

**Larger Us: An evidenced-based
reflection on the first year**

Interim report

April 2022

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1. Introduction

About this report

This report gives an independent perspective on the impact of Larger Us in its first year. The early period which this report concerns represents an important developmental stage for an organisation which, whilst clear on its purpose, has remained open-minded about the most effective route to achieving it.

This report differs from what has come to be the expectation for evaluations of civil society organisations and so might be an atypical read for funders accustomed to third party evaluations. Generally, evaluations reflect on a theory of change. They speak to whether outputs were delivered and whether outcomes were observed (and if not, why not). This research is not a formal evaluation in that respect. It wasn't appropriate for Larger Us to fix a theory of change in what was effectively a proof-of-concept period for both the organisation and its funders. Instead, this report represents an impartial perspective on what Larger Us has achieved and its future potential.

It speaks to the following five research questions:

1. Who amongst their target audience does Larger Us engage and/or fail to engage? How do we perform against our five diversity axes (age, gender, ethnicity, geography, sector of work)?
2. Does Larger Us's target audience find their narrative relevant and valuable?
3. To what extent do those who engage with Larger Us's content feel motivated or inspired to want to explore or further develop practices that are relevant to larger us change-making?
4. To what extent does the Programme enable participants to explore and develop valuable change-making practices?
5. Does Larger Us's target audience consider that they have created valuable opportunities for them to build relationships, share their ideas and progress their thinking?

Note that this report uses capitalised 'Larger Us' to refer to the organisation and 'larger us', in lower case, to denote the narrative and approach that Larger Us seeks to communicate.

Approach

Larger Us has collected feedback of its own, in line with its commitment to iterate content and programme design. This interim report is distinct from that. It provides a summative view and uses its own evidence base derived from:

- ☉ Twenty-seven qualitative interviews that break down as follows
 - Nine, hour long, interviews with a combination of people who participated in the spring (first) programme or who were closely involved in early co-production
 - Nine, hour long, interviews with people who participated in the winter (second and amended) programme
 - Nine, half hour, interviews with people who had attended at least two lunchtime sessions (which featured a talk on core programme content followed by discussion in small groups)

- ⊙ Interviews with Larger Us staff, following the end of the spring programme
- ⊙ Data collected through programme exit questionnaires¹
- ⊙ Monitoring information collected by Larger Us on demographics of programme participants

This research has had access to the feedback collected by Larger Us but has not used this as part of the analysis presented in this report in order to retain independence. The research has also involved familiarisation with Larger Us content.

The final report will include exploration of the following data:

- ⊙ EDI data (where available) of those who have engaged with Larger Us at touchpoints other than the programme
- ⊙ Monitoring information collected by Larger Us that helps to understand the penetration and reach of its publicly available content (podcasts, reports, newsletter, webinars, blog)
- ⊙ Follow-ups with those who have engaged with either the programme or lunchtime talks several months following their engagement (to explore longer term impact and continuation of relationships/ sense of belonging to a larger us community)
- ⊙ Interviews with those close to Larger Us (and were early co-collaborators) and have an informed view on their development and direction
- ⊙ Further staff interviews

¹ Administered as an anonymous survey for winter programme participants and administered during interviews with those who had participated in two or more lunchtime talks.

2. The diversity of the Larger Us target audience

Introduction

Larger Us is strongly focused on reaching the most diverse possible range of people through its work. This is driven by a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) but also because bringing different people together in small groups is a central tenet of larger us change-making.

Following some early deliberation, Larger Us made the following decisions about its target audience in addition to EDI considerations:

- ⊙ To aim to reach those who already had an interest in larger us change making, even if they had no prior theoretical knowledge of it or were knowingly working towards it. The point was to work with people who are already asking themselves questions about whether their approach to change making could be different and possibly more effective by adopting a different mindset and approach. This includes activists who have become concerned that the approaches taken by them or those around them are pushing people away from their cause and reducing the likelihood of them achieving the change they want to see. Larger Us therefore doesn't seek at this point to reach people who have no interest in larger us change making already.
- ⊙ To engage people who are already engaged in 'progressive' or forward-facing change.
- ⊙ Not to deliberately quota in programme recruitment a diversity of political affiliation. It generally falls out of the above two points that those most closely engaged with Larger Us, self-identify as 'liberal', 'left' or 'centre left'.
- ⊙ To seek programme participants who have scope to influence others, through sharing larger us ideas in their own networks. This was not a prerequisite to programme participation. However, it was a consideration and is a factor in how larger us ideas can reach scale (this point is returned to in Chapter 6).

This chapter discusses how Larger Us has performed against their five diversity axes: age; gender; ethnicity; geography; and, sector of work). Additionally, it discusses how diverse Larger Us is perceived to be, and the experience of taking part in highly diverse groups.

