# How the environmental-progressive movement can become more influential

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**League of Evolutionary Catalysts**

There are millions of groups that care about ecological and social well-being. They include peace groups, religious groups, climate activists, social justice folks, regenerative agriculture, psychologists…

The environmental-progressive movement can become vastly more influential by

> Making common cause around the overarching goal of *evolving a compassionate ecologically sustainable world*
>
> … and *empowering their members* to communicate about transforming our destructive system.

I would like to introduce a new social change role: *Evolutionary Catalyst*.

Evolutionary Catalysts communicate with people they know – friends and business colleagues – about the reality of horrific ecological trends (including the potential of nuclear war) and about the system the drives them.

The League of Evolutionary Catalysts is a community of practice supporting Evolutionary Catalysts. Businesses and organisations that care about the future can set up their own Evolutionary Catalyst working groups.

Our aim is to mobilise thoughtful public will to do everything required pull out of our ecological nosedive. Nothing less will do.

What follows is an interconnected series of ideas about how we can go beyond preaching to the converted and affect mainstream thinking in novel ways.

## Our context

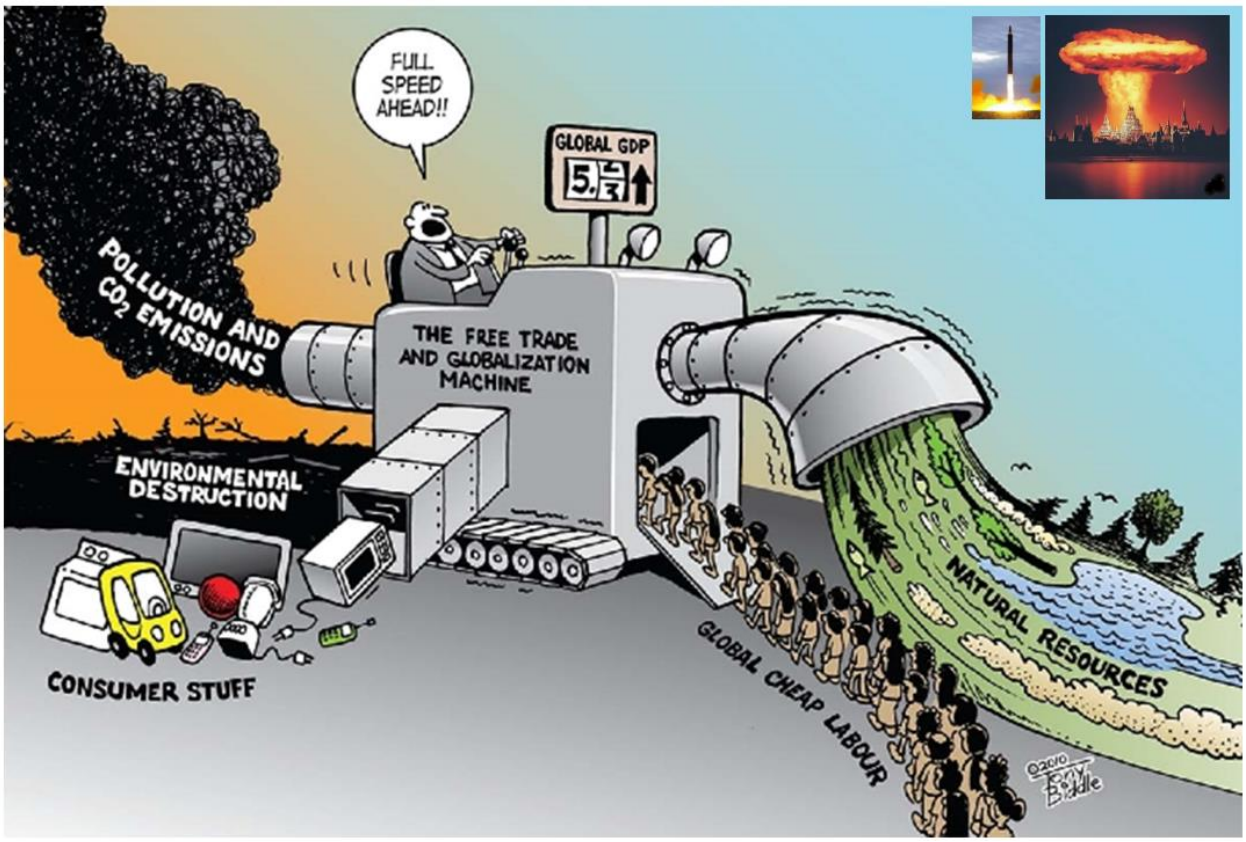
This cartoon by David Parker highlights humanity's two most prominent existential threats.

