



Renaïsi Innovation

CHANGING SYSTEMS: LEARNING, POWER AND RESOURCES

Our strategy for systems change | 2026-2036

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FOREWORD



The UK is entering a period of sustained social, economic and political pressure. Inequality remains entrenched, financial insecurity is deepening in many communities, and public services, local government and civil society are being asked to respond to rising need with fewer resources. At the same time, trust in institutions is fragile and too many decisions still feel distant from the people most affected by them.

Complex social challenges cannot be solved by individual organisations or short-term programmes alone. Across government, public services, philanthropy and communities, there is growing recognition that change must be shaped through stronger local relationships, greater community influence, better use of evidence and more preventative, joined-up approaches.

There are signs of this shift in practice: greater emphasis on place, neighbourhoods, devolution, community participation and cross-system working. But these approaches will only make a difference if they move beyond rhetoric and change how decisions are made, how resources flow and whose knowledge counts.

This strategy responds to that moment. It sets out where Renaisi Innovation will focus its energy and how we will use our experience in place-based and systems change, co-production, learning and evidence to support more collaborative, community-led and lasting change.

Steve Haines
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

OUR LEGACY



How our work has evolved

From area regeneration to place-based systems change and community power

Period	Policy / approach	Shift
1990s	Single Regeneration Budget	Integrated area regeneration + local partnerships
1998–2011	New Deal for Communities	Ten-year neighbourhood renewal + community involvement
2010s	Localism / Big Local	Resident-led funding + civic capacity
2020s	Devolution / Pride in Place	Neighbourhood power + systems + long-term investment

UK regeneration has evolved through overlapping approaches rather than a simple shift from top-down delivery to community-led change. The Single Regeneration Budget encouraged locally driven partnerships; New Deal for Communities brought long-term investment and stronger community involvement across housing, health, education, crime and employment. Its evaluation also reinforced an enduring lesson: many problems are experienced in neighbourhoods but cannot be solved at neighbourhood scale alone. Labour markets, housing systems, public-service incentives and national policy continue to shape what places can achieve.

Today, devolution, neighbourhood renewal, mainstreaming of community-led and relational service design, public-service reform and place-based investment are creating a new phase. Historic centralisation and emerging English devolution has produced distinct policy architectures across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Where we are today combines old lessons with new policy foundations. Levelling Up re-established spatial inequality as a national policy concern, while Pride in Place now returns to ten-year neighbourhood investments and explicitly draws lessons from the New Deal for Communities era. Contemporary agendas of devolution, neighbourhood health and civil-society and public sector partnership broaden regeneration beyond buildings and high streets into governance, prevention, public-service reform, community assets and power.

The current Labour government under Prime Minister Andy Burnham presses this place-focus further with an explicit but emergent “place-first” agenda. Across this journey from the ‘90s to today, incrementally more attention has been paid to putting people and communities in the driving seat of change that impacts them. Through participatory research and design, community-led governance at a neighbourhood level and within funding bodies.

RENAISI | PLACE, SYSTEMS, EVIDENCE & LEARNING

Renaishi's place-based practice stretches back to the late 1990s, with roots in neighbourhood regeneration and community development and long-standing relationships in places including Hackney, Southwark and Lambeth. Over time it moved from direct delivery and regeneration into a wider role spanning research, evaluation, learning, capacity building and strategic facilitation. Its work has included national and multi-place programmes such as Big Local, Place Based Social Action, Empowering Places, Economies for Healthier Lives and youth systems-change initiatives.

A consistent thread has been helping local partnerships understand complex systems, build collaboration, learn across places and connect local experience to funder and policy decisions.

TSIP | PARTICIPATION, POWER & DESIGN

TSIP developed practice centred on co-production, participatory design and community-led innovation. Its approach combines human-centred design, systems thinking and continuous learning, with lived experience embedded in research, programme design, grant-making and evaluation.