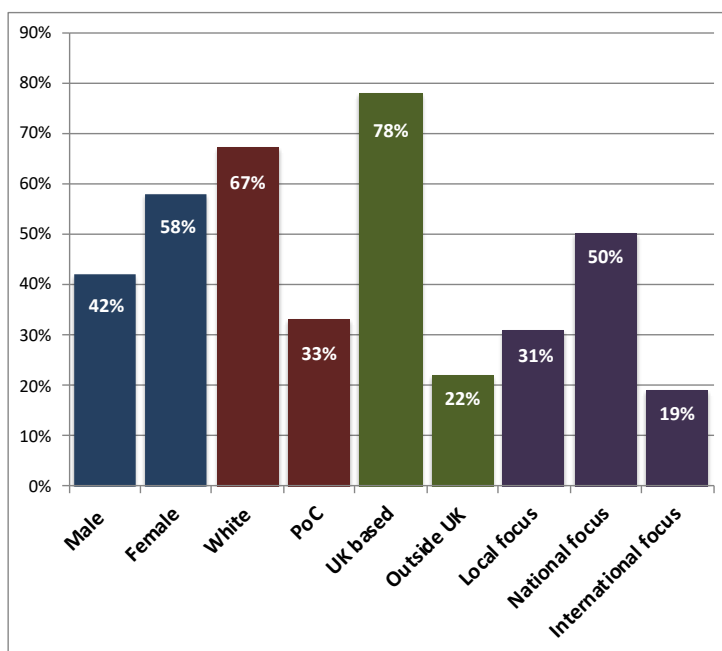
Who has Larger Us engaged?

Larger Us has attracted a hugely heterogenous audience. They differ in terms of EDI indicators but also in terms of the causes they champion, their own personal interests, their background, what brought them to their cause (including lived experience) and in terms of the stage they were at in their own personal development journey.

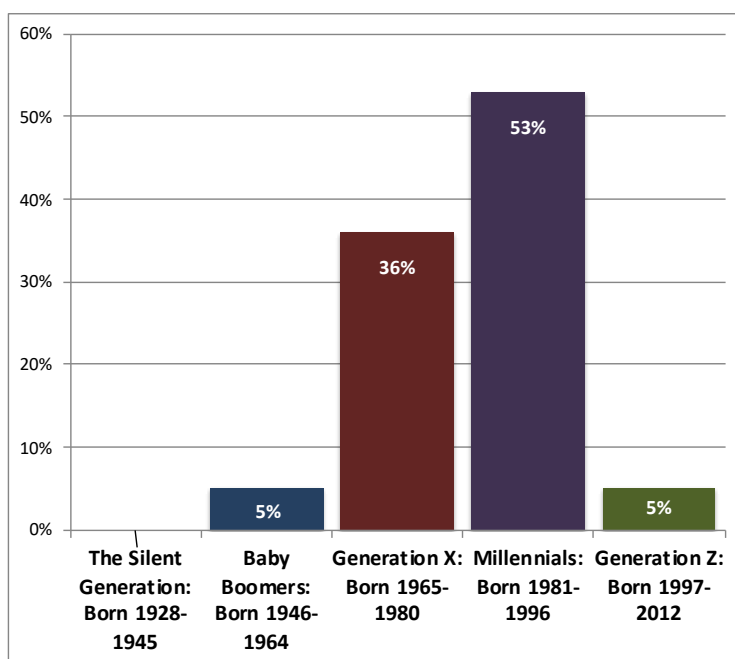
The following charts show basic EDI data for programme participants only (with a base of 36). They do not show the demographics of those who have attended webinars, engaged in lunchtime sessions or engaged in written material. Further EDI data will be collated for the final report, however, this will remain limited as it hasn't been possible to collect this data across all touchpoints.

The key EDI data of programme participants shows a good variety of attendees on these demographics. There are notable over-representations of women and those who are UK based. The former to a large extent, reflects the make-up of civil society organisations and

change makers, and, possibly – those more likely to be attracted to personal development. The predominance of UK based participants is likely due to some reliance on Larger Us’s own network, especially for the first programme. However, it is encouraging to see, for a new and UK based organisation, that 22% of programme participants were from outside of the UK and, regardless of where they reside, 19% reported an international focus to their change-making.



Around half of course participants are ‘millennials’, those born between 1981 and 1996 (aged between 26 and 41). Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980 (aged between 42 and 57) account for the next largest group. Baby boomers are arguably under-represented (even taking account of retirement age), when compared to the size of their group (and note that the proportions of living populations of these generation categories differs across the world). However, the composition of programme participants is much more about diversity within a small group, rather than about how representative it is of UK or world demographics. To this end, the groups comprised a good mix of age ranges and generations.



The programme has featured such a broad range of sectors/ causes/ interests that it doesn’t make sense to count these, given the size of the population concerned². It’s more revealing to recount the variety of causes that have been attracted to Larger Us. These include and aren’t limited to: climate change, tech/ artificial intelligence ethics, child poverty, colonialism, animal welfare, educational psychology, community organising, mental health and transgender rights.

There are other important ways that those who have engaged closely with Larger Us differ. Participants vary in terms of self-confidence, ‘imposter syndrome’, anxiety levels about being in a group with others that they don’t know, how introverted or extroverted they are,

² 36 programme participants

levels of enthusiasm and scepticism for the larger us approach (everyone engaged is curious but not all are convinced by their early reading and research), seniority/ experience, and preparedness to do 'inner work' and be self-reflective.

Large Us were conscious of this in the design and facilitation of the programme and lunchtime sessions. The format of the lunchtime talks allowed even the most anxious and sceptical to become engaged without over committing. Some reported becoming surprisingly comfortable and decided to stay for the post talk break out groups. Others reported being glad that there was no compulsion to do this, but they had, nevertheless, felt part of something intimate – something that created the possibility for relationship in a way in which webinars don't.

Those taking part in the programme who felt initially anxious reported that the pre programme calls with Larger Us had helped to alleviate any concerns they had. Additionally, the small group format and tone set for the group from the outset created a 'level playing field' - an atmosphere of equal value, irrespective of education level, confidence or seniority.

