



Duncan Green

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Why should you be interested in a new blog on activism, influencing and change?

Duncan Green introduces a new LSE blog and work programme. He explores its origins in his previous work at Oxfam on activism and 'how change happens'. He argues that, while influencing the wider system has become increasingly prominent in the work of international organizations, NGOs and others, it remains under-researched and under-theorized. The new programme aims to help fill the gap through a combination of research, training and conversations on this blog.

Progressive activists haven't disappeared. All over the world, whether at the grassroots, in NGOs, governments and the international system, or the private sector, they are striving to expand people's "freedoms to be and to do", in Amartya Sen's brilliant definition of development. Many of their efforts are at least partially successful, but definitely not all. And now they face the onslaught from the Trump/Musk (Tusk? Mumps?) [woodchipper](#).

How/where/win do they succeed? How do the tactics required to resist bad stuff differ from front foot advocacy? What can progressive activists learn from the rise of the Trusk populists? We've got a few ideas, but we want to start a wider conversation, hence this new blog.

First, here's the pitch. How can small groups of dedicated activists influence those in positions of power to bring about change?

Despite stories and case studies of successful influencing initiatives, little is known about the "recipes and repertoires" of public and private (outsider and insider) influencing tactics, ways of organising, modes of collaboration and responses to opportunities and unexpected events that consistently lead to tangible behavioural, policy or legislative change.

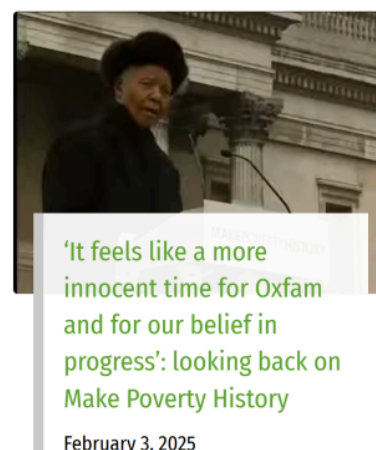
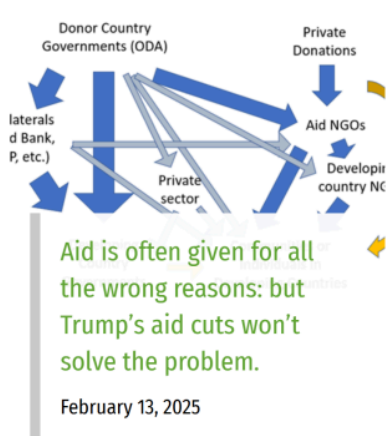
This means that existing theory and practical guidance for activists and those that support them are often based on small numbers of case studies, often written by the protagonists (see 'marking

your own homework') and with untested assumptions as to what will work and under what conditions.

Let me zoom out for some background. The ideas behind this blog have been at least 20 years in the making. Shortly after joining Oxfam in 2004, I took on a big writing project that eventually became *From Poverty to Power* ([the book](#) and [the blog](#), which both saw the light of day in 2008 – the blog is still going strong, see below).

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

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The book came with an annex on 'how change happens', based in part on [a great paper](#) with the same title by Roman Krznaric. It was pretty rudimentary. But it got me thinking not just about what *policies* are needed on everything from trade to climate change (my previous focus, and that of many activists), but about the *mechanics* of change, the plumbing – how does change happen, and how can activists influence it more effectively? I've been thinking and writing about it ever since, and am super excited that we are launching an LSE blog dedicated to the topic.

How Change Happens

That led in turn to another book, [How Change Happens](#), along with large numbers of conversations on the FP2P blog, and a slow transition to the academic life at LSE, first teaching a [Masters module on activism and influencing](#) (one of the great pleasures of my working life in recent years), then being asked to give an expanding number of trainings for people in the aid sector, from [today's Humanitarian](#) bosses to [next gen emerging leaders](#) to grassroots [civil society organizations](#).

The expanding demand for such training (arguably [even more important in light of the US meltdown](#)) is what prompted the creation of the LSE's new Activism, Influencing and Change Programme (AICP) and this blog, which I'll be running with Tom Kirk. Welcome.

AICP will be starting off with three main areas of activities:

1. This blog, where we'll share posts, podcasts and videos on the topic. Lots of other ideas for MOOCs, materials and free stuff if we can find the time and money. We're looking for good ideas,

smart authors, new thinking – please form an orderly queue (and email us on d.j.green@lse.ac.uk or t.kirk@lse.ac.uk)

SECOND
EDITION

2. Training. We can call on an expanding network of super-experienced influencers, covering everything from strategic comms to grassroots campaign to insider diplomacy to put together online, face to face and hybrid courses ranging from a couple of hours to several weeks.

3. Research: What combinations of influencing tactics and ways of working consistently influence power holders? What can we learn from the similarities and differences among them, and what insights does that provide into the conditions in which they lead to change?



What can you do?

- Sign up for notifications of new blog posts
- Tell your friends and colleagues to do the same
- Talk to each other in the Comments – we want conversations, not speeches
- If you like the content, follow us on Bluesky (we've given up on twitter) – [@duncangreenlse.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@duncangreenlse.bsky.social) and [@globalpolicy.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@globalpolicy.bsky.social) for now. We're still debating whether to have a dedicated account.
- Get in touch if you have something you want to write, share or stuff you think we should know about. That includes reposting good, relevant posts from elsewhere and flagging events that you want promoted.
- We're also keen to meet those that might want to collaborate over research on influencing. And this doesn't just mean academics.

It's a bit of cliché, but we hope to build a community of practice around the broad idea of influencing theory and practice, and we're open input from others in seeing what shape this might take. To reach for another cliché, we're convinced this is needed now more than ever.

About the author

Duncan Green

I am a Professor in Practice at the LSE's International Development and Director of the Global Executive Leadership Initiative's Influencing Programme. From 2004-2024, I worked for Oxfam GB, first as head of research, then as Strategic Adviser, where I ran the From Poverty to Power blog. I've joined the Xodus, and am on @duncangreenlse.bsky.social as well as d.j.green@lse.ac.uk

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