I-CHANGE Dialogue Event

Inspirational talk
Positive Tipping Points and the Potential of Community-level Interventions for Behaviour Changes

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TEKNOLOGI, SAMFUND & BÆREDYGTIGHED

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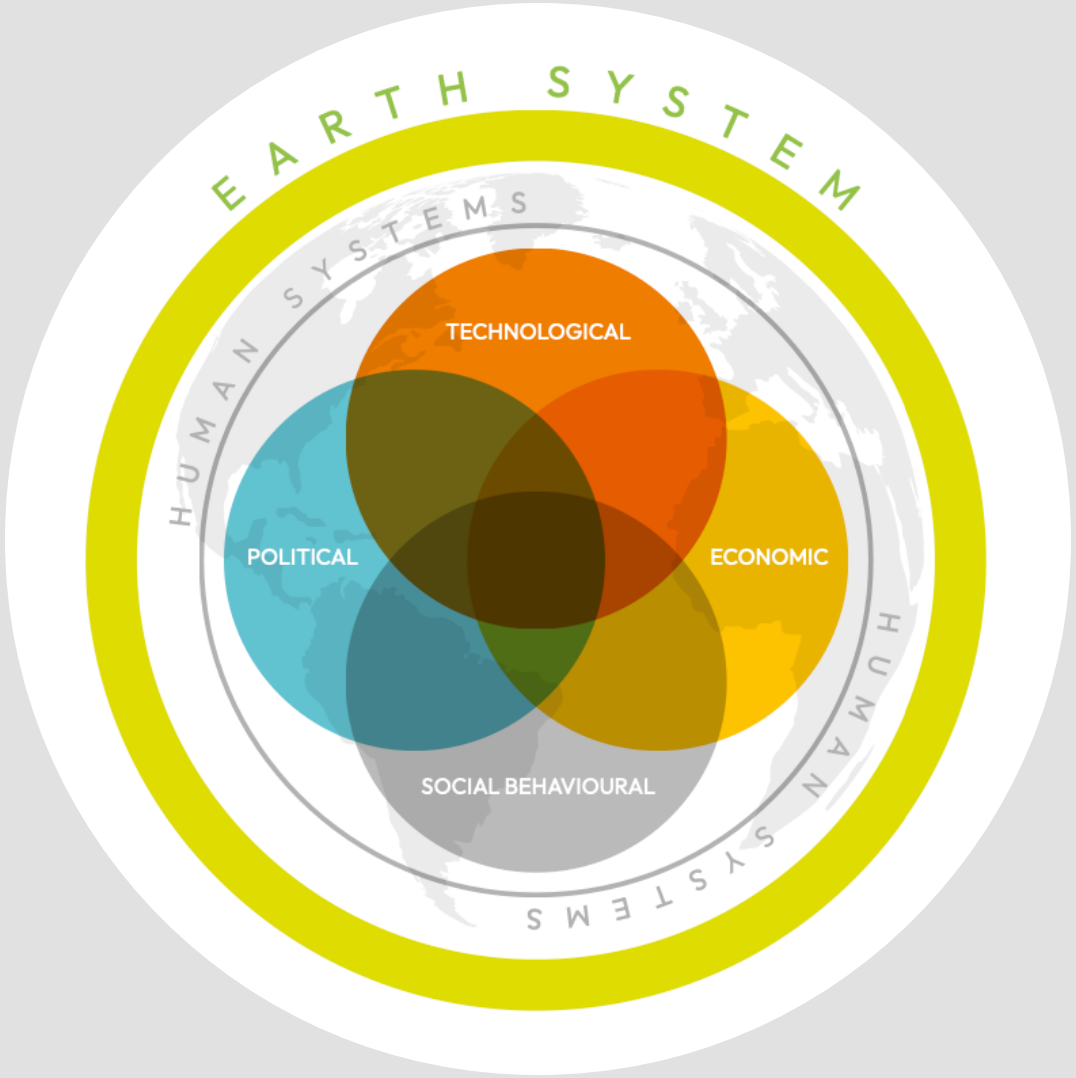
Key takeways

- **The framework of positive tipping points** can help us understand how large scale and lasting behaviour change comes about
- **Positive tipping points** are self-propelling social changes that can be triggered by human agency and strategic interventions
- **New (sustainable) ideas, behaviours and practices** can spread through social contagion in local communities
- **To trigger positive tipping points towards sustainable behaviours** community-level interventions are crucial because they can build capacity for collective action and create social infrastructures that enables social contagion



Lenton et al. (2023). Global Tipping Points Report.

