

## Introducing the Forum's six steps to significant change

We need dramatic changes in the way we live and the choices we make to ensure a sustainable future. We need to decouple our impacts on the environment with our quality of life; change the way we consume to be more equitable and more satisfying; and be resilient to the inevitable resource shortages and climate events that are to come. In essence we need a new sustainable mainstream – and we need it fast.

Over the past 15 years, Forum for the Future has tried many different ways to get to this new operating environment. But we want to have more impact and help others to do the same, so we have created a model for achieving significant change. Our model focuses on action that delivers a new mainstream, by creating radically new ways of doing things or takes a lot of smaller activities to scale.

Forum's six steps to significant change model combines theory and practice. It draws on various change theories (for example, spiral dynamics, Theory U, Meadow's points of leverage, socio-technical transitions and diffusion of innovation) and grounds them in Forum's experience. The model is a framework for designing change processes and learning from them. We designed it with big systems change in mind, but it will equally work at a sectoral and organisational level.

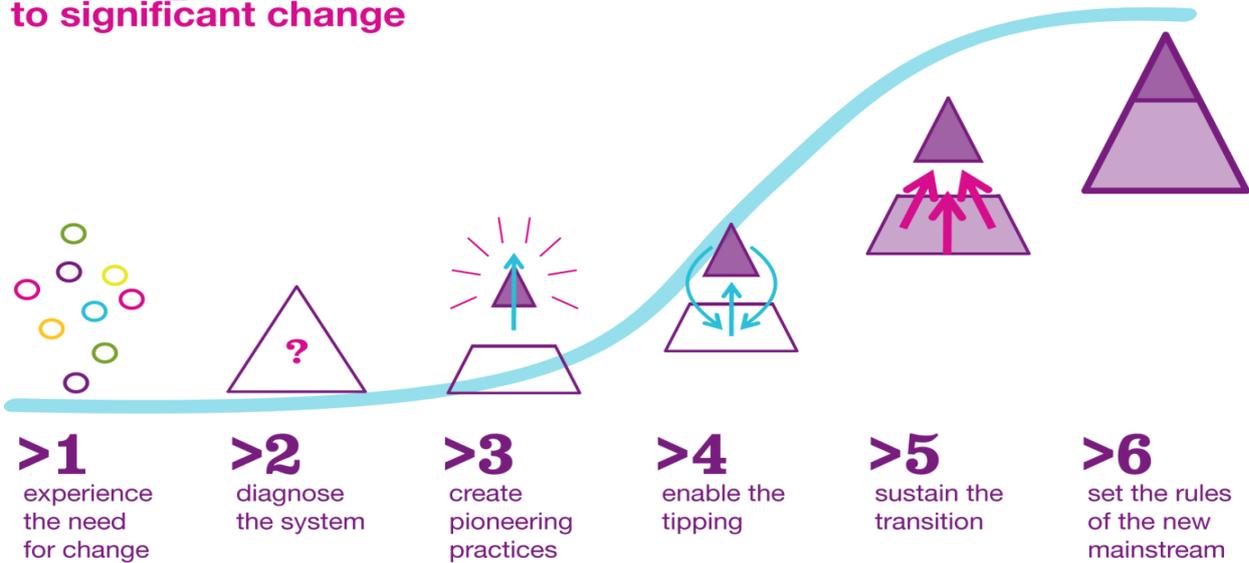
Put simply, change starts with understanding. The first two steps (**understanding the need for change** and **diagnosing the system**) are about raising awareness of the challenges an industry faces, working out what needs to change and how it might happen.

Then we move into system innovation, where new thinking and practical action are key. **Creating pioneering practice** – is about developing and showcasing new and better ways of doing things.

In the next step, **enabling the tipping**, experiments are taken up more widely by an industry once they see how effective they are and increasing number of people and organisations are involved.

The final two stages (**sustain the transition** and **set new rules for the mainstream**) are about maintaining the change that has been created, often through widespread sign-up to voluntary commitments, new consumer standards or regulation.

## 6 steps to significant change



### Forum's six steps in a bit more detail:

We start with **experiencing the need for change** – raising awareness of the urgency of a particular challenge or the size of the opportunity that it presents. In the tourism sector, for example, there will be no more business as usual when water shortages detract from destinations and aviation becomes subject to emissions restrictions. But in an industry with a very immediate focus, it is hard to be ready for these sorts of changes. So we worked with the UK Tourism sector to create *Tourism 2023* - a project where we used future trends and scenarios to highlight the fact that the industry was going to have to change. In one workshop with a diverse mix of 40 people from the industry, every single person thought that the price of oil price would go up dramatically – which will seriously impact business models so creates an impetus for change.