TSIP's work has included participatory funds such as The Giving Lab, community research, health and environmental justice projects, co-design with groups underrepresented in mainstream systems, and learning partnerships with foundations and public bodies. This created a distinctive capability in moving beyond consultation towards community influence over services, funding, knowledge and decisions.

Renaishi's history sits directly within this evolution.

Founded as an independent spin-out of Hackney Council in 1998, Renaishi grew from neighbourhood regeneration, managed a New Deal for Communities programme and the Single Regeneration Budget and later supported national learning for regeneration practitioners. As policy shifted towards localism and community power, Renaishi helped establish and support Big Local and tested neighbourhood-planning approaches in disadvantaged communities. It subsequently became a learning and evaluation partner for major national multi-site programmes including Youth Futures Foundation's Connected Futures Programme, DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund's Place Based Social Action project, Power to Change's Empowering Places, and more. More recently Renaishi helped develop practice and methods for place-based systems change, examining how power, evidence, economies and long-term investment interact in places.

TSIP's history evolved from people-centred research towards participation and co-production in design for social innovations, funding and decision-making.

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Our evolution – becoming Renaishi Innovation

Renaishi Innovation was formed when social impact consultancies Renaishi and The Social Innovation Partnership joined forces, bringing together decades of experience working with communities, places and organisations to understand and support social change. Anchored by The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC), we bring deep experience of working in place, learning from complex and long-term change, helping local systems work differently, and designing with communities. Together, this gives us a strong foundation for supporting change that is grounded in the realities of places and shaped by the people who live there.

WHO WE ARE TODAY



Place, power, and systems change

We are Renaisi Innovation. We are experts in systems change and place-based change. We focus on the point where institutional and community power meet.

We work on the connection between physical and economic renewal, community power, and evidence. We do not romanticise localism or community power as silver-bullets. We believe that community-led change is only meaningful when authority, capability and resources genuinely move towards people impacted by social issues, and that positive social transformation is only possible if structural inequalities are also addressed at the scales that create them.

We integrate **place-based practice, systems thinking, evidence and learning** to help funders, government, public services, social investors and local partnerships change how they use evidence to learn, involve people in decisions that impact their lives, and better resource change.



Purpose

Our purpose is why we exist:

To bridge the gap between people and power, learning through dialogue and discovery to shape the future.

Our vision is the future if we are successfully living our purpose:
A just future where communities design and determine the systems that shape our lives.



Vision



Values

Our values are our non negotiable principles.

Trust - We earn and build trust by being consistent, reliable and transparent

Courage - We work with courage by speaking up and challenging unjust systems, especially when it's difficult or uncomfortable.

Accountability - We take responsibility and are open about what works, what doesn't, and what we are learning along the way.

Care - We care about how we behave, how we do our work and the people it touches - we listen, we respect different perspectives, and we act with empathy.