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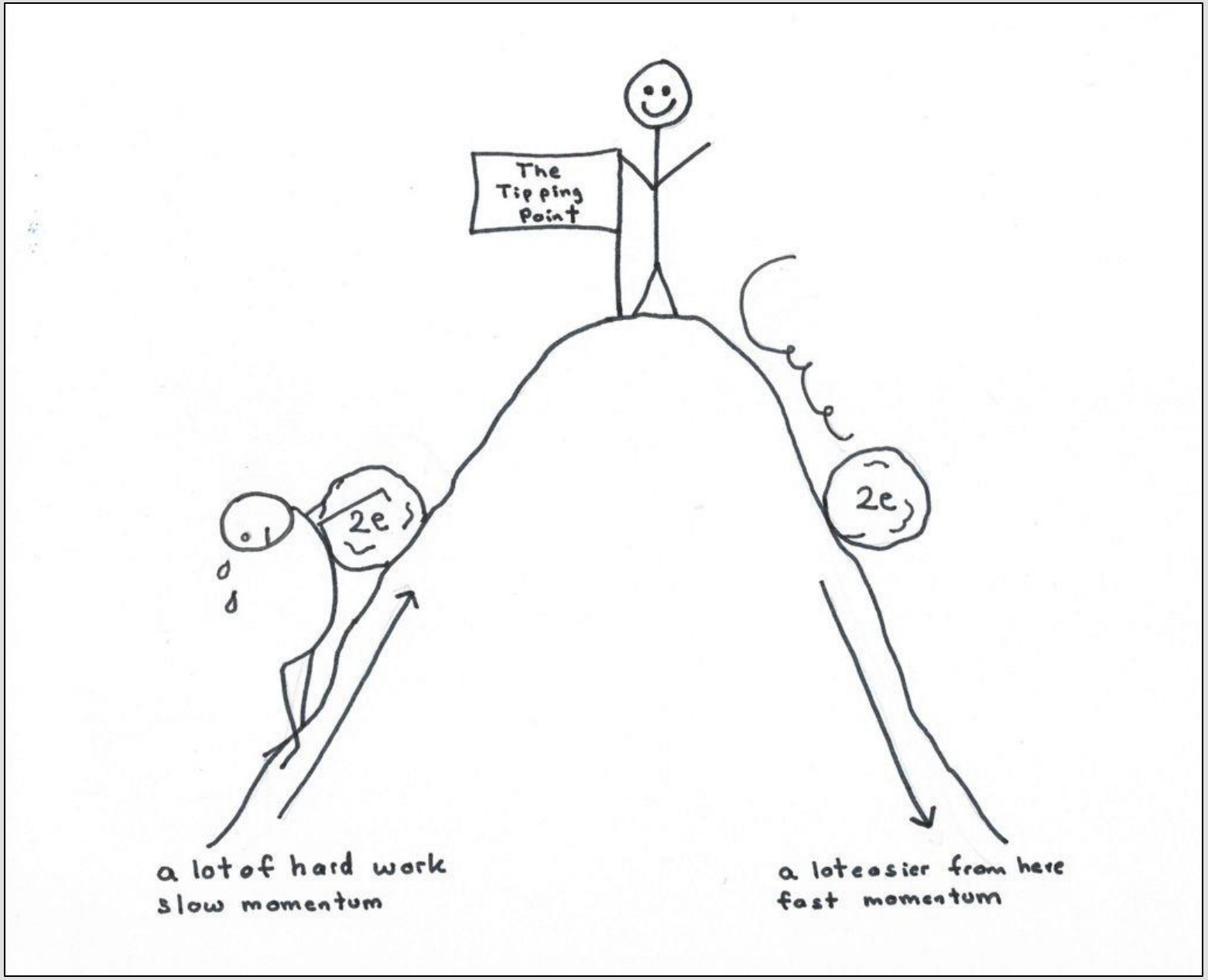
Change is slow. Except when it's fast.

