibid. p. 10.
3. Pew Research Centre, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An update on America's changing religious landscape", *Pew Forum*, 17 October 2019. https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/
4. See also Walter Wink's Powers Trilogy for an influential Christian account of this "power". Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984); Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986); Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1992).
5. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, p. 37.
6. Ibid. pp. 41–43.
7. Ibid. p. 38.
8. Ibid. p. 41.
9. Ibid. p. 45.
10. Ibid. p. 43.
11. Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations are Changing, and Reshaping the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). See also Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
12. Inglehart, *Cultural Evolution*, pp. 1–3.
13. See, among others, Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Robert Putnam and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again* (New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 2020).
14. Inglehart, *Cultural Evolution*, p. 12.
15. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 17, 137.
16. See, for example, Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Penguin, 2013); Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions* (London: Harper, 2009); Martha C Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *Political Emotions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
17. This distinction draws on Johan Galtung's "structural theory of imperialism", which "takes as its point of departure two of the most glaring facts about this world: the tremendous inequality within and between nations... and the resistance of this inequality to change." Galtung divides all the nations of the world into "centre" and "periphery" nations, and within each country, also identifying an internal "centre" and "periphery" of power. See Johan Galtung, "A structural

theory of Imperialism", *Journal of Peace Research*, 8, 2 (1971), pp. 81–117.

18. Leslie Crutchfield, *How Change Happens: Why Some Social Movements Succeed While Others Don't* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).
19. Ibid. p. 12.
20. Ibid. p. 14.
21. Ibid. pp. 80–1.
22. Ibid. p. 13.
23. Ibid. p. 13.
24. Duncan Green, *How Change Happens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 4.
25. Ibid. p. 12.
26. Donella H Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, VT: Sustainability Institute, 2008), p. 12.
27. Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2012), p. 101.
28. Green, *How Change Happens*, p. 17.
29. Ibid. p. 31.
30. Ibid. p. 33
31. Ibid. p. 38.
32. Ibid. p. 51.
33. The Economist, "Nudge Nudge, Think Think", *The Economist,* 24 March 2012. http://www.economist.com/node/21551032. For a more extensive treatment of nudging, see Richard H Thaler and Cass R Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2009). See also Cass R Sunstein, How Change Happens (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019), particularly pp. 60–179.
34. Duncan Green, "How Change Happens: What Can We Learn From the Same-Sex Marriage Movement in the US?", From Poverty to Power blog, 20 August 2014. https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/how-change-happens-what-can-we-learn-from-the-same-sex-marriage-movement-in-the-us/
35. Green, *How Change Happens,* p. 56.
36. Ibid. p. 240.
37. Crutchfield, *How Change Happens*, p. 16.
38. Ibid. p. 199.

02 Insights from four case studies

While Chapter 1 offered descriptive summaries of four influential theories of how culture changes, Chapter 2 considers four examples of real-world cultural change to illustrate or challenge these theories. Our vignettes are as follows: First, we look at the shift to free-market capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s following thirty years of broad social democratic consensus after the Second World War. Second, we examine the successes of the gay rights movement, especially around the campaign(s) for the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Third, we consider Brexit, assessing the political and economic landscape before the historic 2016 referendum and comparing the messaging of the Leave and Remain campaigns. Finally, we consider the rise and (partial) successes of the environmental movement, paying special attention to the momentous last three years, which have seen significant changes and commitments to the environmental cause.

These vignettes are not intended as comprehensive historical accounts. Our aim in this chapter is not to narrate an exhaustive (let alone definitive!) diagnosis of these broad areas of social, political, and cultural change. More modestly, we are interested in simply outlining some aspects of these changes that most strikingly support or challenge the theories outlined above.

The shift to free-market capitalism

In Britain, the decades following the Second World War were marked by a broad social democratic consensus, influenced by Keynesian economics (an economic model advocating for greater government spending to increase market confidence and stimulate the economy) and a generous welfare state (especially in the wake of the 1942 Beveridge Report). However, this economic consensus was reversed from the mid-1970s onwards, and replaced

by growing "neoliberal" support for free-market economics and minimal government intervention.

What were the main drivers and turning points in this transition?

Despite warnings against putting too much stress on ideas, in this case the conceptual underpinnings of the economic debate were definitely the starting point. In the first instance, the economic principles of John Maynard Keynes and the social influence of the Beveridge Report both gave credibility to the prevailing economic norms of the day, which included the government taking responsibility for preserving economic stability and growth, and sustaining a developed welfare state.[1] Conversely, various economists associated with the Mont Pèlerin Society (an international thought collective founded by economist Friedrich Hayek in 1947) were arguing for neoliberal ideas that emphasised market solutions and monetary discipline, against any forms of Keynesian "interventionism".[2] The most famous neoliberal grouping came to be the so-called Chicago school of economics, which included economists Milton Friedman, George Stigler, and Gary Becker.

Hayek perceived an erosion of classical liberal ideas such as liberty and prosperity in British economic and political life, influenced by German statist ideas that sought to regulate increasing swathes of society.[3] His ambition was to help the transition from political freedom (achieved through the ravages of war) to economic freedom, and thus restore English classical liberalism to (what he saw as) its former glory, purging the German ideas from politics. In neoliberal thought, political freedom – popular welfare and personal liberty – is obtained by enabling people to make their own economic choices (so facilitating a free market). This was Hayek's essential argument, even as post-war governments were taking on significant responsibility for the welfare of their citizens.

However, in support of all our theories above, none of these ideas or arguments was enough to effect an economic or cultural change alone – either to drive the post-war consensus, or to make meaningful impact in reversing it. **Rather, both the post-war consensus and the neoliberal ascendency must first (in support of Inglehart) be understood in the context of material conditions – at the time and in the recent past – and second (in support of Hunter) in terms of the role of institutions and**

individuals acting close to the centre of economic and political power in the UK.

First, then, regarding the material conditions behind the change, the post-war consensus was distinctly borne of people's experience of the Great Depression of the early 1930s. This was widely perceived to have been a direct consequence of liberal policies that allowed the markets to collapse and then did far too little to alleviate the consequent suffering. As a result, millions of people endured sustained economic and material hardship, the memory of which lasted decades. In a similar fashion, the experience of mass mobilisation in the Second World War (in which different classes intermingled as never before, people were consciously engaged in a common endeavour, and the state made unprecedented reaches into everyday life) further cemented the determination to "win the peace" as well as the war, through planned, institutional intervention.

The subsequent ascendancy of neoliberal economics from the 1970s resulted from a similar – if, in content, profoundly different – pattern of material and institutional circumstances. By the mid-1970s, personal memories of the material deprivation of the Depression were fading, replaced by the more immediate experience of over two decades of sustained economic growth and significant improvement in material conditions. This was the period in which millions of people bought their first car, TV, washing machine, and so on. While this might have been understood as exemplifying the success of social democracy (and it was by many) it also engendered a sense of personal security and independence which lent itself to the more individualistic emphasis within neoliberalism. Bluntly, it was no longer obvious that people needed to make sacrifices (e.g. through higher levels of taxation or exchange controls) for the wider good.

Nor, by this time, was it in any way obvious that the institutions that so dominated post-war (British) life were as admirable or even competent as people had previously thought. This was partly down to the withdrawal of Empire, the cultural eclipsing of the Church, and the relative decline of British presence on the world stage. But it was also, more significantly, on account of the declining competitiveness of British industry in the hands of government, exemplified for many by the stranglehold unions held over the Labour government of

the later 1970s. The extent to which these public attitudes to unions, government, and institutions were justified is much debated, but the point remains that the ascendency of the individualism and negative liberty inherent in neoliberalism in the 1970s was facilitated by a disaffection with the institutions that had been associated with the previous "regime".

All that said, more immediately (and in support of James Davison Hunter), institutions which pushed ideological shifts close to the centre of power were key in the growing support for neoliberalism. In academia, the London School of Economics (LSE) was a key institution in the struggle for Britain's economic policy, as a stronghold of economic neoliberalism in the interwar period. It exerted a high degree of influence over the teaching of economics throughout the British Empire and Britain itself, and most academic members of the British branch of the Mont Pèlerin Society were economists from LSE and Manchester.[4]

Furthermore, as Philip Mirowski shows, neoliberal intellectuals specifically targeted civil society elites and elite institutions to disseminate their ideas. They operated with a long-term view, seeking to circulate ideas that would shape the minds of opinion formers of future generations. Their success is partly explained by their global approach, "deploying [an] elaborate social machinery designed to collect, create, debate, disseminate, and mobilize neoliberal ideas."[5]

In a British context, however, as the economic historian Keith Tribe notes, the most influential voices were from outside academia altogether, working as researchers and consultants linked to various pressure groups or think tanks. Key in this regard were the Institute of Economic Affairs (founded in 1955) and the Adam Smith Institute (founded in 1977). Tribe argues that "most significant for the subsequent development of neoliberal thinking was the creation of the Institute of Economics Affairs (IEA) in 1955", led by entrepreneur and free-market enthusiast Antony Fisher. Fisher had attended a meeting of the Mont Pèlerin Society in 1951 and was subsequently persuaded by Hayek to focus on influencing intellectuals and decision-makers with research and reasoned argument rather than pursuing a political career.[6] Hence his role in establishing the IEA. He and the people associated with these think tanks worked "chiefly in the field of economic journalism, publishing pamphlets and seeking influence on public opinion,

opinion formers, and politicians."[7] **Echoing the terms of James Davison Hunter's model of power, these institutions were deliberately positioned near the centre of power – but not so close to its nucleus to be impacted by the deadening effect of institutional inertia**. Their wider influence is aptly captured by David Collard of Bristol University in 1968:

> *Hardly a week goes by without some conference of teachers, social workers or medical men being told that, for economic reasons, consumers must be charged directly for welfare services... bits and pieces of the New Right's doctrine appear in various places... but it is most coherently expressed in the publications of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). The IEA's output has been considerable.*[8]

In noting the influence of the IEA, Collard discerned that a new "collective view" was emerging, not least because the publications were deliberately targeting those working within the welfare state – such as teachers, doctors, and social workers. In other words, they were seeking to persuade "enemies" or "antagonists", which signalled, for Collard at least, that they needed to be taken seriously for the influence they were capable of exerting.

This form of sustained economic outreach applied Milton Friedman's famous idea that the basic function of economists who depart from the prevailing economic thinking was

> *to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.*[9]

Such efforts, close to the centre of power, did not thrust neoliberal ideas into the mainstream by their own force. Rather, they provided the underlying conditions for the easy exploitation of (what Duncan Green, following Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, above frames as) a "critical juncture" in the nation's economic history. In other words, when a moment of opportunity for change arose, the ideas which took hold as a result were already waiting in the wings. To this end, the 1970s saw a series of concrete changes in material conditions – supremely, the oil shock of 1973 – which struck at the post-war economic consensus. The oil embargo proclaimed by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in October 1973 tripled the cost of oil in the West, putting enormous strains on national budgets. When central banks cut interest rates to encourage

spending, the resulting stagflation – the combination of inflation and a stagnant economy – surprised almost everyone (including economists) and further deepened the economic gloom, precipitating (in the UK) a humiliating request for a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Although not quite as pronounced, similar processes were at work in the US, where the economic crisis, along with the Watergate scandal, the humiliating failure in Vietnam, and the protracted Iran hostage crisis between 1979 and 1981 converged to produce a material and institutional malaise. For the first time in recorded history, Americans as a rule believed that things were not going to get better in the future.

This failure of what can be termed "institutional Keynesianism" (policymakers and intellectuals/academics) to deal with this economic crisis meant that neoliberalism found it easier to offer a compelling narrative about the solutions to the economics of the 1970s – aided by the organisational clout of the neoliberal institutions outlined above, who ensured neoliberal ideas were readily to hand.

In turn, this triggered a public reaction, and having won the Conservative leadership contest in 1975 and the general election in 1979, Margaret Thatcher would often meet with Hayek – her favourite political philosopher – in the offices of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Indeed, the newly formed Conservative government regularly sought advice from advisers associated with the IEA and the Adam Smith Institute.[10] They arguably provided the intellectual ballast for Thatcher's administration and subsequent conservative governments.

The neoliberal ascendency from the 1970s onwards in Britain (and elsewhere) should serve both as a cautionary tale about the resistance of cultures to change, and as a stark demonstration that cultural changes rely on the groundwork of influence and ideas being in place when the broader circumstances of a "critical juncture" emerge. Circumstances beyond the control of any one individual were clearly fundamental to cultural change on this economic issue; the oil shocks of the 1970s could not have been foreseen or planned in any strategic sense. However, without the targeted efforts of a relatively small group of influencers, the same circumstances would also not have led to durable change. In other words, unforeseeable events were central, but the ability to work with such events

when they occurred (building on many of the tactics noted by James Davison Hunter, in particular) was arguably the necessary condition for change. **In this sense, we might conclude simply that targeted efforts *now* enable more intelligent improvisation *in the future*.**

The gay rights movement

In our second case study, we consider the successes of the gay rights movement in recent decades, including successful campaigns for a series of legislative changes alongside (and sometimes pre-empting) this much broader attitudinal shift. In England and Wales, homosexual acts were decriminalised in 1967; civil partnerships were legalised in 2004 (coming into effect in 2005); and same-sex marriages were legalised in 2013 by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, with the first same-sex marriages conducted in England and Wales on 29 March 2014.[11]

Over the last 50 years, the UK has seen a rapid shift in attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Since 1983, the British Social Attitudes survey has asked people whether they think sexual relationships between two adults of the same sex are "always wrong, mostly wrong, sometimes wrong, rarely wrong or not wrong at all". The group of people answering that they thought same-sex partnerships were "not wrong at all" has almost quadrupled from 17% when the survey started in 1983, to 66% in 2018.[12]

Approval fell in the 1980s with the AIDS crisis and the introduction of Section 28 (a law prohibiting the promotion of or teaching about homosexuality in schools) but a fast and steady rise from the early 1990s onwards reflects a wider trend of social liberalisation (reflected also in changing attitudes to pre-marital sex).

What were some of the most important factors contributing to the attitudinal shift and the success of the legal campaigns? Below, we consider three of the most significant events instigating cultural change in the post-war period: the Stonewall riots in 1969, the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957, and the AIDS pandemic of the 1980s.

The 1969 Stonewall riots followed a regular police raid of the gay bar Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York City. The stand-off between the bar's patrons and the police sparked a huge riot that lasted into the night. The papers reported nearly a thousand rioters and several hundred police. The event is typically seen as a

watershed moment in the gay liberation movement and continues to be commemorated through annual Pride parades throughout the world.[13]

The second significant event was the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957. The Wolfenden Committee was set up by the Home Office in 1954 to review "homosexual offences" after a series of high-profile court cases showed how existing legislation against homosexuality was both harsh and unevenly applied. It is worth noting that no gay rights organisations were involved in prompting the committee's work; there were no campaigns and mass protests. What is less well known is the role of the Church of England in establishing the committee. The committee's focus was originally going to be prostitution, but the Church was instrumental in including homosexuality in its remit, based on its own report on the topic, T*he Problem of Homosexuality*, produced by the Moral Welfare Council. This report reasserted the distinction between sin and crime, public and private morality, and the distinct responsibilities of the state and the Church.[14]

When it was published, the Wolfenden Report recommended the partial decriminalisation of homosexual practice between men in England and Wales.[15] This was based on a clear delineation between private and public morality, a distinction that came to play a decisive role in subsequent moral legislation in Britain.[16] As political theorists Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites argue, while it took a decade for the report's recommendations to be fully implemented, its effect on the gay rights movements in the UK was significant. A series of organisations were created in its wake, "the most politically relevant of which were small, non-membership based and reliant on well-connected leaders to gain influence."[17] One such organisation was the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS), created in 1958, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, as one of its patrons. One of its key aims was to persuade parliament to implement the Wolfenden Report.

If the HLRS and other similar organisations[18] took mainly to advocacy and targeted policymakers, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), a grassroots, student organisation, preferred radical politics and sought wider public mobilisation while also pursuing policy change. The GLF was founded at the LSE Student's Union in October 1970 by a mixture of students and other activists, so forging strong links to the student movement and allowing a presence

wherever there was a university, as well as establishing groups in areas with large or dense LGBT populations.[19] They held student "think-ins" and protests around the country.[20] This meant that many students – future intellectual or political leaders – became involved with the cause from a relatively young age. They also encouraged gay people to be open about their sexuality as a means to change social attitudes. New gay and lesbian communities and organisations sprang up as a result.

In turn, the network of organisations enabled the greater impact of various targeted lobbying efforts in subsequent years. For example, the street action group *Outrage*! was led by the charismatic Peter Tatchell, who was previously active in the GLF. *Outrage*! was formed in 1990, and sought to generate public notoriety through direct action, from disrupting ordinations to so-called "kiss-ins". Not only did this generate press attention, but initiatives like the kiss-ins continued the GLF tactic of encouraging people to "come out" to thereby demonstrate the ordinary nature of same-sex attraction, increase visibility, and thus seek to change existing norms.