The groups included a good mix of people who found Larger Us for themselves, often serendipitously through a repost via Twitter and people who found out about the programme because someone else (at work) suggested it to them, as well as people who had followed the work of Alex Evans after having read *The Myth Gap* or heard about the Collective Psychology Project. They included, therefore, people who were familiar with some of the content that has shaped Larger Us and those who were interested in larger us ideas but hadn't found a home or a vocabulary for them.

Six participant vignettes

1. REDACTED

How diverse is Larger Us perceived to be?

Those who have attended lunchtime talks or webinars are self-selecting. The impression of some of those who attended is that the contingent is predominantly white and highly educated. Those who took part in a programme have a different perspective, perhaps because the composition of the groups was purposively designed. Indeed, some remarked that the groups had been "skilfully crafted" to ensure that change makers from a broad range of backgrounds could engage with each other.

Some suggest that because of the (perceived and not entirely accurate) make-up of the Larger Us staff team, there are 'blind spots' in Larger Us's analysis of how change can happen and the value of winning immediate battles. This sits alongside a prevailing narrative generally about the value of 'lived experience' of oppression on the grounds of identity and the (greater) value placed on this by civil society. In an atmosphere of outrage about whose voices are heard and prioritised, there is some unease that the larger us approach is being presented by (apparently) privileged voices.

At the heart of this is a disquiet about the apparent ease at which someone from a position of privilege can speak about how change can happen at a theoretical level, without, apparently, having lived experience of the thing they want to change. This feedback

arguably comes from a place of misunderstanding about the larger us approach. But it's important to note as it could limit the potential reach of the project going forwards.

Relatedly, some are initially concerned that they 'won't belong', or 'fit in' in a Larger Us programme or wider community. This is fundamentally about education and fear that Larger Us will speak in such a way that isn't accessible. A few programme participants were initially worried about being in groups with people who are outside of their professional, personal and cultural experience – especially on the lines of social class and cultural capital³. This fear is overcome once people have become involved but might present an issue for those who would like to access Larger Us materials but don't feel they qualified. Larger Us is perceived to be scholarly and “slick” and, in its delivery, comes face to face with some of the inner struggles that characterise exactly the kind of activism it seeks to revision.

Finally, there is some concern and most especially amongst those who are most passionate about a larger us approach to change-making, that it might be perceived as a project which better “enables the privileged to talk to oppressed people”. The qualitative research asked people to describe what sceptics, hypothetically, might say about Larger Us. This was the most cited critique. As the following chapter discusses, Larger Us does present skills on communicating effectively and across lines of difference and disagreement. In that respect, the feared critique is accurate. However, the tone of it is potentially undermining and obfuscates the point.

What is the experience of being part of a diverse small group?

Everyone who engaged in the programme, or the lunchtime sessions with breakout groups, reported enjoying the experience and on a number of levels.

They were pleased to discover other people who were troubled by and thinking about the same concerns as them. Whilst they came from different sectors and experiences, they had in common a view that the approach to change in their area wasn't producing the results they wanted. Some came with a concern about polarisation and how their sector's campaign approaches might be adding to this. Participants felt that both the programme and the lunchtime sessions offered them a 'safe space' in which they could begin to explore this that they had failed to find elsewhere. Indeed, it permitted participants to voice some of these concerns for the first time as they had felt reluctant to do so in their own professional/ campaign circles.

Many remarked how refreshing it was to spend time, and in such intimacy, with people so unlike them. The groups provided social contact benefits, and made the point - by design, that belonging can be fostered across lines of difference and there is an intrinsic value in opening up conversations with people that they wouldn't have otherwise met in their day to day lives. For some, this was especially enlightening and resulted in them reflecting on how limited their own personal and professional networks are, and crucially – made them question what the result of this might be on their change-making.

³ Cultural capital is a sociological concept from Pierre Bourdieu. It comprises the social assets of a person (education, intellect, style of speech, style of dress, etc.) that promote social mobility in a stratified society. The theory holds that the more cultural capital you have, the more power you have. It is related to financial wealth but has value without it.

In a way it was like being stuck on the tube and you have to talk to the people around you. This was useful in itself. It was refreshing. I didn't know before where these people were coming from.

My one to ones [a feature of the programme format] gave me an insight into unseen racism that I had never understood before

The experience did leave some wondering how they can find opportunities to meet people who are different to them in life generally. This point is returned to in Chapter 6.

The open and informal nature of the groups, along with content that showed the relationship between inner and outer work (see Chapter 4), allowed participants to get over the split between the personal and professional self. This was hugely valued and considered to be unique. There is much about the group design and facilitation that delivers learning in and of itself. The material that was presented and discussed was experienced actively because of the way in which the groups were put together, organised and the open and convivial nature in which they were run. It is notable that this represented a significant departure from participants previous experience of meetings concerning change-making or campaigning.

Some participants reported a sort of epiphany that people whom they had imagined are unassailable or impenetrable, perhaps because of their level of education, their seniority in their profession or their profile, were in fact vulnerable. They had experienced trauma or were currently balancing difficult personal lives with a challenging schedule as a change maker.

The personal stuff people disclosed – it made me realise that what we see of people is only ever the tip of the iceberg

We've done ourselves a huge disservice in splitting the professional and personal.

Despite demographic, sector and other differences, the groups realised that they were aligned politically and as 'progressives'. There was some criticism of this, insofar as some questioned how different they were from others in attendance after all. They also raised that it was difficult to practice cultivating relationships with people now like them as, ultimately, they were in a group with people who shared the same values and progressive goals (see Chapter 4).

