Evaluating Social Movement Power: Concepts and Indicators

Social Movement Learning Project

November 2019

Innovation Network

Innovation Network is a nonprofit evaluation, research, and consulting firm. We provide knowledge and expertise to help nonprofits and funders learn from their work to improve their results.

- **Us, in a nutshell**. We seek to make evaluation accessible to everyone in the social sector by being a friendly expert, collaborating, sharing ideas, and building knowledge and practice.

- **We are committed to social good**. We contribute to social good through use-driven, actionable, high-quality research and evaluation that leads to improved programs and policies.

Social Movement Learning Project

- Develop knowledge about *how philanthropy engages with, supports, and evaluates social movements*

- Design *more useful and appropriate planning and evaluation tools and approaches*

- So that *more funders can support movements*

Research Process

- Over **50 conversations** with funders, movement-builders, and evaluators

- A review of **80 articles** from academic and practitioner sources

- Vetting with movement builders representing **6 movements**

What do funders need?

Better movement literacy to help them gain clarity about how movements are distinct from other social change efforts and to understand the range of actors, strategies, and tactics that are typically deployed during the different stages of a movement.
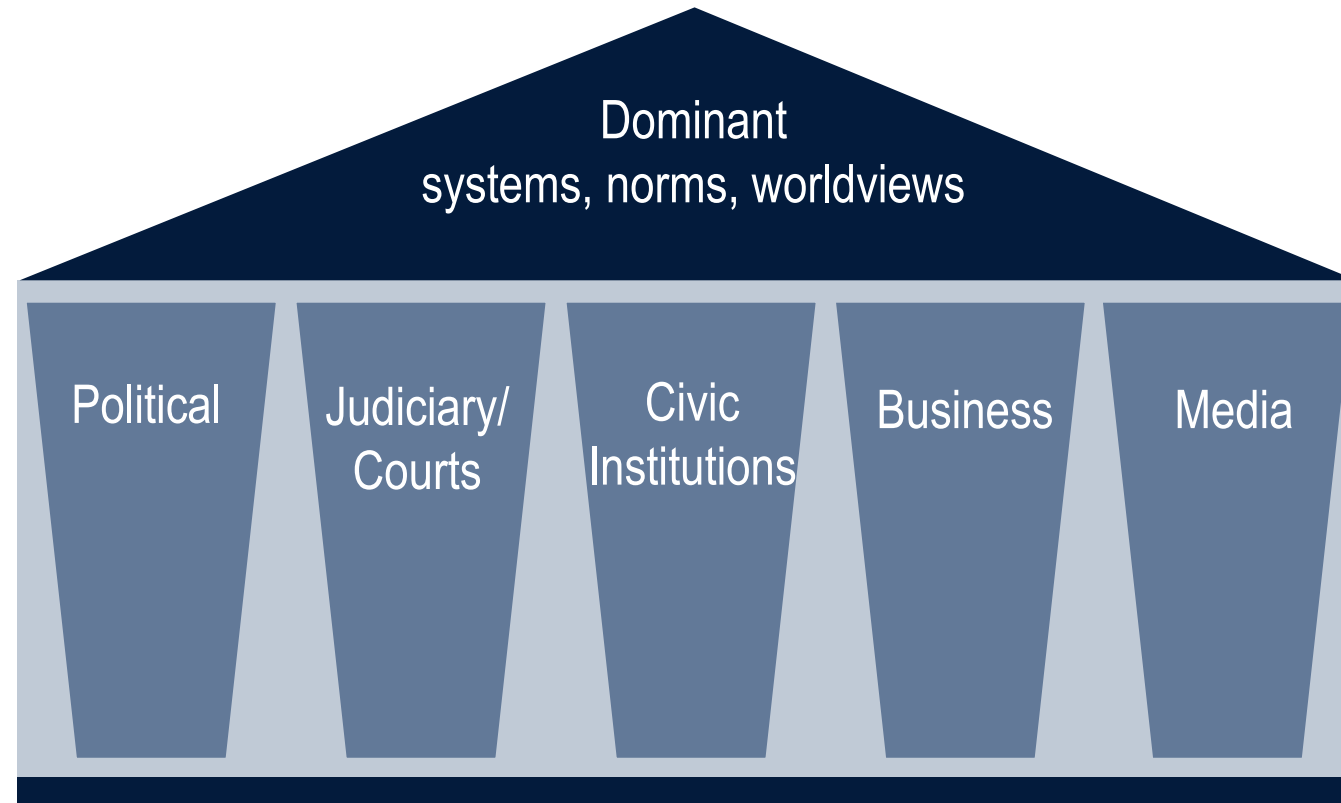
Information about the spectrum of opportunities to support movements, and tools and metrics to help them plan, identify, and justify support for a wider range of movement strategies.