Here, it is worth noting that the campaign was effectively an applied (albeit uncontrolled) version of Contact Theory – whereby hostility between different groups is reduced through positive interpersonal contact over time. The theory was first proposed in a systematic way by Gordon Allport in 1954, who posited that positive attitudinal shifts would occur through contact between different groups, assuming certain conditions were met: the equal status of both parties, shared goals, cooperation, and the social institutions to support the process. Allport's landmark study has led to a burgeoning field of research and refinement in this area (including later research that suggests Allport's conditions should be seen as "facilitating, rather than essential in nature").[21] Contact Theory is not one of the four theories of change presented in Chapter 1, since its scope is comparatively boundaried, and relates mainly to interpersonal social dynamics rather than sweeping structural or cultural change. Nonetheless, it remains an important theoretical framework for those seeking the breakdown of prejudice in particular.

Connectedly, a third event with lasting consequences for the gay rights movement was the AIDS pandemic during the 1980s. Internationally, the pandemic made it far more difficult for members of the gay community to

contain or hide their sexual orientation alongside the deep human suffering.[22] It is true (as above) that this, as well as Section 28 of the Local Government Act, caused a significant setback for the cause of gay rights in the first instance, with the return of a rhetoric that emphasised the alleged threat that homosexuality posed to the public.[23] Nonetheless, the involuntary "outing" also increased the general public's exposure to the suffering of gay people, which subsequently changed attitudes in families, friendship circles, neighbourhoods, and society as a whole over a longer period – again, a case of Contact Theory in action. In the long run "these twin crises invigorated the [LGBT] community and alerted the public... to the existence of sexual orientation discrimination as a political issue."[24] The cause also found sympathy in certain corners of the media and "opened up a degree of LGBT community access to public policy networks as well as a vehicle for enhanced political advocacy on sexuality issues."[25]

During the 1990s, where *Outrage*! challenged public prejudice as one important "prong" of the LGBT rights campaign, the gay rights charity Stonewall, founded with the support and endorsement of actors Ian McKellen and Michael Cashman, was more than willing to court political favours where needed, tying the campaign more squarely to "acceptability" – knowing when to push and when to stay. In the words of journalist Martin Bright in 2002,

> *After years of resistance, the fact that being gay is no longer an issue for huge swathes of the Establishment owes much to the efficient lobbying of Stonewall during the 1990s.*[26]

Stonewall played a particularly important role in targeted lobbying for the incorporation of the Human Rights Act (HRA) into British law, having used a human rights framework at a European level to bring about change, as seen in the 1994 case *Sutherland v United Kingdom*, heard at the European Court of Human Rights. The case was initiated by Jeff Dudgeon from the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA) with the aim of equalising the ages of consent for same- and different-sex sexual activity.[27] Their lobbying efforts paid off when New Labour emphasised human rights heavily in its 1997 election campaign – subsequently introducing an HRA that would incorporate the ECHR directly into British law in 1998.[28] Although the Labour 1997 manifesto itself did not contain a single reference to LGBT

rights itself, the HRA was de facto a pro-LGBT piece of legislation, enshrining protections for LGBT people in UK law amid a slew of other protections for various groups. Also, much was made of the fact that some ministers in Tony Blair's new cabinet, such as Chris Smith, were openly gay.

Here, we might recall Crutchfield's analysis of effective campaigning, and Green's emphasis on the need to understand the distribution of power when seeking change. In short, a combination of "on the ground" activism and lobbying efforts to power were key methods of change for the LGBT community in the UK. In this sense, the British Gay Rights movement, particularly post-1980, broadly operated a "two-pronged" approach: protest groups on the streets, and highly effective lobbying arms near to the ears of power.

> *The dual action of Stonewall's inside lobbying and Outrage!'s protest campaigns, together with the work of other activist groups like Equality Network in Scotland, finally bore fruit under New Labour...*[29]

Having established themselves as activist groups in the 1970s and 1980s, LGBT groups found themselves with a wealth of political connections (especially) with up-and-coming Labour figures. Many New Labour figures "both had personal connections with the leadership of groups like Stonewall and favoured the legal reforms being championed by LGB groups."[30]

That said, neither of these campaigns speak directly to the rapid attitudinal shifts around issues of sexuality and gender that came through the early 21st century – that is, after decades of slow change even despite targeted and relentless campaigning. Turning to these attitudinal shifts in greater detail, we note a second important facet of the success of LGBT campaigning in recent decades: **the deliberate adoption of a positive campaigning tone at several key points in the movement. This aligns with Crutchfield's injunction to target not simply policy change but seek a change of hearts as well. Specifically, it confirms the necessity of an emotional (not merely intellectual) approach to cultural change**.

Crutchfield's advocacy of a "hearts and policy" approach (distinct from a hearts and minds model of cultural change) is supported by the switch to a more positive approach and harmonious note of LGBT campaigners since the 1980s. As Crutchfield herself observes,

> *In the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the Stonewall Riots and other*

demonstrations [...] many LGBT community members were palpably angry and hostile toward the straight population, understandably so given the legal and social discrimination they had endured for so long. But in the more modern era of marriage equality since the 1980s, LGBT advocates have largely struck a more harmonious note. "It was about persuasion, listening carefully and engaging with perspectives – and it was about winning rather than blaming."[31]

In Massachusetts, after the first referendum on gay marriage failed to yield the desired result, Crutchfield reflects that campaigners congregated outside and sang patriotic songs like God Bless America, waving the American flag, rather than "screaming 'gay rights'".[32]

A positively framed approach has delivered additional legal success in the 2015 Irish referendum on same-sex marriage, when 62% of the electorate (with a turnout of 61%) voted "yes" to the legalisation of same-sex marriage. The campaign for legal change was positively named "Yes Equality", and the campaign's Social Media Director, Craig Dwyer, wrote that,

Yes Equality played a part in moderating the tone of the debate and coverage on social media, encouraging its supporters towards positive messaging. By creating content and responding to online developments, Yes Equality set the upbeat and respectful tone of the debate.[33]

Yet this was not merely a matter of civility; rather it demonstrates the effectiveness of a positive tone – and by associating themselves with optimism (with change, progress, and innovation) the campaign won. For example, one of the key ads of the campaign read: "Loving. Equal. Fair. Generous. Inclusive. There are many words to describe Ireland today. On 22nd May we only need one: YES."[34] Another one personalised the "ask": "I'm your niece; your neighbour; your colleague; your cousin. You can let me marry too."[35]

By the start of the 21st century, crucially, we also see the influence of the entertainment industry (especially in film and music) further bolstering a positive messaging at the level of the imagination. The "Freedom to Marry" campaign founded in the US in 2003, for example, embraced the "love is love" slogan introduced by President Obama in 2015. It devised commercials and social media

posts, the star of which was often not the gay person, but a straight friend or relative of the gay person who would talk about how he or she came round to the idea of having a friend or sibling who was in love with a person of the same gender. According to Crutchfield, Evan Wolfson of the American "Freedom to Marry" campaign realised that "if LGBT advocates wanted to win the freedom to marry, they needed to win over the hearts and minds of straight people".[36] The films *Angels in America* (2003), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), the sitcom *Modern Family* (2009–2020) and Lady Gaga's platinum single "Born This Way" (2011), among other such "cultural artefacts", further reflected and entrenched changing societal norms around LGBT issues in the early 2000s and since. Many of these cultural references were porous between nations, and had comparative impact in the UK and the US.

This not only confirms the importance of the "mythic" fabric of society, recognised as a key ingredient in change through various of our theories outlined above, but also the persuasive power of the entertainment industry and the arts – especially at the level of its own elite (and therefore most culturally credible) form.

Finally, though not the explicit focus of any of our theories of change above, it is worth noting the importance of the internet as its own network and platform for changing culture in the campaign for LGBT rights. Digital culture has an element of identity-play "baked in" to modes of discourse, allowing LGBT people to experiment with identity in a space that can be unmoored from "real-world" consequences:

> *Because online experiences have become increasingly rich and engaging, they enable new ways of being. In order to participate in online activities, people are required to create a virtual identity that may or may not correspond to their regular identity. Without the constraints of biology, one can create a virtual identity of any age or gender or, if the site allows, can take the identity of a wizard or alien.*[37]

Online fora allow people to more easily "come out" in spaces as they feel comfortable, even before they are ready to do so in all areas of their lives (see above for the importance of coming out and visibility to LGBT activism). In doing so, it allows for both the formation of empowering "in-groups", demonstrated, for instance, by the idea of in-groups on platforms,

such as "trans twitter". Additionally, this breaking down of spatial barriers has potentially widened many people's exposure to LGBT people – and thus, by Contact Theory – helps serve to reduce anti-LGBT discrimination.[38] Finally, the internet creates new ways of network-building, which may subvert traditional means of power and conceptions of the "centre" or "elite".

Brexit: "taking back control"

Our third case study is the success of the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum, and the UK's subsequent departure from the EU. Brexit has been the defining political issue of the past five years, but it has also encompassed (and relied upon) wider cultural elements – including fundamental questions of identity, meaning, and belonging in society at large. The UK joined the Common Market (what later became the European Union) in 1972, and voted in favour of continued membership in the first referendum on the matter in 1975. However, public opinion subsequently shifted against the Union, with 26% of the population in favour of leaving the EU in 2013, up 16 points from just 10% in 1992.[39]

The Conservative party promised a referendum on continued membership of the European Union in the 2015 general election. After winning the election and delivering this promised referendum, the UK voted to leave the EU on 23 June 2016; the country officially left the union nearly four years later on 31 January 2020. Even despite growing anti-EU sentiment, the success of the Leave campaign in 2016 was unexpected – and reasons for this success are extremely hotly contested, including accusations of electoral fraud. Indeed, in 2018, Vote Leave was fined £61,000 by the Electoral Commission for breaking electoral law by coordinating with another campaign group BeLeave, led by Darren Grimes.[40]

Once again, we do not seek to offer a definitive account of this success in this section. More modestly, we offer a theory for why the Remain campaign (and especially its appeal primarily to materialist values i.e. economic prosperity) did not succeed.

To begin, then, it is generally accepted that a series of complex macro-level shifts, including a cultural backlash against metropolitan elites, the re-emergence of populism, resurgent English nationalism coupled with growing anti-immigration sentiment in the years preceding the referendum, contributed heavily to the eventual result (although the exact

balance of these factors is a matter of fierce debate).[41]

Recent decades have seen growing disenchantment with the political class in Britain – especially among the working class and outside the south-east of England. In part, this can be seen against a much wider backdrop of socio-economic forces in the UK, including significant economic and regional inequality. To this end, the UK is one of the most regionally unequal OECD countries in the world (only Slovenia and Ireland are more regionally unequal in that group), and has risen by roughly 6 points on the Gini coefficient (a standard measure of inequality) since 1978.[42] BritainThinks' *Brexit Diaries* found that 56% of the nation considers themselves "have-nots", rising to 77% in the North East (and 64% of Leavers generally).[43] Yet beyond this economic context, political disenchantment also more widely reflects a sense of cultural disconnect from an elite political class. For example, in 2011, 75% of the UK population agreed that parties are only interested in votes, up from 64% in 1987.[44] Similarly, in 1987 only 9% of people said they "almost never" trust government to place the needs of the nation above party interests – yet that figure rose to 33% in 2010 and 32% in 2012 and 2013.[45] By the advent of the referendum, 73% of the UK public thought that "politicians do not understand people like me".[46]

At the same time, the UK has also experienced high levels of mass migration in recent years, particularly from Eastern Europe after the New Labour government in 2004 elected not to place temporary restrictions on migration from newly acceded EU nations, making the UK one of few EU nations without immigration brakes. According to the British Social Attitudes NatCent report, the public reacted with growing concern and demanded greater immigration controls.[47] Indeed, immigration came to be considered as one of the most important issues facing the country for most of the past decade. Rising public concern about immigration was a driving factor in the abrupt rise of UKIP as a new political force.[48] Among the groups campaigning for a Leave vote, UKIP and its then-leader Nigel Farage framed immigration as a matter of cultural and economic survival, an existential issue, describing Britain as under threat culturally, from high levels of immigration, and economically, trumpeting economic apocalypse on account of migrants. An illustration of this rhetoric is the infamous poster showing thousands of Syrian refugees crossing the

Croatia-Slovenia border with the words "BREAKING POINT" written in red across the picture, above a line that read: "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders".[49] One also recalls multiple tabloid front page headlines that expressed intense anti-immigration sentiment: "Migrants cost Britain £17BN a year"; "Migrant mothers cost NHS £1.3BN"; "Soaring cost of teaching migrant children", read three *Daily Express* headlines. Or take the *Daily Mail*: "Deadly cost of our open borders"; "Record number of jobless EU migrants in Britain"; "EU killers and rapists we've failed to deport"; "Fury over plot to let 1.5M Turks into Britain".[50]

Recalling the oil shocks of 1973 and the resulting rise in "stagflation" as key structural factors which led to the shift towards neoliberal capitalism, this broad context serves as another reminder that significant cultural changes always occur against a backdrop of large-scale, uncontrollable (at least by those hoping to effect specific change) historical events and shifts. Once again, cultural change cannot be attributed solely to the agency of any one idea, individual, or campaign. At the same time, it also emphasises the combination of material and non-material concerns facing the nation on the eve of the referendum. **This is significant because, despite the fact that both sides framed membership of the EU in some sense as an existential issue (a matter of survival), the successful campaign (the Leave campaign) was that which appealed *beyond* mere economic interests to the level of emotion and the imagination.**

Indeed, the Remain campaign has since been criticised extensively for its negative and unimaginative focus on economic issues – dubbed by critics "Project Fear" – which proved to be a drain on the campaign's momentum. The former Chancellor George Osborne predicted, for example, a drop of £4,300 in household income and an 18% drop in house prices.[51] Speaking at a G7 summit in Japan, he noted:

> *In the long term, the country and the people in the country are going to be poorer. That affects the value of people's homes and the Treasury analysis shows that there would be a hit to the value of people's homes by at least 10% and up to 18%.*

Former Chancellor Alistair Darling and then-Chancellor George Osborne shared a platform to announce that an "emergency Brexit budget" would

be needed, which would bring with it increased taxes and spending cuts: a £2.5bn cut to the NHS, a £1.2bn cut to defence, a £1.15bn cut to education, and a £2bn cut to pensions. This strategy was not a total failure, since it was on this basis that Remain voters generally supported the EU: the primary reason given by 43% of Remain voters was that "the risks of voting to leave the EU looked too great when it came to things like the economy, jobs and prices".[52]

However, its success was inevitably limited to those who prioritised economic reasoning in their voting decision. Here, the fact that more affluent voters tended to be more persuaded by an economic "survival" narrative, and those with least economic security were more persuaded by an argument appealing to self-realisation, freedom, and control, might be of potential challenge to Inglehart's understanding of material conditions affecting change. Nonetheless, the intersection of material and non-material concerns is complicated, and (less affluent) Leave voters may well have been more willing to take a "gamble" against the status quo – "Prospect Theory", in the terminology of contemporary economics. Prospect Theory is the idea that people will not always behave in a way that favours their own economic interests, based on their assessment of risk (preferring, for instance, a possible larger loss to a certain smaller loss). Regarding Brexit, some behavioural economists have argued that many who voted Remain did so due to their perceived proximity to risk – they felt they had more to lose, as they tended to be those who either were, or felt like they were, beneficiaries of globalisation and the EU. Those further down the economic totem pole felt they had little to lose, and thus were willing to take the gamble on Brexit. Furthermore, given that people generally believe that things they think are good will have good outcomes,[53] the risk element of Brexit was diminished and the Leave campaign was able to overcome it. Thus, more than three quarters (77%) of Remain voters thought "the decision we make in the referendum could have disastrous consequences for us as a country if we get it wrong", while more than two thirds (69%) of Leavers thought the decision "might make us a bit better or worse off as a country, but there probably isn't much in it either way".[54]

Meanwhile, the Leave campaign deliberately focused on arguments that appealed to the imagination and emotion, over rational calculation

– above all, drawing conversation away from the economic issues altogether in their framing of the debate. Positive support for departure from the EU was associated with greater control over budgets, borders, and local circumstances, against a sense that "other people" were making key decisions on central issues of self-determination – both for powerless communities, and for the nation as a whole. In terms of specific tactics, language of "we" and "them" was used to great effect, signalling belonging and exclusion.[55] This is exemplified by Nigel Farage declaring, "*we* have fought against the multi-nationals, *we* have fought against the merchant banks, *we* have fought against big politics." The word *free*, in turn, was used to string together positive notions for Leave such as, *free speech* and *free will* and *breaking free* from the EU. A *Sun on Sunday* headline from the time captures this well: "A vote for Brexit is all it takes to set Britain free". Leave also successfully harnessed patriotic sentiment, as this exhortatory remark to *Sun* readers from Boris Johnson illustrates: "It is time to take the chains off the giant, unshackle Britannia and hear the Lion roar again!"[56]

