



*Economic &
Political Systems
Institute*

**“Transformational Political Movements Gain
Executive and Legislative Power in a Critical Mass
of Countries through Democratic Elections”**

A Transition Goal and Workplan

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The Economic & Policy Systems Institute (EPSI)'s mission is to help a New Economy paradigm prevail in practice, in the shortest possible timeframe.

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1. Introduction

Landscape reports have repeatedly linked the New Economy field's limited collective impact to its dispersion, with “under-resourced organisations doing important but isolated work”.¹

With at least a thousand initiatives worldwide now working towards New Economy goals, recommendations to address that dispersion include the building of connective infrastructure, such as knowledge platforms and network hubs.^{2 3}

A first challenge with recommendations centered on connectivity is their cost; building and maintaining long-term infrastructure is resource intensive. At a time when New Economy organisations are already competing for scarce funding and media exposure, they can be faced with a choice between organisational or movement objectives.^{4 5}

Recent papers by political scientists, however, suggest the challenge goes beyond increasing connectivity: underlying theories of change themselves may need to evolve if the implementation gap is to be closed.⁶

The argument starts from the widely recognised urgency and size of the transition. Braun and Downey, for example, warn that “The world’s remaining carbon budget has shrunk to the point where avoiding catastrophic climate change requires a green transformation of unprecedented speed, scale, and scope.”^{7 8}

¹ Chris Monaghan et al, “Fertile Ground: A mapping and analysis of the vibrant ecosystem of organisations across Europe working to transform our economic system”, *Metabolic & P4NE* (2025). https://www.metabolic.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Metabolic_P4NELandscape_LR_v2.pdf.

² Fertile Ground: “Interviewees repeatedly stressed the lack of connective tissue that would allow plurality to compound into power – not just in shared infrastructure and bridging functions, but through a collective rallying cry that moves beyond criticism of the existing system and towards a shared vision of what a viable alternative can look like.”; and findings #5 and #8 on building connective infrastructure (pages 88 and 89). The Demos Helsinki “Turning the Tide” report had a similar set of findings in 2022.

³ The New Economy Coalition has 170+ members in the U.S.; the New Economy Index lists 833 organisations in Europe as of September 2026. See <https://neweconomy.net/> and <https://neweconomyindex.eu/#/>. A comparable overview for organisations in other regions or the Global South could not be found.

⁴ See Fertile Ground report, findings #4 and #10 on funding constraints. Pages 87 to 89.

⁵ See Demos Helsinki: “Moreover, balancing between organisational and movement objectives is a constant challenge — organisations are often in competition with each other, e.g., for funding or media exposure, which can make coalition-building an uphill battle.” Demos Helsinki, Turning the Tide, (2022). <https://demoshelsinki.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Turning-the-tide-v.022022.pdf> This was also observed through bilateral conversations with staff and leadership of New Economy organisations in 2025/6.

⁶ The diversity of theories of change in the field can mean common assumptions underlying them go unquestioned. See e.g. “Naturally, theories of how change happens vary across the field, and as a result views of where resources are most needed and how they should be prioritised will differ”. Fertile Ground.

⁷ Benjamin Braun and Leah Downey, ‘Beyond compensation: Climate politics, mobilization, and transformative statecraft’ (2026); https://benjaminbraun.org/assets/drafts/braun-downey_transformative-statecraft.pdf. See also: “...unless the ideas summarized in the ten [New Economy] principles are rapidly embedded in global and national institutions, humanity is unlikely to overcome the extreme crises it is facing.” Jasper Kenter et al, “Ten principles for transforming economics in a time of global crises”, *Nature Sustainability* Volume 8, pages 837–847 (2025). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-025-01562-4>. As Lehmann (2026) has noted, visions of possible futures lack credibility in the face of imminent climate breakdown. <https://bsky.app/profile/silkalehmann.bsky.social/post/3mva753iozs2r>.

⁸ Without endorsing full-scale system change, institutional actors like the German Central Bank have also publicly recognised the urgency of the energy transition. “Given the urgency of the transition, comprehensively analysing

As outlined in section 2, three observations flow from this starting point:

- The implementation of the policies and reforms needed can only happen at the national level, through what Braun & Downey call *transformative statecraft*. Other sources including the UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty beyond Growth also prioritise the national level;
- Broad-based and sustained social mobilisation is essential, including to overcome resistance and backlash from vested interests;
- Mobilisation is necessary but not sufficient: transformational movements must also gain direct access to power through elections.

This emphasis on political pathways is in line with the most recent landscape report by Metabolic and donor collective P4NE, which recommends pro-actively building a political strand of strategy, “forging parties, leaders, litigation functions, media platforms, and coalitions to embed new economy ideals in governance”.⁹

The proposed Transition Goal in this background paper – *Transformational Political Movements gain executive and legislative power in a critical mass of countries through democratic elections* – is derived from these findings.

While comparable in its level of ambition to existing New Economy goals and mission statements, a first contribution of the proposed Transition Goal is its added specificity, in particular in starting to address questions of *Who*, *What* and *Where*.^{10 11}

Central questions of *How* need to be addressed before a detailed Theory of Change supporting the proposed Transition Goal can be developed. For example, political scientists have identified multiple areas where future research around societal mobilisation and transformational politics is required (see Transition Project #3 below).¹²

transition risk is paramount.”