A new frame and measures to assess the success and progress of movement activity to help them justify and maintain long-term support to social movements.

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
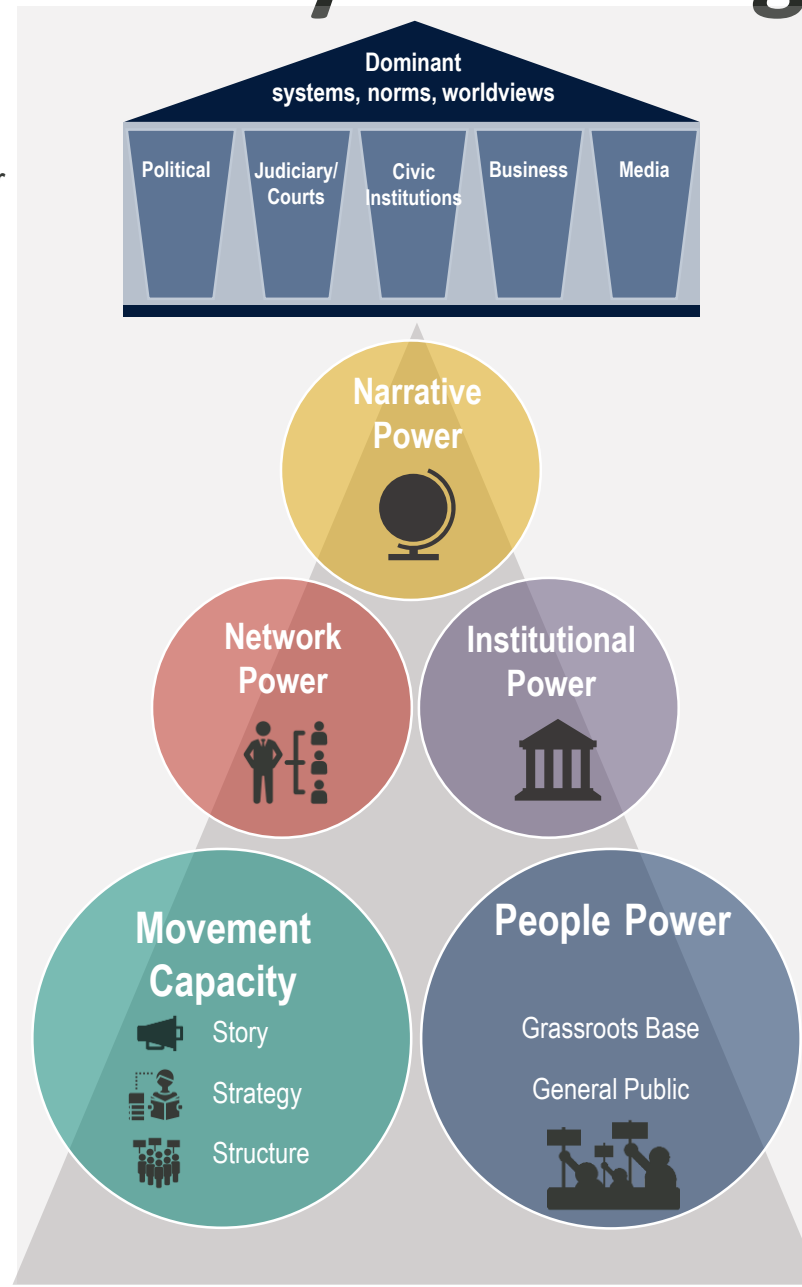
Movement Vision

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.

Dominant systems, norms, worldviews

Political | Judiciary/Courts | Civic Institutions | Business | Media

Narrative Power

Network Power

Institutional Power

Movement Capacity
- Story
- Strategy
- Structure

People Power
- Grassroots Base
- General Public

Social Movement Theory of Change

Movement Capacity

Laying the foundation for a healthy movement.

