

The Positive Tipping Points Toolkit

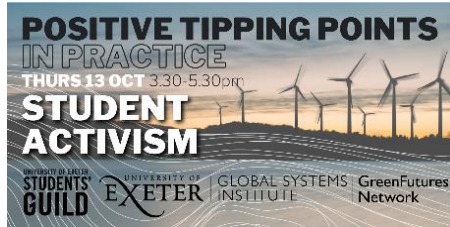
Tuesday 30 June 2026

1.45-3.15pm

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POSITIVE TIPPING POINTS IN PRACTICE RESISTANCE & MOMENTUM



POSITIVE TIPPING POINTS IN PRACTICE

RESISTANCE & MOMENTUM

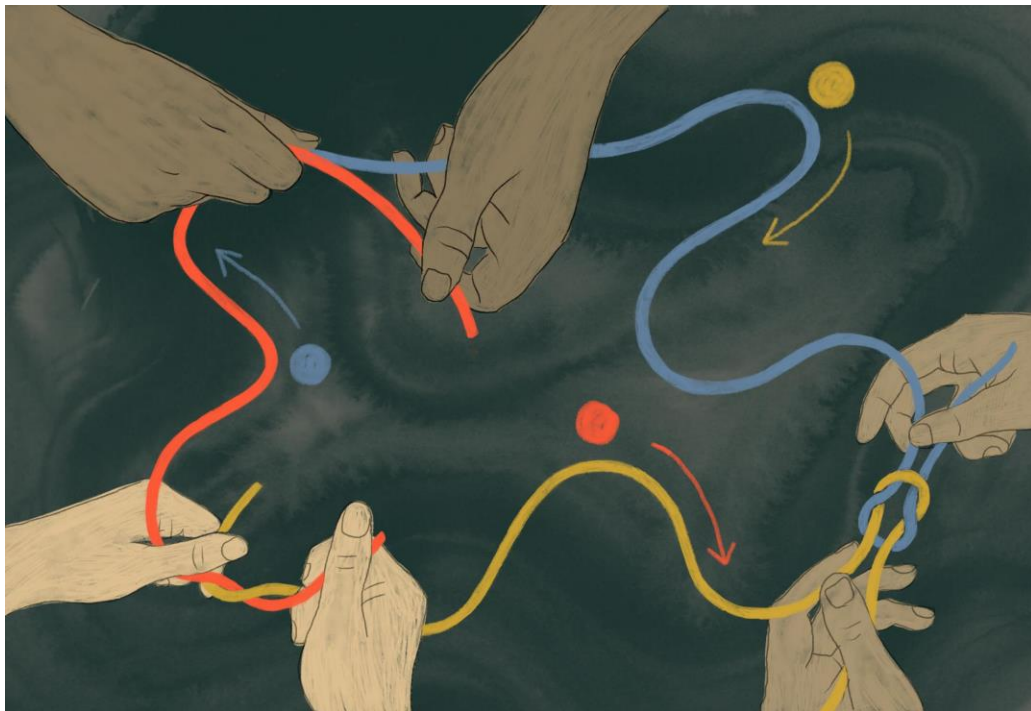
How can we hold the nuance between positive and negative tipping points?

How do different cultures fit into this framework?

Is this framework in opposition to urgency?

This could be a powerful tool for letting go of the illusion of control

Using this model we can all locate ourselves within the work for change, regardless of the level of scale of our activity



1. A map

The Positive Tipping Points framework

A way of making sense of where you are in relation to systems change, reframing the process as something that can be accessible and familiar to all of us, by using play, story, creativity and structure.

Becoming more comfortable with the uncertainty that is unavoidable when we try to shift large or small complex systems of environmental or social harm.



2. Tools

A growing list of ways to apply the framework

A collection of activities and interventions to make your journey easier, including more relevant indicators of progress to inform strategic planning and development towards short and long term goals.

Finding new stories of change that help us learn from what has and has not worked in the past, so that we can identify the actions that may make positive change more likely in the future.