Most famously of all, the "Take Back Control" catchphrase of the Leave campaign proved to have great resonance with the electorate, successfully leveraging people's sense of lack of control over their lives. Thus, nearly half (49%) of Leave voters said the biggest single reason for wanting to leave the EU was "the principle that decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK". One third (33%) said the main reason was that leaving "offered the best chance for the UK to regain control over immigration and its own borders." In Deborah Mattinson's focus groups for BritainThinks, she reports that when asked about Brexit, many Leave voters felt that it would restore Britain's industries – one participant, Ken, told Mattinson that "we used to have the best of engineering, agriculture, fisheries. And now that we can set our own rules, we will again".[57]

This appeal to freedom and control enabled the successful co-opting of political disillusionment for the Leave campaign, reflected in the fact that 90% of Leavers and 84% of Tory voters believed that "Brexit has given the political establishment the shake-up that it urgently needed" – despite the framing of Leave itself as a return to parliamentary sovereignty. As Crutchfield explains:

> *The best social change makers realize they must make people*

feel something before they will do anything else – whether the goal is to get them to change their minds about an issue or to stop or never start a harmful habit. Having visceral emotional reactions awakens people to alternative possibilities – it's what motivates them to act.[58]

Sure enough, polling indicates that just under 43% of voters already knew which way they intended to vote a year or more before the referendum, but a solid 24% only made their mind up at some point within a week of the referendum.[59] Among these "late deciders", emotions polled at +0.75% in comparison to socio-economic issues at +0.03%. Ece Özlem Atikcan, Richard Nadeau, and Éric Bélanger explain:

Resentment toward bureaucracy in Brussels and arguments for regaining control of national borders seem to have infused the Leave campaign with a higher emotional charge that ultimately helped it carry the day.[60]

Of course, more contested is the role that anti-immigration sentiment played in the Leave campaign – and the distinctive tactics of Vote Leave (the official campaign to leave the EU) and Leave.EU are worth noting here. Leave.EU, led by Nigel Farage of UKIP, majored on immigration and security. Farage consistently pointed to immigration as the lead cause of Britain's cultural and economic ills. Vote Leave, however, focused more on national sovereignty and economic interest to make Brexit a more acceptable choice. It sought to capture centre ground voters and argued that leaving the EU would free up money – "£350 million a week", as the infamous bus campaign suggested – to invest in the NHS and other public services.[61] The most famous pillar of the official Leave campaign – the exhortation to "Take Back Control" – clearly exploited the wider cultural context well, appealing in a nebulous sense to both immigration and economic concerns, without needing to focus explicitly on immigration as the keynote of its messaging. Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, the figureheads of Vote Leave, who according to the BBC "put rocket boosters to the campaign", refrained from attacking immigration or migrants. Instead they spoke in softer terms about the need to "control migration", making regular references to an "Australian-style system" or a "points system".[62] However, roughly three weeks before the referendum vote, the official Leave campaign decided to focus more directly on immigration, a move celebrated by Farage.[63] Indeed, Ashcroft polling for Leave cited mainly cultural reasons,

specifically around control, as drivers of the Leave vote.[64]

Simply, the Leave campaign (correctly) regarded its target audience as more than rational calculating individuals. Many argued that the Remain campaign operated with a conception of humans as "homo economicus" – self-interested, isolated, and keen to make decisions that maximise comfort and security for them as an individual. Such a conception has recently been assailed by various disciplines, from neuroeconomics to sociology and psychology, all of which demonstrate a seemingly inherent desire of humans to live socially, with social factors playing a predominant role in our decision-making. Leave appealed to voters as "creatures of desire", people of imagination and emotion, strongly driven by a desire for belonging, dignity, and pride. It tapped into genuine grievances,[65] patriotic sentiment, and sense of rootedness in and commitment to place,[66] which found a mythic and imaginative power in the concept of sovereignty. This showed at least an instinct for anthropologically astute social marketing that recognises, based on neurobiology among other disciplines, that people feel-do-think rather than think-feel-do, as was traditionally understood. Emotions precipitate behavior.

The environmental movement

Our final case study is the rise of the environmental movement, and especially its move to the centre of the public conversation in the UK over recent years.

This case study ostensibly challenges James Davison Hunter's overarching sense that change happens primarily from the "top down", given the prominence (and indeed successes, albeit partial) of the grassroots climate activism in recent years. Of course, this activism must be examined against the steady accumulation of expert voices and scientific evidence, coming from elite circles in academia and governmental and inter-governmental bodies, such NASA and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), all steadily and consistently pointing to human-driven climate change. However, it is clear that scientific fact alone does not suffice. In the 33 years since it was established, the IPCC produced a series of comprehensive reports drawing on the scientific literature on climate change. Over time, this boosted confidence in the science of climate change. But, as

some of the world's most prominent environmental organisations, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Friends of the Earth, learned the hard way, merely dispensing information, addressing the deficit in understanding, and "raising awareness" cannot themselves produce the change required to address the environmental challenge.

In part, this reflects the sheer scale of the challenge in persuading leaders to take action – and here it is worth pausing to acknowledge the differences between the sort of changes pursued in each of the case studies examined in this chapter. For example, changing attitudes and legislation around homosexuality is markedly different from changing global patterns of resource and energy use. Tackling climate change, by its very nature, requires an internationally joined-up strategic approach on an unprecedented scale.

This reflects the major complication facing environmental campaigners: the diffuse nature of the issues at stake. After all, climate change is what some have called a "wicked problem" (i.e. its complexity is such that it is very difficult to assign blame to persons or organisations for the problem, and so even more difficult to identify a clear-cut and readily communicated policy solution or campaigning issue). The early successes of the environmental movement sought to overcome this problem, by campaigning on pollutants that infiltrate the environment from a clearly identifiable place, such as storm-water discharges from factories, metropolitan storm sewer structures, or emissions from chimneys in factories. For example, the role of CFCs in creating a "hole in the ozone layer" was fairly rapidly discovered and publicised by activists, and governments acted together, in response to a clear and straightforward problem alongside public outcry to take necessary action. Sadly, however, these discrete sources of pollution are rare. In fact, environmental activists and sustainability experts acknowledge that the far greater problem is pollution which results from many diffuse sources and processes, including land runoff, precipitation, drainage, seepage, but also smokestacks and tailpipes from cars which adversely affect air quality. In the case of this diffuse pollution, "the buck stops everywhere". The effects range from mass plastic pollution, catastrophic loss of biodiversity through widespread changes in land use based on large-scale processes of development, and most commonly invoked, climate disruption to which

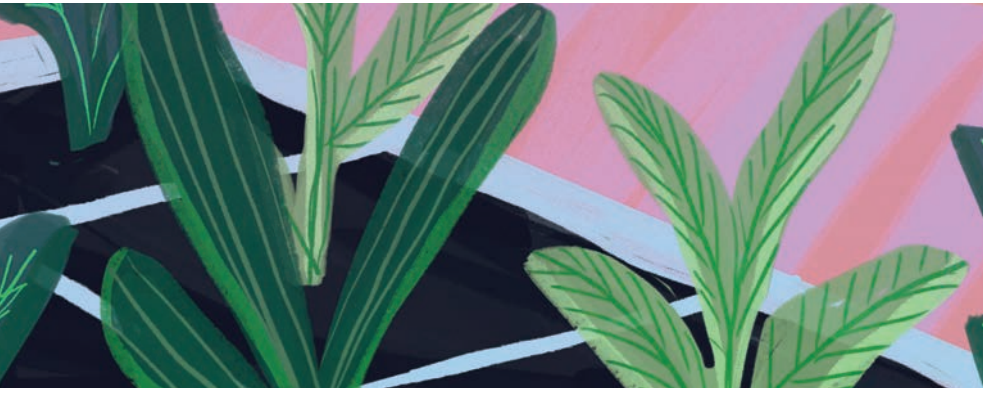
every individual contributes a bit and some contribute a lot. The result is not only a diffusion of impact but also of responsibility. It is much more difficult to campaign against what is clearly a system in which everyone is implicated. The issue is diffuse and for the most part invisible (although that does not entail that some individuals, and indeed societies, are not more culpable than others – and the most affluent especially bear a greater portion of responsibility for the effects of global warming, despite generally being least impacted by its effects).[67]

Alongside the challenge of complexity (and in greater support of James Davison Hunter), the failure of science to "cut through" itself reflects the influence of well-financed organisations downplaying the severity or denying the issue altogether (in other words, the presence of a targeted campaign against climate action which employed many of the tactics identified by Hunter in defence of the status quo). Similar to the tobacco industry, fossil fuel companies like Chevron, ExxonMobile, and BP have been key funders of climate change denial for the past 30 years. It is estimated that the world's five largest publicly owned oil and gas companies have spent about $200m a year on lobbying to control, delay or block binding climate policy.[68] Their tactics included propping up experts with questionable credentials, promoting conspiracy narratives, and cherry-picking evidence.[69] ExxonMobile, for example, spent nearly $16m (£11m) between 1998 and 2005 to fund groups that spread disinformation against climate science.[70] But according to a study from 2013, corporations have been displaced as the primary funders of climate scepticism and denialism by a dense network of over 90 conservative advocacy groups, think tanks, and industry associations.[71] The author of the study refers to it as the "climate-change counter movement" given broad scale and concerted nature of the effort.[72] Between them, the groups received $7bn over the eight years of the study.[73]

And indeed, the reality of institutional inertia (working against cultural change) is also particularly marked in the case of climate change, since the cost of being the "first to act" is so high. In 2006, the 700-page Stern Review, commissioned by the British government, found that cutting carbon emissions so that carbon dioxide peaked in the range of 450–550 parts per million would cost 1% of global GDP annually. That figure was revised to 2% in 2008. But the report also showed that

ignoring climate change could cause economic damage on the order of up to 20% of GDP and thus outlined the clear benefits of early and decisive action.[74] In reality, however, there are strong incentives, including financial ones (as indicated above), to deny the problem or delay action until it is too late. For politicians, climate policies requiring an overhaul of industry and significant lifestyle changes for ordinary citizens do not easily translate into electoral benefits. Indeed, addressing climate change effectively requires taking a whole-earth perspective and long-term, generational thinking, skills, and virtues which have not been cultivated properly in the age of global capitalism.[75]

To an extent, the complex problem of collective inertia started to be addressed with the arrival of technological advances that reduced the price of renewable energy to the point where it is now on a clear trajectory to overtake fossil fuels. Over the last ten years the cost of Solar Photovoltaics has come down by 89%, Concentrating Solar Power by 47%, Onshore and Offshore Wind by 39% and 29% respectively.[76] As the cost of green technologies (not all of them) has come down,[77] the economic arguments against pro-environmental action have slowly been defeated. It has become economically sensible to make the shift towards renewable energy even in the absence of a principled, ethical commitment and a psychological shift towards environmentalism. This is clearly in evidence today in large swathes of the business sector where the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework for



business and investing is becoming widely adopted. Simply, green energy is itself becoming profitable – and all the while, the political and economic costs of inaction are slowly rising.[78]

Nonetheless, climate change climbed more rapidly up the agenda of global leaders through the confluence not only of all the factors above, but especially two later (and largely unforeseen) factors: a series of extreme weather events in the run up to the historic 2015 Paris Agreement, and the unprecedented success of grassroots activism from 2018 onwards. We unpack each in turn below.

As to the first, the years before the Paris Agreement saw several years of extreme weather, including Hurricane Sandy in October 2012, record high temperatures, and wildfires in Australia in 2013. Indeed, extreme weather events, including wildfires, droughts, and devastating storms have been a regular occurrence in the last decade.[79] Environmental advisor Tom Burke calls these types of events, which forced change in the cultural awareness of the issue, "'enemy action' by the climate as it responds to an increased carbon in the atmosphere".[80] Bearing some resemblance to other case studies above, this extreme weather can be seen as a "critical juncture" that changed circumstances enough that ideas which were lying in wait to inform the conversation now came to the centre of the debate. Once again, then, there is a danger in attributing disproportionate causal change power to specific individuals, organisations, strategies, or interventions, and assuming the change occurred as a result of following a specific recipe.

However, effective change movements are able to improvise with what they have as events unfold, and working dynamically with circumstances as they emerge and preparing for opportune moments before they arise. And after years of little movement in this regard, the environmental movement experienced a sudden and unprecedented boost from 2018 onwards. How?

In part, the association of the messages with prominent and widely admired public figures, including David Attenborough, was important. Attenborough had been associated with the environmental cause many years before 2018. However, his fame and appeal grew further (and with it, the appeal of the environmental message) with the hugely successful series of documentaries *Planet Earth I & II,* both now available on Netflix (after they were originally screened on BBC).

According to the BBC, in 2016, the first three episodes of *Planet Earth II* garnered more views from young people between 18 and 34 than the popular music show *X Factor*.[81] A new series, *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet*, has recently become available on Netflix and features Attenborough and earth scientist Johan Rockström.[82] All this once again highlights the powerful influence of the entertainment industry and the arts more broadly to catalyse change.

Nonetheless, despite all this, it remains the case that the environmental crisis ultimately captured public attention as a result of a spike in grassroots activism from 2018 onwards. This is best illustrated by two distinct activist campaigns. One is the rapid growth of Extinction Rebellion, a global environmental movement started in the UK in 2018. They are well known for staging mass protests and engaging in acts of civil disobedience, including blockading bridges (London, November 2018) and occupying prominent sites in major cities (Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Circus, Parliament Square, etc. in London) in order to prompt governments to take immediate action to address climate change. Another movement – which can be seen as more consequential and enduring – began when the young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg staged a protest outside the Swedish parliament. This sparked the international campaigning movement School Strike for Climate also known as Fridays for Future, Youth for Climate, Climate Strike, which gathered millions of strikers, mostly schoolchildren, between August 2018 and the start of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020.

In all this, the unexpected moral leadership of Greta Thunberg can hardly be overstated. Once again, on the surface at least, this is in tension with James Davison Hunter's theory of cultural change, which emphasises the role of elites in close proximity to the centre of power and influence. Thunberg was catapulted to fame from a position of obscurity and emerged as a leader from "the margins", well outside public attention. However, it is worth pointing out that the 2018 IPCC Special Report was a key jumping-off point for people to take her seriously – and indeed, her exposure was vastly expanded following her speech at COP24 in December 2018, when she famously declared to the world leaders gathered there that,

> *Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible there's no hope.*

We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis...[83]

Since then, she has been willingly incorporated into elite events, such as the World Economic Forum, and delivered messages from the pro-environmental sections of global elites to the laggard constituencies. In this way, Thunberg, far from being wholly detached from elites, was amplifying messages from those sections of the elites (the IPCC, notably) that were urging climate action on governments and business. Her role therefore has not been as a lone rebel but as a more effective advocate of established climate science and elite lobbying than the pro-environmental elite lobbies themselves have been.

In April 2021 the Nobel prize summit declared a planetary emergency. Nearly 130 Nobel laureates, including scientists, novelists, and former presidents signed a statement to call attention to the climate emergency and called on governments to sign up to a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty. The statement is a world record.[84]

This flurry of activism and lobbying has been reflected in a surge of pledges from governments and businesses alike. With Joe Biden at the helm, the US has rejoined the 2015 Paris Agreement and pledged, in April, to cut carbon emissions by 50–52% below 2005 levels by the year 2030. The target essentially doubles their previous promise.[85] Similarly, the EU has adopted ambitious new targets to cut carbon emissions by at least 55% by 2030, with a pledge to make them legally binding.[86]

Also, in recent months there have also been a series of successful legal breakthroughs, with fossil fuel companies coming under pressure from campaign groups using the courts to force changes in corporate behaviour. None of our four theories of cultural change major on the use of existing law to bring change, while Green and Crutchfield do emphasise policy. If this relatively new strategy by environmental groups proves to be significant in drifting change that might come to be seen as an oversight.[87]

Conclusion

This collection of real-world examples confirms many of the features of successful cultural change noted in Chapter 1. We have especially observed the **importance of institutions which incubate key ideas**; the necessity of networks which overlap with systems of power; and perhaps above all, the vital importance of **emotional resonance** and the **imagination** (and consequently, the **disproportionate**

influence of the arts and entertainment industry).