<https://www.bundesbank.de/resource/blob/765322/342d8713af4ef45c78dc59e60f9f5b44/mL/2024-68-research-brief-data.pdf>

⁹ Fertile Ground.

¹⁰ See Fertile Ground: “Changing our economic system will be incredibly difficult.”

¹¹ See strategy guidance in Lafley & Martin’s ‘Playing To Win: How Strategy Really Works’; *Harvard Business Review Press*; 2025. Also Matthew Forti, “Six Theory of Change Pitfalls to Avoid”; *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2012. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/six_theory_of_change_pitfalls_to_avoid

¹² See Braun & Downey (2026): “To achieve a green transformation, societies need to mobilize around collectively shared visions for the future, fundamentally reshaping preferences in the process. Future research on transformative green statecraft will need to consider how such infrastructures for collective political mobilization can be revived or rebuilt; how societies can form collective political visions for the future; and how they can harness state power in their pursuit.”

As section 3 shows, few New Economy organisations or coalitions are currently working directly towards national level political objectives. Coalition and movement-building efforts rarely include an explicit electoral component, for instance.

These open areas are the starting point for the Transition Workplan summarised in section 4. The Workplan includes concept notes for three projects that contribute to the overall Transition Goal.

In the short term, the immediate purpose of the Goal and Workplan is to assist the EPSI in the search for **self-selecting project partners to jointly develop and implement the project proposals**. Through these ongoing conversations, both the proposed Goal and the Workplan will continue to evolve.¹³

Transition Project #1 – the Evaluation & Learning Cohort – is already in development with EPSI partner Collaborative Impact.¹⁴

The overall Workplan, including links to project concept notes is at <https://eps.institute/transition-workplan/>. If any of the individual projects is of potential interest, please contact mheywood@eps.institute for an introductory call.

2. Background: State power, mobilisation and elections

Transformational reform requires national state action. Local experiments and initiatives can help to provide proofs of concept, for example by testing different models for community-based decision-making. But large-scale transformation will not happen solely through the horizontal expansion of local models.¹⁵

As the Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth says:

“The scale and coordination required to eradicate poverty, reorganise production, and manage ecological transitions cannot be achieved through fragmented or localised efforts alone. Public institutions thus remain indispensable for redistribution, universal provisioning, and long-term planning.”¹⁶

¹³ Partnership on a particular project will not necessarily imply endorsement of the workplan and overall goal.

¹⁴ <https://collabimpact.org/>

¹⁵ Braun and Downey (2026): “However, the state remains the one vehicle we have to enact transformational change. In facing the climate crisis, the answer is not to turn away from the power necessary to meet it, but instead to harness it and deploy it democratically.”

¹⁶ Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, “Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth”, *United Nations Human Rights Council* (2026). https://www.neep-poverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Roadmap-for-Eradicating-Poverty-Beyond-Growth_final_10-June.pdf.

The recently launched Beyond Capitalism plan is also formulated at the national level, referencing the need for a democratic mandate and adding the crucial role of monetary policy.^{17 18 19}

The second element of transformative statecraft is **mobilisation**.²⁰

Systemic national reforms will face stiff resistance and backlash from vested interests. In a scenario where their implementation becomes a real possibility, “Elite opposition will be immediate and sustained. Capital flight, disinformation, legal obstruction, and institutional sabotage will be deployed to stall or reverse change.”²¹

In this type of context, a durable, broad-based and democratic political mandate is a necessary counterweight to make the transition sustainable. The Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth calls for

“...building countervailing power through alliances between trade unions, social movements, feminist and decolonial organisations, environmental justice groups, social and solidarity economy actors, and impoverished communities, at national and transnational levels”²²

Similarly, the Beyond Capitalism proposal notes

“Building such an economy requires mass mobilization from below: social movements, labor unions, tenant organizations, community groups, and broader networks of solidarity will have to fight—and keep fighting—to transform the society they live in.”²³

¹⁷ See Aaron Benanav, “Beyond Capitalism: From design to implementation”, *Autonomy Institute* (2026). <https://www.aaronbenanav.com/s/Beyond-capitalism-From-design-to-implementation-4.pdf>

¹⁸ Although national governments face supranational constraints and pressures, like loan conditionalities, the most direct (if challenging) pathway to addressing those constraints is again through governments themselves, in their roles as members of global institutions. See the Roadmap for more on the power imbalance currently faced by countries from the Global South in the governance of international institutions, including potential pathways for reform. See also Global Justice Project, ‘Global Justice Report: A Play for Equality & Prosperity Within Planetary Boundaries’ (2026) <https://globaljusticeproject.wid.world/global-justice-report/>.