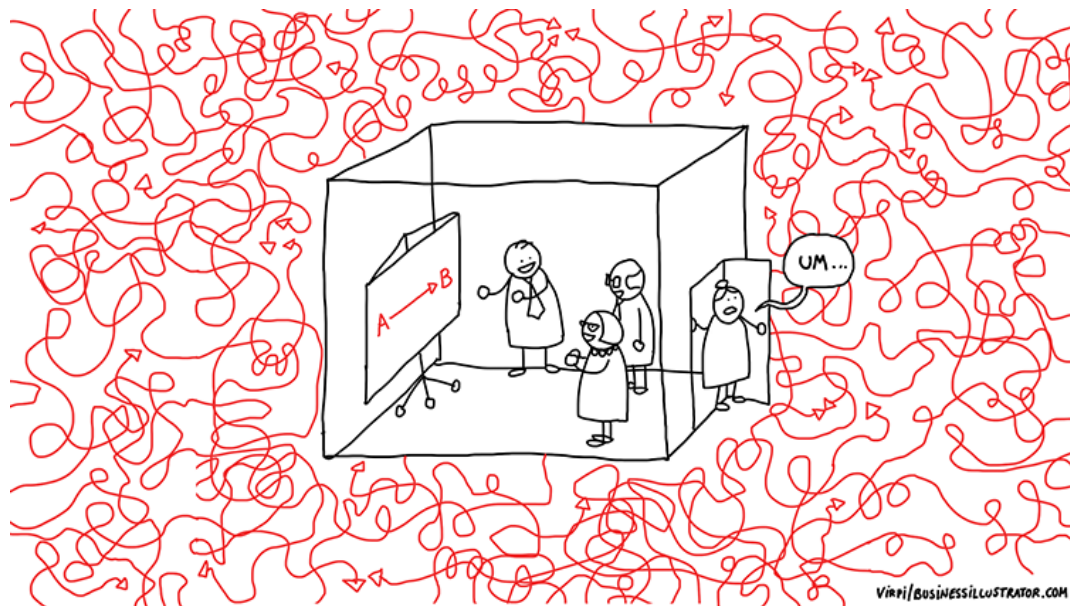


3. An approach

Examples and invitations
to encourage new thought

A way of working rooted in care, intention, and awareness, which holds space for the emergence of new ideas and possibilities.

Creating opportunities to find new collaborations across different spaces, scales, and sectors, through a deeper understanding of our respective roles in changing a system.



The Positive Tipping Points Toolkit

This resource exists to make working with complex systems more **accessible, rewarding, and collaborative**.

Understanding, identifying, and working towards tipping points can bring many benefits to our work for change.

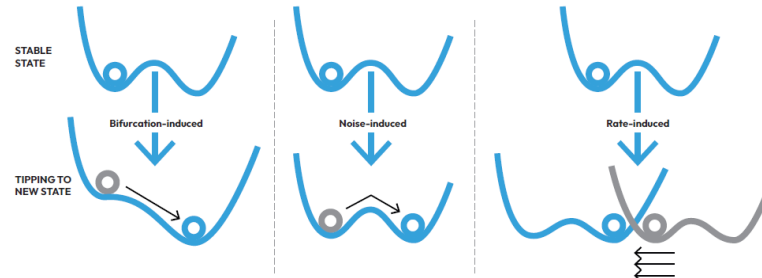
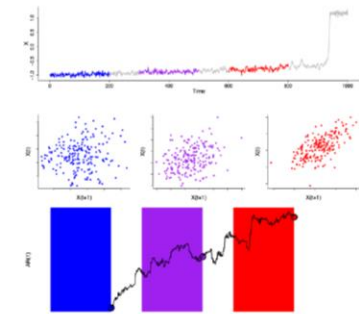
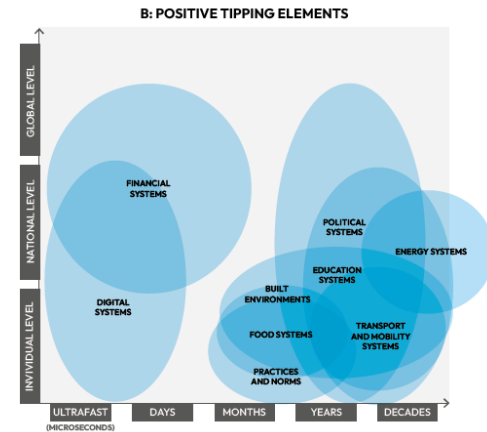
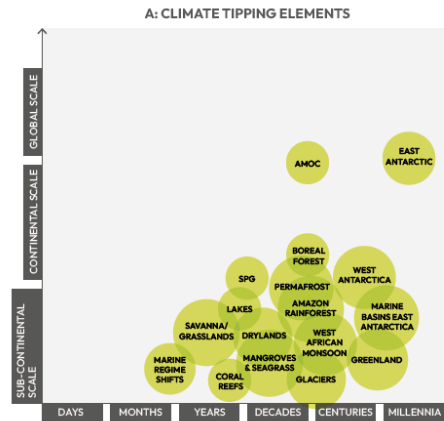


Figure 2: Three types of tipping point. Schematic representations of: (left) bifurcation-induced tipping (Figure 1); (middle) noise-induced tipping, and; (right) rate-induced tipping.