1. Given the potential for negative tipping points the urgency for rapid social change towards global decarbonization has never been greater

2. History shows that big societal changes can happen rapid and unexpectedly. A systems thinking approach can help us understand when and how such change happen

3. The framework of positive tipping points can **qualify** the development of strategic interventions and be a **motivational** narrative for climate action

Tipping from one system state to another



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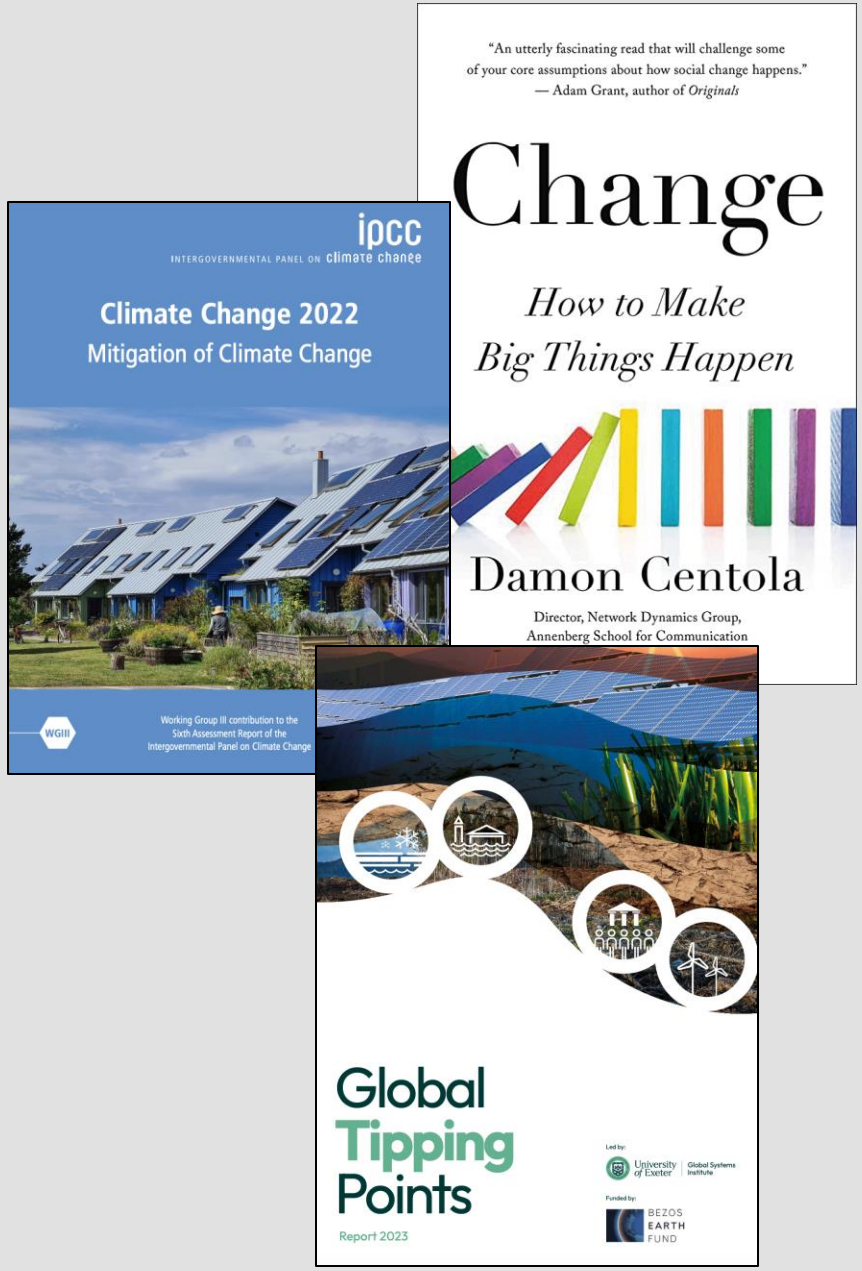
What is a Tipping Point?

When a small change creates a bigger transformation of a system because it triggers self-propelling processes and becomes very difficult to stop again.



Social Tipping Points:

Non-linear change processes in human systems often supported by reinforcing (positive) feedback loops as a mechanism of change.