¹⁹ There are sources that contest a national level focus. See for example “However, grassroots people have been increasingly questioning whether sustainability, peace, justice can ever be achieved through the framework of nation-states. Communities across the world are has been [sic] practicing diverse forms of self-government, anarchisms, and autonomy along with the emerging frameworks of power for radical transformations.” Shrishtee Bajpai & Franco Augusto (eds.): ‘Radical Democracy: recovering the roots of self-governance and autonomy’. <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/media/reports:rd:rd-booklet-2pages-final-low.pdf>. For examples of local and regional approaches in the U.S. see <https://ussen.org/what-we-believe-statement/> or <https://economicdemocracy.us/our-work-in-action/coalition-organizing/policy-work/>

²⁰ Braun & Downey

²¹ Beyond Capitalism

²² Roadmap

²³ Beyond Capitalism

Mobilisation is itself a function of “collectively shared visions of alternative futures”, in particular of how political leaders and parties articulate those visions to shape political preferences. Transformative statecraft, then, emerges from an ongoing interplay between bottom-up and state-led forces.²⁴

On this point, the critical insight from Benanav is that **mobilisation alone is not enough**:

“Movements cannot legislate, create new public institutions, and coordinate the simultaneous transformations across investment, finance, taxation, and firm governance that the transition requires. For that, *a political coalition must take power*” [emphasis added].²⁵

In other words, movements do not have direct access to the core functions of the state: legislating, creating new public institutions, modifying tax systems, etc. For that purpose, either they or a party aligned with movement objectives first have to **win elections**, and then maintain power for a sufficient period of time to enact in-depth reform.²⁶

Well-funded vested interests are already targeting state power as a tool, and using the electoral process to gain access to it.

Historians have found free market discourse is often a pretext for the goal of diverting state power towards protecting private profit; “encasing capital against popular challenge”. Since the 1980s, profits have indeed multiplied, thanks to the weakening of workers’ rights, cuts to corporate tax rates, and looser regulations on monopolies, among others.^{27 28 29 30}

For some industries the state itself has become a profit centre, with the prime example being technology companies’ taste for subsidies, government contracts and tailored tax breaks (accompanied by anti-government rhetoric).³¹

²⁴ “In our definition, transformative democratic statecraft is characterized by a fluid boundary between state-led “hetero-mobilization”—carried out by political parties or governments, with the goal not merely of assembling coalitions but of shaping preferences and forging collective political identities—and bottom-up “self-mobilization.”” Braun & Downey.

²⁵ Beyond Capitalism. See also thread with inputs from Aaron Thierry at <https://bsky.app/profile/max.eurosky.social/post/3mnc25ab2mc24>

²⁶ Benanav’s Beyond Capitalism plan assumes a transformative coalition has come into office, but deliberately does not explore how power is won.

²⁷ See the definition of neoliberalism by Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite drawing on Quinn Slobodian at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/newe.70020> : “...not simply as a shrinking the state, but using state power to insulate markets from democratic pressure—encasing capital against popular challenge.”

²⁸ Ola Innset, “Dual argument, double truth: on the continued importance of the state in neoliberal thought”, *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, Volume 45, Issue 4, December 2023, pp. 647 – 667. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-the-history-of-economic-thought/article/dual-argument-double-truth-on-the-continued-importance-of-the-state-in-neoliberal-thought/309C437D90FD17608C51C180EE40E37C>

²⁹ Terry Hathaway, “Neoliberalism as Corporate Power”, *Competition & Change*, Volume 24, Issue 3–4 (2020). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1024529420910382>

³⁰ See <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CP/> for a time series of corporate profits after tax in the U.S., for example

³¹ See Gil Duran, ‘The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy’, *Simon & Schuster* (2026). Also Quinn Slobodian and Ben Tarnoff, ‘Muskism’, *Allen Lane* (2026).

A direct pathway to that state power is the funding of political parties and campaigns. Examples from the U.S. are the most well-known, following the explosive growth in money in politics since the Citizens United decision in 2010.

But many other countries have political systems vulnerable to the outsized influence of well-funded interest groups. Sixty-four out of 181 countries do not ban or restrict anonymous donations to candidates, for instance. In the UK, almost 1 in 10 pounds in political donations comes from unknown or questionable sources. Political donations from mega-donors (those giving GBP 1 million or more) have gone from 1 percent in 2015 to 35 percent in 2024.^{32 33 34}

Compounding these vulnerabilities are the inadequate institutional protections against tactics of disinformation and disenfranchisement.

To achieve their objectives, movements seeking transformative reform will have to prevail on this increasingly imbalanced electoral terrain.

Here it can help to recall that a funding advantage does not always translate into victory, as discovered by Viktor Orban in Hungary, among others. Even when paired with control over state institutions and media, money is not yet a match for an electorate that has decided it's time for change.

In addition, surveys regularly find majorities for policy positions that align with New Economy principles. The Climate Majority Project has synthesised evidence of “silent majorities” that feel threatened by climate and systemic breakdown.^{35 36}

Taken together, it is these findings that suggest the overarching Transition Goal:
Transformational Political Movements gain executive and legislative power in a critical mass of countries through democratic elections.

³² Jorge Valladares and Jon Vrushji, “Towards Standards for Integrity in Political Finance”, *Transparency International*, (2025).
https://knowledgehub.transparencycdn.org/kproducts/Discussion-Paper_Towards-Standards-for-Integrity-in-Political-Finance-1.pdf

³³ See
<https://www.transparency.org.uk/news/new-research-reveals-almost-ps10-every-ps10-political-donations-comes-unknown-or-questionable>

³⁴ See for example the video series “How Big Money is Corrupting UK Politics” by Democracy for Sale and Transparency International UK. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dn-GOnAlVwY>

³⁵ Roadmap: “Globally, more than two in three people across G20 countries (68%) agree that the economy should prioritise the health and wellbeing of people and nature rather than focusing solely on profit and increasing wealth, and majorities across the same countries support higher progressive taxation on wealth, income, and large corporations to fund the necessary transformations.”