At the same time, each case study in its own way has underlined that none of these factors are silver bullets for cultural change on their own. In the first instance, echoing Inglehart, the material conditions of any given moment, as well as other broad, uncontrollable, external factors, will impose constraints on the sorts of cultural change which might take hold. But more than this, the role of "critical junctures" (which are by their very nature unpredictable and outside any one individual's control) is also a striking feature of meaningful change. **In short, then, the most successful change-makers are those who plan for the long term, making them good improvisers when the key conditions for change emerge**.

In our discussion so far, we have noted the difficulties of defining culture and the complexity of cultural change. Out of this discussion, we have offered a set of insights pertaining to secular cultural change. Together, these provide a helpful technical context for discussing the Church's responsibility in culture. But while Christians duly consider the complexities of cultural change and the sociological and historical insights distilled so far, **the Church's overall direction and approach to culture must be determined theologically – and it is to this task that we now turn in the remainder of the report**.

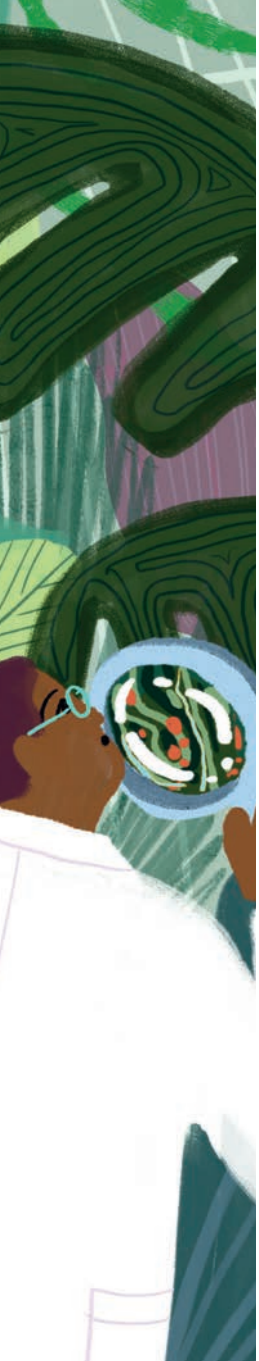
The most successful change-makers are those who plan for the long term, making them good improvisers when the key conditions for change emerge.

References

1. Basak Kus, "Neoliberalism, Institutional Change and the Welfare State: The Case of Britain and France", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 47, 6 (December, 2006), pp. 488–525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715206070268
2. For an introduction to, and a summary of, the key neoliberal ideas see Philip Mirowski, "Postface: Defining neoliberalism" in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* eds. Philip Mirowski & Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 417–46.
3. Keith Tribe, "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930–1980" in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* eds. Philip Mirowski & Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 68.
4. Dieter Plehwe, "Introduction" to *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* eds. Philip Mirowski & Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 12, 28. See also, in the same volume, Keith Tribe's chapter, "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930–1980", pp. 69, 87.
5. Philip Mirowski, "Postface: Defining neoliberalism" in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* eds. Philip Mirowski & Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 431–2.
6. http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/Chronology.pdf
7. Ibid, p. 89.
8. David Collard quoted in Keith Tribe, "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930–1980", p. 68. David Collard, *The New Right: A Critique*, Fabian Tract 387 (London: Fabian Society, 1968), I.
9. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 2nd edition (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. ix.
10. Keith Tribe, "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930–1980", p. 90.
11. Note that marriage law is a devolved issue in the United Kingdom.
12. https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39358/5_bsa36_relationships_and_gender_identity.pdf. Although the British Social Survey data only goes back as far as 1983, it is entirely plausible that attitudes were just as, if not more, negative prior to 1983.
13. Elizabeth A Armstrong, Suzanna M Crage, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth", *American Sociological Review* 71, 5 (October 2006), p. 724.
14. For a fuller discussion of the role of the Church of England in the Wolfenden Report see Matthew Grimley, "Law, Morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954–1967", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60, 4 (2009), pp. 725–41. DOI: 10.1017/S0022046908005952.
15. The report maintained that sex between men should remain a criminal offence under the age of 21.
16. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, politics and society: the regulation of sexuality since 1800*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 239.
17. Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, "United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Movements" in eds.

Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, Carol Johnson, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 184.

18. See, for example, the Minorities Research Group (1964) and Campaign for Homosexual Equality (1964).
19. Sarah Louise Webster, "Protest Activity in the British Student Movement, 1945 to 2011", PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2015. https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/54572449/FULL_TEXT.PDF
20. Ibid.
21. Jim A C Everett, "Intergroup Contact Theory: Past, Present and Future", *The Inquisitive Mind 2*, 17 (2003); T F Pettigrew & L R Tropp, "A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 90, 5 (2006), p. 751. See also Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954); M Hewstone and R Brown, "An integrative theory of intergroup contact" in M P Zanna, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (London: Elsevier, 2005), pp. 256–345.
22. Raquel Fernández and Sahar Parsa, "Coming out: AIDS, institutions, and cultural change", https://voxeu.org/article/coming-out-aids-institutions-and-cultural-change.
23. https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39358/5_bsa36_relationships_and_gender_identity.pdf. p. 18.
24. Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, "United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Movements" in eds. Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, Carol Johnson, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 186.
25. David Rayside, "Early Advocacy for the Public Recognition of Sexual Diversity" in eds. Michael J Bosia, Sandra M McEvoy, Momin Rahman, *The Oxford Handbook of LGBT and Sexual Diversity Politics*, online publication date: June 2019. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190673741.013.3
26. Martin Bright, "In the pink", *The Guardian*, 24 Nov 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/gayrights.comment
27. Ibid. 62, p. 188.
28. Carl F Stychin, Governing Sexuality: *The Changing Politics of Citizenship and Law Reform* (London: Hart Publishing, 2003), p. 26, f2.
29. David Paternotte, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 189.
30. Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, "United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Movements" in eds. Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, Carol Johnson, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 188.
31. Crutchfield, *How Change Happens*, p. 90.
32. Ibid.
33. http://forachange.org/the-importance-of-tone/
34. https://twitter.com/YesEquality2015/status/588988573120126976
35. https://twitter.com/ivanabacik/status/601679594098454529/photo/1
36. Crutchfield, *How Change Happens*, p. 89.
37. Cynthia Carter Ching and Brian J Foley (eds.), *Constructing the Self in a Digital World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ProQuest eBook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1024997. This fluidity of identity is explored, though from a far more critical perspective, in Lisa Nakamura's *Cypertypes: Race, Ethnicity and Identity on the Internet* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).
38. Yair Amichai-Hamburger and Katelyn Y. A. McKenna, "The Contact Hypothesis Reconsidered: Interacting via the Internet" in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 11.3, April 2006.
39. https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39294/8_bsa36_the_eu_debate.pdf



40. https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/vote-leave-fined-and-referred-police-breaking-electoral-law

41. See the discussions in, among others, David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The New Tribes Shaping British Politics* (London: Penguin, 2017); Eric Kaufmann, *Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration and the Future of White Majorities* (London: Penguin, 2019); Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) or an earlier paper which summarises their argument: https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/trump-brexit-and-rise-populism-economic-have-notsand-cultural-backlash. See also Jonathan Hopkin, *Anti-System Politics: The Crisis of Market Liberalism in Rich Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Chapter 4: Taking Back Control: Britain Turns Against the Market; Maria Sobolewska and Robert Ford, *Brexit Land: Identity, Diversity and the Reshaping of British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Gavin Esler, *How Britain Ends: English Nationalism and the Rebirth of Four Nations* (London: Apollo, 2021).

42. "Household income inequality, UK: financial year ending 2020 (provisional)", Office for National Statistics (ONS), 22 July 2020, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/bulletins/householdincomeinequalityfinancial/financialyearending2020provisional; P McCann, "Perceptions of regional inequality and the geography of discontent: insights from the UK", *Regional Studies* 52, 2 (2019), pp. 25–67. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00343404.2019.1619928

43. Deborah Mattinson, *Beyond the Red Wall: Why Labour Lost, How the Conservatives Won and What Will Happen Next?* (London: Biteback, 2020), Kindle edition: location 40%.

44. https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/38455/bsa30_politics_final.pdf

45. https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39374/bsa37_political_consequences_brexit.pdf

46. "Britain Thinks: Mood of the Nation Summary Report", 18 June 2019, https://britainthinks.com/mood-of-the-nation-2019/, p. 20.

47. https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39148/bsa34_immigration_final.pdf

48. Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin. "Understanding UKIP: Identity, Social Change and the Left Behind", *The Political Quarterly* 85, 3 (July–September 2014), https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12099

49. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-48244663

50. https://twitter.com/KimGhattas/status/747042626235310081/photo/1

51. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/20/eu-referendum-george-osborne-house-prices-brexit

52. https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/

53. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2677659

54. Richard Baldwin, "The economics of Brexit: Pre-referendum videos and columns", https://voxeu.org/article/economics-brexit-pre-referendum-videos-and-columns-voxeuorg.

55. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2018/07/24/book-review-the-language-of-brexit-by-steve-buckledee/

56. Paul Rowinski review of Steve Buckledee (ed), *The Language of Brexit: How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union in European Journal of Communications* 1–2, 2018.

57. Mattinson, Beyond the Red Wall, location 39%.

58. Crutchfield, How Change Happens, p. 97, drawing on Philip Kotler's work on social marketing. See P Kotler & G Zaltman, "Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change", *Journal of Marketing* 35, 3 (July 1971), pp. 3–12. Also, Philip Kotler and Nancy R Lee, *Social Marketing: Influencing Behaviors for Good* (London: Sage, 2008), p. 7.

59. https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/

60. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/11/03/framing-risky-choices-how-the-leave-campaign-convinced-britain-to-take-a-leap-into-the-unknown/?fbclid=IwAR0wgwIVZ_hpTbLgH02GadV2hAa6W_eIpkZuxWZNeCPHq0ZxpnGvB__nkgA

61. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36033481

62. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/voting-details-show-immigration-fears-were-paradoxical-but-decisive

63. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36444014

64. https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016/06/how-the-united-kingdom-voted-and-why/

65. BritianThinks Brexit Diaries found that 90% of Leavers and 84% of Conservative voters believed that "Brexit has given the political establishment the shake-up that it urgently needed". Also, 73% of the UK public thinks that "politicians do not understand people like me" – see https://britainthinks.com/leadership-in-times-of-crisis-what-do-the-public-want-from-leaders-at-times-of-crisis/

66. See David Goodhart's illuminating study, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: Penguin, 2017) which showed the fault line between those whom he called Anywheres, people with identities based on education achievement and professional success, who value social and geographical mobility, and Somewheres, people with identities rooted in a particular place, who value family, authority, and national identity. Brexit was arguably the victory of Somewheres over Anywheres. It was the "cultural backlash" (Inglehart) for Anywheres looking down on Somewheres.

67. It is possible, therefore, to attribute responsibility at scale – and this kind of large-scale responsibility is now being tested in law – see the legal action being brought against national governments and corporations in numerous jurisdictions, some with success. Jason Hickel, "Quantifying national responsibility for climate breakdown: an equality based attribution approach for carbon dioxide emissions in excess of the planetary boundary", The *Lancet Planetary Health* 4, 9 (2020), pp. 399–404. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/s2542519620301960

68. https://www.forbes.com/sites/deloitte/2021/05/20/why-organized-illicit-finance-demands-an-organized-global-response/?sh=77302b60101a

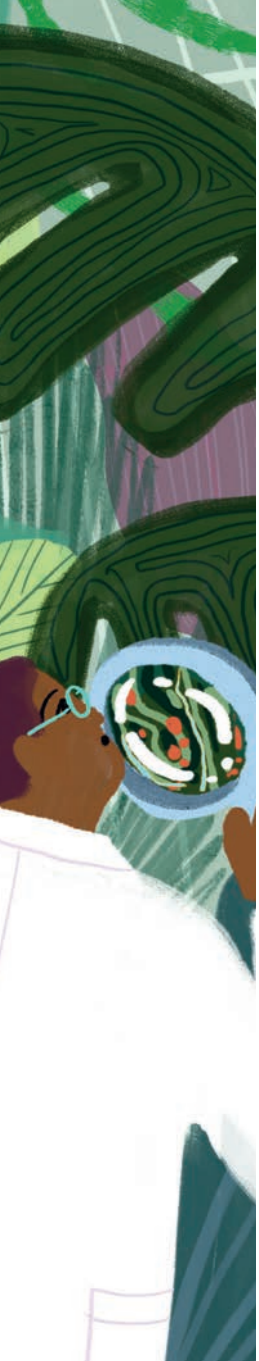
69. See, for example, https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2019-10-21/oil-companies-exxon-climate-change-denial-report, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/25/fossil-fuel-firms-are-still-bankrolling-climate-denial-lobby-groups and https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/10/vested-interests-public-against-climate-science-fossil-fuel-lobby

70. https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/smoke-mirrors-hot-air

71. Robert J. Brulle, "Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations", *Climatic Change* 122 (2014), pp. 681–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-013-1018-7

72. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/dec/20/conservative-groups-1bn-against-climate-change

73. For more on the influence of climate denialism counter-movements, see for example, Naomi Orestes and Erik M Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York, NY; Doubleday, 2016); Robert J Brulle, "Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S.



Climate Change Counter-Movement Organizations" in *Climatic Change* 122(2014), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-013-1018-7.

74. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/25513/SternReview.pdf
75. There is also a major collective action problem at work here, in which it is in everybody's interests to act – but no clear incentive to be the first to act. See Michaël Aklin and Matto Mildenberger, "Prisoners of the Wrong Dilemma: Why Distributive Conflict, Not Collective Action, Characterizes the Politics of Climate Change", *Global Environmental Politics* 20, 4 (2020), pp. 4–27. https://doi.org/10.1162/glep_a_00578
76. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/renewable-energy-cheaper-coal/
77. https://ourworldindata.org/cheap-renewables-growth
78. See for example this piece on how US business has been decarbonising almost regardless of the fraught politics of climate (in)action in America over the past three decades: https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2021/06/climate-change-green-vortex-america/619228/
79. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/12/wildfires-are-striking-closer-and-closer-to-cities-we-know-how-this-will-end
80. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2014/mar/26/events-climate-change-extreme-weather
81. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/12/01/young-people-watching-planet-earth-x-factor-confirms-bbc/
82. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/29/johan-rockstrom-interview-breaking-boundaries-attenborough-biden
83. https://unfccc.int/documents/187780
84. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/21/101-nobel-laureates-call-for-global-fossil-fuel-non-proliferation-treaty
85. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56837927
86. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56828383
87. The use of law can be seen as an extension of the Thunberg approach, which takes elite knowledge and declared values seriously and confronts elites with their failure to act on them. Law in this case is used, as Thunberg used the WEF, UN, etc., to show up hypocrisy and turn the inconsistencies of established interests against them. Climate action is not set against established law but shown to be a required consequence of it.

03 A theology of cultural engagement

Having considered the dynamics of cultural change in some detail, how might the Church and individual Christians draw on these insights for their witness and mission in culture? Sometimes this process of discernment will lead Christians down paths that chime with the insights and conclusions of the previous chapters – but it may equally lead them away from what might otherwise seem sensible or strategic. As James Davison Hunter (himself a Christian) observes, for modern disciples of Christ there is a balance here: theology often "moves in the opposite direction of social theory [regarding how cultures change] but is neither oblivious nor without reference to its insights".[1]

The Church, in both its gathered dimension (as communities of worship, discipleship, and mission), and in its scattered dimension (as individual disciples present within different vocational contexts), is *already* and *unavoidably* embedded in, and has an active responsibility towards, the culture(s) in which it participates. The challenge before the Church is to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, complacency and passivity, where vocations, gifts, and resources, including power, are not stewarded wisely, and the Church remains cowed and inward looking; on the other, hubristic engagement, predicated on the pride and illusion of being able to control culture and history more broadly, falling into the temptations to grab for power for its own sake. Regarding the latter, Hunter writes that

> *the presumption is both that one can know God's specific plans in human history and that one possesses the power to realize those plans in human affairs. There is a fine line between presumption and hope.*[2]

In this section we therefore consider what a hopeful, humble, and theologically informed understanding of the Church acting to serve, bless, and renew culture might look like, drawing on a range of biblical and theological

models. In doing so, we move beyond a consideration of cultural "change", in a neutral sense, towards a reflection on what cultural "renewal" might look like according to the Church's specific identity, vision, and mission.

H Richard Niebuhr: five models of church and culture

A helpful starting point for anyone discussing the relationship between Church and culture is Richard Niebuhr's influential work on the topic, *Christ and Culture*.[3] Niebuhr advances five models for how Christ, and by implication the Church, is understood to relate to culture. These are briefly outlined in the green box below as a way of framing some of the broad, historically consequential options available to Christians as they engage with the culture around them. In delineating these models, Niebuhr assumes an all-encompassing understanding of culture as "[the] total process of human activity and that total result of such activity". In other words, he views culture as consisting of everything apart from the natural world: "language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artefacts, technical processes, and values".[4] On this view, culture is a fundamental human activity and achievement, therefore laden with values, and demanding intentional, purposeful action. We might say therefore that "Christ with no reference to culture" is the sixth, implicit model, which Niebuhr rejects out of hand.