Source: 2023 Global Tipping Points Report



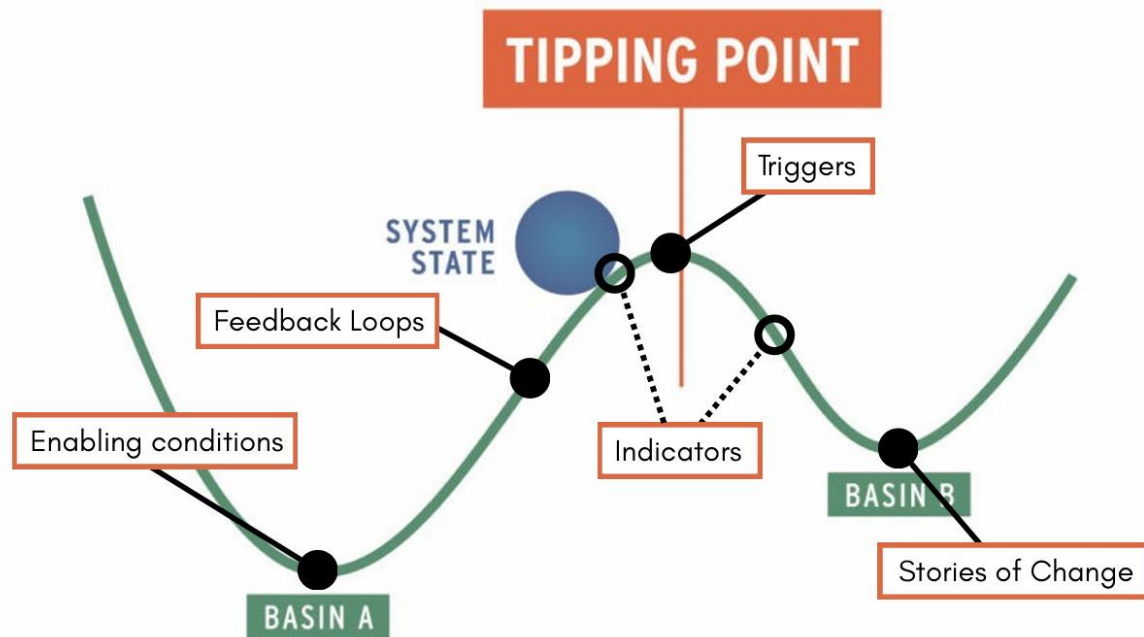


Illustration by Andrew Bernier, adapted from Walker, B. & Salt, D. (2006) Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World. Island Press: Washington, DC.

Creating a Tipping Point

Trigger

A new policy

Enabling conditions

Clear information

Physical ability

Simplicity

Fun / playfulness

Reinforcing feedback

Critical mass

Social contagion

Absent feedback

Economies of scale

Learning by doing

Resisting feedback

Deeper social contagion

Physical discomfort

Indicators

Number and height of hands

Noises being made

Stories of change

Failure?

Systems are hard to change



Photo by Rod Long on Unsplash

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Photo by Deryn Macey on
Unsplash



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Indicators



Indicators

Example tool #1

Synchronicity

Think of a small-scale system you are working in. E.g. a group or team within an organisation:

How do interpersonal dynamics create synchronicity? When does a group experience togetherness? What keeps a group divided? Can you begin to pay attention to the role of body-language and shared emotions?

Think of a larger system, involving behaviour change at a community, city, or wider scale:

What calendars shape the rhythms of behaviour in the lives of people you might want to influence? It might be the rhythms of school terms and holidays, or a religious calendar of festivals, or election cycles, or budgetary cycles.

