

**SHEILA
MCKECHNIE
FOUNDATION**

**UNLEASHING
SOCIAL POWER**

It's all about **power**

A guide to thinking about
power to achieve deeper
solidarity for social change



Our Vision & Mission

We recognise that change often begins in civil society. The power civil society has to drive truly transformational change – in one person’s life or our entire society – is most effective when we work at our best, without unreasonable constraint.

We call it *Social Power*

Our **vision** is of a more confident and powerful civil society in which people work together to drive social change. Our **mission** is to unleash civil society’s power to drive that change.

We do this in three ways:

Our strategic response

We aim to unleash Social Power by working in three core ways:

Think tank

We are a think tank. We gather strategic intelligence on how change is happening, innovate new approaches and tools, and encourage closer collaboration around shared goals. As well as our ongoing tracking of how change happens, we undertake deep enquiries such as our current Power Project.



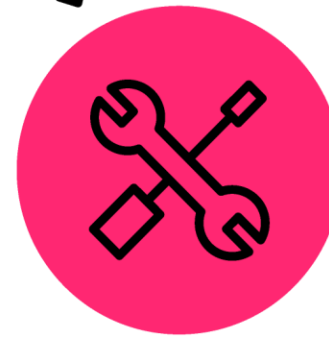
Champions

We are champions. We stand up for civil society's role and value, defending civic space and the right to campaign. We celebrate the very best campaigns and campaigners each year at the SMK National Campaigner Awards.



Capacity builders

We are capacity builders. We strengthen our sector by developing its knowledge, skills and confidence in campaigning and social change. We do this by providing resources, and supporting people and organisations directly through our training and consultancy services.

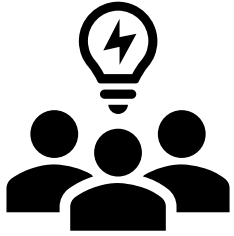




Why "Solidarity"?

*“Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity requires **commitment**, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground.”*

Sara Ahmed



Quick Poll!

**How far along are you in this journey?
Click onto the JamBoard and add a post-it
to show where you are right now**



The challenge

SMK's Power Project hosted a two-year inquiry into social change, civil society and first-hand experience of poverty and inequalities.

The project heard that people with first-hand (or lived) experience are rejecting the social sector as a place through which to seek change.





Starting Question for our Power Project

“How can we grow the voice and influence of Londoners with lived experience of poverty and inequality?”



How did we set about answering this question?

Many people do not find the social sector a welcoming or useful place through which to seek change.

>>>

Some choose to operate outside the social sector. They are not waiting for others to share power with them.

>>>

Much of the most impactful change is being driven by and with people who have experience of poverty and inequality.

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Despite concern in the social sector, examples of genuine partnership with people with experience of poverty and inequality are rare.

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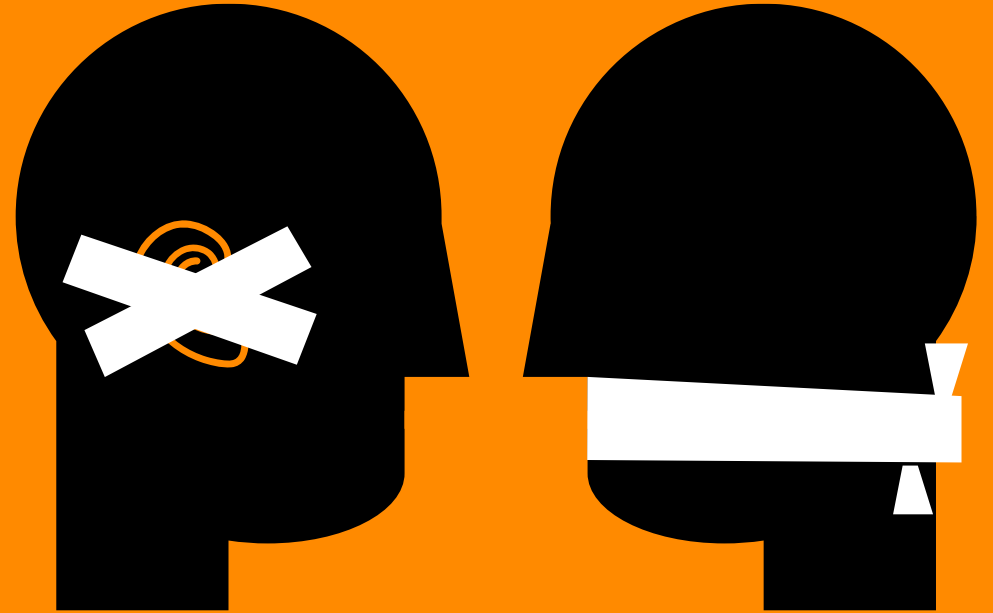
Even where the will exists, common approaches to working together often create as many problems as they solve.