Story
- Vision, frames, and messaging
- Narrative infrastructure including multiple pathways for dissemination
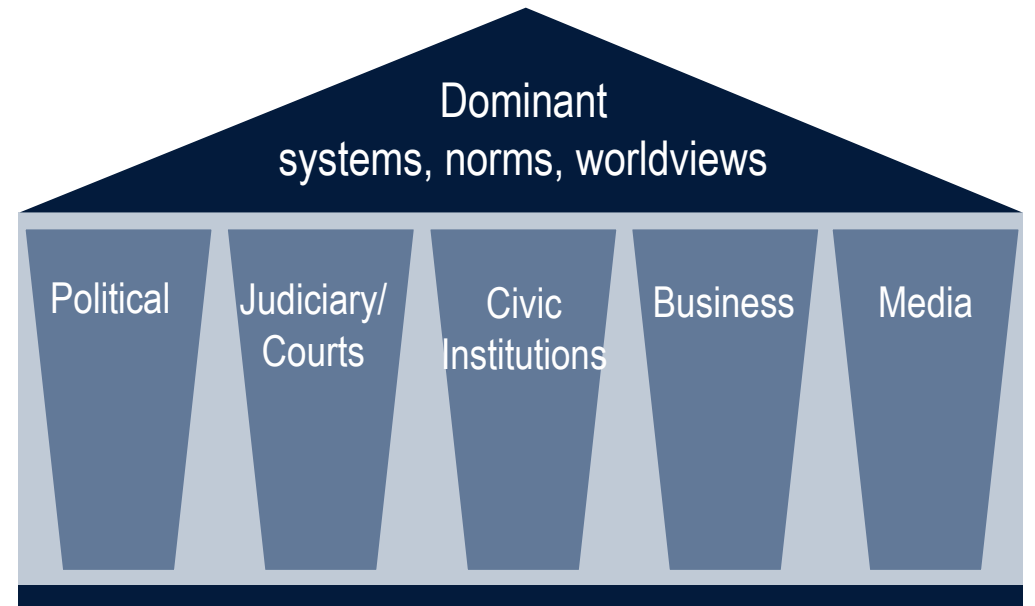
Strategy
- Organizing
- Mass protest
- Direct action/civil disobedience
- Advocacy

Structure
- Grassroots base
- Leadership pipeline
- Networks/alliances

Movement Vision

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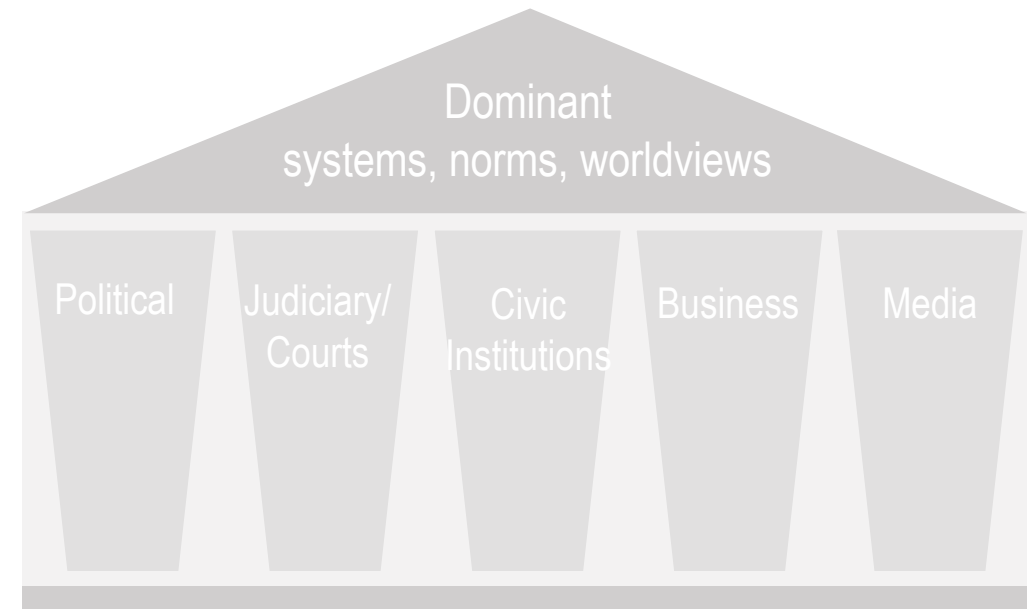

Dominant systems, norms, worldviews

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Evaluating Movement Power Building

Movement Capacity

- Story
- Strategy
- Structure

1. How do we know if movements are *making progress toward toppling or transforming the pillars*?

2. What *types of power* do movements need to influence the pillars?

3. How are movements *translating story, strategy, and structure into power* for the movement?

Movement Vision

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Power of Social Movements Framework

What is it?
Framework of power building types and indicators for understanding and assessing how social movements build power.