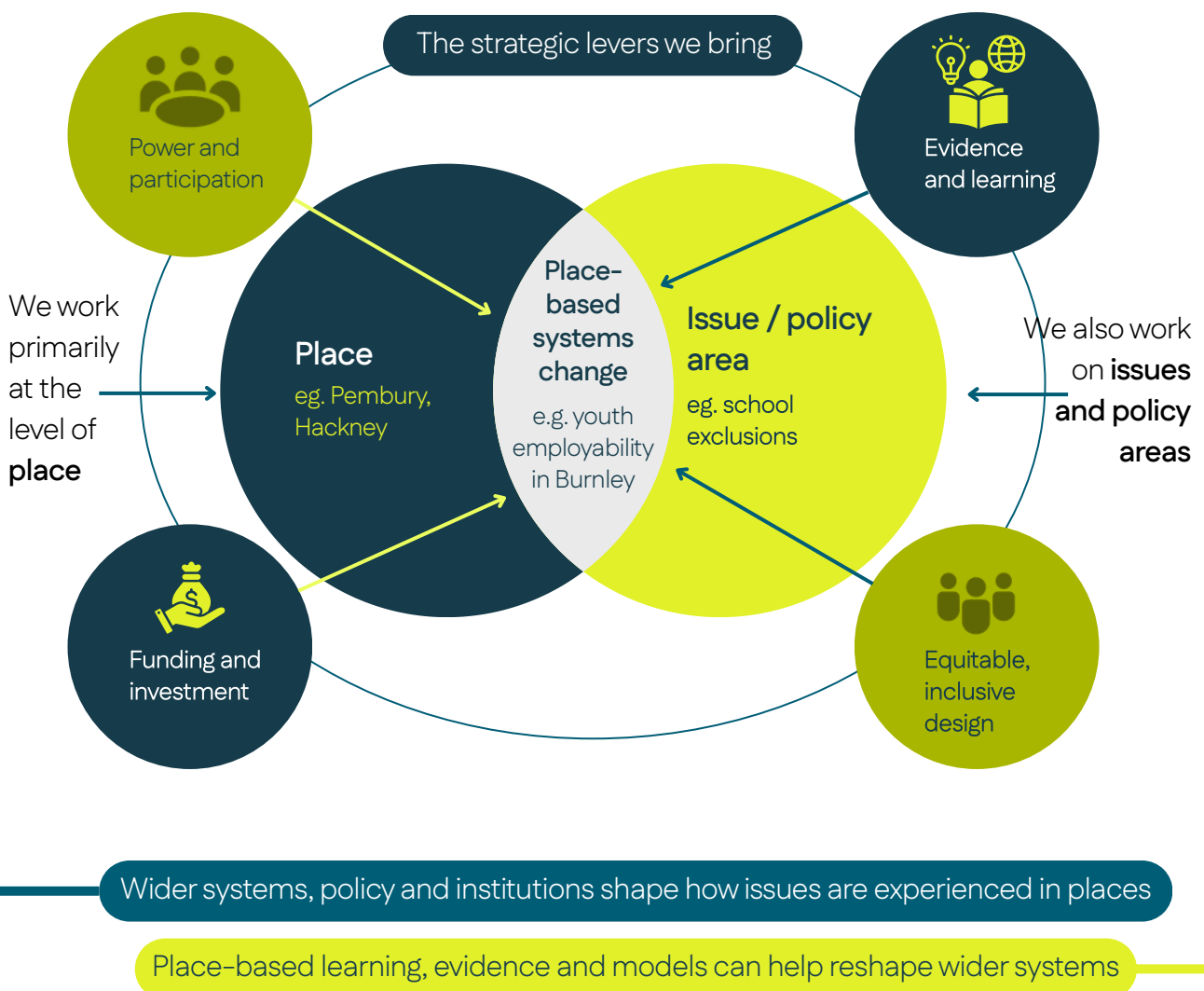
HOW WE DO IT: PLACE & SYSTEMS CHANGE



We are experts in place-based and systems change, with more than 30 years of experience supporting others to understand how change happens in places and across systems. Through this work, we have developed a deep understanding of how change develops in different contexts and how learning from place can inform change beyond it.



We are experts in systems change



We believe place is one of the most practical ways to challenge the root causes of social and economic inequality. Where people live shape their access to opportunity, services, housing, work, relationships, assets and decision-making. It is also where different systems collide in everyday life. For us, places are living systems comprised of people, institutions, histories, relationships, economies and physical environments.

Working in place makes it possible to see how inequalities interact, to build relationships across organisational boundaries and to create routes for communities to shape the decisions that affect them.

Our work is deeply connected to wider systems change because the challenges people face are shaped by more than what happens in one service or organisation. They are influenced by how decisions are made, how organisations work together and where power sits. Decisions made at national or regional level can shape how systems are experienced locally, while learning from place can generate insight that influences wider policy and practice.

Looking at place and systems together helps us understand both what is happening locally and the wider conditions shaping it. Wider systems influence what happens in places and in people's lives, while learning from people and communities can help show where those systems need to change.

Why this matters now

Many community organisations are under financial pressure. Funding remains fragmented and short-term. Local government and public services are stretched. Where participatory research and design is increasingly mainstreamed, there remains a distance between inviting people into processes to share their experience and ideas rather than handing people meaningful authority over the decisions that determine how resources flow in or out of their community, how their knowledge is interpreted and translated into policy or practice decisions.