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Professionals' perception of their own power doesn't match the perception of others.

>>>

Why power?





What is power?

Our definition: the ability to create or resist change

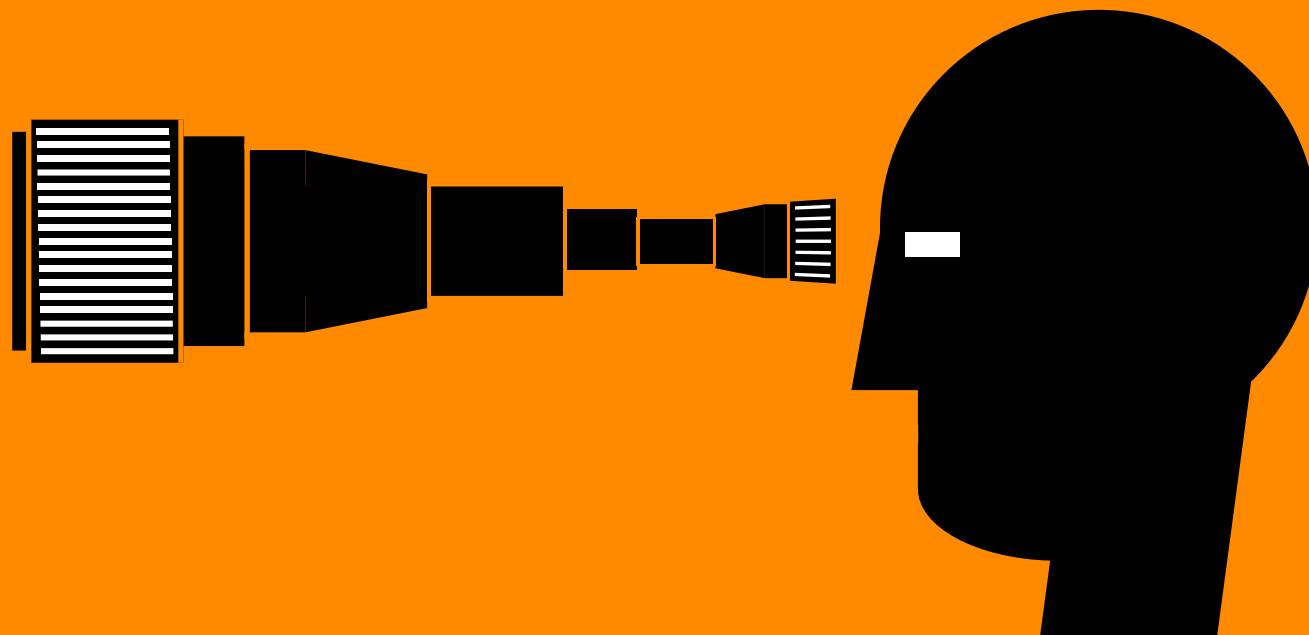
Everywhere,
but not binary

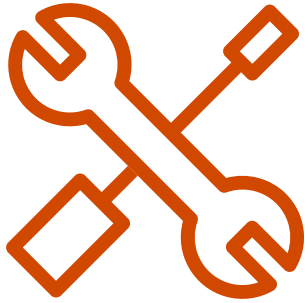
Structural and
Cultural

Personal and
Political

Accumulative,
but not Finite

See power





The Power Lens

The Power Lens tool offers a bird's eye view of the 'nested' systems that make up civil society, and the power that flows through and between each of them.