Indicators

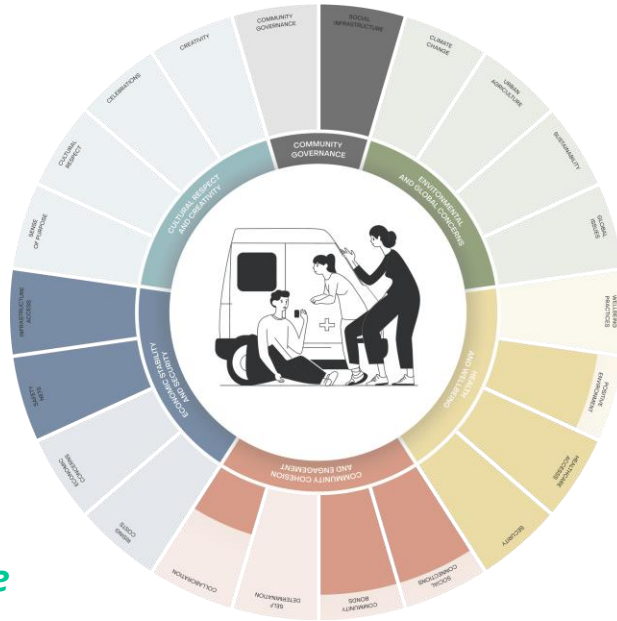
Example tool #2

Cornerstone Indicators



Intuitive indicators of complex value

If the changes you are working towards started to happen, how would you notice?



Access to Care

Montreal, Canada

Number of people who feel confident they would be cared for if they had an accident or fell ill in a public place



Leisure Activities

Sweden, Västerås

Number of people who are regularly doing a leisure activity with people they don't cohabit with

exeterclimateforum.com

Indicators

Example tool #3

Case Study – Electric vehicles

Goal: Increase in market share of electric vehicles to reduce reliance on fossil fuels

Intervention: Policy to ban sale of petrol/diesel vehicles in the future

Instability: Fluctuating availability and price of petrol/diesel

Perspective 1

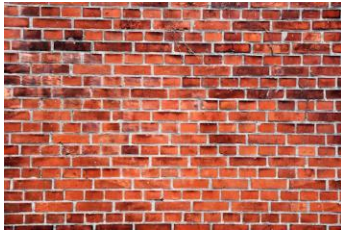


Photo by Waldemar Brandt on Unsplash

Perspective 2

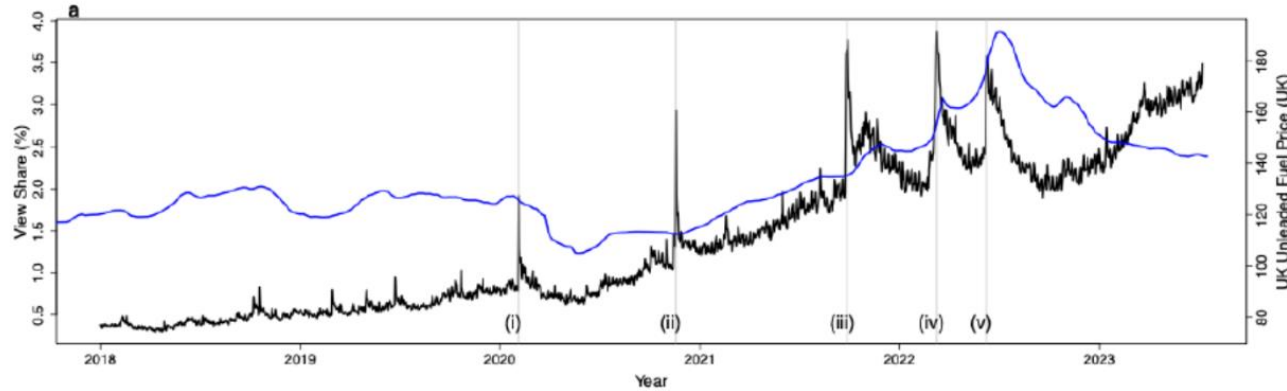


Photo by David Lusvardi on Unsplash



Photo by Michael Fousert
on Unsplash

Indicators



Percentage of views on Autotrader advertisements for second hand electric vehicles

Source: Boulton, Chris & Buxton, Joshua & Lenton, Timothy. (2023). Early opportunity signals of a tipping point in the UK's second-hand electric vehicle market. 10.5194/egusphere-2023-2234.