The challenge before the Church is to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, complacency and passivity, where vocations, gifts, and resources, including power, are not stewarded wisely, and the Church remains cowed and inward looking; on the other, hubristic engagement, predicated on the pride and illusion of being able to control culture and history more broadly, falling into the temptations to grab for power for its own sake.

Niebuhr's five models

Christ *against* culture

The first model Niebuhr presents is "Christ *against* culture". In this model there is a clear line of separation between the Church and the world. Therefore, the Church is understood as a community whose very existence judges the world: the Church seeks purity both from what it judges to be corrupt forms of Christianity (in which the Church is allied with state power) and from wider society or "the world". The Church's basic posture is one of withdrawal from culture. Niebuhr views this approach as exemplified, for example, by traditions rooted in the Radical Reformation (e.g. Anabaptists, Mennonites), and sees it as a necessary model in certain circumstances, given that followers of Christ must reject certain institutions and practices (e.g. the use of coercion and violence, institutionalised greed). There will be certain elements of culture from which Christians need to abstain. However, he judges this model as ultimately limited, since Christians are always and inevitably embedded in and shaped by culture (for better or worse) at some level. We cannot take an "absolutist" approach to culture in all instances, while also fulfilling our obligations to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Christ *of* culture

The second of Niebuhr's models – Christ *of* culture – sees little to no perceived tension between the Church and the world, since Jesus is understood as the fulfilment of society's ideals and aspirations. He "stands for the idea of spiritual knowledge; or of logical reason; or of the sense for the infinite; or of the moral law within; or of brotherly love."[5] The tradition of theological liberalism beginning with 18th-century "culture-Protestantism", including John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Jefferson, Friedrich Schleiermacher, F D Maurice, and others, fits this model. Despite the appeal of this position to the elite and powerful groups within a civilisation, Niebuhr sees it as inadequate because it allows loyalty to culture to trump loyalty to Christ. Along these same lines, he might also be understood

implicitly to guard against the full adoption (without question) of any of the strategies outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 of this report.

Christ *above* culture

Between the two extremes outlined above, Niebuhr argues that the dominant position of the Church has usually fallen somewhere in the middle – within the broad tent of a "Christ *above* culture" model. Within this camp, Niebuhr identifies three subgroups – synthesists, dualists, and conversionists – each of which is described below.

A *"synthesist"* approach

For the "synthesists", Christ is Lord over both culture and the Church. A synthesis between faith and reason, church and state, is possible, as demonstrated by the history of Constantinian Christianity. But Niebuhr thinks this "[does] not in fact face up to the radical evil present in all human work."[6] It also tends to lead to an alignment of the Church with the state apparatus and power.

A *"dualist"* approach

The "dualists" see Christ and culture existing in a paradoxical relationship, since **Christians must recognise that human depravity pervades and corrupts all human work and culture, while also heeding the call to live faithfully in it**.[7] This model is similar to the "Christ against culture", but highlights the universality of sin rather than a distinction between "them" and "us". Niebuhr writes:

> *The dualist joins the radical Christian in pronouncing the whole world of human culture to be godless and sick unto death. But there is this difference between them: the dualist knows that he belongs to that culture and cannot get out of it, that God indeed sustains him in it and by it; for if God in His grace did not sustain the world in its sin it would not exist for a moment.*

Consequently, the dualist "cannot speak otherwise than in what sound like paradoxes."[8]

Christ *transforming* culture

Niebuhr's final category is also the one to which he seems most favourable: "Christ *transforming* culture", or conversionism. For the conversionists, culture contains the evidence of, and transmits, the human being's fallen nature. Opposition between Christ and all human institutions and customs is recognised. **However, rather than separating from the world (Christ against culture) or merely enduring it in the hope of a salvation outside history (dualism), conversionists see Christ as the transformer of humanity and culture.** He "redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates that life of man, expressed in all human works, which in present actuality is the perverted and corrupted exercise of a fundamentally good nature."[9] Initially embraced by mainline Protestants, this stance has since also come to characterise conservative Christianity – and it has been positively influential in persuading Christians to "reflect on their own embeddedness in and responsibility for the culture around them".[10]

There is of course a clear risk in this approach: that a subtle shift emerges in the mind of the Church over time, from *Christ* transforming culture to *Christians* transforming culture. The expectation of sweeping, if gradual, transformation of culture leads (in the words of cultural commentator and Partner at Praxis Labs, Andy Crouch)

> *to a confusion between what God in Christ may be doing in the grand sweep of human culture on the one hand and what Christ's followers can hope for in their cultural activities on the other hand.*[11]

The temptation for Christians will always be to "take matters into our own hands, to take over God's role as the transformer of culture."[12] Here, it is especially "dangerous to abstract away from Jesus the Messiah as we meet him in the New Testament, turning him into a cosmic Christ who embodies a posture towards culture as a whole."[13]

Niebuhr's models offer helpful sketches of how the Church has historically related (and continues to relate) to culture. However, it should be clear these are not mutually exclusive, despite Niebuhr's personal preference for "transformationism". Rather, different models will be required in different contexts and settings.

This is partly due to the nature of culture itself. As noted in the introduction to this report, culture itself is inevitably plural rather than monolithic; a single framework or approach cannot be endorsed for relating to Bengali culture in East London, "a culture of greed" in a particular sector or company, or TikTok as a cultural phenomenon in our digital age. Culture is also extremely complex. Therefore, as noted in Chapters 1 and 2, at a practical level, effective cultural engagement of any kind requires agility and improvisation rather than rigid planning or a fixed response.

But there are also more explicitly theological reasons for adopting a situational or contextual approach to culture, as we will now explore. Despite its influence, Niebuhr's typology is neither exhaustive nor definitive; as the rest of this chapter seeks to show, other models and frameworks, that are more clearly and deeply rooted in Scripture, are available and should be considered. Above all, a contextual response reflects an approach to culture rooted in the cultural engagement of Jesus himself.

An incarnational model of cultural engagement

At the heart of Christianity is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit – not a set of abstract rules. Christian engagement with the world will therefore always need to be dynamic and responsive to context. Following the example of Jesus, it will range from energetic and sustained engagement with culture, to abstention and quiet (even silent) witness to the Gospel against the world. Jesus himself challenged tax collectors to repent, but he also invited them to join him in celebration and feasting; he showed anger in the Temple, but was powerfully silent in the face of his oppressors at trial – and, above all, retreated often to pray.[14]

As such, following Jesus through the guidance of the Spirit, each concrete setting or cultural expression will call for what Christian author Andy Crouch calls a different "gesture" from Christians – *celebration, challenge, cultivation, creativity* – or, indeed, a combination of these. An example of

a creative, if quiet, way of challenging unjust systems and structures is perhaps the 18th-century American Quaker and early abolitionist John Woolman (1720–72), who boycotted the dye industry by refusing to wear dyed fabrics after learning that many workers in the industry were being poisoned by the toxic substances used. But boycott was not the only approach he took in his witness against injustice. Throughout his life, Woolman also used his writing, preaching, and professional activity to oppose slaveholding and the slave trade. Through patient witness and by persistently expressing his concerns about slaveholding, he gradually persuaded more and more Quaker meetings of the evil of slavery. Minutes of those meetings reflect an increase in the condemnation of the practice. By the time the American Revolution had ended, almost all North American Quakers had freed their slaves and those involved in trading slaves ceased their activity.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the story of the social reformers and abolitionists of the 18th and 19th centuries, including – most famously – William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and Henry Thornton (1760–1815) of the Clapham Sect, but also Hannah More (1745–1833) and Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845), is well known. Over the course of several decades, and through a combination of philanthropy, journalism (and publishing more broadly), policy and advocacy work, social and business entrepreneurship, this densely networked, generously financed and faithful group of Christians positively changed the face and indeed the culture of Britain. They helped to end the slave trade (1807), reformed the prison system (1823

Following Jesus through the guidance of the Spirit, each concrete setting or cultural expression will call for what Christian author Andy Crouch calls a different "gesture" from Christians – *celebration, challenge, cultivation, creativity* – or, indeed, a combination of these.

Imitating Christ's humility: Philippians 2:5–9, 11

Let the same mind be in you that
was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of
God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of
death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God also highly exalted
him
and gave him the name
that is above every name...
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Gaols Act),[15] and educated the poor and the disadvantaged in unprecedented ways (Hannah More in the 1780s). At a broad level, all of these efforts are an illustration of Niebuhr's "Christ *transforming* culture" in action. They also illustrate the principles delineated in Chapters 1 and 2, most of all the sociological insights provided by Hunter, on how cultures change.

Ultimately, underlying all the "gestures" and modes of engagement illustrated above are a person – Jesus Christ – who expresses the logic of God's own "engagement" with the world.

On power: a kenotic approach

The logic of God's "engagement" of the world through the Incarnation is kenotic (gr. *kenosis*, meaning self-emptying). This is expressed most famously in the words of the ancient hymn found in Philippians 2:5–9, 11 (in the text box). According to the passage, the Son "did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited." Rather, he willingly submitted to the Father, embracing the divine mission (*missio Dei*) to reconcile all things with God (Col. 1:20). In doing this, he *renounced* the privilege that attached to his position as the Son ("emptied

himself... humbled himself") and took "the form of a slave". Importantly, however, he did not reject or forfeit his capacity to act (which is another way of defining power). Instead, as the gospel narratives powerfully attest, he *redirected* his power, in love and sacrificial service to others, even to the point of death. As Paul the apostle put it, "though he was rich, yet *for your sakes he became poor*, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9, emphasis added). Ultimately, it was this sacrificial logic of engaging the world that God validated by "exalting" Jesus as Lord (Phil. 2:9–11).

In the same way, for followers of Jesus who continue His mission and represent God to the world, the heart of a kenotic approach involves a reckoning with one's own power. We can now break the concept of power down into *resources, networks, and capabilities*.[16] As Chapter 1 showed, power is ubiquitous but unevenly distributed. While, theologically, everyone has a capacity to act and have an effect in the world, in virtue of being created by God, sociologically, some will invariably have more power – more resources, networks, and capabilities at their disposal – than others. Understanding one's own power, both in the sense of the capacity to act and the resources, networks, and capabilities that enhance or diminish that capacity, with a view to enabling the flourishing of others, is a critical step towards a Christlike engagement of culture.

Yet a "power audit" should prompt reflection – not only on the forms and amount of power we may have, nor simply the ends to which we might put it, but also on its source. Given that power is fundamentally relational, has our own power been accrued perhaps at the expense of others?[17] For individual Christians and the Church alike, such an

Understanding one's own power, both in the sense of the capacity to act and the resources, networks, and capabilities that enhance or diminish that capacity, with a view to enabling the flourishing of others, is a critical step towards a Christlike engagement of culture.

audit will inevitably be a self-reflective process which will involve asking hard, but important, questions if we are to remain faithful to the example of Jesus.

At the same time, the Church and individual Christians can also disengage and become disillusioned when they do not recognise the positive and broad-based forms of power they already have. As Andy Crouch reflected in a consultation for this research,

> *We are located in such a way that we have power. The issue is not how do we get more power but to reckon with the power [i.e. resources, networks, and capabilities] we still have as Christians in the West. We have more power than we readily imagine – because all of us are more keenly aware of our vulnerabilities than our capabilities.*[18]

Individual Christians would do well to constantly ask: What power do I already have? How can I use it in a Christlike way to signpost and "nudge" my home, my street, my workplace, my industry, my sphere of influence more broadly towards the Kingdom? The answers to these questions should be sought both individually through personal devotion and worship, and collectively, in the Church, and with the help of dedicated organisations (e.g. the Everything Conference, the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), The Jubilee Centre, etc.).

Ultimately, Christians should be constantly alert to, and resist the temptation to pursue power and influence for their own sake – and those called to (or finding themselves already in) positions of significant power and influence should consistently seek to use those roles and resources responsibly, for the flourishing of others and the Kingdom more generally. For the wealthy,

Individual Christians would do well to constantly ask: What power do I already have? How can I use it in a Christlike way to signpost and "nudge" my home, my street, my workplace, my industry, my sphere of influence more broadly towards the Kingdom?

self-sacrificial philanthropy will be one concrete expression of this process.

Meanwhile, for the gathered Church, how might its own relationship to power need to be addressed as it seeks to address damaging features of wider society? In what ways may the Church be exploiting or misusing the power and influence it already has? Of particular note, the role of *class* (as distinct from money or direct relationship to power and influence) in our social movements – and not only in terms of power itself, but also as we assess which cultural expressions seem relevant, dominant, or worth challenging or supporting – is often neglected. The Church can be guilty of seeking to do "for" rather "with" in its social justice work; the same may be true of its cultural engagement.

If Hunter is correct in pointing out that the deepest level of change generally occurs at the level of the imagination, how might the imagination of the Church itself need forming, and even changing also? A beginning of an answer is offered at the end of this chapter and concrete suggestions are included in the recommendations in Chapter 4.

Moving from the logic of kenosis at the theological level, we see this principle directly in action throughout the contours of Jesus' biography, his relationships, and actions. This is the clearest vision of the nature of God's engagement with the world, and so should be the starting point for any theology of cultural engagement.[19]

Not only was the incarnation itself a divine act of *kenosis*, but the details of Jesus' life and work show he consistently gravitated around the "margins" rather than the centre of cultural and political power. He was born in an occupied province at the edge of the Roman Empire, and far from either Jerusalem or Rome (the most politically decisive cities of his own context). Throughout his life, he surrounded himself with ordinary men, women, and children, the lame and the blind, the abused and the despised. After living a life of humble obedience to the Father, and consistent, sacrificial generosity, the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53) died a "premature death" in what bore all the tell-tale signs of a failed mission. However, it was precisely this "strategy of cultural change" that was supernaturally vindicated through the resurrection of the Son of God: a resurrection which launched the Kingdom.

Whatever else we may draw from this biographical sketch – for example, the Church's special interest in

The cultural mandate: Genesis 1:26–28; 2:15

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind
in his image,
in the image of God
he created them;
male and female
he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

the flourishing of the "least", the "last", and the "lost"[20] (or, to use the language of this report, those without cultural, economic, and social power) – as followers of the crucified and resurrected Messiah, Christians are called to pursue a Christlike effect in their spheres of influence. But what might this look like in practice?

The Church as gardeners of culture

In answering this question, we especially note the significance of gardening and agricultural imagery throughout the Bible – and above all, in Christ's own teachings as they describe the transformative work and expansion of the Kingdom of God. We believe this points to the primary posture Christians should take in their engagement of culture. Simply, insofar as they embark on a self-emptying witness in service of others, guided by the dynamic leading of the Holy Spirit, followers of Jesus will resemble cultural gardeners, called to *care*, *cultivate,* and *co-create* with God towards the Kingdom, rather than seek to control, coerce, or simply capitulate to whatever forces are at play in culture, and the world more widely. Culture, as painter Makoto Fujimura puts it, "is not a territory to be won or lost but a resource we are called to

steward with care. Culture is a garden to be cultivated."[21]

As Christians, we are a people formed by a book which begins in a garden (Eden), pivots around two gardens (Gethsemane and the garden where Jesus was buried), and ends with a garden-city (the New Jerusalem). According to the Genesis narrative, the first humans are created in the image of God and placed in a garden planted by God. They are given a mandate – what theologians call the "cultural mandate" (Gen. 1:26–28; cf. Gen. 2:15) – to *care for and cultivate the garden* with a view to gradually expanding its boundaries until the whole earth becomes a flourishing garden: a lively, hospitable, and fruitful place where God, humanity, and the non-human creation dwell in harmony. The Bible calls this vision *shalom*. The Hebrew word is commonly translated as "peace", but the term refers not simply to the absence of violence and conflict, but also to a state of completeness, wholeness, and perfect harmony between parts.

After the Fall, the rest of the history of redemption is the unfolding of the human story outside of the garden. But the project of turning the earth into a garden, a place of fruitfulness and harmony, is not abandoned. The mission of God, in which humanity is invited to participate, continues. Thus, as Scripture narrates the great story of God's redemption and renewal of the world, it frequently uses gardening, farming, and more broadly agricultural metaphors to describe the relationship between God, the world, and his people. Importantly, gardening and agricultural metaphors feature prominently in Jesus' teaching to describe his identity and actions, as well as the identity and responsibility of Jesus' disciples towards the world. See, for example, images of the Kingdom as a seed (Matt. 13:1–23; 13:24–30) or as a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31–43).