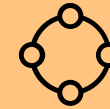
Individual power

Personal and positional sources of power



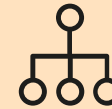
Collective power

Organisations, communities, social movements



Civil Society's power

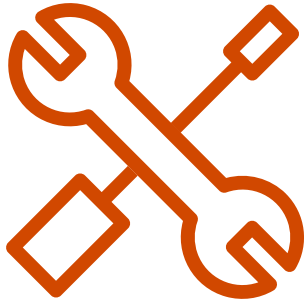
'Social power': the power of civil society to drive change



Societal power

Structural and cultural power in society influences actions and interactions on all levels





The Power Lens

Individual



"I've spent lots of time trying to empower people, but I've found **lasting change has to come from within.**"

Collective



"It isn't enough to invite people who then **don't feel comfortable** to speak."

Civil Society

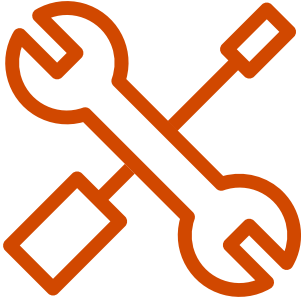


"People in organisations are attracted to other people in organisations... **Everyone else is silenced** as a normal part of how things happen."

Societal



"**A lot of activism is co-opted by systems of oppression** – capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy – simply by virtue of the fact that everything exists within that structure."



Quick Poll

Which sphere of the lens do you focus on the most?



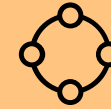
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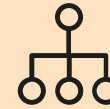
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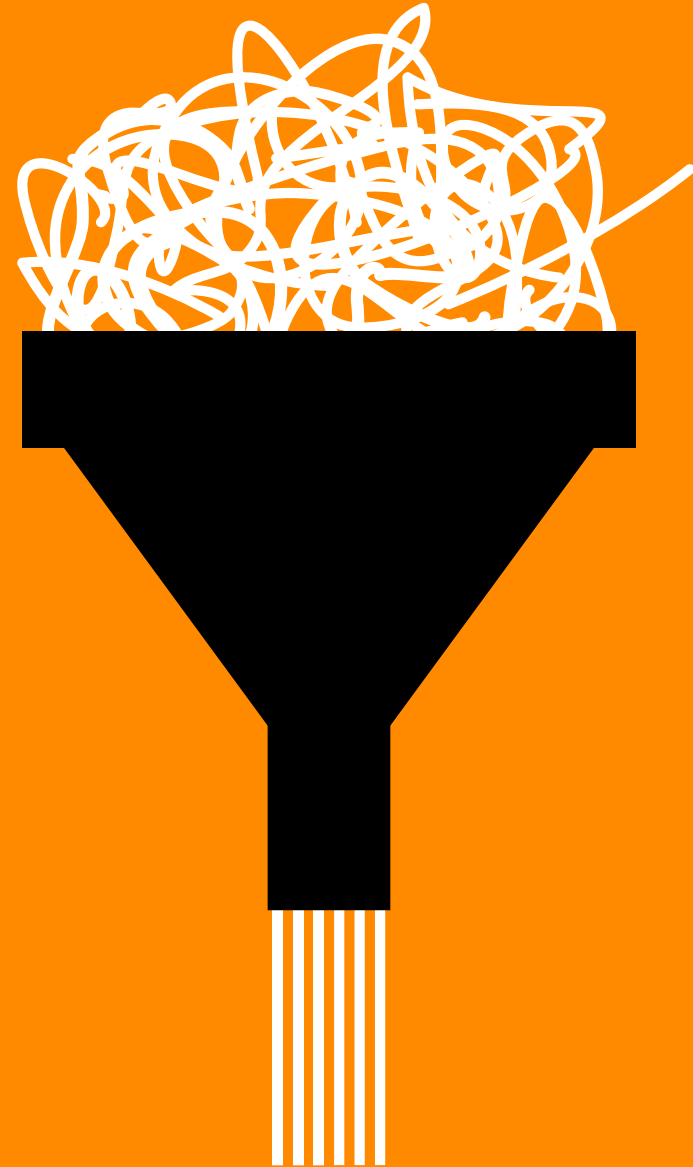