- i. 4th February 2020 The UK Government announces a ban on sale of new petrol vehicles by 2035.
- ii. 8th November 2020 The UK Government brings forward the ban on sale of new petrol vehicles to 2030.
- iii. 29th September 2021 Potential HGV driver shortage, leading to uncertainty about petrol availability, panic buying and fuel shortages in the UK.
- iv. 10th March 2022 Spike in UK fuel prices associated with international fossil fuel volatility from Russian conflict in Ukraine.
- v. 8th June 2022 Spike in UK fuel prices.

Stories of Change

Imagine your goal at the bottom of the right-hand curve.

This represents a new stable system state. Unless the new system state is pushed again, it is likely to stay that way for a while.

How does it feel to imagine your goal as a new stable system state?

Consider:

- How stable does your goal feel? If you reached the goal, how likely is it that it would stay that way without further pushing?
- Does it feel more likely that it would roll back to where you are now, or roll forwards to further change?
- Do you want to stop there, or is there an assumption that this is only the first or next step in the journey?

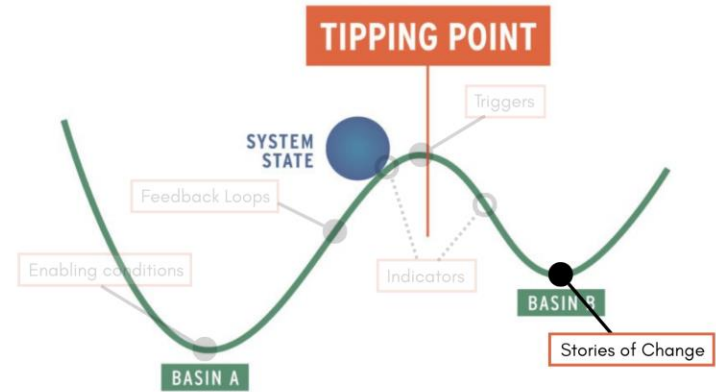


Illustration by Andrew Bernier, adapted from Walker, B. & Salt, D. (2006) Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World. Island Press: Washington, DC.

Stories of Change

Now imagine your goal as an indicator, halfway down the slope on the right side of the curve.

In this scenario, your goal is not a new stable state, it is a signal, or metric, that helps you recognise that the change you are working for is starting to happen.

How does it feel to imagine your goal as an indicator of change?

Consider:

- What assumptions are you making about what your goal would mean?
- In this scenario, what would be the bottom of the curve? What is the new stable system state that your goal is on the way towards?

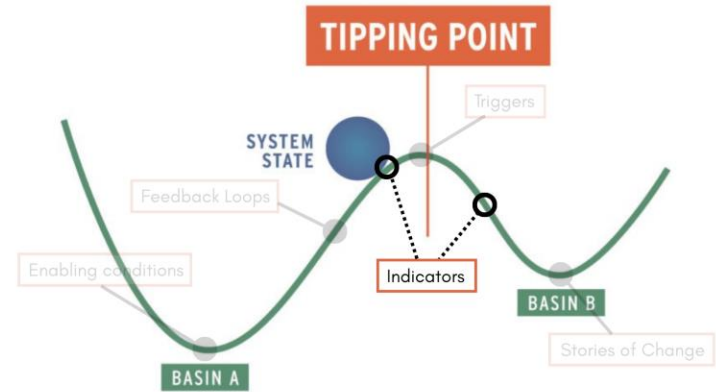


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Stories of Change

Now imagine your goal as trigger, at the top of the curve.

In this scenario, your goal is the moment that causes a shift from resistance to change to momentum for it.

How does it feel to imagine your goal as a trigger?

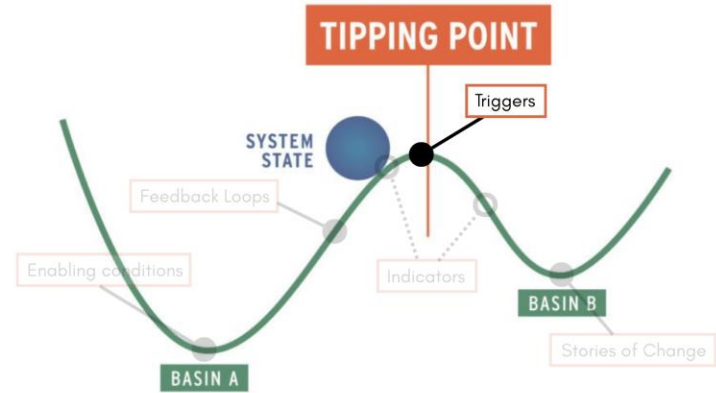


Illustration by Andrew Bernier, adapted from Walker, B. & Salt, D. (2006) Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World. Island Press: Washington, DC.