Whilst largely, participants were pleased that groups were not sector/ cause focussed, some did raise questions about whether a sector/ cause focus could be useful. They noted the benefits of being able to a) share their concerns about change-making approaches in their sector without fear of disapproval/ professional reprisal and, b) the potential for transformative change if a larger us approach is adopted across causes/ movements.

The key thing is to make connections between different groups so in doing things differently all of our efforts are magnified.

However, some were pleased to find someone else in the group with the same interest and did wonder if a sector/ cause focus would be constructive in thinking through the application of the skills they learned in their own settings. Relatedly, being so different, it

was difficult for some to imagine what might hold them together after engagement with Larger Us came to an end.

3. How valued and relevant is the ‘larger us’ approach to change makers?

Introduction

As outlined in the previous Chapter, those who engage with Larger Us closely, or who find Larger Us content (blogs, publications, webinars, lunchtime talks), tend to be those who were looking for a counter narrative to an ‘us and them’ narrative and who have recognised that this impacts their change-making. The Larger Us strategy is to target this audience. Given this, Larger Us’s narrative is, by definition, already relevant to them.

This chapter examines what aspects of Larger Us’s narrative resonates most, is most valued and why. It explores too some of the dilemmas it poses to this audience and aspects of it that those who have engaged with it find problematic.

What is the Larger Us narrative perceived to be?

Before looking at what aspects of the narrative are most valued, it probably makes sense first to explore what people who have come into contact with Larger Us across the various touchpoints perceive the narrative to be.

The interviews asked programme and lunchtime session participants how they would describe Larger Us to someone who didn’t know anything about them, and in as simple terms as they could manage. This exercise revealed which aspects of a larger us approach to change making had landed, as well as how conversant (or not), they were with the narrative.

Larger Us have grappled themselves with how best to capture the essence of their narrative and approach. For the purposes of this research, the following were used to prompt discussion, after interviewees had given their most ‘top of mind’ response.

- ⊙ Aiming for transformation rather than victory (in the zero sum sense of defeating an opponent)
- ⊙ Seeking to bridge divides rather than deepen them; and
- ⊙ Recognising that transformational change is about psychology / states of mind as much as politics / state of the world.

Whilst research participants didn’t describe Larger Us’s narrative in exactly the above terms, everyone was able to describe it as an alternative approach to change that was much *less about winning on campaign goals* and was instead more about *changing the nature of the conversation about them*.

Most people leaned into Larger Us being essentially a depolarisation project – a project that aims to shift change-makers away from us and them dynamics. The following quote typifies most responses:

They want to explore the possibility of change making that goes beyond the them and us.

There were some differences in emphasis in the descriptions given, however. For example, some emphasised collectivism. This was either in terms of a need to see belonging possibilities as broader than those who share the same views, or, relatedly, the idea of change-makers coming together across causes and sectors.

Larger Us recognises that a language of division won't work [to achieve social change goals]. We are speaking to our supporters but that isn't enough. How do we reach beyond the base?

Some others emphasised the importance of personal development or 'inner work' for change makers, seeing this as the essence of the Larger Us narrative.

"I think that the emphasis on inner work and emotional intelligence is one of the unusual and most important elements of Larger Us".

Activism is about outrage. That's not something I can prove empirically but I think Larger Us is generating reflection on that. It's a paradigm shift.

Many also discussed the nature of Larger Us's purpose and emphasised its focus on skills and change maker practice. They acknowledged that Larger Us is neither a campaign organisation nor is it a think tank. It is perceived to present a different philosophy to change making but in the interests in equipping change makers to apply a different approach in some of their work. Note that Chapter 5 discusses how successful Larger Us has been in this regard.

It isn't a project which just states the problem. It is a project concerned with doing something about it.

The research also invited interviewees to remark on how easy or difficult they found the exercise of explaining the purpose of Larger Us and their narrative. There was a mixed response to this. Some found it easier to explain Larger Us in terms of what it does, such as, *"it provides talks and training for activists"*, rather than describing the narrative, and so began with this before attempting to describe what the training and talks are about!

Many did remark that they found the exercise tricky and that it was a struggle to call up the 'right' words. Whilst that might be the case, for the most part, those engaged with Larger Us were able to describe both its purpose and narrative reasonably accurately. It's perhaps worth noting, though, that describing Larger Us was experienced as difficult. Some of this seems to be about it representing a new narrative and set of language that people aren't accustomed too. Some remarked that they feel they lose fluency in terms of their ability to describe the ideas, as time passes from their last engagement with Larger Us (see Chapters 5 and 6 for discussion on how people have gone on to share Larger Us ideas and resources).

It's actually really hard to find the words. I know how what I want to say but hard to find the words. Harder still since the time has passed.

What aspects of the Larger Us narrative/ approach are most valued?

The crystallisation of existing thinking

The key value identified was the crystallisation and validation of participants existing thinking. Their interaction with Larger Us provided validation and a framework for aspects of their change making which had both puzzled and bothered them. They came to Larger Us

with an intuitive understanding of the pitfalls in the approach of change makers in a polarised context, without having been able to identify them, name them or consider what to do about them. Many participants described previously “*feeling around this on my own*”. Their experience with Larger Us refined and clarified their thinking and gave them, for the first time, a forum in which to dig deeper and discuss this thinking with others.