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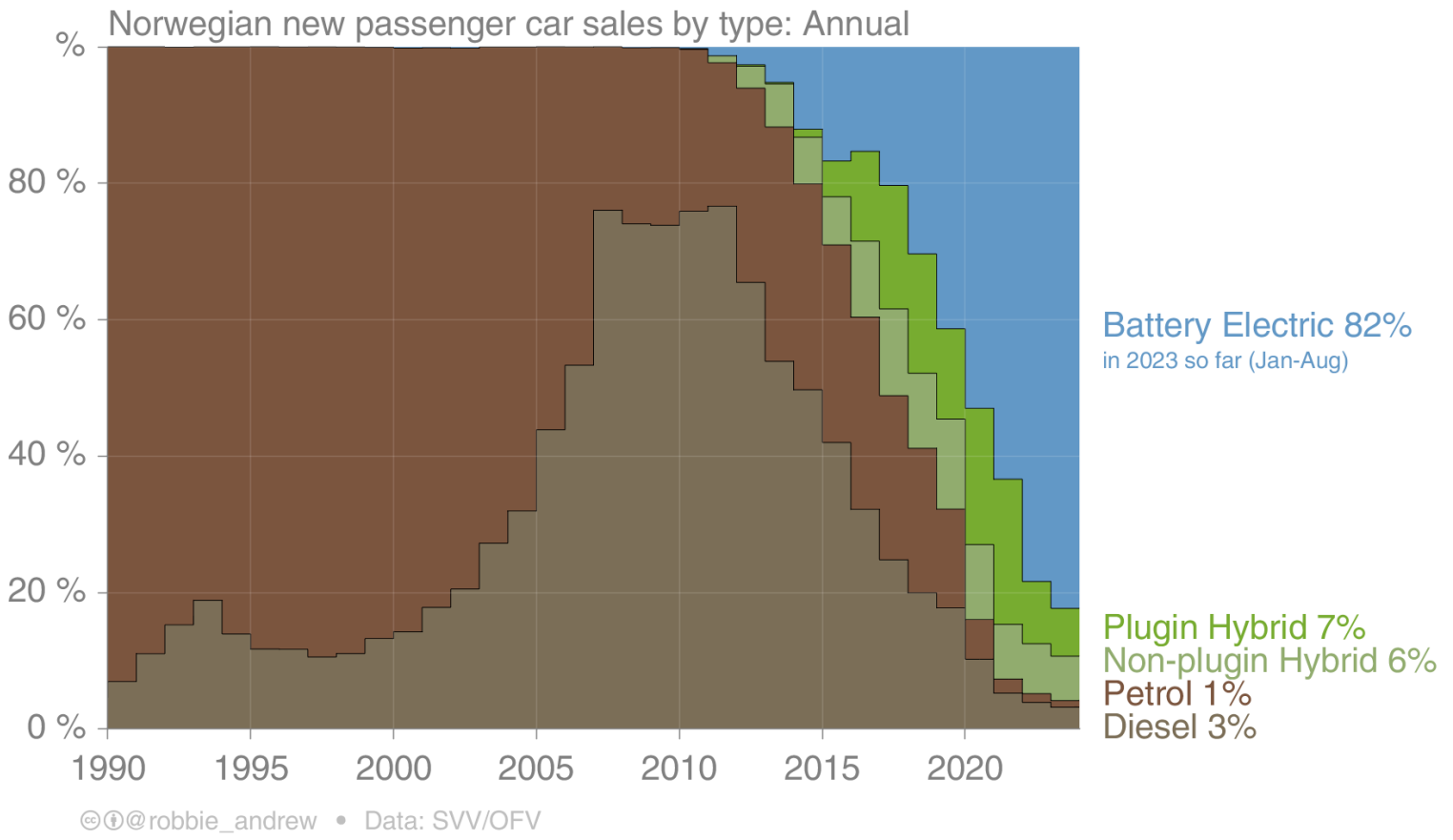
How did EV's become the safe choice for consumers?



