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

Network Power

Institutional Power

People Power
Grassroots Base

General Public

Dominant systems, norms, worldviews

Political
Judiciary/Courts
Civic Institutions
Business
Media

Movement Capacity
Story
Strategy
Structure
The Evaluation Challenge
Too often the success of social change initiatives is defined by the achievement of visible, concrete reforms or policies. However, social movements may spend years building power and capacity before achieving any concrete reforms or policies.

Existing resources provide evaluation guidance for assessing the health and capacity of movements. This framework provides a complementary resource to help funders, movement builders, and evaluators understand and assess whether movements are making progress and building power to achieve transformational change. This framework is not static and will look different for different movements.

Network Power
*Power with a network of organizational allies that work toward a shared vision and goal.*
- **Connectivity:** Organizations are connected to and communicating with one another.
- **Alignment:** Organizations are aligned around movement goals and vision.

Movement Capacity
- **Story:** Creation of narrative and vision. Development of narrative infrastructure with multiple pathways for narrative dissemination.
- **Structure:** Grassroots base. Leadership pipeline. Networks and alliances.

Narrative Power
*Power to transform and hold public narratives and ideologies and limit the influence of opposing narratives.*
- **Visibility:** Movement issues are increasingly visible in the media, popular culture, and among the public.
- **Alignment:** Increasing narrative alignment in the media and popular culture.
- **Adoption:** Movement narrative becomes the dominant public narrative.

Institutional Power
*Power to influence the who, how, and what of visible decision-making.*
- **Awareness:** Decisionmakers are aware of movement issues, goals, and actors.
- **Influence:** Decisionmakers are supportive of and responsive to the movement.
- **Reciprocity:** Decisionmakers are proactive champions of the movement issues and goals.

People Power
*Power to build, mobilize, and sustain a grassroots base and large-scale public support.*
- **Active Grassroots Base:** Grassroots base is engaging in and leading the movement.
- **Action Public Support:** General public takes action in support of the movement cause.
- **Passive Public Support:** General public is supportive of the movement cause but not taking action.

About the Social Movement Learning Project
Social Movement Learning Project (SMLP) is a field-building research and evaluation project by Innovation Network. SMLP seeks to improve philanthropic support of social movements by creating practical evaluation tools and guidance to help funders better understand and support movement power, progress, and impact.