The idea of transformative change, which the larger us narrative presents, was especially valued. Participants reported how their own work – as campaigners, as funders and other roles which seek progressive change, were fundamentally short-termist. The larger us narrative was perceived as both looking beyond ‘quick wins’ and providing a template for how broader and lasting change can be achieved more quickly than fighting many single battles.

It has given me some justification for the approach that I’ve been trying to take with my work and has helped me lean into this further.

It was also relevant because my organisation is primarily driven by short-term political/policy outcomes due to funding arrangements, which has proven to be effective up until now. Now that policies are beginning to affect ordinary people's lives, we need to look further ahead and build broad and vocal citizen support that secures victories that last.

Personal development and acknowledging the implications of outrage

Engagement with Larger Us prompted a realisation about what motivates change-makers. Though many already recognised that their cause/ issue had become increasingly polarised in recent years, they hadn’t necessarily situated themselves in that.

Some programme participants acknowledged to themselves that personal anger had been an entry point to their change making and that this has impacted their approach to achieving change. Not only had this potentially contributed to the polarisation that concerned them, but it had also had a corrosive effect on them personally.

When I started the programme, I thought it was all about [name of organisation]. But then I realised it is actually all about me. My personal development IS change making.

The inner and outer world relationship presented through Larger Us content has been a turning point and, for many, the first opportunity for them to think about how their anger at injustice drives their change making – both positively and negatively. Against a backdrop of an increasingly narrowing space for civil society, participants acknowledged that they have become gradually angrier, exasperated, despairing and, given all of that, personally exhausted.

The context is soul destroying and makes you more emotional and just want to fight even harder.

The term ‘activist’ was perceived to be linked to fighting and (trying to) win campaigns. In the acknowledgement of the role anger and outrage can play in achieving or limiting change; some commented that they found the term ‘change-maker’ to be a helpful shift in vocabulary. No one who took part in the interviews had previously described themselves in

this way, but many found it to represent a useful departure from the negative connotations of the term activist and, at the same time, a way of describing their efforts in a more benign way.

Some of their [Larger Us's] strength is new vocabulary. We need new words and concepts to have a new approach.

Otherring, story-telling and courageous conversations

The aspects of the programme that resonate most and are most valued seems to be much more about the change-maker, and the role they are in, than the quality or delivery of the content.

For a majority of those who were interviewed, content about 'othering' really chimed most. They reported in interviews that they hadn't realised that they had othered and that some of the campaigns they had been involved in were, albeit inadvertently, based on othering. Related to anger and the desire to belong to a group that shared their change making/campaign goals; some described how they had become "siloes" or even "a gated community". They pointed too to realising that they had effectively employed the same methods that had been used to demonise groups they were standing up for, like lone parents or immigrants, that they were conducting a fight on the same terms.

I realised I set up my whole life as setting up fences, all the things people had to get through for me to call them 'us'.

For others, content about 'story telling' or 'courageous conversations' was what stayed with them most. Both were perceived to be important strategies that could be applied in their own settings (although the latter is perceived to be most difficult to do in practice, see below).

It wasn't the purpose of the evaluation interviews to unpick in detail what those who had engaged with Larger Us thought about individual programme modules, documents or talks. As such, it hasn't revealed much detail on this. However, it seems that after some time has passed, it isn't the detail of the content that stays with people anyway. For the most part, those who had engaged with Larger Us content felt it had, overall, left an "imprint" or an "ethos" which made them rethink their approach to change.

It's the ethos that is left, not the details. That is what is powerful for me. It's been a nudge to steer the ship in a different direction.

Tools for change makers in navigating polarisation

As discussed earlier in this Chapter, one of the characteristics perceived to be unique to the Larger Us project, is its emphasis on practice – on equipping change makers to be effective rather than stating the problem of polarisation and why it exists. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a project in a developmental year, not everyone who has engaged with Larger Us feels they are sufficiently equipped. Further discussion of this is offered in the following Chapter. However, in a discussion about what was valued during interviews, many people did describe feeling more equipped to deal with precisely the concerns they had about what limiting their changemaking. This is notably much more a feature of interviews with programme participants and those who had been involved in the second (winter) programme than those who had taken part in the first (spring) programme.

I've left with a Batman utility belt of self-checks.

In my work in political influencing, I am increasingly finding that the polarisation and politicisation of issues makes it impossible to change minds or make progress. The programme gave me some practical tools to try and address this.

What aspects of the Larger Us narrative are perceived to be problematic?

Within the discussions of what those who have engaged with Larger Us have valued, the interviews actively sought views on what content didn't 'land', where participants struggled with Larger Us's narrative and a larger us approach to change making. Amidst this, many remarked that they welcomed Larger Us's collaborative style and their openness to challenge.

In no particular order, here are some of the tensions that a larger us approach to change-making surfaced. Some of these could potentially be addressed in future design and delivery of programmes, talks and resources. But some of them point to more fundamental difficulties change makers experience in applying what they have learned.

Balancing depth and breadth

- ⊙ Participants both want to 'go deeper', especially into the areas that resonate with them most. But given the extent of material to be covered in the programme, some were disappointed that they had to move on from a topic they wanted to discuss further.
- ⊙ Despite the appetite to delve deeper, some participants struggled to make time to attend extra meetings/ all of the talks they would have liked to or undertaken all of the reading that was offered to them.