A majority of people are concerned about climate change; this is a good starting point.

However, there is much more going on in addition to climate change. We have industrial toxins – forever chemicals – everywhere. We have species loss, topsoil loss, overfishing and falling freshwater tables in many parts of the world… all symptoms of excess population and unregulated industry.

In addition, we have the trend towards nuclear war. A new arms race is underway, with unstoppable hypersonic nuclear missiles. If a full-scale war breaks out between America and Russia or China, is there any way it can end benignly? If any country thought it was 'losing', very likely the leader would push the red button rather than admit defeat. Putin has asserted he would do this, even though he is very clear that this would be suicidal for Russia.

This cartoon by Tony Biddle portrays the system that drives our destruction.




If we are to avoid the worst of coming disasters, collectively we must agree to transform the system that drives our destruction. Ecologically, this means significantly slowing industrial production globally.

It's not just a matter of renewable energy or reducing personal consumption. It is a matter of transforming business as usual and collectively adopting materially frugal lifestyles as a matter of policy

Obviously, this implies slowing the global economy. In the developed world, nobody wants that. *My job, my mortgage, my superannuation!*

I think there are two conditions for public acceptance of policies that would slow the economy and back off from militarisation.

- *Feeling* how horrific disastrous trends are.
- Having basic social safety nets.

## Aligning to affect public mindsets

I mentioned that there are millions of groups that care. While we have common values; we have no common cause. Mostly, each group pursues its own agenda. We preach to our own choirs. And most groups focus on either protest or projects that are relatively local in scope. We have limited ability to reach the general public.

Collectively we can become vastly more influential by together aiming to inspire public commitment to *evolving a compassionate ecologically sustainable world…* and inspiring our members to communicate about transforming our destructive system. Groups can do this while passionately pursuing their primary missions.

Affecting public mindsets – how people think – is at a different level from practical actions. It is more abstract, but also more influential.

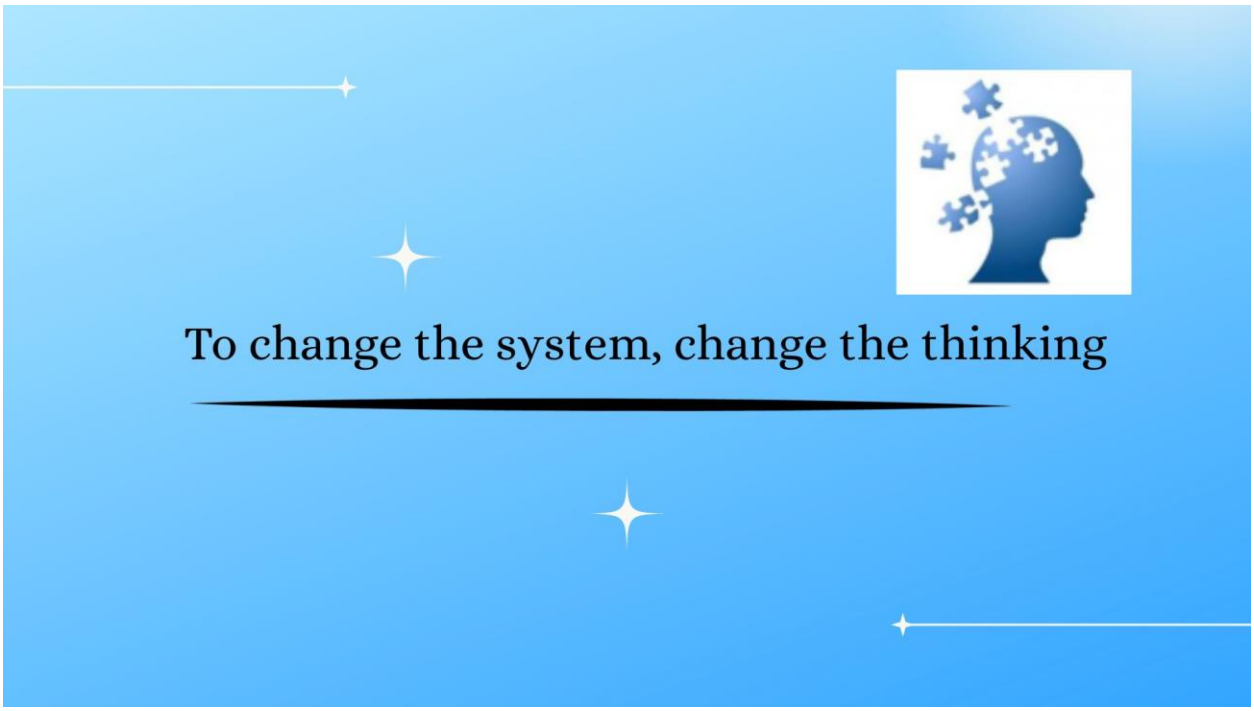
Here is an example. In my view, the most successful social change initiative of the 20th century was not achieved by Gandhi or Martin Luther King. It was achieved by the billionaire Koch brothers.