³⁶ Climate Majority Project, ‘Mobilising Silent Majorities’ (2026) at
[https://assets.climatemajorityproject.com/Mobilising%20Silent%20Majorities%20March%202026%20\(2\).pdf](https://assets.climatemajorityproject.com/Mobilising%20Silent%20Majorities%20March%202026%20(2).pdf)

“Transformational Political Movements” refers to social and political movements that support the visions, policies and institutional reforms necessary for system change. They recognise the scale and scope of the challenges their societies face, and reject discourses of pragmatism and realism that lead towards piecemeal, incremental reform.³⁷

The mention of “critical mass” in the definition above reflects the role of national governments in supranational reform, as members of global and regional institutions. Over time, emerging coalitions could leverage these memberships to enact and embed global reforms. This intergovernmental coordination is also a requirement to tackle more immediate supranational constraints on government policy, like loan conditionalities.³⁸

As the next section shows, few New Economy organisations are currently working towards a goal of this type.

3. The New Economy and Political Engagement

Keeping track of the fast-growing New Economy field is no easy task. The landscape report by Metabolic/P4NE in 2025 introduces two complementary typologies to categorise the 735 New Economy organisations it mapped in Europe. The first is an activity-based typology with six categories and 24 subcategories, and the second a thematic-based typology with eight categories and 41 subcategories.³⁹

Despite this complexity and diversity, it is apparent that few, if any, New Economy organisations are primarily working towards broad-based political mobilisation that includes electoral objectives.

A first indicator is that the Metabolic typologies in 2025 do not include a category or subcategory specifically related to national level political campaigns and parties.

Electoral engagement could be partially contained under subcategories such as Campaigning and Public Engagement, Coalition Building, and Grassroots Organising & Power Building. However, the examples provided for these subcategories are broad, for example “coordinating towards shared political goals”.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Braun & Downey: “We define mobilization as the purposeful activation of power and resources to pursue transformative change”

³⁸ See the discussion on voting shares at the IMF in the Global Justice Project. As the voting share of the U.S. continues to decline over time due to relative falls in GDP and population, it should fall below the 15% threshold that currently gives it sole veto power at the IMF. This opens the theoretical possibility of coalitions of countries imposing reforms. Multiple sources have proposed reforms for international institutions; further research is needed on political pathways to their implementation.

³⁹ Fertile Ground. As seen below, by September 2026 the total number of organisations listed in Europe by the same source is up to 833.

⁴⁰ Others include “bringing together NGOs, labour unions, and advocacy groups” and “mobilising collective action”.

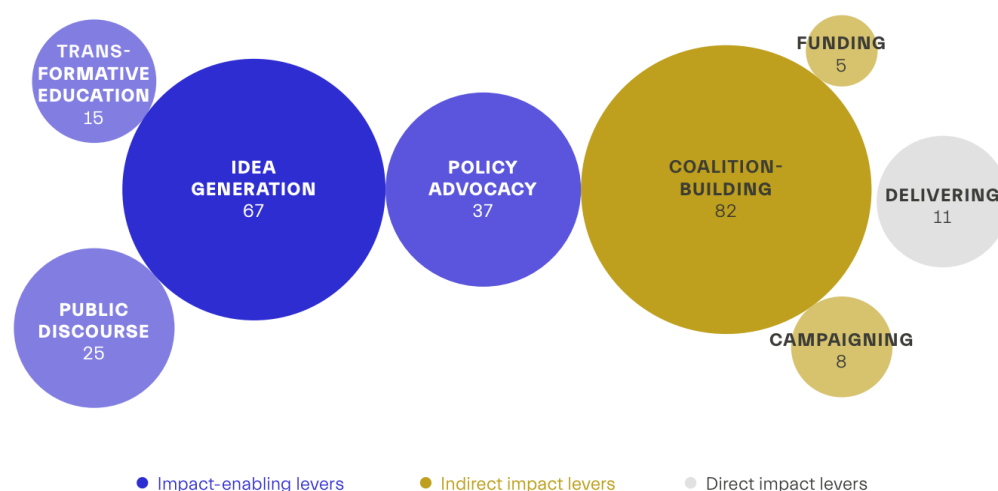
The second indicator comes from the New Economy Index website, a tool launched by Metabolic to accompany the landscape report that allows the searching and filtering of organisations in Europe.

As of September 2026, the Index has data on 833 organisations. Applying the website’s filters to identify organisations working towards mobilisation-related objectives at the national level yields a subtotal of 76 organisations.⁴¹

Based on the summary overview for each organisation, there do not appear to be organisations within this subgroup working directly towards the Transition Goal – including electoral engagement – in their countries. Results of the filtering exercise include the 4 Day Week Foundation, Bankwatch Romania, Degrowth Poland, and the Institute for Circular Economy.