Across the UK, governments, funders and public services are turning again to place and neighbourhoods. Foundations and social investors are also experimenting with longer-term, locally shaped and community-led approaches to funding and investment.

These are important changes, but we have learned over decades of practice that policy ambition alone does not create the conditions needed for long-term locally-led action to endure.

Changing Systems: Learning, Power, Resources.

We work on the conditions that let places build and sustain change – connecting local action with wider systems to create a more equitable society.

Natural and economic systems

Local economies, labour markets and natural environments that support fair and sustainable growth.



People and opportunity

Thriving, healthy, inclusive communities with access to opportunities.

Services and institutions

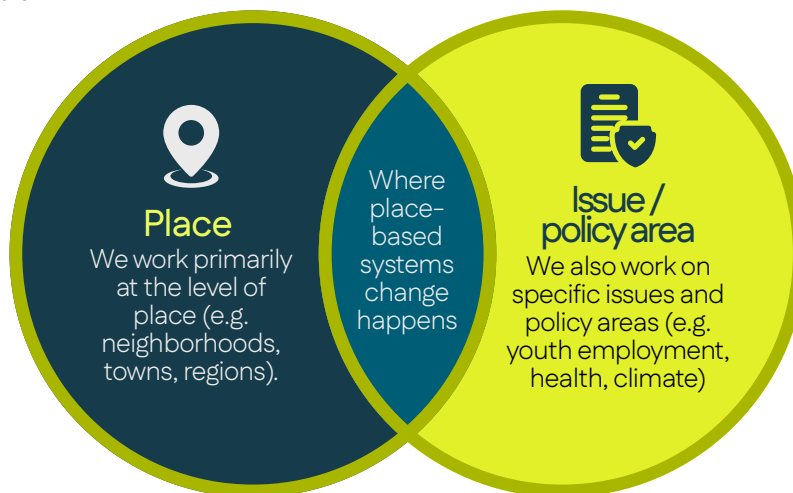
Schools, health, skills, housing and other public services working together for local outcomes.

Places and assets

Homes, neighbourhoods, physical and community assets that anchor local life.

National policy and investment

shape what is possible in places.



Place-based learning and models generate the evidence and influence to reshape wider systems.

We bring four interconnected capabilities to this work.



Our strategic enablers

The internal and external conditions that make everything else possible.

Influence across the system

We translate between edge practice, policy and investment – building influence across all four.

A learning and anti-oppressive organisation

We build our own practice, culture and systems so we can work in ways that reject and shift oppression.

OUR AMBITION – FOUR CHALLENGES

Over the next decade

We will help places facing inequality build the power, evidence, relationships and investment needed to make long-term systems change possible.

We have organised our strategy around four persistent challenges that hold back long-term change. They connect and overlap:



Relationships

How might we build the infrastructure for collective action



Power

How do we move from participation to power



Evidence

How do we turn evidence into a shared capacity to learn



Investment

How do we change how resources flow in place and the wider system

EVIDENCE

Turn evidence into shared learning and adaptation.

RELATIONSHIPS

Build the local infrastructure for collective action.



INVESTMENT

Change how money and resources move through place.

POWER

Move from voice to influence. decision rights and ownership.

Places and systems change

Together, these four challenges give us a simple question to keep asking: What conditions must exist for people and organisations in places and actors in wider systems to take action together, learn, make decisions and sustain change over time?

1. How might we build the infrastructure for collective action?

Place-based policy can create new boards, partnerships, plans and programmes. But policy alone cannot create trust, shared purpose, enabling infrastructure or collaborative behaviour that persists and can be nurtured over decades. We help places build the practical infrastructure that collective action needs. This includes supporting the development of relationships that can hold disagreement, governance that people understand and trust, shared strategy that aligns practice, stronger links between civil society and public institutions, and the tools, processes and routines that allow partners to learn and adapt together.