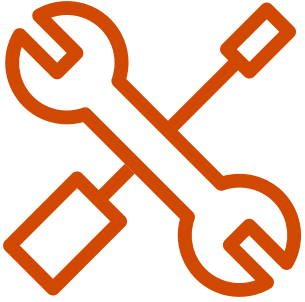
Societal power

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Transform power



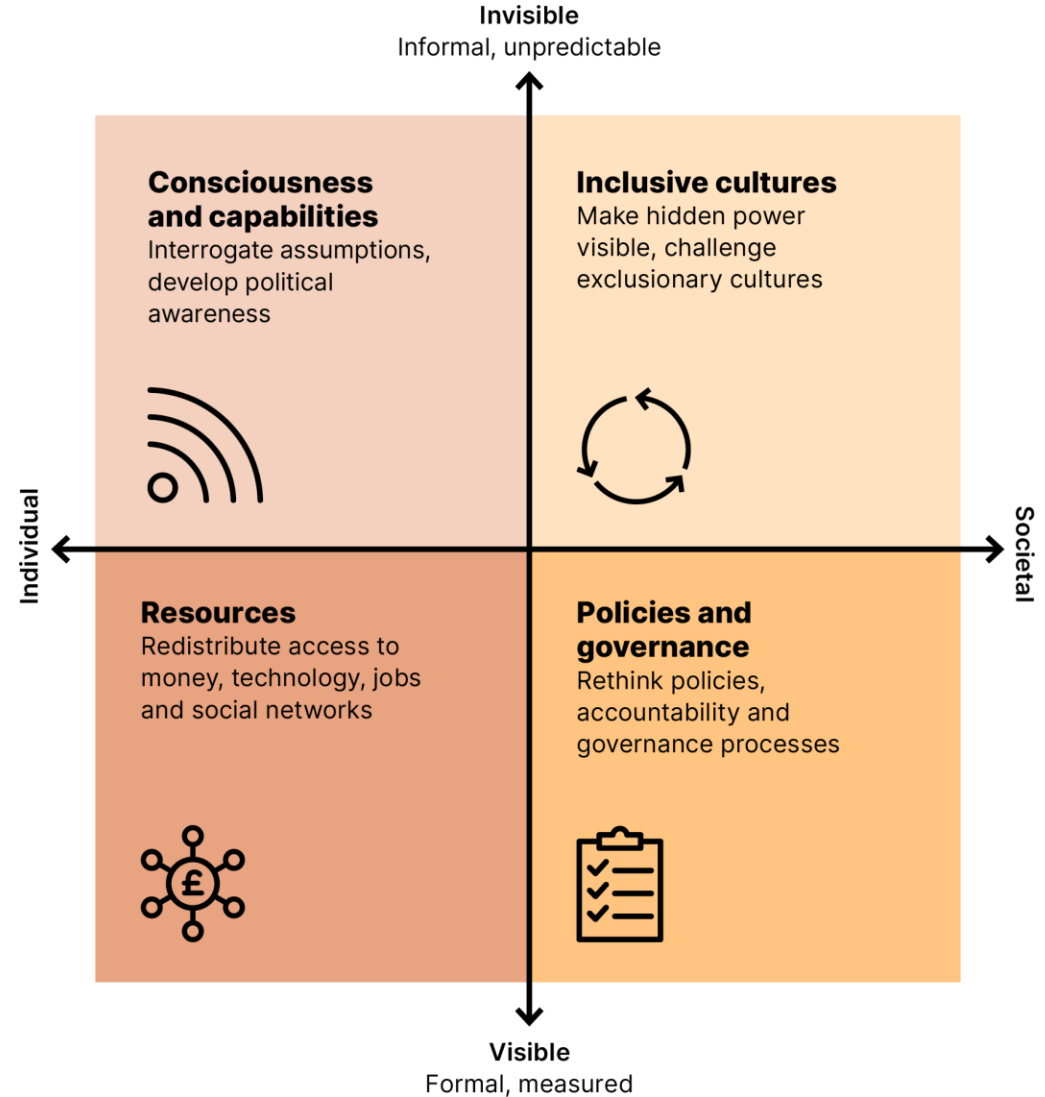


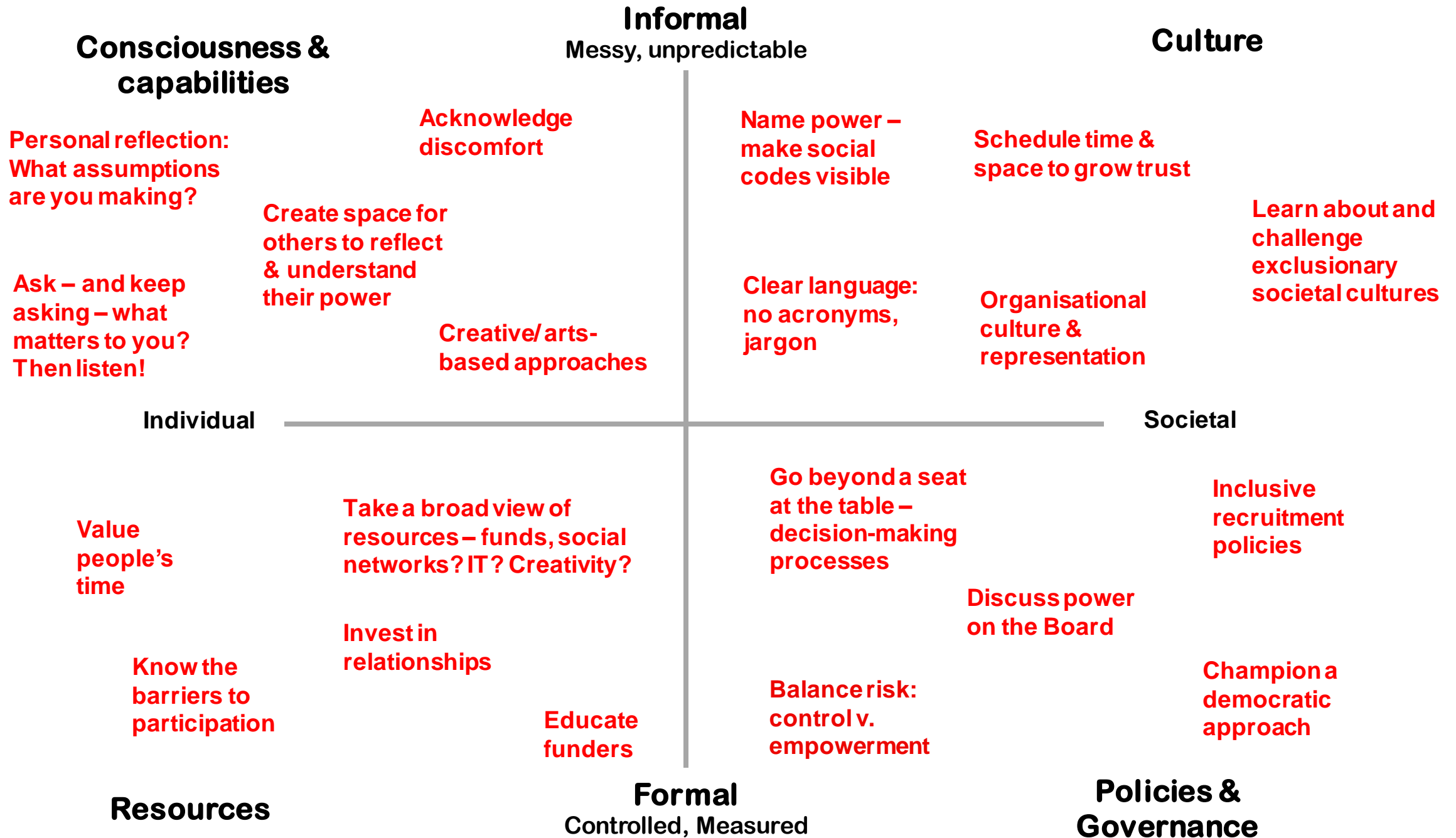
The Power Framework

Each quadrant of the Power Framework reveals a different dimension of power.

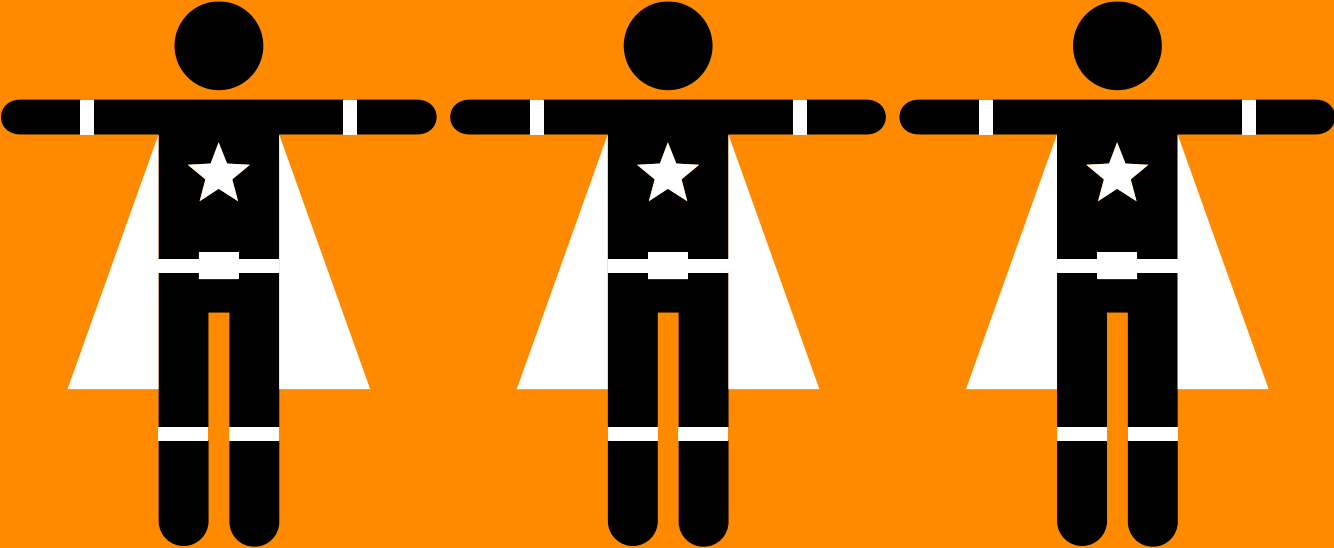
It shows how power is individual and societal, formal and informal.

It encourages us to pay attention to aspects of power that may be harder to predict.





Unleash power





Unleash power

A systemic shift is needed in the social sector – a shift that goes beyond instances of engagement to transform the way it sees, thinks about, and acts on power.

Everyone in the social sector has a role to play to achieve deeper solidarity for social change.



Final Reflections

What are you taking away from this session?

What is one action you could take to work in deeper solidarity?





Thank you for attending!

<https://smk.org.uk/what-we-do/power-project>