An earlier mapping of the field in Europe by Demos Helsinki found the most common categories to be coalition building, idea generation, and policy advocacy (see Figure 1).⁴²

Figure 1: Demos Helsinki typology of New Economy organisations



Source: Demos Helsinki (2022)

In the U.S. context, an interactive map of the 170+ members of the New Economy Coalition does include the criterion “Electoral Organizing”. Applying it as a filter yields the name of one

⁴¹ See <https://neweconomyindex.eu/#/>. Filters applied were: *Activity filters*: “Activism and Advocacy”; “Movement Building and Organising”; *Geographic scale filter*: “National”; *Stakeholders engaged filters*: “Activists and Social Movements”; “Labour Groups and Trade Unions”; and “Elected Officials”. The tool does not offer political parties as a standalone stakeholder category.

⁴² Metabolic’s Fertile Ground report references and builds on the Demos Helsinki ‘Turning the Tide’ report.

organisation. Other coalitions working towards related system change objectives, like the Climate Justice Alliance, are primarily focused on the local and regional levels.^{43 44 45}

Multi-country coalitions again do not appear to prioritise electoral engagement as part of mobilisation strategies.

The WeAll alliance's work with national governments, for example, is at a technical level, sharing expertise and transferrable policy practices. Regarding its mobilisation work, its website says "What is vital for systems change is a critical mass of people and organisations coming together to form a dynamic movement to *influence* and *inspire*" [italics in original]. Elections are mentioned on its FAQ page as one among several options for individual action.

^{46 47 48}

Other New Economy initiatives are also engaging with governments primarily on a technical basis. The Doughnut Economics Action Lab has worked with 50 cities and regions to apply the concept and tools of Doughnut Economics. Mariana Mazzucatto and her team have advised a range of governments, and have a research project in partnership with Brazil's Ministry of Culture.^{49 50 51}

Various organisations and groups have issued one-off statements, petitions, recommendations and open letters to current political leaders.^{52 53 54 55}

⁴³ See <https://neweconomy.net/member-directory/>

⁴⁴ The organisation working on Electoral Organizing is <https://movementgeneration.org/>

⁴⁵ <https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/> "We are locally, tribally, and regionally-based racial and economic justice organizations...". An overview of meta-strategies does not mention elections. <https://climatejusticealliance.org/how-we-work/#4>

⁴⁶ See <https://weall.org/wego> including the quote "The role of government in transforming how our economies operate cannot be underestimated." Katherine Trebeck, WEAll Co-Founder.

⁴⁷ See <https://weall.org/faq> : "**Motivated citizens** can spread the word and work for change across all areas of their lives, talking to friends and colleagues, *voting for parties that support a Wellbeing Economy*, taking part in demonstrations, buying from social enterprises, taking action within their communities, etc." [bold in original, italics added]

⁴⁸ See also "A key difference is that the neoliberals' strategy was based on the formation of an elite powerbase, backed by billions of dollars. WEAll, on the other hand, is supporting the formation of a broad-based movement backed by millions of people—cross sector, cross geography and simultaneously bottom up and top down." WeAll strategy. <https://weall.org/wp-content/uploads/WEAll-Strategy-April-2022.pdf>

⁴⁹ See <https://doughnuteconomics.org/themes/cities-regions>

⁵⁰ See <https://marianamazzucatto.com/>

⁵¹ See <https://marianamazzucatto.substack.com/p/carnival-economics-dispatches-from>

⁵² See <https://www.neep-poverty.org/sign-your-name-in-support-of-the-roadmap/>

⁵³ The limits of the petition approach can be seen in the Reclaim the Economy Week petition, addressed to "Political Leaders". Six months after its launch in January of 2026 it had achieved under 20% of its goal of 10,000 signatures. See <https://www.reclaimtheeconomy.org/petition>, accessed in June 2026. As a point of comparison, in the UK an e-petition through the official petition.parliament.uk page requires 100,000 signatures to be debated in Parliament.

⁵⁴ Olivier de Schutter et al, "We economists have done the maths: 'growth' is a doomed strategy – there is a better way", *The Guardian*, 10 June 2026. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jun/10/economists-maths-growth-doomed-strategy-un-agen-cies-political-leaders>

⁵⁵ See <https://newforum.org/the-berlin-summit-declaration-winning-back-the-people/>

Political engagement itself has been a matter of debate in the New Economy field, linked to strategic choices about ‘insider vs outsider’ or ‘antagonistic vs constructive’ approaches.⁵⁶

Options for engagement are partly limited by risk. As the Metabolic report found in 2025 “...overt alignment with parties or elected governments can compromise independence, expose leaders in the field to backlash, or narrow the movement’s appeal.”⁵⁷

Another limitation is funding. Foundations – not just in the U.S. – risk losing their tax-exempt status if they participate or intervene directly in political campaigns, a concern which can also extend to activities of their grantees. At the same time, those restrictions are not absolute, with advocacy organisations across many domains leveraging those same sources of funding to engage in political processes.^{58 59}

Overall, these findings suggest the need for a new type of targeted partnership model, designed specifically to activate and align coalitions and organisations towards a common mobilisation and electoral project.

The Workplan summarised below seeks to lay the groundwork for that model. For the full Workplan including concept notes for each Project please see <https://eps.institute/transition-workplan/>.

4. Transition Workplan overview

The Transition Workplan currently has three projects, aiming to generate inter-related outcomes that contribute to the Transition Goal. The Projects are designed to be implemented in partnership with “first mover” organisations that are seeking to test alternative approaches and share what they learn with their peers.