Principle

We want to see local systems that maintain knowledge and relationships beyond a single funding cycle; partnerships that can adapt as conditions change; and institutions that work with place rather than simply deliver into it.

2. How do we move from participation to power?

Community voice now appears across policy, funding and service design. But being heard is not the same as having power. We will make the terms of participation explicit. We ask who defines the problem, who controls information, who decides, who controls resources and who owns the assets or infrastructure that matter. We help partners design and develop their work using participatory methods that move beyond consultation where the context allows it, and towards influence, shared decision-making, resource control, ownership and stewardship.

Not every participatory process aims to lead to changes in ownership. But organisations that want to engage in participatory processes or codesign should build the capabilities to ensure engagement is meaningful, ethical, transparent, and clear in scope.

Voice	Influence	Decision-making	Resource control	Ownership / stewardship
People are heard	People shape options	People share formal authority	People influence or control money	People hold or steward assets or infrastructure

Principle

We will not use participation to legitimise decisions that institutions have already made. We will name the limits of power-sharing and challenge tokenism when we see it. We will develop and spread approaches that materially shift and redistribute power.

3. How do we turn evidence into a shared capacity to learn?

Place-based change is long term, non-linear and shaped by context. Yet organisations are often still required to produce evidence for individual projects, fixed reporting cycles and retrospective accountability.

We will strengthen learning and evaluation practice and infrastructure so people can use evidence while change is happening. We will help the social sector build a shared view of what is changing, what is not, for whom, under what conditions and what they should do next. This will include:



Treating community knowledge as evidence and strengthening community control over how knowledge is generated and used.



Track changes in relationships, power, behaviour, narratives and structures as well as programme outcomes.



Create learning that survives individual grants, contracts and organisations, and infrastructure that provides open access to it.



Combine rigour with adaptation: complexity should improve evaluation, not weaken it.

4. How do we change how resources flow in place and the wider system?

Long-term systems change needs long-term resourcing; patient, flexible, trust-based and relational resourcing. Too much funding still arrives through short cycles, narrow programmes and risk models that push uncertainty and risk-holding towards local organisations and people.

We will help funders, public bodies and social investors understand how money moves through a place (flows in, flows within, and flows out), whose priorities shape it and what behaviours it creates. We will support participatory and community-led funding and investment to continue to grow and sharpen as viable mechanisms for systems change, addressing local challenges and seizing opportunities. We will strengthen learning about place-based capital and help partners and places align different forms of resource around their long-term goals. We will build this area with specialist partners. Our role starts with strategy, participation, governance, learning and evidence.

Principle

Money is never neutral. The way institutions fund, invest and manage risk shapes relationships, power and the kinds of change that are possible and that can be sustained.

EQUITY AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE

We work in systems where power, resources and legitimacy are unevenly distributed. Those inequalities shape systems, places, institutions and people's experiences. They also shape research, evaluation, design practices, funding and the organisations aiming to create social change. This includes us.

For that reason, equity and anti-oppressive practice are part of how we work across our whole strategy. This means paying attention not only to who is included, but to who sets agendas, whose knowledge is valued, who makes decisions, who controls resources and who carries risk. Our aim is not simply to make processes more inclusive. It is to help create conditions in which people and communities who are most affected by decisions have greater influence over them, and greater ownership of the means through which change happens.

Our ambition is for this discipline to strengthen every part of our strategy: building stronger local systems, deepening community power, improving how evidence is created and used, and helping resources flow in ways that support more equitable and lasting change

What this means in practice

Area of practice	Our commitment	Questions we will keep asking
Research, learning and evaluation	We will build evidence with, not simply about, communities. We will pay attention to positionality, ownership of knowledge and how evidence is interpreted and used.	Whose knowledge counts? Who defines success? Who owns the evidence? Who interprets it? How will it be used?
Participation and co-production	We will be explicit about what people can influence and design participation to create meaningful routes to decision-making, resource control or ownership.	Who defines the problem? Who sets priorities? What can participants actually change? Who controls resources? What happens to people's contributions?