Within the metaphorical world he sets up, Jesus paints himself as a sower, who sows seeds of the Kingdom: "the message about the Kingdom", the "signs" and manifestations of the Kingdom) and ultimately the "seed" of his very life. He refers to himself as a "grain of wheat" (John 12:24) which, "unless... [it] falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." In the same way, disciples of Jesus are also called to sow the seeds of the Kingdom: in people's imaginations, minds, hearts, and further afield. The seeds are the message (the Gospel) but also tangible expressions of a Kingdom already launched but not yet fully established.

Such seeding and planting will take the form of *words* spoken, *actions* performed, and ultimately the very *lives* of the disciples: lives laid down for others, in order to "bear much fruit" and testify to the Kingdom.

As the second and better Adam (1 Cor. 15:45–49), Jesus is not only a sower and a seed. He is also the world's consummate gardener, the gardener of creation and culture that Adam failed to be. A particular scene in the Gospel of John brings the gardening symbolism and the Adam-Jesus parallel into sharp focus. In John 20, Mary meets the resurrected Jesus in the garden, outside the empty tomb. She does not recognise him and assumes he is the gardener (John 20:15). She is both wrong and right. Jesus is not the professional gardener of the "tomb garden", as it later came to be known. Yet in light of the broad narrative arch of Scripture, she is entirely right though she does not know it. Jesus is the ultimate gardener, the New Adam, who sows sacrificially

towards the world's restoration and renewal. It is his example, therefore, as *sower*, *seed*, and *gardener,* that his followers are called to emulate.

All this reflects what we believe must be the basic posture for all Christian cultural engagement: sacrificial *care* and *cultivation*. The Christian calling and responsibility is therefore, as Andy Crouch puts it, "to plant little seeds that might not burst into power in a quick way, but will pay off for many generations."[22] This requires what political theologian Luke Bretherton calls "ancestor thinking"[23] or, as we have indicated previously, taking a multigenerational approach to cultural witness – sowing, planting, nurturing today goods and projects which may not be completed in our lifetimes, but (as good ancestors) secure the vital first steps towards later fruitfulness and the flourishing of future generations.

But as we engage in this long-term task, Christians will recognise that care will sometimes need to take the form of active struggle against forces and systems that seek to destroy, degrade, and exploit. Such forces and systems are tangible, historical manifestations of the "powers of this present darkness... [and] the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" which Paul mentions at the end of his epistle to the Ephesians (6:12). Good gardeners will know how to *shield* and *protect* seedlings and other vulnerable parts of the garden, "standing firm" and "standing their ground" (Eph. 6:13–14) against what seeks to destroy *shalom*. The aim, however, is never to shelter our own power, but to deploy it in faithful, creative, even strategic ways to shelter the weak, excluded, and culturally voiceless, be they the unborn, disabled, or the otherwise vulnerable and exploited.

Biblically rooted gardening and agricultural metaphors are therefore particularly helpful in indicating both the *posture* Christians should have towards culture, and a set of fundamental *tasks* that will guide this engagement: *seeding, planting, nurturing*, *fertilising,* as well as *shielding* and *protecting*.

At the same time, as with any metaphor, the language of gardening can be

> The basic posture for all Christian cultural engagement: sacrificial *care* and *cultivation.*

overplayed, overused, and abused, and it should be clear that these metaphors, capacious and biblically rooted though they are, do not (indeed, cannot) cover everything that is to be said about Christian identity and responsibility in culture. There are of course other biblical metaphors and frameworks that fulfil this purpose. Taken together, they paint a fuller picture and complement the gardening metaphor chosen for this report: as well as "cultural gardeners", followers of Jesus are also *royal priests,* who mediate the presence of God and intercede on behalf of others and the world before the face of God (1 Pet. 2:9); *strangers and pilgrims or exiles* (Rom. 4:16; Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 1:1, cf. 1:17),[24] "citizens of heaven" whose ultimate allegiance is to God, and whose enduring "home" and deepest source of identity is spiritual and eschatological rather than earthly, geographical, and political; *witnesses* (Luke 24:48; Acts 2:32; Acts 4:33; Acts 10:42),[25] people who testify – individually and corporately – to their experience of God, the love and lordship of Jesus through their words, actions, and the totality of their lives; *prophets*, who follow in Jesus' prophetic ministry, speaking up against injustice.

In the same way, if the gardening and agricultural metaphors helpfully point to the Christian's role and responsibility in *caring* and *cultivating* culture and cultural goods, they are perhaps less apt for the task of *creating* or making – new cultural goods, services, practices, and institutions, for example. Creativity, understood in its broadest sense (not just artistic), or "culture making", as Andy Crouch puts it in his book, is an important means of fulfilling the cultural mandate. Simply put, if we Christians are to have a Christlike effect in culture, it is not enough to simply *cultivate*, *curate,* and *care for* the goods that are already available in culture, important as these functions are. Sometimes *creating* and *introducing* new things – new cultural artefacts, ideas, institutions, practices, etc. – is required. In spite of its unparalleled darkness and horror, Jesus' redemptive death on the cross, followed by the resurrection, was God's ultimate, subversive, and infinitely generative act of creativity: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first fruits*..." (1 Cor. 15:20)... "the new creation has come: the old has gone, *the new is here*!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV translation, emphasis added). This function, of creativity or "culture making", although still accommodated by the agricultural and gardening metaphor of seeding and planting, is perhaps rendered more aptly by an analogy with artistic creation or "making".[26]

Although there are clear differences between gardening, farming, and artistry, however, the postures and basic disciplines they suggest are similar and equally instructive for Christians discerning their responsibility in culture. This is borne out by the verses quoted above, which show the consonance and complementarity between organic and gardening language (e.g. *first fruits* in 1 Cor. 15:2) and the language of "new creation" and newness (2 Cor. 5:17). At their best, therefore, gardeners and artists alike, specifically musical and theatrical improvisers, demonstrate keen attentiveness, patient listening, and nimble responsiveness towards what is before them. Harking back to Duncan Green's exhortation for activists to become "ecosystem gardeners",[27] we note how good gardeners, like improvisers, are called to attend wisely to their surroundings, discerning and improvising with their rhythms and dynamics, constantly asking questions such as: *Where is there life and energy?; What is decaying and dying?;* And therefore, *what needs to be seeded, pruned, nurtured, and protected?*

In turn, these are essential preliminary questions to ask when seeking a Christlike effect in culture. In practical terms, as James K A Smith notes, Christians are called to be "attentive students of history, readers of the zeitgeist, ethnographers of their present", who, like the sons and daughters of Issachar "had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32, emphasis added) – how to engage a particular culture with faithfulness and contextual fittingness and creativity. Smith goes on to explain:

> *Sophisticated Christian cultural analysis and social engagement must be rooted in a deeply historical posture, a sense of our embeddedness in time, and a healthy attention to the specifics of the moment in which we find ourselves.*[28]

Moreover, gardeners and artists both engage in *cultivation* – of the land, in the case of gardeners, and of their craft, in the case of artists. Their work – think community gardens where several ad hoc and "professional" gardeners are at work, or theatre makers "workshopping" a new play – is fundamentally collaborative. Seen in this light, therefore, all Christians are God's "fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9) and gardeners in the world: "I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Cor. 3:6–7, NIV translation). All Christians are also artists, makers, "creaturely creators" called to, yes,

tend or preserve what is good, true, and beautiful, but also shape the world in line with the divine purposes of redemption and restoration, even as they mind the twin dangers of grasping for, and misusing, power, noted further above.[29] The gardening and artistic metaphors therefore also suggest a posture of creativity rather than of mere critique, consumption, condemnation, or imitation.[30]

The "gathered" and "scattered" Church: formation through worship

Much ink has been spilled on the relationship between Church and Kingdom and, connectedly, the scope of the Church's mission.[31] Nonetheless, in this project we have followed the lead of theologians Lesslie Newbigin and Abraham Kuyper, both of whom understood the Kingdom of God as the broader spiritual realm and rule of God within which the Church exists.[32] According to Kuyper, God has instituted in society distinct "spheres", which have their own dynamics and relative independence under the direct authority of God. The Church is but one of the spheres over which Jesus is Lord. It is the sphere which, at its best, acknowledges Christ's lordship and signposts the Kingdom. Other spheres include – and Kuyper never attempts to provide an exhaustive list – government, family, education, business, academia, and the arts. On Kuyper and Newbigin's account, the Church is itself a *foretaste*, a *sign*, and an *instrument* of the Kingdom of God, in both its gathered and scattered dimension.[33]

The Kingdom should be the ultimate imaginative framework and orienting vision for all of the Church's activity in culture. If this is to be case, expanding the imagination of the Church, gathered and scattered, for the Kingdom as it intersects with the everyday realities and ordinary life of individual disciples in the world is essential to a wholesome, sustainable, cultural witness.

In light of the centrality of the Kingdom in Jesus' teaching, and the importance of the imagination in all of the cultural dynamics explored so far, we suggest that the Kingdom should be the ultimate imaginative framework and orienting vision for all of the Church's activity in culture. If this is to be case, expanding the imagination of the Church, gathered and scattered, for the Kingdom as it intersects with the everyday realities and ordinary life of individual disciples in the world is essential to a wholesome, sustainable, cultural witness.

This imagination is to be cultivated and will be manifest both in the Church's *gathered life*, which is called to embody an alternative social and political order shaped by the Gospel of the Kingdom, and in its *scattered dimension*, in the lives, vocations, and enterprises of individual disciples spread across culture and society at large.

In fact, *the gathered church* (and we should not think simply of believers coming together on Sundays for worship, but of the variety of corporate expressions of churches in their localities) *is in an interdependent and mutually reinforcing set of relationships with the scattered church*. There is a tendency, particularly in evangelical circles, to focus almost entirely on the scattered church (i.e. on individual Christians or groups of Christians) in discussions about the Church's role in culture. Perhaps this is an overcorrection in attempts to move beyond a narrow focus on Sunday services, centrally run church programmes, the primacy of the clergy and other "professional" Christians (e.g. foreign missionaries). And there are merits to this skew towards scattered witness, especially in affirming the "priesthood of all believers" and the whole of one's life as the site of witness and mission, thereby abolishing the sacred-secular divide that cripples too many disciples. Nonetheless, the potency, health, and sustainability of the scattered Church's witness in culture remains highly dependent on the health and vitality of the gathered Church and the quality of the relationships and community life it fosters. Quaker educator Gerald Littleboy aptly encapsulated the important dynamics and interdependence between the "gathered" and "scattered" Church as these have played out in the history of the Religious Society of Friends (although his point holds more broadly):

> *In its history the Society of Friends has produced many people whose*

lives of conspicuous service have profoundly influenced their times. John Woolman, Elizabeth Fry, Joseph Sturge and many others would have made for themselves no claim to a special dedication to service, but they were none the less able, out of the depth of their love for their fellows, to take great opportunities that came to them. Their service sprang directly out of their religious faith, but this faith was itself stimulated and fostered by the religious atmosphere in which they lived. To this atmosphere the lives of many Friends, now nameless and unknown, contributed by their faithfulness in inconspicuous service, and so made it possible for the greater spirits to grow to their full stature.[34]

However, where the gathered Church fails to see itself, and therefore act as a missional community in the world, corporately bearing witness to, signposting, and manifesting the inaugurated-and-still-to-fully-arrive-Kingdom-of-God,[35] it will not adequately recognise, resource, and release its individual members (i.e. the scattered Church) in their vocational witness, Monday through Saturday. Getting the balance right between the gathered and the scattered Church is crucial, we believe, for the next season of the Church's work for cultural renewal and Kingdom-manifesting transformation. The recommendations in the final chapter pick up on this point and apply it in a concrete way.

To this end, one of the most important means of equipping members for their work and witness in the wider culture is collective worship. This is because worship, at its best is, as James K A Smith, Matthew Kaemingk, and Cory B Willson suggest, the decisive context and means by which our imaginations, desires, beliefs, and values are renewed and re-storied by the Gospel of the Kingdom. Worship, moreover, creates a capacity for discernment that is critical for effective cultural witness. James Smith explains: "Christian worship is... like the training ground for *sent* people whose *mission* will take them into the contested space of markets and elections, corporations and council halls."[36] Or, as theologian Richard Bauckham puts it, worship

> *is the source of resistance to the idolatries of the public world. It points representatively to the acknowledgement of the true God by all the nations, in the universal worship for which the whole creation is destined.*[37]

Therefore, gathered worship should not be understood as merely the

collective expression of personal piety orientated on God, but as a set of potent, formative practices and rituals, which shape disciples and orient them to the Kingdom and what God is doing in the totality of their lives. From being called and shaped through worship, individual Christians are sent out "to be Christ's image-bearers to and for our neighbours, which includes the ongoing creaturely stewardship and responsibility to order the social world in ways that are conductive to flourishing."[38]

Kaemingk and Willson, in their book *Work and Worship,* make a strong case for how collective worship "can offer workers the time and space they desperately need to begin in the long process of mending the torn fabric of 'faith' and 'work'." They go on to explain how

> *week after week a worker can practice bringing her daily work before the Lord in worship. Through prayer and petition, thanksgiving and lament, she practices laying down her work before the larger work of God.*[39]

They outline the contours of a collective worship that is "vocationally conversant",[40] by which they mean forms of worship

> *that engage work and works in a divine dialogue... facilitates an honest exchange between workers and their God... In and through vocationally conversant worship, workers discover the patterns of God's work, creativity, and service. In this, they are invited to make God's patterns of work their own.*[41]

Indeed, worship that is rooted in the Word, nourished by the Spirit and sacraments will always be a powerful occasion for "cultural gardeners" to be regularly reminded of where their true value lies, who is their true master, and what is the true story of the world (the Gospel of the Kingdom), as it intersects with their lives.

But not just worship as a set of corporate liturgical acts, but the totality of the gathered Church's life in community is the site where individual disciples (the scattered Church) are gradually formed and "filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom", in order to bear abundant fruit "in every good work", in every area of their lives, and in culture more broadly. In the language of this report, this "good work" will consist of *caring, cultivating,* and *co-creating* towards *shalom* and the New Creation, in partnership with Christ and his people, under the guidance of the Spirit.

References

1. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, p. 95.
2. Ibid.
3. H Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1956).
4. Ibid. p. 31.
5. Ibid. p. 109.
6. Ibid. p. 148.
7. Ibid. p. 151.
8. Ibid. p. 156.
9. Ibid. p. 209.
10. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), p. 180.
11. Ibid. p. 182.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. p. 181.
14. Ibid. p. 181.
15. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaols_Act_1823
16. I am grateful to Andy Crouch for this insight.
17. See Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013).
18. Research interview with Andy Crouch.
19. I am grateful to Mark Mayhew for this important insight.
20. What Catholic Social Teaching calls the "preferential option for the poor".
21. Makoto Fujimura, *Culture Care: Reconnecting with Beauty for our Common Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), Kindle edition: location 20%.
22. Research interview with Andy Crouch.
23. https://twitter.com/WestLondonMan/status/1373651855650258944.
24. Paul S Williams, *Exiles on Mission: How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020).
25. https://bibleproject.com/learn/witness/
26. See Trevor Hart, *Making Good: Creation, Creativity, and Artistry* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Makoto Fujimura, Art + Faith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), Alastair Gordon, *Why Art Matters: A Call for Christians to Create* (London: IVP, 2021).
27. Duncan Green, *How Change Happens*, p. 20. The full quote reads: "Activists should switch from being architects and engineers to becoming 'ecosystem gardeners'."
28. James K A Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 125.
29. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making*, p. 97.
30. These are the main approaches to culture that Crouch describes in his book. In line with what we argued earlier in this chapter, all of these are legitimate responses to particular contexts and cultural goods. But they are unsatisfactory as an overarching or

dominant approach to culture. Crouch explains: "In the mainstream of culture, cultivation and creativity are the postures that confer legitimacy for the other gestures."

31. See, for example, from different theological traditions, Christopher J H Wright, Jason S Sexton, Peter Leithart, Jonathan Leeman, John R Franke, Stanley N Gundry (eds.), *Five Views on the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017); George L Ladd, *Gospel and the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Eerdmans, 1990) and *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); G K Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004) and *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014); N T Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2008); John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); Stanley Hauerwas and William H Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville,TN: Abingdon Press, 2014); James K A Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017); Paul S Williams, *Exiles on Mission: How Christians Can Thrive in a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020).
32. See Abraham Kuyper, "Church and Culture" in *Common Grace*, quoted in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt (Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 187–201.
33. Even if this is Newbigin's language, the meaning is shared by Kuyper as well.
34. https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/20-15/. Emphasis added.
35. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, p. 95.
36. James K A Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 96. See also Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B Willson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020). See Chapters 1–3 and 10–12 in particular. In Chapter 1, they liken worship to the pull and push movements of the heart: "Like a heartbeat, Christian worship... has a systolic and diastolic function. Worship welcomes and gathers people in. Worship sends and scatters people out into the world 'to mingle with it like leaven in the dough, to give it savor like salt, to irradiate like light'", p. 23.
37. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 161.
38. James K A Smith, *Awaiting the King*, p. 16.
39. Matthew Kaemingk and Cory B Willson, *Work and Worship*, p. 13.
40. Ibid. p. 18.
41. Ibid. p. 19.