How could funders use it?
- <u>Understanding movements</u>: As a starting place to understand the movement you are considering funding/already funding and movement actors' unique roles/contributions.

- <u>Tracking and evaluating movements</u>: As a starting point for funders to structure their conversations, reporting, and other tracking mechanisms to get beyond static reporting.

- <u>Funding movements</u>: To inform an individual or collaborative funding strategy that is focused on supporting movement actors to build power.

What is the unit of analysis?
- Whole movement.

- Network or grouping of actors within a social movement.

What else should I know?
- The framework should be adapted to the movement you're working with.

- Movement actors will likely focus on one or a few areas of power building but not all.

- Not for evaluating movement capacity.

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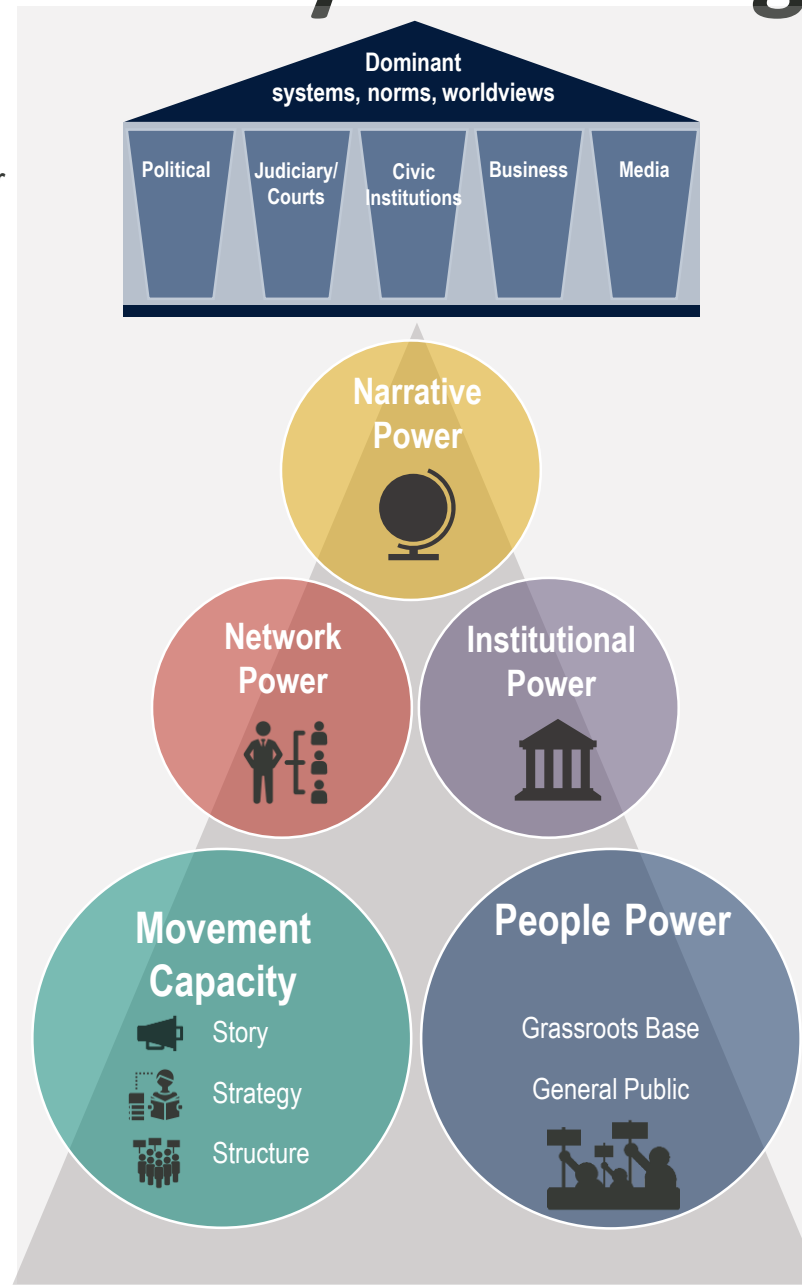
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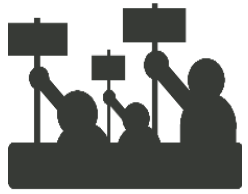
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People Power
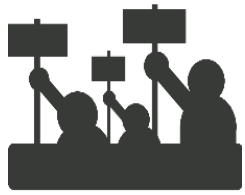
Grassroots Base

General Public

People Power

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

*"The power of social movements is directly proportional to the **forcefulness with which the grassroots exert their discontent and demand change**." -Bill Moyers*

People Power

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

How is the movement shifting public support and building grassroots leadership?