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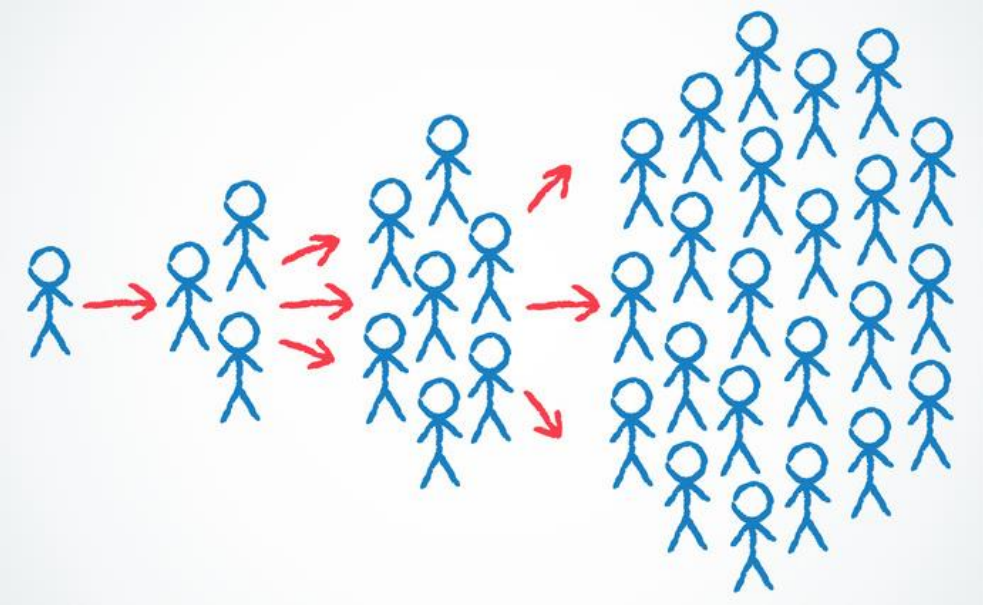
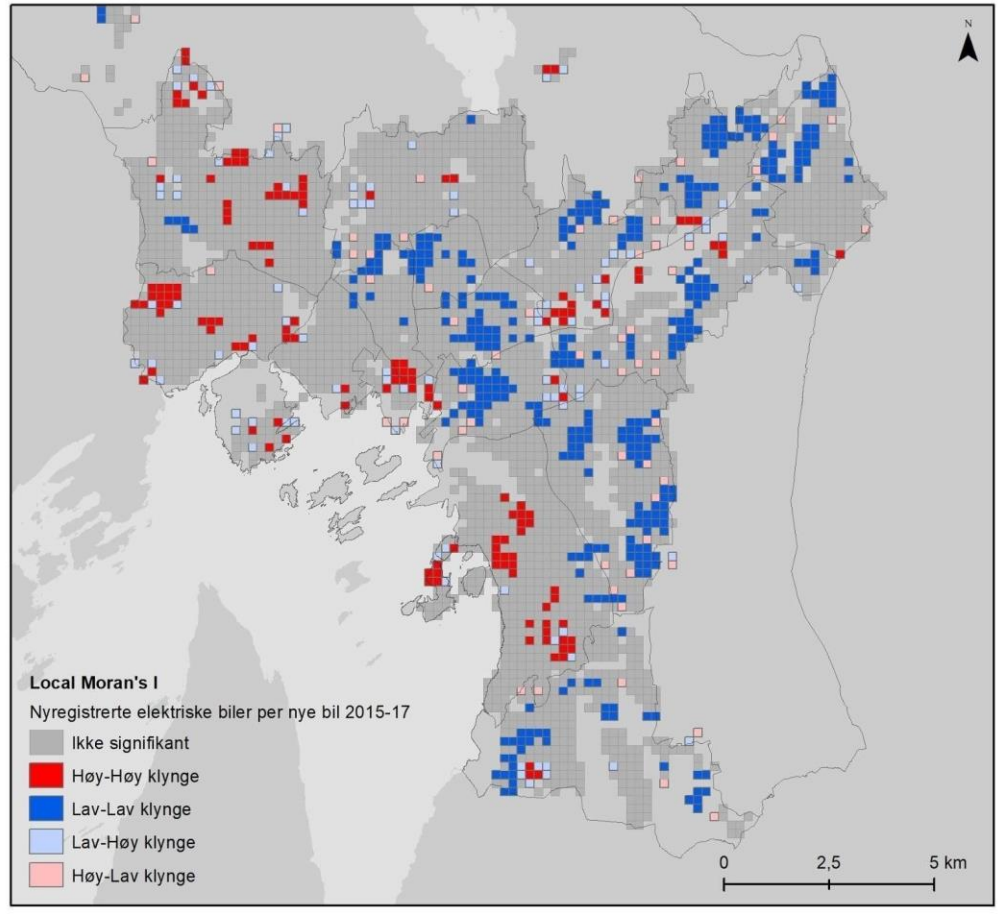
Not just the technology: The neighborhood effect

Social contagion is key to accelerated behavior change





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Source: Damon Centola (2021) Change: How to make big things happen.