The back story is that David Koch ran for Vice President of the United States on a minor party ticket. Despite his billions, he got nowhere with his agenda of small government and low taxes. Americans at the time embraced the social values of Roosevelt's New Deal, including Social Security.

The Koch brothers realised that if they were to succeed, they needed to *shift public mindsets*. They paid intellectuals to articulate their philosophy of liberty and small government. Realising they needed boots on the ground, they also funded grassroots organisations.

This is how neoliberalism became predominant in the Western world.

They had money. We have people. They succeeded because they focused on *mindset change* as a strategy, rather than focusing on specific issues. Similarly, we do well to help people think realistically about our current situation, with the aim of mobilising public will to change course.




## It's not easy to change folk's thinking

As adults, our attitudes and understanding of the world have been formed over decades by the way we were raised, our schooling, ideas we absorbed from the culture, peer influences, self-initiated learning, our temperaments, and possibly unresolved trauma. Neurologically, they are well established as patterns of coordination in the central nervous system. They do not change easily.

If we raise a controversial topic in a social situation, people often push back immediately.

I have an aphorism: *Ideas bounce off unprepared minds*.

This means that messages have limited effectiveness.

By arranging dedicated time to have a thoughtful conversation we can create an opportunity for people to take in new ideas and (perhaps) change their perspective. This is what Evolutionary Catalysts do.

However, just a few conversations will hardly move the dial. We need to 'mass-produce' transformative conversations. The League of Evolutionary Catalysts' idea for how to do this is to inspire the members of established groups to conduct transformative conversations, and provide purpose-built tools to make such conversations effective.

It also makes sense for us to recruit as change agents the many people who are quite aware, but not affiliated with any particular group. And since our aim is to shift public consciousness at scale, articles, lectures, social media posts, webinars, posters, trainings, conferences and the like are all part of it.

Our core communication tools are:

- Escalating Disasters

  These images bring home to people the reality of climate change, industrial toxins, and war.

- Kitchen Table Conversations

  We use labels on beer coasters to support conversations that connect the dots between economic growth, the elite power structure, emotional disturbance and ecological damage.

- Evolutionary Catalyst Outreach slide deck

  This slide deck supports conversations with influencers and potential colleagues about how we can move from concern about, say, climate change or war… to mobilising a social change movement based on transforming the thinking that drives our destructive system… the themes we have been considering here.

In addition to reducing industrial production there are two additional leverage points that are crucial for getting through our existential emergency. Most immediately, reforestation of man-made deserts can begin to cool the Earth within two decades, provided we invest in it massively. This can by us a bit of time. Compared with military budgets, the cost is minuscule.

It has been said that the roots of war lie in child abuse, because unresolved trauma often leads to rage in adults, and this rage is part of the dynamic that drives people towards war rather than diplomacy. Therefore funding programs to support parents in bringing out more of their nurturing side than their punitive side is a wise investment.

**Where do we go from here?**

The League of Evolutionary Catalysts is a community of practice supporting Evolutionary Catalysts.

Our aim is to mobilise thoughtful public will to transform our destructive system.

The most fundamental way to act as an Evolutionary Catalyst is to conduct conversations about the reality of current horrific trends and the system that drives them… and promote shifting from *economic growth* to *evolving a compassionate ecologically sustainable world* as our proper goal at this time.

Of course, it is important to engage leaders and influencers in this vision.

If you care about the future, I invite you to qualify as an Evolutionary Catalyst – and encourage people you know to do so as well.

A small learning curve is involved. Basically, it's about doing a practice run with our Kitchen Table Conversations model and with our Evolutionary Catalyst Outreach slide deck. Everything you need for onboarding is here.

Once you become a colleague in the League, nobody directs what you do. We are self-directing adults aligned to a common purpose. We act individually in ways that make sense to us, and sometimes we act together.

The task of our time is to evolve a compassionate ecologically sustainable world. Nothing less will do! Work with us!

To arrange an introductory conversation, send an email to info@evolutionarycatalyst.net.