To allow for the flexibility of each Project having different partners and timelines, a common evaluation and learning framework will capture lessons that will be regularly discussed across Projects, synthesised and published.

⁵⁶ Fertile Ground

⁵⁷ Fertile Ground, page 69

⁵⁸ Recipients of funds from U.S. foundations, for instance, are allowed to communicate and meet with legislators, voters and political candidates to educate them about policies, as long as they do not refer to specific legislation. See e.g.

<https://www.philanthropysouthwest.org/sites/default/files/files/pages/Foundation%20Advocacy%20Factsheet%209.13.17.pdf>

⁵⁹ It is straightforward to find grantees of U.S. foundations – and in some cases the foundations themselves – officially registered to engage with EU institutions and parliamentarians, for example https://transparency-register.europa.eu/search-register-or-update/organisation-detail_en?id=8557515321-37

Project #1 – the Evaluation & Learning Cohort – is a pilot that tests a model for strengthened strategic adaptiveness and shared organisational learning between New Economy initiatives.

Projects #2 looks at a political economy aspect of the Transition: the role of the renewables sector as a potential force for change. If the political engagement of “Green Capital” expands beyond its current focus on sector-specific interests, it could also become a source of long-term funding for New Economy initiatives.

Project #3 proposes a program for political scientists and national-level partners to develop and test mobilization hypotheses, where possible including New Economy organisations.

Project assumptions and the Workplan will continue to evolve based on feedback gathered, new sources and emergent partnership objectives.

Transition Project #1: Evaluation and Learning Cohort – New Economy (ELC)

Learning question: *How might a model for shared evidence-based learning across New Economy organisations be developed and tested?*

The evaluation literature shows that effective organisations purposefully create space for reflection to assess successes and failures, in order to incorporate them into their next or other projects. Evaluation is also necessary for effective coalition and partnership strategies.⁶⁰

Outside of the large NGOs like Oxfam, a review of New Economy websites (forthcoming) could not find published evaluation and learning reports regarding organisations’ own work. Bilateral exchanges with staff and leadership of New Economy organisations confirmed that, beyond donor-driven project evaluations, opportunities for structured evaluation and learning at the organisational level are rare.

The ELC provides a structured space and process for small, time-bound Cohorts of New Economy organisations to voluntarily have their individual work independently evaluated, learn from the findings (individually and collectively), and assess potential courses of action.

While existing partnerships may gain additional value from joining a Cohort, the proposed model will also benefit organisations joining individually.

⁶⁰ See e.g. “Another widely recognized core element of effective coalition strategy is evaluation. Raynor (2011) argued that coalitions must go beyond binary policy outcomes and instead evaluate incremental progress and increased advocacy capacity. Downey et al. (2008) similarly stressed that coalitions should integrate evaluation into the strategic plan from the outset (during the coalition’s formation stage) and make evaluation iterative, allowing them to adapt based on findings.”
https://www.orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/6242025_110155_386_Coalition_Conditions_for_Success.pdf

Collective reflections will be published and shared with the broader field; the publication of individual evaluation reports is encouraged but not required. Evaluation teams will also capture and publish learnings regarding the application of the Cohort model itself. These will help to gather and assess questions and interest from the wider field regarding shared learning models.

Transition Project #2: Green Capital as a New Economy force

Learning question: *how might New Economy organisations increase engagement with the renewables sector as a prospective political New Economy actor?*

The renewables sector is a clear candidate to become a political economy force for the Transition.⁶¹

Yet despite being on track to surpass fossil fuels in terms of energy contribution, the sector is punching below its weight as a political actor, as observed by Thea Riofrancos, among others. Its advocacy efforts are also focused on sector-specific objectives such as market access and technology development.⁶²

At the same time, leaders within the sector are already making proposals to strengthen their collective voice. This includes calls for companies to provide political funding.⁶³

The Project “Green Capital as a New Economy force” seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the sector’s current political engagement before developing a detailed Theory of Change for the renewables sector in a potential New Economy role.

Transition Project #3: Transformative mobilisation - research initiative

Learning question: *how might political scientists, New Economy organisations and national-level movements partner to develop testable hypotheses on building transformative political movements?*

The need for societal mobilisation to drive national-level transformative statecraft has been emphasised by Braun & Downey (2026), Benanav (2026) and Schutter (2025), among others.

⁶¹ This point was made by Alyssa Battistoni, Lillian Cicerchia, Thea Riofrancos and Will Davies (independently of each other).

⁶² Comments by Thea Riofrancos in June 2026 at a book launch event in Berlin for the German edition of ‘Extraction: The Frontiers of Green Capitalism’, *Icon books* (UK), 2024.

⁶³ See e.g. “...very practically, we got to get more political money in the system...” Podcast with Steve McBee, manager of clean energy investment platform Huck Capital. Transcript at <https://transcripts.volts.wtf/giving-clean-electricity-a-political-voice-of-its-own>

Braun & Downey have also outlined areas for future research on mobilisation, however these do not yet appear to have a dedicated research program or initiative. Fundamental challenges include the decline of formal, long-term membership organisations (unions, parties, clubs), the rise of organisations with weak membership ties (e.g. issue-specific protest groups), and understanding how these trends relate to emergent changes in material forces.⁶⁴

Transition Project #3 proposes a research program to start addressing these gaps. The research program would generate both theoretical contributions and testable hypotheses, working in partnership with political organisers, social movements and national researchers.