Framework for Triggering Positive Tipping Points

Current state of the system

Interventions for actors to trigger tipping points

Individual: Taxes, traditional information campaigns, nudging

Institutional: Regulation, new technology

Social: Community engagement, capacity building programmes

Reinforcing Feedback loops

Increasing returns to adoption

- Learning by doing
- Exonomies of scale
- Technological reinforcement

Social contagion:

- Network effects
- positive experience

Enabling Conditions

Price (affordability)

Performance (quality)

Accessibility (convinience)

Social & cultural norms

Capability & knowledge

Goals and vision for a desired state of the system

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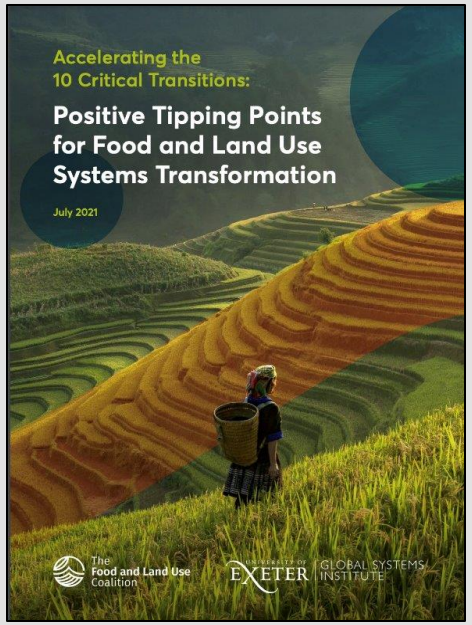
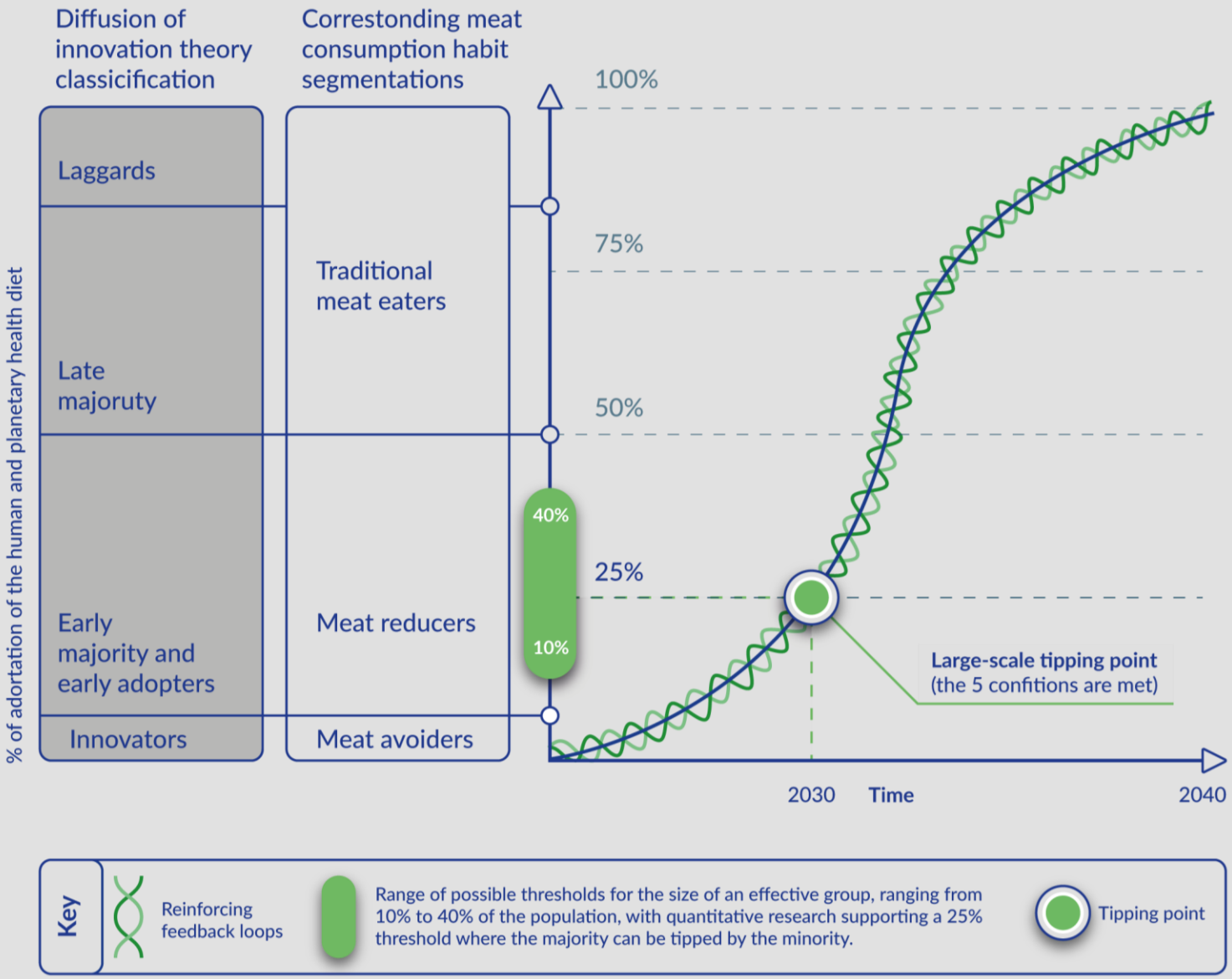
Source: Adapted from FOLU & University of Exeter (2021)