The desire for 'proof', more evidence that a larger us approach will produce results

- ⊙ Some people found the evidence in support of a larger us approach 'glib' and partial. Talks pointed to powerful stories (such as that of an African American whose 'courageous conversations' resulted in KKK members turning their backs on white supremacy) but were perceived to be limited in empirical evidence. Clearly there are challenges in collating empirical evidence base, and, crucially, there is evidence that the presentation of evidence actually does little to change hearts and minds. That said, this was a challenge raised in response to Larger Us materials which deserves consideration.
- ⊙ Some people felt that, in a context of significant power imbalances, some groups had "no choice but to throw stones". Irrespective of how convinced they were about the potential of larger us change making, they felt that it would be difficult to apply at a grassroots level or at the 'coalface' of injustice.
- ⊙ There was an appetite for successful larger us approach examples that were linked to the cause that interests them. Of course, this is inherently problematic, given the nascent nature of the approach in campaigning and current social movements.
- ⊙ Some wanted to see major campaigning organisations/ brands endorse a larger us approach, both to signal their confidence in it and to encourage others to adopt it.

Making the theory accessible

- ⊙ After being involved with Larger Us, many want to share larger us change making theory and ideas with others. It's important to Larger Us that they are able to do so as it contributes to reach/ the ideas achieving scale. There is some (minority) concern that the ideas, or rather, what it requires to explain them, are not easily accessible. A

minority of those across both programmes (the first and second) raised the risk of larger us change making becoming only a practice of those who have invested significantly (and were most able to do so) in understanding it.

The need to practise larger us skills/ apply larger us 'tools'

- ⊙ Whilst some people felt that Larger Us had given them tools to practice larger us change making, many also felt that they lacked the skills and experience to apply larger us change making theory in their own setting. Larger Us had given change makers ideas about what to do differently and why, but some left without the confidence in their ability to apply it. They wanted opportunities to practise having courageous conversations, analysis of (even hypothetical) campaigns which didn't other, appeal to fear, etc. In a few cases, they were hesitant to attempt to apply larger us change-making in their own professional contexts because of dominant short-termism. The separation between inner/ outer worlds and working in organisational cultures that don't support personal development, nor see its relevance, was also a barrier. This perhaps underlines the need (already acknowledged by Larger Us) to reach movement 'leaders' and those who can influence culture and direction in civil society.

How to embed larger us in change making approaches that have relied on division (and have achieved some success in doing so)

- ⊙ Even after understanding and being personally evangelical about a larger us change making approach, some were left wondering what it might mean for their particular model for change. For example, a community organiser who felt that a key feature of community organising is to appeal to fear and anger, and very much focuses organised groups on short term actions intended to 'win'. [Second example redacted.]

Concern about the 'other side' adopting a larger us approach

- ⊙ Whilst this might seem oxymoronic, there was some concern about how aspects like 'story telling' and 'courageous conversations' could be used successfully towards regressive change (examples given were Putin's storytelling about the current war in Ukraine, use of 'deep canvassing' and 'courageous conversations' by the far right and by the Conservative party to organise communities of place and identity, and, the [Restore Trust](#) who are having/ could be seen to seek 'courageous conversations' about the direction of the National Trust).

4. What can we say about the impact of Larger Us on those that have engaged?

Introduction

Impact is what everyone, Larger Us, their funders and those who have become involved across the various touchpoints, are ultimately interested in. The key question is 'what difference does it make to be exposed to larger us change making ideas?'

Impact of any social change intervention is difficult to determine. Evaluators in these spaces face the irresolvable inconveniency of the absence of a counterfactual to measure. But evaluation is especially difficult here, when the intervention doesn't in itself have campaign ambitions or beneficiaries. It isn't possible to talk about 'wins' or 'achievements', so often relied to reveal return on investment for funders or anyone else interested in knowing 'what works' in making progress towards social justice goals.

It's worth stating upfront here that the founding team of Larger Us are passionate about impact. They are only interested in the continuation of their project insofar as it helps to achieve progressive change. They have publicly declared, and reported in interviews as part of this evaluation, that they are concerned with changing *how changemakers go about their work only because they believe it is likely to be effective in achieving social change goals*. This is not a project of therapy or self-help for the purpose solely of inward/ personal benefits. It is a project concerned with advancing progress towards progressive goals.

So, Larger Us itself isn't interested in winning on single campaigns (though it might believe these to be important goals that they would personally like to see achieved!) but in helping changemakers, across a variety of sectors, consider how a larger us approach can help them achieve their campaign goals. A good deal of this is about change makers recognising that some of their approaches might be counterproductive and equipping them with the necessary skills and capacities to approach change-making differently.

To that end, this evaluation can't look to evidence of victories but instead looks to how change makers who have been exposed to Larger Us in some way go on to *think about and apply* larger us change making afterwards.

This chapter discusses what those who have been engaged with Larger Us have done following engagement with one of Larger Us's touchpoints (be that the programme, a lunchtime talk, reading or a combination). It relies on qualitative evidence about how change makers have applied larger us thinking in their work and in their lives (given the premise of Larger Us is that the two are inextricably linked). It also draws on evidence collected at the exit point to the programme. The results must be treated with a degree of caution. Whilst effectively a census, it is a very small sample. However, the results do reveal whether key learning outcomes were observed after close engagement with Larger Us (either as a programme participant or as someone who attended at least two lunchtime sessions).

What learning outcomes did close engagement with Larger Us achieve?

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements devised to speak to intended learning outcomes.