5. Conclusion

The elections of Thatcher and Reagan are widely cited as the inflection point at which neoliberal strategies came to fruition, moving from policy proposals to large-scale implementation.

In New Economy sources, the strategy leading up to those victories is often summarised as a long phase of idea spreading and network building, followed by rapid political action in a context of crisis. Historians have questioned this ‘neat’ narrative, among other reasons for the way it minimises the agency of the candidates.^{65 66 67 68 69}

A more pressing question is the extent to which strategic assumptions centered on ideas and timing – derived from 20th century experience – are of use under 21st century conditions.

The neoliberal approach famously took decades to yield results, an unfeasible timeframe today due to the threat of climate breakdown alone. The assumption of a clear-cut crisis or

⁶⁴ See Anton Jäger, ‘Hyperpolitics’, *Verso Books* (2026)

⁶⁵ See for example pages 14–16, *Fertile Ground*

⁶⁶ See the two sections “Ideas matter” and “Timing matters” in the Earth4All strategy, page 11 at <https://earth4all.life/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Earth4All-Global-Strategy-2025-30.pdf>; See also the WeAll 2040 Strategy at <https://weall.org/wp-content/uploads/WEAll-Strategy-April-2022.pdf>

⁶⁷ Quinn Slobodian refers to “the neat tale of the Mont Pelerin Society-to-Reagan-and-Thatcher arc”; see <https://lpeproject.org/blog/post-neoliberalism-is-the-new-centrism/>.

⁶⁸ “...if we center ideas and politics in our accounts of why change occurred, we might end up thinking that all we need is a change in political leadership and a change in the underpinning ideas to put those changes into reverse...The social democracy-to-neoliberalism account of the twentieth century misses out big forces that need to be placed more centrally in the picture. Deindustrialization, which we can trace back to the mid-fifties. The breakup of the post-war context of Bretton Woods and a whole system that encouraged global trade but also insulated national economies.” Florence Sutcliff-Braithwaite, *What Was Neoliberalism—And Is It Dying?*; conversation hosted by Progressive Review, transcript at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/newe.70020>; August 2026.

⁶⁹ “Free market thinkers and principles influenced the Thatcher program for sure, but suggesting Mrs. Thatcher was simply parroting economic liberalism is to misread the relationship between those ideas and her actions”. Terrence Casey, *Forging the Iron Lady: Margaret Thatcher, the 1970s, and the Origins of Neoliberalism*, Routledge Studies in British Politics, 2024. It is remarkably hard to find in-depth analysis online of neoliberal engagement with Reagan and Thatcher before coming to power.

rupture that New Economy organisations can “prepare for” also bears re-examination in light of the ongoing polycrisis.^{70 71 72}

Emerging authoritarian coalitions with various strands – religious, oligarchic, techno-utopian, nationalist and racial supremacist, among others – are fundamentally opposed to most New Economy objectives and to liberal democracy more broadly.^{73 74 75}

Beyond the political funding and disinformation already mentioned, their tools include rhetoric and policy that targets minorities, and the undermining of institutions that could hold them accountable. Whichever label is applied, these are not actors engaged in a good faith exchange of ideas with their opponents, policy makers, or the electorate.⁷⁶

The times when intellectuals and think tanks could expect to shape public debate and reach policymakers through books, magazines, documentaries and radio shows are also long gone. Higgins & Martin have proposed the term “epistemic collapse” to capture the combined

⁷⁰ “Crises are key turning points, and the field should prepare for the next rupture”; Fertile Ground. “Ideas aren’t implemented immediately. It can take decades. But when the moment comes, they can change everything...”; Earth4all Strategy.

⁷¹ Economic historian Adam Tooze has written it is “probable...we are about to crash through critical tipping points”. <https://adamtooze.com/2022/10/29/chartbook-165-polycrisis-thinking-on-the-tightrope/>. See also: “My basic wager in interpreting modern history is to bias toward the thought that it might be unprecedented” <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/jan/15/the-crisis-whisperer-how-adam-tooze-makes-sense-of-our-bewildering-age>

⁷² “I found the idea of polycrisis interesting and timely because the prefix “poly” directed attention to the diversity of challenges without specifying a single dominant contradiction or source of tension or dysfunction.” Adam Tooze, <https://adamtooze.com/2022/10/29/chartbook-165-polycrisis-thinking-on-the-tightrope/>

⁷³ See Gil Duran, the Nerd Reich.