Place-based work	We will look beyond formal institutions to understand the histories, relationships and forms of leadership that shape a place.	Whose voices are recognised? Who is overlooked? Which relationships hold influence? What barriers shape people's ability to participate in local change?
Funding and investment	We will examine how funding systems distribute power as well as money, and whether they enable or constrain community-led change.	Who can access capital? Who decides what is investable? Who carries risk? Who benefits? Do funding terms support long-term community agency?
Working with institutions	We will help partners examine how their own assumptions, behaviours and structures affect the systems they want to change. We will partner with specialist organisations where deeper anti-oppressive expertise is needed.	How does institutional power shape the problem? What behaviours or structures need to change? Where should we challenge, and where should others lead?

The principles that guide us

These principles shape how we work, what we prioritise and the decisions we make. They apply across our organisation, our partnerships and all of our work.



HOW WE WORK

What this looks like in practice

We help our partners understand contexts, make power dynamics visible, build capabilities for shared learning, and redesign the relationships and resource flows that shape what becomes possible. We share our own learning and ideas to support and challenge institutions to work differently to improve outcomes for people and places, and civil society.

Our core practice is focused into five areas of expertise:



Learning partnerships



Evaluation



Research



Co-production



Strategic facilitation

We combine them differently depending on the challenge we are helping our partners to understand and explore. We will often explore new ideas in collaboration with others, to contribute to developing practice and ideas that push the civil society towards increasingly systemic and equitable practices.

- Whole-place and multi-site learning partnerships ([link to case studies](#)) that connect strategy, evidence, reflection and adaptation over several years.
- Place-based evaluations ([link to case studies](#)) that test contribution, context and changing system conditions without losing rigour.
- Participatory research, governance and fund design ([link to case studies](#)) that push the boundaries of where communities own the agenda and hold real influence.
- Systems change facilitation and learning partnerships ([link to case studies](#)) that enable and strengthen collective action.
- Advisory on place-based funding and social investment ([link to case studies](#)), developed with specialist partners.

OUR ROLE BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

How we use our position

Renaissi Innovation often works close to institutions that hold money, authority and policy influence. We also want to strengthen our relationships with community grounded organisations whose practice can be further from those centres of power.

That intermediary position can be useful, but it is not neutral.

We do not want to become a gatekeeper or to extract community knowledge and repackage it for institutions. Our longer-term role is to help create relationships, shared intelligence and influencing infrastructure that makes grounded practice more powerful on its own terms. We will connect, learn with and amplify grounded practice so that institutions change too:



Partners keep ownership of their stories and knowledge.



We credit and compensate people whose insight shapes our work.



We bring people closest to the practice into the rooms where decisions happen.



We measure influence through changed rules, resources and behaviours – not simply reach or visibility through publications or convening.

We help funders, government, charities and communities learn, design and act together, using evidence and participation to shift power and create lasting change. We do this in four connected ways:

1. Understand change as it happens

- We help partners understand what is changing, why and for whom.
- Through evaluation and learning partnerships, we look beyond outcomes to understand what is shaping change and why. We pay close attention to relationships and power, including challenging traditional ideas about whose knowledge is valued and what counts as evidence.
- We build learning into the work as it develops, so it can inform decisions in real time. People with lived experience also play a meaningful role in shaping the questions being explored and interpreting what the findings mean.

2. Design with communities, not for them

- We help communities and organisations shape services, programmes, funds and wider approaches to change together.
- Through co-design and co-production, people most affected by social issues have meaningful influence over priorities and decisions. We bring lived and learned expertise into the same process, paying attention to whose knowledge is valued and where power sits.
- By strengthening community agency, we support the development of approaches grounded in local knowledge and lived experience.

3. Build collective practice

- Field building is an important part of how we strengthen place-based and systems change beyond individual projects and organisations.
- We use research, frameworks and models to make learning useful to others and strengthen practice more widely. We also create spaces for shared learning, including our Community of Practice, where people involved in this work can share experience and explore challenges together.
- We strive to make learning from one project or place useful to others, so stronger practice can spread and develop over time.