**Diagnosing the system** comes next. A real exploration of what the levers for change might be, who the key influencers are and how things work. How might you change something as critical as engineering, for example. Forum set out to answer that question about eight years ago, through our *Engineering for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* programme. We carried out a detailed analysis which told us that education was key to putting the profession on a sustainable path. As a result, sustainable development became part of the degree curriculum, so now all engineers learn about sustainable engineering in their training, and some of them have gone on to work with us on showing how it is done in practice.

Once you have a good enough knowledge of the intervention points (knowledge of intervention points grows all the time and by trying things out you learn more), it is time to start to experiment with what the new system might look like. This is where Forum's particular focus on system innovation is.

This is the interesting and exciting bit that we call **creating pioneering practice**. At this point you are normally working with a relatively small group of leaders and entrepreneurs to find new approaches.

In our *I-team* project we created a range of new solutions to tackling climate change. These ranged from iphone apps on local services that help reduce your carbon footprint; to alternative approaches to staff travel. We did this by working with three UK local authorities and IDEO, using an innovation process to develop new approaches to climate change. All of these have an impact in their own right, but they are also highly scalable, which is critical.

But pioneering practice needs to become the norm. To do this you need to **enable tipping points**. This does not happen automatically and is difficult to plan for, so is often overlooked. Change agents tend to focus on generating more and more good ideas and exemplar pilots, or they move straight on to looking for policy solutions.

But you can significantly increase your chances of creating tipping points by using learning, networks and communications to take the exemplars out of their niche (and remove barriers too). Just by bringing a network of farmers together with farm nutritionists pioneering new approaches we have the potential to reduce dairy methane emissions by 15%. Our *Farming Futures* project has done just that. We have created a network of farmers and their associations to work together to reduce their climate impact by sharing knowledge to accelerate good practice on farms. The 15% comes from a recent event where 60 dairy farmers discovered that a simple nutritional change could reduce methane/ unit of milk. All this inspiration is then supported by an online resource and great communications that furthers sharing and scaling.

You often only know that a tipping point has happened after the event and from there you need to work hard to **sustain that transition**. So you work with others to reinforce the change vehicles that have helped create tipping points.

A **vision**, for example, is a great way to kick-start a transition. Visions inspire people with what's possible and provide a clear sense of direction. They are generally created earlier in the change process, but the commitments that come from them can secure longer term accountability and impact.

In *Tourism 2023* we used the scenarios to generate the case for change and the vision was the industry's response to those changes. Now the commitments are being taken forward by ABTA, the UK trade body for outbound tourism, as part of their strategy. The plan is for signatories to report on a set of metrics on a biannual basis, and the ambition is that this will become a standard part of ABTA membership so will become widespread.

The final point is **change consolidation**, through **setting new rules of the mainstream**. This is often a change in law – like the smoking ban - or a permanent shift in practice, as we saw with the engineering curriculum. The sort of policy or approach that is needed to enshrine the change you want to achieve will have become clear through the earlier stages, and hopefully acted upon, so getting to this point should simply be about celebrating success!

But, clearly, change is not as simple as all that. It is not a linear process and you can go round different elements of the cycle a number of times. You might pull on one change lever and find that it doesn't budge so you try another. People facilitating change need to be constantly learning and re-diagnosing the system (be that a company, a city or a sector) to

ensure that they are making the optimal interventions. They also need to be reflecting the complexity of the system by trying a number of different 'pioneering practices' at once, seeing how they relate to each other, thinking about the cultural, political, technical and economic factors concurrently.

We hope that this simple change curve is a useful starting point in planning and learning about the significant change that is needed to build a sustainable future.

Forum is constantly working to create change and learning about different elements of this curve and how they relate to each other. We have a particular focus on system innovation and how you scale pioneering practice. We want to grow our bank of knowledge, and that of the sustainable development movement, so we would also like to hear from other practitioners about what they are doing so that we can *all* be more effective.

If you are keen to share your thoughts and ideas with us or want to know more please contact [s.draper@forumforthefuture.org](mailto:s.draper@forumforthefuture.org) or [a.birney@forumforthefuture.org](mailto:a.birney@forumforthefuture.org)