Learning outcome	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I am rethinking/ I have rethought my approach to change-making	32%	59%	9%	0%	0%
2. I am considering the impact of how I communicate about the change I want to see in the world more carefully	55%	32%	14%	0%	0%
3. I have a better understanding of how certain psychological concepts (such as belonging, othering and trauma) are relevant to my changemaking	55%	41%	4%	0%	0%
4. I have a better understanding now of how my own personal development has consequences for my change making	45%	36%	14%	5%	0%
5. I am better equipped to understand, respect and cultivate relationships with people who are not like me.	32%	50%	18%	0%	0%

There are some differences in the extent of agreement, but overall, all the learning outcomes, or ‘competencies’ that Larger Us had designed programme and lunchtime talks with in mind, were observed⁴. The qualitative work revealed that those who ‘neither agreed nor disagreed’ tended to think they were already doing this before their engagement with Larger Us.

Overall agreement is highest on outcome 3. “I have a better understanding of how certain psychological concepts (such as belonging, othering and trauma) are relevant to my changemaking. This chimes with qualitative evidence that the most significant realisations for participants are:

- ⊙ Consideration of what brought them to change-making
- ⊙ How they have unintentionally ‘othered’, or worked on campaigns that othered
- ⊙ The difference between fighting back and changing the conversation
- ⊙ To shift from expressing only opposition to understanding, and, of what this demands of them emotionally and the need to manage that.

It also reflects feedback on this being the unique space that Larger Us occupies. There is awareness at the outset of ‘us and them’ dynamics or that polarisation/ division can limit progressive change. There is awareness too that other organisations are thinking and talking about this. But Larger Us is perceived to be distinct from these because it is seeking to help change makers navigate the space between themselves, their cause and their approach to making a difference to it.

⁴ The base for these questions was 22 people, made up of a sample of programme participants and those who had attended 2 or more lunchtime talks and had participated in an interview. Note that these questions were not asked of those who took part in the first (spring) programme as the evaluation was commissioned during this period.

Learning outcome 5. “I am better equipped to understand, respect and cultivate relationships with people who are not like me”, appears to be the weakest, comparably, although agreement with the statement is still high. This reflects qualitative evidence mentioned in the previous Chapter about a lack of practise with applying the theory and employing the strategies they have learned about.

What happened after engagement with Larger Us?

The impact of having been closely engaged with Larger Us or exposed to their narrative is potentially long lasting and it isn't possible to see all of the possible impacts at this point. Indeed, those who took part in the research describe themselves as on a journey and think the effects of their engagement with Larger Us will likely manifest over time. However, in interviews around 4-6 weeks after close engagement with Larger Us, some participants were already able to describe how they have begun to reflect their learning in their lives and in their work. Here are some of the ways in which participants have been impacted.

Begun or deepened 'inner work'

As mentioned already, the realisation of a connection between the inner self and outer world, is a key outcome of engagement with Larger Us. Or, to put it another way, between personal experience and how this manifests in 'triggers' and how change makers respond to the 'other side' and or those beyond their base.

I expected to find it interesting and beneficial, but I had no idea how deeply affected I would be by the conversations we had.

After their formal engagement with Larger Us, many have begun on a path of deeper personal contemplation. Larger Us has attracted people who are generally 'self-aware' and interested in personal development. But, following their engagement, some have made a conscious choice to find the time to do more of this. Examples include: being consciously gentler towards themselves and practicing being kinder to others; delving into why they were initially anxious of participation in group work that required them to be vulnerable in some way; and, situating themselves in their change making. Some have sought out coaching, returned to reflective practice that they had encountered in previous roles or studies, reflected on how, why and where their 'ego' shows up in their interactions with others professionally and personally, taken up meditation and actively made more time for self-care to manage their emotional responses in their work.

Some have remarked that although they have realised the importance of this, it is challenging/ exposing, difficult to make time for and goes 'unseen' and without reward in the formal sense (praise, promotion, publications, gratification that comes with 'winning').

Becoming a different sort of change maker

With only a couple of exceptions, those closely engaged with Larger Us have made a personal commitment to become a different sort of changer maker. It has provided a vital foundation for the next stage their development as a changemaker. It consolidated things which they had acknowledged as tough experiences of changemaking and provided greater clarity on causes of division, the snares to avoid and ways to harness effectively and strategically their desire for change.

The program has helped me shape my own vision of change-making & future, which is a huge compliment & testament to the work that has been done by the team.

I didn't actually know where [other] people were coming from. I'm now not labelling people immediately.

After the course, I've reflected for myself how much do I other people in my workplace. I'm now trying to look for the best in the person and challenging my own preconceived ideas.

I've become involved in cultural change in my organisation and reflecting larger us ideas there. If we get that right, it filters down.

Beginning to incorporate larger us change making into their work/organisation

Although it is early to identify evidence of how a larger us approach has been reflected in specific campaigns or working practice of change makers, there are already some examples of participants doing things differently, that go beyond personal development and contemplation. Here's some examples that the qualitative work has identified (note that efforts have been made here to anonymise these responses and, as such, specific campaigns and organisations are not named and detail that would reveal campaigns or organisations have been removed).