Case:
Tipping the food system



Illustrative visualisation of dietary shift transition



Source: FOLU & University of Exeter (2021)

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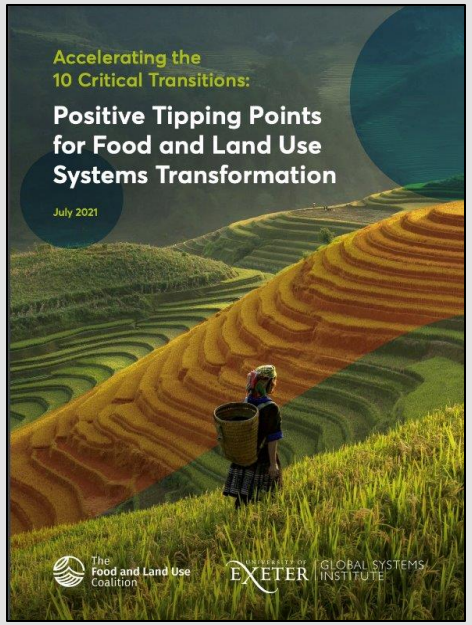
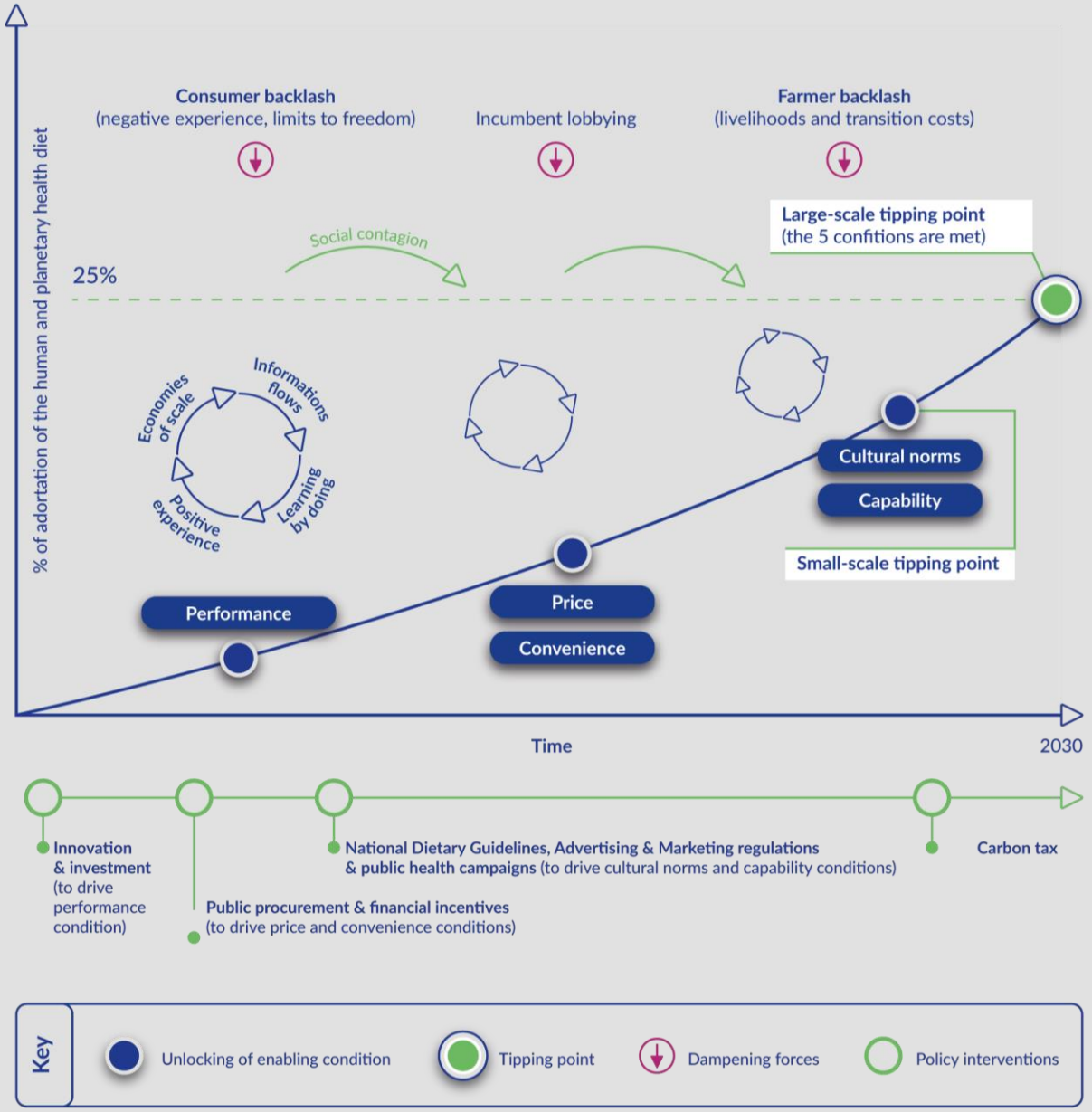


Zoomed into this decade



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Source: FOLU & University of Exeter (2021)

Important cautions and caveats

- When adapting concepts from natural science to social systems we must be very cautious and aware of contextual differences and limitations
- Positive Tipping Points (PTP) is a very recent field of study that has yet to devise a formal, empirical way of distinguishing a system that is possible or likely to tip from one that isn't.
- The exact threshold (critical mass needed) for social tipping points are hard to predict and allways case-specific.
- Incorrectly asserting a PTP could lead to false optimism and wasted resources and time trying to induce PTPs in a real-world system that is either incapable or highly unlikely to tip within a useful timeframe.
- BUT the human capacity for learning, innovation, and agency (aka social change) is a source of hope for a sustainable future.

Lenton et al. (2023). Global Tipping Points Report 2023.

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The case of Danish Green Communities:
A Community Organizing Theory of Change

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Combinging systems work with social movement theory and practice

The project is based and designed on the lifelong work of Marshall Ganz's with social movements:

- Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government
- Community organizer, civil rights activist and trade union activist and leading expert in social movements
- Obama campaign in 2007-8, Sunrise movement etc. etc.

“Social movements have narratives. They tell stories, because they are not just about rearranging economics and politics. They also rearrange meaning. And they’re not just about redistributing goods. They’re about figuring out what is good.”

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Communities are build around leadership

Leadership is **accepting responsibility** for **creating the conditions** that **allow others** to achieve **shared purpose** in the face of **uncertainty**.

- **Marshall Ganz**

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3 day leadership training 3 times a year

House meetings and coaching

Larger gatherings with municipalities

Setting municipal targets for collective action etc.

Questions for you:

How can the framework of positive tipping points help you in your work?

Which community-level interventions could you imagine in your context?

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