4. Shift how resources flow

- We help create fairer ways for funding and resources to reach communities and give people greater influence over how they are used.
- Our experience of participatory funding and community-led funding helps us understand how decisions about resources can be made differently. Through fiscal hosting, we can also provide the infrastructure needed for community-led groups to access and manage funding that may otherwise be out of reach.

- Our work with The Giving Lab and Renaisi Innovation's Community Interest Company provide us with a wealth of experience of what supporting community-led funding looks like in practice and gives us a deep understanding what is needed to make resources more accessible.
- We also draw on the social investment expertise of our parent company, TSIC, exploring how funding, investment and resource flows can better support change.

OUR DIRECTION

Our strategy looks beyond the next few years. We want to strengthen the practice of place-based systems change now, while building the knowledge, relationships and infrastructure needed for communities and institutions to work differently over the longer term.

Horizon 1 | Strengthen practice at the intersection of place, power and evidence

We will deepen our work where place-based change, community power, learning and evidence come together.

Working with communities, funders, public bodies and civil society, we will develop and share stronger approaches to learning, evaluation, participation and systems change. We will use what we learn through our work to help partners make better decisions, adapt over time and put community knowledge and experience closer to the centre of change.

Horizon 2 | Build shared infrastructure for place-based change

Many of the conditions that enable long-term change cannot be rebuilt for every new programme or funding cycle.

We will therefore help create **shared learning, evidence and participation infrastructure** that can be used across organisations and places. This could include common approaches to place-based learning, community research capability, practical tools for co-production and ways for learning to travel across places.

Our aim is to help knowledge, relationships and capability endure beyond individual projects and programmes.

Horizon 3 | Help shift the wider architecture around places and communities

Over the longer term, we want to help change some of the wider conditions that shape what communities and places are able to achieve.

We will explore how shared intelligence, stronger relationships between community organisations, and better routes between local practice, funding and policy can give community-grounded organisations greater influence over the systems affecting them.

Where new infrastructure is needed, we will develop it with partners and with clear community accountability.

Our ambition is to build capability and infrastructure that strengthens communities and places beyond any individual project we support.

Yes — the current version still reads like an internal scorecard translated into public language. The weakest element is **“In Renaisi Innovation”**: it breaks the external logic. I would either remove it from this section or recast it as **“How we will contribute”**. I would also make the outcomes more concrete and directional, so they describe the change you want to see rather than categories you intend to monitor.

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

We will judge this strategy by whether it helps create stronger conditions for long-term change in places.

Across the field

There is stronger practice for learning, evaluating and resourcing place-based systems change. Knowledge travels more effectively between places, and community-grounded practice has greater influence on policy and funding without losing ownership of its ideas or experience.

In places

Communities, local organisations and public institutions have stronger relationships, greater trust and more effective ways of working together. Local governance is more legitimate and inclusive, and people have greater influence over the decisions and resources that shape their lives.

In institutions

Participation has clearer material influence. Community knowledge is owned by them, influences decisions, evidence is used to adapt practice, and funding and investment become more long-term, flexible and accountable to the people and places they are intended to support.

Through our contribution

We build long-term partnerships, share useful methods and evidence, and help create new infrastructure that supports system level learning that others can use and sustain.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Learn in the open.

We will share what we are learning, including what is not working and how our practice is changing as a result.

Build with others.

We will collaborate where others are better placed to lead and strengthen shared infrastructure rather than assume Renaisi Innovation should own every role.

Stay rooted in place.

We will invest in long-term relationships where trust and legitimacy can be built and sustained, including in places where Renaisi and TSIP have historic roots and relationships in Southwark, Hackney and Lambeth.

Keep power in view.

We will continually ask who is shaping decisions, whose knowledge is valued, who controls resources and how power is operating in our work and partnerships.

Renaïsi. Innovation

Get in touch: info@renaisi.com