- ⊙ A community organiser who is thinking of how to appeal less to anger and fear whilst at the same time bringing people together in local action. They have tried to change their narrative in galvanising local people affected by a struggle/ injustice.
- ⊙ An educator and campaigner against [REDACTED] has incorporated larger us ideas and materials into their presentations and has changed the tone in which they hold discussions following these presentations.
- ⊙ A senior leader in a civil society organisation who is in process of re-shaping organisational strategy and culture in light of their engagement with Larger Us. This involves actively thinking about how to be more empathetic to colleagues in civil society organisations where there is a culture of outrage and burnout.
- ⊙ Re-evaluation of campaign narratives (in child poverty, in food policy legislation, for example) to encourage different conversations and actively seek to bring in different voices into the campaign.
- ⊙ Funders/ grant makers who are looking at the potential for longer term transformation in their appraisal of applications for funding, and, considering the extent to which proposals for work might bridge or deepen divides on an issue/ cause.
- ⊙ A grassroots youth mental health advocate who has brought larger us ideas into their conversations with young people, as way to support them in their experience of trauma and to foster belonging across divided groups within a place.
- ⊙ A political influencer who is actively working with other civil society organisations seeking to influence parliamentarians on how their responses in UK parliament can depolarise, rather than playing into a us and them dynamic. This work involves sharing ideas and skills that seek to change the conversation, rather than simply retaliate.
- ⊙ A senior youth worker helping young people of colour who have become suddenly angry with white young people in their community as a result of George Floyd's death to have

courageous conversations and communicate the potential of a 'calling in', rather than a 'calling out' approach.

- ⊙ Several change makers who now actively situate themselves in their work and openly describe their own story and why they are a voice on the issue they speak about.

5. How has Larger Us supported a community of like-minded change makers?

Introduction

Larger Us has actively sought to build a field of people across multiple issues and sectors who self-identify as larger us change makers. The previous Chapter has considered some of the early signs of it having achieved this. Relatedly, Larger Us wants to create opportunities for larger us change makers to connect and support each other, to build relationships to share their ideas and progress their thinking with others.

Given that this evaluation only concerns the first year of Larger Us, it can't tell much of a story about the development of relationships between larger us change makers. That said, there are some strong early indications of a sense of belonging to a larger us 'movement' that cuts across sectors and causes. There are also some early indications of what might hinder or support the intention to foster a community of larger us change makers in the future. This Chapter sets out the emerging evidence on this to date.

Are larger us change makers sharing larger us ideas?

The intention of engaging change makers who have influence – either in their capacity to implement a larger us approach in their own settings, or to share larger us ideas with their networks – is an important part of a strategy to reach scale. Larger Us, and especially given its current resource, can't deliver its programme to a large audience. Even if it could, this would require an adjustment to content, who delivers it and would undermine the impact that bringing small and diverse groups together can have (see Chapter 2).

So, do those who have engaged closely with Larger Us go off and communicate their ideas? Are they talking to others in their networks and operating in some way as ambassadors for a larger us approach to change making?

The evidence on this is so far mixed. Some participants have actively shared materials and podcasts with others or recommended Larger Us to people in their networks. Others have found themselves talking more informally about larger us ideas to people in their family and in their friendship groups. As mentioned earlier, some participants find it challenging to describe larger us change making. Some mention that they could benefit from a digest or some messaging guidelines that would make this easier. There is a degree of fear about 'getting it wrong' and for their communications with others to come across a bit like 'you are doing your change making wrong' and for this to turn people away, rather than invite them in.

It seems that the point at which participants are most able to talk to others is whilst they are immersed themselves. After some time following their close engagement has passed, it seems to become more challenging to communicate the essence of larger us change making and principles that underpin it. There is a desire to build on the community of people who be interested in or benefit from larger us ideas, but a lack of both capability and capacity to do so.

Do larger us change makers stay connected?

Both those who have taken part in the full programme and those who have attended several lunchtime sessions have a strong desire to stay connected to the people they have met and others who are interested in larger us change making. This is personally important to those who feel they are returning to working environments where there is limited scope for them to talk about and build out larger us change making. Fundamentally, they want to stay connected because they want to belong and they want to be able to continue their journey of practising larger us change making skills with others who are also passionate about it.

I'd love to work with others on the course and in the Larger Us team to spread this philosophy and vision of changemaking

Following the programme, there has been continued contact between those who shared the same small group. There have been self-arranged zoom meetings and some planned face to face get togethers. There have even been personal relationships established between participants who continue to talk to each other one to one and plans to meet each other in person. Notably, these have occurred where the individuals concerned share an interest/ cause/ issue.

There is some concern that the energy for this will dissipate as other life and work commitments dominate. There is also concern that these meetings need structure, both to encourage them to take place and to get the best out of the time spent together. Participants want to get on with the business of applying larger us in campaigning, and, whilst recognising that their own personal development does in itself contribute to change; they want conversations that focus on their specific cause/ issue/ social change movement.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there isn't any consensus on whether future programmes would benefit from being cross sector or sector focussed. The weight of opinion on this does suggest a desire to keep programmes cross sector but to also create opportunities, for change makers with something in common to work together. This might not necessarily be sector focussed but instead be focused on approaches to change, for instance, funder groups, community organiser groups, self-identified campaigner groups.

Is there a field of larger us change-makers and how does Larger Us support this?

There is an emerging field of change makers, thinkers and organisations (and funders) who are concerned about 'us and them' dynamics in life, in politics and in social change movements.

Larger Us is perceived to be meeting a need to bring a complex and disparate set of ideas, most especially from psychology, together with the explicit purposes of supporting others to be more effective in their changemaking. It is showing leadership, giving platforms (through webinars and publications) to voices who are themselves leaders in larger us change maker, providing opportunities for relationships and alliances to be built between those who are interested in the potential of a larger us narrative. Larger Us has the potential to support the development of this emerging field of pre-disposed change-makers. There are others who

are having conversations about polarisation but Larger Us is perceived is a locus for the ideas and skills that might do able to change this.

I've never came across anything like it. brings all the psychology together and brings it to change makers