⁷⁴ See <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/new-autocratic-alliances>

⁷⁵ Although the opposition is not always specified. Following a conference on post-neoliberalism, Quinn Slobodian observed that “The opponent, such as it is, is a comic-book version of shareholder value and financial hegemony”. Slobodian also highlights the importance of a common enemy for neoliberals: “But the essence of the original neoliberal project was that it was a group of people who may have had diverse methodologies but were united in one thing: their hatred of a common enemy—socialism.” See <https://lpeproject.org/blog/post-neoliberalism-is-the-new-centrism/>

⁷⁶ See Gil Duran’s ‘The Nerd Reich’; Quinn Slobodian’s ‘Hayek’s Bastards’; and Slobodian and Ben Tarnoff’s ‘Muskism’ for analysis of the various blends of political ideology, religious belief, science fiction, supremacism and eugenics that drive the behaviour of tech oligarchs and emerging authoritarian leaders.

impact of concentrated media ownership, declining local journalism, disinformation, artificial intelligence and algorithmic targeting on the information environment.^{77 78 79 80}

Last but not least, neoliberalism's alignment with short-term business goals led to substantial corporate support, including funding for network building and media outreach. Milton Friedman's seminal 1970 article arguing that the only social responsibility of business is to increase its profits appeared in the *New York Times* magazine, for instance. The policies required for systemic transformation, in contrast, face resistance from a range of powerful vested interests, as seen above.^{81 82 83}

If the priority for the next phase is implementation, these types of structural challenges need to be taken as given and factored into New Economy strategies.

The introduction noted the cost that coordination has for individual organisations, particularly those playing a hosting or active management role. It is also well-established that coordination has to serve a higher purpose if it is to be appealing and sustainable.

But not any purpose will do. To drive effective coordination, a common purpose has to be specific enough for individual organisations to be able to assess its potential value against the expected costs of participation.⁸⁴

Broad objectives or aspirations will usually not provide enough clarity for organisations to work together, even when they agree in principle. Recent historical examples of large-scale

⁷⁷ For an overview of the neoliberal approach to idea dissemination see Larry Kramer: 'Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking Political Economy'. Memo to Board of Directors, *William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Beyond-Neoliberalism-Public-Board-Memo.pdf>

⁷⁸

Higgins & Martin also introduce a framework based on the principles of verification, deliberation and accountability to counter epistemic collapse. See <https://demos.co.uk/research/verification-deliberation-accountability-a-new-framework-for-tackling-epistemic-collapse-and-renewing-democracy/>

⁷⁹ In a reflection on the tenth anniversary of Brexit, Chris Dillow writes: "...the challenge is: how can we create the conditions in which intelligent policy-making is even feasible? Those who want liberal technocratic policies must favour radical change, because only this will create the conditions in which rational policy-making is even possible." <https://chrisdillow.substack.com/p/lessons-of-brexit>

⁸⁰ There are also emerging approaches designed to operate in this environment – like coordinated rapid-response influencer pools – that are proving effective in impacting both online and offline debates. But applying them requires a specific type of infrastructure, which can deliver a constant flow of targeted messages to different voter groups, legislators, media channels and platforms. See e.g. <https://transcripts.volts.wtf/giving-clean-electricity-a-political-voice-of-its-own>

⁸¹ See Mirowski and Plehwe (eds.), 'The Road from Mont Pèlerin; The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective'; *Harvard University Press*, 2015.

⁸² Milton Friedman, 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits'; *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970. Via <https://public.websites.umich.edu/~thecore/doc/Friedman.pdf>

⁸³ Wealthy and corporate interests are not monolithic; see e.g. the growing movement of individuals arguing for higher taxation on income and wealth, such as the Patriotic Millionaires in the UK and U.S., and Tax Me Now in Germany.

⁸⁴ "In order for partnerships to be a success, it is essential that all partners focus on: 1) Value-add of the partnership as a whole... []...2) Benefits / value created for each individual partner". United Nations, 'The SDG Partnership Guidebook' (2022) <https://archive.thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SDG-Partnership-Guidebook-1.0.pdf>

coalition-building, such as the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign, have been built around specific timelines, objectives, and target institutions.

Even without shared objectives, the civil society initiative C20 has been engaging G20 governments continuously since 2013. The common parameters provided by having a defined group of target countries (G20 members) and priorities set by the host country government each year have been sufficient to maintain a loose network over time, including through phases of limited funding and travel restrictions.⁸⁵

It is not a coincidence that these examples have a political component. Opportunities to influence policy at a purely technical level tend not to attract sustained interest or coalition-building efforts. In non-profit domains, effective strategic coordination usually requires shared political objectives.^{86 87}

In the case of the large-scale reforms a Transition needs, an emblematic international deadline or single shared objective is unlikely. A focus on the national level, on the other hand, can help to identify a series of common objectives.

Once first national-level transformative movements are ready to move to electoral engagement, electoral calendars will provide an ongoing sequence of deadlines and measurable outcomes. An international coordination group could provide mutual support, also helping to adapt and disseminate strategies and lessons learned.

For the Transition to happen in practice, gaining and sustaining political power is the bridge that must be crossed.

The New Economy field has a large number of resources ready to help shape the future, from popular policy proposals to active networks and coalitions. If they can be combined with effective models for 21st century mobilisation and electoral campaigning, the race to that bridge can still be won.

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⁸⁵ In 2026, for instance, due to restrictions from the U.S. as host the C20 process is being run digitally. See <https://www.c20international.org/>

⁸⁶ See for example the IMF's public consultation in 2026 on its program design and conditionality, which are among its main levers to influence national policy. While it attracted 83 individual responses, as well as joint letters, the IMF's policy process does not appear to be the target of a coordinated or longer-term campaign by respondents. <https://www.imf.org/en/about/partners/civil-society/consultation-2026-review-program-design-conditionality>

⁸⁷ Landscape reports have proposed recommendations to address dispersion, and separately to develop a political strand of strategy in the New Economy field. See e.g. Fertile Ground.

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