Active Grassroots Support	Active Public Support	Passive Public Support
Grassroots base is engaging in and leading the movement cause.	**General public** takes action on behalf of the movement cause.	**General public** is supportive of the movement cause but not taking action.

Sample Indicators:	Sample Indicators:	Sample Indicators:
1) Increased # of people receiving training.	1) Increased # of people turning out for actions.	1) Increased public awareness of movement issues and goals.
2) Sustained engagement of grassroots base.	2) % of the public turning out for actions.	2) Increased public support of movement goals.
3) Increased agency of affected leaders (agency = skill + autonomy).	3) Increased total $ amount and # of small-dollar donations.	3) Increased email list growth.
	4) Increased # of actions.	

Network Power

Power with network of organizational allies that work toward a shared movement vision and goal.

*"Organizing organizations into **durable and deep alliances** is a requisite for accruing the power we need to get beyond reactive fights. It is necessary if we want to set the agenda." -Richard Healey & Sandra Hinson*

Network Power

Power with network of organizational allies that work toward a shared movement vision and goal.

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

Connectivity	Alignment

Organizations are connected to and communicating with one another.

Sample Indicators:
1) Increased # of aligned organizations.
2) Increased communication and information sharing between organizations.

Organizations are aligned around movement goals and vision.

Sample Indicators:
1) Organizations share movement goals and vision.
2) Organizations take action together.

Institutional Power

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

Visible decisionmaking: Contests over interests that are "visibly negotiated in public spaces with established rules." Just Associates

Institutional Power

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

How is the movement impacting or shifting visible decisionmaking?

Awareness	Influence	Reciprocity

Decisionmakers are aware of movement issues, goals, and actors.

Sample Indicators:
1) Decisionmakers cite movement issues.
2) Increased decisionmaker awareness of movement issues.

**Decisionmakers** are supportive of and responsive to the movement.

Sample Indicators:
1) Public comments by decisionmakers reflect movements narrative and values.
2) Decisionmakers reach out to movement for information and input.

Decisionmakers are proactive champions of the movement issues and goals.

Sample Indicators:
1) Decisionmakers take action on behalf of the movement.
2) Visible decisions are made that support movement goals.
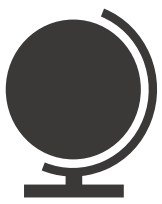
Narrative Power

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

Organizing happens within a larger context, an amalgam of understanding and meaning informed by everything from ideology to religion and spirituality to mainstream media and pop culture. Social movements have historically understood that **this web of meaning-making aids or abates long-term goals of making change, influencing, and building power.** *-ReFrame*

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	Alignment	Adoption

Movement issues are **increasingly visible** in the media, popular culture, and among the public.

Sample Indicators:
1) Increased # of media hits.
2) Movement issues increasingly show up in pop culture.
3) Public is increasingly aware of movement issues.

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

Sample Indicators:
1) Issue framing in media aligns with movement framing.
2) Pop culture depicts movement issues favorably.
3) Public is increasingly supportive of movement issues.

Movement narrative becomes the **dominant public narrative**. Opposing narratives or previous dominant narratives diminish in importance.

Sample Indicators:
1) Opposing narratives are less visible.
2) Cultural influencers publicly adopt and promote movement narrative.
3) Majority of public supports movement issues.

Movement Capacity Resources

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

- American Jewish World Service. **Mapping Social Movements.**

- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. 2009. **Movement Building Indicators.**

- Engler, Paul, Sophie Lasoff, Carlos Saavedra. 2018. **Funding Social Movements.**

- Global Fund for Women. 2018. **Measuring the Capacity of Social Movements.**

- Management Assistance Group. 2018. **Tool for Mapping Successful Movements.**

- Pastor, Manuel, Jennifer Ito, Rachel Rosner. 2011. **Metrics that Matter for Building, Scaling, and funding social movements.**

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Transforming Evaluation for Social Change

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