Consider:

- How could your goal act as a trigger? What are the conditions in which it could be the moment that change becomes self-reinforcing?
- If your goal was a trigger, how would you decide when it was the right time to make it happen?

Stories of Change

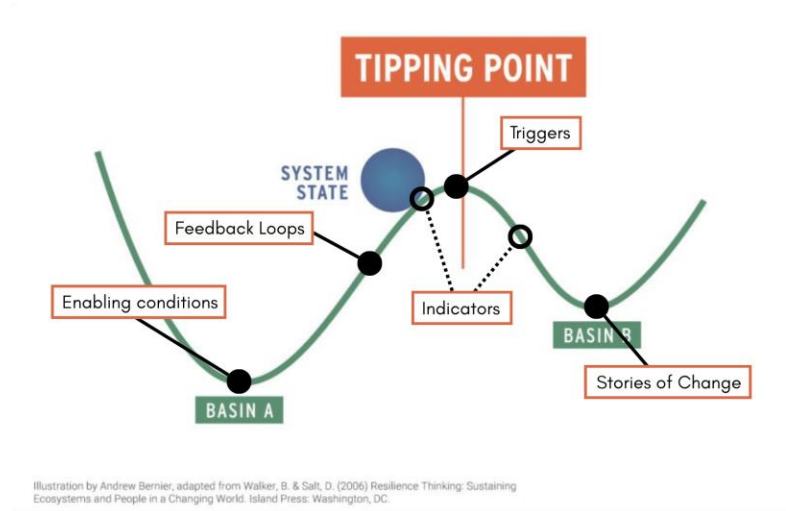
None of these scenarios are 'correct' – they are all different ways of thinking about how your goal relates to complex systems change.

Which reflections felt the most important, surprising, or powerful? Did any of the scenarios feel like a particularly good or bad fit?

How can you take elements of some, or all, of the scenarios to expand your goal into a description of the systems change you are working towards?

Here is a template as an example:

We are working towards [goal]. Once we reach our goal, we expect the system to [become stable / tip towards a new system state / continue its momentum towards change]. The way we will notice this desired outcome is [the triggers, indicators, and/or other tipping points that we predict will happen first].



Models/frameworks

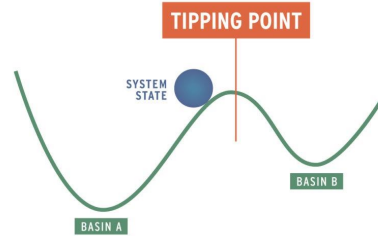
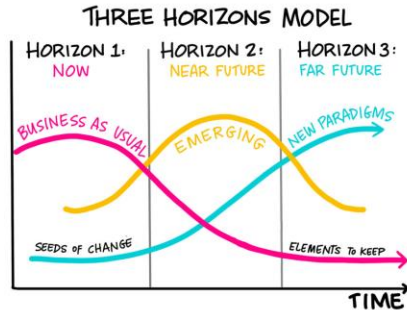


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Applications

Impact measurement

Theory of Change

Risk Registers

Strategic prioritisation

Communications

Investment decisions

Governance

Systems mapping

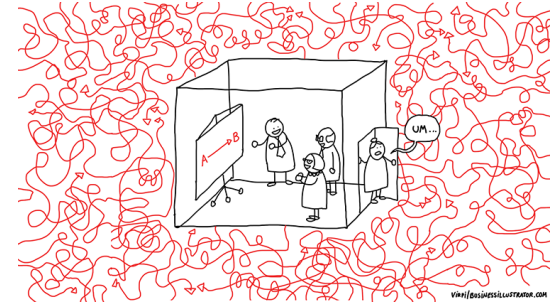
Skills

Holding uncertainty

Navigating complexity

Informed prioritisation

Non-linear thinking





Further links

Positive Tipping Points Toolkit: ptptoolkit.notion.site

Global Tipping Points Report: global-tipping-points.org

Get in touch: p.lefort@exeter.ac.uk