04 What next?

This report began by asking:

> *What does the Church need to do in a more strategic, joined up, and intentional way, so as to help effect positive change or "cultural renewal" in some of the key spheres of British culture today?*

We are now in a position to better answer this question – or rather, in light of the discussion in the previous chapters, to consider how theological reflection on the Church's responsibility in culture might change our approach altogether. After all, the word "strategy" (above) has military origins. In Greek, *strategos* refers to a military general, and conjures up a clichéd picture of a general in command of nearly unlimited troops and resources, with a perfect view of the field, whose purpose is winning at all costs. As the previous chapter has outlined, we hope that this hubristic, sub-biblical language will be carefully interrogated, if not altogether abandoned, to be replaced by the more organic – and authentically biblical – metaphors of gardening and farming, and the sort of cultural engagement they suggest.[1]

In this sense, this report *is not* a strategy document: the approach it advocates resembles gardening more closely than military tactics. However, in a different sense, we hope this report remains *strategic.* After all, we are stewards in God's service and mission in the world (1 Cor. 3:9), with sufficient power available – *resources, networks,* and *capabilities* – to work with hope, even if within varying degrees of uncertainty, towards *shalom* and the new creation. Therefore, planned strategic interventions can be a means of stewarding our resources, vocations, influence, and power wisely (see the parable of the talents – Matt. 25:14–30).

From both our theological and sociological research, we believe that authentic, effective, and sustainable Christlike efforts towards cultural renewal have to be both bottom-up

and top-down, and should involve a sustained, concerted effort and a multigenerational commitment, not just short-term projects or interventions. As we argued in the previous chapter, discerning exactly what "gesture" and interventions are needed at any given time requires both a long-view on, and a keen attentiveness to, the precise moment in which the Church and individual Christians find themselves. In this final chapter, we present a series of practical recommendations that pertain to the core aims of the project. Starting from the understanding that the Church is the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12), these are organised under headings which correspond to different body parts that suggest what the recommendations focus on: *eyes* (attentiveness and alertness to culture); *heart* (imagination, the arts, creative and entertainment industries); *head* (ideas); *hand* (institutions and practices). But before laying these out, it is helpful to recall some of the marks of successful cultural and social change movements outlined in Chapters 1 and 2.

Through our sociological survey, we found that successful movements accurately diagnose the present times, work across generations, plan for the future, ride the waves of critical junctures (politically, socially, culturally), and – in all these ways – build or curate effective resources now which prepare them to improvise well later. The survey also highlighted the important role played by elite institutions, strategic deployment of assets, networked and well-resourced leaders working collaboratively and in common purpose, and the powerful if subtle role of the arts, creative industries, and the academy in creating change.

In light of this, and within the theological vision cast in the previous chapter, we suggest a series of strategic and immediate interventions (i.e. "seeding", "planting", and "watering"), alongside long-term, evergreen priorities to be pursued (i.e. organic fertilising, nurturing, and pruning). These recommendations are informed by conversations had during the four roundtables organised as part of the research process, research interviews with Christian cultural analysts and academics, and the sociology of cultural and social change.

Eyes: cultivating prophetic attentiveness to culture

We recall James K A Smith's observation that Christians are to be "attentive students of history, readers of the

zeitgeist, ethnographers of their present", as well as the sociological evidence presented above that the most successful cultural change movements through history have taken a keen interest – even as experts – in what is going on around them culturally.

Such prophetic attentiveness is not only crucial as a way of understanding the power dynamics at play in "normal time", but also (perhaps more importantly) for correctly diagnosing when a critical juncture – an opportunity for sudden cultural re-evaluation and renewal – is upon us.

So too, the theological sections of this report have noted theological reasons to tend to culture from a posture of *care, cultivation,* and *creativity*. As gardeners of culture, then, Christians should always be paying close attention to the culture around them, asking the questions that any keen gardener will ask: What is dying? What needs pruning? Where are the signs of life? What needs special care?

With this in mind, as part of this research project we held a series of conversations with experts in their respective cultural fields, asking them

where they saw such signs of life and decay in the culture around them. Their answers offer helpful guidance as we emerge from the pandemic in the summer of 2021 – though of course, while we believe that the basic approach is evergreen, different answers to these questions will undoubtedly emerge in other times and seasons.

What is dying? Our participants noted steadily declining trust in sense-making institutions and an absence of virtues like patience, charity, good faith, forgiveness from public conversation; they diagnosed the loss of community bonds and an acceleration of social fragmentation, but also increasing questioning of individualistic assumptions and the myth of self-sufficiency.

What needs pruning and protecting? Our participants saw tribalism and polarisation becoming entrenched, and (despite increasing awareness of climate breakdown) the continuation of socially and environmentally destructive economic models geared towards unlimited growth, conspicuous consumption, and pursuit of profit at all costs. They noted the continued force of "techno-solutionism": an ideological commitment to technology as the "fix" to all social and political problems. This is particularly visible in the expansion of the "data economy", increasing reliance on algorithmic decision-making and automation across economic, political, and social spheres.

Where are signs of life? At the same time, our experts reflected on the silos between disciplines and sectors breaking down, and the appetite for greater collaboration; the global move towards socially purposeful and environmentally conscious business; the energy and life which comes from the margins, from immigrant communities, and at the edge of or outside traditional institutional structures and power. In the Church, they also noted the increase in pioneering forms of mission, including new forms of chaplaincy,[2] Christian social enterprises, faith and spirituality podcasts, and a growing appetite for new ways of being Church: oriented outwards, engaged in holistic mission, fostering the common good, reaffirming and supporting the "scattered Church" in their vocational witness and work for the Kingdom.

As individual Christians (and the Church as a collective) uncover their unique vocation for cultural engagement in their contexts, they should pay attention to these sorts of dynamics and developments,

considering where they are working with or against the grain in their efforts to signpost and manifest the Kingdom in the world.

Top-down: strategic interventions

Heart: support for Christians in the arts, creative, and entertainment industries

At various junctures in the report we have noted the subtle, easily overlooked, but powerful role of the arts, and the creative and entertainment industries more broadly, in shifting consciousness and catalysing change. James Davison Hunter noted in particular how the most enduring forms of change occur at the level of the imagination or what he called the "mythic fabric of a social order"[3] – how people imagine themselves (anthropology), what is the "good life" (ethics), how our common life should be ordered (politics; society), among other things. At worst, this "imagination" work can be manipulative, cynical, and opaque – an approach which is obviously to be avoided – but at best, it is cultivating and inviting, and speaks to the whole person, not just their rational interests.

The arts and entertainment industries arise from, appeal to, and subtly shape the imagination. It is no wonder that artists are often called prophets of their time, crafting new ways of seeing the world: more truthfully, more empathically, more integrated. They generally work upstream from the world of politics, technology, economics, and the broader society. They shape the horizons of possibility and acceptability, nurture the imagination (the spring of action), and through their craft constantly plumb the question of what authentic humanity and a life worth living look like. As James K A Smith put it, the arts – at their best – help us "learn how to be human again... how to be empathetic and live with one another... in all our fractured complexity, mixed motives and dogged hopes."[4]

In a context of increased tribalism, fragmentation, and dehumanising applications of technology, the arts and the creative and entertainment industries are more important than ever to nurture empathy, grapple with transcendent questions, break down barriers of hate and fear, and interrogate prevailing, if often unexamined, notions of what it means to be human.

An instructive example of this is the work done by the Pop Culture Collaborative. They are a

multiyear, multimillion dollar philanthropic fund established in 2016 by a network of philanthropic leaders – primarily women of colour... who dared to imagine what might be possible if they expanded the impact of their investments by pooling their resources, strategic thinking, and leadership influence to dramatically increase philanthropic investment in the pop culture [including films, music videos, web series, TV storyline integrations or creative campaigns] for social change.[5]

PopCollab, as they are also known, envision themselves as a "Google Labs for the pop culture" to achieve "narrative change" at mass audience scale through creative, learning, experimental environments and ventures. Reflecting on their theory of change, they note how they came to understand

> *that the cultural change we seek can most reliably be achieved when an audience is immersed over time in a narrative environment powered by stories and other cultural experiences that express diverse and complex perspectives, while also sharing a common goal to advance a vision for a more humane way of life.*[6]

This chimes profoundly with the insights gleaned in Chapters 1 and 2 of this report, regarding the power of narrative and the arts more broadly, and can spark the imagination of Christians seeking an effective and imaginative cultural witness. The Pop Culture Collaborative example also highlights the important of visionary and courageous forms of patronage.

The arts, creative, and entertainment industries, indeed artists, creators, and makers more generally, have

been neglected by the Church for too long. Although there are heartening exceptions, this is particularly the case in the Protestant-evangelical tradition. This needs to change if the Church is to take its cultural witness seriously. The arts and Christian artists and creatives – whether they be poets, painters, animators, scriptwriters, musicians, actors, producers, etc. – need to be affirmed and nurtured, in themselves, as well as for the important role they have to play as part of the Church's cultural witness.

One caveat is in order: this intervention is not about creating derivative, sub-standard "Christian art". Rather, it is aimed at fostering excellence and stimulating cross-pollination, Kingdom-oriented collaboration and opening pathways into the mainstream of the contemporary art world and to the highest levels of cultural production and influence (e.g. Netflix series scriptwriters; Hollywood filmmakers, producers, directors; a presence at the Venice Biennale and other prestigious international arts events and exhibitions). The success of the Bible Society's film fund, The Pitch,[7] is an encouraging example of this work in practice.

As with other sectors, one of the key needs of Christians working professionally in the arts is to be aware of, support, and as appropriate collaborate or create opportunities for one another, particularly those in more senior or established positions (therefore with more power) for those more junior.

Concretely, this intervention should comprise, among other things, *funding*, via scholarships, bursaries, endowments, art prizes, artist support funds, artists in residence schemes, as well *patronage* for specialist organisations that offer *training*, *mentoring,* and *peer support* for Christians working, or seeking to work, professionally, in the arts and the creative and entertainment industries (e.g. Morphe,[8] Sputnik,[9] Art+Christianity,[10] the Christianity & the Arts MA at King's College London[11]). Some funding and patronage is already underway of course, but there is scope for more to be done for greater fruitfulness.

Head: investment in Christian public thinkers

The sociology of change surveyed in Chapter 1, and the focus on specific cultural and social changes in Chapter 2 also showed that, like the arts, creative, and entertainment industries, public thinkers, journalists, and academics also play a disproportionate

role in shaping the frameworks of understanding, the moral sensibilities, and collective consciousness in a culture. As intellectual historian Richard Weaver famously put it, "ideas have consequences" – but as we found in the sociological elements of this project, to do so they usually need to be generated by or come with the support of elites within or in close proximity to cultural gate-keeping institutions, such as leading universities, prestigious broadsheets or magazines, or think tanks with a consistent presence in the mainstream of public debate.

Here we are proposing *long-term training*, *support*, *coaching,* and *funding* for emerging Christian public thinkers and journalists, selected both for talent and character, both within and outside the academy. We note iterations of the CARE leadership programme,[12] the Jubilee Centre's SAGE graduate programme,[13] and existing support for undergraduate students via, among others, UCCF's Leadership Network and Research programme,[14] Fusion Movement,[15] and the International Movement of Catholic Students.[16] We argue that these schemes need to be further expanded into the post-graduate worlds and strengthened by setting up bursaries and fellowships.[17]

Alongside investment in undergraduates, post-graduates, and recent graduates, we also encourage *long-term funding* for or *patronage* of more established Christian public thinkers, including academics, journalists, and public theologians and public theology think tanks (e.g. The McDonald Centre,[18] Theos,[19] The Jubilee Centre,[20] The William Temple Foundation,[21] The Kirby Laing Centre,[22] The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion[23]). Through their scholarship, writing,

intentional relationship-building within intellectually elite circles they "seed" into the academic and mainstream debate an alternative, biblically, and theologically informed understanding of what it means to flourish, both as persons and as societies, speaking into the many challenges of our cultural moment (some of which we noted earlier). By doing this, they also play a vital role in tilling the ground and fertilising the cultural soil for the rest of the Church – gathered as well as scattered – to fulfil its mission. They also produce important resources that can help cultivate what we are calling the "cultural and political literacy" of the wider Church – the ability to prophetically "read" the "spirit(s) of the age" and think in a theologically informed way about the cultural narratives, ideas, and ideologies that prevail in culture. However, we note that some of these organisations and individuals have at times not had the skills or resources to translate for wider audiences, and so investments should also be geared towards equipping for wider impact. An "Alpha Course" type of resource for the Church should be considered as part of achieving this goal.[24] This could combine engaging video presentations, concise and well-illustrated introductions to the key ideologies, cultural narratives, and ideas that prevail in culture (e.g. capitalism, liberalism, human rights, techno-solutionism, expressive individualism, transhumanism, etc.) reading lists, and discussion guides. This course would effectively translate for a wider Christian audience the wealth of available resources produced by Christian public and political theologians.

Hand: sector-specific "greenhouses"

The diversity of ventures noted above in the sections on "heart" and "head" is heartening. Nevertheless, more could be done to connect the "fertilisers" (e.g. funders, educators, training and mentoring organisations) and the "planters" (e.g. artists, creatives, Christian thinkers) so that their work is mutually reinforcing and leads to greater fruitfulness – to say nothing of the intrinsic and missional benefits of nurturing greater unity within the Church.

Part of the connecting and nurturing work may require a set of "middle space" activities, institutions, or networks to enable cross-fertilisation, collaboration and, where appropriate, coordination as effectively as possible. This could take the form of a loose confederation of sector-specific

incubators/accelerators or – to revert to our key metaphor – "greenhouses". These "greenhouses" should combine: (a) *vocation-relevant theological training, including "cultural and political literacy"; (b) spiritual formation in the context of community;* (c) *industry coaching and upskilling*; (d) *peer support and professional networks*. Organisations focusing on only one element (e.g. networking or theological training) have tended to falter over the long term, but a structure that combines all will be both more effective and enduring. Organisations that currently do some or all of this in the UK include ReSurgo, Morphe Arts, and the Christian Medical Fellowship. Praxis Labs in the US,[25] a "creative engine for redemptive entrepreneurship"[26] that focuses on "supporting founders, funders, and innovators motivated

by their faith to love their neighbors and renew culture", should be considered as a model in seeking to combine the elements noted above. The Everything Conference, we note, is in a process of transition to a more defined institutional shape. It should consider developing industry guilds and cross-sector groups in which holistic formation, faith-work integration, including cultural and political literacy, can be fostered sustainably.

Investment in holistic formation for Christian entrepreneurs and businesspeople

During the course of the research, particularly in the roundtables, we noted the heartening growth of social purpose and environmentally conscious business.[27] We also mentioned the continued rise of "techno-solutionism" and the increasing reliance on automatic and algorithmic processes.[28] These remain poorly scrutinised from a Christian ethical point of view, at both the surface level, of products, services, and capabilities created (or undermined), and at the deeper, ideological, and philosophical levels. With regard to the latter, we note the pernicious if subtle influence of transhumanist ideology and instrumental rationality underpinning many, though not all, developments in the fields of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, biotechnology, including gene editing and human augmentation.

Today, and for the foreseeable future, business and technology are two of the most powerful institutions (sociologically understood) shaping culture and the world more broadly. They deserve particular, even urgent, attention and wise responses, entrepreneurial or otherwise, from Christians, given their consequential ability to, among other things, shift "the horizons of possibility and impossibility",[29] enhance or diminish human capacities, dignity, and relationships. They can also foster or undermine a responsible and restorative relationship to the non-human creation, as the case study that looked at the environmental movement indicated.

While business oriented theological education and "faith and work" initiatives are part of a growing and encouraging phenomenon (e.g. The Marketplace Institute at Regent College, Vancouver; LICC's Work Forum), what is missing is a more sustained and institutionally embedded response to the need for holistically forming,

resourcing, and releasing the Christian entrepreneurs and leaders of tomorrow.

As the first chapter has indicated, the sociological consensus is that institutions have, in general, more cultural power and lasting cultural effect than individuals or even movements. What we are recommending therefore is the creation of an institution, like Praxis Labs in the US, that would combine the elements listed above and embed them in a durable, sustainable institutional form. Such an institution, that would facilitate wisdom and best practice exchange, experimentation, and sustained explorations between entrepreneurs, other practitioners, theologians and relevant social theorists and sociologists, in the context of community, would constitute in the long term a powerful arrangement towards cultural renewal.

