Scale, power, and shifting the status quo

Understanding how social movements are different from other social change efforts

AEA
November 14, 2019
What is your name and which AEA TIG(s) do you hang out in?

Why did you choose this session?
Social change
Look at two complementary sets of ideas about social change types, one organized around **power building concepts** and the other around other kinds of **social change approaches**.

- Clarify what **movements are and are not**, and if it’s not a movement, give you some ideas for **other types of social change**.
- Share ideas about **how to use these ideas** in your work, with social change makers, and funders.
- **Collect your feedback** to strengthen these frameworks as they are works in progress.
Power Concepts for Transformative Social Change

Social Movement Learning Project
Social Movement Learning Project

• **Goal:** Develop knowledge about *how social movements build power* in order to design *more appropriate planning and learning approaches* to *support movement building*.

• **Research Process:** Over *50 conversations*, a literature review of *80 articles*, and vetting with movement builders from *6 movements*. 
Why power?
Social Movement Theory of Change

Movements seek to topple, transform, and/or absorb the institutional, cultural, and social pillars that prop up the status quo.
Social Movement Theory of Change

Movement Vision
Toppling, transforming, and/or absorbing the institutional, cultural, and social pillars that prop up the status quo.

Movement Impact
Putting Movement Power Base into action.

Movement Power Base
Building a foundation of power for social movements.

Narrative Power
Institutional Power
Network Power
Movement Capacity (Internal)
People Power (External)

Movement Impact
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Laying the Foundation

Movement Capacity

Laying the foundation for a healthy movement.

Story
- Vision, frames, and messaging
- Narrative infrastructure including multiple pathways for dissemination

Strategy
- Organizing
- Mass protest
- Direct action/civil disobedience
- Advocacy

Structure
- Grassroots base
- Leadership pipeline
- Networks/alliances

Movement Vision

Toppling, transforming, and/or absorbing the institutional, cultural, and social pillars that prop up the status quo.

Diagram:
- Dominant systems, norms, worldviews
- Political
- Judiciary/Courts
- Civic Institutions
- Business
- Media
People Power

Power to build, mobilize, and sustain a grassroots base and large-scale public support.

How is the movement shifting public support for the movement goals?

Active Grassroots Support

Grassroots base is engaging in and leading the movement cause.

Active Public Support*

General public takes action on behalf of the movement cause.

Passive Public Support*

General public is supportive of the movement cause but not taking action.

Network Power

*Power with network of organizational allies, that work together in service of a shared movement vision and goal.*

How is the movement building alignment and power with a network of diverse organizations?

**Connectivity**

*Organizations* are connected to and communicating with one another.

**Alignment**

*Organizations* are aligned around movement goals and vision.
Institutional Power

*Power to influence and change the who, how, and what of visible decisionmaking.*

How is the movement impacting or shifting visible decisionmaking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decisionmakers are aware of movement issues, goals, and actors.</td>
<td>Decisionmakers are supportive of and responsive to the movement.</td>
<td>Decisionmakers are proactive champions of the movement issues and goals.</td>
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*Visible decisionmaking: Contests over interests that are “visibly negotiated in public spaces with established rules.” (Just Associates)*
Narrative Power

Power to transform and hold public narratives and limit the influence of opposing narratives.*

How is the movement shifting dominant public narratives?

Visibility

Movement issues are increasingly visible (not necessarily positive) in the media, popular culture, and among the public.

Alignment

Increasing narrative alignment in the media, popular culture, and among the public, indicating an increase in issue salience and support.

Adoption

Movement narrative become dominant

*Public narrative: “A story that, when told in many different ways, can shift public consciousness and change what is possible.” (Grassroots Policy Project)
Social Movement Theory of Change

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**Movement Impact**
Putting Movement Power Base into action.

**Movement Power Base**
Building a foundation of power for social movements.
So, are you funding or evaluating a movement...or something else?
THE MIS(USE) OF MOVEMENT LANGUAGE
THE MIS(USE) OF MOVEMENT LANGUAGE
WHY DOES IT MATTER?

POWER IMBALANCES

MISALIGNMENT
WHAT OTHER STRATEGIES MIGHT BE AT PLAY?

FIELD BUILDING

NETWORKS

SPREADING UPTAKE OF A PRACTICE
WHAT IS A FIELD?

“A community of organizations and individuals working together to solve a common set of problems, develop a common body of theory and knowledge, or advance and apply common practices.”

WHAT IS A FIELD?

FIELD BUILDING INCLUDES:

• Generating a relevant body of research and evidence
• Strengthening organizational and professional development systems
• Establishing a set of shared standards and best practices
• Increasing the alignment of a wide spectrum of actors to facilitate complementary and coordinated action.

“A community of organizations and individuals working together to solve a common set of problems, develop a common body of theory and knowledge, or advance and apply common practices.”

### USEFUL FRAMEWORKS: STRONG FIELD FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shared identity</td>
<td>Alignment of stakeholders around a common purpose and set of core values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standards of practice</td>
<td>Codified practices, exemplary models, and credentialing for practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge base</td>
<td>Credible body of evidence and a community of researchers working to advance practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and grassroots support</td>
<td>Influential leadership and exemplary organizations, with a broad base of support from major constituencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding and policy support</td>
<td>An enabling policy environment and dedicated funding streams.</td>
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Useful Frameworks: Maturation of a Field

Stage 1: Framing
- Conceptual framing and isolated practice examples

Stage 2: Networking
- Networking of innovators and proliferation of practices

Stage 3: Maturation
- Maturation of practices and convergence around methods and tools

Stage 4: Standardization
- Highly standardized practices and formal training, credentialing and certification systems

Requires multiple actors engaging in coordinated work across different areas

Multidisciplinary effort

Intended to be catalytic—take on a ‘life of its own’

Outcomes tend to be broad, ambitious, aimed at transformative social change

May show up as part of a social movement strategy
IMPLICATIONS FOR MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Is there clarity about the most strategic or impactful entry points to support field development?

How are investments or efforts toward field building playing out?

What outcomes could result from particular strategies and investments?

What is the evidence of progress on expected or hoped-for outcomes?
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Movement Capacity Resources

These resources provide guidance for assessing the health and capacity of social movements.