Retreats and retreat centres

Recalling the cultural effect of the Mont Pèlerin Society – established in 1947 by Friedrich Hayek with a view to shifting the post-war economic paradigm – points to the importance of curating spaces for friendship, conversation, and intellectual cross-fertilisation.

Here we are recommending setting up sector-specific as well as cross-sector retreats and gatherings. Retreats are well-known to offer a break from familiar surroundings and ordinary routines and catalyse shifts towards

alternative modes of thought, sensing, and relating. Combining immersive experience in nature, interactive workshops, deep conversation, and embodied practice, in a convivial setting of mutual hospitality, short-term retreats and gatherings can be the seedbed of *shalom*-focused innovation and collaborative endeavours.[30] These would also constitute spaces where holistic discipleship and theologically informed cultural and political literacy would be cultivated in an informal, convivial environment.

A more developed version of this intervention would see establishing new urban or rural retreat and community-based study centres in the tradition of L'Abri.[31] L'Abri was established in 1955 by Christian writer and educator Francis Schaeffer and his wife Edith, in the Swiss Alps, as a community for people looking for "satisfying answers to their questions and a practical demonstration of Christian care".[32] The centre subsequently multiplied and expanded to other parts of the world, including England.[33]

Particularly in urban settings, such community-based retreat centres can also model alternative housing arrangements predicated on radical hospitality and an ethic of sharing and gift-giving. As sites of community-based discipleship and formation, these can also be expected to function informally as "greenhouses" in their own right, where missional ventures in culture, and further afield, can be germinated and nurtured to life.[34]

A Kingdom impact investing fund

We noted in the case study examining the rise of the environmental movement how much funding had been poured into strategies and tactics to downplay, deny, or distract from the growing severity of the climate crisis and the real impact of the carbon economy.

Proper creation care (especially, though not exclusively, in Western societies) will require wide scale re-evaluation of cultural practices and assumptions along many different axes, and is a foundational and perennial responsibility of the Church. The climate emergency we are demonstrably facing makes courageous, redemptive responses to this crisis only more pressing – as came through strikingly during the roundtable conversations.

As such, we are calling for the Christian investors, investor groups, and asset owners to consider investing only in sectors and businesses firmly

committed to de-carbonisation and sustainability. This would be a theologically rooted, ecologically, socially, and ultimately culturally consequential form of redemptive action (we recall Praxis' definition of redemptive as "creative restoration through sacrifice"). As such, we would expect it go beyond even Environmental, Social and Governance investing (ESG) and resemble what we are calling "Kingdom impact investing".

The possibility of creating a new fund for redemptive investment that would focus more narrowly on entrepreneurial solutions and ventures that address the climate crisis should be explored with some urgency. More tentatively, alongside its "climate investments", the fund could also invest in faith-based social enterprises and other redemptive commercial ventures. Many of these are, encouragingly, growing today as entrepreneurial Christians lean into their Kingdom vocations. The charity/philanthropic arm of said fund could sponsor some of the projects suggested here as well as other redemptive ventures in the social, spiritual, and artistic/creative spheres.

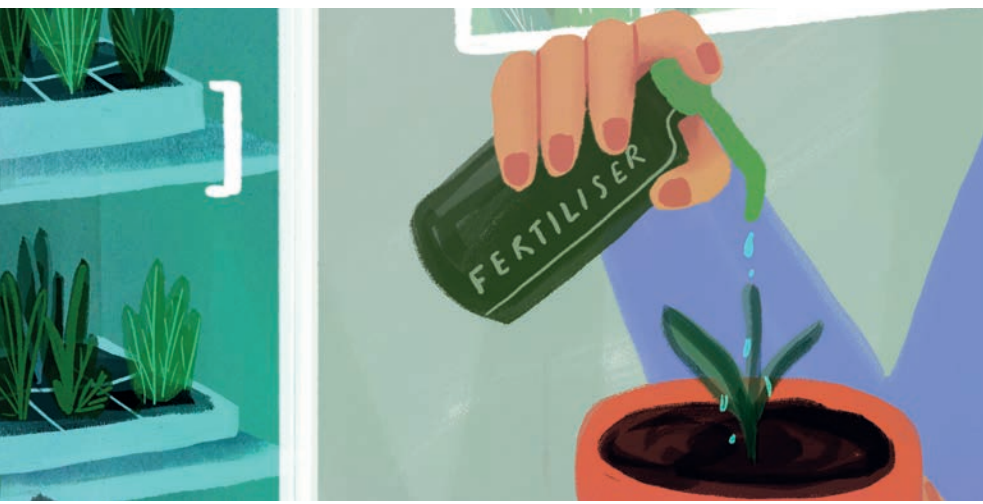
Bottom-up: evergreen priorities

While these top-down, scattered-Church focused interventions listed above – of seeding, planting, and nurturing – are pursued, the gathered Church's work of fertilising, watering, creating compost, as well as training up fully formed "cultural gardeners" remains ongoing and vital. As argued in the previous chapter**, the quality, depth, and sustainability of the scattered Church's work towards**

cultural renewal and Kingdom-transformation is dependent on the spiritual fitness, holiness, and maturity of the gathered Church. If the gathered Church is failing, even the best targeted efforts are no more than cut flowers – alluring for a moment, but transient. For example, funding a Christian film-maker to create excellent artistry from a Kingdom-saturated imagination, or supporting Theos to produce rigorous and relatable public theology, will not make a sustained difference over the long term if the Church is in disrepair. Nor can public theologians, other Christian thinkers, and public voices encourage changed attitudes and values in culture at large if the vast majority of Christians are perpetuating a sacred-secular divide and live a privatised, individualistic, and secularised form of faith, as if God does not exist.[35]

Discipleship and formation: nurturing "cultural gardeners"

The discipleship necessary for Christlike transformative action in culture will have several components. One is to do with Christians discovering and/or growing in their understanding of the meta-narrative or overarching story of the Bible and of God's mission in the world. As we noted in the previous chapter, it is vital for Christians to be able to perceive how their lives, relationships, and vocations are caught



The quality, depth, and sustainability of the scattered Church's work towards cultural renewal and Kingdom-transformation is dependent on the spiritual fitness, holiness, and maturity of the gathered Church. If the gathered Church is failing, even the best targeted efforts are no more than cut flowers – alluring for a moment, but transient.

up in, and participate in God's unfolding purposes.

Second, and connected to this, such discipleship involves developing what theologian Walter Brueggemann calls a "prophetic imagination"[36] – the ability to see and live in the world from a deep yet practical awareness of the Kingdom of God as it intersects and interrupts the dominant culture around us and our vocational spaces (e.g. our place of work, home, and play).

Third, as mentioned further above, a discipleship "fit for vocational purpose" requires theologically informed cultural and political literacy, the ability to understand and relate discerningly, in light of the Gospel of the Kingdom, to the times in which one lives, including the prevailing assumptions, narratives, and ideologies.

These three, alongside developing healthy spiritual and lifestyle rhythms and habits, are key to equipping followers of Jesus for creative making and redemptive action in the places they live and work.

This crucial "fertilising" work is to be done primarily at the level of the local worshipping community and through its regular rhythms and practices, but where appropriate, with support from relevant para-church organisations, projects, and freelance theologians. Encouragingly, important strides have been made through organisations such as LICC, Bible Society, The Bible Project (US-based), and the Everything Conference. But much work remains necessary to ensure the gathered Church is fertilised and is itself a fertiliser for the scattered Church's

witness and efforts towards cultural renewal.

Theological education

A theological education that is integrated across disciplines, firmly orientated towards holistic mission, culturally literate, and geared towards sustaining the type of discipleship envisioned in this report is, in turn, an essential part of "fertilising" and "watering" the Church's soil and forming "cultural gardeners". There are many examples of theological establishments offering this type of education already. However, if the Church – in both its gathered and scattered dimensions – is to be fully equipped for effective cultural witness, we believe more effort needs to be put towards shifting theological education away from technocratic, narrowly scholastic, or subtly secularised approaches, towards the formation of disciples and disciple-makers who live out of a Kingdom-saturated imagination in the totality of their lives.[37]

Community: commitment to place and people at local levels

Demonstrating a renewed commitment of local churches to the place and communities in which they are

embedded (street, neighbourhood, town, city, etc.), and the people to which they are called, is a necessary form of long-term witness.

At their best, churches act as an inviting, generous community shaped by the Gospel, a "city on a hill" in which people relate on the basis of self-giving love rather than money, coercive power, or status. In their outward orientation, as "salt of the world", churches act sacrificially as a trusted, loving, "civic neighbour".[38] As previous Theos research has shown,[39] this may take the form of community projects, including community fruit and vegetables gardens,[40] local celebrations and storytelling events,[41] as well as more established forms of social action projects like running food banks, toddler groups, debt advice, and money courses, etc.[42]

Engagement in "community organising" is a particularly good way for churches to steward their power wisely in a local context, foster the common good, and strengthen community bonds. This work is particularly pressing at a time of marked social division, tribalism, and fragmentation. Organisations like The Centre for Theology & Community, in East London,[43] equip churches through the practices of community organising, theological reflection, and prayer. Funders should consider resourcing them for the long term so they can continue helping churches play their part in the transformation of their communities.

Over time, it is to be expected that the Church's social witness, in the form of social action, community organising, or the pursuit of justice, will improve not just the cultural narratives about the Church and the role of faith in society, but also, more importantly, the narratives about how we care for one another and flourish as a society. Moreover, the Church's social witness can be, in itself, an important site for holistic discipleship – training up "cultural gardeners"! – thereby aiding and strengthening the Church's wider work in culture. We note, again, how the gathered and the scattered Church are interdependent and mutually reinforcing in their "words", "social" and "cultural" witness.

References

1. Admittedly, as we indicated in the previous chapter, other biblical metaphors and motifs for Christian identity and responsibility in culture are appropriate. We certainly do not wish to suggest that the gardening model is the only legitimate one.
2. See Ben Ryan, *A Very Modern Ministry: Chaplaincy in the UK* (London: Theos, 2015), https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2015/03/11/a-very-modern-ministry-chaplaincy-in-the-uk; Simon Perfect, *Relationships, Presence, and Hope: University Chaplaincy during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (London: Theos, 2021), https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2021/02/12/relationships-presenceand-hope-university-chaplaincy-during-the-covid19-pandemic.
3. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, p. 45.
4. https://www.christiancentury.org/article/how-my-mind-has-changed/i-m-philosopher-we-can-t-think-our-way-out-mess
5. https://popcollab.org/
6. Ibid.
7. https://www.enterthepitch.com/
8. https://www.morphearts.org/
9. https://sptnk.co.uk/
10. https://www.artandchristianity.org/
11. https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/research/research-partnerships/ma-in-christianity-and-the-arts
12. https://care.org.uk/about/leadership-programme
13. https://www.jubilee-centre.org/sage-graduate-programme
14. https://www.uccf.org.uk/leadership-network
15. https://www.fusionmovement.org/studentworkers-training
16. https://imcs-miec.com/
17. As an example, The Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University funds PhDs.
18. https://www.mcdonaldcentre.org.uk/
19. https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/
20. https://www.jubilee-centre.org/
21. https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/
22. https://kirbylaingcentre.co.uk/
23. https://www.faraday.cam.ac.uk/
24. For a similar idea, see the "ReFrame" course developed at the Marketplace Institute within Regent College, Canada: https://www.reframecourse.com
25. https://www.praxislabs.org/

26. https://www.praxislabs.org/redemptive-entrepreneurship

27. An important manifesto for "purposeful" business is Colin Mayer, *Prosperity: Better Business Makes the Greater Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

28. See, for example, Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: Technology, Solutionism, and the Urge to Fix Problems that Don't Exist* (London: Allen Lane, 2013); Brett Frischmann and Evan Selinger, *Re-Engineering Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing* (Cambridge, MS: The MIT Press, 2017).

29. Andy Crouch identifies this as one of the key functions of culture: "This is what culture does: it defines the horizons of the possible and impossible in very concrete, tangible ways." This is illustrated well in technological culture where new technology is presented in terms of what it makes possible, easier, and more "efficient". See Culture Making, pp. 29–30, 34.

30. https://breakingground.us/ivan-illich-technology-skill-of-hospitality/

31. https://labri.org/

32. https://labri.org/history/

33. https://www.englishlabri.org/

34. See, for example, Laity Lodge, an ecumenical retreat centre in Texas, USA – https://www.laitylodge.org/; Ashburnham Place in Kent – https://www.ashburnham.org.uk/; the "School of Creation" centre at Moggerhanger Park, Bedfordshire – https://www.schoolofcreation.community/; and the Host Conference organised by the Business Connect thought collective based in Jersey – https://businessconnect.je/

35. Craig Gay, *The Way of the Modern World: Or, Why It's Tempting to Live As If God Doesn't Exist* (Grand Rapids, MI/ Carlisle, UK/ Vancouver, Ca.: Eerdmans; Paternoster; Regent College Publishing, 1998).

36. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 3.

37. See Mark Green and Jan J Shaw (eds.), *Whole-Life Mission for the Whole Church* (Carlisle: Langham & ICETE, 2021), particularly Chapters 6–12 on overcoming the sacred-secular divide by reforming theological education through, among other things, institutional and curriculum change, programme design, individual modules and lectures, and through assessments.

38. For more on the impact of churches' "neighbour love" in their communities, see Madeleine Pennington, *The Church and Social Cohesion: Connecting Communities and Serving People* (London: Theos, 2020). See also the resources from Together for the Common Good (T4CG), https://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/news/churches-more-than-service-providers

39. https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2000/01/31/the-grace-project

40. https://churchgrowth.org.uk/articles/church-community-garden-projects/

41. See Chapter 4 in Paul Bickley, *People, Place, and Purpose: Churches and Neighbourhood Resilience* (London: Theos, 2018), https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2018/11/08/people-place-and-purpose-churches-and-neighbourhood-resilience, pp. 84–99.

42. See this report from 2018 showing the full extent of the Church of England's social action: https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/full-extent-church-england-work-support-local-communities. See also the Church in Action 2020/21 report from the Church Urban Fund on the churches' community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: https://cuf.org.uk/uploads/resources/Church-In-Action-Report.pdf

43. http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/what-is-community-organising/

Conclusion

This project emerged from the sense that the Church in the UK was making important strides in its *social witness* – and indeed, this sense is backed by increasing evidence. The Church's social footprint is growing and increasingly recognised by government and wider society. Evangelism remains a challenge in a pluralistic context saturated by an "each to his own" ethic that still subtly encourages a privatised faith. But progress has been made in this area too, most notably through the growth of Alpha and other courses and avenues for sharing faith (*words witness*). What we perceived to be missing, or at least insufficiently developed and nurtured, was the Church's *cultural witness* and work for cultural renewal.

This concern for sustained cultural engagement only became more pressing in the middle of the research, when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a critical juncture in the life of our nation – and at a time when we are all retraining our imaginations for the future, *Breaking Ground* has sought to plough up the Church's own imagination for its work in culture, to enable greater fruitfulness to emerge, for the good of this nation and the glory of God.

It also offers, we hope, a set of tools – suggestions of *posture, priorities, practices,* and *projects* – to help the Church, in both its "gathered" and "scattered" aspects, to engage in the work of "cultural gardening": *caring, cultivating,* and *co-creating*, with God, towards *shalom* and the new creation in a deeper, more informed, and sustainable way. We look forward, hopefully and humbly, to what comes next.

The Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service.

– 1 Corinthians 3:5–9

Acknowledgements

Many “cultural gardeners” have nurtured this project to fruition. A big thank you to David Stroud and the fellow visionaries associated with the UBS Faith in Philanthropy group who had the imagination for this work. I’m particularly humbled by the generosity of AFD Software Ltd, Jules and Jon Allin, Justin and Ali Stewart, and others who “watered the seeds” of this project.

The conversations I had with Andy Crouch and Philip Lorish early on in the research were incredibly generative and helped set me on the right path. Thank you!

There are too many people to name here, but special thanks are due to everyone who attended and contributed to the four roundtable conversations we organised as part of the research.

At key moments during the project I have greatly benefitted from the rich insights, stimulating questions and overall wisdom of Paul Williams, Mark Mayhew, Paul Milbank, Sam Tomlin, Stephen Backhouse, Luke Bretherton, James Davison Hunter, and James Mumford. Ian Christie’s help with the vignette on the environmental movement has been invaluable. I am in your debt!

My colleagues at Theos have all been hugely supportive, but Elizabeth Oldfield and Madeleine Pennington deserve particular mention – no, they deserve a special prize! Without their encouragement, “patient endurance” – let the reader understand – and skilled help, particularly during the more difficult moments, this report would quite simply never have “sprung up”. A big shout out also to Emily Downe, whose artwork does much more than simply “illustrate” the key ideas of this report. It generates fresh ones!

Last but not least, I am grateful to my wife Ligia – a constant source of joy, strength, and brilliant ideas.